



Project Reference No.	M3-057
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Communities of Practice

Action plans must be uploaded through 'Submit a Form' on www.reframingthefuture.net by COB Tuesday 27 May 2008.

All sections must be completed.

Please note: sections 1 – 11 of this document will be placed on the Reframing the Future website. Details of participants in item 13 will only be used in accordance with our privacy policy and will not be published on the website.

Name of organisation funded by Reframing the Future

CAE

1. Convenor's details

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2. Facilitator's details

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3. Your project goal (which of the three Reframing the Future goals your project is addressing).

To develop staff capabilities to continuously improve the quality of competency based training and assessment.

4. Your priority area (which of the seven priority areas your project is addressing).

Priority area	Diversity
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What challenges will you address during your project in focusing on your priority area?

- Finding ways to include casual staff and part time ongoing staff in activities and workshops
- Communication mechanisms and pathways within organisation
- Developing strategies to support staff long term in dealing with difficult behaviours
- Developing policies, procedures and guidelines to support staff in dealing with difficult behaviours

5. Domain of knowledge

5.1 Mental health issues – development of participants' knowledge of mental health issues, behaviours associated with these, and identifying appropriate support agencies available to assist.

5.2 Difficult behaviours – development of participants' knowledge of the causes of difficult behaviours in classroom setting and strategies to deal with these.

6. Facilitating your community of practice

Our Community of Practice has already commenced, and has moved to stage 2 of Wenger's model. The potential (stage 1) was identified based on feedback to CAE counsellors that many staff were having problems coping with difficult behaviour in the classroom. A workshop for VCAL teachers was extended to include people from other programs, and was well attended. Participants at this workshop were invited to join the community of practice, and the invitation was extended to other teachers across the organisation. A preliminary briefing session was held, and information passed on by email to those who could not attend. A short survey was distributed to gauge the level of knowledge about mental health issues. This has been collated and will be used to guide the development of future activities for the group.

The facilitator will bring together a nucleus of people from within the Community of Practice who are more experienced in mental health issues, and strategies for dealing with difficult behaviour. That group will organise a number of activities – formal workshops, informal get togethers – and will distribute materials to the group. They will also set up an electronic communications system for those unable to attend activities.

Membership of the Community of Practice includes staff from all Centres across the organisation. As the formal activities of the CoP begin to reduce, and the participants have gained sufficient knowledge and practice, they will disperse across their areas, supporting others in managing challenging behaviours.

To help support the wider dissemination and use of the outcomes of the CoP, the group and facilitator will develop and circulate a set of policies, procedures and guidelines for dealing with learners with challenging behaviours at CAE. This will include placing practical advice, guidelines and links on the CAE Intranet.

7. Structuring your community

7.1 Domain of knowledge

There are two areas of knowledge that will be strengthened and enhanced by the CoP.

(a) Mental Health Issues

The CoPs aim is to broaden the knowledge base of the participants on the types of mental health issues likely to be encountered in a classroom setting, and the ways these illnesses manifest themselves. This will include depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, and drug/alcohol related illnesses. Other areas will be added as identified by the participants. The student counsellors and specialist staff of CAE have a good knowledge of these issues. Using external experts, this team will facilitate a series of short workshops to provide background information, in layman's terms, on the causes, effects and suggested therapies for these illnesses.

(b) Challenging Behaviours.

Bringing together teaching practitioners, the CoP will identify the challenging behaviours in classrooms, share experiences, openly discuss their reaction to experiences, and suggest strategies for dealing with these issues. The group will also investigate the pedagogical and androgogical underpinnings of classroom practice in dealing with young people and adult learners.

7.2 Community

The Community in this project is formed from staff across a number of programs but all are employed at CAE. They are not geographically isolated, but can be isolated due to timetables, part time and casual employment, and specialist teaching areas. It is hoped that the CoP will support different levels of participation, depending on the time constraints and interests of the members. Activities will be organised at different times of the day and week to maximise participation. Communication through email and online chat room will be supported. If possible some activities will include video conferencing (or at the very least teleconferencing). Sub-communities within the larger Community could also be established, based on days of attendance at the organisation.

The facilitator will work toward activities that excite the interest of the participants, based on feedback from the initial workshops. These activities will be a mix of formal presentations by 'experts' and informal discussion sessions for participants. At the informal sessions, it is essential that a climate of trust be developed, allowing participants to describe their experiences and feelings, and gain support from other participants.

7.3 Practice

As one of the aims of the CoP is to develop strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour in the classroom, all of the knowledge and community activities will focus on the practice. It is the teacher, in the classroom, dealing with difficult behaviour, who needs to be supported by the organisation, their peers, and the professionals in related agencies. What to do, who to go to, how to cope on a personal level with difficult times – these are the practical aspects of the project teachers will focus on.

The feedback from the CoP will also inform the development of policies, procedures and guidelines for the organisation, to further support the practice of teachers in the classroom. It is intended to run at least one workshop/conference at the end of the project to promote and share the outcomes of the project to the wider CAE community.

8. Anticipated outcomes (see Chapters 6-7 of *The Potential*)

a) What new capabilities do you anticipate the participants will develop during the project?

- Ability of teachers to deal with difficult behaviour in the classroom, either by themselves or by referring the student to the relevant person or agency for help
- Development of a network of people with whom they feel comfortable discussing the issues surrounding classroom behaviour
- Recognition that they are not necessarily “bad teachers” if they have behavioural problems in the classroom
- For experienced staff, the ability to be a useful resource in dealing with difficult students
- Access to professional support agencies and practitioners, or knowledge of how to find them
- Access to new policies and procedures that clearly identify the responsibilities of teachers in classrooms at CAE
- Developing external relationships with local mental health service providers who refer clients to CAE

b) Please describe the specific outcomes anticipated as a result of your project:

for participating organisations	Development of policies, procedures and guidelines to support staff in dealing with difficult behaviours Happier, more resilient staff, better able to cope with behaviour of students Better completion rates of students with mental health issues as they are supported through their learning
For the VET system	Reduced stress issues for teachers Higher completion rates and satisfaction rates

9. Evaluation process

Please provide an outline of the methods you will use to:

- a) evaluate the participants' learning
 - an initial survey that queries the participant's knowledge of mental health issues and support mechanisms
 - throughout the project, check with participants that what is being organised is what they want from the project
 - evaluation/feedback sheets for each activity, workshop or communication
 - a post project survey that measures the changes in knowledge of mental health issues and support mechanisms

- b) evaluate your project's efficiency and effectiveness
 - record the number of participants at each of the activities organised
 - record the number of participants that join the online chat group
 - from participant feedback, determine whether a wider community workshop/forum will be organised
 - new policy and/or procedures developed and implemented
 - reduction in disciplinary actions being taken to Centre Manager or senior management, now being dealt with by teachers and others

10. Promotion

Please outline how your project's processes and products will be promoted:

within your organisation(s)	Possible workshop/conference at the end of the project Articles in staff newsletter New policies, procedures and guidelines developed and implemented
to industry and other relevant organisations	Possible workshop/conference at the end of the project
to the broader VET sector	Possible workshop/conference at the end of the project Through Reframing the Future workshops and publications

11. Project timeframe

Please list project milestones and key dates

(Please add rows as required)

Milestone	Key date
Invite members to become part of CoP; establish objectives and outcomes with CoP members	April - June 2008
First face-to-face session	May 2008
Second face-to-face session	June 2008
Third face-to-face session	July 2008
Project mid term report	August 2008
Ongoing e-discussion	June – October 2008
Fourth face-to-face session	September 2008
Documentation of outcomes of project - policies, procedures and guidelines	October 2008
Report to wider CAE community via workshop/conference	November 2008
Project final report to Reframing the Future	December 2008
Final financial report to Reframing the Future	January 2009