Year 9 CHOICE Program

Creating Heaps Of Integrated Curriculum Experiences

**OVERVIEW**

**Curriculum**
Year 9 will be structured around 3 Learning Centre themes which will provide the framework for students' educational development: **Think**, an experiential, language-centred course designed to empower students with essential literacy skills, will run for 8 periods per week; **Investigate**, an inquiry-based course emphasising the development of numeracy and thinking skills, will run for 8 periods a week; and **Create**, a course incorporating skills of creative expression, will allow students to work collaboratively on three group projects ultimately presented to a wider audience (a performance, a craft / self-sufficiency market and an Arts / Film Festival). There will also be 2 periods per week allocated to **Learning Communities** (based around their main groups, extending their work into a wider community focus), 3 periods per week of **LOTE** (where students will study one of either German, Samoan, Global Studies or Learning for Living) and 3 periods per week of **Health and Physical Education** (a program designed to explore healthy lifestyles and healthy living).

**Structure of Learning**
Our Learning Centres will be ICT-rich environments, larger areas with more teachers available to help individual students. In each of the three Learning Centre themes (Think, Create and Investigate), teachers will work in teams with a staff-to-student ratio of around 22 students per teacher.

Having teachers work in teams with students, and encouraging collaborative, negotiation-centred learning will equip students with the skills required for success in the senior years of schooling (VCE, VCAL, VET and / or tertiary), in future occupations and for life in general after leaving school.

The program will help students to become more effectively organised, better at working with others, more adept with the literacy and numeracy requirements of life, and more motivated to do their best.
Cranbourne Secondary College Year 9

Introduction
Cranbourne Secondary College runs a special Year 9 program, which commenced in 2006 and is called CHOICE. This program is designed to develop important skills within students that will help them in their futures. We believe that having teachers working in teams with students and teaching students important skills and letting them apply those skills at school is the best way to prepare students for senior school education and life after school.

Some of the skills that students will develop in the program include:
- Getting organised and developing self confidence.
- Planning and working together in teams.
- Improving literacy and numeracy.
- Increased motivation to learn and capacity to think through problems.
- Developing them as independent and responsible learners

Frequently asked Questions
What is the change? What will the program look like?
Part of the program is our city experience program which includes a few day visits a week long visit to the City Centre where students investigate a hypothesis they develop at school and make a presentation to parents of their findings.

A normal week of school covers:
- THINK (8 periods per week)
  This theme will have as a starting point English and Humanities ideas, then extend to cover a range of ideas. Students will commence with the “Real Game” which asks students to look at real life situations of planning for housing, cars, careers, family relationships and managing personal crises. It will also look at Conflict and Harmony and the local community. Students develop, write and produce their own magazine and consider current Environmental Issues.

- INVESTIGATE (8 periods per week)
  This theme has Maths and Science as a starting point then expands to help students develop research skills in a wide range of contexts. The course covers the scientific applications of things such as colour, light and movement. It also looks at the smallest scale (such as atoms) and the grand scale of the universe.

- CREATE (6 periods per week)
  Students will work together to present three major projects throughout the year, which culminate in the “Create Festival”. Students will be responsible for developing the tasks, putting the project together and presenting their performances and art work to the public. These Festivals are held in May, August and November and are open to all parents and the school community.

- LEARNING COMMUNITIES (2 periods)
  Students will get to choose an area of interest or challenge where they look at improving their learning or their contribution to the community, based on Think or Investigate projects.

- LANGUAGE (3 periods per week)
  Students will study German or Samoan or Language for Living or Global Studies. We expect that students will learn in different ways to the current program that more closely meet student interest.

- HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION (3 periods)
  The emphasis of the program will be healthy lifestyles and healthy living.
Why do we need to change?
The school has been involved in a very thorough review of the Year 9 program during 2004 and 2005, in which we identified a number of areas that needed improving. Our program has been supported by the Department of Education through our inclusion in the Leading Schools Fund. Surveys of students, parents and teachers over a three years period and a study of student results showed the following:

- Students' motivation and interest declined noticeably in Year 9 and students were finding the work uninteresting and not related enough to their future needs.
- Students' were not learning enough about the ideas and skills that related most to their futures.
- Students did not have the opportunity to investigate “the world of work” sufficiently before they had to select courses for Year 10.
- The work they did was not always practical enough and applied to real life situations.

Do other schools have similar programs?
Yes! Most schools have realised that they need to provide a very different program for Year 9. In the top private schools they run a whole year program out of the school. Many schools, including some local schools are running a City Centre Week, as we are running in term 2. Teachers from Cranbourne have visited more than a dozen other schools to gather together the best ideas and place them within the year 9 program.

Will it cost parents more?
We have been careful to make sure that the total cost of materials and services has not changed. In fact, booklists will be less as only English and LOTE textbooks are required. We have gained subsidies for the City Centre Week and will run some fundraising activities to further support the cost of travel to these activities. This has meant a reduced cost to parents.

What will happen about exams, tests and assessment?
All students in Year 9 will have an AIM test in English and Maths (we expect these to be conducted in April). This will allow us to see the improvement made since Year 7 and compare students with other Year 9 students in the State. A lot of the assessment will be carried out through major projects and challenges that students undertake during the year. All students will collect their work and present it on computers through a Digital Portfolio. Parents will be able to see these at several occasions through the year during Parent-Teacher Interviews and Student Presentation weeks.

There will be an exam period at the end of the year.

Other important aspects of the program
- We have specifically designed the program to meet the needs of students turning 15 who are growing up and starting to think about their future in the world.
- The program is called CHOICE and is about giving students the opportunity to make sensible, informed choices.
- The work students undertake allows them to look at organising their lives, reflecting on their strengths and weaknesses, planning for the future and getting a job. There is a continual emphasis on exploring job opportunities.
- We are having a smaller teacher-student ratio and concentrating on improving the student-teacher relationships.
- We are allowing students to explore their own interest and taking responsibility to work at the best pace for them.
- The program is different; it is based on student interests and needs; they will have more say in developing the projects they do. They will monitor the skills they develop and be able to clearly see their own progress.
- There will be a strong emphasis on using computers and students will be expected to present what they learn to real audiences including their parents as part of Parent interviews.
- The program will focus on developing the important organising and academic skills needed for success in the senior area of the school (Years 10, 11 and 12).