

7th April 2015

Dear Applicant

Thank you for your interest in the position – Teacher at Alesco Senior College.

Alesco Senior College, a registered and accredited Special Assistance School is looking for a dynamic, innovative teacher to join the team in this well established and highly regarded program.

We currently have a **permanent full-time** position of 35 hours per week, located at 100 Laman Street, Cooks Hill. The current remuneration for these two positions is between \$58,225.52 and \$85,197.12 per year, plus allowances, loadings and superannuation and is aligned with the WEA Hunter Enterprise Agreement 2012. Your commencement level will be dependent on your teaching experience and qualifications.

For the remainder of 2015, the position requires the successful applicant to support the Head Teacher in ensuring the Flexible Delivery program continues to deliver education and learning opportunities for the participating HSC Alesco students enrolled in the flexible delivery courses. The position is responsible for the administration of the e-learning platform (Moodle) and the student accessibility for it, including the facilitation of the program and the face-to-face delivery of subject material in the following HSC subject areas; Business Studies, Earth And Environmental Studies, Work Studies and Math.

After 2015 the position will cease being a flexible delivery program only teaching position and will integrate into the team teaching roster. The Alesco Senior College team are continually delivering education and learning opportunities that meet the needs and expectations of the Board of Studies, Funding Bodies, the Host organisation and participating & prospective students enrolled at Alesco Senior College. You will be required to teach stages 5 & 6.

The Teachers at Alesco are responsible for the development, implementation, and evaluation of program delivery and their role includes involvement in group leadership of the student body and individual support of students.

You will need to have experience in the delivery of any KLA's from the following:

- Stage 5 & 6 Maths
- Stage 5 & 6 Science
- Stage 5 & 6 HSIE

Training in science and mathematics would be highly regarded. In the attached information package contains:

- A copy of the advertisement for the position.
- Background information on WEA Hunter
- JD/Position Description
- Position Selection Criteria
- Alesco Senior College – Education with a difference
- Educational Philosophy of Alesco Senior College

150 King Street, Newcastle NSW 2300. PO Box 1791 Newcastle NSW 2300

Please read through the information provided carefully and **respond by addressing all the Essential and Desirable Selection Criteria separately as listed in the attached *Position Selection Criteria*** and return your application together with a copy of your current resume. Applications that do not address the criteria will not be accepted. Please send your application to Diana Cockerill at dcockerill@weahunter.edu.au or post to PO Box 1791 Newcastle 2300. Your application is to reach us by close of business Tuesday 21st April 2015; late applications will not be accepted.

After the closing date, applications will be assessed against the selection criteria. Successful applicants will then be invited to attend an interview.

WEA Hunter is committed to meeting all of its statutory obligations. Candidates selected to attend an interview must provide proof that they have been cleared as a prohibited person as required by the NSW Government, Office of the Children's Guardian. **A current Working with Children's Check clearance is essential prior to the commencement of employment.**

Yours sincerely
WEA Hunter



Diana Cockerill
PA to General Manager and Executive Director/HR Officer

150 King Street, Newcastle NSW 2300. PO Box 1791 Newcastle NSW 2300

Phone: 02 4925 4200 Fax: 02 4929 6845 Email: enquiries@weahunter.edu.au www.weahunter.edu.au

ACN 062 580 634 ABN 61 062 580 634



Full-time Teaching Position

Do you have strong leadership skills and looking for a teaching career that really makes a difference?

Alesco Senior College, a registered and accredited Special Assistance School and is looking for a dynamic, innovative teacher to join the team in this well established and highly regarded program.

You will need to have experience in the delivery of any KLA's from the following:

- Stage 5 & 6 Maths
- Stage 5 & 6 Science
- Stage 5 & 6 HSIE

This position is paid under The WEA Hunter Enterprise Agreement 2012

Applicants will need to **address all the essential and desirable criteria** separately contained within the information pack, which is available on the WEA Hunter website <http://www.weahunter.edu.au/work-with-us>

New graduates are encouraged to apply.

Applications close Tuesday 21st April at 5pm

WEA Hunter is committed to all statutory requirements including the Child Protection Act, WH&S and EEO

Background Information for Applicants

WEA Hunter is a community based, non profit organisation incorporated as a company limited by guarantee. WEA first commenced operating in the Hunter in 1913 by offering courses in Cooks Hill, Waratah and Cessnock.

Vision Statement

WEA Hunter is quality learning.

Mission Statement

WEA Hunter enhances people's lives by delivering quality learning, accessible to all.

Offices

WEA Hunter currently operates from three locations:

150 King Street, Newcastle, operations in this location commenced 25 February 2008.

100 Laman Street, Cooks Hill, the former Cooks Hill Public School was purchased in 1997.

WEA Coast, Manning Street, Tuncurry, since 2013

8 Glenelg Street, Raymond Terrace, since 2014

Accreditation

- WEA Hunter is accredited by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO)
- WEA Hunter has been awarded the NSW Adult and Community Education's Endorsed Quality Award and Seal of Commitment to Quality
- WEA Hunter has been accredited by the Australian Hospitality review Panel to deliver courses in Hospitality.
- WEA Hunter operates Alesco Senior College, a registered and accredited non Government School, accredited by the NSW Board of Studies

Scope of Operations

Currently WEA Hunter conducts around 1,000 courses annually with enrolments in excess of 13,000 with student contact hours reaching 200,000.

WEA Hunter offers one of the most diverse ranges of courses in NSW

WEA Hunter courses include;

- Accredited Vocational courses including Certificates in; Hospitality, Business Administration, Management, Disability, Remedial Massage, Assistant in Nursing, Complementary Health, Workplace Training and Community Services.
- Accredited and non accredited computer courses including book keeping, MYOB, MS Access, Word Processing and the Internet.
- Youth Programs including Links to Learning and Alesco Learning Centre.
- VET Connections - Language, Literacy and Numeracy Courses
- Productivity Placement Program (PPP)
- Training for Business and Industry including workplace skill development courses.

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Plus an extensive range of leisure, personal enrichment and professional development courses including: one night lectures, tours, cooking, crafts, business skills, barista, small engine maintenance, information technology, investing, retirement planning, languages, drawing and painting, photography, abseiling, rock climbing, tennis, guitar, publishing and writing, mediation, iridology, massage, foot reflexology, public speaking, yoga, interior decorating and many more.

These courses are funded on the fee-for-service principle. However some state government assistance is provided through the Department of Education and Communities via Adult and Community Education.

Courses are held throughout Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and the Hunter.

Management

The day to day operations of WEA Hunter are managed by the General Manager and Management Team. Please refer to the organisation chart which illustrates the staffing structure and reporting processes.

Board of Directors

As a community based, not for profit organisation, WEA Hunter is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors. The Board role is one of governance, policy setting and advising at the strategic level. The Board does not involve itself in the day to day operations, as these are the delegated responsibility of the Executive Director.

Membership of the Board

- Chairman of the Board.
- Deputy Chairman who is a member of the Company.
- One representative of students,
- Four representatives of individual members
- Two co-opted members

Integrity - Innovation - Inclusion

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Job Description/Duty Statement Teacher - Alesco

Job Title:	Teacher (Flexible Delivery)
Responsible To:	Head Teacher Alesco Senior College
Centre:	Equity Centre
Hours of Work:	35 hours per week, includes teaching and administration, must be able to do classes 1pm – 5pm.
Employment Type:	Full Time
Award Coverage:	WEA Hunter Enterprise Agreement 2012
Position Description:	<p>The prime objective of the Teacher (Flexible Delivery) is to support the Head Teacher in ensuring the Flexible Delivery program and the Alesco Senior College team are continually delivering education and learning opportunities that meet the needs and expectations of the Board of Studies, funding bodies, the host organisation and participating and prospective students enrolled at Alesco Senior College (Flexible Delivery).</p> <p>The Assistant Head Teacher is responsible for assisting in the administration of the program as well as supporting the face to face delivery of the subjects to the students. They are also responsible for the case management coordination of the students undertaking this program to ensure that their life needs are being supported whilst they maintain a regular commitment to their educational pursuits.</p> <p>The Assistant Head Teacher (Flexible Delivery) is also responsible for the administration of the e-learning platform (Moodle) and the student accessibility for it.</p>
Essential Criteria:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualifications of either Bachelor of Education or Diploma of Education • Experience in working in either a mainstream school or alternative education setting • Experience working in Adult Education settings • Proven ability to develop a stimulating learning environment by using a variety of styles, techniques and approaches to present subject matter and practical techniques • Demonstrated experience in leading a team • Experience working with disadvantaged and at risk young people/adolescence • Interpersonal Skills including high level communication, time management and stress management skills. • Proven innovative and imaginative problem solving skills • Demonstrated knowledge and acceptance of the culture and nature of youth culture, with the ability to develop effective working relationships • Ability to work unsupervised and as part of a team. • Strong computer and IT skills • Ability to maintain full time employment that may fall outside of the 'regular' school hours (ie 10am – 5pm)
Desirable Criteria:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Aid Certificate or willingness to obtain one • Passion for the philosophy of Alternative Education

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in delivery of education/training using an online environment • Website development • Sound crisis management skills • Unencumbered Driver's license
Qualifications:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Aid Certificate • Diploma of Education; Bachelor of Education or equivalent • Specialisation in at least one KLA appropriate to the subjects on offer at Alesco Senior College
Duties & Responsibilities:	<p>Participate as a member of WEA Hunter and the Equity Centre.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to following the general staff practices of WEA Hunter, including, but not limited to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Confidentiality ➢ Child Care and Protection legislation ➢ Occupational Health and Safety • Attend meetings and training as required • Actively promote the WEA Hunter and Equity Centre/ Alesco Senior College philosophy • Maintain privacy and confidentiality in practice • Support management initiatives • Support the development and implementation of organisational policies and practices • Adhere to company OH&S policy, procedures and rules, and adopt safe work practices • Undertake other duties as requested by management • Support the development and implementation of organisational policies and practices • Provide reports as required <p>Develop, facilitate delivery of and evaluate school curriculum, maintaining the overall program objectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively participate in areas such as curriculum development & appropriate facilitation methods • Design a program that follows the overall curriculum outcomes, and submit programming when requested, where appropriate • Identify and trial alternative learning strategies and methods of delivery • Prepare programs and specific lesson content which enhance human potential • Submit to Head Teacher a proposal of resources required for the lessons at a reasonable time for procurement throughout the duration of the school year, and within budget. • Facilitate classes, supervise students under their care and report any necessary incidents/ accidents to Head Teacher. • Complete rolls and attendance records accurately. • Design and implement all necessary assessment tasks and record outcomes as required. • Submit to the Head Teacher, any quotes & or booking details for daytrips relevant to individual tutorials. • Demonstrate ability to create or use a range of educational resources to provide students with a variety of learning experiences which meet the needs of students • Report on student progress as and when required

Support the needs of the students, maintaining gender equity, anti discrimination, cultural diversity, confidentiality and child protection practices.

- Report any incident/ accidents to the Head Teacher.
- Act in a sensitive manner to the students needs upholding a non-violence, no harassment policy.
- Ensure that every student is given a fair chance and choice in all opportunities.
- Actively support referrals of the young people to services that may better suit their needs.
- Maintain client & staff confidentiality, while following appropriate procedures for notifying other staff where required by WEA Hunter Policy or legislation
- Strive to independently administer day-to-day behaviour management strategies of students, referring to supervisors/ colleagues when necessary.

Participate in the overall activities of Alesco Senior College

- Participate in student orientation programs maintain classroom facilities and equipment
- Provide student and course counselling
- Participate in appropriate staff development programs to develop and maintain personal skills, knowledge and attitudes
- Manage risk, health and safety practices within role
- Actively promote the WEA Hunter and Alesco Senior College philosophy
- Support management initiatives
- Ensure that students develop and practice accepted safety procedures in the learning environment
- Contribute to research, development, implementation and review of subjects

Undertake a Group Leadership role for Flexible Delivery (FD) program to ensure that every student has at least one strong, supportive relationship with a teacher. This will specifically require:

- build and maintain supportive relationships with all students in the group
- encourage and maintain open communication between FD students and teachers
- act as the initial point of contact for additional support for all students in the group
- approve leave of up to one half day for nominated students and make recommendations to the Head Teacher to approve leave for longer periods
- identify and respond to possible educational and personal support needs of individual students in the group
- provide basic pastoral care to students or ensure student has referral/ access to pastoral care with external agencies as required
- recommend appropriate discipline responses to be undertaken by the Head Teacher
- liaise with parents or other key stakeholders of students in the group as needed
- seek assistance from the Youth Support Worker to discuss any clinical issues and responses for individual students in the nominated group
- meet regularly with the Head Teacher or other members of the teaching team to discuss ongoing issues for individual students in the group.
- Facilitate independent learning while also balancing it with a routine structure within the FD environment
- Facilitate the upload of new student work and liaise with programming staff regarding their programming integrity in line with

	<p>associated scope and sequence for that unit.</p> <p>Assisting the Head Teacher in day to day administration of the flexible delivery program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assisting in the Special Exam Provision collation• Assisting in the AIS Lit/Num assessment work
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Selection Criteria

Alesco Senior College – Teacher (Flexible Delivery)

Please address each of the following separately. Applications will not be accepted unless the following points are addressed.

Essential Criteria

- Qualifications of either Bachelor of Education or Diploma of Education
- Experience in working in either a mainstream school or alternative education setting
- Experience working in Adult Education settings
- Proven ability to develop a stimulating learning environment by using a variety of styles, techniques and approaches to present subject matter and practical techniques
- Demonstrated experience in leading a team
- Experience working with disadvantaged and at risk young people/adolescence
- Interpersonal Skills including high level communication, time management and stress management skills.
- Proven innovative and imaginative problem solving skills
- Demonstrated knowledge and acceptance of the culture and nature of youth culture, with the ability to develop effective working relationships
- Ability to work unsupervised and as part of a team.
- Strong computer and IT skills
- Ability to maintain full time employment that may fall outside of the 'regular' school hours (ie 10am – 5pm)

Desirable Criteria

- First Aid Certificate or willingness to obtain one
- Passion for the philosophy of Alternative Education
- Experience in delivery of education/training using an online environment
- Website development
- Sound crisis management skills
- Unencumbered Driver's license

Education with a difference



A SCHOOL OF CHOICE

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

Education that empowers students to stand out from the crowd

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Meeting the needs of individuals

DIVERSITY & INCLUSIVITY



Situated within a beautifully restored heritage building in Cooks Hill, close to transport

ABOUT ALESCO...

Alesco Senior College is a secondary school, set within an adult learning environment which encourages young people to participate in education and training that leads to a sustainable future.

Alesco Senior College's strengths are in the provision of specialised services to students. These include;

- ✿ A small school environment,
- ✿ A safe, supportive environment,
- ✿ Staff working to empower students, rather than a model of power and control,
- ✿ Access through education allowing the inclusion of other support mechanisms.

The Alesco Senior College is based firmly in these key principles:

- ✿ Taking a holistic approach. The student is the centre of the education plan, this plan revolves around the needs of the student educationally, emotionally and socially,
- ✿ Ensuring there is rigour in the educational program provided comparable to any school in the state

- ✿ Students have the opportunity to experience an adult learning environment while undertaking a Board of Studies curriculum.

AIMS

- To offer education to young people whose circumstances have previously prohibited them from finding success.
 - To provide these young people the opportunity of realizing their capability and endless potential.
 - To provide an environment which is specifically designed for student inclusion and experience.
-

"Alesco was the difference between merely having a dream and being able to make it come true. Without Alesco I'd never have had the skills let alone the confidence or resilience to go on to tackle 2 Uni degrees and work full time helping youth at the same crossroads I was. I could never adequately explain to anyone how Alesco and all the teachers within it helped me grow. In many ways, I feel Alesco saved my life." Gillian, 2008



GOAL

The Alesco Senior College will strive toward providing young people, who are struggling to find success in a mainstream system, the opportunity to re-evaluate their situation and achieve success in a smaller and more supportive environment.

"After being back at school (Alesco) for a couple of weeks I realized this place was great and I love it here. Bullying still exists in my community and life but at least I know when I come to school I don't have to be afraid of people putting me down or bullying because everybody knows and understands THAT THIS IS NOT OK." Anonymous, 2012

WELCOME TO ALESCO SENIOR COLLEGE

“Offering programs to meet a student’s individual learning needs”

Alesco Senior College is primarily a Senior Secondary College offering students the opportunity to complete their Higher School Certificate in a supportive environment which focuses on offering programs to meet their individual learning needs.

Alesco Senior College does offer a small Year 10 preparation program for selected students who are ready to work in an adult learning environment that offers individual support, personalised planning and a pathway into Vocational Training.

Graduates of Alesco Senior College will most likely move onto further

vocational training or sustainable employment. Some of our students who have an identified and targeted vocational pathway may pursue a future in tertiary education or university.

Students of Alesco Senior College will be required to wear a school shirt when representing our school in the community. This is so we are clearly identified within our learning community and when out participating in Vocational Placements or Community Work.

As a part of their program of study with Alesco Senior College students may undertake at least one

Vocational Program as a part of their HSC studies. Subjects that may be offered to students include; Business, Hospitality, Retail or Aged Care.

In addition to this, students may choose to undertake their HSC via a traditional face to face study option or a combination of this and flexible/self-directed delivery option (comprising of workshops and online course work). This ensures that each student has a program of study that meets his or her pathway planning needs.



Mosaic project: completed by Year 9 in 2010

What's on offer?

SUBJECTS...



MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICES

"Alesco is a great school, you don't feel like another number, you feel like part of a caring family" Alesco Student, 2013

Whilst these are all the subjects on our scope, the subjects provided each year will be different combinations from the list below:

HSC choices

- ☐ English
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Science
- ☐ Geography

- ☐ Visual Arts
- ☐ Community and Family Studies
- ☐ PDHPE
- ☐ Community and Vocational Services
- ☐ VET Courses
- ☐ Ancient History
- ☐ Earth and Environmental Science

- ☐ Society and Culture
- ☐ Design and Technology
- ☐ Digital Media
- ☐ General Mathematics
- ☐ 2 Unit Mathematics
- ☐ Business Services
- ☐ Advanced English

YEAR 10 - HSC

Over the past 11 years students have made Alesco their educational choice and have found success, completing their final 3 years of schooling here

YEAR 10 PROGRAM

Alesco Senior College offers an opportunity for a select number of students to enter into our Year 10 program and complete a dynamic and innovative Record of School Achievement (RoSA) built around a blend of the NSW school curriculum and additional learning opportunities to prepare them for their pathway forward.

Alesco has a very strong focus on Vocational Education and Training and provides all students the opportunity of consistent work experience teamed with a nationally accredited qualification, Certificate 1 in Work Education, which may lead to employment or further study.

To be eligible to apply for the Year 10 program applicants are required to have completed a minimum of 6 months of Year 9 or equivalent.

SWELL Program

The SWELL Program, an initiative of Alesco, is an acronym for SKILLS, WORKPLACE EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAM. The Alesco SWELL program is about gaining a realistic picture of what the working environment is all about. It is expected that students will be able to fill their weeks learning about the company and the industry they are 'taste testing', actively participating in workplace activities (including cleaning) and identifying their own skills and strengths as prospective and effective employees. The program has the potential to empower students and allow them to make informed life decisions and goals, creating a personalised road map of possible future directions. These are:

- New experiences, perhaps in an environment students have never been in before, but have always wanted to try.
- Confirmation that the environment or industry experience is indeed one

that they would like to pursue further through more training or study.

- Confirmation that the environment is in fact something that they don't want to pursue. What they imagined the industry to be was not what it was realistically.
- Experience. You can't get a job without experience AND you can't get experience without a job... or can you?
- The opportunity to prove to themselves that they are capable of making it in the 'real world'.

What are the benefits for the Workplace?

- An extra pair of hands.
- Opportunity to show off your business in a way that the young person will remember for a long time.
- Opportunity to be actively involved in training the workforce of the future.
- Opportunity to view and trial prospective junior staff.

HSC Program

Alesco Senior College offers a Senior secondary program designed to empower students to strive for greater success in the Higher School Certificate.

Our students complete their HSC through the HSC Pathways Program introduced into the education reform in 2007. This program is to assist students gain their HSC in a more manageable and achievable way.

Instead of the traditional 6 subjects in Year 11 followed by the full Year 12 program, our students combine their learning, completing 3 full HSC subjects in any one year. This way if a student can only complete one year, they still receive a partial

HSC. Additionally students may complete their HSC over more than 2 years if necessary.

Students are able to choose their subjects from the streams available based on their Personal Education Program (PEP) and build a program that best suits their individual learning needs

In addition to this, the Alesco Flex program allows students a greater range of additional HSC subjects. These additional subjects are available for inclusion into their HSC Personal Education Program by negotiation.

Flexible Delivery Program

Alesco Flex is an innovative and exciting program that was introduced in 2012.

The Flexible Delivery Program is very well suited to students who may have other pressing commitments such as employment or family commitments during the day or who are too old to attend our day program.

In addition to this some students who are attending our regular Day Program may select specialised units from the Flex program to build into their Personal Learning Plan to complete as a part of the HSC; making their HSC unique and very individualised.

*Alesco Flexible Delivery:
Hours of facilitated workshops
are;*

Four afternoons per week

1.00pm – 5.00pm

*One afternoon per week:
personalised flexible study*



Multi-purpose hall - Completed in 2010

STAFF PROFILES

Meet the dedicated staff of Alesco Senior College

Dan Chapman

After completing his HSC Dan secured an apprenticeship on the local council as an electrician, he also worked with a privately owned electrical company. However he still felt drawn to the idea of further education. Initially interest in primary teaching Dan found Newcastle University offered a specialised degree for people with a trade background. On completion he applied for a teaching position at Alesco and the rest is history!

Wendy Ratcliffe

Having completed a Bachelor of Arts decided to go on to complete a Diploma of Education. At her first practicum she found herself drawn to those students struggling within the school, potentially because Wendy's own school life had not been rosy due to bullying. Wendy has championed alternative education for the past 12 years and completed her Master of Education with a focus on this passion.

Theresa Pantalone

Theresa came to teaching later in life. Theresa, involved in youth work for a period of time, became frustrated at the inability of young people to determine their life paths. This caused her to become passionate about the idea that education could change a person's life. She was drawn to Alesco Senior College as the whole principle of the school was ensuring the young person was

central to their educational philosophy.

Kelly White

As a small child Kelly had wanted to be a teacher, yet after only 4 years in mainstream school she left the profession, loving the job, but hating how the system treated young people. Her path lead her to youth work and community development. For 8 years Kelly worked in some tough neighbourhoods with some great kids. She came to Alesco 4 years ago and while she loved her community job she knew Alesco would be the educational system she believed in and, like some of our students, she felt ready to give education another chance.

Kellie Cockburn

For Kellie the greatest reward in being a teacher is being able to make a positive difference in a young person's life; to support and guide them as they learn to believe in their own skills and abilities, and then watch them head out into the world to pursue their dreams.

She first came to Alesco as the Night School teacher and then took up the opportunity of coordinating the new Alesco Flexible Delivery ("Flex") programme in 2012. The unique nature of this programme is a perfect example of why Alesco Senior College is different; offering people over the legal school leaving age the chance to come back and complete their

high school education.

She has taught in many educational institutions, in Australia and overseas, and nothing compares to Alesco. Alesco truly is a school of choice – for students and staff alike.

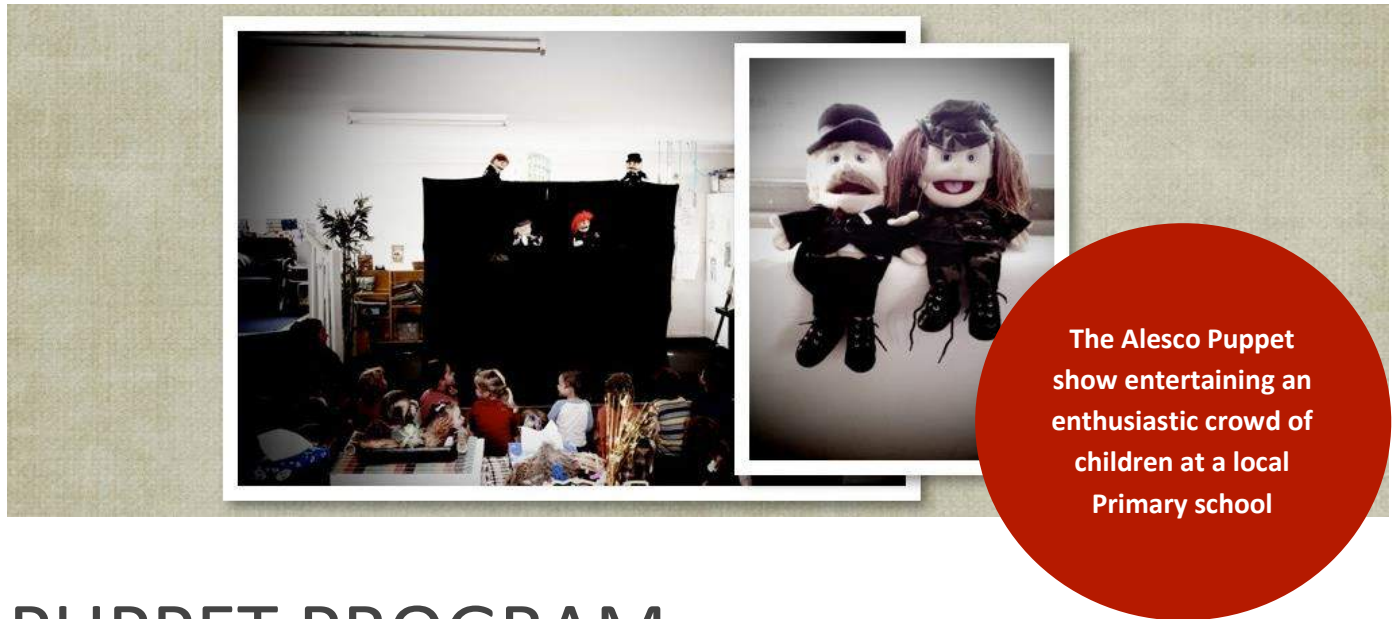
Gino Difelice

Working as a casual teacher in the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie area for about 5 years Gino was looking to be a member of a team for a school that was doing something positive for the community and for young people's lives. He found this at Alesco firstly as teacher's aide and now as a Teacher and aid combined. This role allows him to support students in their learning that would otherwise have little chance of success at mainstream. Simply put he is proud of our school.

What else?

EXTRA CURRICULA OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteering in the community



PUPPET PROGRAM

Alesco Senior College offers students the opportunity to enrich their educational careers with a range of extra curricula opportunities that help build their Record of School Achievement (RoSA) into a full and diverse portfolio

Alesco works with students on engaging within the community through new and existing programmes and projects.

2013 has witnessed the development of one such project. Alesco has invested in purchasing puppets and a puppet theatre as a new innovative and exciting resource.

The Puppet project commenced as an idea to be a resource that would engender students with a sense of belonging and pride in

serving their community. Added to which it has become a rich resource to enhance student learning as they work together to create puppet shows that focus on issues important to young people such as anti-bullying messages.

Students learn beneficial skills such as working as part of a team, script writing, public speaking and being generous with their time and skills.

Alesco students have a repertoire of different puppet performances

and continue to learn and practice new ones.

If you would like a puppet show please contact Alesco Senior College:

Phone: 4925 4200

or visit:

www.alc.nsw.edu.au

EXTRA CURRICULA CONT...

The more that can be added to a students Record of School Achievement (RoSA) by the end of their schooling career the stronger their future opportunities may be

The RoSA

The biggest change to education in the past 5 years has been the abolition of the School Certificate and its associated exams and the introduction of the RoSA, Record of School Achievement.

The RoSA is moving to a structure that allows for ANY achievement to be recorded, for example, should a student have the opportunity to complete their life saving certificate this will be recorded and evidence of the achievement may be uploaded onto that students RoSA.

Overall this has the potential of turning the RoSA into a full and rich portfolio that represents far more than academic achievement.

Imagine having the opportunity to present to prospective employers a full transcript of ALL achievements during a students time at school, both academic and none academic. This allows students to stand out from the crowd and

demonstrate to employers and other key stakeholders a more rounded picture of everything a student has achieved & their development throughout their time at school.

Personal Development

Utilizing long standing connections within our local community, Alesco can make available to our students a range of personal development opportunities; for example, anger management courses, referrals to external mental health providers, completing their First Aid certificate at a reduced cost.

COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT

As a part of our 2013 commitment to engage more fully with the wider community, we have been planning and are in the process of setting up a range of community enrichment projects such as:

- **volunteering** in the local community,
- **planning and organising** youth

forums addressing issues confronting young people in the local community,

- **planning and organising** fundraising events that give back to charities within the local community, The puppet show project and more, all of which can be attributed to their RoSA

Life Style Courses

WEA Hunter, our auspicing body has proudly set up a sponsorship project that will see students have the opportunity to participate in a range of WEA Hunter's quality life style course for free or limited cost. These courses may include:

- Sea Kayaking
- Guitar
- Photography
- Creative writing
- Learn to Draw
- Dog grooming
- A language

A WORD FROM OUR STUDENTS...

What do the students, past and present, have to say?

"Alesco gave me a new lease on life. The school and the teachers offered opportunities to me which I thought were out of reach and an endless amount of support. I was given back my self-confidence and the ability to believe in myself again. There's a lot more I could say but then it wouldn't be a short quote. I'll always be glad I made the decision to go to Alesco. Without that school I wouldn't be where I am now"



Mural project: completed by years 10 - 12, 2012

"Alesco meant that I wasn't forgotten. The teachers believed in every one of their students even when they didn't believe in themselves. Their unconditional support provided me with the opportunity to achieve my HSC and their dedicated team of teachers rekindled my passion for learning" C, 2009



ALESKO

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Proudly auspiced by



"Not just a school, a family"

"if it wasn't for Alesco and the great staff you guys have there I would never have finished school"



Providing innovative and inclusive education options to students of the Hunter for over 10 years.

"Above all else, Alesco showed me the value of my own self worth, helping me realise that I can in fact achieve everything I want out of life and more"

"We are treated like adults and work on a system of mutual respect"

"I would not have had the future I have today, Alesco gave me the chance to travel, a trade... Simply they gave me a future"

"Before Alesco I suffered from severe panic attacks and social issues, Alesco gave me the strength and the tools to become an independent adult. I am proud to say I have not suffered a panic attack in 4 years"

"The start to the rest of my life! Alesco was not only a school, it felt like a home. The constant support from fellow students and teachers is amazing. Alesco made it possible for me to love school" S, 2008

Make it your choice...



STAGE 2a

Alesco Learning Centre
Development Package

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF ALESCO LEARNING CENTRE

Document 4 in Series of 9

Alesco Learning Centre reserves the right to make amendments to this document at anytime where additional information is required. Organisations will be advised of significant changes when they occur.

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A New Chance for a New Generation

The construction of a ground breaking educational setting that is taking the region by storm.

In Australian society, education for our children is a necessity. It forms the basis from which every child and young person will approach the rest of their future. It is the way this education is delivered that can make the difference between students planning a future and merely coping with whatever comes their way.

“There are few assumptions in society more entrenched than those we have about the way we educate children”¹

ALESCO, the Latin word for growth and maturity, reflects the belief we have regarding the approach to young people’s learning. The ALESCO Learning Center’s educational philosophy has been created to give these young people and their immediate reality a beginning, a present and a future; by providing the opportunity for students to choose to be educated and to give each and every student the greatest chance to succeed to the best of their ability.

We strive to have students focus on their own achievements and allow the commitment to their own future be self – generated.

The students who attend the ALESCO Learning Centre are young people who cannot complete education in a mainstream school. The reasons they cannot complete are many and varied. It is true, some students are those labeled ‘naughty’ ‘troubled’ or ‘delinquent’. Some are the ones who were always in trouble for being the bully, harassing other students, disrespecting teachers, swearing loudly, not wearing a uniform, rude gestures, generally being ‘out of control’. In fact, many of our students neatly fit this description. They have been suspended, in school and out of school, many see detention as a comfortable place to spend lunch, they have been on warnings, levels, report cards, supervision and finally expelled. We even have students who are generally banned from returning to the mainstream school system.

However, not all of our students are so. Some are students who were over whelmed by the large volume of people at school; some couldn’t handle the competitive environment. Some were the

¹ Priesnitz 2000

victims of serious bullying; some suffer an emotional or psychological disorder and don't feel supported at mainstream. Some students are in State Care, some students missed a year of school because their family was on the move and no one was available to help them catch up. And at the ALESCO Learning Centre all these students are in together.

Another significant feature of ALESCO Learning Centre is the adult learning environment that the young people are immersed in. The students learn in an environment surrounded by other adult learners, who often unknowingly act as a community group role model. These students who are so desperate to be treated as anything other than children have the opportunity to take on the roles and responsibilities of learning as an adult does, in an environment that asks for greater responsibility but also offers greater freedom. It is often a reality check for the young people as well, that the life they have chosen to lead; to leave the stage of being a 'child at school' requires greater commitment to reap the benefits. However, it must be noted that the level of responsibility and freedom is often slightly more tailored to meet the requirements and developmental stages of adolescents. One of the greatest beauties of operating the school within this learning environment is that of comparison. Comparison and observation assist not only the students but the staff of the centre also. If a young person happens to be climbing a tree, the easiest way to explain to the appropriateness of such actions, without crossing into authoritarianism, is to ask the young person if they see any other adult learner climbing the trees. It is also often an automatic reaction to noisy young people in the hallways to jump out and ask them to stop. Sometimes when staff do jump out to ask for 'shhhh' they can find the noisy students are in fact a class of adult learners. Situations such as this remind staff that excited people talk loudly regardless of their age.

Guaranteed chaos? Or a method of madness that creates young people who are ready to take control of their own lives, be responsible for their own choices and actions and who attempted, some for the first time, to make a positive difference to the life that have to make for themselves.

In identifying what it is that the ALESCO Learning Centre does to achieve success with young people, we must first identify that it is not traditional schooling; it is not following historical practice. It began as a trial that has succeeded.

To create a sense of the alternative learning environment at the ALESCO Learning Centre, specifically for young people who do not fit the mainstream school system student mould, it is important to first identify what makes up a traditional school system. What are its properties? What are the constraints that many young people try to break? In attempting to break these constraints what is it that the young people *really* want?

Once this is identified it can become more easily seen the simple differences that make the ALESCO Learning Centre a successful learning environment.

In reviewing historical development of schooling, Gatto (2000) points out that school originally set forth on the 'mission to create obedient, well subordinated workers and citizens who thought alike on major issues. The result of this mission was to support the societal status quo and create conditions where those on top, in positions of power, are rarely challenged or required to embrace less dominant possibilities.'²

The narratives of capitalism, religion and patriarchy have had a distinctly strong historical effect on the structure and nature of schools.

'Under the capitalism's specifications the purpose of the school setting is to lift productivity to the top of the priority list. Schools are factories to produce good workers, and competition for the production of the best product (or in the academic sense the best grades) is the dominant motivator.

The positive aspect of the Capitalism model is that students feel competent, accomplished and ready to enter the working world. However the negative impact of the capitalist model includes the lack of focus on the support and cooperation with others, learning for knowledge sake, curiosity and encouragement for students to move towards their own goals (academic or not) In the capitalist

² Zimmerman 2001

educative model productivity is rated higher on the scale of desired outcomes than the experience of the students or their relationship to others'.³

For students who are applying to attend ALESCO Learning Centre, the academic achievements are equal in value to the ability to develop good interpersonal relationships, as well as the enhancement of the desire to learn for learning's sake and their own goal setting that makes this environment unique. A dynamic that is important for life not just for work.

'Religious influences have the effect of creating certain expected standards of behavior for the greater dominant population (white, middle class, heterosexual and Christian). While this is OK for some of the population it means immediate isolation or marginalization for others. This social expectation does not take into consideration that non-dominant population groups may prefer to interact differently (dialect, volume, tone, interrupting or jumping in vs. waiting quietly). Not that we wish to question the ideology of mutual respect, only the question has to be aired about what standards are used to define respect and who gets to set these standards. Religious influences in society also bring the tactics of domination such as the oppression of certain preferences and the presence of nonsensical rule making'.⁴

At ALESCO Learning Centre we attempt to accept the young people as they are, and however they choose to express themselves, with a strong consideration for mutual respect, not just power play respect between teacher and student, but between individuals regardless of role. A student shall not be discriminated against by either staff or students because they do not fit the norm. At the ALESCO Learning there is no mould to fit into.

'The patriarchal influence creates the sense of hierarchy experienced in our schooling system. Hierarchy is seen not only in the ranking of individuals, but in the way discipline order and rule following are maintained. Practices which often take precedence over other issues, like the

³ Berndt, Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1997

education of individuals in schools. None of this promotes really cooperation, connection or prosocial values, let alone the promotion of self directed thought⁵.

The lower student numbers at the ALESCO Learning Centre means that each student can have individual issues taken into account, that rules can be malleable where necessary and the promotion of prosocial values is high on the agenda.

The effect of all of the above can be seen in students; the way students see and treat themselves, and others; the way teachers relate to students and the way principals treat teachers and so on.

Zimmerman (2001) also identifies that in traditional or mainstream schools children have little or no control or power over the knowledge. They are almost always seen as being the 'wrong' ones in disputes with adults. They can be treated disrespectfully (yelled at, called names, punished, humiliated) by adults but cannot respond in kind. Others determine what they will learn and students are rarely given space to speak about what might be helpful or what might be having a negative effect.

These practices have been allowed based on the thought that due to their age students are unable to know what they need. Although some schools are beginning to promote some experiential learning, most schedules, learning styles and problem solving approaches are all organized around adult ideas and preferences. When we fail to consider that young people may have the ability to know what they need it is called 'adultism'; based on the assumption that adults know what is best for the student and thus (despite all good intentions) disempowering the student by removing all matters of choice from them.

The strongest concept in the ideology of the ALESCO Learning Centre is that of choice. For our students, choice can be both liberating & limiting. We actively encourage the students to make decisions about their own learning and they often find this liberating, yet in making their own choices

⁴ Zimmerman 2001

⁵ Zimmerman 2001

and then having to take responsibility for those choices they tend to better understand their own limits and boundaries. For example; at the ALESCO Learning Centre, it is not compulsory to attend. Students can walk out the door any time they like. As long as the student is aware of the choices they make and the possible consequences for those choices, we do not try to stop them. There is no such thing as detention for truancy. How can you truant from something you don't have to be at in the first place? From day one students are told of the attendance requirements that they have to meet. They are given regular updates on their attendance; they can approach the records keeper at any time for a weekly update. But after that – it's up to them. If they miss work, they must approach the teacher or fellow student to get the work to catch up on; otherwise, when it comes up in an assignment or unit exam, it is not 'our' (staff) issue.

If an issue is raised that is seeming to be having a profound impact on the student body, stopping the lesson to evaluate it is common place. Staff does not steer away from a topic because it is not seen as 'appropriate' for the learning environment (ie drugs, alcohol consumption, theft of vehicles, teenage pregnancy, social/ recreational activities). In doing this, students can learn they are heard and valued. When there are fractions amongst the group it is common for the staff to gather with the students to explain the issue and ask the students' opinion on what way best to solve the problem. Students are much more likely to participate in reconciliation processes if they believe they have had a part to play in the formulation of a plan.

Schools, by their very nature, and the logistics of student numbers, cannot empower youth to be independent souls while also belonging collectively to one another. Students find it difficult in a competitive environment to be the masters of their own learning and to also be generous to one another. The idea of one thousand or more students in the one place, standing up for themselves and each other, deciding what they want to do and when they want to do it and still maintaining unity amongst them? These approaches would not work well in a mainstream environment as the level of individuality would slow, if not halt the production line.

When listed in layman's terms it is clear to see that everyday occurrences that take place in schools contribute strongly to the restriction of belonging, independence, mastery and generosity in students.

<p><u>Anti Belonging</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greet newcomers with 'REPORT TO THE OFFICE' signs. • Orientate new students and their presumably irresponsible parents by making them sign the discipline policy. • Emphasis that the automatic response to 'serious behaviour' is exclusion in it's many forms, (in-school suspension, out of school suspension, after school detention. • If a student quits be sure to call them a 'drop out' • Be very business like so as to avoid 'unprofessional' relationships with other staff or students. • Make student numbers big so as to have better footy teams or bands. • Ring bells every 50 minutes and mix 1500 in narrow hallways, just to see what happens 	<p><u>Pro Belonging</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Any staff member can approach a new comer to the centre; they introduce themselves and attempt to help at all possibilities. Staff members do not just give directions to the main office. •All students attend an orientation day, where the new educational setting is explained to them in language they understand and students are given a copy of the handbook, including any relevant policies and procedures and are then given time to consider them and raise any issues they have. •Parents are also invited to an orientation session, where they are free to ask as many questions they like and will get clear and honest answers about the educational environment at the ALESCO Learning Centre. •A student has every opportunity to apply for inclusion to ALESCO Learning Centre, despite any previous exclusion from any program they may have faced. •Students call teachers by their first name, and individual teachers and staff choose the level to which they disclose information about their lives ie. marital status etc. •Student numbers are maintained at a level where each student's name is known and staff can maintain a sense of personalisation for each student. •The ALESCO Learning Centre does not ring bells, buzzers or whistles. When it is time to return to class, either the students remember for themselves or they may receive a gentle reminder from staff as they too make their way to class.
<p><i>Effect: Instead of belonging students are guarded, untrusting, hostile, withdrawn, or they seek attention through compensatory attachments⁶</i></p>	<p><i>Effect: The students are active in participation; they seek out inclusion in activities and form trusting positive relationships with staff.</i></p>

⁶ Brendtro & Van Brockern 1994

<p><u>Anti Independence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impose system wide discipline policies so we know who is REALLY in charge. • Make examples of troublemakers by publishing the list of detentions for the week. • One thing we can't stand is bullies, so come down hard on those who do, so they know who's really boss. • Pace the room to keep on top of the class • Keep students anchored to their desks, don't allow formations other than strict geometrics. • Put names of 'naughty' students on the board and have surprise locker searches to keep them off-guard • Keep students in submissive roles so they learn to 'respect' authority. (Yet years later teachers will only remember those students who didn't take any crap) • Timetable all classes by a computer system, as most students will just want to learn with their friends 	<p><u>Pro Independence</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of self choice discipline (where the student chooses the action they will take to make amends) • Allow peer group to assist staff in decision making where concerning community conflict or in-school/ peer discord. • Allow students the opportunity to work in the same classes as their friends. Only if this proves to be destructive will the students be separated. This agreement is undertaken in initial negotiations about placement in same classes with staff. • Students' desks are situated so they can see the teacher and each other. A student does not need to remain at their desk if they work effectively sitting on the floor. When reading, a student lying on the floor is more than accepted. The student is comfortable and relaxed, and doing no harm to anyone else. • Staff may not always position themselves at the front of the class, or even be standing. Teachers may sit on the desk if comfortable, next to the students, or take the class outside if they wish. • On more than one occasion, students are given the opportunity to run a class on a topic they feel to be some what of an 'expert' on. In these classes the staff member sits in with the students and takes on a learning role. <p>If the students are unhappy or feel they are not learning enough, they have every right to speak to the teacher in regard to the matter.</p>
<p><i>Effect: Not having learned independence they feel like helpless pawns, are easily misled, or seek pseudo power by bullying or defiance⁷</i></p>	<p><i>Effect: Students have a sense of control over their contribution in the program. They can act as individuals; showing an element of control in their participation. Students have a sense of working in collaboration WITH the staff to achieve an outcome.</i></p>

⁷ Brendtro & Van Brockern 1994

<p><u>Anti – Mastery</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise instruction tightly around separate specialised subjects. • Switch groups every 42 minutes, teachers won't know anyone well but at least one student won't be responsible for ruining their entire day. • If students say they are having fun, or teachers teach outside the classroom, spread rumours that there is no learning going on. • Make students work on their own so you can make sure there is no copying going on. • Follow a strict, tight schedule and allow the shortest break possible between classes. • Emphasise competition with tough grading systems, tracking and reduced expectations for difficult students. • In 'real' classes make students listen to dull dry professor type lectures that fry your brain even in university • Ask – 'what is the big deal with outcome based learning, why not stick to what has always worked in the past?' • Use only textbooks and the approved curriculum • Maybe add some more trophies for the top in sports and studies, so those who aren't have to see it every day. 	<p><u>Pro Mastery</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life skills subjects are on the learning agenda, so every subject, generally can be easily identified which creating a sense of familiarity on all subject matters. • Classes are broken into only 4 sessions a day. • Staff members are actively encouraged to think outside the square and teach outside the learning environment. • Peer support learning is encouraged. Students who have strengths in one area are encouraged to share these strengths with other students. • Breaks are negotiable. If the class has been pushed extra hard, the teacher may allow extra time for the group to unwind. • There is very little competition amongst students. The Life skills subjects offered are a competency based system so the main source of competition is only from and against the individual students. • Staff members are encouraged to be creative in their lesson designs. Different learning styles need to be catered for and classes should be engaging and enjoyable. • If what has worked in the past is no longer working in the classroom, the message is <i>change it!</i> • Not all students are proficient at working through textbooks, so we solved the problem by not having any textbooks. Each staff member is responsible for designing and delivering their course content in the way they see best. • At the end of the year we recognise students who have achieved more than just academic success. At the end of year graduation we award students for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - overcoming barriers to learning - overall participation - outstanding attendance
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - overall improvement - academic achievement <p>This way students can be recognised for achievements in themselves, not just their Maths and English.</p>
<i>Effect: In place of mastery they have encountered perpetual failure leading to frustration, fear of failure and a sense of futility⁸</i>	<i>Effect: Opportunities for success come every day for students at ALESCO Learning Centre. They are provided with the opportunities to feel a sense of competency in their participation, life at school is not complicated and can be mastered by anyone.</i>

⁸ Brendtro & Van Brockern 1994

<p><u>Anti Generosity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The notion of peer counselling shouldn't be considered – imagine what they are telling each other, make them go to a qualified shrink like the rest of us refuse to. • We shouldn't get into controversial issues in schools or teach values, let's stick to the flag and our history. Let's continue to pull down anyone who isn't an Aussie battler. • We have enough to do in the cognitive domain, so let's leave the affective issues to the parents • Today's kids won't produce unless you give them something, a reward, bribe or payoff. 	<p><u>Pro Generosity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who feel they need time out of class because of some issues they are experiencing are welcome to take out with them a close peer to sit and talk the issue over with. • Discussing individual cultures, values, morals and ethics are considered to be an acceptable part of a lesson where appropriate. • Controversial issues are not avoided, shied away from or ignored. If they are part of the lives our students are living, they can easily become a very effective learning tool.
<p><i>Effect: Without a spirit of generosity they are inconsiderate of others, self indulgent and devoid of any real purpose of living.⁹</i></p>	<p><i>Effect: Students are reminded that they are not the only ones experiencing adversity, they are generous of spirit towards each other and have a real sense of purpose amongst the group.</i></p>

⁹ Brendtro & Van Brockern 1994

Since the introduction of 'alternative' education into our society there have been four major models use to define emotional and behavioral problems in students. These, in historical order, have been:

Psychodynamic	Behavioural	Sociological	Ecological
This identifies troubled children as 'disturbed' because of an underlying emotional problem or some mystical unmet need	Which identifies children as being 'disordered' because of maladaptive patterns of learned behaviour	Identifies children as 'maladjusted' because of association with peers who embrace negative values and behaviour	Identifies different 'ecosystems' in the child's environment as creating internal conflict or 'disease' to be endured.

¹⁰

Although each approach has continued to be developed and used in separation, the approaches have also been combined to be used in a more dynamic, flexible, eclectic way within some educational settings.

It is this eclectic approach that the ALESCO Learning Centre strongly supports. This psycho-educational approach carefully combines a variety of methods to meet the diverse needs of challenging young people. These methods are not systematically followed, nor are they a sure-fire recipe for success. However, by combining strategies from each of these approaches the ALESCO Learning Centre is successfully helping the 'too difficult' student to learn again.

¹⁰ Whittaker 1980

Model	Focus	Strategies Used
Psychodynamic Psychoeducation	Recognition that what the young person is feeling is a genuine and bone fide emotion, that either the young person cannot cope with, or has never been taught to manage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying importance of differential acceptance in which the child is accepted, not the behaviour. • Understanding many children will initially provoke well-meaning adults to see if there is hostility underneath • Realising that real world problems are grist for learning more adaptive ways of thinking, feeling and acting. • Instead of withdrawing away from young people in crisis the staff see it as a unique window of opportunity for teaching learning skills • Teaching young people self-responsibility and strategies to assist with matters they feel are out of their control and therefore not their responsibility. • Helping young people become masters of the existential crisis • Many young people seem not to have had the opportunity to learn the most basic sense of human concern, they can hurt or exploit others with impunity,; allowing the young person to feel guilt, and acknowledging that it is an emotion they must deal with when they 'do wrong' is not steered away from. Massaging numb values helps foster internalisation of feelings.
Behavioural Psychoeducation	This approach integrates teaching methods other than academics into the young persons study regime. This includes social skills training, relationship building, non aversive crisis intervention and structured verbal response skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship building is essential to ALESCO Learning Centre, staff are seen as more than just <i>staff</i> and young people are recognised as individuals. • ALESCO Learning Centre introduced the instruction of specific social skills to increase social competence and teach adaptive skills • Students are taught how to cope and accept criticism, using role plays and other methods • ALESCO Learning Centre helps young people to identify triggers and cues for anger arousal, using self-administered reminders and reducers to lessen anger and self evaluation and reinforcement to improve social skills • We see that the students, now empowered with the appropriate social skills, have new options to act in caring and responsible ways.

Sociological Psycho education	<p>The ALESCO Learning Centre recognises that peer groups can act as a primary agent of change in values and behaviour of challenged young people. We also identify that the impact of peers is strong, particularly among youth with minimal parental attachments or control, and so therefore strive to use this to our advantage.</p> <p>We are also aware that undesired behaviour often develops through association with peers who support anti social beliefs and behaviours. The ALESCO Learning Centre attempts to reverse these negative impacts by involving positive peer culture to assist identify problems and develop strategies to resolve them. We aim to create a pro-social ethos by making caring all the rage and a desirable trait. We encourage greatness from internal sources instead of demanding obedience. A strong feature of the ALESCO Learning Centre is challenging young people to take responsibility for their lives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults model caring relationships and monitor confrontations carefully so students don't become the target of counter frustrations. • Peer concern, rather than peer pressure, is a strong strategy. This method is particularly powerful with young people who are more inclined to trust peers than adults. • The group provides feedback about hurtful or inconsiderate behaviour of members of the group and encourages positive alternatives. Eg- Easily angered youth are helped to understand and disengage themselves from the put down process thereby immunising themselves from the negative behaviour of others.
Ecological Psycho education	<p>We identify and realise that some emotional disturbances are not symptoms of individual pathology but rather a sign of malfunctioning human environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In their environment people who break down the barriers to gain trust are those who become reliable sources of support, affection and learning. This is something that we attempt to recreate in the ALESCO Learning Centre environment. • Helping people be good at something, especially work in public settings, significantly impacts on a young person's self esteem and motivation. • Students also need opportunities for problem solving in interpersonal relationships in which they display 'conspicuous ineptitude'¹¹. These opportunities and resulting successes lead young people to have greater control over their participation in interpersonal relationships.

¹¹ Brendtro & Bockern 1994

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ALESCO Learning Centre also uses adventure and outdoor activities to engage those students who don't respond to typical class room structures. • The ALESCO Learning Centre utilises self governing group work to implement behavioural programming. The group helps devise strategies for solving raised issues and thereby encouraging responsible behaviour in all members of the group.
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The unifying theme for psycho education and the ALESCO Learning Centre is one of 'empowerment' of the individual. At the ALESCO Learning Centre we actively challenge the models that viewed difficult young people as deviant and deficient. We believe that abandoning the thought of 'controlling' the students is a significant key to alternative education. We believe the students have the ability to take self control if only shown how, and given ample opportunities to try. A successful learning environment such as the ALESCO Learning Centre, should take up the role of nurturing the students' capabilities.

The ALESCO Learning Centre utilizes the keys of mastery, independence, belonging and generosity that is within each and every one of our students. We take into account the physical and safety needs of all the students who learn here. However, the focus will always lay with these key points. Tapping into the key points allows us the ability and opportunity to empower each individual young person. This way each student may succeed in their immediate life, if they choose it to be that way.

ALESCO Learning Centre is an environment based on mutual respect and recognition of students and staff as people, who have lives outside of this environment. There is the acknowledgment that people have good and bad days, that missing the bus in the morning is irritating regardless of your age. Just because the student is a young person should not mean they cannot be subject to the everyday irritations of life.

We also re-evaluate, every day, the concept of 'problem behaviour'. We as practitioners, carers and supporters of young people are confronted with the question 'Is the behaviour *really* a problem,

or does it just not meet the standard expectations?’ When young people are conversing, loudly, using typically expressive language, is the problem really the language? Or is the volume of the conversation? The value-laden answer is the language, but the common sense answer is the volume. If I couldn’t hear what they were saying would I care if they were swearing or not? The answer is probably not.

The rules at ALESCO Learning Centre are simple and realistic. They are either there because legislation requires it to be – e.g Occupational Health and Safety - or they fit into three simple categories: Respect. Responsibility. Honesty. Staff members do not ask students to do something for no reason. There is no rule just for the rule’s sake. Students can leave the property at lunch time to purchase their lunch, there is no reason why they can’t go to McDonalds, as long as they make it back in time. If a student needs to go to the bathroom during class, permission is not asked for; just the courtesy of letting the teacher know where they are going before excusing themselves from class. If there is a problem and the student does not share the problem with some one who can help, then no amount of tantrum throwing will resolve the problem when it finally comes to a head. The staff members of ALESCO Learning Centre are good, but they are not mind readers.

The most significant, powerful key to the empowerment of the young person, not only in the learning environment but in their lives in general, is the reinforced sense that everything they achieve they succeed in, themselves. Staff do not take it personally when a student does not complete their homework, it is not a personal offence to them when a student does not write a thing in their workbook, because the underlying current will always remain that it is the student who is control. ALESCO Learning Centre operates as a two way street, a concept the students are informed of very early in their enrollment. We are merely offering the students an opportunity. We cannot make it happen for them; we cannot control their level of participation; it has to be something from within each of them. All we do is offer the opportunity, and make it so it is achievable and realistic, but it is and will always remain the responsibility of the young person to take that opportunity. An analogy might be; if you are hungry and someone hands you a steak on a silver platter, do you take it or wait

for them to spoon feed it to you? For ALESCO Learning Centre students, they have to be hungry enough to take the steak themselves.

Only by operating within a learning environment that strives to treat young people as they want, deserve and are capable of being treated, can we begin to meet the unmet development needs that drive students with problem behaviour.

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