Case Study: Accenture and Footscray Primary School

The grade five children at Footscray Primary School are asking, “Is it an Accenture day today?”; the Principal thinks it’s a win-win partnership, and the staff from Accenture are absolutely loving it.

Grant Powell and Andrew Friars, Partners from Accenture first began working with Natalie Bakai, Principal at Footscray Primary School when they joined Partners in Leadership. They soon decided to involve a small team of staff from Accenture, to connect with purpose and deliver a leadership program to the year 5 students.

The Program

“In the beginning we talked about an option that would include and involve students and how they might be mentored and supported. We were excited about that because it’s about the future of our community and inspiring leadership at the student level. The school is in a low socio-economic area, and we have many children with high needs from diverse multicultural backgrounds. Our multicultural community is, in fact, a perfect match with Accenture who hold the same values and work with similar cultures as well.” – Natalie Bakai

“Accenture have been working with the year 5 students on student leadership. Encouraging and enabling students to develop a deeper sense and understanding of themselves as learners and future leaders. It’s also about connecting them with their future potential and capacity which can be difficult for some students who come from highly disadvantaged backgrounds” – Natalie Bakai

“So being a leadership program it’s around strength and delivery, self awareness, how do you work in teams and how do you lead a team – really the same sorts of things that you might see in an adult leadership course but targeted to children.” – Grant Powell

The Students and Staff

“The students have been able to access adults to work with them from different occupations, from same or similar cultures, and who generally have a good strong sense of themselves. For our students, that means that they’re really good role models. The fact that some of our partners are males is an added bonus as our school, like many others, has a low ratio of male teachers.” – Natalie Bakai

“The staff are absolutely loving it and can’t get enough of working with the kids. They’re also practicing some of their technical skills in terms of facilitation, leadership and work-shopping. They’re getting a lot of value out of it and giving something back which is really appealing to Generation Y values around doing something more in your workplace than just work – actually contributing to the community.” – Andrew Friars

“We’re at the stage now where the students and their mentors from Accenture are really quite comfortable working with each and have a good working relationship. You can see that the kids are settled and the Accenture staff are taking on that role as
teacher/mentor. The skill building aspects of the program are reciprocal as Accenture staff build and develop their ‘classroom leadership capacity’.” – Natalie Bakai

The Partnership Experience

“It’s been a win-win. The Accenture staff are quite passionate about putting back into the community and the students are linking in to Accenture in a way that they don’t normally get the opportunity to with business.” – Natalie Bakai

“It’s certainly been a very rewarding experience for Accenture and great to see what opportunities there are for business to work with educational institutions. I would encourage companies to embrace the idea because it’s great and rewarding. I think it’s important to explore all the different avenues for assistance and partnership. I would suggest that other companies think very broadly around what their organisation and the school have to offer each other and be imaginative with what they come up with.” – Grant Powell

“For us the projects that we’re building and developing are right for our school. I don’t think there is any singular model that will work for all businesses or schools. There just has to be the commitment from both sides to underpin an innovative program, that will keep the school and the business engaged. Ideally it should be an authentic partnership where there’s mutual respect and both partners are learning from each other. Something that is good for the business as well as the school with genuine motives and commitment.” – Natalie Bakai

“It’s been a very rewarding and fulfilling program. The relationship’s been mutually beneficial on lots of levels, both organisationally and individually. As hard as it is for me to schedule time out of my diary, I absolutely love going out to Footscray Primary it just feels fantastic and seeing the kids is very special. I think that in doing this we really can help the school and help Natalie achieve the aims that she has for the school and at the same time really get some benefit to Accenture and its people, so I’m very positive about it.” – Andrew Friars

Melbourne Cares’ Role

“The great thing about having Melbourne Cares on board is that in the initial stages there was someone to facilitate the conversations around strengths and challenges and throw in ideas to open up new directions. It’s also valuable to be able to share what other schools and businesses are doing. We couldn’t do all that as an independent broker going out and finding our own business partner.” – Natalie Bakai

“We wouldn’t have started this in the first place and probably wouldn’t have had as good a result without the input from Melbourne Cares.” – Grant Powell

“Melbourne Cares shadowing and being with us through Accenture visits as part of the program has created another dimension to the program. Melbourne Cares has taken on almost a further parenting role, shepherding the program along. By being in the background, but always being there ready to support if the need’s there. Melbourne Cares has documented the progress of the program, taken visual and text coverage and taken over the more tedious ‘day to day’ management of the partnership as an action research project. Without Melbourne Cares this aspect of the program would be difficult if not impossible for either party.” – Natalie Bakai