**Autism Hub - Creating a path through subject selection**

 **TRANSCRIPT**

- I'm particularly interested, and I know schools ask us this all the time about how creative you can become in senior with subject offerings. Now, I know at your school, you offer an enormous amount of subject offerings, which I can only imagine would be enormous interest in timetabling, but however, it does help your students to cover a lot of their diverse skills and strengths. So, can you share with us some of the things that you do in your senior as far as subjects are concerned? Very operational question, I know.

- Yeah, so I suppose we started to see a few years ago that there was a group of students coming through where they would look at a typical senior timetable subject selection, and there just wasn't anything suitable for many of them. So, then we would see lots of changes in the timetable, students not happy, attendance was affected. So that's where we kind of went a little bit around the other way, looking at, okay, who are our students? What sorts of things do they... Might they like to try? So, we brought in... We were lucky to bring in some of the practise subjects. So, the hospitality in practise, agricultural in practise. We've brought in a lot of those subjects. There's just that little bit more flexibility, not so ATAR, that's another acronym. It's not university driven at this stage, so that's...

- Although you certainly do offer all of those subjects as well don't you?

- Yes, that's right. Yes, and students can choose anything, but we're always having that conversation about where they'll get the greatest success. A couple of other things that we really promote and we've spoken briefly about is TAFE at school. So, when we get the booklet out and we start looking at that in Year 10, and there's just so many different subjects there that can't be offered at school. But one day a week, the students can go out. So not only are they trying something new, something they like, but the other side of it is they gain the confidence. They're seeing adult learning for the first time. They don't have to wear a uniform. We support them very much in the first part, but even in the application, but particularly with travel training, we will try to send support staff to make sure they get to where they need to go and then gently ease back from that. And we also offer another program it's called ASDAN. Now I did write this down, the Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network. It's actually a program from the UK and Education Queensland has supported the running of this program in many schools previously. It's a little bit like the Duke of Edinburgh award where there's a bronze, silver, gold level and the students, they do challenges. Each module is about 10 hours of credit resulting in 60 hours for either the bronze, then the silver, then the gold. So that has allowed students who might otherwise be disengaged to really go to the next step further than TAFE to really be working on a topic of their interest. So, it's very, very specific to the student, but they're building their skillset. They might need to research, they might need to present, they might need to get out in the community or do a practical challenge. And if they start that early enough, like they do at our school in Grade 10, then in Year 11, they can be achieving the silver for one QC point. And then the gold in Year 12 for another QC point. So collectively it's about the equivalent to a Certificate I course worth two QC credit points.

- But I know one of the things that you're really strong on at your school, Lynelle, is actually about encouraging our young people to do volunteer work. And you've already spoken about work experience, but I think that some schools perhaps don't consider that as part of a senior's pathway or designing subjects for young people, even though we know that, that the can now attribute to their QCE attainment, which is fantastic, but also for parents, when we start to look at life beyond school and building a quality of life that can give them some more skills. So, I know that you've incorporated volunteering at your school, can you talk a little bit about that?

- Yeah, so we run the Cert II Active Volunteering, and we also do a Cert II Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways, but particularly our volunteering certificate course, while it can be a little bit paperwork heavy. So, some of our students with autism do struggle with that a little bit, we have to keep encouraging them, the opportunity for them to do volunteering work. So first of all, to go out into the community, sometimes the volunteering work isn't specific to their skillset, but that's where we are looking at those ... We're looking for those transferable skills. So those soft skills that a little bit like Sharon said, how do we communicate with people? How do we introduce ourselves? How do we follow those instructions? And I know our school has a close relationship with a morning breakfast service to those who are less fortunate. And so, for some of our students, it's very daunting the first couple of times they go, but we make sure they visit first, they know who they're going to be working with, what it looks like. So that's probably a big part, Vicky, is really preparing in advance our students. But the benefits of that by the time they've going one morning a week for the whole of Year 11 and Year 12. They are just amazing, but just the confidence. And I think... And that's what we've always said, that even when you do leave school, if you're not working, you must be volunteering. And because they've had that opportunity, it's not this scary thing. And sometimes volunteering will lead to that job, it's also something great for their resume. So yes, that's a program that we've actually built into our senior programme.

- And I think I like particularly, Lynelle, that it does contribute towards QCE attainment.