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From classroom to CEO

A distinctive aspect of Lavalla's VCAL program is the Career Enterprise and Opportunity program (CEO Program). Year 12 students develop a business, such as hairdressing, beauty, engineering and community services, and the Year 11 and Year 10 students are employed in the business. Within their chosen enterprise, students must plan and cost a project, look at community links, hire 'employees', and even fire them if they are not performing. This creative curriculum ensures the students develop work readiness and employability skills, rather than just do projects.

Prior to commencing the CEO program students cover OHS, first aid, resume writing and group development skills. Group processes are a major focus of the CEO preparation. With a background in industry and outdoor education Brett and the teaching team at Lavalla College understand that relationship between workers determines business success.

Brett has set up a structure for teaching group processes to students, which includes icebreakers, discussing and experiencing different leadership styles, and doing a practical task that then reinforces what students have learnt about group processes. Students also learn the language of group processes so they can describe what they are doing and experiencing. In Lavalla's unique CEO program where students run their own businesses they get plenty of opportunities to practice the group process skills and language. They begin to learn how integral relationships are to success in the workplace.

Also central to the CEO programme is an interactive journal developed on a student directed model from Canada. In the journal students create their own charter, based on what they have learnt about group development; write up a plan for each week (at the beginning of each week); and reflect twice a week on how they are doing in relation to their plan. Reflection can take any form: visual, such as photographs or drawings, audio or written.