

MEDIA RELEASE

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CHILDREN at Woorinen District Primary School are being asked “What do you want to be when you grow up?” as part of a new research project.

Former students are also being asked what they wanted to do as a child and where they are and what they are doing now.

Principal Jodi Walters said the project aimed to explore the theory that a child’s aspirations were a good indicator of what they would end up doing with their lives, especially at work.

“I’ve always thought that if a child has a genuine belief or goal, they will end up doing better at school,” she said.

“They might dream of being a doctor from prep to Year 8, but I believe that sets the foundation for where a kid ends up - with a VCE or a VET score and a pathway into employment and a career.

“This is a way of checking that theory to see if that is the case and, from looking at our past students, they have not necessarily begun their careers directly from school.

“But as adults they’ve gone back later and many have done Certificate III and Certificate IV courses and changed career paths.”

Ms Walters set up a Facebook group to spread the word about the project and enlist the help of former students of Woorinen District and Woorinen South schools.

So far more than 200 former students and teachers have joined the group.

Former students include teachers – one working in a prison and another at a refugee detention centre – hairdressers, librarians, auto-electricians, accountants, university and TAFE students, a shearer, bird breeder, filmmaker, massage therapist, racehorse strapper and dancer.

They have worked and studied in all states of Australia, as well as London, Singapore, Hong Kong and the United States, and many have stayed in or returned to the Swan Hill region.

Several completed Year 11-12 by distance education and highlighted in their posts the importance of finishing high school.

Ms Walters said it was important to start talking about careers at a young age because children with a purpose did better at school.

“We start at prep, by talking about what do you want to be and how do you get there?” she said.

“That doesn’t necessarily mean higher education. If you want to be a bricklayer, what do you have to do to be a bricklayer? If you want to be a ballerina? There’s thousands of five year olds who want to be a

ballerina. What do you have to do? There's no point saying you want to be a ballerina, if you're not taking dance classes after school.

"If you want to be an AFL player you need to be playing junior football, you need to eat well, look after your body, put yourself up for representative squads and be prepared to travel for games."

Ms Walters said she wanted to use the project to "make it real for these kids".

"We want to connect students with someone who went to the same school and is now a nurse, or doctor, so that our kids can see it is real," she said.

"If you'd told my daughter five years ago that she could go and do a course in dance she would have laughed at you. But she has."

Students at Woorinen have identified their preferred occupation and the next step is to find an adult among the former students to match each child.

Ms Walters said she was still looking to get in touch with former students who were playing professional sport, such as AFL, or working as a doctor, demolition expert, police officer or snake catcher.

Murray Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network (MMLLEN) is a partner in the project.

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MEDIA: For more details, or to arrange a photograph or interview, please phone Woorinen District Primary School Principal Jodi Walters on (03) 5037 6514.

Issued by Sandra Godwin, Murray Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network Communications officer (03) 5033 2017

Notes: MMLLEN is a not-for-profit organisation responsible for the area of north-west Victoria covered by Swan Hill Rural City (excluding Robinvale), Gannawarra Shire (excluding Cohuna), and Sea Lake in the Buloke Shire.

MMLLEN works to establish partnerships with local education and training providers, businesses and industries, community groups, parents and families to help young people aged 10 to 19 get involved in study, training or work, stay committed and succeed in their chosen careers.

Further information about MMLLEN is available at the website <http://www.mmlen.com.au/>