“The reality of our students is that they come from 70 different countries, many of them having survived torture and trauma. They have a very good understanding of their previous life but a very limited understanding of the sorts of things that we value and take for granted in our community. The ‘village’ (hub) is about having a safe place to share, talk and communicate these things.”

Principal Thebarton Senior College, 2013

Location: Western suburbs, Adelaide
Background: Wide student age range from 16 to 60 years of age
South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE)
Vocational education and training (VET)
New Arrivals program (the only SA adult senior secondary provider in South Australia)
United Nations Global Peace School

Students: 1000 FTE (82% NESB)
Identified need: Based on a holistic idea of student services for specialist population.

How did the hub get started?
The hub started when the Women’s and Children’s Hospital began offering antenatal services at Thebarton Senior College, which was then the catalyst for a hub model to combine health and wellbeing services with education. The hospital’s decision to provide services stemmed from the number of pregnant students who were missing antenatal health checks. This led to a realisation that other health and community programs could be provided at the college too. Although student numbers have doubled, educators have noted a significant reduction in time spent attending to non-academic student issues.

What worked? What didn’t?
The hub was planned outwards from a central model of what will most benefit the students and the community. The hub is designed to be accessible and friendly for young people and new arrivals, aiming for a ‘close-knit’ village atmosphere. Services needed to be in keeping with the college’s values of respect and peace. In 4 phases, the college built its hub to encompass a wide range of health, wellbeing, community, education and employment services and programs.

An initial challenge was adequate space to integrate a vibrant community hub within the existing site — this was achieved through redeveloping the current library. Sourcing sustainable funding that can subsidise students who have limited funds available for their learning and living is an ongoing challenge.

Your advice?
1. Clarify the purpose of the hub and remain focused on its achievement.
2. Have leadership fully on board, driving the operational culture of the hub and school as a whole.
3. Move away from the status quo by enthusing teachers and partners to do things differently.
4. Be willing to take risks so that new programs can be investigated without fear of negative
repercussions.

5. Learn from challenges and failures and use these lessons to develop better approaches and methods.

Thebarton Senior College is now well recognised as a centre of peace and positivity. It continues to look at new ways of attracting new students and assisting existing students to realise their goals.

“We have a model here that focuses on a rigorous learning programme where all students do SACE or VET or combinations. We also have immediate and responsive follow-up on student attendance and engagement particularly with formerly disengaged students. We’ve experienced very positive results with students who were previously very unsuccessful in achieving learning outcomes.” Assistant Principal, Thebarton Senior College, 2013.

Further information
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