

ENTERPRISE LINKS CASE STUDY

JULY 2007

GRAPHICS

MATERIALS TECHNOLOGY

YEAR 13


WANGANUI GIRLS COLLEGE / KITCHEN CONTOURS LINK

For the past three years Teacher Mike Jackson has refined this unit by linking with David Mackay, Managing Director of Kitchen Contours, a well-established kitchen design and manufacturing company with a showroom and factory close to the school, who has hosted tours of his factory, and shared his professional experiences with students. In this major Year 13 Graphics design project, students find a client and design a new kitchen for them.

ADDITIONAL LINKS:

- Techlink technological practice case study – Kitchen Contours: www.techlink.org.nz/Case-studies/Technological-practice/Materials/kitchen-contours
- Wanganui Girls College/Norsewear link, where senior Fabric Technology classes visit the local Norsewear clothing factory to observe their operating practices: www.techlink.org.nz/Case-studies/enterprise/wanganui-girls/page3.htm
- For discussion of relevance, manageability and sustainability issues from the teacher, school and the enterprise perspective: www.techlink.org.nz/case-studies/enterprise/summary.htm
- Brokering links – a business perspective: www.techlink.org.nz/Case-studies/enterprise/wanganui-inc

FOCUS POINTS INCLUDE:

- Establishing the link
- Mutual benefits
- Management issues

WANGANUI GIRLS COLLEGE / KITCHEN CONTOURS LINK

Developing industry links

A genuine culture of enterprise has evolved within the Technology Faculty at [Wanganui Girls' College](#). Core staffing has remained stable for several years and teachers have taken the initiative to develop links between their classroom programmes and the wider Wanganui community, the observed benefits providing motivation for maintaining and extending the links.

A major impetus for creating links with industry came when teacher Mike Jackson took a year out in the community on a [Teacher Fellowship](#). "When I was doing this, I was told all the time that what we were doing in schools often lacked relevance So I quickly appreciated that the four walls of your classroom must not limit your subject, what you teach and what your students learn. You've got to get out there and make sure that what you're doing in the classroom fits with how things are done in industry, and that it has a positive link with the community."

This view is now shared by the whole department, which works collectively to ensure a consistent approach to the establishment of community links within the different programmes at each level.

Wanganui Girls' College students visiting Kitchen Contours

In establishing links, manageability has not been a significant issue for Mike. "It may require a bit more effort initially, but in terms of resource management over the unit as a whole there are no more issues than in a wholly class-based unit of work. It only needs a couple of hours to go out and get a company on your side, and the gains you get in terms of student experience and learning make that initial effort well worthwhile. And the attitude of the industries has been very positive – I don't think we've ever had anyone say 'No, go away, we can't be bothered'. Most seem very pleased to be asked and enthusiastic to help."

Mike says there has been a positive influence on junior students coming through into the senior programmes. "Junior students see the work done by the seniors and it motivates them to choose the subject. But more importantly, they have a sense of pride in what our students



are doing in the community. So that flow-on effect is very good."

It has also made a big difference that senior management are also fully supportive. "The school is really excited about the prospect of their students being involved in community activity," says Mike, "and is usually happy to accommodate the juggling of classes which is often required. That shows how much it is valued. We always inform the school management when someone is coming in as a mentor or a speaker, and we do that a lot in our area. The school is not only enthusiastic about it but, where possible, the management like to meet these people to consolidate the link and to personally thank them for coming in and helping the students. And the principal will always write to them and thank them on behalf of the school."

This appreciation quickly spreads to the community, which makes it easier to go out and attract additional support.

In establishing industry links, the school has also received invaluable support from [Ken Hird of Wanganui Incorporated](#).

The Kitchen Contours Link



Teacher Mike Jackson has been doing two major design projects with his Year 13 Graphics students for a number of years, both using industry links. In one, students find a client and work to design a new kitchen for them. For the last three years Mike has refined this unit by linking with David Mackay, Managing Director of Kitchen Contours, a well-established kitchen design and manufacturing company with a showroom and factory close to the school.

After David had supplied and installed a kitchen for him, Mike asked him if he could provide technical expertise and design input into individual students project work. After ascertaining the nature of the help required and the time commitment, David was more than willing to become involved.

The project begins with the girls choosing their client and exploring the environment they are working with and considered some initial design concepts. The class then visits David at Kitchen Contours showroom and factory.

“Before the visit, we get them to draw a plan of their client’s existing space and investigate the potential for change and discover the problems associated with these changes,” says Mike. “The visit then becomes significant in terms of the link between design and manufacture. You can’t have a fantasy kitchen – everything has got to be able to be manufactured.”



During the visit David discusses design considerations and the importance of working within a budget, and then takes them through the design and manufacturing process that his company uses.

“The girls are invariably impressed by the design process, the machinery and the range and quality of the products we can make. I point out that there are a lot of female designers out there and that kitchen design is a good thing to get into if you’re keen and have a flair for it. I can honestly tell them that it’s a good challenging career, and that gets some of them thinking a bit.”

“They’re always surprised at how computerised things are and how quickly we can do things– they still think of kitchen manufacture as hammer and chisel stuff and the good old sandpaper block. They quickly realise that you need a sophisticated set up if you’re going to compete.”

Students find out how kitchens are put together and the things to consider when designing that will become important in their own project – such as standard dimensions of cupboards, where doors will go when you open and close them, standard bench depths to accommodate appliances.



David is keen to ensure that every student is interested in what’s going on, “and that they have all taken something away with them from the experience.”

As they work through their designs with their clients, students can consult David for advice on design issues, materials and manufacture, and keeping to their budgets. While this involves the commitment of valuable worktime – “We’re not a big business, and because of that we can’t afford downtime – every hour counts to us.” – David is more than happy to keep it going for as long as its useful to the school. “If I can’t do it there’s always someone else here who can provide a bit of time. I think its important that teachers and students are keeping up with what’s going on outside the school and seeing a range of ways of doing things.”

This client-based project with early industry input makes a big difference to the approach the students take to their work, says Mike. “With the regular client interaction, each girl is strongly motivated to extend their graphic skills so they can present their ideas in the best possible way. It’s a level of motivation they don’t have in the junior school, for instance, where they’ll take what I say as gospel off the board and reproduce it and make a nice neat drawing.”