

# School's 'Service Project' helps students become global citizens

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At Aitken College, a Prep-to-Year 12 co-ed school in Greenvale, Victoria, staff are busy [setting up the next generation of global citizens](#). At the forefront of this effort is 'The Service Project' – a cross-curricular initiative that puts student agency first.

To help students in this journey, the school has just started to unpack Ron Ritchhart's "Cultural Forces" pedagogy, which encourages [a strong focus on critical thinking](#).

"We have a very diverse community and styles of teaching, but having these cultural forces underlying our teaching and learning helps us to use the same language and focus on learning," Ben Lawless, Service Project Coordinator, told The Educator.

“We aim to provide students with engaging, experiential learning experiences that set them up for life by helping them to become lifelong learners. We look for opportunities to teach in a cross-curricular way [like the Service Project] and always put the student at the centre”.

Lawless said one of the College’s core goals is to make its graduates “great global citizens”.

“So, social and emotional learning is paramount to what we do,” he said.

“Most importantly, when you walk around our spacious, green campus, you see lots of smiles on the faces of both teachers and students”.

## **Putting student agency at the forefront**

Once the (Year 9) students receive some initial instruction around what service learning and project-based learning is, they form groups of five to develop their own unique project which provides service to the local, national or even international community.

Students then work through a six-step action research process, guided by our flexible mentor teachers.

“Some of the projects students have developed include wellbeing packs for students undergoing counselling at the school, liaising with Melbourne Zoos to help fight the extinction of the Baw Baw Frog, building and maintaining a First Nations Peoples edible garden,” Lawless said.

“The list could go on forever”.

Lawless said the school will soon be having a big celebration event called “Funhelen” (named after Aitken College’s middle school/sub-school ‘Dunhelen’) to mark the new initiative

“Students complete one service project per semester. At the end of Semester 1, on June 10, we are holding a major event called “Funhelen” – from the name of our middle school, ‘Dunhelen’,” he said.

“Students will show off their projects and create a festival for students from Grades 3-8 to come and explore”.

The festival will include DJs, a bubble machine, mini-golf, a 'chill out' zone (sponsored by Library staff) and staff vs students sports.

"There will also be a million and one ways to play circus style games and donate money to the many causes our students have become involved with," he said.

"It will be a huge, flashy, loud and colourful affair that doubles as a 'show your learning' activity. We can't wait".