

GTA is the national peak body representing the network of over 150 Group Training Organisations (GTOs), employing apprentices and trainees throughout Australia.

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Pioneering primary trades program brings the workplace to the classroom

A ground-breaking Victorian school program which allows primary students to engage in a hands-on learning curriculum has been awarded the 2011 Group Training Australia (GTA) Partnership Award.

The GTA Partnership Award was announced today at the Career Development Association of Australia Conference in Cairns. The award recognises and promotes effective and innovative collaboration between one or more schools and a group training organisation.

The winning program, the 'Primary Technical Schools Program', involves a partnership between group training organisation, WORKCO, and Horsham Primary School.

The program gives students in Grades 5 and 6 the opportunity to improve their basic skills by adding practical experience in technical and trade-based areas into the school curriculum. It engages the students with hands-on learning, visiting guest speakers, and industry tours.

The program was designed to improve the retention rates, literacy & numeracy skills, and future aspirations of students from a low socio-economic area with a significant Indigenous population.

Horsham Primary School has seen vast improvements from students, particularly in school attendance, as well as increased social skills, co-operation and team work.

Following a successful pilot program in 2010, the program is now a key part of the school's strategic goals, curriculum and timetabling.

Group Training Australia CEO, Jim Barron, said the program gives students a taste of the trade careers available to them later in life, while allowing them to continue to improve their basic skills in a fun and practical way.

"This is a pioneering program that will pave the way for more hands-on learning within schools, and will no doubt assist students to determine the right career pathway for their future."

Horsham Primary School Leading Teacher, Keryn Ackland, said the program opens the minds of the students, and allows them to understand and explore several careers early in their schooling.

"Children's early experiences influence their later life chances. Career education needs to begin in primary school. We need to raise expectations, broaden horizons and develop self-belief that anything is possible," she said.

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