



Context

The Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra operates under the auspices of WEA Illawarra. WEA Illawarra is part of the Adult and Community Education sector and is dedicated to the principles of life-long learning.

WEA Illawarra Vision

A brighter future for individuals and their communities.

Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra Philosophy

Inclusion

Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra subscribes to the philosophy of inclusive education. Inclusive schools are those “which include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs” (UNESCO, 1994)¹.

The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all students should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. Inclusive schools must recognise and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education for all through appropriate curricula, organisational arrangements, teaching strategies, resources and partnerships with their communities. There should be a continuum of support services to match the continuum of special needs encountered by every school (UNESCO, 1994).

We aim to rise to the challenge of “Education for All”, particularly those who are most vulnerable and most in need.

Values

The school’s core values are reflected in the management and operation of the school and participation of students, with the Student Code of Conduct, welfare system and discipline framework all revolving around our Circle of Respect:

Acceptance

Learning

Empathy

Safety

Commitment

Opportunity

Relationships and Personal Growth

We aim to create positive relationships with our students so we can help them to move forward with their education. Breaking down barriers between students and teachers creates an environment in which young people feel comfortable learning.

Our job is to help young people believe in themselves and to realise that they can shape their future and choose what it will be, regardless of what has come before.

We seek to provide opportunities for each young person to:

- grow as a person,
- learn how to form positive interpersonal relationships,
- enhance their desire to learn for learning's sake,
- progress in their knowledge and skills.

We attempt to accept young people as they are, and however they choose to express themselves, within a framework of mutual respect.

We seek to provide learning opportunities for young people which prove their capabilities and help them reach their potential, in an environment that is designed specifically for their inclusion.

Adult Learning Principles

At Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra, students learn in an environment surrounded by other adult learners, who often unknowingly act as a community group role model. Students have the opportunity to take on the roles and responsibilities of learning as an adult does, in an environment that asks for greater responsibility but also offers greater freedom. The level of responsibility and freedom is tailored to meet the requirements and developmental stages of the young people enrolled.

The adult learning principles which guide the Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra program include:

- Recognition that young people have a range of life experience and learning needs to connect to experience in a meaningful way.
- Young people have a need to know why they are learning something.
- Use of appropriate strategies to meet the young person's need to be self-directing.
- Education and training needs to be learner-centred to engage learners.
- The learning process needs to support increasing learner independence.
- Learning should be experimental and participative, recognising and accommodating each person's different learning style and reflecting individual circumstances.

Psychological Framework

Our underlying psychological framework is Dr William Glasser's Choice Theory (Glasser, 1998)ⁱⁱ, which states that almost all behaviour is chosen and that behaviour is one's best attempt, at any given time, given the skills one currently has, to meet one's needs. Glasser summarised these needs as:

- Survival
- Love and belonging
- Power
- Freedom
- Fun.

We aim to help our students to evaluate their behaviours to see if what they have chosen to do or say is most likely to get them what they really want or to figure out a more effective way of meeting their own needs.

Choice Theory includes Seven Caring Habits. Our hope is that everyone involved in the Learning Centre, including staff and students, will use the Seven Caring Habits, and eliminate the Seven Deadly Habits which are used to try and control other people's behaviour.

Seven Caring Habits	Seven Deadly Habits
1. Supporting	1. Criticizing
2. Encouraging	2. Blaming
3. Listening	3. Complaining
4. Accepting	4. Nagging
5. Trusting	5. Threatening
6. Respecting	6. Punishing
7. Negotiating differences	7. Bribing or rewarding to control

Mission Statement

Alesco Learning Centre Illawarra strives to provide young people, who have not been able to find success in traditional secondary education models, the opportunity to learn, grow and achieve success in a smaller, more informal and supportive learning environment.

Who can apply to enrol?

Young people, aged 15-18 years, who are ready to take responsibility for themselves, their learning and their future and are willing to work with us towards change, in a safe and supportive environment.

ⁱ UNESCO, 1994, *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Paris.

ⁱⁱ Glasser, W, 1998, *Choice Theory: A new psychology of personal freedom*, accessed 24 June 2011, <http://www.wglasser.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=12&Itemid=27>