

Successful project marks up 5 years

FIVE years ago Taree, Chatham and Wingham high schools decided to combine their resources to provide year 11 and 12 students with increased subject options for HSC study.

The results have been outstanding.

Taree High School principal Peter Bird said students and teachers both benefit from the shared curriculum.

"This approach to subject delivery has provided a diversity that hasn't existed before.

"It has opened up the stage-six curriculum. For example out of the 16 subjects currently being delivered, the shared curriculum has provided the necessary resources for nine of those subjects," Peter said.

In previous years if only a small number of students selected a particular HSC level subject then the subject would not run within an individual school. However by combining students and resources, a regional class can now be formed.

"The process is driven by the students themselves. We send out expressions of interest before they settle on their subject selection for year 11.

"In response to student choices we have developed a shared stage-six curriculum which is approximately 60 per cent academic and 40 per cent vocational," Peter said.

Taree High School student John Lam is very grateful for the opportunity a shared-curriculum



Working together: Taree High principal Peter Bird, Chatham High principal Willem Holvorst, and Wingham High principal Mark Thomson.

created for him.

"Although I am currently in year 12, I was able to complete one of my HSC subjects last year, thanks to the flexibility of the shared-curriculum.

"As an accelerated student I enrolled in Software Design and Development when I was still in year 10. I completed this subject in year 11 and now I can concentrate on my other subjects, so I am less stressed.

"At the time there were only five students at Taree High School who wanted to do that subject, but once Wingham and Chatham high school students made their choices, we were able to put together a class. It wouldn't have happened without the shared curriculum," John said.

The shared curriculum project was initially developed in 2006 by

a team of three teachers who were set the task of creating a regionally-supported structure which would add breadth to the curriculum and provide greater subject choice for Manning Valley students.

In 2007 the first shared curriculum classes commenced with students travelling between the three schools on Tuesday afternoons and Thursday mornings.

Students now only need to travel one afternoon per week thanks to developments in information technology. Access to course content is available via connected classrooms and moodle/computer-based learning.

Chatham High School principal Willem Holvorst has noticed that students become more mature learners through involvement in the shared curriculum.



Chatham High's Lauren Townes, Taree High's Zac Sheather and Ella Hartcher from Wingham High in the lab at Taree High.

"Students have to navigate their way in new environments and with new teachers and students which helps them become adaptable and mature learners. They also have to be very organised when it comes to directing their self-study and ensuring they get their work done on time.

"Regardless of whether they choose subjects which are academic or vocationally oriented, they emerge from the high school environment better equipped to pursue further study.

"For those students who have a foot in both camps, vocational skills can be used to help finance an academic degree - which is a great thing for regional students who usually have to leave the area to pursue university study," Willem said.

Wingham High School principal Mark Thomson noted that the biggest benefit for students is the potential for increased options when it comes to tertiary education.

"The availability of subject choice for senior students allows them to make decisions that will increase their opportunity for tertiary studies. It is an ideal arrangement for regional students," Mark said.

During 2012 Taree High School will host Engineering Studies, Primary Industries and Music; Wingham High School will host Spanish, Agriculture and Entertainment; and Chatham High School will host Legal Studies, Software Design and Development and Food Technology.