

## ★ Vicki Summerfield

*He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata! He tangata! He tangata!*

This is my 13th year working in career development. I work in a large urban secondary school for girls in Christchurch. My client base is 1000 young women aged 13-18 from a multitude of ethnicities.



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I came to careers through happenstance. I was working as a schools adviser and wanting to get back into a secondary school when as member of the Avonside Girls' High School Board of Trustees I heard that the career adviser job was going to be advertised. I rang a friend who worked in careers to tell her about the job, thinking that she might be interested in it. She said, "why don't *you* apply?" So I did, and here I am!

While still on the learning curve I discovered that there was such a thing as a qualification in Career Development and I jumped at the chance. I completed the Graduate Diploma in Career Development from AUT in 2006. The study introduced me to the world that is the career industry, increased my knowledge and confidence, gave me theory based tools for my practice, and gave me credibility.

**"Don't ask me what I want to be until you show me what there is to be." Anonymous student.**

Those who work in careers in schools have the task of making sure that each student (especially those at risk of not making a smooth transition from school) is engaged in career development so that they will leave with a set of competencies enabling them to make sound career decisions. At Avonside I aim to raise aspirations, get girls to consider entering non-traditional careers for women, and help students to become aware of the wide range of career opportunities and interventions available to them.

Last year our school was displaced by the earth quake, and went to site share at Burnside High School. This year although back on our own site we are in a temporary school with an uncertain future, and many of our students are living in a temporary world as they wait to see where they will go to live when they move out for their "Red Zoned" or severely damaged homes. This state of flux comes with its own challenges, and for a careers adviser one of these is to become aware of where the opportunities will be during the 10 – 20 years of our city's rebuild so that our young people can be informed and make career decisions accordingly.

The skills and knowledge sets that I draw on in my work are many and varied, they come from my study, and networking in the strong Christchurch career development community, and authentic professional development.

## **Career Development theory underpins all I do in my work.**

The developmental theories, Ginzberg's occupational choice, Super's Life-Span Life-Space and Gottfredson's Occupational Aspirations theories remind me that my clients are at particular stages of development. The behavioural and ethnic theories of Krumboltz, and Tyler, and the Whare Tapa Wha Health model, assist my work with clients from differing socioeconomic, Maori, and other ethnic backgrounds. The work of John Holland, and our own Heather Carpenter (my heroes!) in particular, influence the Career Development programmes I have developed for each of the year levels in our school. The work that Krumboltz and Bright have done on planned happenstance and chaos, hold a beacon of hope when I am working with clients who are "stuck," and I am vigilant about helping clients to benefit from unplanned events.

### **In summary....**

What follows is a typical day in the life of a careers adviser in a secondary school – Wednesday 2nd of May.

*8am* – prepared the daily dispatches of information, dispatched information on the Army and Air force work experiences, and the CPIT "have a go" day to interested girls, and fielded inquiries about the "have a go" day. Had three one on one careers appointments with senior students investigating university options.

*10am* – taught a Year 12 Career Development class a lesson on identifying best skills and personal qualities.

*11am* – prepared a year 13 assembly on study skills, wrote a letter to parents regarding the benefits of the careers expo, checked my email, then saw a student to discuss her recent work experience and her next step, and assisted another to prepare a CV.

*Grabbed a bit of lunch.*

*1.45pm* – went to teach my Year 12 Employment Studies class, who were preparing for a formal interview practical assessment.

*2.35pm* – school finished and I opened the mail, and wrote some of this article.

*4.00pm until 7.00pm* – parent interviews, where I talked to parents about their daughters' career choices.