

Waratah Framework: Outcome 1 - Improving literacy, numeracy, and other academic outcomes

Activities

This school undertook a considered approach to achieving the improved literacy, numeracy, and other academic outcomes of students. This was both a top-down approach by leadership and internal facing strategies, as well as programs and activities that engaged students in their learning.

“I read the most books during the week and won a prize for it. I’m okay at reading and I don’t like to read out loud in front of the class but because I was trying to win, I read by myself and to people. I really liked one of the picture books that only had a few words, and the pictures told the story. I liked that when my friends and I looked at the pictures we all saw different things and thought it meant different things.”
(student)

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Data and measurement

In 2021 the school had no formalised or consistent method of assessing and tracking student knowledge and student’s literacy and numeracy skills. They underwent a considered approach to finding a tool that was appropriate for the school context, and eventually decided on ‘Essential Assessment’. Once in place, they conducted a ‘diagnostic assessment’ of student’s initially focussing on the Year 9 cohort and then including Year 10. Testing provided consistent data that measured students individually and collectively and allowed for the analysis of concerning information. It also enabled the school to map students according to the National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions, which when initially rolled out revealed that grouping students for intervention according to their existing skill sets would be beneficial teaching students’ foundational knowledge and skills for their continued growth in both literacy and numeracy.



Staff capacity building

Formal professional learning was provided to one staff member on “Growing Evidence Informed Practice”. The goal was to build staff understanding of support and the implementation of data and measurement activities. For example, the best ways to gather and use data and how it can inform classroom and whole school teaching and learning, as well as support targeted student interventions. In addition, an Indigenous staff member was supported to attain further education, which both built their own skills and capacity to participate better in a classroom environment but also enabled them to work with students with complex learning needs and promote cultural safety.



Additional support staff

In Semester 2 of 2021, school leadership assessed the use and allocation of support staff and reallocated them to achieve consistent student support. They also focussed on upskilling staff with the skills necessary for the class they were in. The result was greater stability for students by knowing in what class to expect support, and by who. This also meant the school could provide individual and small group intervention, which was targeted at students with similar learning needs and areas of development. Information generated through these interventions was also provided back to classroom teachers to create a consistent and responsive approach.

Aspirations for ongoing education and future careers

Utilising a Project led template for student post school aspirations, staff facilitated sessions where students identified areas of interest, strengths, and goals. Students were prompted to expand their thinking around what was possible. While, some students found these sessions challenging, they were well supported by staff and there were rich discussions that resulted in clear goals that will be incorporated into learning plans in 2022.

A Whole of school approach and commitment to literacy

The schools ran a Read-a-thon to invigorate and engage students in reading. It ran for one week and every subject area facilitated independent, guided, or whole class reading opportunities. The school purchased books with an Indigenous perspective, or by an Indigenous author. Students and staff recorded their participation in reading with incentives for the top readers in each year group, and staff members who read the most.

The school reported that this was an uplifting experience with all students engaging in reading opportunities across a range of subject areas and with a wide variety of staff members. The Read-a-thon achieved 100% of students participating in reading at some stage throughout the week.