

Waratah Framework: Outcome 7

Activities:

- Professional Learning for staff
- Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs)
- Opportunities for students to share stories
- Cultural celebrations at the school
- Acknowledgement of Country at events
- Staff included in transition programs for students
- Acknowledging Indigenous staff
- Staff presentations (collaborative learning)

Strong leadership has been shown from this school to strengthen relationships between staff and students to improve outcomes for Indigenous students. They are genuinely interested in investing in professional learning for all staff to build cultural competence. They also seek feedback from students, families, community members and staff' and incorporate those different perspectives into executive level decision making.

This has resulted in engaged, supportive and culturally competent school leadership and staff. The flow on effects from this outcome intersects with outcome 9 and 10 and the school has developed strong relationships between staff, students, family, and community. In turn, students feel acknowledged, and have a sense of belonging and a deep connection with the school.

“When surrounded by my friends and learning with them about diversity and cultural difference of Indigenous people, it then broadens more peoples understanding as well as brings more cultural awareness which is really important for me.” (student)

Hence, their approach to meeting outcome 7 also directly supports improvements in students' academic outcomes (outcome 1)

To do this, the school provided Indigenous specific professional learning opportunities for all staff to build cultural competencies that assist ***not only Indigenous students to reach their potential...as the entire community benefits from better understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, language, and perspective.***

The Project also provided the resources to engage an Indigenous owned company to deliver cultural competency training to 500 teaching, boarding and administration staff (200 in-person and 300 online). They provided an introduction to the kinship system, unconscious bias and current policy and practice. The professional learning was well received by staff as well as students. 100% of respondents said they would (80%) or would maybe (20%) take something from the session to use in their work. A school psychologist who attended a 3-day course in 'Aboriginal mental health assessment and suicide prevention' run by Indigenous Psychological Services (IPS) and shared their learnings with the other schools within their network, supporting the collaborative learning environment within the Project.

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Boarding Staff and students also had input into the AIS online module “Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students in Boarding”. Currently 26 staff have completed the course and it will be listed in the Professional Learning catalogue for 2022.

Whilst Indigenous specific professional learning was the predominant focus to build cultural competency, having students share their stories in Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs), College newsletters, Acknowledgements of Country, boarding newsletters and school assemblies also proved highly valuable with students ***leading and driving change...through their increasing confidence in learning about and sharing their own stories.*** Teachers commented that this approach resulted in an acceleration of understandings and ***leading to more desire [by students] to learn and share,*** as well as an increase in teachers understanding ***student’s unique talents, knowledge, and circumstances... as well as their culture.***

Students who participated in the focus group could not have been more grateful and encouraging of their school’s approach to culture and supporting them. Further, all discussions with staff, including the Indigenous staff member who support the Project, were incredibly proud to have culture recognised and celebrated as part of school life.

School Leadership are engaged, supportive and committed to improving outcomes for Indigenous students: Pymble Ladies' College

Purpose

To diversify engagement and leadership in the Indigenous Education space beyond the immediate sphere of our Indigenous Students Co-ordinator (ISC) so that more areas of the College recognise that improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is part of their core brief. A holistic approach to organisational and cultural change was implemented aided by the College's work on a new Strategic Plan.

Target group

The entire College staff, K-12, the entire student body and wider College community. The College has a relatively large number of leaders due to the school's size with some important teams in this project being the Senior Executive, Executive, Heads of Learning Areas, Heads of School, leaders in curriculum and professional learning, and Sport and Co-Curricular Activities.

Activities

Staff working with the College's Indigenous students took bolder outward steps to engage colleagues, especially those in leadership positions, by passing outcomes to them to work towards and/or achieve. The College's Reconciliation Action Plan is now in development with leadership by and membership of the group from a wide range of staff. The ISC does not coordinate the working group but is a member who contributes her knowledge and resources. A Head of Learning Area has taken responsibility to work with the Director of Studies and Dean of Curriculum Innovation to set a path for the implementation of Aboriginal Studies. The College's internal professional learning program included two courses on Indigenous culture and education in 2020. The film *"In my blood it runs"*, was shown as a film night for the College community, hosted by three teachers who organised the night to link with the theme for Reconciliation Week.

Outcomes

A change in energy and culture has been noted with more engagement across the entire College, increasing our collective capacity and knowledge in Indigenous education. The evidence is seen in staff volunteering to join groups, learning sessions or activities, and in the ISC being able to focus more on the students themselves, as others take ownership of events, curriculum and initiatives relating to Indigenous areas.

Learnings

We learned that many staff are very keen to enrich their knowledge and understanding and that teacher-leaders come from all kinds of people. We had capacity we had not tapped to this point. College strategy is important in terms of giving overall support to cultural learning in the Indigenous area. The approach is both bottom up and top down. The advice we give is to consider the importance of both and to seek opportunities to broaden the engagement base of staff in Indigenous education leadership. For real and enduring change to occur in Indigenous education outcomes we need to look more broadly than just opportunities for the Indigenous students but rather greater education for all.

"Two members of the College Council were keen to learn more about our response to NRW [National Reconciliation Week], they loved that the NRW assemblies were run by non-Indigenous and Indigenous students."
(Deputy Principal during Reconciliation Action Plan meeting)

Display organised by the Head of Junior School for school foyer:



"It was informative and also provoked a lot of thought and discussion about how we structure school practices and how these could change to give more voice to First Nations people and promote more culturally sensitive practices." (Participant's reflection on internally run Professional Learning course)