

Waratah Framework: Outcome 8 – An ongoing process of learning and evolution

One school provided an exemplary overview of their approach to outcome 8, describing it as an ongoing process of learning and evolution throughout their commitment to the Project over many phases.

Initially the school pursued practices to inform staff but now focus on implementing strategies and activities that promote direct, self-initiated action. They indicated this step-change is indicative of **the successful education of staff, to the point that students, families, and the staff themselves feel confident in their ability to implement a culturally safe curriculum**. Hence the enhancements made to existing activities have yielded greater, more wide-reaching results and progress.

Examples comprise of restructuring the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Working Party from Indigenous staff only, to including three members of the Leadership Team, who have direct oversight of middle-management and all teaching staff. The result of this an increase in the staff accountable for embedding culturally safe curriculum from four to over 120. Further, Heads of Department are now required to identify at least one other area of their curriculum in which they will revamp the unit of work to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives authentically into the curriculum. With the intention that this be designed and implemented in collaboration with students and community members. Other activities include a whole-school curriculum planning review and development of a formal curriculum for the Indigenous Cultural Tutoring Program, as well as holding Indigenous Curriculum Week and undertaking other RAP strategies.

Their approach was reported to empower staff to act with confidence and undertake classroom activities and pedagogical practices of their own volition, sharing their knowledge and practice with leadership and other teaching colleagues in the process. In turn, this underpins a cyclical learning environment and is a factor to embedding a commitment to the Project outcomes across the whole of school environment. The school has commented that this enhanced approach is **arguably [the] most significant step towards whole-school cultural competency since the inception of the Project. (St Joseph's College – Hunters Hill**

This step-change is indicative of the successful education of staff, to the point that students, families, and the staff themselves feel confident in their ability to implement a culturally safe curriculum.

“this enhanced approach is arguably [the] most significant step towards whole-school cultural competency since the inception of the Project.” (St Joseph's College – Hunters Hill

Students experience a successful transition from school to further education and employment: Post-School Program at Saint Joseph’s College, Hunters Hill

Purpose

To enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to successfully transition into life after secondary school through a Post-School Program (PSP) that provides Four Pillars of support:

- Tertiary Education through TAFE or university
- Accommodation arrangements
- Employment assistance to secure part-time or casual work
- Recreation/leisure including local sports and recreation clubs.

Target group

All Year 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students must engage with the Program. In 2019/20 this involved 11 students.

Activities

The Post-School Program commences mid-way through Year 12. Step 1 is a Meeting Request from the student to the Indigenous Coordinator to commence the PSP, establishing expectations that the student is taking the initiative and responsibility for their future. Step 2 involves the student and Indigenous Coordinator meeting for the initial planning phase where the Four Pillars are explained, the student’s strengths, interests and goals discussed, and university degrees or TAFE courses that match these strengths and interests explored. UAC applications are created, potential accommodation, work and recreation options are considered, and ‘action lists’ are created for both the Coordinator and student. Step 3 – Action – involves students actioning the items before requesting another meeting. Step 4 is a Follow-up Meeting where tertiary education plans are confirmed, often consisting of submitting UAC applications and completing alternate university entry or scholarship applications. Step 5 – Completion – ensures students have comprehensive support plans in place encompassing the Four Pillars prior to graduation.

Outcomes

There has been very positive feedback that the support provided has enhanced student confidence and well-being as they complete Year 12 and their HSC and increased their aspirations towards further education and future employment opportunities. Students and their families also feel cared for as they transition into life after school. Eighty-one per cent of respondents to the 2019 SJC Indigenous Program parent and community survey ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that their “son’s aspirations and options for life after school have improved because of his support”.

Learnings

The Four Pillars Program is based on our learnings that many Indigenous students are the first in their families to graduate secondary school and consider tertiary education (this was the case for six of the seven graduates of 2019). From discussions with students we learned that there was little understanding of how to apply for university, arrange accommodation or financially support themselves. Thus, the PSP was immediately initiated and then formalised as a mandatory part of the SJC Indigenous Program.

*“I have never thought about going to university. Now I want to go to Macquarie University and become a teacher.”
(Future graduate of 2021 comment after engaging with a university program through the College in 2019)*

*“I never had any goals after school but now I do.”
(Indigenous Program student survey)*

“To me it is as though he can see more doors being opened now.” (Indigenous Program parent and community survey)

“My son has always strived for better things, he had an issue with some learning in the beginning at Joeys, however he has always wanted a career, and to become something of significance. He is now at the stage where he is really thinking about what’s possible. His ideas have changed overtime, though he is keen to be a teacher now! I believe this is because he is receiving great support.” (Indigenous Program parent and community survey)

“My son is looking at medicine as an option now.” (SJC Indigenous Program parent and community survey)