

Leadership Research International (LRI) University of Southern Queensland

LRI/USQ-CESA Collaborative Research project

Sustaining school improvement: Exploring internal and external factors that develop school-system alignment in selected CESA Schools.

CASE STUDIES

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Rosary School

Sustaining school improvement: exploring internal and external factors that develop school-system alignment in selected CESA Schools.

Case Study: Rosary School, Prospect, SA

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Toowoomba

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Introduction

This case study explores the factors that build on (and sustain) a school improvement agenda as well as those that inhibit ongoing improvement. The relationship between the CESA system and the school is also explored. This case is one of a number of CESA schools who have over time engaged with a whole school improvement project, IDEAS, as well as other, both school initiated and system initiatives. This case explores the improvement processes in which the school engaged over a period of time (2012 – 2018) and relates data provided by the school and from external agencies, including NAPLAN and USQ-LRI DISA. Data collected were in the form of documentation, statistics and interview data. In this school, the interviews included the principal, deputy principal and teacher leaders.

School Background

Rosary School is a Catholic co-educational primary school, established in 1908 by the Dominican Sisters of North Adelaide to serve the needs of the Catholic families in the Prospect/North Adelaide Parish. Rosary School works in partnership with the community to educate young people to take their place effectively in the Church and in the world. The Dominican charism influences the school's offerings in faith, curriculum and extracurricular activities. Rosary offers instruction in nine key learning areas as outlined in the SACSA Framework and is committed to the Archdiocesan guidelines and curriculum frameworks in all areas relating to Religious Education (extract from MY SCHOOL).

Rosary School has an ICSEA of 1091, enrolments are 400 ranging from reception (R) to year 7, Male/Female a 50-50 balance; and 26% have LBOTE. Staff include 26 (23F/T) teaching staff and 11 (5F/TE) non-teaching.

Vision Statement

At Rosary School we work in partnership...*to educate young people, to take their place effectively, in the Church and the world.* Our vision is represented by the image (see Figure 1) that captures the essence of the spirit of the community, reflecting the journey in both academic and spiritual growth as the student moves through the school – *Together We Journey into The Future ...for Lifelong Learning.*

Mission Statement

Our Mission, then, in the spirit of the Dominican tradition, is to:

- Educate the whole child
- Create a safe, happy and nurturing environment
- Promote Christian values based on the life and teachings of Jesus
- Develop strong links with the Parish community
- Encourage students to live by the truth and with hope
- Respect and honour the dignity and worth of each person
- Promote justice and reconciliation.



Figure 1: Image of Our Vision

Based on a philosophy of educating the whole child, living the Vision for Learning engenders a whole school approach to teaching and learning, including personalised approach, collaboration and inquiry based learning operating in 21st Century learning spaces.

Our School Wide Pedagogy Program

Australian Curriculum Modification

All areas (Mathematics, Science, History, English, Humanities and Social Sciences, Languages, Health & PE, The Arts)

Literacy Pedagogy

Implementation of literacy Blocks (1 hr reading and 1 hr writing)

Use of Oxford work list as basis of spelling to Year 4 followed by Oxford word list plus

Numeracy Pedagogy

Building towards numeracy block based on inquiry learning and incorporating Basic Number skills daily

Whole School Data Collection

Running Records – R-2; 3-5; 6-7

Data Walls – for students’ literacy and numeracy results

Learning Outcomes

Displayed for Literacy, Numeracy and RE

Homework

Policy outlines for each class at end of previous year

Reading – readers are based on the scores given

Reporting to School Board

Reporting done by *imovie* on the *ipad*

Section 1: Moving culture from *Them and Us* to *We* – a review at 2015

The following text captures the voice of the Principal, Deputy Principal and a teacher leader as they recall their journey from 2012 until 2015. These data were collected from semi-structured interviews.

On Arrival ...

We certainly had a difficult situation on two fronts when I came to the school. The staff were divided into two factions depending on whether they supported that staff member or not. That made, in the first six to 12 months, the whole building of relationships and the building of trust extremely difficult. Also, there was a great divide between the administration and the staff, and they used to be that term – meaning the principal and the deputy. They'd talk about admin as we weaved magic up here in the office areas. Certainly when I walked into classrooms here, the teacher was a bit surprised. They would almost – you could almost see them freeze. Then the next response was they'd call all the children to attention almost and everyone would have to say good morning in a very formal way.

So it was a bit of a traditional school. Teachers were used to going into their classrooms and shutting their doors and working their magic. Not a lot of working together. It was more working as individuals. So here, they've got a principal who wants to actually come in and see what they're doing and chat and whatnot. So it was quite different – that was not the culture of this school. Many of them, maybe they've spent five years or so at another school – somewhere between five and 10 years. Then they come here and never left our school. So they'd spend the rest of their career here at our school.

The Principal's aspirations were different:

My view of coming into the school, usually I try and be quite relational and build that trust so people can see that I value them, I'm interested in their work, and that really my aim is to try and help them become better teachers. What I wanted to do was to come in and slide around the side of the classroom, interact quietly with the kids if it was appropriate, and make my way up to the teacher and say hi, and then move on.

And he wanted to change this ... and he used both a process (IDEAS) and structural change (in the form of Education Committee):

So we had an education committee of parents, and an education committee of staff. They met at separate times – we tried to meet and plan what our next step was according to the IDEAS project.

The Education Committee and its Impact

We were very strategic about who we picked for the education committee. We picked people who were thought to be very good teachers. We picked one out of our early years, primary years, and middle years' group. So we tried to have a span across the school.

So we would have always met at least twice a term again. The structure of the discussion around the workshops we were going to run with the staff were fantastic ... But I suppose if you look at the structure of that, it was more about the relationships and the trust that was built between myself and the deputy and our three staff members, that I think that's where the culture changed. People started to see that we were all on the same page. So it really helped with that cultural change I think as we went forward.

So if we were to talk about the hardest data, like NAPLAN, it's really made no difference in that. We are still pretty much getting the educational achievements we have always had. But if you walked into any one of our classrooms, the softer data would be that our children no longer sit in rows. Most classes sat in rows when I got here. Most classes were very quiet rooms where it was like heads down, seemed to be working quite hard.

Whereas today, I think if you walked into one of our classrooms, you would see a lot more of the phrase the twenty first century learning skills. So you'd see lots of group work, lots of communication, lots of collaboration, children doing different things at different times probably in small groups. Methodology has changed enormously. We work on things that are well researched. We often present that research before we make changes to the staff. Often – our biggest one in the last year has been our staff in literacy would do something different in every room. So there might be a similar spelling program, the way we test reading might be similar.

Whereas now we've aligned literacy right across the whole school on the literacy block concept and there's guaranteed things happening in every room of our school. So that was unheard of five years ago. Then the fact that teachers will share their work so openly today and even ask for help is quite a different culture. So we've gone from teachers working as absolute individuals to teachers working much more in teams, sharing their practice, being open to – wanting suggestions, asking for suggestions, being open to learning themselves in a whole different format from five years ago.

People use the word leadership now. Now I think culturally that was a huge change for this school. That maybe it's not about pushing papers, but maybe it's about leading the school. So hardly anyone now, I can't remember the last time I've heard someone refer to administration as a collective term.

The Strategic process – the Three Year Cycle

I had this sort of plan that over a three year time period we would try and support staff to make changes through. The first year it was like dip your toe in the water, lots of support, very little pressure. Then in the second year, some more expectations about staff about okay, we need to try a few more things structured across the school. We'll continue to support you a lot through professional learning, support in the classroom. Then the third year in my mind, it was almost about well now we decided we're doing this as a group across our whole school or are we not?

Change based on Research and Education Committee Structure

I think one of the biggest learnings for myself was that in this school, that structure was not enough. It needed more structure, particularly if we were going to move a little bit quicker. A big part of that structure I think was about research here. So I had to go out and actually find that research and had to get my head around it in a far more strategic way than probably what I have in most educational changes. But through presenting that slowly to staff over time, when it came down to the fact that the staff were going to let go of many practices and we were going to align our practices across the school, spend a year doing professional learning.

Staff were far more open to the fact that we're working from R to 7, rather than I'm a Year 1 teacher. So that was a big change. So for me, it was all about far more experienced staff here, so I had to present the case in a far different way than probably what I ever have before and that meant me thinking quite differently and doing quite a bit of different work than perhaps what I have previously.

I think the idea of educational committee of staff members has been probably the most strategic thing or one of the most strategic things that we've done here. Because it gets the principal and the deputy working with people who are actually in classrooms. So I think that carries more weight just rather than I'm saying things. Because often it ends up being well those staff members are saying things. So that definitely has helped a lot. I think people are far more open, far more accepting, far more willing to try things. That whole idea about being on the same page now, and we've got an aligned strategy – schoolwide pedagogy – across our school which this school would have never ever had before. So we can write things in a newsletter about – and people take turns writing things. We're able to share the strategies we're using in our classrooms. Because we meet in small groups, people feel far more comfortable than talking in a group of say 30 people. So that was probably another good strategic move. Leadership is no longer just the province of the Principal.

The Deputy and the Teacher Leaders – reflecting on the impact of the changes that have happened and on the Principal's action:

The Principal certainly came into the school with a view that the school needed quite a different culture. I think a lot of it has been a mindset change on the teachers. Because I think a lot of teachers were perhaps cruising. Very comfortable because they've been here so long. I think the thing is too that what we can see from his style is that he's happy to delegate, he doesn't need to be doing everything himself, and he respects other teachers' views as well which I think is really, really important. So I think we were equal partnership when we were doing this process which I think was fantastic. I think it led on to other things as well. Because it was very, very research based which was fantastic, so we could all see the point of where we were going. But I definitely think we were getting to the point and I just think to have a process was important. I think what this was, was a process to get through to where we are now.

I think he's had to make adjustments and renegotiate in order to get everyone comfortable and on board and to actually see that there is a goal that we're heading towards and sort of everyone is working in alignment.

We now make the most of every minute with our learning and there's a lot of conversation, a lot of learning. I really believe the change has happened from when people walk into a staff meeting they know they've got to get involved. They're not going to sit and get their mobile phone out or write the notes for something else. You're in there and you're involved which I think you need to be. Even just

having the opportunity to work in with your colleagues within your area has been really good as well. Because we all – like we get to evaluate and moderate and stuff and give each other feedback. So I think that more intimate setting as well in the PLTs has been really invaluable for everyone across the board.

I think so because it's more consultative. I think before it was like this is what we're going to do and that's it. I don't think we had a lot of choice in what was going on. So definitely, I think the team aspect is that the opportunity to meet with the early years' team and just work with five people around a table is just fantastic. So you feel part of that team. I think people are far more open, far more accepting, far more willing to try things. That whole idea about being on the same page now, like we've got an aligned strategy – schoolwide pedagogy – across our school which this school would have never ever had before.

Supportive data

In 2015 the school completed another diagnostic inventory (DISA) and the results indicated the following positive movements in the data from 2012:

DISA

School Outcomes:

Parents and Students:

- Student well-being; teachers at the school think teaching as a job is really important;
- The school has a reputation for providing a caring and respectful environment for students, parents and staff;
- The school is seen by the local community as a good school.

Community Cohesiveness

Staff:

- The school staff demonstrates highly positive working relationships;
- Collective responsibility is assumed by staff, parents and students for individual student progress and needs;
- Expectations – teachers and parents have high expectations for student achievement.

Schoolwide Pedagogy & Deepening

Teachers and Students:

- teachers share successful practices.

Teachers:

- An agreed Schoolwide Pedagogy is grounded in current educational theory;
- A strong association can be seen between the school's vision and values and approaches to teaching and learning.

Generative Resource Design

Students, Teachers and Parents:

- Technology is used purposefully to facilitate and enrich the school's pedagogy

Holistic Professional Learning

Teachers:

- Professional engagement and conversation is built on explicit and agreed principles of trust and respect.

So most notable movements from the data was closer alignment between staff, students and parents in regards to the school's success and in particular an improvement in staff cohesiveness (see Figure 2)

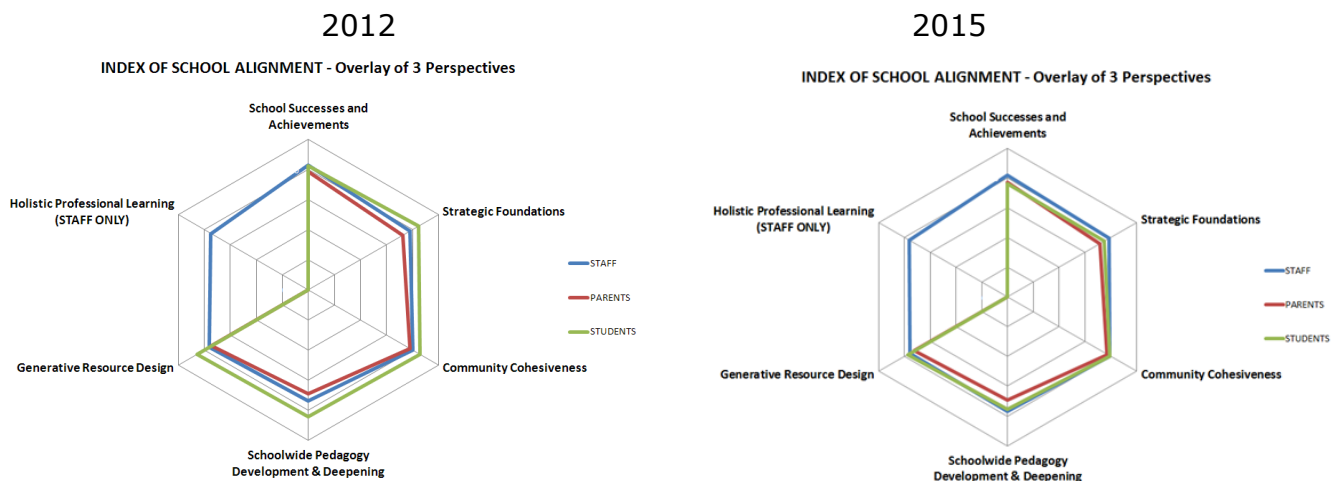


Figure 2: Alignment DISA Outcome and Elements from the Perspectives of Staff, Parents and Students

Section 2: Moving on into 2018

USQ researchers revisited the school in 2018 to capture the school's ongoing progress since their engagement with IDEAS. We asked the school to provide us with evidence of ongoing improvement based on their strategic plans. In addition, to outline their understanding in regards these successes. The school chose to present an outline of the two projects in which the whole staff had been engaged as exemplars of successful processes and outcomes. For this school, the two projects were KIDS MATTER and DYSLEXIA ONLINE, as these were the focus of the school's aims and they had used the process of the 3-year implementation cycle that had become *the way of doing things here* – the programs always are based on defensible, documented research.

The data reported now presented included semi-structured interviews, PowerPoint and video presentations and documents. The text which follows captures their story and the structure adopted has been based on their presentation of evidence of successes and outcomes. The voices were those of the Principal, the Deputy and Teacher Leaders.

School Improvement Focus

Our aim was to improve student and mental health and well-being because parents are very interested in their child's education but just as interested in their well-being. This was important to

the Rosary School community because it draws upon the strong research base indicating that greater mastery of social and emotional learning improves students' personal development, readiness to learn, classroom behaviour, and academic performance. Which in turn supports our belief in further developing the skills and knowledge of our teachers in teaching and supporting students with special needs.

Implementation – the 3 year cycle planning

We think that professional learning that is effective is long term.

The structure – The plan is to use small professional learning teams and teachers are encouraged to lead professional learning. The PLTs are early years, primary years and middle years teachers. The PLTs do not choose their focus and the Professional learning has a school-wide focus because research would say that we need to move forward together ... [though] there might just be the opportunity to branch out in different ways, e.g. literacy blocks across the school but specifics vary with level.

The first stage is to determine the focus area and establish an action team who then complete Professional learning: the expert teachers going off and doing the training bringing it back in implementing that in the classroom and having discussions with teachers. Year two we did split up to do some things in our professional learning teams about dyslexia. By the third year there is an expectation that all teachers are providing differentiation. For example: implementation of STEM initiative – focus this year next year and the year after. This year, firstly dip toe in water, then maybe some whole school PL, trial in classrooms and reporting back. The second year will be STEM PD in PLTs and providing support but more pressure in that we have more expectations about what you're going to do in your classroom. The third year: it's pretty much saying are we in or are we out? If we are in then it's a part of our culture, a part of the way that we do things around here and there will be expectations from R-7 about what STEM education looks like across our school.

The Two Programs

We felt that the success of 'Kids Matter' was reflected in the success of the online dyslexia training because our aim was to improve student mental health and well-being because parents are very interested in their child's education but just as interested in their well-being. The two programs went hand in hand with our social and emotional focus.

It draws upon the strong research base indicating that greater mastery of social and emotional learning improves students' personal development, readiness to learn, classroom behaviour and academic performance. [This] in turn supports our belief in further developing the skills and knowledge of our teachers in teaching and supporting students with special needs.

They also used the ATSIL Australian professional standards for teachers (Standard 6 Engage in professional learning) as a justification for running the programs, because *research has shown that teacher effectiveness has a powerful impact on student success*. As a result, they presented a report on each of the programs under these four areas:

- Identify and plan professional learning needs
- Engage in professional learning and improve practice
- Engage with colleagues and improve practice
- Apply professional learning and improved student learning

Evidence was presented in their PowerPoint presentation which formed the basis of USQ researcher's dialogue:

KIDS Matter

- **Identify and plan professional learning needs**

What we did:

- ✓ A small action team was formed who attended professional learning and then facilitated this learning with staff.
- ✓ Updated the Friendly Schools and Families Resources.
- ✓ Purchased What's the Buzz Resource and Online school registration of What's the Buzz.
- ✓ Staff participated in a KidsMatter Survey on student well-being at Rosary School

- **Engage in professional learning and improve practice**

What we did:

- ✓ Two members from the action team attended a Mental Health and Wellbeing day run by the Principals Institute.
- ✓ The action team and two invited parent representatives attended KidsMatter training on Components 1, 2, 3, 4.
- ✓ The action team facilitated staff meetings for each KidsMatter component.
- ✓ The action team attended Wellbeing in Schools Australia (WISA).
- ✓ Mark LeMessurier facilitated Professional Learning in "Raising Beautiful Kids" for all staff.

- **Engage with Colleagues to improve practice**

What we did

- ✓ After each component training whole school actions were implemented – this included:
 - An action team member and staff representatives from each learning team designed an R-7 Scope and Sequence integrating student well-being with Religious Education, Made In the Image of God, Health and the Child Protection Curriculum.
 - Release was provided for each learning team to plan and prepare their wellbeing program in consultation with a member of the action team.
- ✓ In hosting Flinders University social work students this opened up an opportunity for staff to work with them in the area of student mental health and well-being.

- **Apply professional learning and improve student learning**

What we did:

- ✓ Flying Start Week was implemented at the beginning of each school year.
- ✓ Providing opportunities for student leadership through Student Representative Council.

- ✓ On-site Life Education Van to complement our Reception to Year 7 well-being program.
- ✓ Empowering students with problem solving strategies by using consistent methods throughout the school.
- ✓ An action team member organises an annual live performance incursion performance with a student well-being message.

DYSLEXIA ONLINE LEARNING

- **identify and plan professional learning needs**

What we did:

- ✓ Two members of staff attended the Online Training: Understanding Dyslexia and Significant Difficulties provided by the Catholic Education Office.
- ✓ The two staff members embedded the strategies into their own classrooms.
- ✓ There were two further training sessions and Tutor Training.
- ✓ Following our tutor training the action team approached leadership as they were now able to deliver the program to our staff.
- ✓ Through collaboration, it was decided that the program would be delivered in 2016.

- **Engage in professional learning and improve practice**

What we did

- ✓ The action team contacted Catholic Education to gain approval to deliver the course to the staff. The CEO then prepared and delivered the resources required.
- ✓ The action team met on two occasions for a pre-course set up.
- ✓ In consultation with leadership, it was decided to ask all staff including specialist teachers and ESOs. This consisted of a cohort of 24 staff, 2 from leadership, 1 ESO and 21 teaching staff. (This was the maximum capacity with the online course)
- ✓ One action team member worked with teachers in Years 4 to 7 and the specialist teacher. The other member worked with teachers in Reception to Year 3, the Deputy and an ESO.
- ✓ In consultation with leadership, workshop dates were established.

- **Engage with colleagues and improve practice**

What we did:

- ✓ The action team delivered the first session (Understanding Dyslexia) to staff January 2016 and the follow-up day was during a staff meeting in Term 1.
- ✓ A full day delivery occurred on 1 April (Assessment for Learning and Interventions), with three follow-up sessions during staff meetings.

- ✓ The action team initiated collegial discussions and engaged with their cohort in numerous ways: Online forums, emails, face to face contact, informal discussions and pre and post surveys.

- **Apply professional learning and improve student learning**

What we did:

Through delivery of the online course, the cohort was developing skills in the following areas:

- understanding the term dyslexia; understanding a tiered approach to assessment and accessing different forms of assessment
- describing the importance of student progress
- the principles of intervention and the practical intervention strategies to support learning
- writing SMART goals to individualise student learning and maximise student outcome

The School also provided evidence of meeting the requirements of the CESA Continuous Improvement Framework for Catholic Schools (CIF) in the areas of Community CIF Domain 8 – Strong home, school, community and engagement (KIDS MATTER) and CIF Domain 5 – High Quality Teaching and Learning (DSYLEXIA). Examples provided included:

KIDS MATTER

- Family Engagement
 - Year Level Liturgical Celebrations
 - Mother's Day High Tea and Father's Day Breakfast
 - Parent information Sessions "Raising Beautiful Kids" and "Setting Up For Success" with Mark LeMessurier
 - Well Being* resources available for parents to borrow through the school library
- Community Engagement
 - Whole School Liturgical Celebrations
 - Following the Mass of the Roses, the blessed flowers are delivered to a local nursing home by the SRC. Senior students visit with the elderly at the local nursing home.
 - Grandparent's Day
 - Service Directory compiled during social work program with Flinders University making positive connections with local agencies to support parents in their role.
 - Walk-a-mile in my boots where our senior students are encouraged to support a community initiative.
 - Each family was invited to contribute to our Rosary School community cross permanently displayed in the school grounds.
- Consultation, collaboration and decision making
 - Parents participated in a KidsMatter survey on student well-being at Rosary school.

Parent representatives were invited to work with the KidsMatter action team.

Parent representatives attended the KidsMatter components 1 and 3 training sessions.

DYSLEXIA

▪ **Quality teaching**

Program based on Research

Developed by the UK and modified by NSW Department of Education and Communities. Each course has been trailed, tested and evaluated in NSW.

Provided a supported online learning model

Each course includes DECD content and is based on current research using proven quality materials and education based practice.

Adjusted to reflect Catholic Education policy and practice

Evidence Based Intervention

Based on teacher reflection, action, collaboration and team work

▪ **Student Engagement in Learning**

Student Ownership of Learning:

Teachers provide challenging, rich, differentiated learning opportunities that engage the students and promote deep learning.

Establishing SMART goals to identify the progress a student makes in a specific area of learning from a baseline skill level to a projected achievement level.

Students participate in discussions with teachers, parents and peers about their own learning and take ownership.

▪ **Professional Learning**

Engaged Professional Learning to achieve student goals

Online learning that responds to immediate needs

Flexibility of access

Opportunity to collaborate with others dealing with similar issues

Immediate access to advice and support through forums and email

Materials presented to respond to different learning styles

Participants can work at their own pace

Section 3: Evidence of Ongoing Success

In 2018 the school completed another DISA and the items that showed positive movement since 2015 included:

DISA Data

School Outcomes

Teachers: literacy achievement

Teachers, Parents and Students: Student well-being; teachers at the school think teaching as a job is really important; the school has a reputation for providing a caring and respectful environment for students, parents and staff; the school is seen by the local community as a good school.

Strategic Foundations

Students: inspirational vision, defined values and teacher leadership

Staff: defined values; the Principal promotes the school vision, values, and programs in the wider community; School successes are promoted by the principal; the school has a clear process for ongoing improvement; the Principal facilitates a defined, collaborative process of strategic planning.

Community Cohesiveness

Teachers, Parents and Students: high expectations for student achievement

Schoolwide Pedagogy & Deepening

Students and Teachers: teachers sharing successful practices

Students: students have a say in the way their learning is conducted at the school

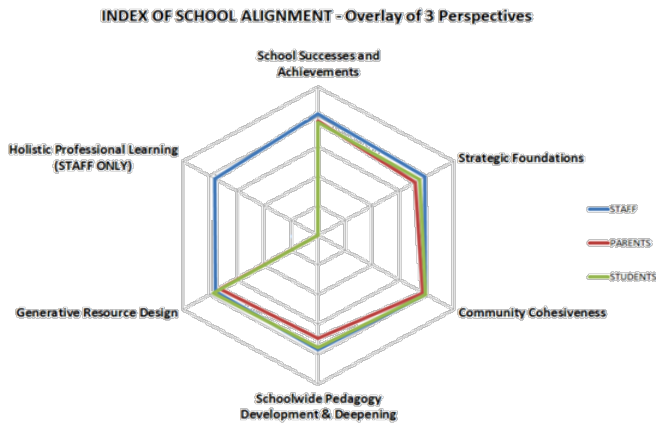
Generative Resource Design

Staff, Parents and Students: the teachers at this school try to make the classrooms interesting to improve student learning; the school uses technology to make learning more interesting

Students: the way the day is organised lets teachers try new things. The school uses community resources to improve school programs. What students learn is often changed and updated to suit their needs.

Figure 3, drawn for the DISA data, captures the maintenance of successes, however there was no outward growth in alignment. One area, professional learning, has seen a decline in satisfaction overall.

2015



2018

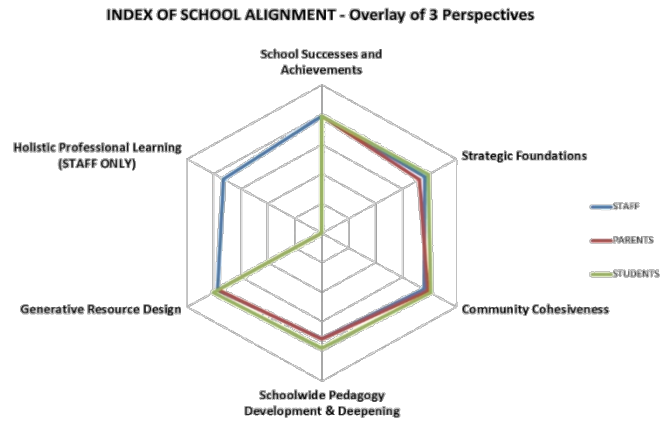


Figure 3: Alignment DISA Outcome and Elements from the Perspectives of Staff, Parents and Students

NAPLAN

The school also reported improvement in Literacy outcomes and reflected in student gain 2015-2017 has shown growth: *“our spelling and our reading went up which is fantastic”*. (Figures 4-9)

Years 3 – 5 Student Gain



Figure 4: Years 3-5 Gain Writing

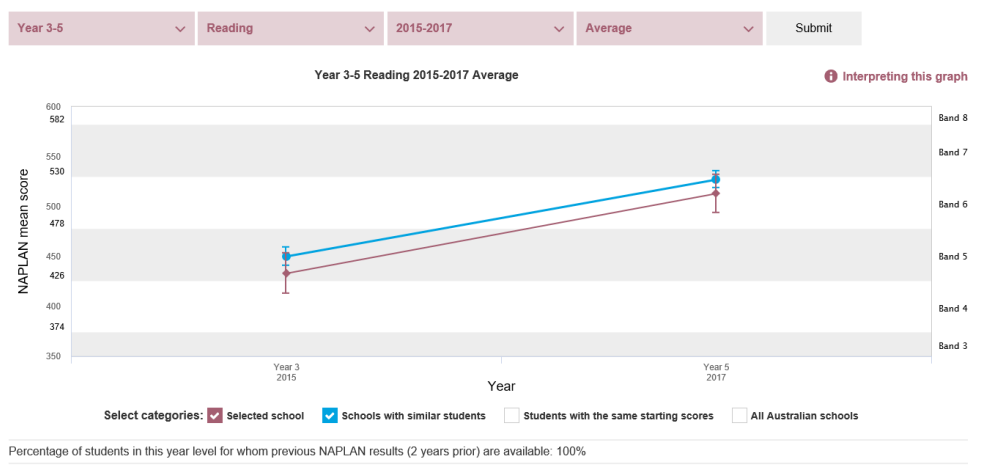


Figure 5: Years 3-5 Gain Reading

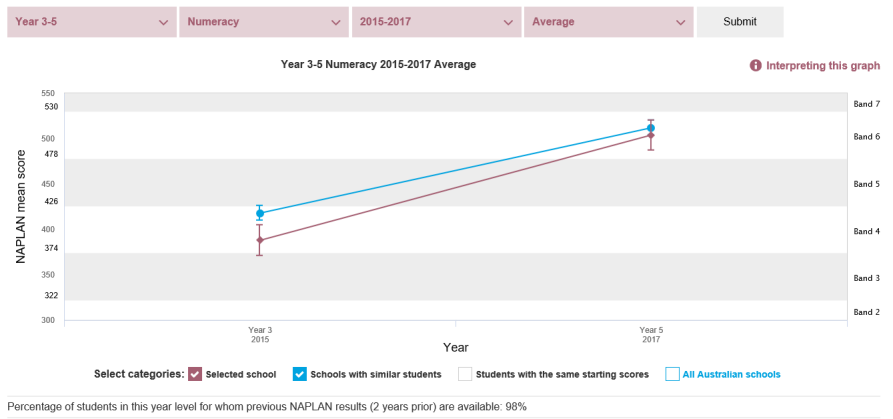


Figure 6: Years 3-5 Gain Numeracy

Year 5 – 7 Student Gain



Figure 7: Years 5-7 Gain Writing



Figure 8: Year 5-7 Gain Reading

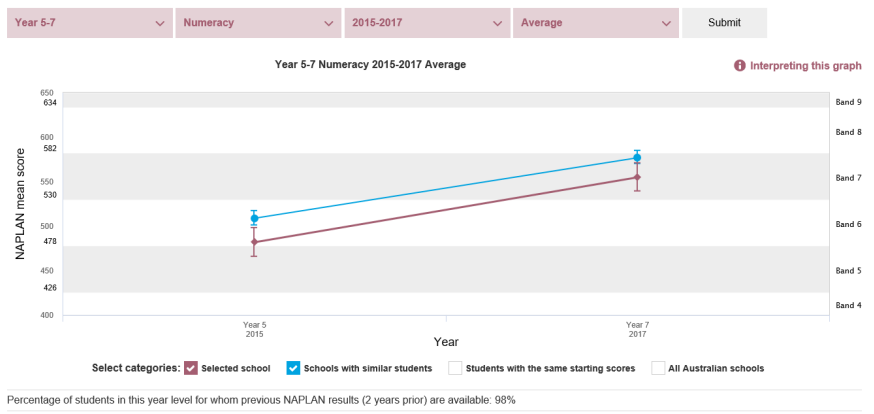


Figure 9: Year 5-7 Numeracy

Section 4: Factors that contributed to the reported Successes

Professional Learning Teams

PLTs – Early Years (meet Mondays); Primary Years (Tuesdays); Middle Years (Wednesdays)

- Small enough groups for good communication
- Common professional interests (level specific)
- Efficient use of time

This means 3 staff meetings a week for leadership team (not every week though – sometimes admin focus sometimes all together) – The benefits outweigh the costs.

In my opinion that's been quite a part of the success of what we do here – we have formed fantastic groups of people and people are more willing to share.

PLTs do not generally choose their own PL focus – PL has a school wide focus.

We are thinking that professional learning that is effective is long term and it is talking about the work that you do in the classroom with children.

Whole school approach ensures consistency for learners to support whole classroom practice

Whole school approach ensuring:

Consistency for learners through the use of – consistent language of methods so that staff can support each other and the children are also receiving the same message. Having a common language is important for clear shared understanding (e.g. in dyslexia (and other areas). Having explicit language makes it more powerful and more meaningful for our children.

I think most people are on the same page now because we do have that national curriculum and the national curriculum is enquiry based learning so you'll be very surprised if a teacher picked up the Australian curriculum and didn't use enquiry based learning. You really actually would not be teaching it properly.

There is certainly an agreed school wide pedagogy that we would introduce at the start of each year and remind people about this culture – this is the way that we do things around here e.g. things like literacy blocks enquiry in math and science.

They are the outcomes of the statement that is a bit more around the original project (IDEAS) that we did how about together we journey into the future and lifelong learning. We are talking more about the benefits of inquiry based learning and it being part of the school culture: with enquiry we support our children to work together and learn from each other and build that expertise within the children so if you look just at our classroom and look at flexible learning spaces I think that's pretty evident without anybody having to say anything to you but that is one of our cultures.

Schoolwide Pedagogy is explicit when it becomes the action of students in the classroom – an example given is from a relief teacher being able to operate well in the classroom – *We get a lot of relief teachers who comment to me about the way children operate in classes. I think one of the classics for me was when I did my 5 year review – we went into the class of a relief teacher and when I came out explained to the two people that were with him that this was a relief teacher and they were very surprised because of the way the class was operating....the way that they were learning and they're small groups but they were on task that they were conversing with each other – that they were on task and doing their learning even though it wasn't their regular teacher. That says something about the culture that's developed in the school.*

Consistent practices related to discipline areas – for example, Literacy – guided reading in every class, literacy groups in every class. We actually do have a template: It depends on the activities that you're doing. Sometimes I do make it inquiry-based, and other times it might be something more explicit because you need to do some explicit teaching. This might depend on the teacher and the approach varies from classroom to classroom.

So as a new teacher coming into our school, how do they know? *On the display board up here now (as part of our agreed school wide pedagogy) is where literacy is definitely placed based on literacy blocks, numeracy is definitely based on enquiry, and I suppose that professional learning over many years certainly developed skills among teachers.*

As it was explained, it is also about individualised personalised learning, for example, The Rosary IEP cover lists: diagnosis, the broad category, impact of learning, any intervention done within the school, and what form of reporting and assessment takes place whether or not they are EAL, all the history of reports from outside agencies. There is a long-term goal for term 3 and then from that the teacher puts together short-term SMART goals. *We've brought it all together because it just makes more sense.*

- Leadership

The programs have been supported and valued by leadership – Leadership from the principal and from teacher leaders....

Our programs are being supported and valued by leadership. It's certainly been in consultation with leadership and members of the action teams have worked alongside leadership for them to be actually implemented.

▪ Long term embedded learning (3-year plan)

The school has developed a way of implementing initiatives that is based on:

- Research-based successful programs
- Implemented through Action Teams led by teacher leaders working
- PLTs are linked into the action team through whole school professional learning
- Based on a 3-year cycle of development:

Year One – PD introduces the concept, reflection and reporting back OR *the expert teachers going off and doing the training bringing it back in implementing that in the classroom and having discussions with teachers.*

Year Two – provide support but more pressure in that we have expectations about what you are going to do in your *classroom*

Year Three – *There is an expectation that all teaches are providing differentiation, or it's pretty much saying are we in or are we out? If we are in then it's a part of our culture, a part of the way that we do things around here and there will be expectations from R-7 about what e.g. STEM, Literacy education looks like across our school.*

▪ Action Team (Leadership and teaching staff)

I think the successful part of that [action team] is that we could individually work with teachers. It wasn't in a threatening way. We had time where we could sit with them and we could get them to be very specific about their goals.

By creating the action teams people do have that first port of call – and someone they can talk to. We haven't got all the answers but together we can work on it. I think that's a big part of our success – building motivation and excitement to continue and promote initiatives so by building that excitement...getting all staff involved.

Distributed knowledge: Even if the action team isn't there then someone will step up because we've all had that training...we have worked together as a team and really anyone – it doesn't have to be a team member – can pick up and deal with it.

▪ Staff felt that they could ask for help

Diversity of people in the action teams helped that. Teachers also feeling more confident about asking questions "very powerful".

Action team for dyslexia – their approach invited collaboration (also true of Kids Matter)

Teachers could see the program was working in two classrooms, this generated conversation. Teachers had the opportunity to ask questions and were interested.

▪ Capacity building (empowering teachers and students)

When you are looking at change and being part of continuous improvement you know you can't do it all yourself.

- *Empowering teachers to embed effective reading strategies to support students*
- *Empowering students by gaining ownership of their own*

- *Students are now writing smart goals for themselves – that’s very powerful. Students are actually looking at what they specifically need to do to improve their learning.*

Building capacity for leadership within the staff has been a very conscious thing that we’ve done and tried to encourage. In relation to the dyslexia project: I could see the great potential in building some capacity in that area...we’ve now had many people on the staff play leadership roles in various areas of education. Certainly it’s never just us [the leadership team].

Who are the leaders? The people who are passionate about inclusive education, inquiry maths, play in the early years etc. – These are the people who lead those things.

We are looking at 21st century learning up where that’s at the back of our heads – with that enquiry learning approach... Just looking at those components that you need to go out into the future because we know that they need to learn specific things now but we don’t exactly know what they’re going to need in 2030 or whatever it is – so we’re just trying to give them the skills like with the STEM you want to look at all those collaboration skills working together looking at engineer design – all those skills there they would be 21st century skills. Learning how to learn as learning content now no longer enough – trying to prepare children to take their place in their world effectively – 21st skills e.g. communication, collaboration, problem solving.

Not content driven: We’ve made a specific decision that that is the opposite of what we’re about – the exact opposite – it’s not about the knowledge base it’s about the skills to take your place effectively in the world.

Kids Matter is an umbrella program e.g. Choice theory, restorative practices fit under that. I think it gave us the ability to shape well-being in a way that would meet the needs of the students at Rosary School... and the program is giving students voice. I think now they feel empowered to problem solve and have the skills and the strategies they need now to be able to do that – that’s very important.

▪ Time available

Investing our resources in providing time for:

- staff to attend professional learning time to come back to school and work together as a team.
- staff to work with our colleagues and to implement e.g. Kids Matter.
- class teachers within the year level to work together to plan specific lessons that fitted in with our framework.

I think the principal realised that we actually needed more professional learning time and we had it on more staff meetings so that teachers could get access to people who actually knew what was going on...And because they were in different groups they could feed off each other and talk about what was happening and what the successes were...that is a really powerful thing.

- Culture of Continuous Improvement – most staff are open to change, but there are always some who take longer ...

Three year implementation cycle has become a way of working. Almost everyone now on board and just really excited about doing different things. There has been a cultural change, for example:

- the PLTs has been adopted as a structure to build collaboration and sharing
- change not just mandated by leadership – teachers becoming passionate about various things

- Monitoring and reflecting on our practice – related to the PLTs and action teams as a process for ongoing improvement

It's important to ask why we are doing things and what will be effective and what are we going to achieve implementing it.

- Programs – Dyslexia (system support which included access to human and financial resources)
- Student wellbeing and the way students learn is the underlying factor of both of the programs we have implemented successfully

Further evidence of improved practices emerges from the comparison on an IEP prepared two years ago and a current IEP. He describes this as 'a fulcrum change' – so, presumably, one of some significance. This is also linked to cultural change. Teacher recognition of the need for Smart Goals is also a cultural change – and seeing their value teachers use them – they are not doing this because they have been told to, but because they see the value of doing so.

Inclusive education – Once upon a time we would just have called that special education and now we have widened our thinking and now it's just about including everyone.

...suggests that it is because the school is catering for all students not just dyslexic ones. These strategies become embedded into the school's inclusive education.

- Parents are informed and involved so they support the initiatives

Parents recognise the importance of academic achievement but families soon work out that there is quite a link between how a child does academically and how their well-being is going.

Increasing ethnic diversity in the predominantly middle class school. Some kids are in crisis. It's no surprise to me when kids come in in crisis is there is no learning happening. Particularly, some of the refugee children that come to our school have suffered trauma that's probably going to have an impact on the learning.

Parents are interested in academic performance but also know that well-being is very important.

- Staff working collaboratively towards an explicit common goal

Working collaboratively towards explicit common goals motivates staff and allows them:

- to bounce ideas off each other
- to support each other in working towards achieving an agreed end goal
- Working well together professionally: asking questions, asking for help, willingly sharing

This course [Dyslexia] has provided me with the number of strategies that I will be able to implement in my classroom. I think by the school completing this course together it will mean that teachers will be using similar strategies throughout the year levels keeping it consistent for a learners.

...where the language is used and teachers have opportunities to questions...There's always someone you can come and talk to.

In the PLTs they get to know their team very early on and just from previous experiences with new teachers, they do feel confident to come and ask because we have those conversations.

- Finances committed to initiatives

It's not just the resources – it's the constant support. Time to plan together. It is not just reading the file, there is a lot of other support too.

- New teachers

New teacher and dyslexia PD:

- Might be encouraged to take the online training, because of what you observe in the school
- Has the folder
- Able to ask questions – not afraid to admit gaps in knowledge
- Teachers have a shared language for talking about dyslexia – and know specifically what can be done to help [so have professional knowledge that can be shared].

Other Factors:

Systems support – this includes financial and resources support for special programs at central level (KIDS MATTER and DSYLEXIA) or at regional level (Reading Recovery).

Bringing In New Knowledge

Expert coming in has been the model for STEM

Interviewer – Is there a problem – expert having no knowledge of context?

Teacher: the expert is not just an outsider:

Expert had lengthy conversations with the teacher and Principal involved

Expert from within – and has good knowledge of – the Cath Ed system

Principal – sometimes we outsource depending on the expertise we need.

Expert expressed approval to Rosary approach to PL – not wanting her just to work with the whole group “talk and show”. *“She was very excited about that that's in our second year it was more about coming almost walking alongside people rather than I am the expert, this is how we do it.”*



Inhibiting Factors

The following list was provided:

- Time constraints
- Where are we on the continuum of the culture of continuous improvement as individuals
- Busyness of schools today – overcrowded curriculum
- Staff missing important training sessions and new staff to the school who haven't completed the training sessions
- Lack of computer skills to actively engage in the on-line learning
- Commitment to complete forums etc. in own time when ample school time and support were provided
- Attitude to what people value
- Finances – allocated funds

Section 5: Impact of SWP on in-school alignment

A component of the research was to explore the Impact of SWP on in-school alignment. Is there an understanding of in-school alignment? If so, what factors contribute? Is it about:

- contextually relevant language for in-school alignment?
- what emerges as the effect of contextually relevant pedagogical framework?
- what other factors have contributed to in-school alignment?
- what evidence is available?

SCHOOLWIDE PEDAGOGY

Drawing on the already presented data, a way of working has emerged which has an imbued philosophy of teaching and learning which is developed in teachers and students through carefully selected research evidenced projects. These whole school projects are implemented through a 3-year implementation cycle led by a member of the leadership team and teachers who either have expert knowledge or acquire this knowledge through Professional Development. The following points were made:

1. The agreed SWP is introduced at the start of each year and we remind people about this culture – this is the way that we do things around here e.g. literacy blocks, enquiry in maths and science...
2. 21st Century learning is important and we know about Together we journey into the future and Lifelong learning.
3. SWP is not explicit – rather it is embedded into practice (the 3-year implementation plan aimed at enculturating practice).

4. Inquiry based learning – with enquiry we support our children to work together and learn from each other and build that expertise within the children so if you look just at our classroom and look at our flexible learning spaces I think that’s pretty evident without anybody having to say anything to you but that is one of our cultures.
5. The approach depends on the activities that you’re doing sometimes – I do make it inquiry-based and other times it might be something more explicit because you need to do some explicit teaching. This might depend on the teacher and the approach varies from classroom to classroom.
6. Induction – so as a new teacher coming into our school – on the display board up here now (as part of our agreed school wide pedagogy) is where literacy is definitely placed based on literacy blocks, numeracy is definitely based on enquiry, and I suppose that professional learning over many years certainly developed skills among teachers.
7. The *art* of pedagogy is I suppose those skills that teachers bring themselves that makes their literacy block look a little bit different from those of the person next door. When we say that the best way, at Rosary School, is to do literacy blocks – not a 20 minute session before recess on spelling and after recess we’re going to do reading and then maybe at 12:30 I’m doing some writing. That would not fit the view about what we do in literacy here at Rosary School.

..well it has been interesting watching new teachers just come into our school and what their understanding of literacy blocks has been and over time helping them adjust the literacy blocks so that it fits in with the way that we do it in our school. Talks about one teacher and adjusting the way that that teacher did guided reading to bring them into line with current practice at Rosary. Talked about making it very clear to the new teacher about the rationale for guided reading and how it was carried out it was very explicit. It was more about walking them through the research I suppose about guided reading and why – that reading is best taught in small groups at a similar level. More about walking them through the research around guided reading.

8. Use evidence-based practice – there is a specific theory that is underpinning their approach to guided reading. This is based on research done in Canadian schools. I suppose the why we do it this way is because it’s backed by rigorous research that would say that this is the best way to teach reading to children.
9. Rosary School it’s a personalised learning approach...really we are looking at 21st century learning up where that’s at the back of our heads – with that enquiry learning approach. Just looking at those components that you need to go out into the future because we know that they need to learn specific things now but we don’t exactly know what they’re going to need in 2030 or whatever it is – so we’re just trying to give them the skills like with the STEM you want to look at all those collaboration skills working together looking at engineer design – all those skills there they would be 21st century skills.

Learning how to learn I think. Compared to why don’t we see children in rows like we did when I was at school is that we’re trying to prepare children to take their place effectively in the world that they are going to enter – that means we want to develop those good communication skills and collaboration skills and problem solving – those are the things we want the children to be getting into where as my education was very content driven. We’ve made a specific decision that that is the opposite of what we’re about – the exact opposite –

it's not about the knowledge base it's about the skills to take your place effectively in the world.

Use of technology going from the old days of working in a computer lab to no using devices just to assist learning in groups around the school. So a lot of that is about learning how to learn the goal setting to keep them on track to think about learning how to learn.

Underpinning is the concept of your philosophy about what it means to educate the whole child ... programs like KIDS MATTER does fit in the theories underpinning educating the whole child.

Section 6: Leadership

Another focus of the study was the emergence of aspects of leadership that has been effective in maintaining continuous improvement. The narrative certainly captures this story, and the following actions and structures have been reported:

1. Initial moves in the early years to change the culture of “them & us” to “we”. This cultural shift was a major outcome of the school’s engagement with IDEAS as well as the Principal taking the opportunity to change practices and structures. This included:
 - Principal and Deputy working with teacher leaders – Teacher Leadership is important in implementation: *If we look at people who might step up to do a leadership role...we've got quite a few people who step up and do things now; and*
There is that professional expertise that we have in our school but I'm quite proud of really –we can't have the success that we have without that.
2. It was important that the staff being given the opportunity to lead – not a feature of previous PD models. Whilst this was initially challenging for the teacher, the Principal encouraged them and gave teachers opportunities to lead and gain confidence to lead. *It is recognising the expertise of teachers...people are happy to get up and take the lead.*
3. Structures such as the PLTs and Action groups provided opportunities for leadership and developing a culture of inclusivity for all.
4. The view of the Principal about developing processes for continuous improvement that are defensible (research based), require a whole school approach; and providing opportunity for teachers to grow in their learning and expertise as well as opportunities to lead.

Section 7: Alignment

Summary – Within School Alignment

The school has reported factors that have enabled within school alignment as:

1. Developing a culture of continuous improvement through a clearly defined process – the 3-year implementation cycle.
2. The enhancement of teacher quality through specifically designed professional development, collaborative learning and an understanding of developing 21st century approaches to teaching and learning.

3. The encouragement of teacher led professional learning through action teams and PLTs.
4. Increasing confidence in teacher professionalism – knowledge, leadership and processes for action.

School-System Alignment

An overall aspect of this study was to explore the degree of alignment between the system and schools. In this school, the relationship between Rosary and the system reported:

1. The concept of “the System” varies in depending on what we talking about
 - The CESA system is divided into 4 regions.
 - Rosary’s region the most proactive by far – our region is often the initiator of projects that broader system taken on board.
 - This region is proactive because of its culture – there is culture of learning among those principals led by people like yourselves – University based people who would come out and run school improvement projects – they were the umbrella of people while we would all have our individual projects that we would bring along to discuss. *However, in today’s CESA system, projects have to be wider than regions.*
2. System’s role was to help us with consultants (school projects) to do things (including financially). Accountability: Principal consultant visits school to discuss the 3-year School Improvement Plan and 1-year annual Improvement Plan. *We have to present evidence that we are doing the things that we were saying in the 1-year plan.*
3. System knowledge of PL at Rosary and improving teaching and learning? Only through the Principal Consultant. Beyond that, the System not really knowledgeable about the work being done at Rosary. This raised a discussion of Principal appointments and the sustainability of initiatives at Rosary:

In the 15 years I have been here the certain principals apply for jobs in this region and certain principals do not. In some regions the principals rarely meet – or talk about admin issues. In this region, a lot of the meetings are based on professional learning. So people who are perhaps not driven by the educational agenda perhaps strongly consider being a principal in another region.

The Teacher leader indicated she would be confident that staff could sustain what was happening at Rosary.

Another Teacher indicated: *Well I would hope I was confident. I would certainly be giving at this kind of evidence to this hypothetical principal to say how it’s worked. I also believe in what I’m doing so – I am passionate about what I’m doing.*

Before a Principal is appointed, staff are consulted. I doubt anyone would be appointed to Rosary if their educational agenda wasn’t a large part of why they want to be a principal.

4. System Support and Accountability. The school reported that it had tapped into system funded projects, systems expertise and were able to report on the CIF – a framework with which they were comfortable as an accountability and reporting framework.

Overall, the system-school relationship could be reported as being “loosely-coupled”.

Section 8: Sustainability – A researcher’s Comment

Rosary has achieved significant ongoing improvement since 2012 as reported in this case study. The 2018 DISA, however, does indicate some decline in teachers’ reporting applicability of teacher professional learning and the teacher leadership of professional learning initiatives. Whilst this has been a strength in the past, as the school moves into the future, a dialogue between the Leadership team and the staff would warrant consideration.



Star of the Sea

SCHOOL

Open Hearts ~ Open Minds

Sustaining school improvement: exploring internal and external factors that develop school-system alignment in selected CESA Schools.

Case Study: Star of the Sea School, Henley Beach, SA

Compiled by Dr Dorothy Andrews

USQ/LRI Leadership Research International

University of Southern Queensland.

Toowoomba.

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Background of School

Star of the Sea School is situated in the western beach suburbs of Adelaide. It has a stable enrolment of 510 primary students. As a parish school which serves the needs of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish at Henley Beach, the school draws its ethos from MSC Priests and community. As well as an academic focus, the school has strong programmes in Sports and Music, both in school and as extra-curricular activities. The Marine Discovery Centre is part of the school and guides the school's excellent environmental programmes (www.marinediscoverycentre.com.au). With a strong focus on community, Star of the Sea is a school for the whole family and values parent participation (extract from My School <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/49718>).

Demographics

Teaching staff 39 Full-time equivalent teaching staff 27.8

Non-teaching staff 21 Full-time equivalent non-teaching staff 11.4

Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA)

ICSEA: 1112

Enrolments

Total 498 (M = 219 – 44%; FM = 277 – 56%) see Figure 1

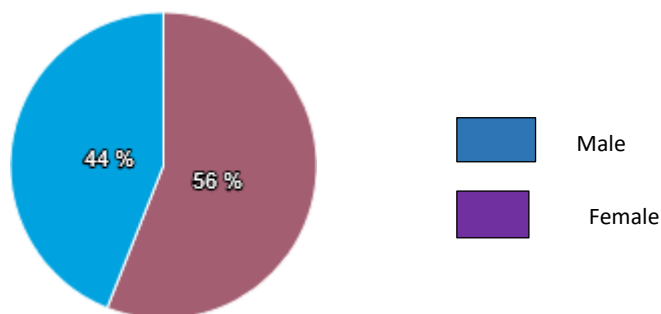


Figure 1: Enrolment by Gender

Source: My School <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/49718>

School Vision

Star of the Sea School in partnership with our community and within the Catholic tradition provides students with an excellent foundation for lifelong learning and the inspiration to take an active part in shaping a better world for all.

Open Hearts ... Open Minds



Mission

At Star of the Sea School, we want to challenge our students to aim for the highest possible level of achievement in all areas of school life: academic, spiritual, cultural and sporting. We hope that our students will be challenged to question and search, explore and discover as they become self-motivated learners who will seek to make a difference in the world in which they live.

Given the school's aspirations for student learning, they have developed a Vision for Learning (see Figure 2).

Vision for Learning at Star of the Sea

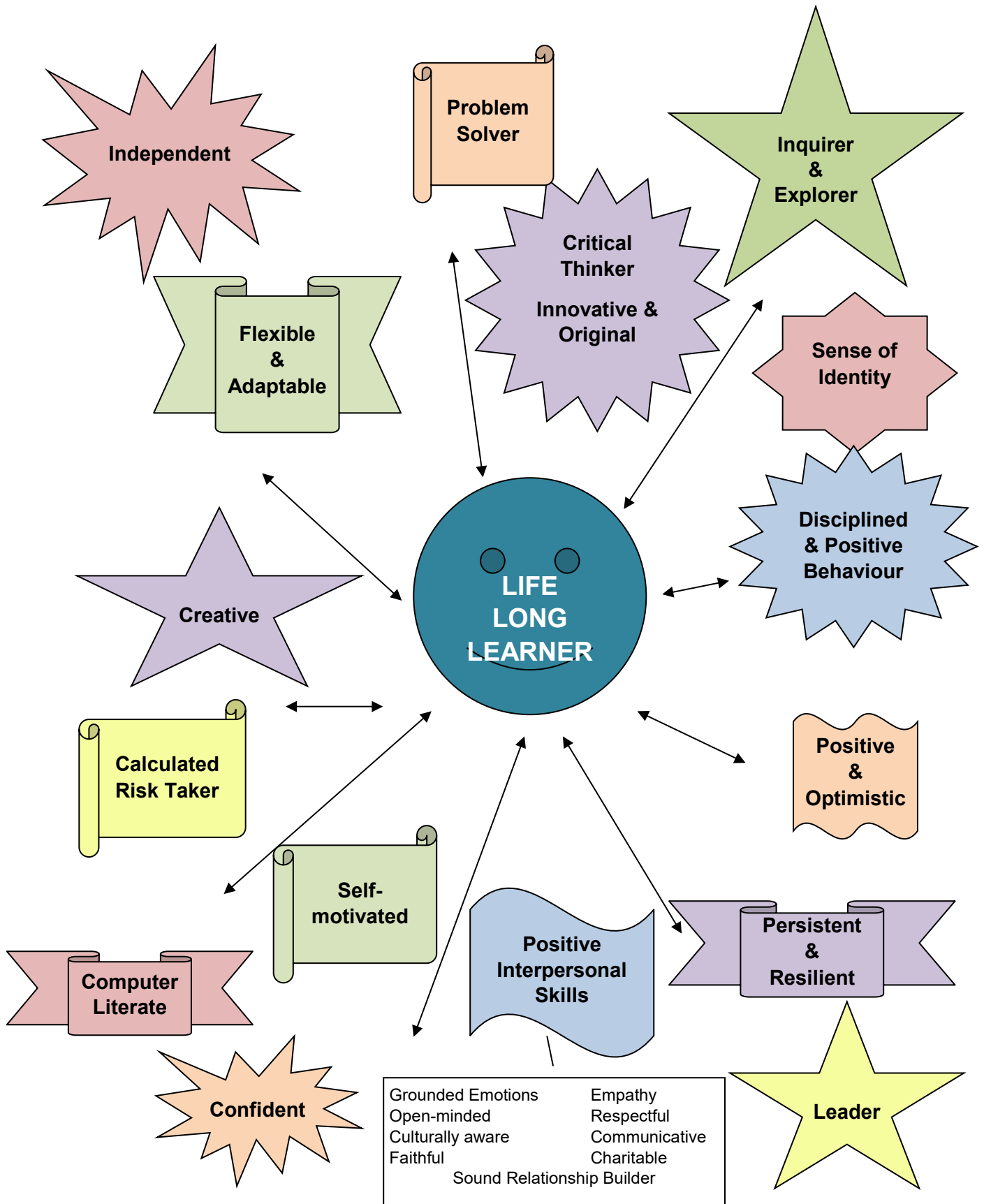
At Star of the Sea School we guide our learners to be **self managed, innovative and critical thinkers** who have a strong sense of who they are and their **responsibility** in the world.

We value the skills necessary to build **meaningful relationships** and to be **connected to learning**.

We encourage our learners to **question, search, explore and discover** so they actively contribute to a more **just, peaceful and forgiving society**.

Figure 2: Vision for Learning

A focus has been to make explicit the student knowledge set that we believe our learners need to leave our community into the next. These skillsets (refer Figure 3) include skills for the self-motivated learner. Skill development therefore included aspects of Well-Being (see Table 1) mapped to our Learning Vision.



Star of the Sea Case study 2018

Figure 3: Star of the Sea School: Student Knowledge, Skills

Table 1: Student Well-Being

(*)	BUILDING BLOCKS OF WELLBEING AND HAPPINESS (*)	Star of the Sea School GOALS The “SOSS STUDENT CLASS” (**)
P	POSITIVE “feeling good”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy • Creative & Stimulated • Confident • Spiritual & Faithful • Self Esteem • Optimistic
E	ENGAGEMENT “being completely absorbed in activities”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistent & Resilient • Endurance • Inquirer & Explorer • Committed • Disciplined
R	RELATIONSHIP “being authentically connected to others”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social & Moral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Respectful ➢ Supportive ➢ Grounded Emotions ➢ Emotional Intelligence • Flexible & Adaptable
M	MEANING “purposeful existence”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Hearts • Open Minds • Spiritual & Faithful • Social & Moral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Emotional Intelligence ➢ Charitable ➢ Empathetic
A	ACHIEVEMENT “a sense of accomplishment”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self Esteem & Self Belief • Critical Thinker • Problem Solver • Independent & Self Motivated • Persistent & Resilient • Innovative & Original • Calculated Risk Taker • Leader & Disciplined • Technically Savvy

(*): source Martin Seligman

(**): source SOSS

Moving towards Teacher Quality through Focused Professional Learning that reflects the Vision and builds a Collaboration to develop a Learning Community.

The following text captures the voice of the Principal and three teacher leaders as they reflect on the journey, essentially since 2014 when the current Principal arrived. These data were collected from

semi-structured interviews. Inserted into the text is documentary evidence they presented during the interview and school visit.

Prior to the new Principal coming:

The dialogue had little comment on this other than to say:

We started IDEAS – the IDEAS team had worked with the staff and we had developed a vision – Open Hearts, Open Minds.

We wanted to be a school that was moving forward but we were trying to do too many things. We had too many things in a basket. There has never been one thing that you could say this is it. You would go off and do you would do one bit of PD and did come back as a bit of a lone wolf and try and implement something in your classroom.

The Arrival

Principal: *so when I arrived in 2014 Open hearts and Open Minds was there. My view was let's take that and do what we need to do what is necessary with it. So we have spent many staff meetings breaking that concept open – open hearts open minds to the point where the other day we were interviewing for a reception teacher for next year and that was one of the questions – talk to us about open hearts open minds. We actually weaved that into our interview process.*

I took the [2012] DISA data and had a good look at it. What we took out of the survey was that there needed to be holistic professional learning. That was one of the areas that wasn't quite aligned. In fairness in the school, there was very good alignment, so you're actually trying to find something by nit picking – it was holistic professional learning, school wide pedagogy – Shared understanding and decision making, clear plans for teaching and learning [and] students wanted a greater voice in their learning. They were the areas that we took out of the DISA work and we made that our focus.

The key factors from the DISA survey that led to the creation of the learning team – with the big questions, so how do we want to teach, as a staff how do we want to go about our teaching? How do we want our children to learn? Also we looked at some theorists. We looked at Hattie's work, we looked at Treadwell, we had been working with Kath Murdoch enquiry, Lisa Burman, Adrian Doolger – there are quite a few people that we looked at closely.

Then we developed a new school vision for learning (see Figure 2).

Defining School Success

The study asked the Principal and teacher participants to define their understanding of school success. For the Teachers: *It's the happy children, the happy teachers, it's the learning, forward, sharing of learning, Community of learning – happy and passionate that's the definition of success – also Star of the Sea is known for being open to everyone and everything.*

For the Principal: *I think success is a whole team working together to bring about school improvement. Sense of Purpose, yeah Purposeful.*

Further, the Principal adds: *Different people see school success differently. If you ask parents what makes a successful school you'll have different answers like children being prepared for high school. Our kids at high school do well. Parents will define school success very differently than teachers. Some people in administration might say, But a school that has full enrolments is a success, but just*

because you've got strong enrolments doesn't mean you've got a successful school. I think it's about people working cohesively as a team having a sense of shared vision and purpose – I think that for me is success. People who are prepared to support the vision of the school and take it on and live it. That to me is success.

Evidence of Success

Table 2 outlines the criteria for which the principal and the teachers cited as areas where they collected evidence of their understanding of success. They outlined *7 indicators that we think defines our school success*:

Table 2: Seven Indicators of Success

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear goals and direction (Vision and Mission) 2. High quality teaching and learning 3. Children who are able to articulate how and why they learn (student voice) 4. High expectations of students and staff 5. Student performance 6. Parent satisfaction 7. Student well-being
--

Source: Star of the Sea PowerPoint slide for USQ/LRI Research

1. Clear Goals and Direction (Vision for Learning and Mission)

Under this indicator, the school group provided these areas as evidence:

- * DISA survey and results
- * School strategic plan (see Appendix 1)
- * Developing a shared vision for learning
- * Community input – conversation with parents, café conversations, parent surveys, student surveys and voice
- * AGM
- * Development of Vision for Learning and School Values

Strategic Direction

The Principal discussed the development of the strategic planning process:

Developing a clear direction ... when I came here we took the 2012 data and this is back in 2014, with the staff. We looked at identifying what the good things that we were doing so we can make them explicit. We looked at identifying the things that we could do better and how do we continue to be sustainable and make what we do explicit. We took the DISA results and analysed the data as a staff. Anything with a mean of 4.04 or above, we rated as a success. Anything with a mean above 3.9

we rated as satisfactory. Less than 3.9 we looked at and that's how we came up with our challenges. So we use that data to give us direction.

... So we are coming to the end of it now [the current strategic plan] – we have to do a new strategic plan. Using the data we had a cafe conversation evening with our parents and we ran one with the staff. We even ran one with our students. So we came up with our strategic imperatives. We were able to break that into five pillars being: faith and values, learning and teaching, culture and well-being, community and partnerships, resourcing infrastructure and environmental sustainability.

The environmental sustainability is a really key thing given where we are on the beach plus the Marine Discovery Centre being a big part of our school. When you look at some of the stuff we're doing now with zero outdoor bins, it's all starting to take shape. The main part was that – so one of the things we were saying was that we were driven by a culture of learning and provide optimum learning strategies for students, we will invest in and promote the personal professional development of staff and students. It was in our strategic plan to make sure that we will offer a relevant, state of the art – or whatever you want to call it – so that we will offer a relevant contemporary curriculum. Also in regards well-being, we promote healthy life-styles and responsibilities and we will have power respect, resilience independence and engagement, ownership risk taking, optimism and inspiration. That was all part of our well-being strategy.

That is the higher structure and then each one of these is broken up and we started running down. One of the things that I do at the end of each school year with a school board – I have a traffic light system and show the board what we've achieved, what we haven't achieved and what's in process. We are due another cafe evening – we will look at what we've done and some things that we need to keep, they are ongoing and there will be some new things.

We had an [CESA] external validation last year – have one every three years and you have to address three in each cycle. The strategic plan has to reflect this cycle.

Shared Vision for Learning – Our aims for our learners

We guide our learners to be self-managed, innovative and critical thinkers who have a strong sense of who they are and their responsibility in the world. We value the skills necessary to build meaningful relationships and be connected to learning. We encourage our learners to question, search, explore and discover so they actively contribute to a more just, peaceful and forgiving society.

That is our vision and I suppose everything that we do we come back to that vision. If it is in the area of learning, it is about ensuring that our children are critical thinkers, it is about them being self-managed learners, it is about making sure that they are connected to learning. When we are looking at well-being it's looking at relationships and we bring everything back to our vision.... This is your vision for learning.

*The vision just wasn't written and given to the staff. It took lots and lots of staff meetings with the entire staff and I think those key questions about how do we want to teach and how do we want our children to learn, what are the key questions that brought us to this. We talked about what successful teaching looks like and what successful learning looks like and then we broke that down. You know how open hearts and open minds that's our motto – I think it worked really well for us. When we did our brainstorming for our vision for learning, we were then able to break up the vision for learning into **four key areas**: identity, relationships, innovative thinking and connected learning. If you look at that there are two from the heart and two from the mind and so that*

becomes our framework – it is our pedagogical framework. It is our vision and so we concentrate on those four areas.

The group then go on to explain: Students talk about open hearts and open minds all the time. The open hearts is the social justice side – the being selfless, giving to others. From here we came up with 5 School values and so those values are present in front of the children all the time. Children are able to name the values if you go to a classroom.

What about a new teacher coming into the school? When new teachers come to Star of the Sea, what can we give them to show this is how we go about the teaching process here at Star of the Sea. We are not asking you to leave your skill set at the door – a new person coming and we would then sit down with them and take him through our pedagogical framework – how we teach writing, how we teach reading, how we teach numeracy, using the framework that we have in place.

Also, the Teacher adds: It's about that understanding of how we work together is that we are a team. It is therefore not that individual's responsibility to come in and work it out. We work as a team. It is a team approach through the whole set up the way we do things in our professional learning and our regular meetings together.

We have also started to develop and these will be ready for next year – essential guide to reading at Star of The Sea, essential guide to writing at Star of the Sea. The reading guide is the pedagogy around the reading workshop etc., everything that they need is in these folders online. We have just developed the new maps as well. This is the reading map for Year 2 at Star of the Sea. It goes through the habits that we want to instil in our children, the crafting focuses for the writing, what it is that we need to help our children explore and learn. So we have maps of learning. We have essential guides to learning. I'm, so the hope is that when people come in, this is very visible and there is common conversation around them.

2. High quality teaching and learning

The school group provided these items as evidence for this indicator:

- * Agreed principles for teaching and learning (refer Vision for Learning and Skill Development)
- * Educational theorists and mentors
- * Celebrating personal pedagogy and having a clear vision for learning at Star of the Sea
- * Streamlined professional development in line with our vision for learning
- * Regular sharing of learning and teaching practices
- * Consistent model of teaching and common language from R-7 in literacy and numeracy

And presented a Photo Collage to illustrate a number of staff collaborative learning activities (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Regular Sharing of Teaching and Learning Practices – staff workshops

Source: Star of the Sea PowerPoint slide for USQ/LRI Research

We have regular sharing times with the learning journey throughout all the classrooms. So from R-7 the children left artwork for us to view. And we went around and viewed the whole school. We've done that quite regularly actually. The power of it was being able to see from reception to year 7 the development, but the continuity.

Sharing times are: ... not compulsory but most people chose to stay, even student teachers which is fantastic. It started at 3:30 and people were told they could go at 4:30 and there were people still in classrooms at 5:00. I think that says it all. I was with a staff member who was asking a lot of questions right up until about 5:30. They were so engaged with what they had seen and wanted to talk it through. There is power in going into other people's classrooms, and seeing what they are doing – we don't often do that. We don't do that enough. We might do it across our immediate year levels but not up and down. It's a very powerful and enriching experience.

You can see the way the learning grows from reception to year 7. And it wasn't about us coming in and judging. It was about trusting and everybody feeling safe and opening at their classrooms.

One of the things that we did when we were looking at reading was we set up the staff room to be a reading café [see Figure 3]. We try to have a bit of fun when we share as well so it's not mundane and boring – and everyone reflects on what we've been doing. You know staff meetings can become quite dry so this was our Cafe. We have snacks and we had work to share from different classrooms and we looked at the comprehension language from reception to 7, so we actually unpacked different ways to learn in regards to inferencing – this is visualising down here, and so from R-7 we had some examples of the way we might approach inferencing in your classroom and that allows for that creative freedom with different models and different ways. We had our professional reading texts out as well – some professional reading for staff to engage in. It was really an open conversation of learning. Our teachers who have been coached by Lisa Burman, they were the ones who were leading the learning but everybody had the opportunity to share. We didn't go to every station – people got to choose and there was creative choice but they had to visit 3 before they entered the staff meeting.



Staff Reading Café Sharing of learning



Reading Group Agenda

Richard Day 2nd December 2014

Learning Intentions

- To review our year together
- Set personal/professional goals in the area of teaching and learning of reading
- Set year level goals

Success Criteria

- An opportunity to reflect on success this year
- Walk away with a focus/professional goals for next year
- Start generating ideas for using the teaching of reading/writing through an inquiry approach

Overview of half-day release...

Reflective Reading - The Language of Learning - Lisa Burman

- Time to read and reflect...
- Think, pair share about the successful outcomes of our Reading Group this year
- Sharing of professional success
- Wonderings - What are we still wondering?

Let's stick our wonderings on the wonder wall

Time to think and reflect

Kath Murdoch Video - What are you thinking? Start to consider your goals for the teaching of reading in 2014.

Let's explore further

The role of picture books in teaching reading and inquiry - Read article by Kath Murdoch

What role does the learning environment play in the teaching and learning of reading? Do you need to add to your wonderings? Add more questions to the wonder wall.

Reflective Reading - The Learning Environment

- Goal setting - what are your personal goals for next year?
- Goal Setting - What are your goals as a professional year level team next year?
- Request from Lisa Burman - photos, artefacts from our journey, videos etc...
- Resource time - list of possible novel studies/mentor texts, websites, sharing of valuable resources, Daily 5 website
- Planning in teams - possible novel studies, mentor texts?
- Presentation of certificates and thank you over lunch

Professional Reading Group 2014

You are invited to continue your journey in the Professional Reading Group next year. There will be an open invitation for all staff to attend. Staff will need to log their hours of attendance with KSL. Next year, we have six staff involved in a writing inquiry with Lisa Burman. This group will also share their learning with you during Reading Group sessions. The sessions will be similar to this year and will include: professional readings, sharing of good practice, opportunities to visit different learning environments in our school and possible release to view learning in other schools.

I would like to thank you all for your input, passion and dedication this year. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with you all. You are a special group of educators.
Tom Cox



Figure 5: Staff Reading Café Sharing of Learning

Source: Star of the Sea PowerPoint slide for USQ/LRI Research

We always set the agenda for our meetings according to our learning [see Figure 5] and what we needed at the time and then we share that out. Then we have possibilities for learning. And this is a map that we have played with, with Lisa – where we need to go with our children. So when we are planning our programs [see Figure 7] now we talk about possibilities for learning but we move with our learners. So I'm aware of where I could go with my children but based on their needs as learners I

make decisions about where I go with their learning. So these are called possibility maps. We call them Bubble Maps [see Figure 6].

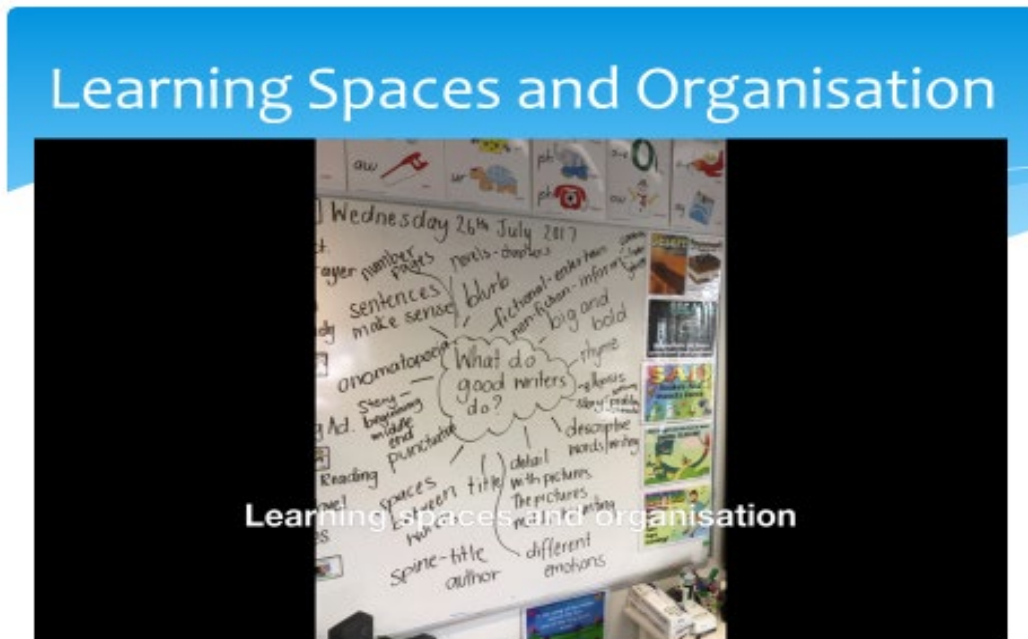


Figure 6: Sample Bubble Map

Source: Star of the Sea PowerPoint slide for USQ/LRI Research

Structure of Lessons

Mini Lesson Learning Intention	
Materials	
Connection: (activate prior knowledge and focus student attention on the lesson) Yesterday we worked on... Today I am going to teach you... because...	
Teach: (demonstrate the teaching point as if you were working independently) Let me show you how I... Hmm...I'm thinking... Did you see how I...	
Active Engagement: (coach and assess students during this time) Now you are going to have a go. You are going to... Let's come back together now.	
Link: (review and clarify key points) Today and every day when you are writing/reading, you can...	
Reflection and share learning:	

Reference: Teachers College Reading and Writing Project

Figure 7: Planning Framework for Lesson

Source: Star of the Sea PowerPoint slide for USQ/LRI Research

The interview revealed other important evidence:

Developing Models of Learning:

Models of learning – that is very much in action here because we have a demonstration lessons. We have a collaborative learning sessions, and we have our coach teachers who share their learning. We have videos available online of Lisa Burman teaching or of other people teaching so it's very much a model of support and a model of a visibility I think. It's a visible thing and if it's not visible and if it's not moving and shifting it's not a conversation that you have regularly ... it's about us continuing our area group conversations, our staff meetings are regularly devoted to being purposeful around our vision.

The model is a framework which has a structure and lessons (literacy and numeracy) – so we're not trying to tell people how to do it all but there is a structure to the way we teach reading, a workshop structure and even in numeracy there is a structure so that as children, hopefully as children move through regardless of who the teacher is, they have that same so that kids become confident in the way that they are being taught. So it's not that this teacher – we all teach differently but the structure, the model, the framework is the same. It is really important that you get that framework right because if it's the wrong framework you've got 8 years of the wrong thing. We are confident that we are with the data that we are getting it's showing us that the framework is good because our reading is going through the roof. Our writing is improving. We are still working on that one, but we're confident that we've got that framework right.

So ... It is about being clear about your teaching and your learning intentions for the children, so they can think about their learning. It's being purposeful about what you're teaching and why you're teaching and how you are teaching it. So at the beginning of the lesson we have our workshop model – it is the way we make that intentions clear to our children, we connect back to a previous learning, and then we introduce what we're doing for the day and why we're doing it ... and a major part of the model of learning is that teachers understand how to think out loud themselves with the learners in front of them.

Use cooperative learning strategies – children talking with each other (not ping ponging with the teacher) [and] when the children move from reception and you say to the kids think, pair, share or turn and talk, or whatever, they know exactly what to do. You don't have to re-teach it. The other part is that all teachers share with the kids how they teach.

Teachers indicated that they have drawn on some educational theorists – *but this is OUR model.*

Coach Teachers

Before the external coach begins we meet with them ... we make sure that their pedagogy and philosophy meets our needs.

A coach teacher (a professional expert) is a teacher who is working with our model of learning. So they might present a reading workshop for example – for example Lisa Burman – they prepare a lesson around how we want to learn and the focus areas that they are teaching in that classroom and then they present that lesson and then they have time for critical analysis and feedback with Lisa Burman. So they are coached I guess in the way of how to teach in regards to how we want our children to learn, how we want to teach, who we want to be as a school – in that enquiry mode of learning as well. But then they get the opportunity to see how to self-reflect, ... how to take that

critical analysis and then how you reflect to make your teaching even better. Lisa guides you through that, you have the opportunity then to reflect yourself and tell her where you want to go and what you want to do. It's about learning with your team.

I think the coach teaches that you've got to be prepared to put yourself out there to be vulnerable. And really be prepared to sit down and put in the time to really think purposefully about how I am going to deliver this lesson. You can't just think, yes I'm going to do a lesson on big and bold crafting techniques – you can't just think I've done this every year for the last 20 years, I can just walk in and wing it – actually really think about what am I going to say, how am I going to introduce it, what questions am I going to get from the students. Everything you do is really purposeful. I think that for me has been my biggest growth, and then being able to share that with my team and say what I thought this was going to happen but it didn't so I had to then change – or I really wanted this to happen and it worked really well or next time I'll do something different. And then they can go off and give it a go and try it as well. That's sharing, that's learning as well and sharing that journey with them. Be prepared to be challenged.

Coaching happens: Once a term for us and then there are demonstration lessons by her where she comes in and teaches and we as a collective group watch her. The coaching isn't individual focus. There are 6 of us being coached with the intention that we then mentor what we are learning. So I am being coached and I am learning all the time with Lisa. That's a one-to-one session. If I don't share that then it's not going anywhere.

That's about my learning then but if I'm then in connection with our vision for learning – as a group of learners I need to make sure that I am sharing that with my junior team. The coaching is one-to-one with our professional educational theorist who we call in because of our beliefs around learning as a collective of staff. The mentoring is about me in that position of leadership sharing my learning and making sure that we keep that passion and that conversation of learning and keeping our vision alive. If we don't, there's no point. If you don't do that there's no point in any of it because I'm learning and the others are not.

Teachers are doing some coaching ... The coach teacher has a huge responsibility – that's me – and we have two in Upper Primary, 2 in middle primary and 2 in Junior Primary. Well actually we've been lucky enough to get a third one in Junior Primary this year.

However, this approach enables the individual teacher creative freedom ... [but] there needs to be a common language (a language of learning) across the school. For example, if you are teaching a comprehension focus, I have to know what inferencing you've done, I have to know how to teach summarising and so on – so my approach to that. I have the freedom of what I use, what texts I use, anything I bring to the table and how I model that, but I have a consistent focus in the language that I'm using. I know that when I'm talking about inferencing that is 'reading between the lines' but the name that we give it is this ... So it is more about the consistent language. You can approach it in your own way, you can choose your own resourcing, you can get your children to do it creatively but you won't be doing the worksheet.

It's not a structure, it's about how I set up the teaching and learning in my classroom and me being a learner with my children making sure that the language of learning is at the forefront of that classroom.

The external coach provided a different way of doing things – we wanted a consistent language across the school and we needed outside support to.

Building Capacity

We use the external coach on a 3-year cycle. The idea is that you set up in your school this language of learning, you have a clear vision for learning and teachers who are being coached. So, we've got key people who are being coached who then work with others.

We need leaders of learning in the school – many outside pressures can make us so busy that we go back to old habits.

Staff Workshops

Teacher leader runs workshops for the whole staff – There are workshops not on a staff meeting day and people opt in. People are welcome to come when they want or not come when they want and I'll go along and the library is full of people. People go there because they want to learn ... that will be a model for next year. We've already put that forward about the enquiry into work study and I think already will have 20 people every afternoon, and that is an opt-in in your own time.

Sustainability of our Model for Learning

Adhering to Systems Requirements: *it fits in with the continuous improvement framework when we look at components of the continuous improvement framework we're able to say well this is where all these things fit into that. So high quality teaching and learning, data analysis, school identity, all those things we are able to fit in at various levels of that framework.*

Embedded Process: *that our model and framework continues. The way we go about learning, the way we go about approaching professional learning here at Star of The Sea continues. That we provide people with time to learn that professional learning doesn't just happen on a Tuesday night after school but people are supported in the way that we learn and just don't all go off and do our individual learning ... It's a whole school approach to it.*

New Principal Proof: *process of selection has a context statement ... So one of the things that happened before I got here I think whoever was on the panel came out and interviewed the staff – it was a context statement. In the context statement there was a whole lot of things that the community, the school board and the staff were wanting of the new principal coming in.*

I think it's partly the responsibility of the staff and the community and the parents and the board to educate the principal coming in. There is a collective responsibility. Principals do have their own ego and we've all got a vision for what we want our school to look like. I've been in four schools and every time you bring your own flavour in, your own attributes, your own strengths, because there is strength that I have and weaknesses that I have. The new person coming in would play to his or her strength.

Shared Leadership Model: *a shared leadership model has been developed – instead of top down, it has been a middle up ... it's been an organic thing. So a new principal coming in would get that straight away that there are leaders throughout the school. It's been set up in that way through the groups that we have with our professional learning teams, our positions of responsibility model. There are leaders everywhere working alongside the principal.*

3. Children who are able to articulate how and why they learn (student voice)

The school group provided these items as evidence for this indicator:

- * Strong identity as learners
- * Confident, independent learners
- * Innovative and critical thinkers
- * Know how to learn and speak about their learning

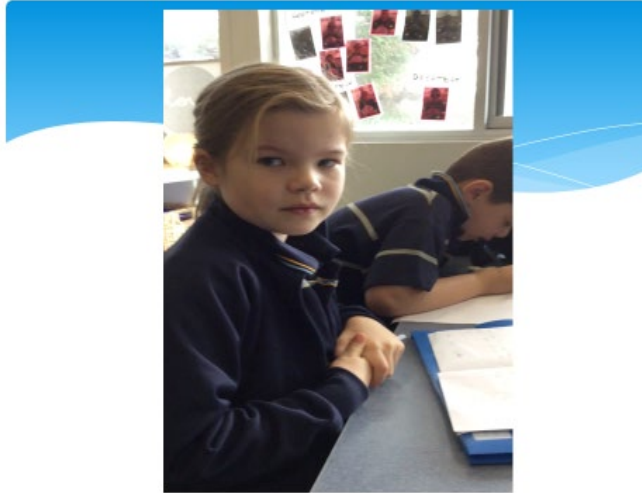
We hope that our children have a strong identity as learners and that they are confident and independent. They can take their learning where they need to. That they are innovative and critical thinkers and we know how to learn and how to speak about learning.

For example: Writing

... so in our model of learning we want our children to think about genre or whatever it is we are teaching but let's just say genre, in the way that it is intended to be learnt – that is, that procedure is a 'how to' text. It teaches our readers something.

So we look at it through the eyes of the reader first. I setup some possible resources for a unit of work on how to texts. I approached it in a very different way and the children might have a range of books out on the table and I want you to go and have a look at those books and see what you discover about them. So the children straight away are not being told "we are about to learn procedure", it's an enquiry model as well. So they have been given sticky notes, and they stuck things down about what they noticed and then they come back to a sharing circle and share. They might say well these books are teaching us things. This is how you make something, this is how to play something. They have the opportunity to go off and read those books but through your strings of lessons what you're doing is you are saying to them, ok then what do we know about how to texts? What kind of words do we notice? The children are discovering for themselves and essentially then have the opportunity to go off – and we're sharing our thinking and we are recording that thinking, until eventually the children are creating their own how to text with their book making and so they are playing with writing.

The teachers captured the voices of students in video clips as they related their experience and learning from the creation of their books (see Figure 8).



You hear that she has a strong identity as a writer, which is what we want. That is in a vision for learning. You hear that she is very purposeful about what she is writing and you hear that she is using what authors use when they write a how to text. More importantly you hear that she is critically thinking about herself as a writer, that she is innovative in what she is doing, and she is actually passionate about what she's doing. She's not having to do a whole class set task – they are all individually working on something but they are using the learning that we have highlighted to them.

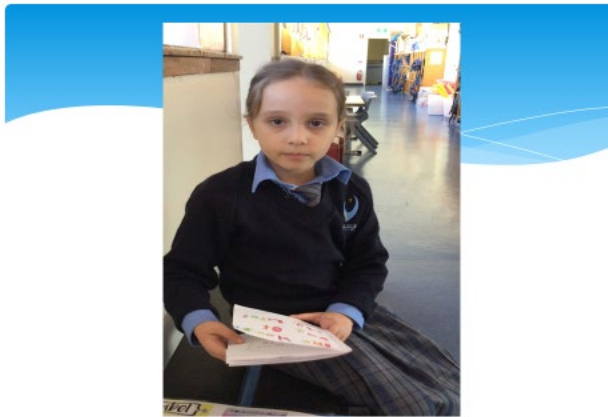


Figure 8: Students talk about their experience in creating a Book

Source: Star of the Sea PowerPoint presentation for USQ/LRI Research.

Transition to Secondary

About 95% of our students go to St Michael's – the closest secondary school.

We get excellent feedback, absolutely. I think the proof is also in the pudding in the year to come – looking at St Michael's all the student leaders are ex Star of the Sea students – you could call this a coincidence or not I don't know, most of the high academic awards – most of the students come from Star of the Sea ... our kids cope in the environment, I think they are so resilient and adaptable that they have, they have all those skills, the critical thinking the innovation they've been self-managed learners – they can adapt.

4. High expectations of students and staff

Although this area had been discussed to some degree in indicator 2, additional information was provided. This included:

- a. A Professional Learning Plan (see appendix 2)
- b. Teacher Goal Setting and Professional Learning – see Table 3

Table 3: Teacher Goal Setting/ Professional Review Process 2015

Timeline

Term 1	Teachers review their 2014 goals and begin thinking about their goals for 2015.
Term 2	<p>First day back next term Monday 27th April teachers meet in their teams to set and share their goals and plan how they will collect evidence.</p> <p>Time provided during Weeks 1 or 2 to meet with Matt, Kelly or Joe to discuss your goals and implementation.</p> <p>Time provided for a learning exchange or observation with another teacher.</p> <p>Matt, Kelly or Joe to undertake a walk through and provide feedback.</p>
Term 3	<p>Time provided for a second learning exchange or observation with another teacher.</p> <p>Matt, Kelly or Joe to undertake a second walk through and provide feedback.</p> <p>Teachers given time to meet in teams to assess goals and discuss progress.</p>
Term 4	<p>Teachers complete End of Year Reflection form.</p> <p>Teachers meet individually with Matt, Kelly or Joe for end of year Professional Review and reflection</p>

Other Information:

Learning Exchange: An opportunity to observe another teacher or invite another teacher to observe you with a focus on a goal for 2015.

Walk Through Feedback: A defined focus on a goal with an informal observation lasting 10 – 30 minutes, starting the process toward collaborative reflective dialogue. Feedback will be provided by leadership and will contribute to the end of year review. There will be a minimum of two walkthroughs this year.

End of Year Self Review and Discussion: This is designed to be summative, evaluative and a collaborative document. Teachers are asked to reflect on their progress toward their individual teaching goals and to also reflect on their strengths and growth areas. Once teachers have written their reflections they will meet with Leaders of Learning (Matt, Kelly or Joe) and discuss their goals and general performance. Following discussion, the Leadership team member will provide feedback as part of the Professional Review process.

It should be noted that although the 2018 DISA data were not available at the time of the interview, the researcher can report:

The DISA data indicate that teachers and parents believe that teachers, students and parents hold high expectations for student achievement and that students are actively engaged in their learning. Students believe that teachers and parents hold high expectations for their achievement.

DISA indicates Teachers have a strong sense of professionalism and Parents and Students believe they are good teachers. The overall high level of satisfaction of Teachers with their professional learning and their teaching and learning practices indicates a learning culture that is self-reflective and prepared for self-critique. (Researcher Observation from 2018 DISA)

5. Student performance

The following evidence was provided to support this indicator:

- How do we monitor student data?
- Analysis of NAPLAN results
- Introduction of Scorelink to store and track student data from R-7
- Pat Data analysis

I think probably over the years we haven't been that good at analysing data. We've just been doing the same old and not really analysing our data and I think that's something that we've taken on board that we need to look at the data more closely and look at the trends. So we have been looking at NAPLAN data and our Pap data – and we've introduced a program called Scorelink where we set our own benchmarks and so we're able to track children all the way through the school. We've prescribed the tests that we are going to do so we use NAPLAN data, pap data, spelling tests, one minute – [inaudible] so we've got all the tests and we can track those children and we are then able to pass that data on. We're able to have meetings with parents, we're able to have meaningful meetings, where we talk about data and not just about we think.... So really it's looking at the data more closely and being able to see the trends and what it means for us.

Some of the things we also do are look at how we track the cohort [notes that NAPLAN data does not do this because each year tested is different cohort of kids] so we're able to say is that cohort improving, not just a test from one year to another. The other thing that we do is look at how we are tracking two similar schools in this area. We're looking at how we compare with [names three other primary schools] because we want to make sure that we are tracking ok. [now referring to the documents in front of you so it's hard to follow what's being said]. So if we see dips in our data we can go back and say well what can we do differently, what was the cause of that, was it the cohort, was it the test, was it a whole lot of things. What we've tried to do there is look at some analysis. Reading results have remained the most stable within the last 3 years' performance so we can track back and see – this being a major focus with Lisa Burman so the work that we're doing in that area seems to be working. The reading results have been the strongest – they have been for the last 3 years. Spelling results have tapered away – next year we are focusing on that. That is driving our professional learning into the future.

So our kids are making improved results. Improvements in reading however, numeracy, numeracy – not so good (see Table 4). We've got Adrian coming down to talk to us about why that is happening. We need to be smarter in what we do.

Teachers: *and some of the testing does not match what we teach.*

Principal: *we don't want to teach to tests. That's one of the things that inhibits ongoing success – outside testing NAPLAN – but it's not teaching to the test so one of the issues would inhibit success if*

we started to teach to our tests. There is so much pressure from parents especially in this area where parents compare NAPLAN. I've had two parent teacher interviews, enrolment interviews, saying well why should I be paying [fees] or why should my children come to this school when I can get the same education and Naplan results are better than yours. There is a pressure out there. I think that if we're not careful we could end up like other countries where tests have taken over the agenda. We've got to really stand strong and use the data but not let it drive us.

What we find now is that our Pat data gives us a more accurate picture but NAPLAN measures basic skills, whereas Pat ... we get the information immediately. So we do a Pat testing at the end of the year and we don't test again until this time next year. We are able to get that information immediately and use it to inform our teaching. Whereas NAPLAN, you do it in May and you don't get the results till July or August something like that.

Table 4: School's Presentation of NAPLAN Growth Data

Growth

An encouraging result is having an equal or lower than national progress score in the low band and an equal or better than national progress score in the high band. This is indicated in blue.

Progress from 2015 to 2017	Reading				Numeracy			
	Year 3 to 5		Year 5 to 7		Year 3 to 5		Year 5 to 7	
	SOTS	National	SOTS	National	SOTS	National	SOTS	National
Low	9%	25%	17%	25%	30%	25%	9%	25%
Medium	64%	50%	53%	50%	45%	50%	63%	50%
High	27%	25%	30%	25%	25%	25%	28%	25%

Data shown in Figures 9 to 14 capture the growth data in Reading, Writing and Numeracy 2017.

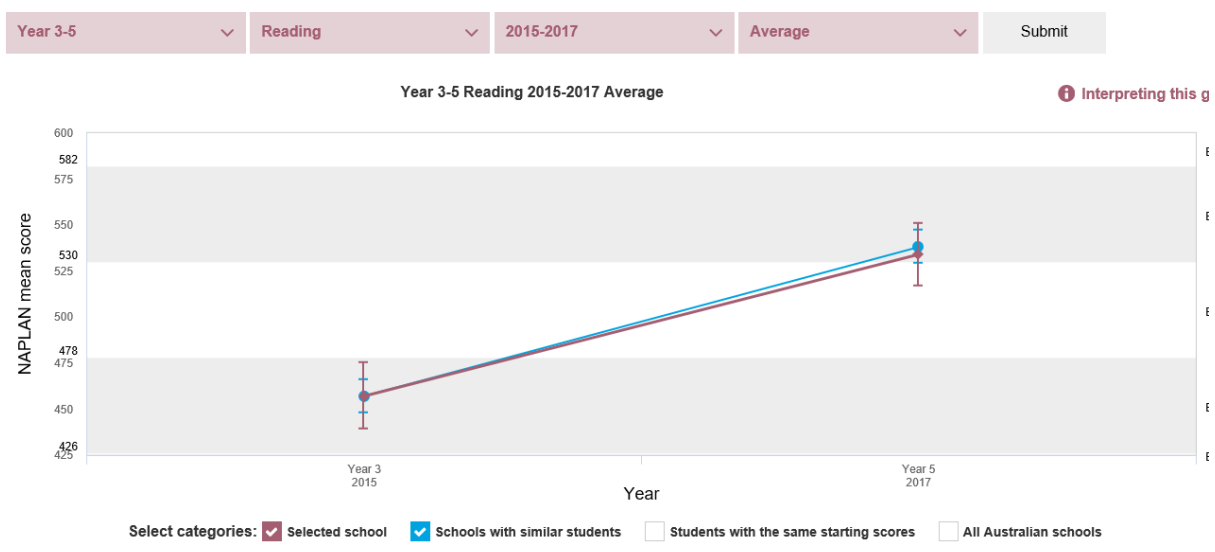


Figure 9: Year 3-5 Reading

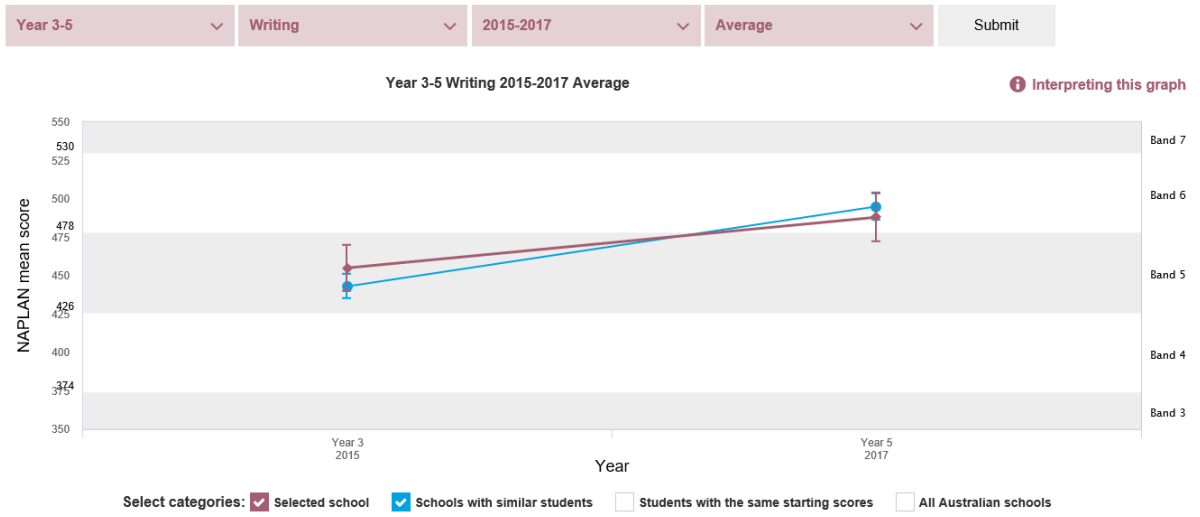


Figure 10: Year 3-5 Writing

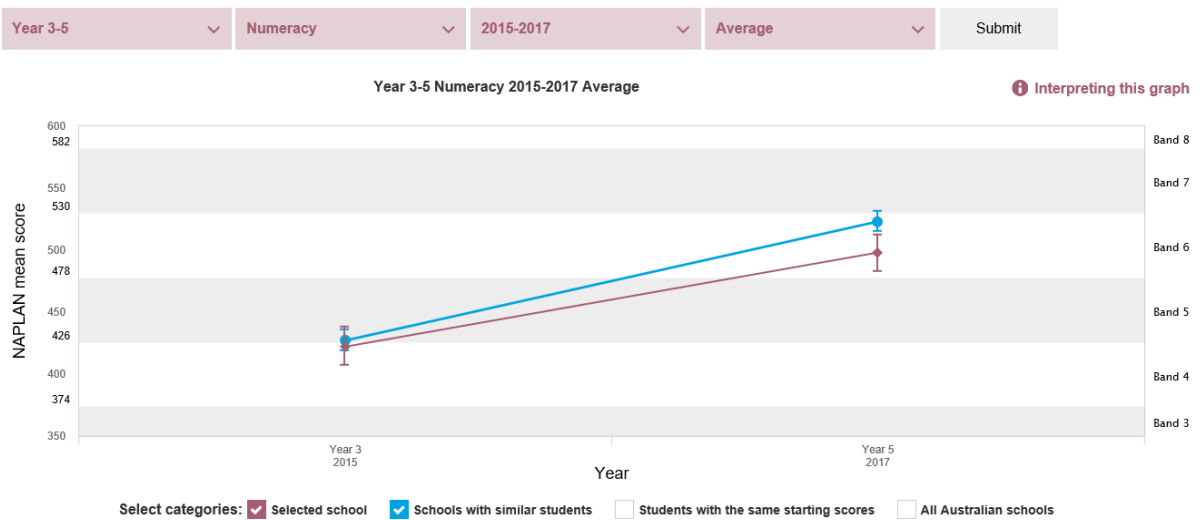


Figure 11: Year 3-5 Numeracy

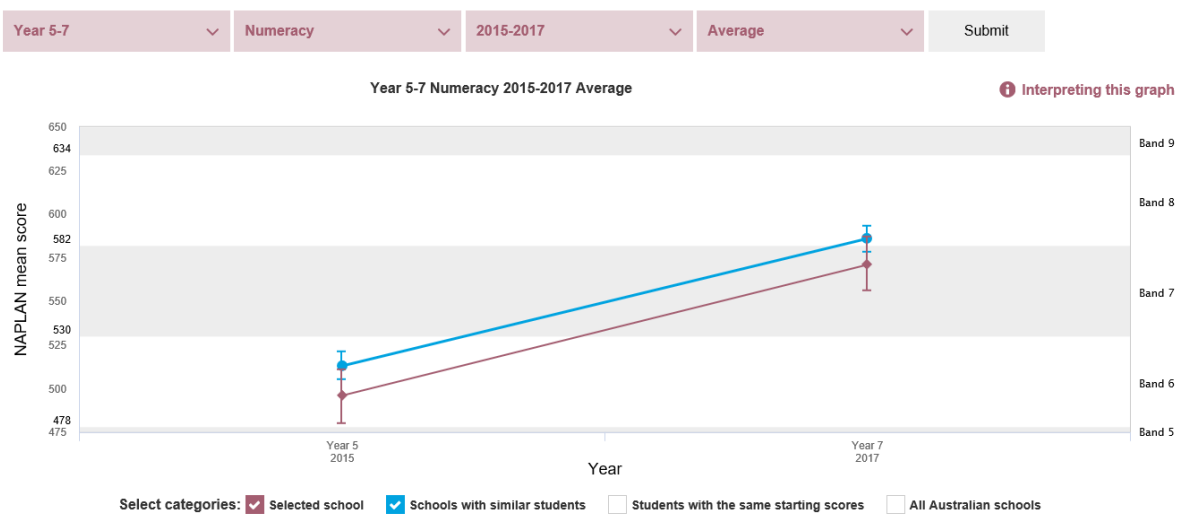


Figure 12: Year 5-7 Numeracy

Year 5-7 Reading 2015-2017 Average Submit

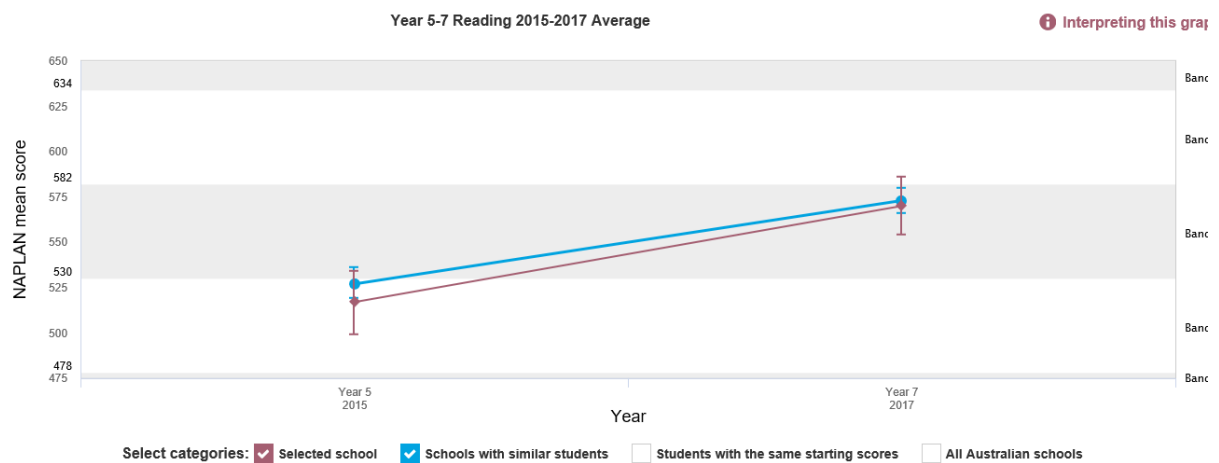


Figure 13: Year 5-7 Reading

Year 5-7 Writing 2015-2017 Average Submit

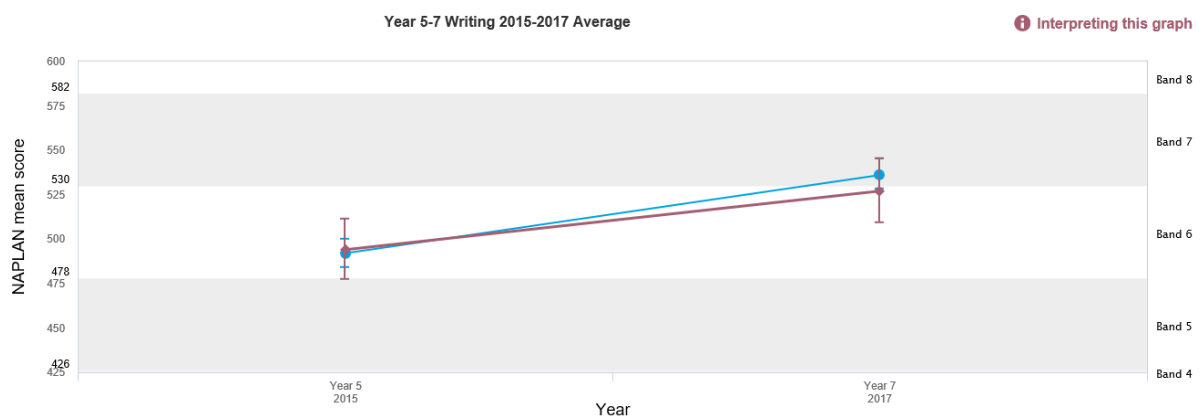


Figure 14: Year 5-7 Writing

6. Parent Satisfaction

The school provided the following items as evidence of this indicator:

- * Parent involvement – P & F involvement, LAP volunteers, Star outreach, School board
- * Community based – Strong connection to our Parish, Sacramental program
- * Open communication – school newsletters, year level newsletters, Seesaw, Facebook page, Edmodo, Open nights, Skoolbag app, QKR

Principal – we surveyed our parents on Catholic identity and so the questions were around that. Statements like the School values permeate all that we do, we strongly agree are uncertain or disagree. So you're able to see that our parents in the area of Catholic identity rated us highly. But also – key positives and key negatives – some parents thought that the school's Catholic identity could be more visible, social justice needs to have a greater awareness than you described or greater parent student participation in Parish activities. Key positives – Open Hearts Open Minds motto is

easy to associate with and is visible. So this is good data. Liturgies and masses religious principles and beliefs are reflected – in other words we practice what we preach.

So teaching learning and well-being – that’s the one with a focus on curriculum and wellbeing. Again key positives, teachers are hardworking and dedicated. Teachers are approachable and helpful. Key negatives arts and music which we have now. So we’ve now got specialist music and art programs so some of these things have come as a result of the parent satisfaction survey. Class sizes are overwhelming for teachers – some things I can handle and some things I can’t but again, I’ve addressed that at school board level and we’ve said well ok if you want class sizes of 15 these are the school fees you have to pay. Too much homework – we’ve looked at homework as a staff. Parent teacher interview timing and length – one of the things that came from this, we shortened our report writing and made parent teacher interviews 20 minutes rather than 10 minutes. So things like that have come as a result of the parent survey.

Community partnerships – key positives, as part of our well-being we have introduced a school counsellor. Environmental sustainability, closeness to the beach, the Marine Discovery Centre, the beach trail, we introduced marine studies as a subject. Sustainable initiatives like our zero outside bins. Key negatives – a healthier canteen. We had some parents say that the kids were spending too much time on the beach and others that said they don’t go on to the beach enough. More hands-on nature so we’ve now got our Nature Play. This is all the results of the parent satisfaction survey and we have used the same survey each year over the last 3 years... we have the three surveys all lined up together there’s not much variation which is really interesting.

7. Student Well-Being

The school provided the following items as evidence of this indicator:

- * School counsellor
- * Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishments (PERMA) – Seligman –refer also Table 3.
- * Connecting room – time out room replaced with a connecting room
- * Student survey (MDI)

Children can self-refer to the connecting room. The connecting room is open at recess and lunch time. It’s more about building relationships than punishment.

Student Survey – This compares Year 6s and year 7s 2014 2015 and looks at levels of optimism, self-esteem and we can actually see that we would hope that the more work we do in this area – and it would be good to actually do it again next year to see what our results would be like. It’s very good. So satisfaction with life, sadness etc. but it gives us an idea of those areas that we need to be working in. Connection at school – so it is using that data – as a school and with a counsellor to make sure that we’re in that whole area of student wellbeing, but we are channelling our resources in the right direction.

Factors that Inhibit Success

The school provided the following reflection when asked about factors that may inhibit success:

- Time constraints/commitment – overloaded curriculum
- Change – not enough time to become skilled in an area before something new comes along
- Resources/funding
- Commitment of all staff (blockers – not having all on board)
- Interruptions to learning – time devoted to non-core teaching tasks
- Parent expectations (demands unrealistic)
- Social Media (emails, Facebook)
- Outside testing (NAPLAN – teaching to the tests)

An interesting observation was made about those on staff that are referred to as blockers:

Principal: *and in the end there are always blockers. This is not all through rose coloured glasses. We know we've got blockers and it's about just working with the blockers or working around them and hoping that they make little gains along the way. There is only so much you can do. Your hands are tied. But there's a wave of people that have come on board and if you don't come on board you stand out like a sore thumb and often the kids and the parents are the best critics in that area.*

Teacher: *and our attitude has very much been well let's not forget people just because they have not been keen. Let's just try and embrace them and help them and support them.*

Researcher's Observations of the 2018 DISA Data

The DISA data were not available for several months after the interviews and therefore could not be referred to at the time of the interviews. The Principal explained the delay:

My reason for that is because we have been doing quite a bit of community surveys recently and I thought if I hit them with another too soon I'm not going to get the kind of response that I'd like. I'd rather do it next year when people are fresh.

The DISA data indicated the observation of a professional and committed staff, inclusive practices, individual valuing as well as a collaborative community. Table 4 indicates the overall positive movement in most aspects by all groups.

DISA Results

The 2012 and 2018 results appear in Table 5 and the Alignment Graphs Figures 14-17. There are a number of interesting statistics.

Considering Table 5:

- a. All elements for all groups moved in a positive direction.
- b. In 2012, although the staff responses were generally positive, the SD especially for the strategic direction (and decision making) and the SWP of the school showed polarisation, but by 2018 this had moved into closely unified responses.

Table 5: Means and SD of DISA Elements

Component	Staff 2012	Staff 2018	SD Staff 2012	SD Staff 2018	Parents 2012	Parents 2018	Students 2012	Student 2018
School Outcomes	4.17	4.46	0.92	0.59	3.99	4.11	3.88	3.89
Strategic Foundations	3.82	4.56	1.06	0.64	3.73	4.01	3.65	4.01
Cohesive Community	4.09	4.34	0.81	0.69	3.93	4.14	3.98	3.97
SWP & Deepening	3.72	4.39	1.18	0.65	3.62	3.83	3.74	3.90
Generative Resource Design	3.81	4.28	0.95	0.65	3.71	3.99	3.84	3.96
Holistic Professional Learning	3.75	4.35	1.13	0.74				

Areas where “successes” occur:

- a. In all staff responses, and based on the mean benchmark, there were no challenges.
- b. Students and parents agree that the school builds positive relationships, is seen as caring and is a significant place of learning. The vision has a clear link to learning.

A summary of the DATA that supported previously reported evidence in this case was evident in the DISA data and included the following statements.

All Groups (Staff, Parents, Students) responses verified:

STRATEGIC FOCUS

Items from Outcomes and Strategic Foundations:

A clear link is evident between the school’s vision, teaching and learning and school resourcing.

The school is guided by an inspirational and memorable vision.

The school has defined the values that underpin its vision.

The Principal promotes the school vision, values, and programs in the wider community.

INNOVATIVE TEACHING PRACTICES

Items from Generative Resource Design

Teachers find innovative ways to utilise learning space in order to optimise student learning.

Technology is used purposefully to facilitate and enrich the school’s pedagogy.

Pedagogical innovation is enabled by the flexible use of time.

Staff responses verified:

SHARED DECISION MAKING:

Items from Outcomes and Strategic Foundations:

Teachers are integrally involved in making key educational decisions that affect the school.

School actively encourages and enables teacher leadership.

The Principal facilitates a defined, collaborative process of strategic planning.

Decision-making processes are focussed and open and decisions are responsibly implemented.

The Principal creates a culture of shared power.

COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES THAT RESPECT INDIVIDUAL GIFTS AND TALENTS

Items from Element: Schoolwide Pedagogy and Pedagogical Deepening

Individual teachers identify and share their successful teaching practices.

The school engages in systematic, school-wide analysis of its current teaching, learning and assessment practice.

The school has developed an agreed statement of quality Teaching and Learning that fits the school context.

An agreed Schoolwide Pedagogy is grounded in current educational theory.

A strong association can be seen between the school's vision and values and approaches to teaching and learning.

The school enables individual teachers to realise their gifts and talents for teaching.

Students contribute to the development of school-wide approaches to teaching and learning.

An agreed Schoolwide Pedagogy assists meaningful staff analysis of external requirements.

An agreed Schoolwide Pedagogy provides direction for teaching and learning across all curriculum areas.

SCHOOL RESOURCING

Element Items: School Outcome and Generative Resource Design

There are sufficient resources to support effective teaching and learning.

Adequate time and space is available for shared staff reflection.

Planning for the use of the school's facilities begins with consideration of how to enhance teaching and learning.

The school successfully uses external professional expertise to enhance its pedagogy and curriculum.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Element Items: Holistic Professional Learning

The professional learning community systematically reflects on the relevance of the school's vision according to the needs of students.

The school has explicit processes in place to enable teachers to learn from each other's successful practices.

The core of the Professional Learning Community's activity is developing and enhancing the Schoolwide Pedagogy.

An emphasis is placed on encouraging teachers to take leadership of the school's pedagogical enhancement.

Professional engagement and conversation is built on explicit and agreed principles of trust and respect.

Staff participates actively in professional networks, associations and clusters.

Opportunities are provided for individuals to pursue their personal professional needs and interests.

The staff exploration of pedagogy informs the development of school professional development plans.

ACCOUNTABILITY – SYSTEM AND SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Items from Element: Generative Resource Design and Community Cohesiveness

The school is able to relate its own internal improvement process to external review requirements.

Processes are in place for broad professional and public input into school planning processes.

DISA ALIGNMENT and SCHOOL CAPACITY

The 2012 Alignment graphs (Figures 15-18) provide baseline data for this school. The figures 19-22 are the results of the 2018 data and indicate an overall positive movement in all areas. However, this growth is less for parents and students.

In the 2018 data, all areas of School Capitals, the staff movement in a positive direction is very confirming. This places the school in a position of capacity to sustain and grow the capacity for overall outcomes.

2012 Data

- Total number of staff responses = 27
- Total number of parent responses = 107
- Total number of student responses = 122

For the purposes of this analysis, the data have been grouped as follows:

- Responses with a mean of [4.06] or above are regarded as ‘successes’.
- Responses with a mean greater than [3.56] and less than [4.06] are regarded as ‘satisfactory’.
- Responses with a mean of [3.56] or less are regarded as ‘potential challenges’.

INDEX OF SCHOOL ALIGNMENT - Overall Perspective

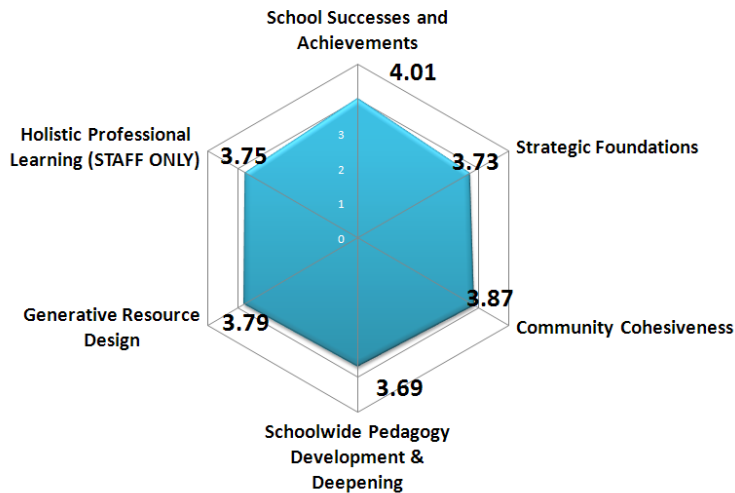


Figure 15: 2012 INDEX of School Alignment – Overall Result

INDEX OF SCHOOL ALIGNMENT - Overlay of 3 Perspectives

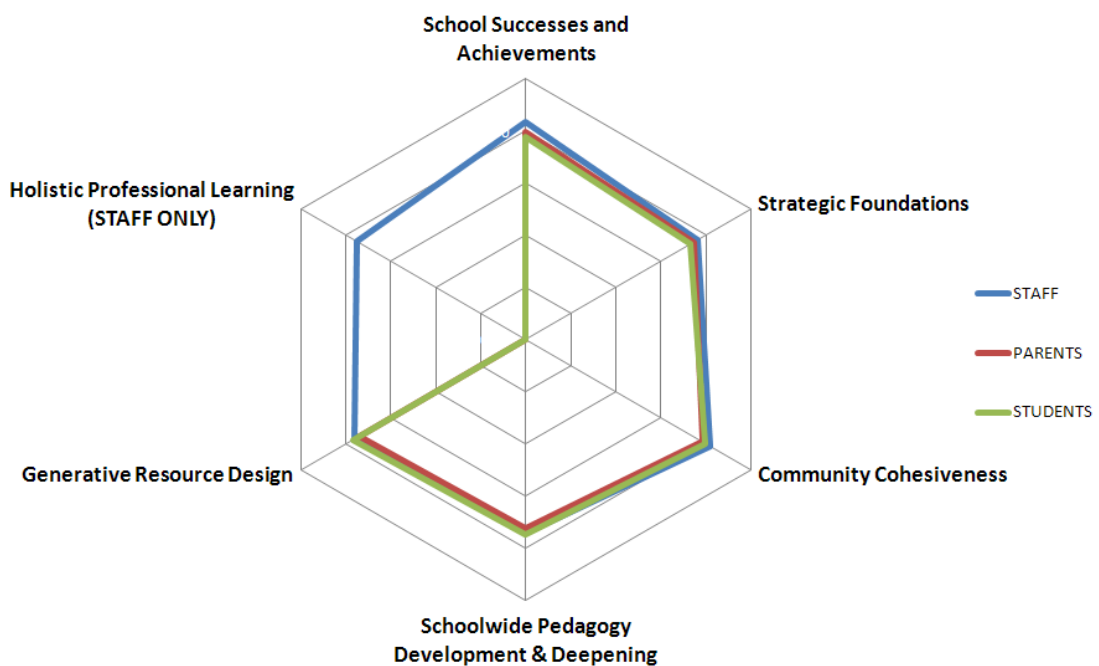


Figure 16: 2012 INDEX of School Alignment – Three Perspectives

INDEX OF SCHOOL CAPITAL - Overall Perspective

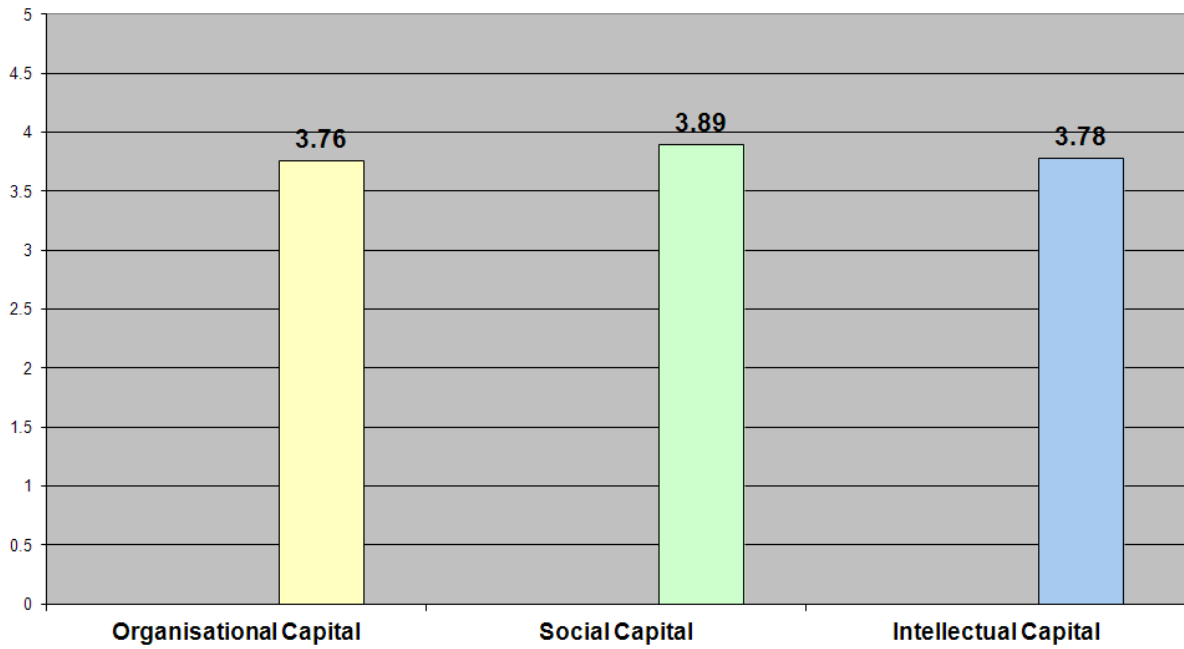


Figure 17: 2012 INDEX of School Capital – Overall Result

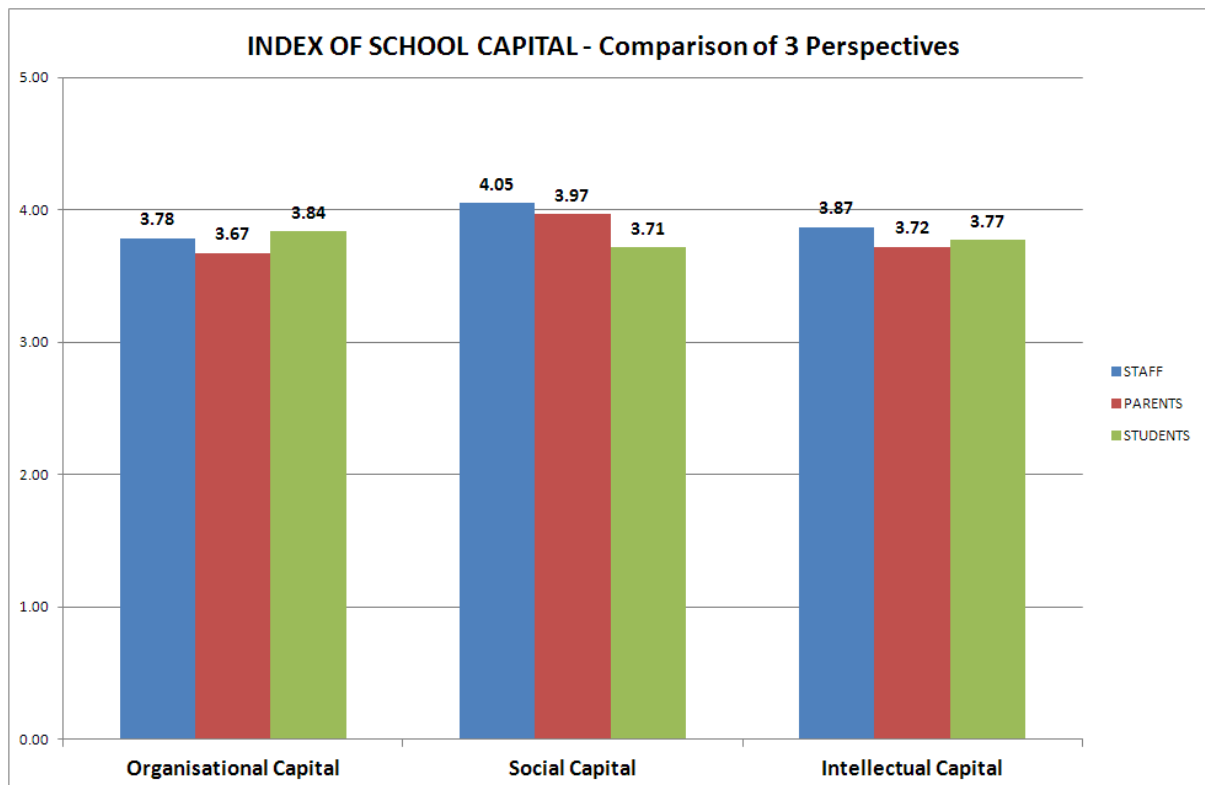


Figure 18: 2012 INDEX of School Capital – Three Perspectives

2018 DATA

- Total number of staff responses = 35
- Total number of parent responses = 125
- Total number of student responses = 81

For the purposes of this analysis, the data have been grouped as follows:

- Responses with a mean of [4.41] or above are regarded as ‘successes’.
- Responses with a mean greater than [3.91] and less than [4.41] are regarded as ‘satisfactory’.
- Responses with a mean of [3.91] or less are regarded as ‘potential challenges’.

INDEX OF SCHOOL ALIGNMENT - Overall Perspective

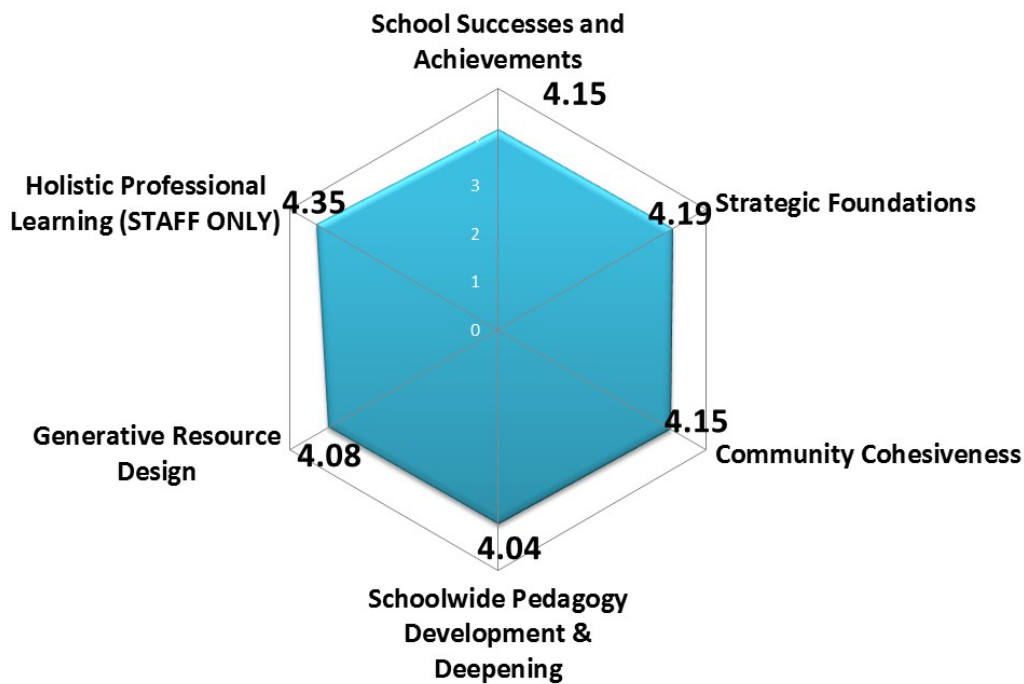


Figure 19: 2018 Index of School Alignment – Overall Result

INDEX OF SCHOOL ALIGNMENT - Overlay of 3 Perspectives

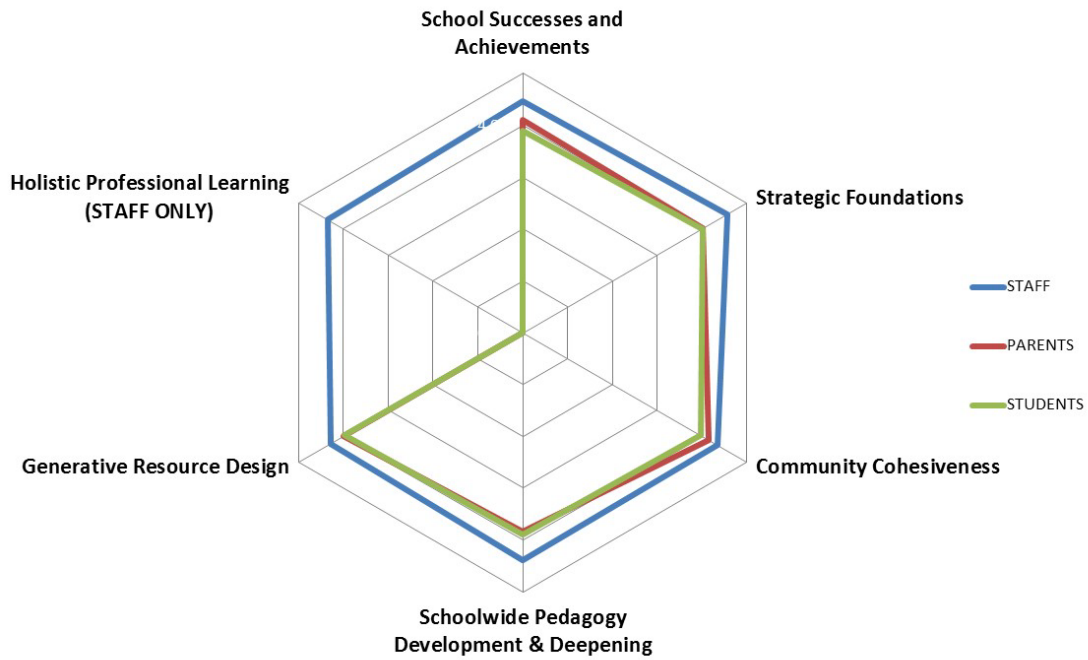


Figure 20: 2018 Index of School Alignment – Three Perspectives

INDEX OF SCHOOL CAPITAL - Overall Perspective

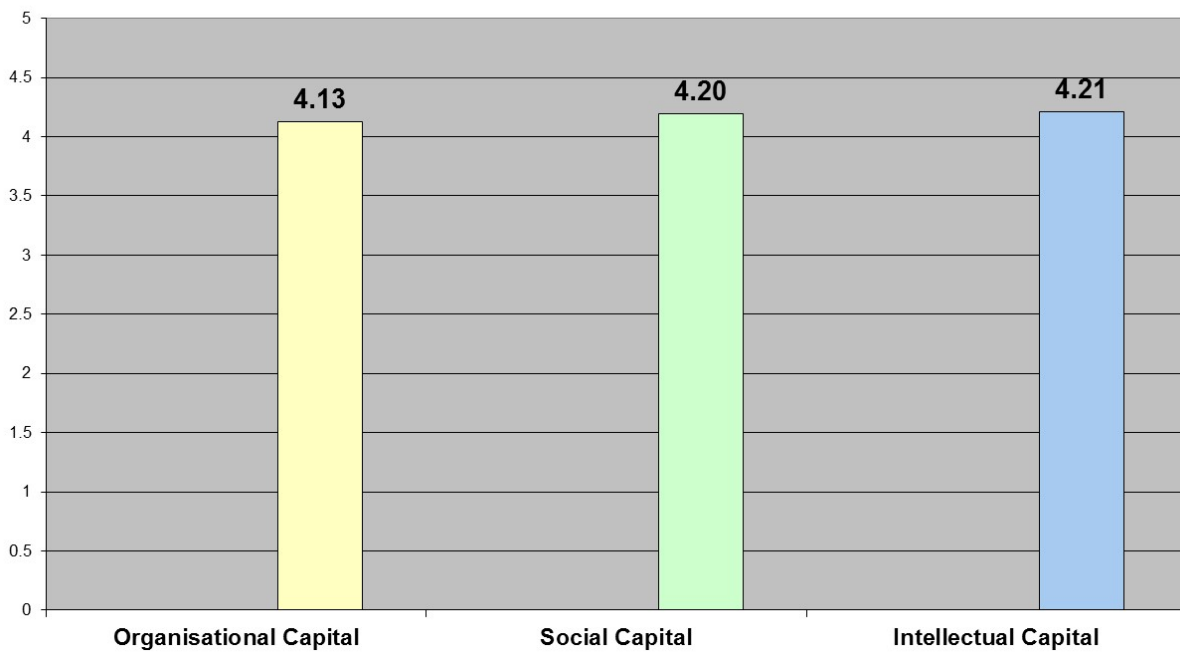


Figure 21: 2018 INDEX of School Capital – Overall Result

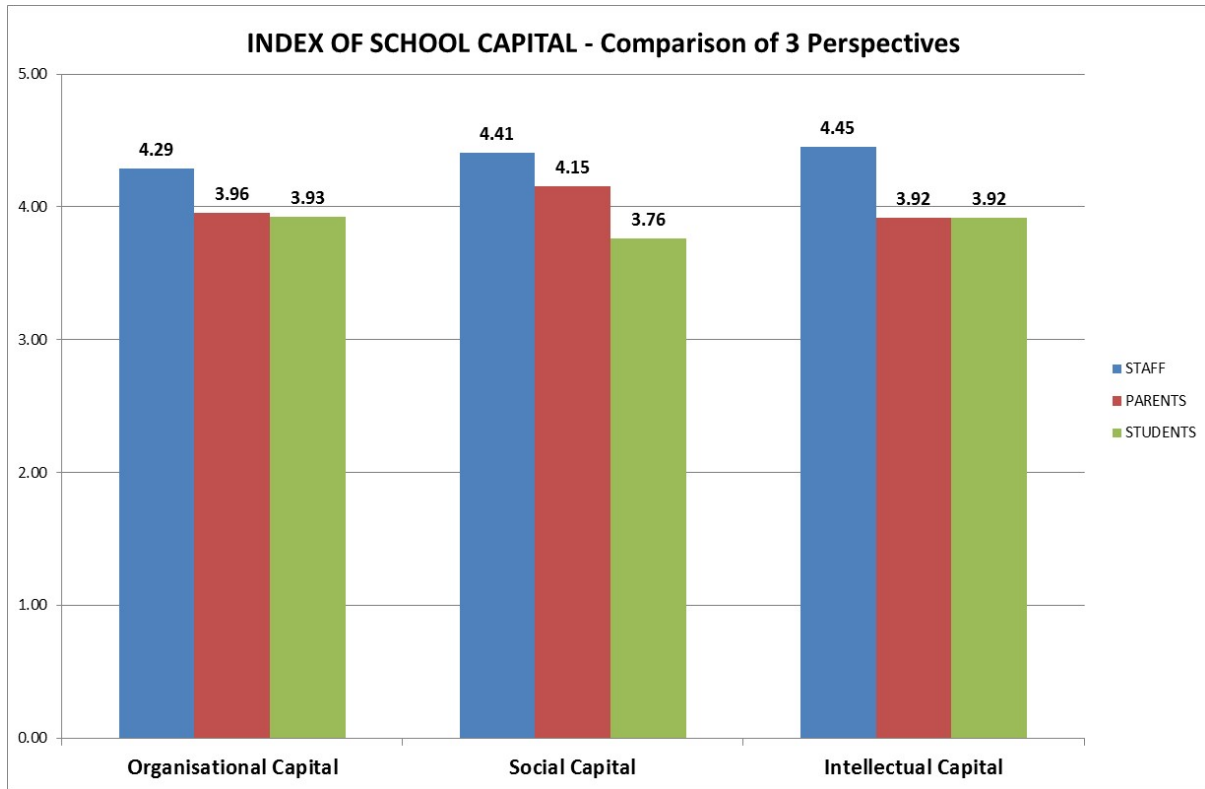


Figure 22: 2018 INDEX of School Capital – Three Perspective Result

Researcher's Concluding Comment

This school has achieved much, especially since 2014 (essentially 3.5 years from the data collection). However, some challenges still exist – and this relates to the slower growth in parent and student perceptions, in particular related to Student Achievement and student engagement in *students having a say in the way learning is conducted in the school*. In regards to the latter, evidence from the lower grades would indicate that this is developing and as such needs to be more broad based. The continued challenge in regards well-being is being addressed and the efforts need to be continued.

The areas where parents are less satisfied could be captured in perceptions related to the communication of Student Achievement data (that is NAPLAN), particularly in decision-making processes. Current classroom practices in regards support for the vision in the wider community could relate to the conflict of the school vision (Open Hearts Open Minds) and the Vision for Learning.

Appendix 1: Strategic Plan



Star of the Sea

SCHOOL

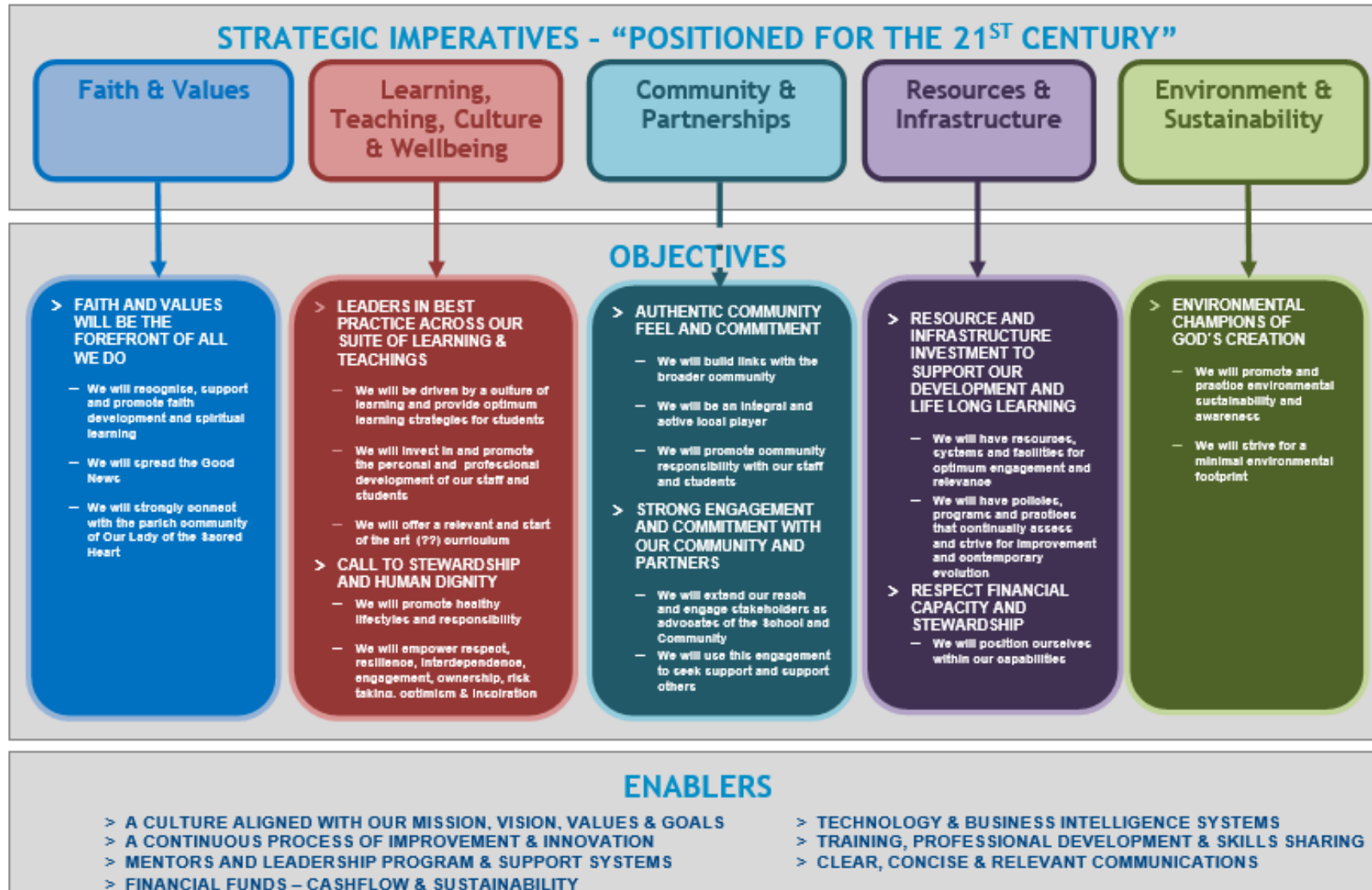
Open Hearts ~ Open Minds

STRATEGIC PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2014 - 2017

"Star of the Sea School in partnership with our community and within the Catholic tradition provides students with an excellent foundation for lifelong learning and the inspiration to take an active part in shaping a better world for all"



Appendix 2 Professional Learning Plan

Name: Joe De Tullio		2016 Appraisal and Professional Learning Plan			2016
Principal standard	CIF Domain	Professional SMART Goal	Strategies	Indicators of Success	Appraisal Consultation
What Professional practice(s) are you working on?	What domain is the goal most focussed on?		What ways will you achieve this goal?	What will you/others see if your goal is achieved? What artefact could you collect for your portfolio as evidence?	At the end of this year, what person/groups could provide feedback on your work?
Catholic Identity and Religious Leadership	Domain 1: Leading Catholic Identity 1.5 Faith Formation Staff spirituality and religious formation is evident in the school's strategic plan	To work with all key stakeholders to develop and promote Catholic Identity of the school with an emphasis on 'heart spirituality'. To support the spiritual formation of staff so as to more fully understand and embrace the MSC charism of 'Heart Spirituality'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make links with and work with Allison McKenzie from the Chevalier Institute • Work with the staff to understand the meaning of 'Open Hearts - Open Minds' and to make it visible in the school. • Staff focus on prayer - particularly on staff and student meditation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be an annual involvement in MSC formation with 3 staff members attending the Chevalier Institute each year. • The Open Hearts - Open Minds motto will be prominent and identifiable in the school. • Staff, students and parents will have a greater understanding of Heart Spirituality. • Staff and student mediation adopted and practised in the school. 	Year 2 of tenure Local POR Team Leadership Team Parish Priest Chair of Board Staff Student leaders

Name: Joe De Tullio		2016 Appraisal and Professional Learning Plan			2016
Principal standard	CIF Domain	Professional SMART Goal	Strategies	Indicators of Success	Appraisal Consultation
What Professional practice(s) are you working on?	What domain is the goal most focussed on?		What ways will you achieve this goal?	What will you/others see if your goal is achieved? What artefact could you collect for your portfolio as evidence?	At the end of this year, what person/groups could provide feedback on your work?
School Vision and Strategic Planning	Domain 2: Focussed vision and goals 2.1 Strategic Directions Working with School Board, Staff and the school community to develop a Strategic Plan based on consultation and input 2.2 Strategic Planning Working with the school board and the leadership team to ensure that key actions and strategies to achieve improvement are implemented 2.3 Consultation and Communication Progress towards improvement is formally communicated to staff, students and families on a regular basis	To continue to work with the school strategic plan and to bring it to a realisation. Continue implementing the Strategic plan and to communicate to the school community progress of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the School Board to create a strategic direction document based on input from parents and staff • Create a mechanism for progress to be communicated to the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation of a formalised Strategic Plan that has a series of actions • The Strategic Plan will be made available to the school community • The School Board will be able to use the Strategic Plan in its work • There will be opportunities during the year to monitor progress 	Year 2 of tenure Local Leadership Team Parish Priest Chair of Board School Board Parents and Friends

Name: Joe De Tullio		2016 Appraisal and Professional Learning Plan			2016
Principal standard	CIF Domain	Professional SMART Goal	Strategies	Indicators of Success	Appraisal Consultation
What Professional practice(s) are you working on?	What domain is the goal most focussed on?		What ways will you achieve this goal?	What will you/others see if your goal is achieved? What artefact could you collect for your portfolio as evidence?	At the end of this year, what person/groups could provide feedback on your work?
Knowledge and Understanding Leading Teaching and Learning	Domain 5: High Quality Teaching and learning 5.1 Developing a shared mission and vision for learning that inspires and reflects a school wide pedagogy 5.5 Developing a culture of professional learning, inquiry and improvement using school based and outside professional learning opportunities	To develop a school vision for learning and the formation of a school wide pedagogy. To promote and create a professional environment that builds high quality teaching and learning opportunities for students and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with a Lead Learning Team of teachers who will work with me to develop a vision for learning. • To ensure that we have one or two staff meetings per term dedicated to this task • Change the model of professional learning delivery by giving teachers time to engage in professional learning and discussion by releasing them • Provide quality teacher professional learning opportunities with time for feedback, discussion, planning and evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will have a Lead Learning Team with 2 PORs to work with the leadership team on leading learning. • There will be regular staff meetings that focus on school wide pedagogy and learning vision • Teachers will be released to work with quality educators, to watch them teach. 	Year 2 of tenure Local POR Team Leadership Team Staff

Name: Joe De Tullio		2016 Appraisal and Professional Learning Plan			2016
Principal standard	CIF Domain	Professional SMART Goal	Strategies	Indicators of Success	Appraisal Consultation
What Professional practice(s) are you working on?	What domain is the goal most focussed on?		What ways will you achieve this goal?	What will you/others see if your goal is achieved? What artefact could you collect for your portfolio as evidence?	At the end of this year, what person/groups could provide feedback on your work?
Leading Teaching and Learning Developing Self and Others Leading Improvement Innovation and Change	<p>Domain 6: Effective Use of Data</p> <p>6.1 School identifies the range of data to be used to inform strategic direction and strategies for improvement</p> <p>62 Teachers build their skills in analysing and interpreting a broad range of data</p> <p>Teachers have time for in depth discussion of achievement data and strategies for improvement</p>	<p>Create mechanism for teachers to engage in the use and interpretation of data, benchmarking and observation in order to monitor every child's progress.</p> <p>By the end of the year I will have lead a process whereby we have inquired into our schools strengths and weaknesses at the whole school and class level.</p> <p>Throughout the year we continue to use data to refine and inform our teaching</p> <p>During the year I will organise ongoing professional learning in regards to interpreting data</p>	<p>Term 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use staff meeting time to look at the data (NAPLAN data, PAT testing and EYA) • Provide time for staff to drill data down to the student level • Develop a method of data collection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers taking part in quality professional learning • The use of a common language about data analysis • Improvement in interpreting and measuring data • Identification of whole school strengths and weaknesses • Teachers will have developed strategies at class level to address the needs of the year level cohort and their class 	<p>Local</p> <p>Leadership Team</p> <p>Lead Learning team</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>Ray Moritz</p>



Sustaining school improvement: exploring internal and external factors that develop school-system alignment in selected CESA Schools.

Case Study: St Francis School, Lockleys, SA

Compiled by Dr Dorothy Andrews

USQ/LRI Leadership Research International

University of Southern Queensland

Toowoomba

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Introduction

This case study explores the factors that build on (and sustain) a school improvement agenda as well as those that inhibit ongoing improvement. The relationship between the CESA system and the school is also explored. This case is one of a number of CESA schools who have over time engaged with a whole school improvement project, IDEAS, as well as other, both school initiated and system initiatives. This case explores the improvement processes in which the school engaged over a period of time (2012 – 2018) and relates data provided by the school and from external agencies, including NAPLAN and USQ-LRI DISA. Data collected were in the form of documentation, statistics and interview data. In this school, the interviews included the principal, deputy principal and teacher leaders.

Background

St Francis School is a Catholic coeducation primary school catering for Reception to Year 7 students in the western suburbs of Adelaide. St Francis School promotes a particular view of the human person, the community, the world, the environment, centred on the person of Jesus Christ. We work together in Faith, Peace and Wisdom as we develop and celebrate an inclusive environment where right relationships and students' intellectual, spiritual, social and physical wellbeing is paramount in our thinking and actions. The teachings of Jesus and St Francis guide us in our commitment to developing attitudes of respect, integrity and care for all creation.

The Catholic Ethos of the school is expressed in a variety of ways, including Religion lessons, the Sacramental Program, Prayer, Outreach and Social Justice, Made in the Image of God Program, Wellbeing Programs and the basic value of respect for the dignity and worth of each person.

The charisma of St Francis, the environmental saint, has been fostered with Environmental Education in all classes. In recent years, an Eco-Splash room has been added to the facilities where students study and engage in Environmental and General Science. Supporting this initiative, a Frog Pond and Wet Land have also been established which enriches the environmental focus of the school. Appealing Music and Drama facilities have been established, including a Performing Arts Room and small Music Rooms for individual tuition. To support Physical Education, St Francis School has extensive grounds, including a large oval area, three tennis courts and large undercover spaces, where activities can occur in all weathers.

Inquiry Learning is valued and supported at St Francis School with Multi-Disciplinary Units being developed to enhance student learning and to enable students to construct their own knowledge. The Early Years has a particular focus at St Francis School with extensive support programs, including a comprehensive program supporting students in their transition from Preschool to School. Students are supported in their learning in small Literacy groups, utilising a suite of learning approaches and strategies. To enhance fitness and encourage total engagement of students in all areas of study, an Active Play Uniform has been adopted. Our unisex uniform promotes the gender equity of all students and encourages movement and participation.

Student Wellbeing is supported in the school with the teaching of Circle Time and Program Achieve which are Social Education Programs. In addition, counselling, chaplaincy and mentoring programs support the individual needs of students. Mathematical thinking is encouraged and developed from Reception onwards and is supported with a range of learning strategies and practices throughout the school. Extensive programs to support students with special needs are given high priority at St

Francis School. Speech Pathology Services along with the Reading Doctor, the Listening Program, Move to Learn Program, Rainbow Reading and individual class support comprise a suite of programs offered by the school to enhance students' learning. (Adapted from My School website)

Enrolments – 449 (225 M 224 FM) 16% LBOE

Staff Numbers: 24.3 FTE teaching and 12.2 FTE non teaching

ICSEA: 1082

Vision Statement

At St Francis School, we promote a particular view of the human person, the community, the world, the environment, centred on the person of Jesus Christ.

We grow together in Faith, Peace and Wisdom as we develop and celebrate an inclusive environment where right relationships and students' intellectual, spiritual, social and physical well-being is paramount in all we do (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: St Francis presentation of Vision and Values

Underpinned by the value of WISDOM, the school provides an environment of innovative and dynamic learning opportunities that aspires to create a community of inspired, engaged learners through *Growing Together*.



Our Schoolwide Pedagogy (SWP)

The SWP represented as a School's vision for Teaching and Learning is clearly articulated in school documents as, Being ---Connected, Engaged, Reflective and Creative (see Figure 2)

**School Vision For Teaching and Learning:
'Learner Qualities'**

<u>Being Connected</u>	<u>Being Engaged</u>	<u>Being Reflective</u>	<u>Being Creative</u>
Self Aware *I am aware of myself e.g. my actions, thoughts, strengths, weaknesses and next steps	Think *I have an opinion, idea or belief about something	Reflect *I think about and look back on my learning to enable me to best move forward	Wonder *I have the desire to be curious about something
Collaborate *I listen to and work together with others	Question *I find out	Resilience *I use a Growth Mindset	Persistence *I do not give up when faced with a challenge

Figure 2: St Francis Schoolwide Pedagogical Principles

The School also developed a Learner Quality Continuum (see Table 1). This was set up as a series for questions to enable students to interrogate their learning.

Table 1: Learner Quality Continuum

Learner Quality	Supported	Self Manage	Self Direct
Self Aware *I am aware of myself e.g. my actions, thoughts, strengths, weaknesses and next steps	I can respond to the questions the teacher asks me, to help me become more aware	I am able to consider a number of factors to benefit me in my learning	I am self-aware of actions I need to undertake to improve myself as a learner
Collaborate *I listen to and work together with others	I use some collaborative skills to work with others, with support	I am able to apply collaborative skills when working with others	I choose to work collaboratively with others to achieve a common goal
Think *I have an opinion, idea or belief about something	I can use some thinking tools and strategies with support to further my learning	I select specific thinking tools and strategies to deepen my learning	I am aware that there is a range of perspectives, which may challenge my thinking

Question *I find out	I ask simple questions about things that interest me when prompted	I ask both open and closed questions that are relevant by myself	I actively question to further my own understanding and challenge thinking
Reflect *I think about and look back on my learning to enable me to best move forward	I share simple reflections on my learning	I use a range of prompts to reflect on my learning	I understand that reflection helps me with my learning and I use it to inform my next step
Resilience *I use a Growth Mindset	I attempt to use a Growth Mindset with prompts	I use a Growth mindset to help me stay positive	I use a Growth Mindset to bounce back in challenging situations
Wonder *I have the desire to be curious about something	I wonder as a tool to predict when supported	I can use wonder as a tool to form an opinion or think about a different perspective, to form a new understanding	I wonder to generate understandings and can distinguish between wonderings I can act on and wonderings that are unattainable
Persistence *I do not give up when faced with a challenge	I will have a go and not give up when supported	I will have a go, not give up, and have another try	I readily take on new challenges and persist.

Apart from the Curriculum addressing the basic requirements (see Figure 3), the school has developed a multi-disciplinary approach to designing learning experiences (see Figure 4).

CURRICULUM

Australian Curriculum:

- English
- Mathematics
- Geography
- History
- Design and Technology
- Science *
- Languages/Italian*
- Physical Education and Health *
- The Arts *

The graphic also features an inset photograph of several students sitting around a table in a classroom, engaged in a learning activity. The background of the graphic is a light green color with large, stylized leaf patterns.

Figure 3: Curriculum Offerings

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY UNITS

- At St. Francis school we teach 'Multi-Disciplinary Units' using an Inquiry Learning methodology.
- MDU's integrate a number of different Learning Areas so that rich, authentic learning can occur.
- Inquiry Learning methodology is based on the belief that children are powerful learners who must be actively engaged in the process of investigating, processing, organising, synthesising, refining and extending their knowledge of a topic.

Figure 4: Multidisciplinary Units approach

From 2012 to 2015 – A review at 2015

The text in italics captures the voice of the Principal and the teacher leaders as they recall their journey from 2012 until 2015. The data were collected from semi-structured interviews.

The Principal reflected on his journey:

Well, about a year, 18 months, before the project was offered I had a review on my staff and the staff indicated that they were feeling a little bit out of the loop in terms of some of the things that were happening in the school. It was fairly clear to me that I needed to change my style to some degree or a greater degree in terms of how I brought the school along. ... So when the opportunity to be involved in a project which opened leadership up to be a more sustainable way that more people's opinions and ideas could be part of it I was very keen to be part of.

As a requirement of the IDEAS project, the school established an IDEAS School Management Team (ISMT) and this was established by the Principal and his Deputy selecting those who had strategic intent:

... I had to really just think about the talent in the school and who were the people that I and the rest of the staff would appreciate their input and if they said something as part of a leadership team, or as part of a sustainable leadership team that they'd be listened to and they would have authority. ... so I picked some people that already had POR positions on the staff. The staff was very, very much into trying to work out pedagogy, so I picked a person that had a POR in that. I picked a person who was very much involved with the curriculum, the Australian curriculum and how that was unfolding and the multidisciplinary units and the enquiry methods that had already been started; people that were very, very good at organising that. Also in another sort of pillar of the school was our wellbeing program, so I picked the coordinator of POR in wellbeing to be the third person ... and then looked for others that ... people that were picked took a lot of people with them. I think they all had if you like, their sort of allies if you like. So I think if they were enthused I think everyone else would be enthused

too, and they were on the whole fairly much – two in particular, I think, were very, very much team players and the other one was probably a lot of skill but a bit more on the job orientated side of things.

The school invested money and time (resources) into the project to provide release time and sometimes off campus. This project enabled the Principal to step back and encourage others to take the initiative:

As the project unfolded I was finding I had to do less and less in the project. Because people were coming up with some marvellous ideas and we thought well why don't we do this, why don't we do that. So it just became, for me, a case of where and how can these marvellous ideas be – where can they best occur. ... I was certainly part of all the discussions, a part of every bit, but there were people that were coming up with lots and lots of different ideas. Probably the biggest point I had was when we were discussing – it was quite early in the piece – about our vision and I was thinking we should be going down a particular line.

The focus of our work initially was to capture the school's vision and bring to life the school's values:

... what we were able to do, we were able to bring real meaning to the faith, peace and wisdom ... we actually really explored that. I'm pretty confident that most people in the school would know what the faith, the peace and the wisdom actually means in terms of our school ... We've incorporated that in just about every article that goes out, to the point of having to do a new prospectus, faith, peace and wisdom.

And this was explicitly implemented: *I look around classrooms and we're always maintaining that you do an activity to show these things we're doing need constant reinforcing ... so that it feels like the culture.*

As the project progresses, the team became confident and were able to progress their ideas without the principal being there:

I think too that this particular staff like to think that they can make things happen. So it's, for me sometimes I just have to make sure I'm not in the way, that I don't get in the way of things happening.

In the long term, sustainability:

I think is that we're having a lot more staff meetings where I'm not front and centre, I suppose, and giving people opportunities just to talk with each other about some of the things that we unfolded in our learning vision. That people had an opportunity just to talk about their practice in their classrooms instead of it being an academic exercise trying to learn something, it's just unfolding what's giving teachers a voice to say well this is how we're doing it in our room at the moment ... letting people then share that with each other and then to the wider group.

The schoolwide pedagogical principles have become embedded and influence our work, not just in classroom practice but also in strategic planning, budgeting and in refurbishment of classrooms. Teachers are more confident. They ask the Board members to visit classrooms: *we were about eight or nine minutes in each of the classrooms where people just go around and read bits and pieces of the kids' work and their descriptions ... the idea of being engaged was very evident with the work that we wanted the kids to - one of the words that we really wanted to explore, so – and creativity. I mean the more that we do it the more creative the kids become. I was comparing my – to a parent, I said look when I was a kid, when I was at school we didn't have a chance to do any of this.*

The impact on the students has also been evident:

If you're looking around a school where the kids are happy and you go into classrooms, the kids are engaged, the kids are suitably employed. I mean I go into rooms and people are really doing the right thing and happy to do things. We build up a lot of trust at this school ... also Year 7 students take on leadership ... I don't actually get to speak at our assemblies, or weekly gatherings, here unless the kids ask me to.

As well as the Principal's reflection, the teacher leaders who were a significant part of the ISMT shared their reflections of the journey:

I think the biggest impact the project has had on our school and the leadership role that Rick has within it is that we use the shared leadership model. I think that has really enhanced the project because it was a team approach of teacher leaders in the school with the leadership team and I think that that working together as a team has – it started through that project and it's been a really positive thing ... he chose people who are representatives across the school, so they not only came from the positions of responsibility but from an early year's, a middle year's and a primary year's perspective as well which shared it across the school.

The team grew in confidence:

I think as a team we worked together really collaboratively – through the process we really questioned each other. We didn't always agree with each other but it's having that professional conversation, that professional dialogue; but also having the integrity of the relationship between people that you could say well, what do you mean by that.

And they reflected that the process enabled us to: *close the gap between leadership and the rest of the staff in the fact that we were able to have our shared leadership of it. Then whatever was facilitated in the group we were able to run sessions with the whole staff and be given time to plan them as a group and then how we would run that with the staff ... the process was full of integrity and value that everybody brought, the different gifts and talents that everybody brought to the table. The feedback and the emotional journeys that the whole staff went on looking back and reflecting on what has come and into the future. Very powerful.*

For the team, the journey had enhanced their professional learning and their confidence:

I think that has developed from it is his extra reading and research which actually the project probably did bring out a bit more of a passion in me. When we were trying to find the research and the evidence to back up our principles for our vision and we were going to read up on the theorists ... we all took an area of what we were investigating – like I did the creativity and someone else took the connectedness – and we had to research and then that gave you the expert role in that part to bring that back to the group.

The principal was just part of the team: *he enabled people, I think that is a really good quality, enabling people. Recognising talents in people and enabling them to shine in their particular area as you two do in what you do.*

And ... *what it's done for our whole school, like our project in particular with the vision and the pedagogy is that we actually know who we are now and everything that we do in the school comes back to that, does that fit with our vision, is that part of our pedagogy? ... it basically gives everyone power because we're on the same page and we know what direction we're heading in. It's a common language and a common understanding.*

And our schoolwide pedagogy lives in classrooms, and they related the school board meeting that had been held in a classroom: *So last night I took them up to the Year 6 and the Year 3 rooms and showed them what the students had been doing ... what you're looking at, this is a reflection, this is how they were connected, this is how they were engaged, this is their creativity. So you can see that it is alive and living through what we're doing.*

So at the end of 2015, one year after the school had created a new vision and schoolwide pedagogy, the evidence of a movement to shared leadership, teacher confidence, a vision and schoolwide pedagogical framework that had become embedded was evident from the documentations, classroom practice and voices of teacher leaders.

2015 to 2018

Returning to the school in 2018, the researchers were interested in the ongoing sustainability of the vision and schoolwide pedagogy, so evident in 2015. The school provided significant documentation, video clips of students reflecting on their learning and a focus group including the Principal, other members of the leadership team and teacher leaders.

The following represents the voices of the focus group who reflect on what they value as important in school success and sustainability – other data have been presented in the outcomes section of the study.

The focus has been on developing an understanding of the Vision and the values that underpin its meaning: *At the heart of what we are really trying to do is to have – that stuff we did with the vision you know the faith, peace and wisdom – we've really made huge inroads and especially the faith component.*

Further, the development of respect has been central and it began with *the learning that we did in those two years was powerful. It was some of the most powerful learning that I've been engaged with ... One of the really big things that worked in that project is the relational aspect. The way we worked together as a team with you, to work towards what we wanted as a vision for the school: I think relationships are at the base of everything that we do, whether or not we are in a Catholic school. I think the project we did with you [IDEAS project with USQ] was the essence of that relationship building – the trust, the sharing, and the growth in teaching and learning as well.*

We do a lot of faith development with the formation of teachers through professional development – and this year we have introduced Christian mediation ... there are religious benefits of that but there is obviously wellbeing and mindfulness as well. As all the research will tell you – stop and be still to be in relationship with one another, with God and self, so we do that for 10 minutes 3 times a week. It is a whole school approach ... includes the whole school community.

The impact on our students has been positive ... We had a staff meeting with lots of teacher feedback, which was very positive, about a greater focus and engagement afterwards ... we have quite challenging students at the moment and for them it is three times in a week but they really look forward to. We talk to them about their meditation afterwards and how they felt. They always say they feel relaxed but feel calm, they can let all their problems go and they have time to think ... they say things like, when I can't sleep at night time I go back to my meditation and do it at night time to get myself back to sleep, or if I'm having a problem in the yard I will go and sit by myself and do my meditation so it helps me to think properly. If I'm ever feeling worried that's what I go to – or if they are scared or if they are unsure or something. It's amazing how it's become a part of who they are. I think it's a strategy that they go to when they're not sure about something. It has been really

powerful. A Year 7 student talked the parents about the meditation at a transition meeting – and example of student responsibility and communication.

The group then talked about other factors that have contributed to sustainability of success:

Teacher Stability in keeping our focus: – When we do things we are really building on what we've already done because we don't have a big staff turnover. I think because we work together in teams, too, that there are always people that have been on the whole journey. If you've come into our staff, we try to catch people up – it's part of who we are. We work together so our vision has continued to grow with us because we have all been on the same journey ... it is part of who we are. It is not just our vision for teaching and learning, it is part of what we do, it is part of how we talk with the kids, it's part of how we teach and it is actually become our language in our school.

... if you're ever doing anything, the first thing we go back to is 'does it fit with our core vision, the areas of our vision?' We're always taking it back to that I'm trying to use the language around the use our building on what we've already done. If we use external people we say our work with him has complimented our teaching and learning. It's added to it – it has enhanced it. I think the new Staff that have come in have brought an incredible creativity with them around the interpretation of what we might be doing and they have brought their own meaning to that and worked alongside teachers that have been here for a while. They have brought their new learnings to it and also enhanced what we are on about as well. They have mentored with the teacher that they are working with and they become imbued with the idea of what we are on about.

We work together – time is found in the timetable to provide staff with time to collaborate for planning, discussing and reflecting. By collaborating with other people you get such different viewpoints. We all bring our own ideas and experiences and then what comes out at the end is often very different to what we thought when we started. It's a great way to learn and with the children, we give them the invitation sometimes they go off and a completely different direction again and that's what enquiry is and it is great to have another body in the classroom – allows children more flexibility.

Evidenced in the classroom: If you go into the Year 2 unit or the Year 3 unit and the Year 7 unit, where there are two teachers – they just work together. You can talk about two teachers working together – it's as if they can read one another's minds. It works. You actually have to see it and it is tangible. You go in there and you cannot help but be impressed by the way that the students are engaged and on board with their learning, and sharing and collaborating and working together.

We don't expect each other to be perfect either. You have to have that opportunity to laugh at yourself. We are reflective. If something didn't go well we analyse it to think about why it didn't go well and next time we do that, we try something else.

Our focus on our way of learning is also evidenced in the approach we made to refurbishing the classrooms: We started working with the architect and started thinking about how we really wanted to work. The architect says ... tell me how you work and how you want to work and what you want the learning to look like and we will build the room around the learning not about the classroom structure. We started talking about being collaborative, we want this and this and this and this and this – and then we looked at each other and said, well there's no way that we want a folding door down the middle, we're never going to use it because we're actually never going to close it. What we did want as part of our learning was a quiet space for kids. We wanted to give them the opportunity to work together but also know that that was a space where they could be reflective – that's how we got the quiet room that's in our space.

Learning together has become our way of working: ... I think it was very empowering for us to be able to – the challenge for us was to stop and actually think about what we actually do as

teachers, what do we believe in and what do we believe about children. What do we actually believe about what we learn and how do we want them to be learners and acknowledging to that we are learners as well. I think it came back to us reflecting on what we really believe about what we do. It's still an ongoing process. We access new knowledge: professional reading. Online, PD but mainly for the professional networking, school visits ... but new ideas have to fit in with what the school is on about. I think that's our strength you draw knowledge from lots of places and then make it your own ... we are going to be **our** school. I think it comes back to the vision and that document that I think it's given us a real focus of who we are.

Ongoing development: We started off with the vision and now our next step was going back to now having learner qualities. For the connector as a school we have expanded on now we have these learning qualities that if you're being connected, if you're being self-aware and something. The kids have that language. We talked about what it means what it looks like and how they can be collaborative. Now the whole school has a common language they can use to talk about their learning.

We talk about being engaged, we talk about thinking and questioning – what does that look like? If you're being reflective ... that's also resilience because you have to be resilient to be reflective.

We are very different to other schools – not trying to compete. Our School philosophy – not filling up kids with knowledge but developing the whole child. In the first two weeks of school you would learn that relationships are important and that we care about you as a child more importantly than we care about filling you up with some knowledge. It is important also to share our progress (and common language) with the parents – this includes parent information evenings and newsletters [extensive information in documents provided]. We also need to ensure that new people coming in may have new ideas – and you need to value those, especially if they bring richness to the student learning.

Teachers and the principal provide examples of traumatised and students with behavioural problems finding the mentoring support provided at the school assisting in their capacity to deal with issues that they face.

Ongoing Professional Learning is a reality at this school: *It is about passion, and also I think from talking to teachers have been elsewhere then come here they say that our school never stops. Everyone is always trying to be better. So it's that continual reflection saying what can we do now? It's always looking at things and saying OK now what else can we do? ... We know what we want to work and he's given us some ideas of where to go. A lot of the things we've said forget it and other things we've said this is really good, that fits into what we are talking about. I think we own it.*

... and the staff wouldn't know of the whole pile of things I get invited to be involved with – a whole pile of things. The staff wouldn't know of all the requests I get to be involved because I don't take it to them because I say well that doesn't even fit with what we have been doing. So I'll say no, no, no or then I might say yes let's have a look at this because I think it fits in. We filter things a bit ... however, there's always those fierce conversations that we have with people. We have them and people accept that. We want the best for the kids and sometimes we will interrogate a position and we interrogated on behalf of the kids. If we do this, is this the best result? That can be awkward at times but I think at the end we are happy that we come up with decisions that are good – that have some credence to them.

The principal accepts that he has had to rethink his leadership: *... I don't have to be a charismatic person, I just need to be an enabler in the school.*

He goes on to note that the principal consultant has indicated his tendency towards control: *... I've had to step back from that and it's easier to do when you know that there are competent people around with great ideas.*

The group talk about changes in curriculum and resources that have been introduced – but only after they are the ‘right fit’ – this included STEM, Social skills part of the reporting system.

The group then moved onto discussing School Success: *School success is not necessarily in line with NAPLAN success – very interesting discussion about writing – and about the assessment of what is important for 21st C learners (mismatch)... I think if you came down to assessing the children 10 years ago in creativity, collaboration, problem solving – all those are the skills that they need for life, we would be streets ahead of what they were 10 years ago. Our kids actually make choices for themselves now and do have control over their learning. They are learners themselves, by not being “done to” like they would have been 10 years ago where it was seen that they came to school and learnt what we wanted them to learn – and we filled them up. Now we give them choice their choice and representing their learning is not necessarily through formal writing.*

However, we have put some effort and resources into reading over the last couple of years and taken on board in the upper primary, the Year 4 to the Year 6s have been doing something and those general scores have been pretty good. It’s always this flow of are you going to concentrate on something just a little bit more and then something else will come up and then you’ll go back to it.

We are creating these kids who are creative and, yes, they use writing as a tool for the money but because they’re not writing perfectly structured formula for NAPLAN at the end of the day I know schools are on results but is that really what we’re on about? I look at it and think if a parent came to challenge us about writing skills I would say, do you want a child who sits there and learns a formula and learns to regurgitate what they have been filled up with or do you want children who freely think and do all these other things. I get so cross that we put so much money on NAPLAN that really isn’t important at the end of the day. [There was an ongoing conversation by the group about the importance of writing skills – obviously an ongoing conversation in the school.]

The principal indicates that the CESA System – does raise issue about performance: *I have a discussion with the Principal Advisor. I actually did a big comparison – I compared our NAPLAN scores in 2016 with the scores from 2008 and the only thing that was very, very different was that the writing was down a little bit, but the grammar was really improved – almost everything it was almost identical [and] we got a citation last year for having a huge growth in reading, from the kids who are in the Year 3 and the growth they had made in Years 3, 4 and right at the beginning of year 5. We were on a list of not very many schools showing remarkable improvement. They were the same cohort of kids. Any analysis has to be of the same cohort.*

The interviewers asked: At this school, St Francis, we define ongoing school success as....?

... Creative, engaged, reflective learners! (Teachers)

... We have been consistent with our vision, consistent with rhetoric. (Principal)

It comes back to the language that we use. We have a common language, for example, this is like our restorative practice. Kids know that is the same regardless of what teacher they talk to. I think it comes back to that in teaching and learning we are using the same language and have similar expectations. It doesn’t matter whose class you go into, they have the same expectations and you know that is consistent.

A checklist was compiled in regards to the keys to sustainability here:

- a clear focus on who we are – so you see ongoing success about having a clear focus on who we are
- having a whole school approach, for teacher collaboration and capacity building
- to have trusting relationships

- to have a real sense of community
- that students have a pride in what they achieve
- students have agency over their learning
- staff have high expectations of teacher performance

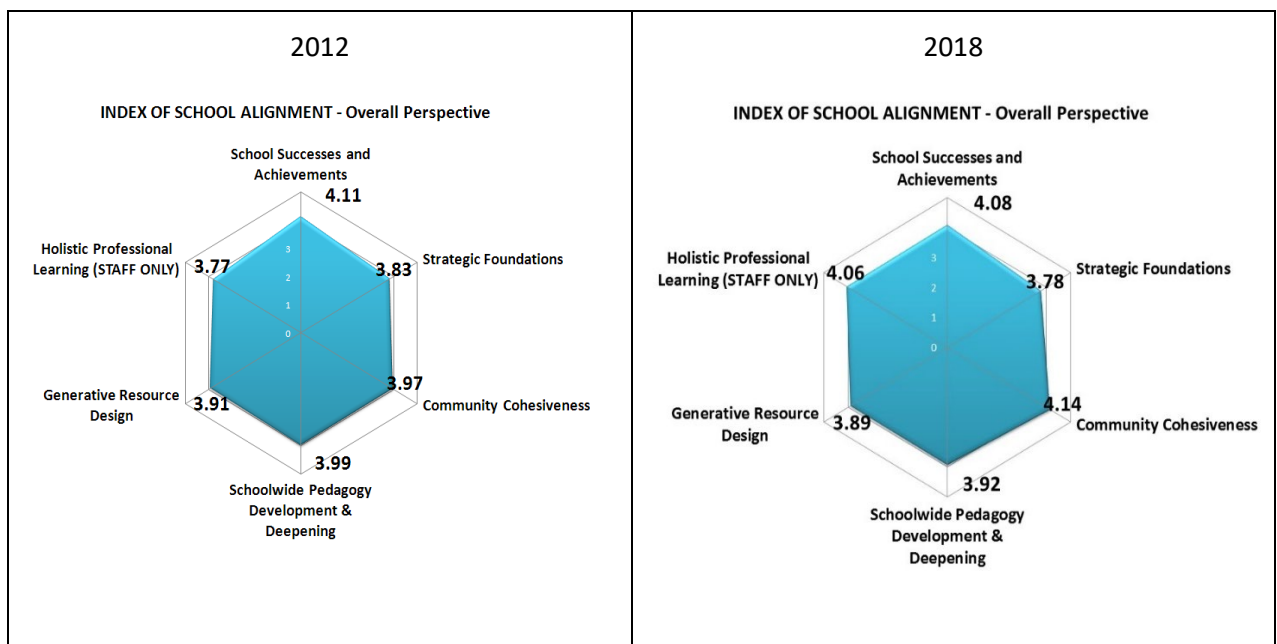
Evidence of Ongoing Success

In 2018, the school completed another DISA after completing one in 2012. The 2012 DISA results were used as a reflective tool by the school when they engaged with the IDEAS process. Presented is a summary of the comparative data that provides insights into the success or otherwise of the school improvement agenda outlined by the school voices in the preceding commentary.

Comparison of DISA Data 2012 - 2018

Success mean moved positively 4.18 to 4.23 and Challenges from 3.68 and below to 3.73 and below. Parent response and student response rates were higher than the previous period.

The alignment graphs (see Figure 5) indicate a firming of alignment for both students and staff. A full report has been provided to the school however, for the purposes of this case study, the following features are highlighted.



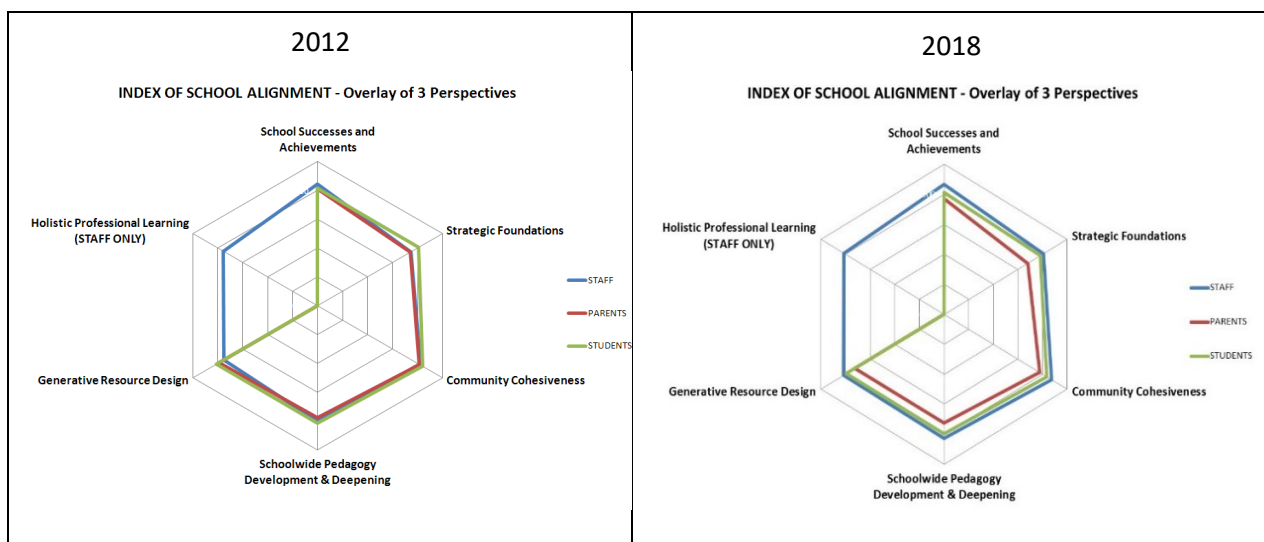


Figure 5: Alignment Graphs 2012-2018 comparison

An analysis of the Outcomes mean and the contributing elements are presented in Table 2. In addition, the features highlighted in the data include:

- a. Outcomes – sustainment of satisfaction with school outcomes with significant positive movement in Teacher Professionalism, resources for Teaching and Learning (teachers and students) and time and space for reflection (staff)
- b. Strategic foundations – staff and students strongly support the vision and all groups agree that defined values are clear and underpin the school vision. Further, staff indicate the principal promotes the vision and school successes, encourages teacher leadership (and students), the Principal facilitates a defined, collaborative process of strategic planning and the school has a clear process for ongoing improvement.
- c. Cohesive Community – for all groups, this is a real strength in the school and this has been maintained and enhanced. In particular, for staff, the support for the school vision in the wider community and positive movements in their expectations of students towards their achievement, as well as those of themselves and parents. This movement was also replicated by students and parents.
- d. Schoolwide Pedagogy Development and Deepening – for staff, this area indicates a positive movement in the sharing of, interrogation of, and reflective analysis of teaching and learning practice; an acknowledgement of the link between the intent of the vision and classroom practice, as well as its impact on teaching and learning throughout the school; the development of teachers’ individual gifts and talents. Students continue to be supportive of the quality of teaching and learning as they experience it across the school.
- e. Generative Resource Design – overall, the mean for this area has shown a positive movement. In particular, staff, parents and students overwhelmingly agree that teachers find innovative ways to utilise learning space and technology in order to optimise student learning. Overall, staff acknowledge curriculum has been updated to meet student needs and students generally agree.
- f. Holistic Professional Learning – overall the mean has moved from 3.77 to 4.06 indicating a growth in teacher professional knowledge, confidence and collaboration. The following areas are strongly supported:

- The professional learning community systematically reflects on the relevance of the school’s vision according to the needs of students
- The core of the Professional Learning Community’s activity is developing and enhancing the Schoolwide Pedagogy;
- An emphasis is placed on encouraging teachers to take leadership of the school’s pedagogical enhancement

Table 2: An analysis of the Outcomes mean and the Contributing Elements

	Staff	Parents	Students
Outcomes			
2012	4.22	4.08	4.07
2018	4.34	3.85	4.06
Strategic Foundations			
2012	3.74	3.71	4.05
2018	4.03	3.39	3.90
Cohesive Community			
2012	4.13	4.07	4.19
2018	4.36	3.88	4.18
Schoolwide Pedagogy			
2012	4.13	4.07	4.19
2018	4.14	3.64	3.99
Generative Resource Use			
2012	4.00	3.89	4.08
2018	4.07	3.63	3.97
Holistic Professional Learning			
2012	3.77		
2018	4.06		

Overall the results show a mature, confident professional community who have provided an environment of innovative and dynamic learning opportunities that has created a community of inspired, engaged learners. The student voice has confirmed this outcome. The voice is not only in

these data but also through capturing student discussion about their school learning experiences. Excerpts from the video include:

Connected Learner:

This is about working together ... connecting with others both teachers and other students ... respecting what each other can provide to my learning. (Year 6 student)

Creative Learner

This is when we try new things ... use different resources and work together in teams. (Year 4 student)

We are provided with lots of opportunities to be creative.

Our classrooms are large, lots of different areas for us to learn ... I like the quiet area and then being able to work with others and like the use of computers ... (Year 4 students)

Reflective Learner

This is when we look back over our work and see how we can improve and see if it my best work.

It is when I get in the learning pit – I have to reflect and keep trying to get out. (Year 5 students)

Engaged Learner

When we do work we get involved with a group and learn with others.

When we learn things about other countries we get to use materials make houses or villages that these people live in ... it helps us understand these people. (Year 6 students)

Student Achievement

The DISA perspectives of the school community on student achievement related to Literacy, Numeracy and Other curriculum areas either maintained positive support or were further supported. Interviews had raised a disappointing result in NAPLAN for writing but growth in other areas. This trend is reflected in the NAPLAN results (see Figures 6 to 11).

NAPLAN

Figures 6 to 11 show the growth data from 2015-2017 for year 5-7 and year 3-5 students.

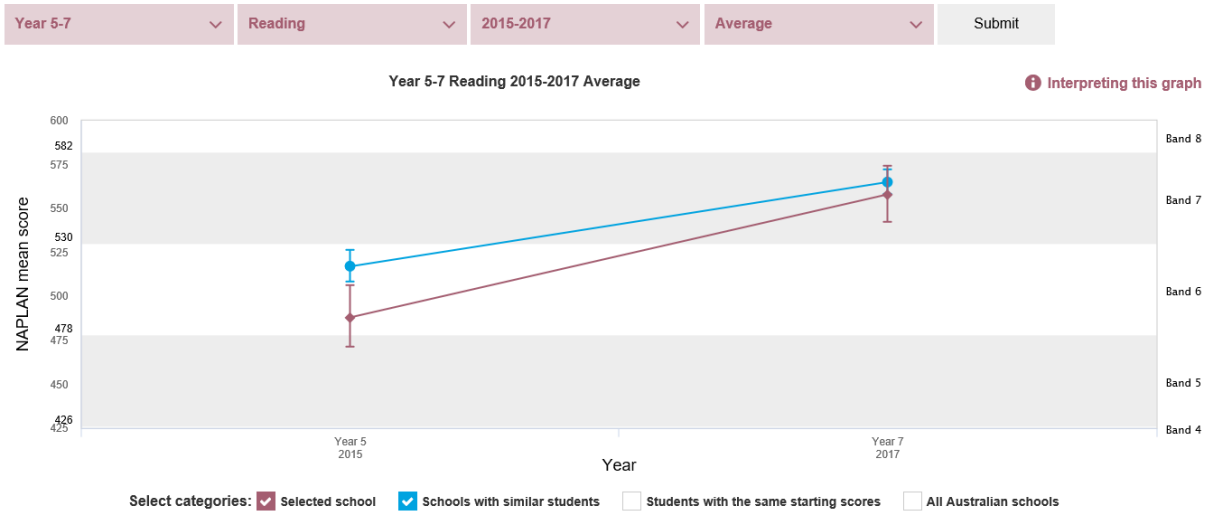


Figure 6: Year 5-7 NAPLAN Reading Growth data

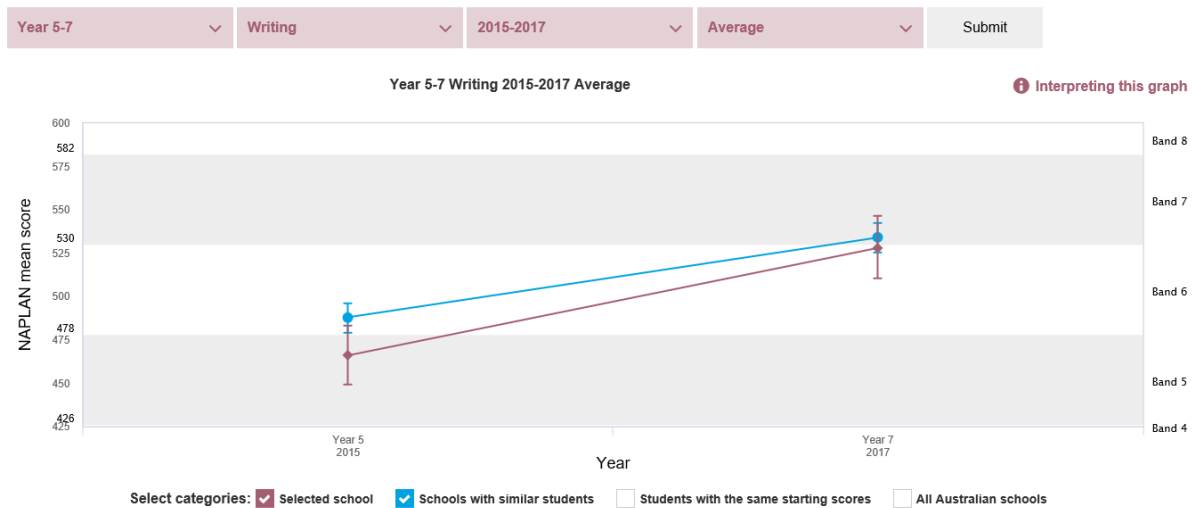


Figure 7: Year 5-7 NAPLAN Writing Growth data

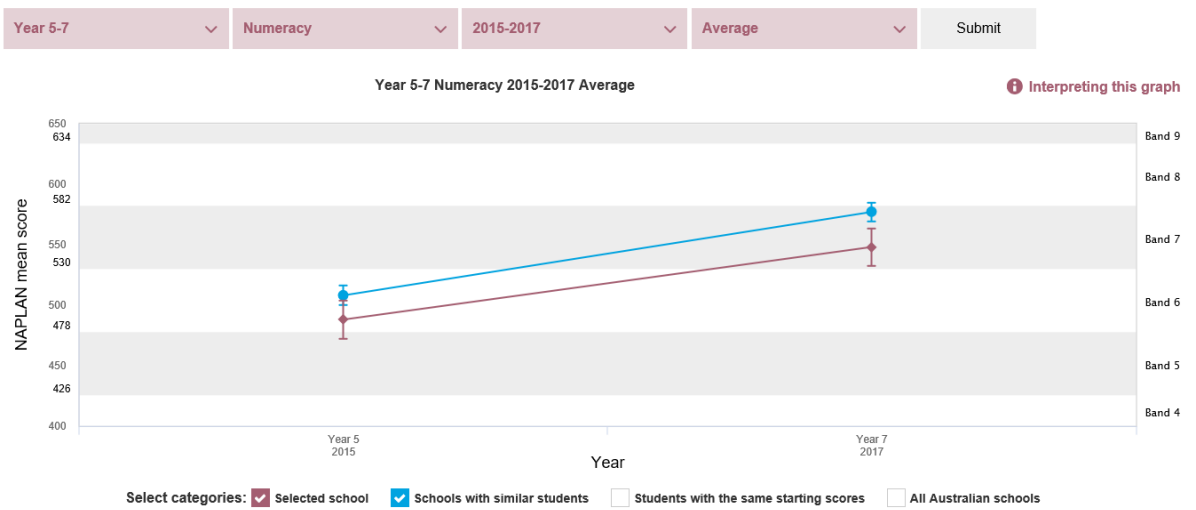


Figure 8: Year 5-7 NAPLAN Numeracy Growth data

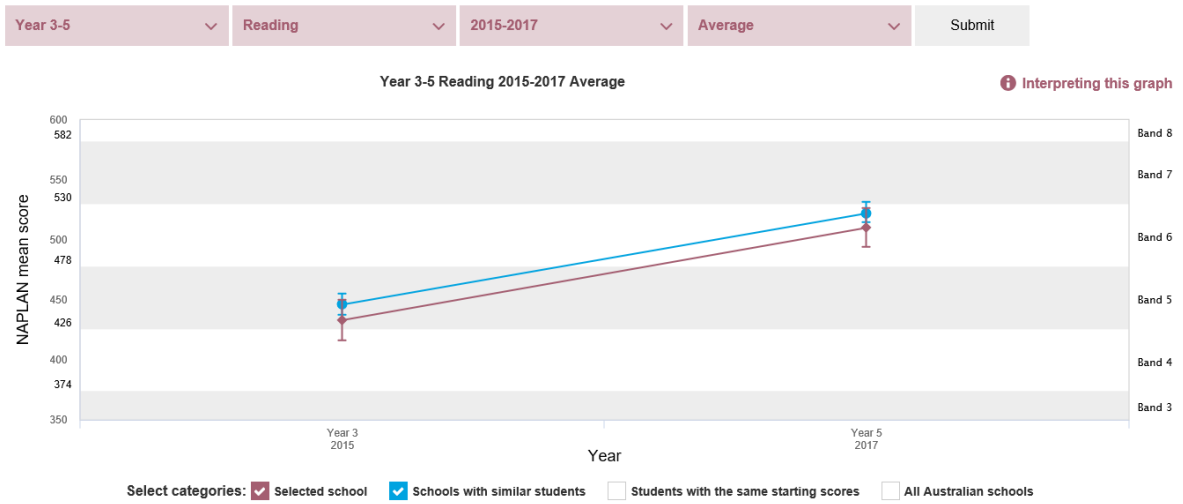


Figure 9: Year 3- 5- NAPLAN Reading Growth data

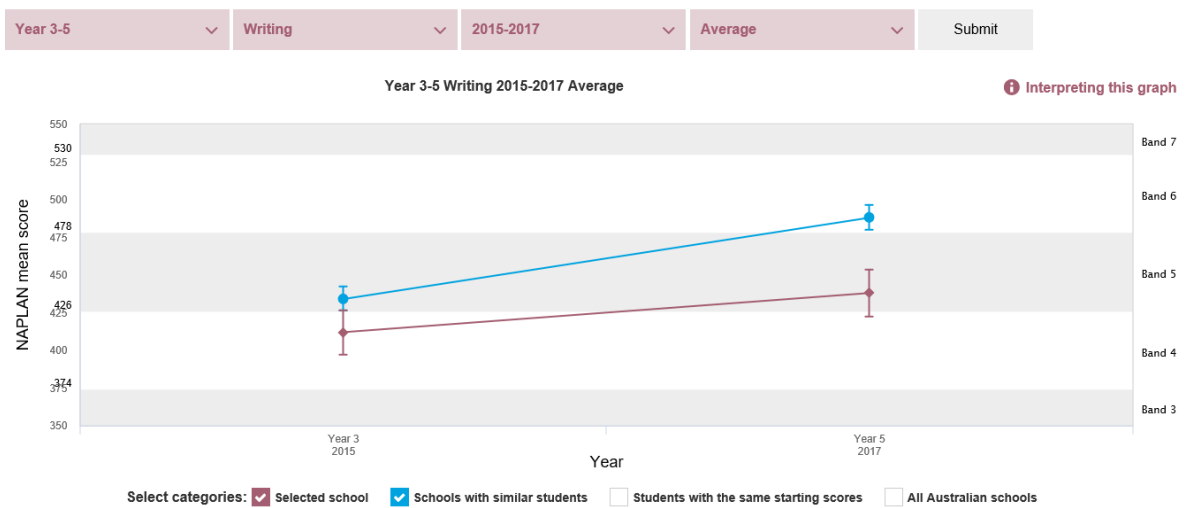


Figure 10: Year 3- 5- NAPLAN Writing Growth data

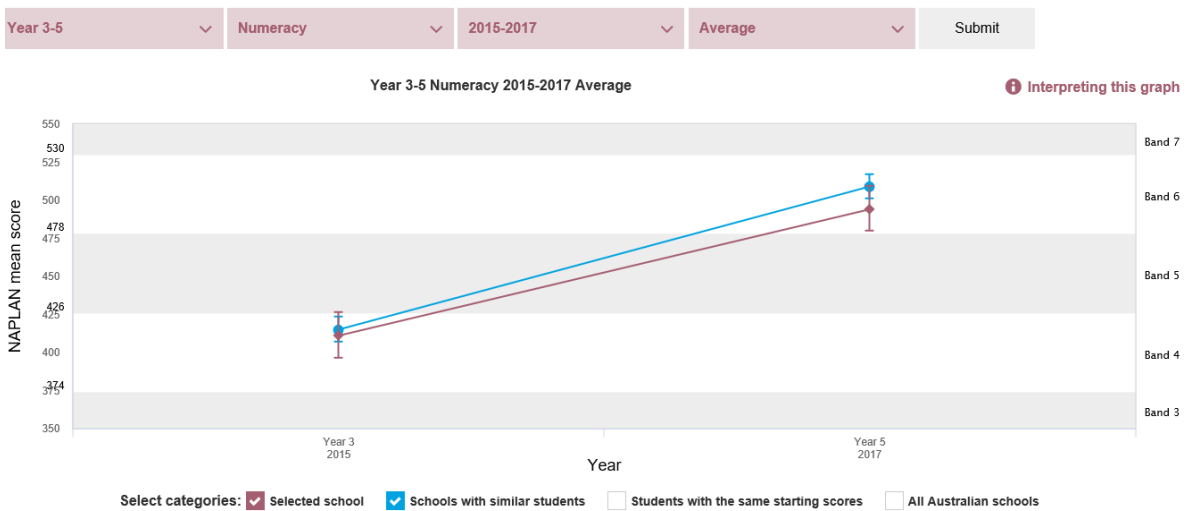


Figure 11: Year 3- 5- NAPLAN Numeracy Growth data

School Annual Report

In the 2016 Annual Report, a parent, staff and student survey supported the DISA data, except for the parent data that indicated high levels of support across the data that reported on Student Involvement, Academic Focus/Opportunities, and Community Spirit.

Factors Contributing to Success

The school provided a list of factors that they considered build on (and sustain) a school improvement agenda:

1. Shared vision for who we are and how we work, which includes
 - A strong sense of Catholicity in the school
 - Strong values
 - The vision is spoken about regularly
 - The vision is prominent in the school
 - Everyone supporting initiatives
 - Professional development to consolidate thinking as a whole staff
 - Being on a faith journey together
2. Shared Learning Vision
 - Change has to be consistent with the vision
 - We need to be speaking the same language
 - Provide time with staff to explore the vision [and learning]
 - Make sure we don't jump from one idea to another
 - Consolidation of ideas
 - Make the case for the vision in lots of ways (e.g. Newsletter)

Researchers' comments

There is evidence in all data that a Catholic school operates not just in name but in action. Growing Together in Faith, Peace and Wisdom is certainly evidenced in documentation as well as the voice of the principal, the teaching staff and the students. The DISA indicates strong support for the school vision by the teachers and the values (as articulation of the vision) by all groups.

Also evident is that the Schoolwide approach to teaching and learning is a reality in teachers' understanding of appropriate pedagogical practices enacted in classrooms and high levels of student engagement. There is evidence of a shared language for learning and living as a Catholic community throughout the school. The DISA supports a strong relationship between students and teachers across all aspects of the school, including student achievement and well-being; teaching and learning, and challenging and innovative classroom experiences. Students were able to articulate how they learn and the value of Christian mediation in their daily lives.

The school has developed a confident, professional community and strong teacher led school improvement initiatives, and the decision of adoption or not is filtered through the learning principles. The principal also uses the lens of the school vision, values and SWP to decide what in the plethora of initiatives that the school could consider to put before the staff for implementation. Staff acknowledge this is the focus for their professional learning and reflection and the school has a clear process for ongoing improvement.

Student achievement is lived within the school – the development of a creative, innovative and engaged learner. The Learner quality continuum has been developed and provides a focus for ongoing student learning focus. Discussion over NAPLAN and its relevance in the school, whilst it provides interest and debate, does not drive classroom practice at the expense of their strong commitment to the current pedagogical practices. Students also report that all groups have high expectations about their achievement, and students at the school focus on their learning.

Two researchers' observation emerge:

- i. Whilst there has been considerable communication to parents through newsletters, open classroom sharing and parent evenings in regards to school direction, especially in terms of student academic achievement and the focus on teaching and learning, the parents that responded (around 20% of the families) to the DISA were less satisfied. This provides the school professional community (including the principal) as an ongoing challenge to enhance the alignment of action. This is even more puzzling when a 2016 Annual Report provided results of a staff, parent and student survey that reported on academic focus and achievement – the parent data indicating positive responses. However, reflecting of the data instrument, the information collected had a different emphasis.
- ii. In comments of the principal's capacity to share power which indicated a challenge by the professional community – the staff did not see this as an inhibitor to action. The staff know they are trusted and enabled to drive school initiatives and provide an "allowance for individual expression". These data remind the researchers of our concept of Parallel Leadership – where teacher leaders and their principal share the qualities of mutual trust, a shared sense of purpose and allowance for individual expression.

Defining Success

The school provided the following as the factors to consider when defining success:

Ideas are progressed and seen through

- Strong sense of community
- Ability to be consistent with stated procedures
- Trust that we do our best
- Classrooms are orderly
- High levels of engagement
- Student agency over their learning
- Student leadership
- Students can speak about their learning
- Parent participation
- Visual appeal of the school
- Students are responsive
- Parent support school decision
- Student, Parent and Staff surveys.

Summary

Given the measures that the school has established for success, there is clear evidence that this definition can be verified. This school is well positioned to continue to sustain action through an active, passionate professional learning community as well as continually challenge themselves to improve.