

Carnegie Primary School (P)

Embracing change at Carnegie Primary School

Carnegie Primary School changed its pedagogical practice from a traditional classroom approach to a whole-school model of collaboration to build teacher capacity and leadership through working in open learning environments, sharing responsibility for student learning and care and planning at point of need using data.

- **Purpose** – build teacher capacity and leadership through a shared pedagogical approach
- **Audience** – school leaders, Education Support staff, teachers, parents
- **Dimension** – Building leadership teams (see Framework for Improving Student Outcomes Improvement Model - <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/management/Pages/schoolperformance.aspx>)

The challenge:

In 2014 Carnegie PS undertook a school review and developed its new Strategic Plan. The review allowed the school to celebrate some real success in student achievement with NAPLAN outcomes in literacy and numeracy at both Years 3 and 5 registering well above state levels. These results have been consistently high from 2010 to 2013. However, the school's performance against Year 3 NAPLAN continues at a higher level than at Year 5 in both literacy and numeracy. The school recognises that the growth in students between Years 3 and 5 is an area for continued improvement.

Funding for more flexible learning spaces provided the impetus to audit and reflect on current pedagogical practice and to devise a plan to ensure a smooth transition for all staff, students and parents.

'We wanted teachers to embrace 21st century pedagogy, whether they were teaching in traditional spaces or in more flexible spaces, and we really wanted to take them on a journey of learning rather than directing them. The challenge was to model this approach to learning without it being enforced; we wanted to ensure teachers were on the journey with us because they could see the benefit and not because they were directed to take it on,' says Principal Linda Jones.

The process:

Teachers were encouraged to see themselves as teachers who taught cohorts of students rather than taking responsibility for one homeroom of students operating within four walls.

All teachers were taken on a journey to develop their understandings of collaboration, working in open learning environments, sharing responsibility for student learning and care, and planning at point of need using whole-school data.

Whole-school documents/assessments were developed such as the whole-school assessment schedule, inquiry planners, writing genre, word study scope and sequence, maths year planners.

'Using data to direct purposeful teaching has been an area of growth for our teachers. This enables more targeted, point-of-need teaching to take place. All teachers within a teaching level need to have a broad knowledge of each child learning within their level. Our teachers have been given

resources as well as new pedagogy to enable them to come on this journey as team members,' says Linda.

'Teachers are continuing to learn and some levels are beginning to use shared drives to facilitate sharing of planning documents, templates and student work. They can share their knowledge and skills so that other teams can begin to use this valuable tool.'

'As our school has significantly grown in student numbers, we need to have clear roles and responsibilities for all staff. All staff are expected to be leaders in something,' she adds.

Leadership at the school is reflective and evolves to meet the point of need. It is structured so that leaders are accountable (for example, the literacy co-ordinator has whole-school targets) and are supported by a curriculum team to ensure smooth transition and effective communication and implementation of these targets occur.

Using the Performance and Development process, teachers and teams collectively create achievable goals around pedagogy and work collaboratively to ensure these goals are met. They are supported and monitored by the principal and the assistant principal through one-on-one sharing sessions where goals are reviewed and tracked to ensure success. Mid-way through the cycle, staff meet to share progress on their goals. This encourages rich discussions and collaboration, creates new directions and serves to empower teachers to continue their great work.

Peer shadowing and mentoring has been introduced across the staff, including new staff, graduates and Casual Relief Teachers (CRTs). Staff walk-throughs are common, and an induction process ensures that all teachers understand "what we are about and how we go about it."

Parents have also been well considered with a range of information sessions to inform current parents of pedagogy and goals and open mornings and afternoons that allow them to be part of their child's learning. Prospective parents are given a personalised tour of the school with either the principal or assistant principal.

Enablers:

The process was facilitated by:

- being respectful of existing practice and staff
- ensuring change was collaborative and gradual
- identifying needs across the school (social, emotional, educational, physical) and recruiting particular people/organisations to help be motivators of change
- embracing a distributive leadership model with crucial roles for Principal, Assistant Principal, Leading Teachers, Curriculum Leaders and Team Leaders
- ensuring parents and the community are provided with accurate and current information
- allocating time for teachers' professional learning; including the Emerging Leaders course, and engaging educational consultants to support pedagogical change, inquiry, emotional intelligence and data analysis
- providing teacher release for staff to visit identified schools with proven best practices, to investigate specific focus/agenda
- providing quality time to reflect either in teams or as individuals
- changing 'management team' to consultative teams



- connections with local kindergartens and the secondary school to enable smooth transitions. The school now has an onsite kindergarten, which creates a smooth transition to primary years.

Barriers:

- previous building structure (in terms of pedagogical vision)
- parent perception (cultural and academic)
- lack of whole-school approach to knowledge management (creating/sharing/storing information) and communication
- out-dated learning spaces and facilities
- managing constant change and providing enough time to enable teachers to make change
- balancing co-design with providing clear direction

The impact:

‘We went from isolated four-wall classrooms to open collaboration when planning and teaching. We have shared responsibility for cohorts of students by the teams of teachers in each area. We now employ teachers whose role is to support the learning within teams. Terminology has changed from ‘my grade’ to ‘our cohort’ of students,’ Linda says.

‘Staff Opinion survey data shows that we are a happy staff and have longevity of staff. Graduate students apply for jobs and stay. Our staffing profile is stable including a number of part timers on family leave in grade-share positions and in other roles. We are also valuing our ES staff more highly than in the past and giving them further responsibilities and PD opportunities.

‘Students have become far more reflective and responsible for their own learning. They are becoming more self-directed and can make decisions about the efficacy of their learning and generally understand their learning styles. Student engagement is higher and learning outcomes have increased. Formal and informal feedback indicates that students now trust all staff within the school, including ES staff, and move from one learning space to another with confidence.’

The school has a strong wellbeing program led by a passionate leader and team that are instilling restorative practices across the whole school. Linda says increased student confidence is reflected in emerging student leadership.

‘Students are taking on leadership roles across the school; sustainability, art, school captains, Student Representative Council, PE, library, ICT, LOTE ... it’s terrific to see.’

Increasing enrolments have led to the introduction of a neighbourhood boundary.

Next steps:

Carnegie PS will continue to:

- house a growing number of students and to keep the community feel of the school
- develop the capacity of staff including ES staff – everyone is considered a leader and decision maker
- be innovative with practice and refine it so that they are teaching at point of need



- value the importance of multiple sources of data
- motivate teachers to be lifelong learners through modelling of professional learning and research
- build the capacity of teachers with professional learning through institutions such as Bastow
- build critical colleague partnerships to enable staff to more fully reflect on their practices
- participate in projects through the Department including the University of Melbourne REAP project (Realising the potential of high-capacity students) and the trialling of the Insight Assessment platform
- foster positive relationships with parents via walk-throughs, coffee mornings, evening forums, parent helper training sessions, open afternoons, website, emails, phone app, and support of Parents and Friends Association (PFA) activities
- develop greater support for the PFA across the whole community
- look at the school's Master Plan in terms of the 2016 State Budget and the allocation of funds and the implications for changed learning spaces, existing buildings and land use
- develop its electronic footprint in terms of up-to-date website, app notifications, use of shared drives
- strategically market the school, clearly explaining its pedagogy to interested parties.

School context:

Carnegie Primary School enrolments have increased significantly over recent years, from 350 in 2010 to 563 students in 23 classes in 2016. A neighbourhood boundary is now in place to enable enrolments to be contained. The increase has predominantly been in the junior classes. There has also been an increase in the number of students with English as an Additional Language.

Steadily growing enrolments allow for greater flexibility in staffing and curriculum, while still maintaining a community feel and a sense of belonging for all. Staff are committed to the development of whole-school effective teaching and learning practices and conduct programs and activities that meet the highest expectations of student wellbeing and connectedness to school.

Students are challenged to be reflective and independent learners so that they realise their full potential.

Who can I contact to find out more?

Principal, Linda Jones

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Ideas for using this case study:

Discussion prompts:

How does our school embrace 21st century pedagogy within our teaching spaces?

Is there room for greater flexibility in staffing and curriculum?

What is the best way to encourage students to take on leadership roles across the school?



What's working in Victorian schools case study:

<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/project/fiso/Pages/EmbracingChangeCarnegie.aspx>



Framework for Improving Student Outcomes

