School Improvement Unit
Report

Meridan State College

1. Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report is a product of a review carried out at Meridan State College from 24 to 27 August 2015. It provides an evaluation of the school's performance against the nine domains of the _National School Improvement Tool_. It also recommends improvement strategies for the school to consider in consultation with its regional office and school community.

The review and report were completed by a review team from the School Improvement Unit (SIU). For more information about the SIU and the new reviews for Queensland state schools please visit the Department of Education and Training (DET) website.

1.2 School context

Location:	214 Parklands Boulevard, Meridan Plains
Education region:	North Coast
The school opened in:	2006
Year levels:	Prep to Year 12
Current school enrolment:	2465
Indigenous enrolments:	2 per cent
Students with disability enrolments:	4 per cent
Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:	1019
Year principal appointed:	2005
Number of teachers:	150
Nearby schools:	Talara State College, Currimundi State School, Pacific Lutheran College, Unity College
Significant community partnerships:	Caloundra Coalition of State Schools, University of the Sunshine Coast, Technical Trade Training Centre, Salvation Army, Caloundra and Caloundra Pacific Returned and Service Leagues, Meridan Springs INC., Industry Reference Group, Kindergartens and Child Care Centres
Unique school programs:	Project Based Learning, Flexi Learning, Master Classes, Dance Excellence, Steps to Success, Pathways to Success, Pursuit.

1.3 Review methodology

The review was conducted by a team of five reviewers.

The review consisted of:

- a pre-review audit of the school's performance data and other school information

- consultation with the Assistant Regional Director/Regional Director

- a school visit of four days

- interviews with staff, students, parents and community representatives, including:

    o Executive Principal and three sub-school Principals

    o Six Deputy Principals

    o 16 Heads of Department, two Heads of Special Education Services, a Head of Curriculum, three Guidance Officers

    o More than 90 teachers

    o Over 150 students including student leaders

    o Two Business Services Managers and 15 ancillary staff

    o Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) president, College Council Chair and 21 parents

    o State Member of Parliament, Jarrod Bleijie

    o Principals from two feeder primary schools and four community members

1.4 Review team

Jenny Maier	Internal reviewer, SIU (review chair)
Jim Baker	Internal Reviewer, SIU
Lyal Giles	Internal Reviewer, SIU
Denise Kostowski	Peer Reviewer
Ian Hall	External Reviewer

1.5 Reading the report

The executive summary outlines key findings from the review. The key improvement strategies prioritise future direction for improvement. The executive summary should be read along with the findings and improvement strategies outlined in the nine domains which provide a strategic view for improvement.

2. Executive summary

2.1 Key findings

- Innovation, creativity and a sincere determination to be a leader in state education are distinctive marks of the college.

  The college leadership team has collaboratively developed and is united in driving an expansive college improvement agenda for the college which is subscribed to by the college community.

- Academic performance across the college is trending upwards.

  The college has a comprehensive plan for the systematic collection and analysis of a range of student outcomes data. Staff are aware of the need to develop strategies to promote higher-order thinking skills and extend higher achievers.

- College leaders are committed to the development of staff into an expert teaching and leadership team.

  The college has high expectations for the development of teaching and leadership capabilities and has implemented a coaching program. Coaches have been trained in the GROWTH Coaching Model. The coaching process links to the college's pedagogical framework, Annual Performance Reviews (APR) and teacher identified needs.

- The college leadership team has developed a culture of high expectations and commitment to excellence.

  A strong collegial culture has been established and all staff share a clear commitment to the Meridan Way. Teachers have a shared commitment to improving teaching practice and have an openness to being critiqued by colleagues.

- Goal setting is being used to support student learning in a variety of age appropriate ways.

  Feedback is provided by teachers to students in a variety of ways. Goal setting and the use of feedback to provide clarity of learning for students is developing.

- Parents and community members are valued partners of the college.

  Parent and community members participate in the student led conferences, student performance interview cycles, college information sessions and other college events. Parents and community members are also encouraged to be actively involved in the decision-making practices of the college.

2.2 Key improvement strategies

- Refine the explicit improvement agenda to provide a narrow, sharp and deep focus on key improvements.

- Further develop the capacity of staff and the leadership team to enhance the future direction of the college through embedding the coaching culture.

- Build teacher capability in differentiation practices that stretch and challenge high achieving students.

- Embed goal-setting practices across the college that are linked with effective feedback practices to students.

3. Findings and improvement strategies against the domains

3.1 An explicit improvement agenda

Findings

The college leadership team has collaboratively developed and is united in driving an expansive college improvement agenda for the college and subscribed to by the college community. Innovation, creativity and a sincere determination to be a leader in state education are distinctive traits of the college.

The agenda identifies four focus areas: improving student outcomes, P-12 curriculum alignment, building teacher capability through the pedagogical framework and parent community engagement. Staff consistently articulate that the improvement agenda is related to improvements in student outcomes, particularly levels of achievement, Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) attainment and National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) literacy, numeracy and upper two bands (U2B) performance. The pedagogical framework is in evidence across the college and curriculum is well documented. Parents interviewed indicate that they would like to see more parents engaged in the life of the college and college leaders are exploring innovative ways to increase community and parent engagement.

The expansive leadership structure provides the strategic direction and support for the college priorities. This team has evolved over the nine years since the college opened and continues to respond to the emerging needs of the community. Devolution of responsibility enhances the efficacy of leadership in the college.

The leadership team has set explicit targets for improvement which are communicated to staff at regular intervals. Performance against the targets is shared at meetings of faculty and whole of teaching staff and progress is celebrated. There is an inconsistent understanding by some staff of the data targets.

The college draws on a broad range of data related to student performance and wellbeing to understand current achievement and inform decision making. Teachers are introduced to their class data set at the beginning of the school year and revisit it after each reporting period. Analysis and discussion of class and individual student data informs subsequent teaching and learning cycles.

Staff demonstrate their commitment to the improvement agenda by their willingness to develop their teaching capability through participation in a range of professional learning opportunities. These are described in the college Professional Development Plan and include, but are not limited to, the formal Annual Performance Review and associated coaching conversations, Professional Learning Teams (PLTs), the *Data-Informed Classroom Project*, the sharing of strategies at faculty meetings and the observation and feedback conversations. All professional learning is aligned to the priorities in the annual improvement agenda.

Students are expected to learn successfully. Curriculum and assessment are regularly reviewed by teachers to ensure they remain engaging and relevant. Many teachers provide additional encouragement and support through after-class tutoring and extra-curricular activities.

Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2012-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Explicit Improvement Agenda 2015, P-12 Curriculum Framework, Instructional Leadership Framework, Great Results Guarantee 2015, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, Professional Development Plan 2015, college website, college newsletters, differentiation placemats, staff, student and leadership team interviews, college professional development programs.

Improvement strategies

Refine the explicit improvement agenda to provide a narrow, sharp and deep focus on key improvements.

Consolidate the work already underway to ensure consistent understanding and practice of policies and processes across the college.

3.2 Analysis and discussion of data

Findings

The executive leadership team has a comprehensive plan to systematically collect and analyse a range of student outcomes data including systematic, diagnostic and subject achievement across the three sub-schools.

Each of the three sub-schools has a well-documented data plan which incorporates academic, attendance and behaviour data sets.

The detailed primary and secondary sub-school data plans clearly identify data to be collected at each year level and includes targets and timelines. The plans also describe the specific responsibilities of class teachers, Year Level Community Leaders (CL), Head of Curriculum (HOC), Heads of Department (HOD) and members of the Executive Team. Evidence confirms that the data plans are consistently enacted.

A broad range of data is available including, but not limited to, OneSchool dashboard, the *Data-Informed Classroom Project*, benchmarks, pre and post testing, data walls, class window, reading and differentiated placemats, R3 and R6 achievement ladders and OP Analyser. Data is stored in a number of areas including OneSchool, G Drive, One Note and OnePortal. Staff articulate a desire to have a central location for data storage to enable ease of access and effective transitions across the college.

Tracking, monitoring and analysis of data to inform teaching and learning is inconsistent across the college. Staff indicate varying levels of capability in data literacy skills.

Student outcomes data, as demonstrated through systemic testing, is consistently improving with 100 per cent of students achieving a QCE in 2014 compared to 90.7 percent for Queensland State Schools.

The college is generally upwardly trending in NAPLAN performance. NAPLAN performance in 2015 in all strands is above the National Minimum Standard (NMS) for Queensland State Schools across Year 3, Year 5, Year 7 and Year 9.

Performance is above the nation in NMS in all strands in Year 3, Year 5 and Year 7 and for spelling, grammar and punctuation and numeracy in Year 9.

Supporting data

Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Explicit Improvement Agenda 2015, School Data Profile 2015, college improvement targets, class window, differentiation placemats, staff, student and leadership team interviews

Improvement strategies

Refine data storage solutions.

Further develop staff data literacy skills.

3.3 A culture that promotes learning

Findings

The college leadership team has developed a culture of high expectations and commitment to excellence. A strong collegial culture has been established and all staff share a clear commitment to the *Meridan Way*.

Teachers have a shared commitment to improving teaching practice and an openness to being critiqued by colleagues.

Student success is driven through a broad range of programs and processes to ensure quality outcomes. These are related to student wellbeing as well as academic performance.

A diverse range of activities are in place to develop positive and caring relationships across the entire college and include Community Days, 'Day for Daniel' and sporting carnivals.

Parents and community members feel welcomed into the college and are valued partners of the college. They participate in the student-led conferences, student performance interview cycles and college information sessions. Parents and community members are also encouraged to be actively involved in the decision-making practices of the college and this is an area that is being pursued by the college leadership team.

The positive learning environment is based on the college values and *Fish! Philosophy* which are the basis of the Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students. There is a clear, well-documented approach for managing student behaviour but the reviewers noted inconsistent understanding and implementation.

A range of strategies is embedded to recognise and promote appropriate behaviour including student of the week awards, postcards and 'Student Stars'. There is a team approach to case management of student wellbeing within each of the three sub-schools.

The college prides itself on being a leader in innovation both as part of the Caloundra Coalition and state-wide community. The Year 7 curriculum has been reviewed to include project-based learning to engage students and promote inquiry and innovation.

The college precinct and classrooms provide welcoming environments that are conducive to learning.

The current attendance rate is 92.9 per cent with 89.3 per cent of students attending at or above 85 per cent attendance.

In the School Opinion Survey 2014 (SOS) students responded that 'student behaviour is managed' with a satisfaction level similar to state schools. Staff and parents indicated a satisfaction level with behaviour that is below like schools and state schools. Overall satisfaction with the college expressed by the staff is lower than both like schools and all

state schools. Students overall rating is higher than both like schools and all state schools.

Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2012-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Explicit Improvement Agenda 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, Learning and Wellbeing Plan, P-12 Communities Framework, P-12 Curriculum Framework, Instructional Leadership Framework, School Data Plan, college newsletters, differentiation placemat, staff, student and leadership team interviews.

Improvement strategies

Quality assure the implementation of the Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students and associated processes to ensure high expectations are maintained.

3.4 Targeted use of school resources

Findings

College leaders give a high priority to understanding and addressing the learning and wellbeing needs of all students and apply available resources in a targeted manner to meet those needs.

College leaders ensure priorities identified in the college Annual Implementation Plan 2015 and primary, junior secondary and senior secondary action plans, faculty plans and year level plans are used as a basis for allocative decisions.

The development of the college budget is led by the executive principal and sub-school principals in consultation with business services and cost code managers and is aligned to the college explicit improvement agenda. Budgets are systematically aligned with sub-school plans and quality assured by the executive leadership team.

Improving literacy and numeracy are identified priorities in the college literacy and numeracy plans. Great Results Guarantee (GRG) funding for the college is $592 088. These funds are used to employ HODs, additional teacher and teacher-aide positions, implement programs and provide professional development.

The current bank balance is $ 1 850 689. A professional development budget of $285 453 has been allocated to build staff capacity in line with the identified improvement agenda. This includes the GRG funds and college budget.

Student Services teams in the primary and secondary sub-schools address student wellbeing requirements. Support is also provided for Students with Disabilities (SWD), students with learning difficulties and disengaged students.

The college has established an innovative Contemporary Learning Hub (CLH) to provide leading edge professional development within the college and nationwide. A business plan outlines the strategic vision for the CLH to ensure it is self-funding and sustainable.

Study tours for visiting international students also contribute to the college budget.

The campus is well maintained and all classrooms provide an attractive physical learning environment. The ongoing building and facilities development program is well managed and strategically aligned to the promotion of learning.

A small but supportive Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) contributes funding in-line with identified college initiatives. The P&C raises considerable funds via two business run at the college (tuckshop and Café). They have made a $60 000 contribution in 2015.

Supporting data

Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Sub-School Action Plans, Great Results Guarantee 2015, staff, student, P&C and leadership team interviews, budget overview report, College Data Plan, Literacy Plan, Numeracy Plan.

Improvement strategies

Refine data storage solutions.

3.5 An expert teaching team

Findings

All college leaders are committed to the development of staff into an expert teaching team. This is recognised as central to improving student outcomes.

The college has high expectations for each teacher to develop their teaching capabilities and has implemented a coaching program for all teachers. Coaches have been trained in the Growth Coaching Model (GROWTH). The coaching process links to and responds to the college pedagogical framework, Annual Performance Reviews (APR) and teacher identified needs. It is recognised by the majority of teachers that this is an effective program. It is also recognised that further development and refinement of the process will occur.

The college is implementing Annual Performance Reviews for all staff and the leadership team is involved in a range of professional development activities to enhance their leadership capability.

Processes occur to enable teachers to share quality teaching practices. Professional learning time at the commencement of each staff meeting enables good practices to be shared and discussed. Weekly year level and faculty meetings provide the opportunity for teachers to network and discuss teaching and learning practices. Teachers visit other teachers to observe quality teaching practices.

The college has a comprehensive documented Professional Learning Plan. Teachers have access to a range of quality professional development including programs developed and delivered by the Contemporary Learning Hub. The CLH provides online professional development to teachers nationwide.

The college has an induction program to support beginning and new teachers. The program includes professional development and mentoring. The collegial culture of the college is recognised as having a positive impact on the assimilation of teachers into the college.

The college has recognised the strengths and weaknesses of the college-wide team and strategies are in place to recruit staff with the necessary expertise to fulfil the college agenda.

The college has a supportive formal process to manage unsatisfactory performance of staff.

Supporting data

Curriculum Overview, Data Plan, Pedagogical Framework, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, Strategic Plan, Annual Improvement Coaching Instructional Learning Framework, budget overview, college website, whole of college teaching and learning artefacts, interviews with staff and parents.

Improvement strategies

Formalise a systematic program and practices to promote leadership density and capacity.

Embed the college coaching program.

3.6 Systematic curriculum delivery

Findings

The college has a comprehensive Prep to Year 12 Curriculum Plan for curriculum delivery which makes clear what teachers should teach and students should learn. The curriculum plan informs the construction of year level and unit plans across the college and outlines the pathways from Prep to Year 12.

The college is delivering the full scope of mandated curriculum and expectations for learning. Teachers expressed agreement about the clarity and consistency of curriculum expectations.

Curriculum planning sessions occur on a regular basis in the primary sub-school. The HOC works with teachers to create engaging units of work using data to inform planning. Teachers in the primary school regard these planning sessions as highly valuable. Junior secondary teachers from across the Key Learning Areas co-plan integrated units such as the Year 7 project-based learning unit. In the secondary school planning and assessment is overseen and monitored by curriculum HODs.

Cross-curricula priorities are embedded in units of work in the primary sub-school.

Higher-order thinking skills have been identified as an emerging priority and Heads of Learning Engagement have been appointed to lead and manage this initiative.

Moderation of assessment tasks to ensure consistent teacher judgement is practised across the three sub-schools. Front-ending of assessment is evident in the primary sub-school. A consistent template for the writing of task and criteria sheets is in use across all key learning areas in secondary.

College-wide numeracy, science and literacy plans exist. The level of adoption varies and is less consistent in secondary.

Information and communications technologies (ICTs) are highly integrated as a tool for teaching and learning in the secondary sub-schools. This is not so evident in the primary sub-school. Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) is being implemented in secondary and the college is exploring this option for the primary sub-school.

The college has identified Science Technology Engineering Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) as a key priority in the secondary sub-schools. The HOC and HOD Science have collaboratively developed a unit of work with the Caloundra Coalition of Schools to specifically focus on engaging Year 7 students in science.

Teachers communicate their classroom curriculum overviews and unit outlines to the parents in newsletters, through student led conferences, student performance interviews and during transition days.

Supporting data

Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Explicit Improvement Agenda 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, School Data Profile, P-12 Curriculum Framework, Instructional Leadership Framework, literacy plan, numeracy plan, professional development program 2015, college website, college newsletters, staff, student and leadership team interviews, college professional development days.

Improvement strategies

Consolidate the implementation of college-wide plans and ensure alignment and consistency of preferred practices.

Embed higher-order thinking strategies into planning.

3.7 Differentiated teaching and learning

Findings

College leaders and staff demonstrate the belief that students are at different stages in their learning and teachers make adjustments to the teaching according to content, product, process and environment. Teachers within the secondary sub-schools use a differentiation placemat to plan for adjustments for students while teachers in the primary sub-school reflect their changes using snapshots.

Teachers regularly review data on student achievement to inform teaching and learning. A broad number of strategies support differentiation however these are mainly structural and include master classes in junior secondary, class groupings and individual support within and outside the classroom. Many teachers identified the need for further development in explicit teaching strategies that specifically cater for students requiring extension in the classroom setting.

The college has recently appointed Heads of Learning Enhancement to support the extension of students in English and mathematics and provide advice to classroom teachers on differentiation strategies. As a new strategy it is yet to have a direct impact on classroom practice but staff are appreciative and optimistic about the support that this role will provide.

Individual Curriculum Plans (ICPs) are implemented for students requiring substantial adjustments to their learning programs. These plans are evident for students with disabilities who are accessing the curriculum at an alternative juncture to that of their peers. The ICPs are relatively new in implementation and are more established in the primary sub-school.

College-wide processes are in place for the identification and referral of students requiring intervention.

Transition programs for students, including those with a disability, are well-established for prep, junior secondary and senior secondary.

Supporting data

Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Explicit Improvement Agenda 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, P-12 Curriculum Framework, Instructional Leadership Framework, Differentiation Plan P-12, literacy plan, numeracy plan, professional development program 2015, college website, college newsletters, differentiation placemats, staff, student and leadership team interviews, college professional development days

Improvement strategies

Provide professional development, observation, coaching and feedback to support teachers in the implementation of differentiation within the classroom.

Embed the development and implementation of ICP's across the college.

Develop and implement a whole college process for the collection, storage and use of data to monitor adjustments and support provisions for students over time.

3.8 Effective pedagogical practices

Findings

The college has developed a pedagogical framework based upon the *Art and Science of Teaching*[1] (ASoT). It is evident in practice across the college that the framework is having an impact on teaching practices.

Leaders articulate a strong desire to see effective teaching occurring throughout the college. Staff are committed to the alignment of teaching practice throughout the college, hence the development of *The Meridan Way*.

The college reflects on current data and research when developing programs. Staff involvement in Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) is contributing to the development of these programs and promoting a whole-college commitment to successful implementation.

The college has literacy and numeracy plans that include timelines, actions and expected outcomes. The primary school has successfully implemented a reading program and a reading program is being developed for junior secondary. In NAPLAN 2015, results in reading in Year 3, Year 5 and Year 7 were similar to the national average.

The college numeracy program, which utilises external expertise, coaching and mentoring practices, is being implemented and has contributed to improvement in 2015 NAPLAN results with Year 3, Year 5 and Year 7 results above national average.

The college espouses an explicit teaching agenda, with lessons incorporating learning goals and success criteria and following the *Gradual Release of Responsibility* model. This is developing across the college.

Staff are aware of the need to develop strategies to promote higher-order thinking skills and extend higher achievers. Some quality planning and teaching practices to meet the need of higher achieving students are in evidence but these practices are not consistent across the college.

Goal setting is being used to support student learning in a variety of age appropriate ways. Feedback is also provided by teachers to students in a various forms. Goal setting and the use of feedback to provide clarity of learning for students is developing.

Supporting data

Curriculum Framework, Data Plan, Pedagogical Framework, Instructional Leadership Framework, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, Strategic Plan, Annual

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[1] Marzano, R.J. (2007). *The Art and Science of Teaching: A Comprehensive Framework for Effective Instruction.* ASCD, Alexandria, VA.

Improvement Plans, budget overview, college website, whole of college teaching and learning artefacts, interviews with staff and parents.

Improvement strategies

Develop consistent programs, practices and teaching strategies to enhance higher-order thinking skills with focus on higher achievers.

Embed and quality assure the whole college approach to explicit teaching across the college.

Embed goal-setting practices across the college that are linked with effective feedback practices to students.

3.9 School and community partnerships

Findings

The leadership team makes deliberate and strategic use of partnerships with parents, local business, education and community members to improve opportunities and outcomes for students. Evidence indicates these partnerships are having the intended impact.

The leadership team reflects on the effectiveness of the community engagement strategies in planning future directions and have identified the involvement of parents as an impending initiative.

Significant examples of community partnerships include the Caloundra Coalition of State Schools, University of the Sunshine Coast (USC), Salvation Army Youth Outreach Service, Contemporary Learning Hub, Sunshine Coast Technical Trades Training Centre, Industry Reference Group and kindergartens and child care centres.

The Caloundra Coalition of State Schools and the college have a strategic plan to ensure that transitions between key junctures of pre-prep to Prep and Year 6 to 7 are effective. Meridan teachers engage with neighbouring primary schools and kindergartens to enhance the transition to the college.

Links with USC provide opportunities to source quality staff and access professional development. Some senior students are also enrolled in university studies through USC.

The CLH is an innovative approach to providing professional development to both college staff and the wider educational community on a cost-neutral basis. The Caloundra Coalition of State Schools also provides opportunities for professional development of staff.

The college is proactively exploring innovative strategies to engage local businesses, parents and community.

Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2012-2015, Annual Implementation Plan 2015, Explicit Improvement Agenda 2015, professional development program 2015, college website, college newsletters, interviews with community members and parents.

Improvement strategies

Nil

4. Follow-up timelines

- School to publish the executive summary on their website within two weeks.

- School to meet with Regional Director/Deputy Director General, State Schools (or delegate) to discuss review findings and improvement strategies.