

Creating a culture of excellence: case studies

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

Background

The School Excellence Framework (SEF) describes 14 elements of high quality practice which underpin school excellence in the three domains of learning, teaching and leading. In 2016, five schools (Lansvale Public School, Rooty Hill High School, Sefton High School, Taree West Public School and Woonona High School) were identified as excelling in most of these elements. The practices of these schools are described in case studies of how individual schools create and maintain a culture of excellence. The high quality practices common to these five schools include data collection and analysis; ongoing evaluation of teaching practices; peer support and mentoring among staff; interschool collaboration; and educational leadership.

Main findings

- All five schools maintain a culture of building educational aspiration and supporting students' learning through a partnership between teachers, students and parents. Teachers continually monitor students' academic progress using formative and summative assessment data (including NAPLAN and HSC data). Students are also encouraged to make personal learning plans and have discussions with teachers about where, and what, improvements are needed in their learning.
- These schools also strategically involve parents in students' learning to ensure that learning does not stop once students leave the school grounds. By sharing responsibility for students' learning, the schools create learning environments where students feel motivated to learn and have adequate support to reach their full learning potential.
- The case study schools emphasise staff learning and development and promote a culture of self and/or peer evaluations to improve teaching practice. Each school has professional learning systems in place that enable teachers to learn from and with each other about a range of

teaching-related topics. Although schools may differ in their approach to professional learning, the goal remains the same across schools – to sustain quality teaching practice.

- To facilitate learning and development, the case study schools often form learning alliances with other schools to promote collaboration, peer learning and mentoring among teachers.
- The principals of these schools are strong educational leaders who model instructional leadership within and beyond their schools. These principals all share a common desire to build leadership capacity among their staff and often allow staff to play key roles in the making and/or enactment of school decisions.
- It is clear that not all schools that excel do so by focusing on exactly the same things, nor do they all demonstrate the same quality practices in the same way. Hence, there are many similarities between these case studies but also some differences. Before considering or adopting any of the practices discussed in these case studies, schools must first understand how contextual factors (such as ICSEA value or location) might affect outcomes. The School Excellence Framework continues to provide a reliable point of reference for schools to assess their practices each year.

More information

The case studies for these five schools can be found here:

<https://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/publications-filter/creating-a-culture-of-excellence-case-studies>