

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Rosehill Public School

Every student is known, valued and cared for
in our schools

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation



Student wellbeing has always been at the
heart of our teaching and school.

Sarah Balestriere,
Relieving Deputy Principal

CESE would like to thank the Relieving Principal, Tony D’Amore, and his senior executive team, Sarah Balestriere – Relieving Deputy Principal, and Leah Moffa – Relieving Deputy Principal; as well as the school’s wellbeing team, Teina Maguire – Learning and Support Coordinator, Leonie Marshman – Assistant Principal and Classroom Teacher, Kirsty Parra – Relieving Assistant Principal and Classroom Teacher, Paul Salviani – School Counsellor, and Melita Stubis – Relieving Assistant Principal and Classroom Teacher, for their valuable input to this case study.

Introduction

Rosehill Public School is a large primary school located in the western suburbs of Sydney. It is five minutes away from the rapidly expanding commercial centre of Parramatta. Most of the students at Rosehill are from a language background other than English (LBOTE) with the majority of students of Indian background. The student body is somewhat transient, with families often coming to the area as new migrants and leaving as they become more settled. The school has experienced rapid student growth in the last few years and today has almost 800 students from preschool to Year 6. There are currently 18 new learning spaces being built on the school grounds to accommodate forecast growth in student numbers. Teacher turnover has been relatively high in recent years due to retirements and the school’s focus on leadership development, which sees many teachers offered promotional opportunities in other schools. As a result, the school currently has a number of early career teachers. Rosehill has slightly more students in the top two Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) quartiles than the Australian average and performs similarly in NAPLAN to other ‘like’ schools.

Our staff have always made sure that every child is valued. Our school has always strived to continually improve the wellbeing of our students through professional development of our staff, constant reflection and revision of our programs and practices, valuing the opinions of all stakeholders – students, staff, parents and the community – and giving students as many opportunities to extend themselves through extra-curricular activities.

Melita Stubis, Relieving Assistant Principal and Classroom Teacher

Rosehill Public School has always been known in the local community as ‘the school that cares’. Wellbeing is embedded within everything the school does, spanning recruitment of staff and the design of its programs and initiatives, to engagement of parents. The school articulates its wellbeing focus as ‘wellbeing for learning’. Rosehill provides a meaningful and flexible learning environment, created through a culture of care, respect and resilience.



What has worked to improve student wellbeing at Rosehill Public School:

- Providing the learning and support coordinator with a flexible timetable so she can support teachers to work more effectively with students.
- Adopting a distributed leadership model to promote greater staff collaboration.
- Implementing a ‘Rosie’ reward program as part of the PBL relaunch.
- Boosting staff morale through initiatives such as staff ‘wellbeing week’.
- Increasing parental engagement through digital learning platforms, such as Seesaw, and restructuring the P&C to include ‘parent groups’.

I'm loving the amount of aspiring leaders here in the school and the keenness of the teachers to put their hand up to do things. And often a lot of them are putting their hands up to do the big ticket items as well, which is really good.

Tony D'Amore, Relieving Principal



Strong systems and structures

At Rosehill, a culture has been created that supports wellbeing for learning. Everyone in the school has ownership of wellbeing and there is a common vision and language.

Embedding wellbeing

Staff at Rosehill are recruited strategically to ensure the wellbeing vision and culture remains embedded. All staff who join the school through an expression of interest or a formal job advertisement must demonstrate the commitment and capability to have a positive impact on student wellbeing. This helps to ensure that student wellbeing continues to be placed at the centre of everything the school does.

Rosehill also has a large team to support wellbeing in the school. This team is comprised of teaching staff, executive staff and targeted support professionals, such as the school counsellor. The wellbeing team works closely with each other, the executive, students, and with parents and the broader community. For example, the school counsellor works closely with the learning and support coordinator to support individual students. The wellbeing team ensures they communicate with other school staff: through an information noticeboard where they can share updates; and they regularly share information at whole-school meetings.

Importantly, staff on the wellbeing team are also given time off class to plan and provide support. For example, the current learning and support coordinator has been given a much more flexible timetable this year so she can support teachers to work more effectively with students, rather than just supporting students directly. This support to teachers involves spending a lot of time in classes, providing feedback to teachers, and working one-on-one with students to give teachers more time to teach other students.

Distributed leadership and shared vision

At Rosehill, the whole school community understands and is working towards common goals and visions. This is exemplified by the fact that the relieving principal is new to the school, as are several of the executive team, yet all staff members interviewed for this case study could clearly articulate the school's vision and strategies. This shared vision is embedded through effective communication and strong systems and processes. For example, the school has seven processes (or 'projects') that they are working on to improve specific outcomes. These projects all feed into the school plan and relate to the School Excellence Framework. All staff are invited to work together on these projects and the school executive clearly articulates the links between the projects to the broader school community.

We know we're organised. We know what the expectations are, the students know what the expectations are, the parents know what the expectations are. So it's all one machine that works.

Teina Maguire, Learning Support Coordinator

Staff at Rosehill are given many opportunities to lead and own projects and initiatives, and they keenly take up these opportunities. For example, there is a strong Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) committee at Rosehill which is comprised of a mix of executive and teaching staff, and staff can receive training in PBL. Aspiring leaders are also given many development opportunities. For example, one of the school's young aspiring leaders has been involved in Rosehill's classroom 'walkthrough' professional learning program focusing on student voice, and has recently been appointed as relieving assistant principal. She was one of the staff selected to speak to CESE about wellbeing at Rosehill.



Whole-school approach

Wellbeing at Rosehill is embedded in everything the school does. This is brought about by a whole-school approach involving staff, students, parents and the broader community.

Student wellbeing for learning

Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) is one of the most important student wellbeing programs in place at Rosehill. This program is embedded within the school and is constantly being evaluated and adjusted to suit the changing local context. The PBL initiative was re-launched in Term 2 2018 as 'PB4L'. With the arrival of so many new staff at Rosehill, the school felt it was important to clarify the core values and messages of PBL with all staff. The PB4L committee have worked really hard over two years to refine the new program, to make sure everyone is on board and to ensure student expectations are clear and embedded within existing systems. PB4L lessons, flowcharts and systems have been developed to ensure consistency across the whole school. A mascot, called 'Rosie' was adopted this year as part of the PB4L relaunch. Rosie represents safe, respectful learners. As part of PB4L, Rosehill has also implemented a reward program for students called 'the Rosies'. This is a merit system based on 'safe awards', 'respectful awards' and 'learner awards'. The merit system has created buy-in with students, teachers and parents.

It doesn't matter whether or not they're a little kindy child or they're a too cool Year 6 child, everyone still likes to get a Rosie. They all get really excited when they receive a Rosie.

Kirsty Parra, Relieving Assistant Principal and Classroom Teacher.

Ensuring staff wellbeing

Rosehill has a strong focus on staff wellbeing. The wellbeing team commented that staff morale is high and that Rosehill is a 'happy' place to work. This focus on staff wellbeing is critical to ensuring that there is both a culture of trust and strong commitment from staff at the school. Rosehill has recently implemented a 'wellbeing week' for staff in response to feedback from them. Wellbeing week aims to build wellbeing at the collegial level. The executive team began this year's wellbeing week by cooking pancakes for staff; by 4pm at the end of the week, the executive were having to make staff go home because they were enjoying themselves so much. Staff feedback after wellbeing week was that they feel cared for and appreciated despite the sometimes heavy workloads. Many of the staff also meet on a Friday afternoon to play sport together. This has provided an important opportunity for staff to socialise, particularly as building works at the school have made it necessary to split lunchtime, and K-2 and 3-6 staff otherwise spend little time together during the week. Friday afternoon sport has helped to boost staff morale across the school.

Encouraging parents as partners

Rosehill places a lot of importance on creating a reciprocal relationship with parents as a means of ensuring wellbeing for learning. The school is working hard to communicate and engage with their parents from a non-English speaking background. These parents usually have high expectations for their children but often view teachers and schooling in a different way to parents from English-speaking backgrounds, in that they don't feel it is their 'place' to be involved with the school and the work that goes on in the school. This is a challenge for Rosehill, but the school has a number of strategies in place to meet it. For instance, the school sends whole-school communication through the School Enews app. This app is designed with Rosehill's branding and is updated continuously so it provides parents with current information about what is happening at the school. Rosehill also encourages the use of 'Seesaw' in all classrooms. Seesaw is a digital learning platform that allows the school to upload students' learning, including learning goals, photos, awards etc. Seesaw enables parents to see what their children have been doing at school, and parents can communicate back to the school using Seesaw's online messaging system. This 'makes the kids happy and proud' (Kirsty Parra, Relieving Assistant Principal and Classroom Teacher).

We don't have a P&C, we have a parent group and one of our lovely parents is happy to be the conduit for the others to come to because ... some parents don't feel comfortable. But I think since the change ... because it's not a P&C anymore it's not as structured. So, it's just a talking avenue and they're a lot more comfortable coming in. It's more of like a tea and coffee – have a chat – but their voice is heard and I think that's made a bit of a difference.

Teina Maguire, Learning and Support coordinator

The school has also taken an active decision to restructure the P&C as the traditional model was not working for their local parent community. Instead of a traditional P&C, Rosehill has implemented a 'parent group' which meets twice a term. This is much more relaxed than a formal P&C and it gives parents the opportunity to engage with the school in a less structured way. Many parents come to these meetings and are happy to voice an opinion. For example, parents expressed concern that some students are getting more 'Rosies' than others and this was creating tension between students, so Rosehill implemented a 'kindness bucket' system. This system, which encourages students to use words or actions to show that they care about their peers, has received a very positive response from parents. Students at Rosehill have a duty to fill each student's bucket with kindness. Rosehill also runs workshops to encourage parent engagement in their child's learning, and these are well attended. For instance, over 100 parents attended a recent meeting to explain the school's reporting process.





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