Irrawang Public School

Positive Behaviour for Learning: Our school, our community

Context

Irrawang Public School is located in Raymond Terrace, north of Newcastle, NSW. The school has an enrolment of 309 students with 25 percent of students who identify as Aboriginal. The school has a Family Occupation and Education Index (FOEI) rating of 175 (2015/16 average). The school wanted to build the capacity of teachers, families and the wider community to work collaboratively to enhance learning opportunities and student outcomes in a welcoming and inclusive learning environment.

Enhancing community consultation

The strategies to improve community consultative decision making and engagement at Irrawang Public School can be categorised into four areas:

1. The school utilises a range of strategies to gather the opinions of parents and community members in planning processes. Strategies include parent and community forums, phone and paper-based surveys, parent interviews, workshops and meetings.

2. The Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) program was adopted in collaboration with Irrawang High School, Hunter River High School, Raymond Terrace Public School and Grahamstown Public School. Consultation with parents and a number of local businesses and services was critical to successfully implementing PBL across the network hub. Students, parents and the community are encouraged to use common PBL language at home and in the community.

3. Thou-Walla Community Centre, part of the Schools as Community Centre initiative located in the school, provides programs for families with children from birth to eight years of age. It became pivotal as a meeting place for consultation with families in Raymond Terrace and the surrounding areas.

4. Consultation with local Aboriginal Elders, the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG), Irrawang Aboriginal Education Group (IAEG), Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council, Port Stephens Council, the Healing Foundation and Aboriginal families support a range of programs. These include the cultural programs Sistaspeak and Brospeak, an Aboriginal language program and local Aboriginal Elders working in the school on aspects of Aboriginal culture. To facilitate community engagement, a room is allocated for the IAEG as a designated place for the Aboriginal community to meet and have a yarn.

Achievements

The strategic efforts of the school in consulting with the wider school community resulted in:

- the leadership team clearly articulating the why, how and what of their strategic directions with the input and assistance of teachers, parents and the community
- increased capacity of the school leadership team, teachers, parents and the wider community to develop and engage in partnerships with stakeholders to enhance learning
- a positive impact on student engagement in their learning at school and home by adopting a shared purpose and using the shared PBL language
- strengthened partnerships and raised expectations with schools in the PBL network hub, local businesses and community agencies
- increased parent and community participation in the school and the Thou-Walla Community Centre.

Sustainability

Irrawang Public School will continue to consult with parents, community organisations and businesses to improve student engagement in learning. The school will employ an external PBL advisor to monitor current systems and data to inform the future directions of the school. It will continue working with the PBL network hub and local businesses to ensure consistent PBL practices between settings. It will encourage a greater number of parent and community members to access learning opportunities through Thou Walla, the dedicated IAEG room and the PBL network of schools.

For more information on Irrawang Public School visit their website.