Callaghan College Wallsend Campus
Technology connecting communities

Context

Callaghan College Wallsend Campus (CCWC) is one of three secondary campuses which make up Callaghan College in Newcastle, NSW. The school caters for 1,105 Year 7-10 students, including 12 per cent of students who identify as Aboriginal. The school has a Family Occupation and Education Index (FOEI) rating of 116 (2014/15 average).

Recognising the research that links parents who are proactively engaged in their child's school and improved student learning outcomes, CCWC sought to involve greater numbers of the community in the school's many activities, as well as in local decision-making processes.

Enhancing community consultation

The school engaged in a range of strategies for information sharing, all of which depended on a strong digital footprint. Initially, a technology platform was developed to ensure school systems were integrated and compatible. This allowed for all school and community communication to be easily accessible by students, parents and the wider community. Following the initial investment in technology, the school embarked on a wide consultation process beginning with the development of the school’s values and school vision continuing with policy reviews, all conducted using the school’s digital platform.

In 2015, the school reviewed its values with the school community. The culmination of the consultation and decision-making process was a school planning day to which parent, student and Aboriginal Educational Consultative Group (AECG) representatives were invited to work alongside staff representatives. During this consultation process, many parents and community members contributed, far exceeding parent contributions through previous Parents & Citizens meetings. The school's values were reaffirmed and published widely on social media. The school used the parent portal for planning and to review policies, including a review of the Student Welfare Policy.

Achievements

Parental involvement in the school's decision-making processes has increased significantly, both in attendances at school events and in their online presence. Surveys and invited comments via the school's Facebook page indicate growing parental support and engagement. Parental use of the school app and other digital communications has grown from under five per cent to more than 60 per cent of families using these forms of communication over the past two years. Attendance, enrolment and engagement data indicate improvements across the whole student cohort.

Sustainability

To sustain the significant progress made in community consultation, the school will ensure that all major decision making is promoted on the school's various media channels. Ongoing professional learning for all staff will ensure sustainability of the technology platform across the school community and continuing community access to the school's learning and curriculum resources. Parental forums will continue to enhance engagement with the school’s programs. Twenty-first century project-based learning and authentic assessment involving the community as members of the assessment panel will be further developed. As an example of ongoing measures to engage the wider community, a school development day initiative will involve vocational education teachers visiting and liaising with local businesses to increase community knowledge of and involvement in school programs such as vocational placements for students studying Stage 5 and 6 (Years 9-12) vocational courses.

For more information on Callaghan College Wallsend Campus visit their website.