Repton Public School

Engaging and empowering the school and wider community

Context

Repton Public School is a small school located on the Bellinger River near Coffs Harbour on the mid-north coast of NSW. The school has an enrolment of 62 students and caters for a diverse demographic that includes a transient population and many families who have been at the school for several generations. The school has a Family Occupation and Education Index (FOEI) rating of 84 (2015/16 average). In preparation for the school centenary in 2015 and the development of the 2015-2017 school plan, the principal seized the opportunity to engage the wider community in planning and decision making.

Enhancing community consultation

In planning for the centenary, a committee consisting of the principal, community members and past students, was established to consult and plan an inclusive celebration. Meetings were held fortnightly. Working groups were formed to organise the production of a school book, a DVD, a fair and a reunion dinner dance. Awareness of the working groups was promoted through social media, invitations, print and radio. Personal phone calls from the principal were made to encourage community members to respond to a survey on the organisation of events.

Following success with the centenary surveys, the staff designed a series of surveys seeking the opinions of the community on a range of topics, including reporting to parents on student progress and satisfaction with the school. The surveys were delivered in three ways: online using Survey Monkey, in hard copy and over the phone.

As a result of the surveys and conversations with parents, structured meetings were organised each term to consult with the community. All staff voluntarily attended the after hours meetings. To support maximum attendance, child care and afternoon tea were provided. The meetings commenced with general comments from the community about what the school was doing well and where improvements could be made. This was followed by structured focus questions. Following consideration by staff and the Parents and Citizens Association (P&C), suggestions for improvements were actioned and reported in the school newsletter. Examples of actions undertaken include a suggestion box for students and parents and the establishment of a kitchen garden.

Achievements

In planning for greater community engagement and participation in decision making, Repton Public School:

- developed stronger community consultation with parents who became increasingly confident in expressing their ideas and opinions
- increased the participation rate of parents and community members in surveys following personal phone calls from the principal
- fostered the development of relationships between the community and staff
- delivered a range of community engagement resources and events including the production of a school book, a DVD, a fair and a reunion dinner dance
- developed a kitchen garden leading to increased parent and community participation in the school
- increased the number of parents volunteering at the school in reading groups, literacy groups, crafts, drama productions and special events.

Sustainability

The analysis of community surveys and student outcomes data will continue to be used to assess the effectiveness and impact of the community consultation strategies. To ensure communication and consultative decision making practices are maintained, Repton Public School will continue to hold regular parent meetings for parents, staff and P&C members to attend. Advertising and promotional materials through a variety of channels will keep lines of communication open. The National School Improvement Tool and the Collaborative Inquiry Continuum will continue to inform future planning and decision making.

For more information on Repton Public School visit their website.