Context
Briar Road Public School is located in south western Sydney and has 303 students enrolled P-6. The school caters for a diverse range of students, including 32 percent who identify as Aboriginal, 21 percent from a language background other than English and includes three support classes. The school has a Family Occupation and Education Index (FOEI) rating of 181 (2015/16 average). Based on a school evaluation in 2014, it was evident that the school needed to strengthen community partnerships. Planning for the future, the school’s priority was to create “a place where all students will reach their potential….We all share a responsibility for success, high expectations and a love of learning. Everyone is welcomed, respected and valued” (Briar Road Public School 2015-2017 School Plan).

Enhancing community consultation
To maximise student outcomes, the school decided that learning experiences must be culturally relevant, supportive and ongoing. The principal also believed that the resources, talents and successes of the community needed to be showcased to benefit students and the community. A steering committee of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community and agency representatives was formed and a ‘community excellence’ chairperson resourced. This strategy was further divided into three key areas led by school and community personnel.

1. Promotion and marketing
School achievements, values and expectations were communicated through a wide range of innovative marketing and promotion strategies including apps, Facebook, Twitter and newsletters. A comprehensive website was established and kept current. Key personnel have been employed including a Community Liaison Officer (CLO), an Aboriginal Community Development Coordinator (ACDC) and an Aboriginal Education Officer (AEO) to assist with promotion and engage with the Aboriginal community. The AEO is a member of the learning and support team and is a link between the school, parents and interagency support.

2. Feedback and consultation
The main strategy to increase parent feedback has been the hosting of parent dinners each term. Personal invitations are posted to each family as many cannot readily access email. Each staff member rings five parents with personal invitations and reminders. The dinners have a ‘speed dating’ format and include engaging activities and time for discussion with all staff members. The dinners are also used to distribute surveys and school data as well as to facilitate discussion about school performance. Additionally, picnic dinners allow parents and teachers time to ‘yarn’ about the school and give feedback.

3. Transitions
Programs to support transitions span the preschool years to post school pathways. An engagement class for boys was established in addition to preschool to Kindergarten and Year 6 -7 transition programs.

Achievements
1. Parent participation and feedback has increased significantly from an average of 25 parents attending morning teas in 2014 to 140 parents attending each dinner in 2015. There has been a 25 percent increase in parents attending school planning forums and 95 percent of parents are now satisfied with school/home communication.
2. The ACDC has set up a Junior Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) across the local community of schools. A Koori room has been set up and has become a hub for cultural studies and parent workshops across local schools.
3. Parent workshops have been increasingly well attended. Parent helpers are now active in the school.
4. A parent choir and parent dance groups have been established.
5. Ninety percent of Kindergarten parents have participated in the preschool transition program.
6. A career awareness program for primary students and parents has been developed in partnership with the University of Western Sydney and Technical and Further Education (TAFE).

Sustainability
The school plans to continue to employ personnel with a working knowledge of the local community. Parent initiatives, including the term dinners, ‘yarning’ time at school picnics, and the use of dedicated spaces in the school for a range of meetings are sustainable strategies to ensure communication and consultation are ongoing. School planning, which involves the parent and wider community, including community agencies, contributes to the sustainability of the school’s strategies.

For more information on Briar Road Public School, visit their website.