



Exceptional Learners

Degrees of Difference

Change Initiative

To improve the capacity of decision-making teams in order to recognise and respond flexibly to the varying nature and level of ability of gifted and talented students.

More specifically, to assist the School to make effective decisions for the likely acceleration of a profoundly gifted student.

Change Initiative Focus

Interwoven with broader change initiatives –

- Restructure of School's approach to providing required evidence for the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD)
- The formation of a new Faculty K-12 to build school capacity to support students with diverse learning needs

PESTEL - Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environment, Legal

- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 & Disability Standards for Education 2015
- NCCD – National Consistent Collection of Data -“For the first time, the support for students with a disability will be informed by the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data ...”
- Increased enrolments of children with disability in Independent schools
- A Nation Deceived – highlights disparities between the research on acceleration and the educational practices
- Headlines - ‘The overfunded schools in PM’s sights’, ‘Child placed in cage: Canberra parents says schools can't cope with special needs students’
- Higher expectations of Schools to innovate and continually evolve – ‘Schools for All’

SWOT – Weaknesses & Opportunities

- School policy, guidelines and procedures
- Decision making teams
- Expertise of staff to make the best decisions possible
- Individual student case management

Consultation

- Conversations at the coffee shop
- Weekly consultation with supervisor
- Consultation with senior management
- Consultation of current School policies, procedures, guidelines
- Consultation of individual student records, enrolment information and assessment data
- Research on best practice

Consultation - Key Stakeholders

- Principal
- Deputy Principal (Curriculum), Heads of School (Pastoral Care) – Junior, Middle & Senior
- Heads of Faculty (Years 7-12)
- Teaching staff
- Non Teaching staff
- Parents
- Student

Plan – Time Line

Term 2

- Potential transitional enrolment of student – interview, establishing expectations, gathering data, scenarios, risk analysis, school visit, liaison with current teacher, Principal, communication with School staff

Term 3

- 2 days to 3 days enrolment (trial basis only)

End of Term 3

- Formal review from stakeholders, including feedback from student

Term 4

- Full time enrolment this year or next year or option to pursue other schools

The Change Initiative Plan

- Linked to strategic plan
- Linked to a specific strategic objective
- 7 key initiatives were identified
- Action required to fulfil initiatives determined
- Success factors determined

Issues/Problems

- Meeting with key stakeholders
- Competing priorities
- Time
- Change Resistance “I can’t be expected to cater for all students.”
- Limitations of professional development – 2e in particular
- Myths and Misconceptions
- Perceptions of inequity - Passow’s Would, Could, Should – “Why aren’t you doing this for all students?”
- School information/communication systems in need of review

Implementation - Consultation

- Conversations at the café
- Accessed latest research on effective strategies to inform decision making
- Undertook PL – whole faculty team
- Weekly meetings with Principal – scenarios and contingency plans
- Weekly meetings with senior management
- Consultation with Heads of Faculty
- Consultation with staff who have had prior involvement and/or professional interest in area
- Consultation of current School policies/procedures/guidelines, individual student school records, enrolment information, individual support information, standardised assessment results
- Consultation with Principal, class teacher, Learning Support staff at previous school through phone calls, emails, school visits and meetings
- Consultation with external specialists - Private educational psychologist - Gifted Minds & National expert on Gifted Education – Bronwyn McLeod, Gateways Education & AISACT initiative

Implementation – Consultation cont.

- Documented decisions and consulted with faculty team
- Provided ongoing updates to Middle/Senior School Support Team
- Consulted with School Psychologist
- Ongoing updates and delegation of refinement in responsibilities of faculty team
- Parents x 10 ! – Regular consultation, liaison and troubleshooting with parents to determine issues/problems and agreement on strategies
- Consulted with non-teaching staff to gauge community views
- Ongoing updates, recognition of efforts and communication of expectations
- Sort feedback from staff on progress

Implementation - Changes Made

- More communication – Faculty staff representing different areas of the School communicating same message at weekly pastoral care briefings
- ‘Released the brakes’ – Faster transition of G&T student than expected
- Further involvement of senior management to champion change initiative
- Need for more specific goals for G&T Team – term based
- More explicit steps towards clearer case management responsibilities – one to one mentoring, modelling, coaching and close collaboration

Key Challenges - Change Resistance

- Lack of experience with change - uncertainty linked to capacity to adjust
- Sudden impact of the amount and degree of change over a short period of time - fear, uncertainty, exhaustion
- Prior negative experiences with previous change management – scepticism, negativity, mistrust
- Communication – lack of consultation due to strict timelines and external pressures
- Previous experience with change perceived to be incongruent with values

Key Challenges cont.

- Need for further professional learning to develop a range of decision analytic techniques
- Unclear roles and how they contribute to decision making
- Need for a clearly articulated shared decision-making vision
- Overwhelmed school information systems due to rapid enrolments over a short period of time

How addressed?

- Consult - Sell to the heart not just the head the benefits of growing professionally and personally
- Communicate – plan how to communicate to, and encourage participation by key stakeholders; highlight the consequences of stagnation
- Consistency – use logic and work with integrity
- Collaborate – utilise ‘change champions’ - be sure to ask introverts and allow time for feedback
- Celebrate - reward and celebrate growth, praise publically to focus on making growth the norm
- Create Momentum – Spend 80% of your time on positive people and/or behaviours that give you 80% return (80/20 Rule – Vilfredo Pareto)
- Take control over challenges to create a better future

How did we go?

- “Thank you, you got me out of the sandpit!”
- Successful transition and acceleration of a profoundly gifted Year 6 student to Year 8
- Formation of a number of key decision making teams across all areas of the School
- Development of school policy, procedures and guidelines for diverse learners including G&T and 2e students
- Comprehensive support information developed for teaching staff for a range of individual diverse learners including twice exceptional and gifted and talented students

What would I do differently?

- Provide and create more opportunities for personal recognition and encouragement – be genuine, specific and timely – show genuine appreciation and respect
- Communicate benefits of change more formally i.e. written and make them more accessible
- Use more variety of tools to seek initial feedback on proposed change e.g. questionnaires/surveys
- Incorporate systematic review practices to evaluate change initiatives and share results
- Develop school capacity to pull together ‘lessons learnt’ to inform future approaches

What would I do differently?

Cont.

- Consult with senior management to put in place considerations for competing change initiatives, particularly in relation to time frame of implementation
- Consult more explicitly with senior management about competing priorities, particularly the impact of external factors when creating a time line for implementation
- Use anonymous staff questionnaires
- Capitalise on the range of staff expertise through 'expression of interest.'

The Challenge of Leadership (Van Tassel-Baska, 2003)

“What makes leadership in gifted education so challenging today is that leaders must embrace the paradox of working in schools where core educational values are competing as never before, with values such as equity and excellence, standardisation and personalisation, tradition and innovation, and modern and post modern paradigms fighting for supremacy.”





