

Examples from 2009 School Self-Evaluations

Executive Summary

A series of documents have been prepared which contain illustrative examples of completed sections of a school self-evaluation.

This document contains examples of completed “Executive Summary” sections, drawn from school self-evaluations prepared by schools in 2009. In each case, the schools are referred to by a generic name, such as Victoria Primary School or Victoria Secondary College as appropriate.

These examples are aimed at assisting schools who may be about to undertake their self-evaluation by highlighting a range of very effective ways in which schools have tackled and presented information within their school self-evaluations.

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Example 1 – Small Primary School

Victoria Primary School is the only public facility in the town. There is no shop, sporting facility or playground and the town hall was recently condemned. The life of the community is centred on the school. As well as the normal functions of a school, it also serves as the town hall, sporting facility, library, internet café and picnic ground. The school currently has a full-time teaching principal and a part-time junior classroom teacher.

The school has been through a turbulent time during the period under evaluation. However the school self evaluation has provided the opportunity to reflect on the past, learn from that and plan for positive future directions where all student outcomes can be improved. In 2009, the school has re-grown by around 50% and has a very positive future.

Deleted: The causes of this turbulence were unforeseeable, unavoidable and very unlikely to be repeated. Because of this, reviewing the past few years is of very limited value to the school's forward planning

The very small cohorts and high changeover of students and staff mean the statistical data in the School Level Reports is extremely volatile and this needs to be acknowledged in ascertaining information about the school. Curriculum planning here is focused on the needs of each individual student with individual learning plans and a personalised curriculum.

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This period saw most staff and students leave the school by the end of 2008. ¶

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The statistical information appears to show a decline in parent and staff opinion and a simultaneous increase in student attitudes over the evaluation period. A clearer picture is obtainable by talking to staff and parents.

Example 2 – Primary School

The school self evaluation was undertaken with clear detail of the school's performance over the last strategic plan period. The strategic plan priority of further development of the curriculum and teaching and learning and instilling a performance and development culture in the school was vigorously worked on during this period.

Deleted: Future planning is not a matter of making alterations to past practices but starting anew with fresh plans. The school is now more similar to a new school than to the school of a year ago.¶

In making the assessment that there has been steady growth in the schools academic standing, data from several sources was used. Data was sought from teacher assessments against the Victorian Essential Learning Standards, use of the Achievement Improvement Monitor (AIM 2006-7) and National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN 2008), Staff Opinion Surveys, Parent Opinion Surveys, Attitudes to School Survey, Assessment and Reporting tools, the Effective Schools Framework, a range of Professional Development sessions. Data was gathered using CASES records pertaining to student absence, enrolments, staff sick leave and financial status.

Based on the findings of this self-assessment there will be a specific focus for the school on an area for improvement. When analysing data some of the questions raised are based on very small improvements or falls in the performance levels of a certain group or within a certain area of the curriculum.

Over the period of the previous strategic plan the school has maintained and at times exceeded planned targets in the areas of English and Mathematics. There have been many areas of the curriculum that have shown anecdotal improvement.

The school has shown improvement in the Teacher Assessment against the CSF (2006) and VELs (2007-8) in the area of Reading. AIM data has shown a slight decline for year 3 but NAPLAN has shown a better than State mean result. For year 5, AIM shows a slight improvement but NAPLAN shows a decline.

In the Assessment of Reading for P-2 there has been a trend improvement over the three year levels with a small decline at grade 1 (level 15 assessment).

The 2006-9 Strategic Plan target of 80% of students achieving above their expected level in writing has not been met with a decline in this area in the 2007-8 recorded data for the VELs. Data from the AIM and NAPLAN shows a mixed trend for grade 3 and 5 in number. Small cohorts in both areas do not provide robust data for comparison.

Many of the recommendations in this report are made based on where we can make substantial improvements in performance. The more obvious area for targeted improvement appears to be in the areas of Writing and Number.

The school consistently ranks highly in the Parent Opinion Surveys. There has been a consistent trend upward over the 2006-8 period in most areas of the survey.

The Attitudes to School Survey has shown positive improvements in the Teaching and Learning area but there is considerable room for improvement in the Student Relationships area.

Example 3 – Secondary College

The College has undertaken two major whole College implementations during the period of the Strategic Plan: the implementation of VELS and gaining Accreditation as a Performance & Development Culture College. These mandated changes to College curriculum and teacher pedagogy and practice have given significant structure towards improving student learning and achievement. However, as part of the College focus on continual improvement, we understand that as a school we need to build further. The College offers students a very dynamic learning environment, both within and out of the classroom, and this, together with a highly committed and professional staff, is the foundation on which to build processes for further improvement.

The College has, since its inception, had at its focus continuous improvement in all aspects of College life, particularly in focussing on improving learning outcomes for all students. It has been very active in developing curriculum, teacher pedagogy and processes to achieve this. While the College achieved most of the specified goals and priorities that were set in the Strategic Plan 2006-2008, there are some targets that were only partially met.

An examination of student learning outcomes data reveals there is much to celebrate. However, there are indications that reveal areas in need of stronger focus. While the VCE results are impressive, the College must ensure that it continually works for improvement in this area. VCE results for English have been consistently outstanding and given that this is the one subject that is compulsory, then it demonstrates the capacity of all students to achieve well, if teachers work together on pedagogy, assessment strategies and moderation. Staff teaching VCE subjects are expected to attend extensive Professional Learning and those teachers of single subjects have been urged to be involved in their subject networks and form pedagogical and assessment partnerships.

The notable student learning outcomes of many students in the junior years are not always translated into success in the senior school. To address this issue, all policies and processes in terms of achievement expectations and student management in the senior school are currently being reviewed. The College will need to systematically review each level of the College to strengthen our programs. The College is currently reviewing its Year 9 Program to address issues of engagement and to improve learning outcomes by creating stimulating approaches to learning.

In terms of the student learning focus for Years 7-10, VELS was successfully implemented, along with significant changes to student assessment and reporting. The data from College Teacher Judgements against the VELS were very pleasing and consistent with the NAPLAN

results. The implementation of a P&D Culture and subsequent, accreditation has been a powerful impetus for staff collegiate approaches to targeted teaching and learning improvement.

Victoria College has built on its initial involvement in the DEECD Interactive Whiteboard Trial. From 17 Interactive Whiteboards in 2006, the College has a learning resource of 28. Students have access to a wide variety of ICT technologies including eleven dedicated computer facilities. Teacher professional learning has been very focused in building ICT skills to enhance teaching and learning strategies. The College eLearning Plan has been developed to provide a framework to continue to improve staff PL, teaching and learning strategies and also to improve College operations and processes. Improving communications with parents and reporting on students is at the forefront of these operational developments in readiness for the Ultraset in 2010.

At the heart of the ethos of the College, is the recognition that students need a purposeful, safe, caring and supportive environment. A wide co-curricular program encourages opportunities for students to extend themselves. There are many programs that support students' learning, social and emotional needs. Student recognition is integral to all student endeavours. The College has two counsellors, a First Aid Officer, a Careers Coordinator and Year Level Coordinators with Assistants who check attendance at every level. As well, visiting psychologists and external agencies provide a very effective program of student support. All but one of the Programs for Students with Disabilities [PSD] students are functioning in mainstream classes and are given the support they need for successful learning. The delivery of a Reading Recovery Program for Year 7 students, and an extensive ESL Program, are in place to improve literacy outcomes. The improved real retention data attests to the success of the programs in place and that the College is a place where students want to be.

In the post-compulsory levels, Year 10 students must undertake a week's Work Experience and are given extensive personal and careers focus as a preliminary to course selection for VCE. Links with the Northern Melbourne VET Cluster and TAFE's and universities have provided opportunities for students to explore post-compulsory pathways towards employment and tertiary study. Internal VET provision has decreased but the number of students accessing external VET courses has increased. The College has formed a partnership with the Melbourne School of Dance to deliver VET Certificate II and III in Dance. VCAL was trialled in 2005 but was far from successful. Although it was offered in 2006, there were insufficient students to ensure viability. The College auspiced the local LLENs VCAL course in 2006-2007. In order to maintain retention data for Years 10 and 11 and engage students with practical learning needs, the College will continue to investigate a range of VET programs and partnerships in order to provide a variety of post-compulsory options.

The College has at its focus student recognition and publicly rewards the endeavours of student talents through assemblies, certificates, and publication of activities in the newsletter. The College Student Leadership Program is a dynamic program, providing valuable leadership opportunities as well as being integral to stimulating energy and involvement. As well, a large number of students participate in the extensive programs offered in the music and sports areas, the debating teams and the drama performances and College production. Over the last three years a number of students have achieved recognition through VCAA's Season of Excellence for Top Arts, Top Design and Top Acts, where the very best VCE student work is recognised throughout Victoria.

After the retirement of the long-standing Principal in 2008, a newly appointed Principal left in December after six months in the position, thus the College has been under the direction of an Acting Principal for the first six months of 2009. Leadership in the College is in need of a complete review. Currently contracts will expire at the end of 2009 for all Leading Teacher positions but one and the College will need to appoint an Assistant Principal. This is an opportunity to review and create a leadership to reflect College needs as per the new Strategic Plan.

Example 4 – Secondary College

Victoria College has a clearly stated core purpose: to challenge all members of the learning community to achieve individual excellence and personal growth, and to ensure that students become autonomous and socially responsible members of society.

The values that underpin this core purpose – respect, responsibility, resilience, initiative, connectedness and integrity – should be evident in much that it does. Each strategic planning period, however, affords the opportunity for a school to revisit and reaffirm its purpose and values, and we hope that this will happen as part of this exercise.

At the beginning of 2006, Victoria Secondary College set out to improve student learning through the development of a learning environment in which there were high expectations and teaching approaches appropriate to the learning needs of individual students. This goal and its key strategy focusing on “teachers as learners” will once again be integral to the key improvement strategies the college adopts for the next four years.

It also set out to improve student engagement and wellbeing through the development of independent and socially responsible learners who were engaged and connected, in and beyond the classroom.

In the area of student pathways and transitions, we wanted to provide opportunities for the development of students' knowledge, understanding and skills in managing their pathways and transitions from school to further education, training and employment.

The targets we set to achieve for our student learning goal, however, were not fully realised, for a variety of reasons which are set out in this report. We made greater progress in the other two goal areas of student wellbeing and engagement and student transitions and pathways, but again did not fully achieve our targets. Of particular concern are student and parent perceptions of teacher performance against the teacher effectiveness, teacher empathy and stimulating learning variables of the Student Attitudes to School survey; our parent perceptions of our learning environment, evident in the Parent Opinion Survey data; and the increasingly long "tail" of students whose performance in literacy, numeracy and VCE impacts on our cohort performance levels. At VCE, these levels do not compare favourably with our "like schools" grouping, although we are still performing above the state mean. In literacy and numeracy, students arrive at our school well above state means, but we do not add as much value as we would wish to their learning.

It should be stated that, while some of the targets we set were ambitious and may not have been appropriate measures of the goals we were trying to achieve, nevertheless, greater progress could have been achieved with a sharper, less diffuse focus on developing and implementing the performance and development culture that was so integral to the learning environment we wanted to nurture. At the same time, the work undertaken during this period has been valuable in developing a language and perspective amongst teachers that now allows for meaningful discussion and debate about the centrality of students and their learning. Accordingly, we aim to sharpen that focus on "teachers as learners" further over the next four years, and to align our resources more effectively to implement our key strategy.

What we will be seeking to develop and implement over the next four years will be a whole school approach to improving and sustaining an effective teaching and learning culture that:

- is governed by a shared community vision regarding what constitutes effective teaching and learning;
- incorporates all key elements of a performance and development culture, including a commitment to ongoing professional growth and feedback and access to evidence-based research and professional learning based on "best practice" for all teachers; and
- promotes relational and personalised learning that will inform students' transitions and pathways choices.

Each of the key implementation strategies outlined in this self-evaluation report stresses aspects of this over-arching strategy, and we commend it to our school community.

This implementation process will require a review and re-alignment of our leadership structures and strategies, as well as our resourcing of each of the three goal areas. Leadership and resourcing for the new School Strategic Plan must necessarily differ from that which was appropriate in the past.