

Examples from 2009 School Self-Evaluations

School Context

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 “School Context” 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 - a small primary school

Victoria Primary School is seventeen kilometres north-west of the district's major township. Our current enrolment of 81 has students educated in a friendly working atmosphere. We have strong links to the historical nature of the area with the original school building and other historical buildings and landmarks nearby.

Our school is currently in the "Building Futures" process. The refurbishment and new learning spaces are currently under construction. The design will support the understandings of how space best facilitates teaching and learning while also being a model for environmental sustainability. It has been a real challenge to meet educational and wellbeing needs in the years leading to this refurbishment due to the dreadful facilities.

Our enrolments come from the local kindergarten and local child care centres. Families represent farms, local business, and a significant number of unemployed, low income and single parents. We currently have 5 Koori students but have had many more over the SSP period. Since the development of the last strategic plan, we have had a significant change in our SFO. This has increased the need to more family wellbeing support and more children with low entry data in literacy and numeracy. We also have a high percentage of students with referrals to the network support staff.

The school offers a comprehensive curriculum program in the following learning domains: Physical, personal and social learning (Health and P.E., Personal Learning, Interpersonal development, Civics and Citizenship), Disciplined learning (Arts, Humanities, Mathematics, English, Science) and Interdisciplinary learning (Communication, Design, Creativity and Technology, ICT, Thinking). We have a strong commitment to teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy and this remains a priority for the school. In support of this we offer Reading Recovery in Year One with other individual and small group support for other children. We have skilled literacy assistants and individual numeracy support from aides.

We have a strong interest in preparing the children for the global world with their use of technology. Staff and students have a commitment to use ICT to CREATE, COMMUNICATE (or COLLABORATE), INVESTIGATE and INTERACT. We have skilled teachers in using ICT. We have used the Arts as a domain to learn new and exciting ICT tools but now these are integrated in all domains to deepen their understanding and to demonstrate their learning including the use of interactive whiteboards in all classrooms. This will grow with the implementation of the 'netbook' program in Year Five.

We have a whole school approach to Student Wellbeing basing our work on the Restorative Practices approach and TRIBES principles.

Example 2 - a 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.

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 grade 3 but NAPLAN has shown a better than State mean result. For grade 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 may not have 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 - a secondary college

Victoria College was established in 1954 and has enjoyed an excellent reputation as a public school. It has a long tradition of academic excellence and a very broad co-curricular program that fosters the development of the whole person. The school has a designated zone and enrolments at the school are highly sought after.

The school has strong and honoured traditions exemplified in its House system, music, sport and student leadership development programs. The school offers 120 co-curricular enhancement and enrichment activities. In the past decade the cultural diversity of student population has grown and now has 53 different nationalities represented.

Over the past four years the school has clearly articulated its Vision, Values and Mission which guides and informs the process of school improvement and development.

The school has developed structures to support student learning that recognise the developmental needs of young adolescents as they negotiate the stages of schooling. The school has two sub-schools; Middle School (years 7-9) and Senior School (years 10-12) catering for student well-being and learning needs.

The school provides a comprehensive, challenging, academic curriculum and encourages a strong work ethic. Positive work habits have consistently translated into outstanding VCE results that maximise students' tertiary education options. The general curriculum is well balanced and is structured with a strong emphasis on the use of learning technologies. Special opportunities are provided in accelerated mathematics, advanced studies in music and LOTE and a range of enrichment programs. Four languages other than English are offered (French, Chinese, Modern Greek, Classical Greek) and there is an English as a Second Language program. The College has an Accelerated Learning Program for children of high intellectual potential and is one of the state's leading specialist music schools. The College is accredited to enrol international students.

The school promotes the all-round personal development and self-esteem of each student. The development of courteous, articulate and thoughtful attitudes is encouraged. A wide

range of co-curricular activities is fostered, including music, drama, academic enrichment, debating, cultural pursuits, camps, the house system, sport and community service.

Support for students is formalised in the Student Transition Enhancement Program, the co-curricular program, the extensive Integrated Health Program, and the provision of a range of welfare staff together with a strong commitment to student leadership. A high standard of personal conduct is required and the wearing of school uniform is compulsory. Teachers actively assist students to develop sound study habits in the junior years.

The School Council expects parents to uphold the goals of the school and encourages their involvement in the educational development of their children. Opportunities are made available for parents to participate in curriculum and school policy development through such groups as the Parents' Association, Friends of Music, Friends of Sport, Friends of Theatre Arts and the School Council and its sub-committees. The school actively seeks the support of the wider community to assist with its operations and future development and in 2008 created a non-teaching Leadership position of Director of Community Engagement and Development to further strengthen the partnerships between the school and other educational institutions, the creation of an Alumni Association as well as a Centre for Professional Learning to provide high quality programs for our own and other school staff.

Example 4 - a secondary college

Victoria Secondary College is situated approximately 45 km south east of Melbourne on the outer limits of the metropolitan area, in a high growth corridor. The School Family Occupation Index is 0441. Student numbers have fluctuated during the period of the current plan from 1538 in 2006 to 1503 in 2007 and 1572 in 2008. Student numbers in 2009 are 1646.

There have been a number of difficulties associated with completing the Self - Evaluation process. These have included the significant changes associated with the leadership of the College. In 2007, a new Principal commenced and mid way through the year, two of the long serving existing Assistant Principals left, one of whom had been instrumental in identifying and establishing the goals and key targets associated with the current Strategic Plan. Another long serving Assistant Principal has also recently gained a Principal position at another College.

In addition, many of the data sets used in this process actually changed during the period of the Plan. Student Attitudes to School survey questions and focus areas altered as did some of those associated with the Parent Opinion Survey. The Achievement Improvements Monitor (AIM) was discontinued after 2007 with the introduction of the National Achievement Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The Victorian Essential Standards (VELS) replaced the

Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF 2). These changes have added a degree of complexity in analysing certain aspects of the school's performance.

The Leading School Fund provided a great deal of flexibility and additional resources for the College, enabling it to implement a number of initiatives. These included the construction of a number of flexible learning spaces which were designed to facilitate a greater focus, awareness and sharing of the different pedagogical approaches used by staff in the various Domain areas. These new facilities were augmented by the appointment of a number of Teaching and Learning Coaches whose role it was to work cooperatively with certain staff members to provide feedback on their performance, assist their development and to promote a greater use of ICT within the classroom. Most of these coaches are no longer with the College – having retired or promoted to positions elsewhere. Furthermore, there has been a significant change in the leadership of the Domain areas. Whilst it is fair to say that some significant professional development took place, the long term impact of these initiatives within the College is not as embedded as we would have liked.

During the period of the Strategic Plan, the College was fortunate to be one of three schools in the state to be designated as a “Languages Other Than English (LOTE) Centre of Excellence”. This program provided significant additional funding for the LOTE staff to work collaboratively together to develop a greater emphasis on the use of ICT as a teaching resource within the different LOTE areas. The Centre was responsible also for the development of new curriculum materials as well as the provision of extensive professional development opportunities for other LOTE teachers throughout the state. The residual funding from the program was used to promote and assist the introduction or further development of LOTE in surrounding Primary Schools. Despite some staffing difficulties, the project team worked hard to do some outstanding work in meeting their goals and related accountability requirements.

In 2007, Victoria Secondary College began to explore how relationships between all members of the school community (students, parents, teachers and the community) could enhance the quality of the learning and life at school for students. This exploration was driven by consistent data from our students and parents highlighting issues in relation to connectedness to school and the quality of relationships between staff and students. Two members of the teaching staff accessed the Teacher Professional Leave (TPL) program at the beginning of the year and visited schools in a number of different states to examine how they had addressed similar issues.

In response to these ongoing issues, the College established a Steering Committee comprising parents, students and staff to use the TPL report as the basis to explore and develop a “Victoria” model. Following a period of consultation, the committee recommended

the establishment of 8 Learning Teams comprising approximately 170 students to commence in 2008. Each team was to comprise 8 Home Groups of approximately 23 students from years 7 – 11. Year 12 students were initially not linked to the Learning Teams due to significant student resistance from the then year 11's. Year 12's have since been linked to the Learning Teams but remain a separate entity due to the specific demands and requirements associated with their final year of schooling.

The Learning Team structure is designed to more purposefully build positive and quality relationships between students, teachers, parents and the community and to ensure that every student feels as though at least one staff member is taking an active interest in their social, emotional and academic development. This can only be achieved by Home Group teachers developing a keen knowledge of the interests, learning needs, styles and goals of each of the students under their care and by facilitating effective lines of communication with the home.

Victoria SC has a fundamental belief that quality relationships between students, parents, teachers and the community will have the most positive and powerful impact on the quality of learning and subsequent achievement by each and every student. Although our performance in these areas still has a long way to go, there have been some encouraging indicators of success.

In 2008, through an extensive consultation process, the College developed the Guiding Principles to underpin its Educational Philosophy and future planning processes.