

Negotiated School Review Report

Prepared for

Brighton Secondary College

and the Department of Education & Training

2005

- **School Number** 7650
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1.0 Executive Summary

Brighton Secondary College (BSC) is a Year 7 to 12 co-educational provider to over 1000 students. Established in 1955, the College is set in spacious grounds in the City of Bayside, situated in Marriage Road, Brighton East. The local community regards the College as a prestigious government school, which is family oriented.

The current student population of BSC is about 40% female, 60% male, a proportion that has changed little since 2000. About a third of our students are recipients of EMA/AUSTUDY, and about a quarter come from families where a Language other than English (LOTE) is spoken at home. One further aspect of the 'student mix' at BSC is that we have a large number of international fee paying students (approximately 60 students in 2005).

BSC has a tradition of excellence and aims to provide a high quality education for all students in a secure environment with firm but caring discipline. The College prides itself in being a 'family' for its students and therefore attempts to provide and review programs at all levels which are beneficial to all individuals. It provides a comprehensive range of studies in all Key Learning Areas (KLAs) and additional special programs are available to support and extend students in Literacy, Numeracy and Integration. Also, any student who excels in a particular learning area may be offered acceleration in that area and, at a more formal level, the College became a Select Entry Accelerated Learning (SEAL) provider to the Bayside Cluster in 1998. This program has seen approximately 5% of participants complete their secondary education in less than the normal six years whilst the remainder has the benefit of additional time in VCE.

A number of initiatives, both government and locally driven, have been developed to engage students in learning, including: Engineers in Schools, Kool Schools, House Chorals, Debating, Tournament of Minds, Night of the Notables, Science Drama, Science of the 21st Century Action Network (SCAN), the Advance Program (Outdoor Education), and the School, Transition and Resilience Training Program (START). The most recent of these is the commitment to build a new centre that will become the learning environment for all Year 9 students. It will be known as the Discovery Centre. This is an initiative made possible by the Leading Schools Fund.

A very successful Grade 6 to Year 7 student transition program has been in operation for a number of years and in 2003 and 2004 was incorporated into a larger program known as: Students and Teachers Resourcing Innovative Discovery in Education in Schools (STRIDES). 2005 saw STRIDES implemented at both Year 7 and Year 8.

Through the School Self Evaluation and discussions with the leadership group, staff working parties, the college critical friend and parent representatives it was decided that in keeping with college expectations of improving areas deemed to be most in need the review should focus on Year 10 programs. Other priority areas such as Discovery, STRIDES and SEAL should be improved in some areas and continue to be monitored on an annual basis to determine the degree of focus necessary for the college over the next four years. The Discovery Centre will receive the emphasis appropriate to the initial year of such a major initiative and enable the opportunity to explore such a significant and broad enhancement of current pedagogy.

Various working parties addressed the recommended areas and raised a series of questions that it was felt would provide a basis for the college Strategic Plan. A further area to be addressed was the pathways to and from VCE.

In summary, the review recommends that the school strategic plan includes goals focusing on:

1. The integration of Principles of Learning and Teaching into the Discovery Centre.
2. The continued monitoring, evaluation and improvement of the STRIDES and SEAL programs.
3. Improving literacy and numeracy at Year 10.
4. Improving the transition at all year levels within the college.

2.0 Aim / Purpose

To focus on

1. Student wellbeing and engagement through the development and integration of innovative teaching practices through the Discovery Centre (a Leading Schools Fund initiative), STRIDES and SEAL and on
2. Year 10 Literacy and Numeracy and their attitudes to school.

3.0 Methodology

The review engaged members of staff, students, parents and the college council. Findings of the School Self Evaluation were presented to all members of the community. Relevant links to our current programs and priorities were also discussed by various groups within the college community. These also included research findings from staff engaged in Professional Leave and links with overseas infrastructures through the High Performing Principals. Table 1 represents the consultative process undertaken by the college in arriving at its recommendations.

Activity 1: College Management Team (Principal, Assistant Principals and all Leading Teachers) review the School Self Evaluation. From the evaluation and discussion of college priorities it was suggested that an enquiry is entered into on:

- Year 10 programs
- Discovery and STRIDES programs
- SEAL programs

Activity 2: Working parties for each of ‘enquiries’ were set up. These included teachers involved in various programs that were being investigated. From surveys and consultation of other schools, students and parents the working parties made recommendations to the review committee which were also discussed at staff meetings.

Activity 3: A report was written and the Critical friend was consulted. Through the consultation, findings and recommendations were amended and presented to the staff and community through the Management Team.

Activity 4: The recommendations of the review were finalised by the Management Team and presented to the College Council for endorsement.

Table 1: Timeline for the review

Date	Activity	Resources	Action officer
19 July	Briefing to staff on upcoming review	Blueprint	R Timmer-Arends
26 July	Activity 1	Leading Teachers/CRT release as required	P Gargano
2 Aug	Activity 2	Surveys/Meetings	R Timmer-Arends
16 Aug	Activity 3	Contract in place	P Gargano
23 Aug	College Management	Leading Teachers	P Gargano
5 Sep	Presentation to staff		R Timmer-Arends
12 Sep	Activity 4		P Gargano
13 Sep	Consultation of Critical Friend	G Seamer	P Gargano
14 Sep	Presentation to school council		J Podbury
19 Sep	Submission of report		J Podbury

4.0 Findings

Over the last few years the College has instituted three major programs designed to improve student outcomes in learning, well-being and engagement: the Select Entry Accelerated Learning program (SEAL); Students and Teachers Resourcing Innovation and Development in Education in Schools (STRIDES – the Year 6 to 7 and 8 transition program); and, most recently, the Discovery Centre (a program catering for Year 9 students). While these programs have delivered and will continue to deliver many benefits to students some concerns are now emerging.

This review has also built upon the work carried out in the School Self Evaluation by expanding upon and clarifying concerns relating to Year 10. This in turn has led to further questioning of the validity and hence usefulness of the Teacher Assessments against the CSF data in the School Level Report. Some issues have also been identified with the retention rate data.

If Year 10 is treated as a program in its own right, then nearly all the concerns that have been identified by this review can be characterised in one of two ways: those that are specific to a program; and those that pertain to how the programs relate to each other and to other areas of the College.

SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

The SEAL Program

This is the longest running of the three programs listed above with the first group of SEAL students graduating in 2004. Over this time the College has learnt a great deal about conducting such a program and the negotiated review has provided an opportune moment to reflect on this learning. It has found that

3. Clarification is needed regarding the role of the SEAL coordinator, particularly with respect to the division of responsibility between the SEAL coordinator and the Student Management team at each year level.
4. There is a need to review and/or create policies and procedures that deal with
 - under-performing SEAL students, including setting out the level of expectation that has to be met in order to continue in the SEAL program; for example, performance, attendance, behaviour, and work ethic.
 - backfilling of casual vacancies in the SEAL program from within the College, including setting out criteria for entry.
 - selection of students for admission into SEAL 1: currently this is through the use of an entrance exam, but should it include a folio of primary school work (and if so how will it be authenticated?) and/or an interview?
5. The SEAL curriculum needs to be reviewed with a view to
 - updating the syllabi for each SEAL subject
 - ensuring continuity of syllabi across SEAL 1, 2 and 3
 - examining how 'acceleration' should occur: currently it seeks to simply have SEAL students complete the standard Year 7 to 10 core curriculum in three years; should it look more to depth or breadth?
 - clarifying assessment policies and practices, in particular deciding the VELs standards against which SEAL students should be assessed.
6. A professional development program needs to be developed that specifically targets SEAL teachers and is implemented on an on-going basis. It could include areas such as 'Bright Sparks', PEEL, and 'differentiating the curriculum'.

STRIDES

The STRIDES program grew out of a Year 7 transition program. It currently attempts to reduce the number of different class teachers a student has in Years 7 and 8 as well as provide a partially integrated program through the use of themes. For a number of reasons, largely to do with timetabling (see appendix 1), even these simple aims have been difficult to achieve.

It is clear from the discussion that there needs to be a re-evaluation of STRIDES, especially in light of the new Discovery program (see below). Specifically, there is a need to determine

1. how best to deal with the tension that exists between the desire to make the move from primary to secondary education as painless as possible for students, while at the same time prepare them for the rigours of secondary education.
2. the kind of teaching practises best suited to STRIDES and the kind of professional learning that is needed to make STRIDES work well.

The Discovery Centre

The Discovery program is the newest of the programs being looked at in this review. Its vision, as set out in the Leading Schools Fund (LSF) application, is clear. To quote

...having completed an important developmental year in the Discovery Centre, students will enter their final three years of secondary education with four key foundations in place:

- Good relations with their teachers
- A positive view about school and education
- A wide range of skills and a variety of curriculum experiences enabling them to tackle further and more demanding learning
- A desire to continue learning

Discovery was successfully launched this year and the negotiated review has been used as a vehicle for identifying major policy and implementation issues whose resolution will allow the program to move further forward. These are the findings that relate specifically to the Discovery program:

1. A prime objective of Discovery is to improve the engagement of Year 9 students. Research shows that 'connectedness' to the peers and school increase the likelihood of students being engaged with their learning. Therefore, to what extent will student connectedness be enhanced by
 - strong identification with the Discovery Centre as a separate entity within the College?
 - the allocation of small teaching teams to a group of students?
 - the allocation of a single home group teacher to a small form group?
2. One of the key features of the program is the formation of small teaching teams that 'look after' a group of about fifty students. Current timetabling policies and practices make this difficult to achieve (see appendix 1).
3. The current Discovery curriculum structure reflects the outcome of a Year 9 review held before the LSF was launched. The appropriateness or otherwise of this structure now needs to be questioned; for example, would a more integrated program may lead to the desired outcomes being achieved more effectively? How is student learning in the Individual Learning Program (ILP) best utilised in order to maximise student outcomes in all their studies.
4. The kind of change the Discovery seeks to make in the College necessitates changes in teaching practice. As well as ensuring that the Principles of Learning and Teaching are applied, it must be determined what specific teaching practises are best suited to the program. Following from this, the kind of professional learning that teachers need to fully implement the principles and practices must be ascertained.

Year 10

The Year 10 program initially came under scrutiny because of the statistics the School Self Evaluation drew attention to in relation to the learning of algebra; school assessed CSF scores indicated learning below the state mean. The 2004 Attitudes to School survey also identified concerns about the 2004 Year 10 cohort where many of the indicators were in the bottom quartile of the state responses.

While the data regarding Maths suggests there is a problem, it is unclear just what that problem might be; the CSF scores are internally assessed and then compared with averages for the internal assessments of other schools, but none of these schools have a shared understanding of what constitutes, say, a Beginning Level 6; there is no moderation of CSF results between schools. Therefore the results could be explained by any one of a number of things including poor attitude among students, inappropriate course design, poor course delivery, overly exacting or inconsistent assessment practices. The 2004 Attitudes to School survey supports the idea that student attitude may in fact explain the poor 2004 Year 10 Maths results. However, this raises the question of why the attitude is poor and why it seems to only show up in the Maths results?

Since the School Self Evaluation two other sets of data have become available (see appendix 2):

1. **The 2005 Attitudes to Schools results.** These allow us to compare the 2004 Year 10 cohort with cohorts one year after and one year behind. The analysis of this data suggests that for the three years for which we have data the cohort in question had a lower overall opinion about school than either of the other two cohorts. Equally though, it must be pointed out that the 2005 Year 10 cohort is showing a drop across all indicators since they were surveyed in Year 9.
2. **The Year 10 overall grades for Maths – semesters one & two, 2004, and semester one, 2005.** This data shows about a quarter of students scoring E or N for the subject for each semester. The rest of the scores are normally distributed across the range A+ to E+. This suggests that there is a significant proportion of students being ‘turned off’, at least in Maths, rather than being inappropriately assessed.

Inquiry into the Year 10 program also identified other concerns not specifically related to Maths. It was felt there is a need to:

- review all syllabi with a view to ensuring the relevance of all courses; determining how VELs is best incorporated; and revising all assessment practices.
- examine the Year 10 Work Experience program in order to ascertain its value in the curriculum.
- investigate Year 10 links to the community and the extent to which there should be links.
- investigate the perception that there are many disruptions to normal classes at Year 10.

RELATIONSHIPS

SEAL with STRIDES, Discovery and VCE

The main difficulties that have arisen in relation to the SEAL program have to do with how it sits in relation to other areas of the school, specifically:

1. Clarification is required in relation to which year level cohort(s) SEAL students should be aligned with for the purpose of determining retention rates, surveys, information sessions, AIM testing, and other activities normally associated with a year level.
2. There have been requests to ensure that SEAL students are included (or considered to take part) in all activities and initiatives that are integrated in the school; for example STRIDES. Related to this is a need to undertake a review of the SEAL3 class after the implementation of the Discovery Centre.

3. Currently SEAL 3 students participate in subjects appearing at three different year levels of the timetable, raising the question as to how desirable this is and should it be changed?
4. The way in which SEAL students undertake VCE also needs investigation, particularly in light of the fact that many seem to be take the opportunity to become 'part time students' in their third VCE year, rather than extending themselves in some way.

The suggestion was also made that the SEAL program should be seen as a model for teaching and learning and so should influence everyday teaching and learning in the mainstream classes.

STRIDES with Discovery

Two main issues have been raised in regard to the relationship of STRIDES to Discovery.

The first arises from the observation that in many ways STRIDES has identical aims to Discovery and so the question has to be asked: how similar should it be to Discovery?

The second has to do with designing and managing the transition process from Year 8 STRIDES to Discovery. Students will require specific knowledge and skills that will be called upon immediately in Year 9, especially those relating to the Year 9 camp; they will also be required to work in a large space with a large number of students and perhaps three teachers. The College will also need to ensure a logical progression of teaching practise from Year 8 into Year 9.

Year 10 with Discovery and VCE

With the advent of Discovery, Year 10 now sits between two major programs, the other being VCE. Discussion around this idea largely revolved around the place of Year 10 in the College: is it post-Discovery, pre-VCE or parts of each?

In relation to Discovery, the first question that needs to be addressed is that if Year 10 is to incorporate elements of the Discovery program, just how much like Discovery should it be? Following on from this, what elements can and should be incorporated? For example, ILP forms an integral part of the Discovery program's curriculum but the knowledge and skills it tries to impart are generic to all learning. It is understood that the precepts of ILP should be integrated into the Year 10 curriculum, but should ILP continue into Year 10 as a discrete subject?

Clearly Year 10 has to prepare students for the VCE but how well it does this at present is unclear, especially in terms of expectations and assessment. In this context Maths is once again brought into question, this time asking how well Year 10 Maths is preparing students for VCE Maths and whether or not there should be different levels of Maths offered to suit different pathways. Overall, should Year 10 become part of the Senior School?

Another issue, but still to do with Year 10 and VCE is the Year 10 to Year 11 retention rate. The data provided by the School Level Report shows the real retention rate from Year 10 (Aug) 2003 to Year 11 (Feb) 2004 as 115%, an impossible number caused by SEAL students being promoted directly from Year 9 to Year 11. Analysis of data obtained from the student report databases in use in 2003 and 2004 reveals that the actual real retention rate is closer to 73% compared with a state mean of around 80%. A similar analysis gives 64% for Year 10 2004 into Year 11 2005. In both cases SEAL students are not included in the data (see appendix 3).

Finally, the current school structure places Years 9 and 10 together as 'the Middle School'. If Year 10 is to be distinct from both Discovery and VCE, then the effective transfer of information about students from Year 9 into Year 10, and from Year 10 into Year 11 will need to occur. Ways of doing this will have to be determined.

5.0 Conclusions and recommendations

In the following recommendation tagged ^{SSP} are intended for inclusion in the School Strategic Plan

The SEAL program is now well established and meeting its aims of accelerating students through their secondary learning. Now that the first group of students has completed the program it is time to consolidate what has been learnt and 'bed it down'.

Recommendation 1: that a working party be formed early in 2006 tasked with addressing the findings regarding SEAL and producing a revised set of policies and procedures. These policies and procedures should then be documented, made available to the College and implemented as soon as practicable.

STRIDES is one of the major programs of the College involving at least a third of its students. Despite timetabling issues the initial aims of the program have largely been met. It would seem, however, that it time for a major review of the STRIDES program, especially in light of the introduction of the Discovery program.

Recommendation 2^{SSP}: that STRIDES is incorporated into the School Strategic Plan with goals being formulated that relate to Years 7 and 8 in all outcome areas: learning, engagement and well-being, and transition.

Recommendation 3^{SSP}: that the Annual Implementation Plan for Year 1 of the School Strategic Plan includes a full review of the STRIDES program. The aims of the review should be to: address the issues raised above; define where STRIDES sits in relation to primary school and Discovery; identify generic knowledge and skills that students need in order to achieve success at secondary school and consider ways of imparting this. It should also consider seeking the opinions of parents whose children have completed or are nearing completion of the program. Once complete the review should produce documentation that sets out STRIDES policies and practices.

Discovery is in its infancy and, while the broad approach to its operation is known, many implementation details as well as some philosophical ones still need to be worked out, especially regarding how Discovery relates to the rest of the College.

Recommendation 4^{SSP}: that Discovery is incorporated into the School Strategic Plan with goals being formulated that relate to Year 9 in the outcome area of engagement and well-being.

Recommendation 5^{SSP}: that the Annual Implementation Plan for Year 1 of the School Strategic Plan includes one or more major planning sessions for the further development of the Discovery program; that the planning takes into consideration the issues raised in the findings above and outlines the direction that Discovery should take in succeeding Annual Implementation Plans for the remainder of the School Strategic Plan.

At Year 10 it seems three areas have to be looked into: the Maths program; specific elements of the Year 10 curriculum; and the relationship of Year 10 to the rest of the College. With the first it is not clear where the problem lies, although as much as anything it may lie with student attitude. It is reasonable to expect a subject like Maths to be the first to feel the effects of a disenchanted group of students. It is this disenchantment that Discovery hopes to deal with, but, this does not mean the Maths program should not be reviewed.

Recommendation 6: that before the end of 2005 the Year 10 Maths curriculum is reviewed with the purpose of ensuring its relevance and of looking into innovative ways of delivering the content. The review should also look into ways of catering for individual differences, including the use of individual learning plans, and explore options for allowing students to undertake different pathways to VCE Maths.

Recommendation 7^{SSP}: that the School Strategic Plan include a target in the student learning outcome relating to student achievement in Maths. The measurement of this achievement should be derived from a set of criteria developed in the College and based on VELs. A means of ensuring that all Maths teachers understand the criteria and apply them in a consistent fashion should also be worked out, including the possibility of employing moderation techniques.

Recommendation 8: that the College determine the place of Year 10 within the organisational structure from the point of view of the transition from Discovery to VCE. From this decision, plan a review of Year 10 to deal with the broader issues outlined in the findings above, including an examination of the retention rate from Year 10 into Year 11, and student attitudes at Year 10. This review should be completed as soon as practicable.

Recommendation 9^{SSP}: that the College sets a goal or target in the outcome area of transition and pathways. This goal or target should relate to VCE but be a consequence of a successful Discovery and Year 10 program.

To underpin all the above, several other courses of action also need to be taken. Three areas have come out in this review as needing attention: the structure of the timetable; data; professional development.

Recommendation 10: that the College investigate options regarding timetable structures that ideally will facilitate the desired operation of all sections of the College. When making a decision about the best option it may be necessary to place the needs of certain sections of the College ahead of others. A decision should be made before the end of semester 1, 2006 so that planning for the 2007 timetable can commence as it normally would in semester 2 of 2006.

Recommendation 11^{SSP}: that the School Strategic Plan include as a strategy (or as part of a larger strategy) the institution of its own internal accountability mechanisms. There should be three main aspects to this: the collection of data that complements data obtained from external sources such as the School Level Report; the use of all data collected to support and improve major College programs including SEAL, STRIDES, Discovery, Year 10 and VCE; the institution of an annual review process for all College programs with each review publishing its findings.

Recommendation 12^{SSP}: that each Annual Implementation Planning cycle identifies areas of PD needed that year to support SEAL, STRIDES, Discovery, Year 10 and VCE, and determines how that PD would best be delivered as well as those who should receive it. It is expected that for all these programs there would be on-going PD, but especially early in the year for the benefit of new staff.

6.0 Signatures

The principal and school council endorse this school self-evaluation as being both fair and accurate.

SIGNED by the principal

Name Julie Podbury

Date/..../.....

SIGNED by the school council president

Name Mike Allard

Date/..../.....

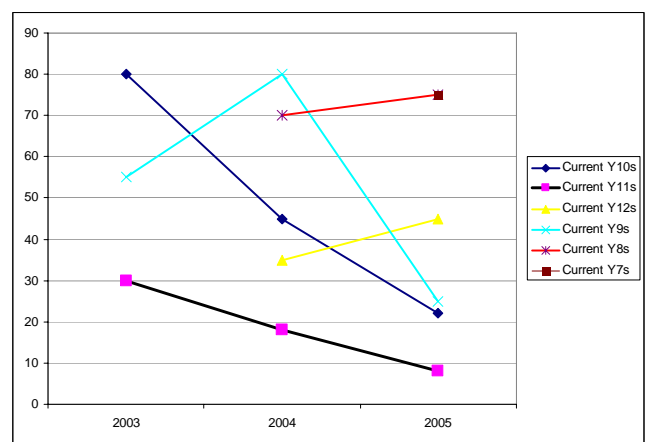
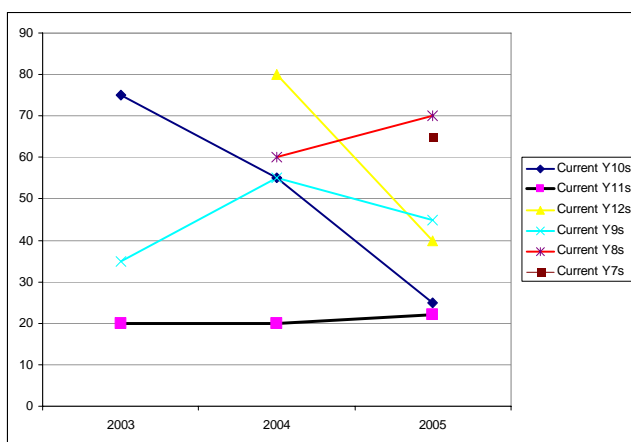
APPENDIX 2: FURTHER DATA

2005 Attitudes to School Survey

This survey asks questions of students that lead to values being placed against 12 indicators, divided into two groups:

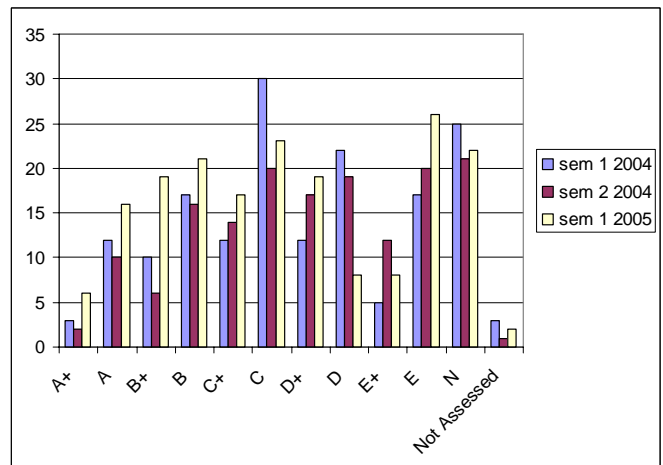
- **Teachers and teaching statements:** Quality of Instruction, Helpfulness/Responsiveness, Fairness/Firmness, Teacher Energy/Enthusiasm, High Expectations, Feedback
- **Feelings about yourself and school statements:** Connectedness - Teachers, Connectedness - School, Connectedness - Peers, Motivation to Learn, Student Safety, Self Esteem

The two charts below show Quality of instruction (left) and Connectedness to peers (right) for six cohorts of students. The 2004 Year 10 cohort is the 'Current Y11s'. Notice how these results sit well below those of other cohorts. The other indicators show a similar pattern.



Year 10 Maths Overall Grades

The chart at right shows, for three semesters, the number of students scoring A+, A, ... N, and Not Assessed for their overall semester grade for Year 10 Maths.



APPENDIX 3: RETENTION RATES

The table below shows the real retention rate for Year 10s going into Year 11 as provided by the School Level Report (which includes SEAL students), and a rate determined from students receiving reports in the relevant years. In 2003 and 2004 SEAL students were promoted directly from Year 9 to Year 11, thus inflating the real retention rate to an impossible figure.

	2003	2004	Rate	2004	2005	Rate
School Level Report	118	166	140%	177	NA	NA
Students receiving reports at the end of Semester 1, not including SEAL students	118	86	73%	177	113	64%