Case Study – Footscray Primary School

Background
Footscray Primary School is a small inner suburban school which has grown from 125 to 200 students over the past four years. During this time the school has continued to grow in diversity and, with the support of parents, has developed a number of playgroups, sporting and community opportunities for parents, students and members of the wider community. The school also supports a local church group, Chinese and Vietnamese community schools and an African Drumming school.

Situation
Challenges facing the school were declining enrolments, limited community participation and a lack of resources to connect with the wider community.

What did you do?
Parents and staff worked together to encourage new enrolments with parents taking on more responsibility for encouraging new parents to connect socially when dropping off, or picking up their children. As relationships flourished between families, parents took up the opportunity to establish the first playgroup, which was soon followed by two more. These playgroups were established in partnership with local school community, the Vietnamese Women’s Society and the local Health Centre. They were held on a weekly basis and offered both formal and informal health and educational support, connection to the community and a meeting place for parents, friends and children. The Vietnamese Playgroup is still operating, and we are currently in the process of restarting a parent-run group as the school community diversifies and changes.

The school and community worked together to develop a number of inclusive initiatives including a ‘Global Jamboree’ which celebrates and honours the multicultural community by sharing music, foods, arts and crafts from communities across the globe. The Jamboree is held on an annual basis and has grown significantly over the past two years.

Shared sporting opportunities include the netball clinic for students from Prep-Grade 6 which is run by parents after school on a weekly basis. An adult netball team, fielded by parents, friends and staff of the school, also competes in the local competition.

A local Christian church group is supported through the use of school facilities as are the Chinese and Vietnamese Community Schools and a local African drumming group.

Results
The school continues to maintain and develop links with the immediate and wider school community as it shares its facilities. Connectedness within the immediate and wider community has increased, as has the profile of the school. Parents within the school community are taking on a higher profile and are more involved in working with students and families. Communication is more open and cohesive and students acknowledge families as part of the broader school community.