Drouin Primary School in Gippsland has become the first school in Victoria to develop and sign a Partnership Agreement that aims to improve Koorie education in government schools. In collaboration with the national ‘What Works’ program, the landmark Partnership Agreement has taken almost 12 months to complete. The agreement is part of the Department’s Wannik strategy, which aims to improve the academic performance of Koorie students and to ensure a culturally inclusive education system.

The school’s Partnership Agreement vision states: That all Koorie and Torres Strait Islander students will be successful academically and socially as a result of a strong and positive relationship between the school, parents and the Koorie community, where students are encouraged and supported to take pride in their identity and culture.

Drouin Primary School has 200 students, 28 of whom identify as Koorie, which creates an opportunity for every member of the community to embrace and celebrate Koorie culture. The Partnership Agreement will allow all students to share in and learn about Koorie culture: working together, building trust, forming relationships and working towards common goals.

Drouin Primary School principal Lyn Keating said their motto, ‘School Smart – Culturally Strong’, builds a foundation for the new vision within the school. “Discussions between the school and the Koorie parents shaped the notion of shared responsibility in creating better outcomes for the students,” she said.

“The (Koorie) parents are coming into the school, planning with staff, helping with yard duty and providing classroom help...”

“They helped us all realise that we were aiming for the same goals, and this has resulted in a greater appreciation of each other and an understanding of the role each of us play in helping our students to be academically and socially successful.”

Drouin Primary School is now teaching an ‘all-inclusive’ curriculum that is more relevant and more suited to Koorie understandings and culture. Ms Keating says Koorie parents now have a very visual role in the school, which sends the message to Koorie students that their education is supported and valued. “The parents are coming into the school, planning with staff, helping with yard duty and providing classroom help, and all students are working together to create stronger relationships.”