Bethanga Primary School and the Tallangatta Cluster

Who we are...........

<table>
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<tr>
<th>· Small rural primary school</th>
<th>· Principal – Tim Cashmore</th>
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<td>· 44 students</td>
<td>· Low EMA, LSG 1 school profile</td>
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<td>· 3.5 teachers</td>
<td>· Many of the students travel by bus from Bellbridge as well as the surrounding area.</td>
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Where we started....... 

Bethanga Primary School is part of the Tallangatta cluster. The schools in this cluster have had a very close working relationship and have embarked on a range of initiatives together. The Performance and Development Culture journey was also taken together, with the assistance of the Innovation and Excellence cluster educator, Marilyn Chambers. The cluster participated as a reference group when the initiative was being developed during 2004.

The Tallangatta Secondary College model was adopted by the cluster as it had already achieved accreditation and its knowledge and resources would help primary schools in the area.

The main focus for all schools in this cluster is to improve student outcomes, so this focus has been kept at the heart of any practices that have been introduced.
Tallangatta Secondary College’s model was the “TCAT” (Tallangatta Cluster Accelerated Teams) model. These teams met once a term and included teachers from every level of the profession, and from across schools.

The teams first worked together to establish a common Performance and Development Culture approach including linking policies to goals, using data for self evaluation, professional development and the development of documentation.

It was recognised that the element of induction was problematic since most of the schools in the cluster have stable staffs and induction is not a regular need. The cluster decided to pool the induction approaches of larger schools to develop an induction handbook template, which could be used by all when needed. The handbook was compiled by the cluster educator based on the handbooks already used by other schools. There is now a cluster SharePoint where these documents are stored and accessible to all teachers.

To monitor the program and ensure that student outcomes are always at the forefront, accountability for Performance and Development activities is built into the mid cycle and end of year reviews. Staff are asked what is different and better based on their activities, and what is yet to be done.

The application writing process was streamlined for principals through the work of the cluster educator, who created an application template. Schools were required to customise the template so that it reflected the individual school’s situation.

The achievement of a strong Performance and Development Culture is seen as an outcome of the hard work of the schools involved. It is also a very enabling culture that ties in very well with other government initiatives.

In particular, it has strengthened the feedback component. Data is now used to provide feedback to teachers and it is no longer seen as threatening. Principals now also participate in the feedback process. While this may once have been a nerve-wracking prospect for the principal, it is now welcomed as a highly positive experience. These feedback processes improve the principal’s and all staff’s skills and practice.

Performance and Development Culture has assisted in the shift towards collegiate support for all teachers and mutual growth based on plans and data. It has also helped to strengthen the cluster’s working relationship.
Bethanga Primary School embraces Performance and Development Culture as an ongoing improvement strategy. The principal believes that all professions have benchmarks, and teaching should not be any different. Therefore, the school has a commitment to the continual development of skills.

Bethanga is a Reference School in 2007 and Principal, Tim Cashmore, is more than willing to share his experiences and resources to assist other schools, including the school’s application and feedback mechanisms.