1. Creating and Supporting a Performance & Development Culture at Ballarat Specialist School

ELEMENT 2 : Use of multiple sources of feedback on teacher effectiveness to individual teachers and teams of teachers.

Over the last few years we have reviewed how constructively we can use the sources of feedback and improve the processes we have in place to give and receive feedback. As a specialist setting we have looked at what type of data is the most suitable and feasible to gather and how we will link this to teacher learning and improved student outcomes.

We would argue that we do use 3 sources of feedback and these are derived from:

1. Student outcomes – goal achievement. This is looked at from individual students, classrooms, mini school levels and the whole school goal achievement.
2. Attendance Data
3. Parent Feedback gained through the parent survey, Individual Education Plan meetings, diary entries and personal phone calls to individual parents.

We have now established a process for gathering peer observation data and in the future would add this as the fourth source of feedback.

As a school we recognize that more formal work needs to be done in this area of feedback on teacher effectiveness to individual and teams of teachers. The nature of our students severely restricts some aspects, in that, the vast majority of our students are unable to make systematic and objective assessments about themselves as learners. Our school caters for students aged 5 to 18 years all of whom have an intellectual disability and many of them profound disabilities and associated communication problems. This means the collection of formal feedback is unrealistic and not feasible. The data we do have from students about themselves as learners has come through the assessment of students who undertake our Educational Residential Unit program. Data is gathered pre and post program one element of this data is an assessment the students make of themselves. This data is processed and reported to staff and the school community. It is used as part of the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Educational Residential Unit program and followed up 3 months later to see if students’ perceptions have remained the same.

As part of our work towards creating and supporting a performance and development culture we have had staff working in teams to establish some clear protocols for the use of multiple sources of feedback. This year is our year of review and as part of the self evaluation process staff worked as a whole to review our data, look at our achievements and then make future recommendations to improve teacher effectiveness and improve student outcomes.

Once the new strategic plan is written teachers will write new goals that will support and acknowledge the role they play in achieving the Strategic Plan goals and targets. These goals will relate to them individually but also they will...
work within their professional learning teams to establish goals and targets for themselves, their teams and for student outcomes. Within each mini school, time will be set aside each term to discuss their progress with goals and targets and to support each other with feedback.

Our staff are very experienced with setting goals and measurable outcomes. Each teacher writes up individual plans for each student with outcomes targets set for each student. This skill is transferred to their ability to measure their success at achieving their goals and targets by ensuring that they are **Specific**, **Measurable**, **Achievable**, **Realistic** and **Timely**. (SMART)

The staff have identified that the mini school model works extremely well and that they feel comfortable contributing in this forum. Over the last few years mini schools have looked closely at the needs of students and ways in which to improve student outcomes. The junior school has looked at literacy and implemented a range of assessments to aid teachers in analyzing the level of students’ abilities. Each mini school has developed a comprehensive personal develop program “Growing Pains”. They worked in their mini schools to research topics and resources, report back to staff and provide feedback on topics they were trialing. Staff share good practice and have accumulated a huge range of specifically designed worksheets and activities that are kept in each mini schools resource room. The most pleasing fact about this program is that we have data to show that the goals set under health and physical education (directly related to the growing pains program) show a marked improvement in all mini schools. In the last 12 months goal achievement in this area rose 6% across the whole school. Staff also reported that working in teams enabled them to gain confidence in this area and this in turn had a positive effect on the way they engaged their students in the program. Having looked at our attendance data the senior school under the school priority of “the retention and engagement of our senior students” established an electives program. This has been very successful with all goals set in this area achieved unless a student had a long absence due to illness. Students and staff have expressed their ongoing support for this program and listed it as one of our “achievements” in the self evaluation process. Working under this model for a number of years they have established teams that work effectively and efficiently. Time will be set aside at mid year and the end of year for staff to meet with their mini school leaders to gain feedback and discuss their progress in attaining personal goals and their contribution to professional learning teams’ goals and action plans.

Staff have agreed that we need to look at establishing some clear protocols which enable staff to more readily visit each others classrooms, to establish some critical friends to gain feedback and set side time in their mini school meetings to give and receive feedback, discuss goals and targets and evaluate their progress. Time will also be set aside on our staff meeting/professional development sessions to evaluate annual data and give feedback on the progress of goals and targets set for each professional learning team.