

This report is the product of a self-determined school review for West End State School, which was carried out in collaboration between school staff and researchers from QUT. A community showcase event was held in September 2015 to provide parents, community members and interested parties with an opportunity to understand the school's progress over the period of 2012-2015. This report outlines the school's performance in key priority areas defined in the WESS strategic plan (2012 – 2015) and maps this performance against the nine domains described in the National School Improvement Tool.

2015



All documents and presentations delivered at the West End 2012-2015 Showcase are available on the school website on

<https://westendss.eq.edu.au/Ourschool/Performanceandachievements/Pages/Strategic-School-Programs.aspx>

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Introduction

This report forms part of a self-determined review for West End State School that was completed in September 2015. It provides an evaluation of the school's performance against the school strategic plan 2012-15 as well as mapping across the nine domains of the National School Improvement Tool. The review process also included a community showcase event, hosted by all teachers at the school that ran on September 15, 2015. West End State School became an Independent Public School in 2014.

School Context

Location	24 Vulture Street, West End.
Education region	Metropolitan
The school opened in	1875
Year levels	Prep to Year 6
Current school enrolment	825
Indigenous enrolments	1%
Students for whom language background is other than English	49%
Students with disability enrolments	1%
Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value	1148
Year principal appointed	2009
Number of full time equivalent teaching staff	44

Review methodology

The review was conducted by three reviewers from QUT. The reviewers have also monitored the progress of the school over the past three years as critical friends on the Australian Research Council Linkage project, "Ethical Leadership: A collaborative investigation of equity-driven evidence-based school reform is an Australian" (ARC Linkage project no. LP 120200647).

Over the past three years, QUT staff have worked with the school to monitor the school's performance by:

- Conducting interviews with teachers.
- Conducting focus groups with student groups from Prep to Grade 6.
- Conducting interviews with school leaders.
- Attendance/observation of staff and school meetings, classroom teaching, community events (such as the art show), pupil free days and teacher professional development over the course of the 3 year project.
- Observation of work samples, including teacher data collection and student work samples.
- Providing feedback to the school leadership team on focus groups and interviews in the form of summary reports.

The Showcase

School staff were active in the review with all teachers taking part in a “Showcase” that mapped progress in the school’s priority areas during 2012-15:

- Reading comprehension and writing
- Data driven accountability
- Differentiation
- Creativity – Multimedia and the arts
- Australian Curriculum implementation.

These priorities were used as the basis of organizing collegial work amongst teams of teachers from 2012-2015. The teams operated with fortnightly meetings; on alternate weeks to year level planning meetings. At least one teacher from each year level and one school leader was a member of each SSP team, and thus the school was able to ensure information across the priority areas flowed horizontally (across year levels) and vertically (across SSP priority areas).



In the third semester of 2015, the SSP teams took responsibility for collecting data to measure the team’s progress since 2012. Each SSP teams collected data on a range of key projects and priorities that had been central to their work over the four years. This included:

- A description of the work completed (including professional development, impact on teaching practice), and why it had been identified as a priority.
- Annual budgets for the work (for example, cost of staff development and resourcing).
- Outcomes of the work or project. This included both quantitative data (for example, links to NAPLAN and other internal school data) and qualitative data (for example, student feedback on teaching and learning gathered via surveys and focus groups).
- Recommendations.



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The SSP teams also prepared presentations for a culminating event, the “Showcase” that ran on September 15 (from 3.30pm-6pm). In addition, a number of external stakeholders and community members were invited to take part in presenting the sessions. The principal began the event by presenting an overview of the school’s progress before the teachers’ presentations commenced. Each group presented their ten-minute presentation six times, which allowed guests to view at least six sessions. The sessions presented were:

- Reading Comprehension (including QAR)
- Guided Reading
- School-wide Assessment and Moderation
- Grow Our Own Coaches
- Student/Staff Feedback: **Perceptions of Learning and Teaching (PoLT)**
- Feedback for Learning (F4L) Project
- SMART Goals
- Differentiation Journey
- Gifted Education Programs & GEMs
- Differentiated Pedagogy
- Visual Arts
- Dance and Drama in the Curriculum
- Multimedia in the Curriculum
- Music @ WESS
- Environmental Sustainability
- Student Leadership
- Master Planning of WESS
- Community Partnerships
- WESS P&C

All presentations are available on the School Website:

<https://westendss.eq.edu.au/Ourschool/Performanceandachievements/Pages/Strategic-School-Programs.aspx>

The invited guests included:

- Parents and families.
- Community members (including local community groups (i.e. Kurilpa Futures) and local MPs).
- Staff from the Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment
- Staff from organizations with links to the school (such as University of Queensland, Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority).
- Staff from nearby schools (including Brisbane State High School).

The review team attended the Showcase to view the presentations and to observe the community involvement and partnerships. Members of the team also attended rehearsals for the showcase, and spoke to the school leadership team and teachers as the presentations were prepared. The Showcase was an important means of building community relationships and allowing staff to participate in an innovative review process which afforded them opportunities to reflect on their achievements and to consider areas for improvement.

Feedback from the showcase event was resoundingly positive, with 96.7% of respondents either agreeing (31.5%) or strongly agreeing (65.2%) that the presentations by staff and students were an effective way of communicating the schools progress. A further 98.8% of those who responded agreed (29.5%) or strongly agreed (69.3%) that the showcase gave them an opportunity to find out about the areas of the school that interested them. Each of the presentations at the showcase provided detailed information about the school’s activities over the period 2012 – 2015, highlighting how their strategies for improvement were



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developed, adapted and embedded throughout the school over the four years. One parent reported that they 'valued the sense of continuous improvement and support' in the school. Another indicated that the showcase gave them a sense of the 'amazing range of programs and skills offered and how they are organized sequentially into a plan'.

One drawback of the showcase that was identified by the school was that they would have liked more parents to attend. They believed that difficulties associated with getting parents to attend events in the late afternoon were compounded by the nature of the showcase. Parents who attended the event indicated that they were not sure what type of information would be included in the showcase. Over 98% of those who attended, however, either agreed (30.5%) or strongly agreed (67.8%) with the statement that the showcase presentations had improved their understanding of WESS's journey in those areas. Parents and members of staff also reported that, now they are familiar with the showcase process, they would be able to offer more targeted promotion of such an event in the future.

One of the key benefits of the showcase that was identified by reviewers was the impact on teachers' understanding of what the school had accomplished over the four year period. For new staff members, the showcase presentations highlighted the school's journey and the background for many of the initiatives within the school. Staff members who had been at the school over this period reported that preparing for the showcase presentations gave them an opportunity to reflect on their journey and their achievements with regards to the school's strategic goals. Preparation for the showcase thus offered staff an opportunity to see how the school had achieved the strategic goals over the period 2012-2015 and established a foundation from which they could develop the next strategic plan.

QUT Critical Friends involved in the Australian Research Council Linkage Project

Professor Mel Ainscow	University of Manchester
Professor Val Klenowski	Queensland University of Technology
Professor Barbara Comber	Queensland University of Technology
Associate Professor Lisa Ehrich	Queensland University of Technology
Dr. Judy Smeed	Queensland University of Technology
Dr. Jessica Harris	Queensland University of Technology
Ms. Nerida Spina	Queensland University of Technology
Ms. Leisa Brandon	Queensland University of Technology



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Executive Summary

The 2012 – 2015 Strategic Plan for West End State School (WESS) outlined five key priorities and two further focus areas. While this document will address each of the key priorities and focus areas separately, initiatives in each of these areas have been incorporated throughout the school as part of their continuous improvement agenda. The school has a culture of ongoing learning for all students and staff. There is a clear commitment to ongoing professional learning and evidence based decision making at WESS. All improvement strategies implemented in the school must be evidence based, adapted to fit the needs of the school community and embedded throughout the school to become part of the “West End way”.

1. Reading Comprehension and Writing

WESS has had a strong focus on improving the teaching of reading comprehension and writing. Significant investment has been made in researching best practice, training guided reading expert coaches and training all teachers and dedicated teacher-aides. Significant investments in prioritising and scheduling regular lessons supported by teacher-aides and coaches with each class have contributed to strong improvements in NAPLAN reading data in 2015. There has also been a strong focus on collegial practice and the use of evidence based decision making (including quantitative data such as PAT-R and PM Benchmarks) as well as qualitative data (such as teacher and student focus group data).

2. Data Driven Accountability

WESS has had a strong focus on building a culture of evidence based decision making across the entire school. Data is regularly used at all levels from leadership to classroom teachers to identify areas for improvement and to monitor student achievement, attendance and behaviour.

3. Differentiation

Differentiated teaching, learning and assessment have become central to the work of teachers at WESS. Teachers have been provided with professional development in both evidence based decision making and differentiation. Policies have also been developed which clearly articulate pedagogical expectations. Teachers work from the WESS differentiation “mantra” of “know your students; know your curriculum intent; vary the pathways”. WESS now has more Gifted and Enrichment Mentor teachers and leaders than any other school in Brisbane. The focus on building expertise has also allowed teachers to share knowledge within the school via coaching and the culture of collegiality.

4. Creativity – Multimedia and the Arts

Part of the “West End Way” has been a continued focus on multimedia and the arts. The school has invested in resources such as a Mac lab, and professional development for teachers to ensure multimedia is embedded across the arts as well as other curriculum areas. The school offers a range of extra-curricular opportunities for students such as participation in Scratch club (programming) and music activities (e.g., Garageband club; strings ensemble). The school promotes the arts, recognising the diversity of the local community, at events such as the WESS art show.

5. Australian Curriculum Implementation

WESS has had a strong focus on ensuring that effective teaching and learning is a priority across all curriculum areas. The School Strategic Plan team structure has allowed teachers to focus on improving teaching practice across all year levels. Curriculum delivery is enhanced through a range of projects across the school including Feedback for Learning, SMART goals and Guided Reading. Classrooms are calm, orderly and purposeful with a focus on learning.



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6. Leadership

The school has worked to support the ongoing development leadership skills at all levels, from school leadership, staff leadership and leadership within the student body. There has been significant investment in professional development opportunities for both teaching and non-teaching staff members.

7. School Community and Partnerships

WESS has a broad range of partnerships with external organisations and community groups. A key goal of the school is to develop curriculum opportunities and student engagement while also meeting the needs and reflecting the changing face of the local community. The school has a strong P & C and school council, which support parents and community members to engage with and get involved in decision making at WESS.

8. Reflections and Recommendations

In each of the key priority areas, the team at WESS have met or exceeded the goals documented in their 2012-2015 strategic plan. This is reflected in the positive mapping of each of domain against the National School Improvement Tool. The school team have worked to embed successful programs and strategies throughout the school and adapt approaches to the WESS way. Some reflections for future practice include expanding on innovative practice and being mindful of the workloads of students and teachers in the continuous improvement agenda.



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Reading Comprehension and Writing

WESS has had a strong focus on improving the teaching of reading comprehension and writing. Significant investment has been made in researching best practice, training guided reading (GR) expert coaches, all teachers and dedicated teacher-aides. Significant investments in prioritising regular GR lessons supported by teacher-aides and coaches with each class have contributed to strong improvements in NAPLAN reading data in 2014 and 2015. There has been a strong focus on the use of evidence based decision making, drawing on both quantitative data (i.e. PAT-R and PM Benchmarks) and qualitative data (i.e. focus groups with teachers and students).



Overview

Key Strategies	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of QAR (Question Answer Relationship) pedagogic strategy across the school. Subsequent consolidation of QAR teaching across the three years. Development of a coaching model, “grow your own coaches” as part of ARC linkage grant. WESS’ action research included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a school wide process for consistency in the teaching of reading based on “Guided Reading” (Fountas & Pinell, 1996). A team of GR coaches monitored the consistency of implementation. Providing extensive professional development for team of 4 coaches; Providing intensive professional development to all teachers (over three years) on reading comprehension pedagogy based on GR model and the use of data to drive school improvement . PD provided to all staff (for example on pupil free days) and teacher- time exclusively for GR lessons; Providing teacher-aides with training GR and funding all classes to receive two hours of regularly timetabled teacher-aide professional development. Providing ongoing support to teachers to support sustainable implementation of GR Training parents in the early years of schooling in supporting GR lessons (for in-class parent volunteers); Implementation of school wide teaching and assessment strategies including Words Their Way (Spelling) and 7 Steps of Writing Continuation of writing intervention workshops for students in Years 3-7. Purchase of appropriate, high quality resources for teachers (curriculum support) and students to support reading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NAPLAN data improvements in reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year 3 (2015): Well above state, national and like school mean. Year 5 (2015): Well above state school mean; slightly above national and like school means. Year 5 (2015): Well above state school mean; slightly above national and like school means. Year 7 (2015): Well above state school, national and like school means. 100% of teachers trained and working with coaches using WESS GR pedagogical process. 100% of teachers collect student assessment data which is recorded for longitudinal tracking: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PAT-R/ PM/IPIs WTW 4 teachers trained and regularly working as GR coaches to support classroom teachers and teacher-aides. Teacher and student identification of improvements in reading pedagogy (in interviews and focus groups).

Reflections and Recommendations

WESS has exceeded their original strategic goals for the Reading Comprehension and Writing key priority area. Working within the ARC Linkage project with QUT, they effectively implemented GR approaches throughout the school, the results of which are clear with substantial improvement in grade 5 NAPLAN reading data for 2014 and



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2015. WESS has committed to responsive change and listening to the needs of teachers and students. In so doing, they have developed an effective strategy for supporting coaching and pedagogical change throughout the school.

Performance against National School Improvement Tool

Explicit improvement agenda

- The Reading Comprehension and Writing agenda has focused the whole school's attention on core learning priorities of improving comprehension, developing strong reading comprehension to support all learning.
- Focus groups and interviews with staff reveal a strong, and collegial approach to the strategy. In part this is also due to the use of staff feedback staff to help shape the improvement agenda over the three years, and to build a culture of trust, collegiality and evidence based improvement.

Analysis and discussion of data

- A range of data is now used throughout the school to monitor improvement over time and growth across years of schooling. These are outlined in the school assessment calendar, used by all classroom teachers and monitored by school leaders.
- Data is used throughout the school to identify gaps in student learning. E.g., WTW Spelling, PAT-R.
- Priority has been given to building data literacy. For example, coaches provided PD to all staff and regularly support staff to analyse literacy data using a range of test instruments.
- The school has also systematically collected qualitative data to support improvement in reading pedagogy. For example, in 2013, 2014 and 2015, a cohort of 32 students have been tracked via focus group interviews, which has provided feedback that has been used to adjust lesson planning and teaching practice across the school.
- Staff conversations reflect a sophisticated understanding of student assessment and data concepts, with links to strong pedagogical practice.

A culture that promotes learning

- Teachers expect that every student will learn. The GR program requires teachers to build deep knowledge about students' learning needs and adjust teaching practice.
- The coaching model has established a culture of trust and collegial improvement. Teachers regularly work with coaches, which extends to inviting coaches to observe lessons and provide critique.
- A strong collegial culture exists between staff, based on a shared commitment to improvement of teaching.

- Parents and families are valued partners who have been trained to assist with GR lessons in the early years, and to support reading comprehension strategy use at home.
- The leadership team has invested significantly in ensuring lessons are valuable for all students. For example, the school has recently purchased programs such as World Book and Read Theory in response to student feedback about independent reading activities.

Targeted use of school resources

- High priority is given to understanding and addressing learning needs of all students, with targeted resources to ensure all students receive quality literacy instruction.
- Significant investments have been made (e.g., allocation of trained teacher-aides) to target quality reading instruction across every class, twice per week.
- Coaches are deployed to make best use of their expertise by supporting development across teaching staff.

An expert teaching team

- Expert staff with very high levels of pedagogical knowledge in evidenced based teaching and reading pedagogy have also been trained in coaching. Expert staff have been working closely with teaching staff since 2013.
- Sharing and showcasing of work is common. The 2015 Review Showcase was used to celebrate the achievements of staff and their commitment to providing quality teaching.

Systematic curriculum delivery

- Literacy teaching incorporates cross curriculum teaching. The school explicitly plans and resources across the school to ensure teachers align curriculum delivery, planning, teaching and student assessment.

Differentiated teaching and learning

- Differentiated teaching is promoted by use of evidence based data use to ensure that every student is engaged and learning successfully.
- Data is used regularly to check on student progress, to identify student needs, and to inform teaching practice.

Effective pedagogical practices

- School leaders allowed expert teachers to research best practice in reading pedagogy and coaching, and to devise "The West End Way", which articulates a clear approach to teaching reading, and is used by all teaching staff.
- The literacy teaching strategies are based on explicit teaching of both skills and curriculum content.



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Data Driven Accountability

WESS focused on building a culture of evidence based decision making across the entire school. Data are regularly used at all levels from leadership to classroom teachers to identify areas for improvement and monitor student achievement, attendance and behaviour.



Overview

Key Strategies	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The leadership and data teams have aligned data collection across the school to ensure consistent, longitudinal and timely data is collected in key curriculum areas (maths, English, science). • The data team have implemented strategies to monitor trend and individual data to identify both individual student needs as well as to inform strategic directions. This includes a range of data (e.g., PAT-R, IPIs, PAT-M). Data has been used to set and monitor short and long term goals. • The data team have supported teachers by providing professional development and support in the use of data to inform, monitor and review classroom practice. • Implementation of “Feedback for Learning” project in collaboration with the University of Queensland. This has included having coaches work with teachers to build their capacity in providing multiple opportunities (planned formative assessments) to give students explicit and timely feedback. • Introduction of SMART goals for all students. • The school have participated in the ARC Linkage project “Ethical Leadership: A collaborative investigation of equity-driven evidence-based school reform is an Australian”, which has provided opportunities for school leaders to engage in action research with a focus on how to use evidence to make ethical decisions across the school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adaptation of “Perceptions of Teaching and Learning” (PoLT) survey to gather data annually that is aligned to WESS strategic goals. Action research methodology was used to improve the process of data collection, as well as the use of data to drive improvements in teaching across the school. • Ensure data collection is aligned with both teaching needs and community needs. For example, revision of data collection timing to support the provision of quality feedback and evidence to parents and parent teacher interviews. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased use of data to inform school planning. Collection and analysis of key data sets is used by teachers for differentiated teaching. There has been a change from individual paper based data sets to whole school use of OneSchool using standardised data sets at set times annually. • Increased use of data across the school to support differentiation of teaching to meet the needs of individual students. • Development of the WESS Curriculum Assessment Overview to ensure alignment between what is taught and what is assessed, and that there was a balance of assessment types and modes. • NAPLAN/data goals and achievements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○

Reflections and Recommendations

Data are used to inform practice at all levels throughout the school. The Key Priority area of Data Driven Accountability has extended the drive for the effective use of data and has resulted in teachers having greater understanding and leadership in collecting and interpreting data to inform their own practices and other practices within the school. The school’s well considered assessment calendar and the adaptations made to the POLT survey are two prime examples of this work.



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Performance against National School Improvement Tool

Explicit improvement agenda

- The school has developed an explicit school improvement agenda that is clearly set out in planning documents and well known and used by teachers (e.g., school assessment calendar).
- The school improvement agenda includes clear targets and is linked to improvement strategies (e.g., the introduction of GR was linked to NAPLAN data targets in all domains).
- All teachers use data on a regular basis to monitor effectiveness and meet targets. This occurs across year levels, individually and is shared as a whole school.

Analysis and discussion of data

- Priority has been given to building data literacy across the school by implementing school wide processes (such as the use of OneSchool to record data according to assessment schedule). Regular professional development has been provided by expert teachers on the data team.
- Conversations amongst staff and at staff meetings reflect their sophisticated understanding of student assessment and data concepts.
- Data is used throughout the school to identify gaps in student learning. Students who require support or intervention are supported by the Student Support Services Team. Gifted and talented students are supported by trained GEMS teachers.
- Data is used throughout the school to monitor improvement over time and growth across years of schooling. The data team has established collection protocols that allow longitudinal tracking of students across all year levels in in key domains (English, maths, science).

A culture that promotes learning

- There is a strong collegial culture that includes the use of evidence to improve teaching.
- Data is collected on a range of areas to promote both learning and wellbeing of students. This includes qualitative (focus group and interview data) and quantitative data (student assessment data, PoLT data). Data is regularly used to

encourage improvements in teaching across the school.

Targeted use of school resources

- School-wide processes have been developed to ensure systematic testing occurs across the school that identify learning gaps and special needs.
- Records of individual student needs and progress are now maintained centrally and shared across year levels. Individual and student level data is also analysed by school leaders to ensure learning needs are identified, and trends are monitored.
- Evidence is used to inform decisions on the use of resources in order to maximise teaching and learning. For example, the GR resourcing decisions drew on teacher and student feedback collected in the action research cycle, and PAT-R, PM and NAPLAN data.
- Data (such as PoLT data) is used to ensure school resources are being targeted in ways that have a notable difference on student wellbeing and learning.

An expert teaching team

- Expert staff with very high levels of proficiency in data (for example statistical knowledge, excel and OneSchool computing knowledge, and the use of evidence based decision making) share their knowledge of evidence-based teaching strategies with staff. This occurs across year levels, and across the whole staff.

Systematic curriculum delivery

- Data collection and analysis is strongly linked to planning, delivery and assessment of curriculum. Data is used to support decisions about planning prioritisation.

Differentiated teaching and learning

- Differentiated teaching draws on a culture of evidence based decision making and data collection and analysis tools that are used across the school.
- Data is used by all teachers to check individual student progress and identify individual student needs.



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Differentiation

Differentiated teaching, learning and assessment has become central to the work of teachers at WESS. Teachers have been provided with professional development in both evidence based decision making and differentiation. Policies have also been developed which clearly articulate pedagogical expectations. Teachers work from the WESS differentiation “mantra” of “know your students; know your curriculum intent; vary the pathways”. WESS now has more Gifted and Enrichment Mentor teachers and leaders than any other school in Brisbane. The focus on building expertise has also allowed teachers to share knowledge within the school via coaching and the culture of collegiality.



Overview

Key Strategies	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide professional development (e.g., coaching and PD at staff meetings) to all staff to ensure common understandings of quality pedagogical practice that is characterised by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High expectations of all students. ○ Targeted teaching in response to students’ specific needs • Increased collaborative capacity of staff to differentiate lessons by utilising the vertical and horizontal staff team structures. • Ensure consistent pedagogical practice through professional development to the whole staff provided by expert teachers on the Differentiation SSP team. • Provide staff with additional PD, including training Gifted and Enrichment Mentors (GEMS) as experts who lead the development of practices across the school such as adjusting assessment and planning; developing differentiated teaching strategies. • Develop and monitor the use of the Differentiated Learning protocols (outlined on the placemat). • Supporting all SSP teams to implement differentiated planning, teaching and assessment across all curriculum areas (e.g., GR lessons, Year 2 maths program). • Drawing on community programs to extend differentiation opportunities for students, including (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ UQ Philosophy Department’s program for high achieving Indigenous students. ○ City Cluster High Achievers Program. ○ QUT the CUBE workshops for high achieving students in science and technology. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of key forms and processes including student referral forms. • Development of protocols for differentiation planning and monitoring of lesson adjustments. Implementation of protocols across all classes. • 100% of classroom teachers have set goals for reading, writing and spelling with support from the differentiation SSP team. • Development of a school wide checklist for the identification of giftedness. Establishment of schoolwide register to monitor performance of gifted and talented students. • Well established knowledge of differentiation practices across all staff based on the WESS Differentiation “mantra”: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Know your students. ○ Know the curriculum intent. ○ Vary the pathways. • WESS has 23 trained GEMS teachers and GEM leaders – more than any other school in Brisbane. • EALD and support classes have regular access to iPad lessons to support learning.

Reflections and Recommendations

The school has undertaken substantial work in the Key Priority area of differentiation, particularly with regards to enriching student learning. This priority area is closely linked with the use of data to understand the learning needs of every student. While the school has met all of the goals outlined in their 2012 – 2015 strategic plan and Annual implementation plans in the area of differentiation, there has been substantial progress in international research in this field. We suggest that WESS may be interested in exploring innovative research, particularly in the area of Universal Design for Learning.



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Performance against National School Improvement Tool

Explicit improvement agenda

- Teachers across the school use a range of data on a regular basis to monitor effectiveness and meet the needs of individual students.
- Improvement goals are explicit and detailed, with links to WESS key priorities (expressed in terms of specific goals and improvements sought in individual and cohort student performances).
- Differentiation is used to support improvement across all curriculum areas, as evidenced by teachers' application of the mantra "know you students, know the curriculum intent, vary the path" to supporting improvement for all students in all areas of the curriculum.

Analysis and discussion of data

- Reliable student outcome data is crucial to differentiation policy and practice at WESS, as all modifications to planning, assessment and teaching begin by teachers use of data to develop understanding of student learning needs, gaps and goals.

A culture that promotes learning

- The differentiation program is based on an expectation that every student can and will learn.
- Classroom observations and interviews with students and teachers reveal that classrooms are busy but calm for all students when instruction is differentiated.
- The training of GEMS teachers and GEM leaders is used to further build a strong collegial culture where expert teachers provide regular and ongoing support to colleagues. This extends to peer observations of teaching.

Targeted use of school resources

- High priority is given to understanding and addressing learning needs of all students, evidenced by the focus on developing a differentiation policy, training all teachers in differentiation of planning, practice and assessment; and the use of GEMS training across the school.

- School records of individual student needs, such as special needs referrals and gifted and the talented register are monitored and maintained centrally and shared across year levels.
- WESS trains expert teachers strategically (e.g. across all year levels) and deploys expert staff in ways that make best use of their expertise (e.g., mentoring and coaching colleagues and new staff).

An expert teaching team

- Expert staff with very high levels of understanding and skill in differentiation strategies work across all year levels. Expert staff monitor the use evidence based differentiation across the school.
- School leaders participate in professional learning, as evidenced by the training of seven members of the leadership team in GEM leadership.

Systematic curriculum delivery

- The differentiation team has worked across all year levels to ensure explicit planning of how and what teachers teach is clear.

Differentiated teaching and learning

- Differentiated teaching is a priority and is promoted strongly across the school to ensure that every student is engaged and learning successfully. Differentiation is a feature of every teacher's practice.

Effective pedagogical practices

- The school leadership team and Differentiation SSP team has driven improvements in pedagogical practice throughout the school by providing professional development and coaching support to all teaching staff in differentiation.
- All teachers have a clear understanding that the school requires evidence based differentiation of practice.
- School leaders have been trained in GEMS and spend time working with teams to monitor the implementation of improvements in teaching practices across the school.



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Creativity – Multimedia and the Arts

Part of the “West End Way” has been a continued focus on multimedia and the arts. The school has invested in resources such as a Mac lab, and professional development for teachers to ensure multimedia is embedded across all curriculum areas. The school offers a range of extra-curricular opportunities for students such as participation in Scratch club (programming) and music activities (e.g., Garageband club; strings ensemble). The school promotes the arts, recognising the diversity of the local community, at events such as the WESS art show.



Overview

Key Strategies	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a multimedia teaching lab, with Macs, electronic whiteboard and other multimedia equipment. Train all staff in the use of the equipment in the multimedia lab and in the arts (e.g., dance and drama pedagogy have been taught on pupil free days). Include multimedia and the arts into unit planning (e.g., photography, drama, dance and moviemaking). Provide a range of visual art opportunities in the curriculum that can be showcased in the annual WESS art show. Introduce iPads in EALD classes, support classes as well as general classroom trials. Establish and extend multi-media groups (e.g., iMovie, iPhoto, Scratch (programming), Garageband). Continue to promote and support extra-curricular music participation, with a target of 200 students to be involved in school music. Extend classroom music curriculum to include marimbas and ukulele from P-7. Promote student and community engagement in the arts via student participation in events such as PANZFest. Expansion of the WESS art show to become a major community activity that showcases a range of student exhibitions (e.g., photography, painting, sculpture, dance, music). Participate in EQ’s Apple Mac/Dell C4T (laptop replacement program) and Adobe software upgrade. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of a multimedia lab that now has a class set (of 25) Macs which are used regularly by classes to support teaching and learning across the curriculum. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Years 3-6 use labs for Arts curriculum projects. P-2 classes use labs for ICT lessons. Annual art show is now a major school event that promotes the importance of many forms of the arts across the school and is open to students and the wider community. Majority of staff trained in both multimedia and the arts via pupil free day and staff meeting training opportunities. Extracurricular music target of 200 students has been exceeded, with 330 students now actively involved (e.g., strings, piano, choirs). Marimba and ukulele lessons now taught from P-7. An increasing number of students are participating in additional extra-curricular groups, e.g., Scratch programming, which promote multimedia and the arts. Students regularly participate in various extra-curricular community opportunities in multimedia and the arts, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PANZfest Steelband Festival Raw Art GOMA activities (via GOMA partnership)



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Reflections and Recommendations

Work within the Key Priority area of Creativity – Multimedia and the Arts has exceeded the school's strategic plans and their goals for the period 2012 – 2015. The school's incremental development of the multimedia teaching lab and the multimedia work being produced through groups working with various applications, including Photoshop and iMovie, are a testament to the school's strategic approach to drawing on the talents of their staff members and extending successful programs.

Performance against

National School Improvement Tool

Explicit improvement agenda

- WESS's improvement agenda in the arts and multimedia is strongly aligned with the school's core values.
- The agenda to improve the quality and quantity of instruction and the number of opportunities available to students was linked to clear targets and timelines (e.g., creation of Mac multimedia lab; targets for extra curricular club and instrumental music participation).

A culture that promotes learning

- There is a strong culture across the school that WESS students can produce outstanding work in multimedia and the arts, and that there should be opportunities for students to learn and showcase their work.
- Student wellbeing and development are central to the focus on multimedia and the arts (e.g., Year 6 dance Footsteps program is linked to student wellbeing and is based on a social emotional learning program).
- A strong sense of belonging and pride is evident in the arts. This commitment to the arts and multimedia was very evident at key events such as the WESS annual art show and 2015 Review Showcase.

Targeted use of school resources

- High priority is given to understanding and addressing learning needs of all students. Where possible WESS has prioritised students with learning needs who will benefit from additional access to multimedia and the arts. For example, the EALD and special needs iPad lessons.
- A range of initiatives have been implemented to make effective use of available resources such as the multimedia labs to enhance teaching and learning. For example, training all teachers in the use of the equipment means that the lab is booked and used regularly throughout each week for

multiple purposes from classroom teaching and learning (e.g., project work) to clubs and individual student projects.

- WESS teachers and school leaders have been proactive in sourcing and applying available resourcing to meet both current and future learning needs. E.g., investments in ICTs over the past 4 years have placed the school in a strong position for the future as the national focus shifts towards STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Maths).

An expert teaching team

- The WESS leadership team have actively sought to foster an expert staff with very high levels of pedagogical knowledge and skill across multimedia and the arts. The school has also made use of within-school expertise by providing opportunities for staff to learn from each other (e.g., running professional development sessions for colleagues in the art).
- School leaders place a very high priority on the ongoing professional learning of all staff in both multimedia and the arts.

Systematic curriculum delivery

- The curriculum is locally relevant, acknowledging and incorporating the importance of the arts to the West End community. The curriculum values and builds on to students' existing knowledge and varying backgrounds (e.g., multicultural dancing opportunities; Year 4 history curriculum links to multimedia).

Effective pedagogical practices

- Staff are given opportunities to learn about effective pedagogy in the arts and multimedia. High priority is given to ensuring the arts and multimedia are valued and that high quality instruction and opportunities are available to all students.



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School-community partnerships

- WESS has established partnerships with families, local businesses and community organisations with the goal of improving student outcomes and opportunities in the arts and multimedia.
- WESS has a range of operating partnerships that are designed to enhance student knowledge and participation in the arts.
- The school's partnerships are successfully implemented, adequately resourced and sustainable. Many have been ongoing for a number of years. Partnerships are celebrated, via "Friends of WESS" community events.



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Australian Curriculum Implementation

WESS has had a strong focus on ensuring that effective teaching and learning is a priority across all curriculum areas. The School Strategic Plan team structure has allowed teachers to focus on improving teaching practice across all year levels. Curriculum delivery is enhanced through a range of projects across the school including Feedback for Learning, SMART goals and GR. Classrooms are calm, orderly and purposeful with a focus on learning.



Overview

Key Strategies	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the Australian Curriculum (English, Maths, Science, History, Geography) has continued using the Department of Education’s C2C (Curriculum into Classroom) units, Brisbane School of Distance Education units and EAL (English as a Second Language) units. Strong focus on core national and state priorities (English, Maths, Science and History) has been retained. For example, WESS’ strong focus on literacy across 2012-2015. (Refer to Reading Comprehension and Writing); ongoing STEM partnerships and Project 1:2:1 Numeracy intervention via ACBN partnership etc. The leadership team have clearly articulated and enacted a shared vision of pedagogical practice and systemic school-wide curriculum delivery, assessment and reporting procedures. These are linked to performance targets (e.g., reading targets). The structuring of the school teams across strategic priority areas has enabled staff to embed priorities across all year levels, including, differentiated instruction and assessment. This distributed leadership has allowed both vertical and horizontal knowledge flow both across SSP teams and across year level teams with a focus on pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. Collection and analysis of assessment data gives staff a clear direction that links data to targets and pedagogical practice. Both teachers and students use SMART goals (specific, measureable, attainable, results-oriented, time-bound) that are linked to units of work based on the Feedback for Learning project. Introduction of Global Languages program with 1.5 hours of either Greek, French, Japanese, Chinese or Academic English (for bilingual students). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant improvements in NAPLAN literacy data. Refer to Reading Comprehension and Writing outcomes. Teachers have a shared vision of expected pedagogical practice, curriculum delivery and assessment practices across the curriculum. This has been established via the school SSP team structures, professional development of staff, and collegial practices (e.g., grow your own coaches). Australian Curriculum (English, Maths, Science, History, Geography) continues to be delivered across the school. In the 2014 school opinion survey, 100% of teachers agreed that the school looks for ways to improve; and that students are encouraged to do their best. 96% of students said they are getting a good education. 99% said their teachers expect them to do their best and motivate them to learn. Play based project with QCAA NAPLAN data improvements

Reflections and Recommendations

WESS staff have worked to effectively implement the Australian curriculum. The involvement of all teachers in both year level teams and team focused on school Strategic Priorities has clearly supported the cross-flow of information to all teachers and resulted in an effective strategy for implementing change across the school.



Performance against National School Improvement Tool

Explicit improvement agenda

- The school's strategic planning documents and SSP team structure has led to a school wide focus on improving pedagogy, with particular attention given to core learning priorities.
- There is an optimistic commitment by staff to the SSP strategies, established over 4 years of working in SSP teams and reporting back to year level teams.
- The leadership team and teachers are strongly committed to improving student outcomes. For example, the school regularly uses evidence from research (e.g., Feedback for Learning project in collaboration with the University of Queensland) to drive improvement.

Analysis and discussion of data

- Data is used across the school to drive student improvements. This is a particular focus for core priorities (English, Maths, Science and History) with all teachers collecting and using data as per the school's assessment calendar. This data is also used by the leadership team to track cohort and individual achievement in core curriculum areas.

A culture that promotes learning

- WESS teachers and leaders have an expectation that every student will learn in every curriculum area. The SMART goals and Feedback for Learning projects link student goals to specific units of work to ensure all students value the culture of learning.
- Students are given multiple opportunities to participate in extension and extra-curricular activities.

Targeted use of school resources

- High priority is given to understanding and addressing learning needs across the curriculum. Data is used to ensure the effective use of resources enhances teaching in multiple curriculum areas (e.g., iPads for EALD classes).

An expert teaching team

- The leadership team have assembled and fostered and expert staff with very high levels of pedagogical and content knowledge across a range for curriculum areas from literacy to the arts.

Systematic curriculum delivery

- The school has a clearly documented whole-school plan for curriculum delivery (aligned with the Australian curriculum)
- Explicit planning of what (and when) teachers should teach and students should learn.
- The school has made significant progress in ensuring the continuity and progression of learning across the years of school through the collection of a range of data as required in the school's assessment calendar.

Differentiated teaching and learning

- Refer to [Differentiation](#).

Effective pedagogical practices

- The SSP team structure has enabled the school to ensure that a range of pedagogical practices (e.g., differentiated teaching and assessment; reading comprehension pedagogy; feedback for learning etc.) have been embedded across the school so that teachers are committed to improving pedagogical practice in all curriculum areas.
- High priority has been given to resourcing opportunities for staff to develop and implement effective pedagogical practice (e.g., feedback for learning, GR etc.)
- The prioritisation of effective teaching and learning at WESS is built around clear SMART goals and high expectations, effective feedback and explicit teaching of curriculum content.

School-community partnerships

- A sequenced school curriculum plan is available on the WESS school website to communicate curriculum intent to parents. Many teachers also communicate curriculum news (planning and implementation) regularly with parents (e.g., year level emails).



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Leadership

In addition to the five key priority areas, the WESS strategic plan 2012- 2015 included the aim of developing leadership across the school with an unrelenting focus on improvement. The school has developed effective partnerships with external organisations and invested heavily in professional development to support and build strong leadership practices at all levels in the school, including the school leadership team, teaching and non-teaching staff members and in the student body.

Overview

Key Strategies	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The structure, involving all classroom teachers as part of a year level team and an SSP team means that every teacher has some leadership responsibility to ensure that information flows horizontally (across year levels) and vertically (across SSP priority areas). • Substantial staff participation in the QUT/QELI 'Ethical Leadership in a context of data driven accountability' ARC Linkage project. This project has included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ School leadership team participating in regular meetings with leaders from other project schools. ○ Supporting leadership of school staff to develop and undertake action research projects, which included the development and implementation of the 'grow your own coaches' model. ○ Staff receiving targeted feedback from students using PoLT survey. • Principal regularly participates in leadership PD, including Metropolitan region coaching program, City cluster leadership program, Independent Public Schools Innovation program, QUT reference groups, Independent Public Schools Alliance • School participated in the 'Partners in Learning' mentoring programs with the Australian Business Community Network (ABCN). • In 2014, WESS developed new processes for the selection and support of student leaders with a focus on building their confidence and public speaking skills. New leadership roles, including the Environmental captain have been added. • The 'grow your own coaches' model has supported the training of expert teaching staff as coaches to lead professional development and implement changes throughout the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% Administrative Staff participating in leadership courses facilitated by the Australian Business and Community Network (ABCN) Fuji-Xerox partnership. • Student leaders attended the 2015 GRIP leadership conference and participate in the city cluster school leadership training and activities. • Over \$20,000 spent on leadership programs from 2012 – 2015, with substantial additional funds made available for staff release for coaching sessions, Developing Performance Reviews and PD.



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Reflections and Recommendations

The principal of WESS is highly regarded by her staff. She has developed, and maintains a continuous focus on developing, a strong team of teaching and non-teaching staff who are dedicated to improving the learning opportunities of all students. All staff members interviewed as part of this review and throughout the ARC linkage project shared a view of Judy Thompson as a highly energetic and strategic school leader. One area for consideration was that staff reported at times they did not always fully understand her vision for various strategies. Using the showcase event as an example, some staff members reported that at the outset of planning, they did not fully understand the vision for this event. Every staff member, however, reported a high level of trust in Judy's expertise, vision and planning. In working towards the goal, the ultimate vision became clear and was shared by staff. All staff members were extremely proud of the showcase event and immediately began planning ways to improve the event for the future.

The school is characterized by a high level of transparency and trust. Throughout their involvement in the ARC Linkage project and the process of this review, the principal has made all aspects of the school available for scrutiny. The research team has been encouraged to speak with staff members, both formally and informally, and conduct focus groups with students. Information drawn from discussions and interviews with staff and focus groups of students has been reported anonymously to school leaders. Any concerns raised in these discussions, such as student concerns about the use of worksheets in guided reading noted in 2014, have been promptly addressed by school staff.

The WESS leadership team have been well supported through professional development. There is a high level of distributed leadership among the leadership team. The Deputy Principals, Head of Curriculum, Master Teacher and the Program Managers, who lead the SSP teams, take on considerable leadership within the school.



School and Community Partnerships

The development of sustainable partnerships to enhance curriculum opportunities, student engagement and community involvement was one of the objectives of the WESS 2012 – 2015 strategic plan. Over this period, the school has developed numerous partnerships with other schools, universities, business and community groups to support curriculum opportunities, develop and implement new strategies for school improvement and to build close links with the local community. WESS works to meet the needs of the local community and is mindful of both the history and changing face of West End.

Overview

Key Strategies	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WESS has employed Linda Cupitt in the role of Community Partnerships Officer to ensure that community needs are central to decision making within the school and that the school is able to develop strong, sustainable partnerships with individuals and organisations. • WESS was a key partner in the QUT/QELI ‘Ethical Leadership in a context of data driven accountability’ ARC Linkage project. This has led to links with other project schools and to strengthened links with the ‘Buddy School’ Brisbane State High School. • WESS is an active member in the city cluster Schools and through this membership is engaged in a range of projects to extend curriculum opportunities, including the grade 3 & 4 Mini Scientists Project and the grade 5/6 High Achievers Project. The school is also engaged with the cluster to develop student leadership, through the city cluster school leadership training. • The principal has developed strong links with other Independent Public Schools in Queensland. • The school has links with the University of Queensland, through their Feedback4 Learning project with Cameron Brooks. Members of the school are working to establish an ongoing relationship with Prof. John Hattie. • WESS has an ongoing relationship with the Kurilpa Futures group to engage in discussions about how to best meet the changing needs of the community in West End and South Brisbane. • There is a strong P&C and School Council at WESS, which enable parents and community members to have input into the strategic directions of the school. • Parents and members of the local community are actively invited to participate as partners in the education of their children. The Showcase event is one example of this engagement. The school also offers a weekly ‘Swim Club’, which has established WESS as a community hub. Parents and the community are also welcomed to participate in school events, including the annual WESS Art Show. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WESS has developed sustainable partnerships with a range of organisations, including (but not limited to): Australian Business Community Network Brisbane School of Distance Education Brisbane State High School CSIRO DET City Cluster eLearning Branch Fuji Xerox GOMA Griffith University Independent Public Schools Alliance Kurilpa Futures Metropolitan Region Queensland Academies Queensland Studies Authority QUT South Brisbane Institute of Technology State Library of Queensland Surf Lifesaving of Queensland University of Queensland

Reflections and Recommendations

The school is actively involved in a broad range of partnerships to effectively utilise the resources available to them in central Brisbane. Partnerships with universities, the metropolitan cluster and the Australian Business Community Network are used to develop the professional practices of all staff. Other local partnerships support the enrichment of student learning and the extensive links that the school has developed with the local community.