

# Narrabundah Early Childhood School Annual Action Plan Report 2017

Throughout the scope of the latest Strategic Plan, Narrabundah Early Childhood School has spent time working collaboratively with the school community to review the initial school philosophy and to develop a vision and mission statement. Throughout this process it was imperative that we captured the strong focus on relationships and the integrated service delivery of the school that encompasses pre-birth to work with adults.

Our school is a learning community that highly values life-long learning and facilitates excellence in student achievement. Our practices focus on enabling all stakeholders to demonstrate our motto: **'Learning Excellence'**.

## Philosophy

Respectful relationships form the basis of all interactions at Narrabundah Early Childhood School. We believe in forming genuine partnerships with families and across services in the learning, care and development of children. At NECS we believe that enrolling a child means enrolling a family.

## Vision

At NECS we work collaboratively to provide a secure foundation for a community of lifelong learners that enables all members to reach their potential in all aspects of their life.

## Mission

Our mission is to create secure, solid foundations from which a lifelong love of learning, curiosity, creativity, and innovation enables the development of compassionate citizens under the umbrella of respect for country, self, family, community and others.

Narrabundah Early Childhood School (NECS) was opened on the site of the former Narrabundah Primary School which was closed in 2008. NECS does not have a PEA. In the formative years there were a number of out of area enrolments. This has changed significantly with the majority of enrolments being from within the local area. The demographics of the school have changed to reflect the changing demographics of the suburb. Enrolments have continued to grow steadily each year and we are maintaining more enrolments at the preschool – kindergarten transition point. As yet we have not reached the minimal requirements of eighty children from kindergarten to year two for our student resource funding allocation stages of school weighting of \$5,711 per student. This means we receive less funding K-2 than other schools. We are one of two schools within the ACT Education Directorate to have a funded three year old preschool. This program is over-subscribed every year. Enrolments into this program are managed in accordance with

preschool enrolment guidelines. Our Koori preschool has seen significant growth and has been full for the past three years with a waiting list.

## Methodology

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2017 was a significant year for the school and the end of the 2014 – 2017 School Plan. This was celebrated through an external review process where we had the opportunity to share the journey we had been on and the evidence we had to support our work across all nine domains in achieving our priorities.

A small school improvement committee operated. Throughout the duration of the plan this committee had significant challenges in maintaining consistency due to significant changes in staff. Despite these changes the school maintained its focus on the key priorities and successfully documented the journey towards achieving these and ensuring this was an integral part of everyone's work.

We ensured all staff were provided with opportunities to engage in the school improvement agenda and were familiar with the National School Improvement Tool (NSIT). In working with all staff clear links were made between our school improvement agenda and performance documents where goals were aligned to our priorities. In 2017 we introduced Narrabundah Children's Council (NCC). NCC met once a week and provided a platform for our children to become actively involved in decision making and contributing towards the strategic direction of our school.

Progressing the school improvement agenda has become everyone's business. Clear links between our priorities and how these relate to the roles and responsibilities of every staff member have ensured this has been an integral part of all the work we do. In professional pathways and performance plans, staff have used the identified priorities to guide the development of their own goals to reflect the work they do each day and ensure we are all worked collaboratively to reach our targets. Our priorities were reported on in our newsletter, P & C and School Board meetings. Our staff meetings once a term also celebrated the progress we made towards achieving our targets.

The National School Improvement Tool (NSIT) was utilized throughout the period of this plan. All staff were introduced to the NSIT and participated in identifying where the school was currently performing and collected evidence to support this. During School Review the reviewer's reflection on where the school was currently operating mirrored that of the staff with total congruence. In addition to the NSIT we used the National Safe Schools Framework tool to audit where we are and support the planning of our future direction. Throughout this plan we have participated in the Assessment and Rating process twice. In both instances the preschool was rated as 'Exceeding the National Quality Benchmark' across all seven areas. We continue to look for ways in which we can further strengthen our practice in the preschool and kindergarten to year two learning spaces.

### Priority

#### ***Priority 1: Improve literacy and numeracy outcomes***

### Targets

- 5% increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children achieving A & B grade in English and Mathematics from 2015.
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- Increase children achieving ACT ETD reading benchmarks by 5% from the 2015 results.
- Increase the number of children who achieve at and above expected growth in literacy and numeracy component of PIPs assessment by 5% from the 2015 results.

### Progress

- The percentage of students achieving expected growth in PIPS reading has remained constant from 84% in 2016 to 83% in 2017. A decline of 1%.
- The percentage of students achieving expected growth in PIPS maths has increased from 73% in 2016 to 93% in 2017.
- 47% of students in years one and two were awarded A and B grades
- Our results for children who identify as of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin demonstrate that whilst there were improvements in the academic performance of these children, no A or B grades were awarded.

A comprehensive action plan has supported us in achieving our priority to improve the literacy and numeracy outcomes of our children. This work encompassed five of the domains from within the National School Improvement Tool.

#### **Develop a culture of analysis and discussion of data**

Developing a culture of analysis and discussion of data has been a significant shift that has enabled staff to understand where each child is at and to plan effectively for the next step in each child's learning. The development of a formal assessment and reporting schedule has enabled a systematic process where the same data is being collected across the school. We have embedded the practice of at least one meeting each term that focuses on data analysis as part of our PLC structure. There are links between what the data is telling us and programs that have been developed to support continued growth and learning. At the beginning of the year we interrogated our PIPS data and the data we have received from our children who have completed NAPLAN as a whole school. This has enabled us to identify

trends and to determine if modifications needed to be made to programs to adequately address the needs of our children. Narrabundah Acceleration Program (NAP) that utilizes volunteers to work 1:1 with selected children to support their learning has been an effective intervention to support this work. In addition to growth in reading this program provided significant gains for children in their confidence and social skills. This year we have been able to provide small group targeted teaching to selected children K-2. This has also supported improved reading outcomes for the children participating in the program. Integrating NAP and our intervention program to have a deeper focus on sharing data will be a focus for 2018. Staff meet with executive twice a year to share information about the children in their class. This has enabled executive to gain a comprehensive understanding of all children in each group and to identify if any additional supports or interventions are required to support the learning of our children.

### **Develop a culture that promotes learning**

When reflecting on our second key improvement strategy to **develop a culture that promotes learning** we have ensured our professional learning team meetings have continued to incorporate rich learning focused on high expectations and a consistent approach to the delivery of curriculum across the school. Part of this strategy has involved staff working collaboratively to develop integrated units of inquiry and social and emotional learning. Staff also delivered workshops for families focused on supporting literacy in the home. This year our Learning Journeys also have a specific learning focus including literacy in the early years, numeracy in the early years and science in the early years. To support this work staff have worked collaboratively to develop publications on Science in Early Childhood, Mathematics in Early Childhood and Bush School.

### **Develop an expert teaching team**

In respect to our key improvement strategy, **develop an expert teaching team**, we have focused on introducing a supportive approach to observing practice and receiving feedback. All staff are observed at least once during the year and provided with written feedback from their executive team leader. This is aligned to key priorities in our Annual Action Plan. We have built on previous approaches and incorporated new learning to ensure a valuable approach is utilized that supports the building of capacity for all staff. In 2017 our approach has involved a more comprehensive format aligned to the AITSL teacher standards. Feedback around this approach has indicated that staff feel supported and had a focus for future observations. In 2017 the leadership team have worked closely with Red Hill School to explore peer coaching. We are utilizing elements of this approach in our current coaching program. This needs to become an embedded practice within the school.

## **Develop an innovative and relevant curriculum**

When reflecting on our fourth key strategy, to **deliver an innovative and relevant curriculum**, our staff worked collaboratively to build on the documentation that was produced in earlier years.

A display was created in the foyer articulating the learning areas within the Australian Curriculum and expectations for each grade level to support families in understanding the learning across areas for each year level. As part of this work we also produced a display in our hallway leading to the kindergarten to year two learning areas around reading levels and expectations mid-year and at the end of the year for each year level. Parents commented that this was useful for them to ascertain how their child was going in relation to grade appropriate expectations. The introduction of 'Classroom Connections' each term has been a positive step in promoting the learning happening in classrooms and strengthen parent-school communication.

For the fourth year NECS has offered Bush School. Our Bush School program has expanded to include children from three year old preschool to year two. It provides an opportunity for children and their families to engage in rich learning experiences outside of the school and within the natural environment. Students spend one day during Term 3 or 4 at Bush School. It is held at different locations around the ACT. As a result of Bush School we have seen an increase in student engagement and learning outcomes linked to reading, art, science, mathematics, writing and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).

Significant work has occurred in documenting our approach to curriculum to create a consistent approach across our K-2 classes. This has also included a statement regarding learning intentions and success criteria in early childhood. This will be a continued focus in 2018.

## **Ensure differentiation of teaching and learning is across the school**

In respect to our fifth strategy, to **ensure differentiation of teaching and learning is across the school** we used Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely (SMART) goals for students with ILPs and PLPs. Our Disability Education Partner has provided ongoing support for staff around the development of SMART goals with the use of the adjustment matrix. The use of the matrix has helped teachers to determine more specific, measurable and achievable goals for students requiring the support of an ILP or PLPs. With a significant number of students across the school requiring an ILPs or PLPs to support their learning, the development of SMART goals has helped to increase the rate of achievement of identified goals.

Narrabundah Acceleration Program (NAP) was introduced in term 1, 2016. This has been a successful program in supporting the acceleration of children. NAP is a program designed to

provide targeted intervention for children who have been assessed as performing above or below benchmark for their age cohort. All children in NAP have an ILP with clearly identified goals that have been developed in consultation with their families / carers. Children are identified to participate in NAP by their classroom teacher. This is done through a range of ongoing classroom assessments.

NAP involves children participating in an individualised program on a regular basis. Each term the NAP team meets to identify children who will benefit from participation in this program. Some children may receive extended support whilst others may only participate for a short period of time. During 2017 twelve volunteers supported the implementation of this program. Volunteers committed to working for at least one hour each week and receive intensive training to ensure they are confident to support the work they are doing.

### **Embed effective pedagogical practice across the school**

In relation to our key improvement strategy of **embed effective pedagogical practice across the school** we have focused on building staff capacity through exploring best practice in literacy through our professional learning team meetings.

Our partnership with Real Schools has also enabled staff to engage in rich feedback around specific elements of their programs. The focus for most classes during 2017 has been around Circle Time and working with children who have difficult and/or challenging behaviours. Specific feedback was provided to staff from the consultant based on rich discussion with staff and observations. In 2017 we have progressed the coaching approach with a focus on teacher practice aligned to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) professional standards. The executive teacher responsible for leading each team has spent time observing and providing feedback to staff in their team. We have participated with Red Hill School in a peer coaching program. This involves staff finding a peer to work with, deciding on a focus and then a fifteen minute observation occurring in which data is collected around the focus. This data is presented to the person being observed and a conversation around the data enables robust discussion about what the data is saying and supports future planning around this. Further work around embedding this as a whole school approach is required.

## Priority

### **Priority 2: Develop sustainable systems and practices to support the Early Childhood school setting**

#### Targets

- Increase the proportion of children who continue their education to preschool and beyond by 10%
- Achieve a rating in National Quality Assessment of Meeting National Quality Benchmark across QA3, QA6 and QA7

#### Progress

- Enrolments from preschool to kindergarten have continued to increase.
- The school was rated in July 2016 for the second time as exceeding the National Quality Standard in all seven areas :  
<http://www.acecqa.gov.au/NQAITS/SearchServices.aspx?vm=1&keywords=Narrabundah&state=act> .

Our work in this area focused on the National Safe Schools Framework and two of the domains of the National School Improvement tool:

#### **Enhance the school's environment and culture to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children**

In response to the declining satisfaction survey data a major focus over the last two and a half years has been on ensuring documentation has been developed to support new staff to the school to understand how we design and develop programs at the school and our approach to managing student behaviour. We introduced a restorative practices approach to behaviour management in 2015, developed our promoting positive partnerships procedure in 2016 and developed our signature behaviours and related processes and procedures in 2017. The introduction of an online student referral has also enabled us to gather data around student behaviour and analyse this to make adjustments to support our students and staff. We began our journey into *Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL)* in 2017 and will continue to focus on our work in this area. The introduction of school improvement teams to work on areas within the annual action plan has supported our improvement agenda.

In 2016 we participated in the TRUST project. Recommendations from the senior psychologist in collaboration with the Network Student Engagement Team (NSET), have supported the introduction of a number of school initiatives to support the building of a productive school culture. The introduction of our Morning Gatherings has enabled us to

build a consistent whole school approach where we have the opportunity to welcome everyone, do an emotional check-in, share notices and celebrate achievements. In 2017 our awards have been linked to our signature behaviours. As this has become an embedded practice we reduced our morning gatherings to two days a week. These gatherings have been successful in building a positive school culture and promoted our school signature behaviours.

NECS recognizes and values the importance of staff health and wellbeing as a major contributing factor in developing a mentally healthy school and is essential for effective teaching and learning to occur. In 2017 the school recognized the decline in staff satisfaction. A Staff Health and Wellbeing plan was developed to ensure there is a planned and deliberate focus on this area. In addition one of the four areas that our roles and responsibilities are broken into is Health and Wellbeing. Part of this area focuses on staff health and wellbeing.

Sustainability has been a major focus for the past year. We introduced Trash Free Tuesday and have been analyzing the amount of waste collected each day. An award (the green waste truck) is presented to the class that has demonstrated the best practices in this area each week at our Friday morning gathering. Our Friday morning gathering is focused on sustainable practices. Stories, songs, videos, games and other activities are an integral part of this. Our focus on this area has resulted in a Waste Strategy being created and us receiving our first accreditation in this area. Our Worm Farm was installed in term 3 to further embed sustainable practices across the school, with our year one and two children taking responsibility for collecting the scraps each day and depositing these in the bins provided. Our second focus was on reducing our Energy consumption and ensuring we had sustainable practices. We have completed an Energy audit and received our accreditation in Energy during term 3. During term 4 we participated in the Eco Bus Tour. Four children and two staff members accompanied staff to three schools to We will continue to work towards accreditation in all 5 areas.

### **Embed an explicit school agenda across the school**

A number of initiatives have been put in place to support increasing our enrolments from preschool to kindergarten. Our *Learning journeys* have been aligned to a specific learning area. Publications have been developed on Bush School, Science and Mathematics in Early Childhood to reflect our approach to teaching in these areas and shared with families. Information Evenings are held for parents and carers of preschool children to showcase NECS beyond preschool. We have established a marketing and publicity working group to support taking our preschool families beyond the preschool rooms. Part of this has involved the rebadging of our school with a new logo. A new handbook was also created and published for distribution to families who attended our end of year information evening. We exceeded our target of a 5% increase of the proportion of children retained from



preschool to kindergarten. We are committed to maintaining or improving this retention rate and working towards our goal to have more than eighty children enrolled from K-2 to facilitate an increase in our Student Resource Allocation funding (SRA) for K-2 in the next two to three years.

Our preschool programs have been assessed twice as part of the National Quality Framework Assessment and Rating process. In both instances we received the highest rating - 'Exceeding National Quality Standard'

### **Enhance school and community partnerships**

Narrabundah Early Childhood School has always developed and promoted strong community partnerships. NECS is fortunate to have a Community Coordinator employed at the school providing a range of activities and initiatives to support children's learning and engage and support families raising young children in partnership with government and non-government organisations.

The school has a range of partnerships, each carefully planned and designed to enhance student outcomes. The partnership between the school and Woden Community Service is in response to the high need for targeted support for 'at risk' families and children. The school partners with the Smith Family Learning for Life program to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged children. The school-community partnership between the school and Australian Red Cross and Communities@Work provides a healthy breakfast to ensure children are ready to learn. School Volunteer Program ACT offers trained volunteers working with students one-to-one in activities such as literacy and numeracy. Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre Growing Healthy Families program supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities. Sporting schools partnership provides students' kindergarten to Year 2 the opportunity to participate in a range of sporting activities including soccer, gymnastics, orienteering and the Buoyed-Up program - a sailing program for Year 2 children. Fresh Tastes partnership helps the school make healthy food and drinks a bigger part of everyday life for children at NECS.

The Community Coordinator works with government and non-government organisations to provide a range of activities and initiatives to support children's learning and engage and support families raising young children. Initiatives for children and their parents include: Move and Groove music program; Storytime; Paint and Play Saturday, Community Breakfast; parenting programs including COS-P; UR FaB and BUGKs, transition to school programs and health and nutrition initiatives. Initiatives for children preschool to Year 2 including Narrabundah Acceleration Program (NAP); Lunchtime Enrichment Activity Program (LEAP); Sporting Schools; Music in the classroom; Fresh Tastes; Narrabundah Individual Personal Pursuit program (NIPP). We have celebrated our strong focus and achievements in this area most recently through receiving an award for our partnership with Woden Community Services, the production of a short video clip by ACT Health around our Growing

Healthy Families cooking program (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZfcQaprwC0> )and the publication of our work with families in 'In Their Words – ACT Schools Share their Parent Engagement Practice' June 2017 by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth.