Peer Review Report

Dixons Creek Primary School
North Eastern Region

Department of Education and
Early Childhood Development

State Government Victoria

School number:	1585
Principal:	Sharon Walker
School Council President:	Mark Hull
Review Company:	Radii Org
Accredited School Reviewer:	Darrell Mullins
Peers:	Kay Rowe
	Bec Marley
Date of Review Meeting:	21/08/2014

FEEDBACK VERSION

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1. Executive Summary

Over the course of the last strategic plan Dixons Creek Primary School made impressive gains in student achievement and was determined in its endeavour to provide a safe and stimulating learning environment for their students. This was achieved with student population growing from 52 to 104 over this time and associated challenges to accommodate the learning needs of all students and engaging new students in the learning environment in place at Dixons Creek. The panel acknowledged that this ever-changing cohort, with many students entering the school at a wide range in achievement levels, some with significant behavioural issues, had the capacity to impact negatively on the high level of student achievement and high expectations that were well established. In addition the school had to make significant changes in class structures to accommodate the growth in student population.

The school met these challenges and was successful in achieving pleasing results for student achievement. In VELS /AusVELS generally 90- 100% of students were at or above expected levels across the school. The NAPLAN results for Literacy and Numeracy for year 3 and year 5 were above state mean with a high proportion of students working well above expected levels. The school was able to demonstrate strong relative growth in NAPLAN from year 3 to 5 across both domains and in all dimensions with students above state mean in the high growth cohort. Most students demonstrated growth in learning and those with specific needs and challenging behaviours made individual gains.

Dixons Creek had mixed success for student engagement and well being. The student survey variables for wellbeing and teaching and learning remained high over the planning period. However for student relationships, classroom behaviour and student morale were not to same high levels. The school has addressed this and successfully implemented a wide ranging curriculum .They encouraged student involvement in their learning and the development of individual learning styles and promoted student choice and voice and digital technologies. The school committed to an inclusive school program and students with specific needs were provided with teaching programs and specialist support.

In consideration for the terms of reference the following outcomes resulted from the panel reflection on performance and recommendations for improvement.

- Indications are that current structures within the school are supporting students in making good progress achieve expected outcomes in Mathematics. However the data analysis indicates improvement tapers from years 4- 6. It was recommended the school focus on better equipping teachers with strategies through professional learning and develop a whole school scope and sequence for numeracy to further strengthen student performance.
- With the growing student population and an increase in the number of classes it was agreed there was a need to make better use of data to inform teachers to differentiate the curriculum, improve internal accountability and assist teacher moderation of student performance. This should include the development of a whole school curriculum plan as a means to improve student outcomes.
- In considering the need to further develop ICT the panel acknowledged the work done in introducing the iPad program and was in agreement there was to need increase staff capacity in particular through peer mentoring for the use of ICT and integrating this across student learning. In support the school would develop a whole school scope and sequence for digital learning.
- To address well being issues and catering for students with specific needs it was considered that ILPs should better reflect relative growth gains. To improve outcomes for classroom behaviour and

student safety the school would also introduce whole school approaches to behaviour management and include professional learning to better equip teachers to meet the demands of challenging behaviours.

- With the rapid growth in the school community and to promote prep enrolment the panel agreed Dixons Creek revisit their vision and values statement in developing an informative website to document the schools success.

The following recommendations are the outcome of panel day discussions:

	Panel recommendation
Achievement	To improve student learning outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy, particularly in strengthening Numeracy skills in the 3-6 area. - To build teachers capacity to collaboratively use data to analyse student achievement and teach at the point of need. - To build teacher capacity through targeting professional development and the development of whole school approaches in the teaching of literacy and numeracy
Engagement	To strengthen students motivation and commitment to actively involve themselves in their learning and understand how they learn - To enhance student motivation through the use of ICT - To revisit the vision and values of Dixons Creek Primary School
Wellbeing	To strengthen the provision of a safe, supportive, orderly, inclusive and stimulating learning environment for the school community - To develop a whole school approach to improve student morale, learning confidence and learning environment through teacher professional development in the management of student behaviour and classroom climate
Productivity	To align the schools human, physical, and financial resources with the schools strategic intent. - Revisit the school workforce plan, including the role of a teaching principal - Raising staff awareness of the need for an understanding of the relationship between the SRP and the school strategic plan

2. Context

Dixons Creek Primary School is a small rural school of 104 students located in the Yarra Valley on the Melba Highway 9 kilometres north of Yarra Glen. Dixons Creek has no township as such. The school attracts enrolments from Dixons Creek, Steels Creek, Yarra Glen, Castella and Kinglake. During the review period enrolments have grown from 54 students in 2010 to 104 students in 2014. Dixons Creek has an SFO of 0.7708.

The rapid growth meant the staff faced challenges to resource new classrooms, initiate and mentor graduate staff and deal with the complexities of high needs children. *'During the period of the last 'School Strategic Plan,' the school's enrolment has nearly doubled in size. The work entailed in managing this process has been time consuming in relation to: staffing, resourcing, policy development, grounds/building maintenance, parent satisfaction and student behaviour. Managing the change process needed to support this growth cannot be underestimated.' (School Self Evaluation,* SSE p 5.)

It is an integral part of the local community and there is a great deal of community support for the school with a number of community groups being actively engaged in a variety of school activities. This school's vision is to provide a comprehensive inclusive curriculum that engages children and develops their independent learning skills, resilience, self-esteem and social responsibilities. Mutual respect underpins their values education. Staff model caring for others and show children how to work together in teams that value each and every individual.

The school has six classes housed in double classrooms that serve as learning units – Prep and Year 1, Years 2 and 3, Years 4-6. There are six full time teachers, including the principal who teaches a Year 3 class. There are three specialist teachers and five education support staff to assist with administration and the delivery of individual learning programs. All classrooms have interactive whiteboards, iPads available, and a high computer /student ratio. ICT is an integral part of the teaching and learning program therefore computers are located in the classrooms not in isolated banks.

The curriculum is structured according to AusVELS with many units of work delivered by an Integrated Curriculum approach. Lessons are planned to actively involve students in exploration and research. Students who fall below the expected level of achievement have individual learning programs and special tuition with an intervention teacher or assistant. The school offers a Reading Recovery program for identified students. Two education support staff members are trained in the use of a literacy support program that is implemented in the Years Prep to 2.

All children receive a weekly thirty minute lesson in Indonesian. The Year 3-6 children have access to a specialised sporting program that includes cross country skiing, athletics, rafting, orienteering, table tennis, archery, golf and football. Prep to Year 2 children may participate in the school's swimming program.

3. Terms of Reference

Aim / purpose

The aim of the Peer Review is to provide an analysis and insight into Dixons Creek Primary School's progress towards improvement targets and provide a foundation for the next level of improvement.

The Peer Review will address the school's performance related to student achievement, engagement, wellbeing and productivity and the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) minimum standards.

It was evident through discussions with the school leadership and explicit in the Dixons Creek Primary School Self School Self Evaluation within the context of school improvement a number of key foundations are in place alongside strategies to lead to improved student outcomes.   It was further evident that the school has clearly identified factors that maybe inhibiting progress and articulated opportunities for future success in student achievement, engagement and wellbeing.

Within this framework after consideration of the school's self-assessment and analysis of school data sets, the Peer Review will focus on the following questions/key issues identified:

To investigate the effectiveness of current teaching practice in Mathematics and its impact upon student learning in Years 4-6.

How effective is the current teaching practice in Mathematics and what is its impact upon student learning in Years 4-6?

How effective have the schools' programs been to engage the students in their own learning through ICT?

 How effective has the school been in the use of data to inform teaching practice, measure their effectiveness and to build internal accountability to improve student learning particularly in Mathematics and Grammar?

How effective have the school's practices been in the development of Individual Learning Plans that address relative growth gains,-do these successfully differentiate the curriculum to cater for the diverse needs of students and to demonstrate student achievement gains?

How has Dixons Creek Primary School been able to form and maintain connections with its own community in particular through the use of the school website and other school partners in order to improve student learning?

. Methodology

The Review will comprise a   pre-visit to include negotiation and design of the Terms of Reference, and to view school classrooms and teaching practice.

The principal will chair the review panel, with the reviewer facilitating the preview process. Leadership and teaching staff will be present as required to provide a broad school perspective. Students and parent will be invited to provide input into the process with the school council president present on panel day.

Peer principals have been selected for their expertise relevant to Dixons Creek Primary School's needs and with a perspective of pedagogy of the school, and the educational environment.

Dixons Creek Primary School has allocated a Review budget to cater for the formal processes for a Pre visit and Review day in addition to budgeting for time release and CRT replacement for the panel day. Additional time has been allocated for consultation with stake holders and for the presentation of the school self evaluation as a result of the consultative process

Table 1: Timeline for the review

Date	Activity	Resources	Action officer
05/6/14	Self evaluation sent to reviewer Data sets forwarded to Reviewer inc: ✓ Surveys ✓ Student achievement ✓ Annual reports ✓ SSP ✓ AIP	Time allocation – admin Consultation process	Principal Admin support
17/06/14	Briefing to staff on upcoming review. Principal and Reviewer addressed staff re input and role in review process	Time allocation	Principal.
23/06/14	Terms of reference established for Review. To be signed off by school council president.	Pre review meeting	Principal SC president
24/6/14	PAG meeting Discuss terms of reference and review day agenda Participation in reviews and surveys	Normal meeting Admin support to aggregate survey data	Principal Admin support Teachers/staff to complete survey
31/7/14	Peer Review Day	CRT release Students released Admin support SC president available	Principal (Chair) Reviewer Peer Reviewers Key staff SC President Student leaders
21/8/14	Presentation to staff	Staff meeting time	Principal Staff Reviewer
25/8/14	Presentation to school council	School council meeting	Principal Reviewer SC
01/9/14	Submission of report	Sufficient writing time inc draft versions and opportunities for Principal input	Reviewer

Accredited school reviewer   **Company**

Darrell Mullins   Radii Org

4. Evaluation of Performance

	Panel view of school performance	Panel Recommendations for improvement
Achievement: Achievement refers to both the absolute levels of learning attainment and growth in student learning that schools strive to support. While recognising that literacy and numeracy are essential foundations for students' success, achievement outcomes encompass a broader view of learning, spanning the full range of curriculum domains, as well as students' co-curricular achievements.	The Panel is in agreement that Dixons Creek Primary School was successful in improving student achievement outcomes over the course of the strategic plan. • The school shows strong evidence of cohort growth across literacy and numeracy in NAPLAN data. NAPLAN Data for years 3 and 5 were above state means and equating to like schools. In general, the Year 3 growth was better in both domains. Overall, performance in literacy was better than performance in numeracy. • NAPLAN demonstrated a wide range of abilities with high achieving students in all domains. It was also evident that a small number of students were facing challenges in improving achievement outcomes. • Teacher assessment against AusVELS did not reflect NAPLAN results. • Following the Early Years of Schooling Literacy Program has been beneficial • There is a well-structured and resourced Early Years Literacy Program	The Panel recommends the school focus on the following areas: • Improve performance in Mathematics through Teacher Professional Development • Develop a whole school Scope and Sequence for Mathematics • Review current teaching strategies, particularly in numeracy • Improve teacher moderation, within the school and amongst other local schools • Make more efficient and effective use of data in order to better reflect student abilities and inform teaching • Team responsibility to examine all 'Individual Learning Plans' (ILP's) monthly • Team responsibility to regularly examine student achievement, track progress and provide appropriate intervention at least monthly

	• Parents are invited to partake in a Parent Literacy Program that supports them in assisting children with reading and writing • The school has resourced a range of Literacy Intervention Programs to support at risk students – tutoring, Levelled Literacy Intervention, modified Reading Recovery • Teachers took part in a Lyn Watt's Writing PD	• Develop a Whole School Curriculum Plan
Engagement: Engagement refers to the extent to which students feel connected to and engaged in their learning and with the broader school community. Engagement spans students' motivation to learn, as well as their active involvement in learning. Engagement also refers to students engagement as they make critical transitions through school and beyond into further education and work.	The Panel is in agreement that the school has successfully gauged student engagement. The rapid growth has produced challenges that the school has been meeting. Teaching and learning is a particular strength of Dixons Creek PS. *Due to the number of student enrolments at all grade levels the school has provided programs to assist the growth of these students.* • Teacher empathy and understanding of students is a strength of the school • There has been an emphasis on hands on/inquiry based learning • The school has provided additional Literacy and Numeracy Intervention Programs for students at risk • The staff utilise iPads and other digital technologies to engage students • The school has invested considerable funds in ICT, with Interactive Whiteboards and a large number of computers in each room to aids skills consolidation and engage students	The Panel recommend that the school focus on : • Aligning staff PRP's with school priorities • Developing a Scope and Sequence for ICT • Strengthen the use of ICT across student engagement in their learning • Staff would benefit from increasing their knowledge and use of ICT through a Mentoring Program • To improve student leadership within the 5/6 student cohort

Wellbeing:	The Panel is in agreement that the school has faced significant challenges whilst still actively promoting student wellbeing.	The Panel is in agreement that the school needs to:
Students' health, safety and wellbeing are essential to learning and development. An inclusive, safe, orderly and stimulating environment for learning is critical to achieving and sustaining students' positive learning experiences.	• The school has implemented programs to improve the feeling of positivity and wellbeing in the school, e.g. Student awards, regular communication in the newsletter. • Staff constantly/ consistently address student wellbeing • The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities to stimulate student wellbeing • There has been strong ES support to support student learning • The school has developed ILIP's to assist students • The school has developed individual behaviour management plans • The school developed a benchmark for the standards expected in each classroom in relation to ideal Teaching, Student Learning and Classroom Expectations The panel agreed that the school needs to continue to address student wellbeing and safety.	• Readdress the schools 'Student Engagement and Wellbeing' policy. • Work to ensure that the School's Teaching and Learning Expectation document is integrated thoroughly into school processes • All staff attending 'Managing Difficult Student Behaviour' professional development sessions • Develop and integrate a whole school mental health program • Better communication of school policies in relation to student engagement and wellbeing to the school community • To redevelop the school website in order to engage the school community and potential future families
Productivity: Productivity refers to the effective allocation and use of	The Panel is in agreement that the school successfully prioritises allocation of resources.	The Panel is in agreement that the school needs to:

resources, supported by evidence and adapted to the unique contexts of each school.

Successful productivity outcomes exist when a school uses its resources – people, time, space, funding, facilities, community expertise, professional learning, class structures, timetables, individual learning plans and facilities – to the best possible effect and in the best possible combination to support improved student outcomes and achieve its goals and targets.

- To ensure the ongoing effective allocation of teaching resources, the Panel is in agreement that the school has to readdress the allocation of staff.

- The school has provided sufficient support and resources to staff.

- The School has had success with local fundraising. The school has had a long term vision that has included the future need for the integration of ICT throughout the school and the aim of keeping class sizes small.

- The school has a high level of ES staffing to support staff and student needs.

- Revisit the role of a teaching principal

- Continue to direct funding to the Schools strategic intent – Behaviour, Numeracy

- Improve staff awareness of the importance of workforce planning and SRP in terms of classroom resources

5. Registration Requirements: Summary Statement

MINIMUM STANDARD		Has the school met the standard?			
1.	**SCHOOL GOVERNANCE STANDARDS**				
1.1	Democratic principles	*Evidence provided by DEECD – ETR 2006*			
1.2	Structure	*Evidence provided by DEECD – ETR 2006*			
1.3	Philosophy	Yes		No ❑	
1.4	Not-for-profit status	*Evidence provided by DEECD – ETR 2006*			
2.	**ENROLMENT STANDARDS**				
2.1	Student enrolment numbers	*Evidence provided to DEECD via CASES21*			
2.2	Enrolment policy **(Specialist and Specific Purpose schools ONLY)**	Yes ❑		No ❑	
		N/A ❑			
2.3	Register of enrolments	*Evidence provided to DEECD via CASES21*			
3.	**CURRICULUM AND STUDENT LEARNING STANDARDS**				
3.1	Curriculum framework	Yes ☑		No ❑	
3.2	Student learning outcomes	Yes ☑		No ❑	
3.3	Monitoring and reporting on students' performance	*Evidence provided to DEECD via CASES 21*			
4.	**STUDENT WELFARE STANDARDS**				
4.1(a)	Care, safety and welfare of students – *(i) Student Welfare*	Yes ☑		No ❑	
4.1(a)	Care, safety and welfare of students – *(ii) Student Safety*	Yes ☑		No ❑	
4.1(a)	Care, safety and welfare of students – *(iii) Student Care*	Yes ☑		No ❑	
4.1(a)	Care, safety and welfare of students – *(iv) Additional Evidence*	Yes ☑		No ❑	
4.1(b)	Care, safety and welfare of students – Emergency Bushfire Management	Yes ☑		No ❑	
4.2	Student discipline	Yes ☑		No ❑	
4.3	Attendance monitoring	*Evidence provided to DEECD via CASES21*			
4.4	Attendance register	*Evidence provided to DEECD via CASES21*			
5.	**STAFF EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS**				
5.1	Teachers' requirements	Yes ☑		No ❑	
5.2	Compliance with the *Working with Children Act 2005*	Yes ☑		No ❑	
6.	**SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE STANDARDS**				
6.1	Buildings, facilities and grounds	*Evidence provided to DEECD via Infrastructure Audit*			
6.2	Educational facilities	*Evidence provided to DEECD via Infrastructure Audit*			
7.	**OTHER REQUIREMENTS**				
7.1	Information about school performance	Yes ☑		No ❑	
8.	**STANDARDS FOR SCHOOLS OFFERING A SENIOR SECONDARY QUALIFICATION**				
8.1	Student learning outcomes **(Secondary schools ONLY)**	Yes ❑		No ❑	
8.2	Student records and results **(Secondary schools ONLY)**	Yes ❑		No ❑	
8.3	Student welfare **(Secondary schools ONLY)**	Yes ❑		No ❑	
8.4	Teaching and learning **(Secondary schools ONLY)**	Yes ❑		No ❑	

Signature of Reviewer: _____ Date: 21 /08 /2014

Name of Reviewer:　　　　Darrell Mullins