

Woodberry Learning Centre Annual Report

2018



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Introduction

The Annual Report for **2018** is provided to the community of Woodberry Learning Centre as an account of the school's operations and achievements throughout the year.

It provides a detailed account of the progress the school has made to provide high quality educational opportunities for all students, as set out in the school plan. It outlines the findings from self-assessment that reflect the impact of key school strategies for improved learning and the benefit to all students from the expenditure of resources, including equity funding.

Nancy Snow

Principal

School contact details

Woodberry Learning Centre

Cnr Woodberry Rd & Lawson Ave

Woodberry, 2322

www.woodbrylc-s.schools.nsw.edu.au

woodbrylc-s.school@det.nsw.edu.au

4964 1473

Message from the Principal

As 2018 draws to a close, we look back over the year. It has been quite a different year for us at WLC. We had more year 8 students and more female students than ever before. This can have its disadvantages in that the physical differences can be quite substantial from 29 – 70kgs and 120–175cms and the level of maturity as our kids are maturing at a much faster rate these days. We often get a call from a parent/carer wishing to send their child here to undertake our program but unless they are in year 5, it is not permitted. We are hoping to change the age grouping so that instead of years 5–8, it will be years 3–6 and take any year 6 students into year 7. This fits in with all the research that states the earlier the intervention the better and it would give us a cohort of students who would be much more similar in size and cognitive maturity.

This year two staff did some training in Project Based Learning and in-serviced the rest of us. It was decided to do "Perception" through photography as our Project Based Learning. One of the highlights of the year was the photographic exhibition that was held as a celebration of the students' work at the Hamilton Hub. The students were taught the skills of photography and the assignment was to take a portrait of someone they loved. They took some amazing photographs and the Hub asked if the photos could stay on display during the school holidays. We have continued with the same Electives and the students have been engaged and have produced some great art – tie dyeing and pottery, fantastic woodwork items, made some very tasty meals and caught some fish.

The bane of our lives are the mobile phones that our students bring to school! Some of them spend every possible moment they can on their phones and I often wonder if their parent(s) know what exactly they are watching and listening to. I would like to think that the positives of different internet platforms outweigh the negatives, but sometimes I wonder. More and more students – not just ours – are becoming addicted to computer games and spend virtually all of their spare time playing them. There is nothing wrong with suitable age appropriate games but when you know children are playing these games for hours a day or are playing R rated games, it is very concerning. We would appreciate it if you could make sure you are aware of what your child is doing when s/he is on the computer or their chosen device. It might scare you! Your child does not need to bring a phone to school. If they need to make a call, they can use the office phone.

Next year will be virtually a new cohort as our current students leave to go back to mainstream or another educational setting. We wish them all well and hope they will do themselves and us proud by using the skills and knowledge they learnt at Woodberry Learning Centre. We love it when our students from previous years call in to say hello. As you know these are students who had almost burnt their bridges at their mainstream schools through inappropriate and unacceptable behaviours. They were often way behind in their learning as they have allowed their behaviour to interfere with their learning. So you can imagine how proud we feel when they tell us that they are doing well at school, have done the HSC, have a job or a traineeship or enrolled in a TAFE course. We always tell them that they are products of their past – their life's experiences– BUT they are designers of their futures. When they arrive at WLC their future is spotless and they can choose to write their own life script not just live out the one they believe has already been written for them because of where they come from or because of what may have happened to them or because of their parents'

experiences. It is *their* life and *only theirs* to make of what they choose!

Nancy Snow

School background

School vision statement

Our vision statement is “Sense of self, Sense of direction” as our students tend to arrive at WLC with a negative, fragile sense of self and no real sense of direction for their lives. It is our job to create a caring, safe learning environment where we believe in our students and what they can achieve, until they believe in themselves. Our students do not care what we know until they know we care and we put in a huge amount of time and energy building trust and positive relationships with each student so that we can have influence to help them learn new skills and make better choices about their learning and behaviour.

School context

Woodberry Learning Centre (WLC) is a DEC NSW designated Behaviour School. It was established in 2007 and is located at Woodberry, near Maitland in the Hunter Valley. We take a maximum of 21 students at any one time who participate in approximately a 40 week program.

The students range in age from 10 – 13 years and have been referred by their homeschool after consultation with their parent/carer(s). At WLC we use a positive internal control psychology – Choice Theory – as the behaviourist practices in their home schools have not worked in helping these students to learn socially acceptable and more appropriate ways of behaving. We, at WLC, believe that you cannot mandate values and change – that both of these require an environment of choice and the evaluation that what we are doing, isn't working. None of us changes unless we perceive a need to change and then we need the skills and strategies to use, to bring about what we want through that change. Our students have very limited knowledge and skills to use in order to change their behavioural patterns. Our students mostly come from low socio-economic backgrounds. We only have our students for a limited time and so need to use our time, and limited resources wisely. Our students have deeply ingrained "failure identities" as they have not had a successful time during their schooling. We provide our students with opportunities to have success and to see that they are NOT their behaviours, but worthy individuals deserving help to make their lives better and to realize that although they are products of their pasts, they can be designers of their futures as their futures are spotless. We work with our students' home schools with regular weekly contact to plan and assist a successful transition for each student back to their home school or another specialist setting, at the end of the program.

Self-assessment and school achievement

Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

This section of the Annual Report outlines the findings from self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework, school achievements and the next steps to be pursued.

This year, our school undertook self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework. The framework supports public schools throughout NSW in the pursuit of excellence by providing a clear description of high quality practice across the three domains of Learning, Teaching and Leading.

Because of our unique context we struggle somewhat to determine where we see ourselves in relation to the options given. Because of this and because of the better defined continua of the descriptors we have settled on an overall judgement of SUSTAINING & GROWING for each of the three domains. We continue to provide a learning culture of high expectations with a focus on staff and student wellbeing.

Our self-assessment process will assist the school to refine our school plan, leading to further improvements in the delivery of education to our students.

For more information about the School Excellence Framework:

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/school-excellence-and-accountability/sef-evidence-guide>

Strategic Direction 1

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1 – Increasing student motivation, re-engagement and learning.

Purpose

To create a stimulating and engaging learning environment underpinned by quality teaching practices with a differentiated curriculum that students find relevant and motivating to improve learning outcomes.

Overall summary of progress

Woodberry Learning Centre caters for students with a diverse range of academic levels, emotional lability, negative behaviours, and personalities. One thing many of these students have in common when they are placed at WLC is a disconnection with education.

This strategic direction focuses on inspiring our students to attend school regularly and engage with their learning.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Funds Expended (Resources)	Progress achieved this year
<p>1: Improved and sustained student attendance which is better than their attendance at their home school, showing engagement with Project Based Learning units and the Healthy Lifestyle program.</p> <p>2: Staff committed to ongoing professional learning and the desire to continuously improve.</p> <p>3: At least 80% of students demonstrating expected growth over the program across DEC literacy and numeracy progressions relevant to expected time frames.</p> <p>4: Progress notes show improved and sustained engagement in tasks.</p>	<p>Our students are only with us for the duration of their program so it is important that they attend. Once a new student has connected with WLC, there is a huge jump in their attendance rate. Each year we achieve or increase our sustained student attendance rate where this year approximately 85% of students have an 80–100% attendance rate. Prior to attending WLC some of our students had attendance rates of 55 – 65%</p>	<p>PL has seen staff trained in Project Based Learning and Principal, AP and SAM have had financial training.</p> <p>All our students show expected growth in literacy and numeracy once they engage with the program. Length of time for a student to fully engage varies quite considerably from student to student.</p>

Next Steps

PL in the literacy and numeracy progressions has been delayed and this is something we will engage in as soon as it is available. We are really satisfied with the attendance rates of our students especially when compared with their attendance at school prior to coming to WLC. We will continue to provide relevant, engaging, high interest lessons and building trusting positive relationships with each student in order to maintain our great rates of attendance

Strategic Direction 2

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2 – Building student responsibility for behaviour through the positive psychology – Choice Theory.

Purpose

To help our students to accept responsibility for their actions through the teaching of Choice Theory and to enable them through new knowledge, skills and strategies to become valued, functional and included members of society.

Overall summary of progress

One of the hardest behaviours to help students achieve, is acceptance and ownership of their behavioural choices. They are always far more willing to blame somebody or someone else rather than accept responsibility for their choices. This is essential if they are to grow and mature into well-rounded human beings who are happy and can form and maintain positive relationships and be a valued member of their community.. All students are taught the concepts of Choice Theory and there is a great emphasis on self-evaluation. Over time we see students understanding that the only person they can control is themselves and so they and they alone are responsible for the choices they make.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Improvement measures (to be achieved over 3 years)	Funds Expended (Resources)	Progress achieved this year
<p>1: Sustained student enrolment and attendance rates (70 – 80%) in their home school or another educational setting 6 months after exiting WLC –currently approximately 80%.</p> <p>2: Sustained achievement of, or movement towards achievement of, behavioural targets demonstrated in Behaviour Data and/or IEPs</p> <p>3: Improvement in students' social skills demonstrated through parent and student survey and observed behaviour in various settings.</p> <p>4: Continued excellent evaluations on MyPL of quality professional learning based on Choice Theory, as a result of wide and on-going provision of teaching and learning opportunities within and beyond local schools.</p>		<p>1. In progress</p> <p>2. In 2018 we had quite a number of our students fully transition back to their home school. In fact 60% of the WLC enrolments in Term 3 had returned to their home school by the end of 2018.</p> <p>Of these students 80% have settled in to their home school and are attending regularly.</p> <p>3. Students individual behaviour data reflects improvements in social skills.</p> <p>4. Continued demand for this professional learning means more teachers from more school feel more competent and confident in managing students with challenging behaviours.</p>

Next Steps

Attendance rates are inclined to drop off with some of our students once they have transitioned back to their mainstream school or alternate setting. Next year we intend to improve communication with and transition to our mainstream schools.

Social skills teaching is still not as we would like. Again it is the lack of generalization from practice at WLC to the real world. Next year we will emphasise social skills more in real life situations and settings to see if this aids generalization.

Key Initiatives	Resources (annual)	Impact achieved this year
Aboriginal background loading	Employment of an Aboriginal SLSO and	Students have a positive role model who relates well to them and who provides cultural experiences for our students.
Socio-economic background	Employment of Aboriginal SLSO	Students have a better understanding of Aboriginal culture and racist remarks have all but disappeared.
Support for beginning teachers	\$2500 for Advanced Intensive Training and Advanced Practicum plus accommodation in Sydney and travel in order to visit other behavioural settings	Our beginning teacher has undertaken Advanced Intensive Training in Choice Theory/Reality Therapy & Lead Management and undertaken an Advanced Practicum. She will do her Certification in 2019.



Student information

Student enrolment profile

Students	Enrolments			
	2015	2016	2017	2018
Boys	14	14	14	12
Girls	1	2	1	4

Workforce information

Workforce composition

Position	FTE*
Principal(s)	1
Assistant Principal(s)	1
Classroom Teacher(s)	2.48
Teacher Librarian	0.17
School Administration and Support Staff	4.41
Other Positions	0.2

*Full Time Equivalent

This year we employed an Aboriginal SLSO at WLC.

Teacher qualifications

All teaching staff meet the professional requirements for teaching in NSW public schools.

Teacher qualifications

Qualifications	% of staff
Undergraduate degree or diploma	100
Postgraduate degree	60

Professional learning and teacher accreditation

All teachers at this school are maintaining accreditation at proficiency level and undertake professional learning in accordance with their PDP and the school's Strategic Directions.

Financial information

Financial summary

The information provided in the financial summary includes reporting from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2018.

	2018 Actual (\$)
Opening Balance	319,575
Revenue	1,133,206
Appropriation	1,104,513
Sale of Goods and Services	19,605
Grants and Contributions	5,208
Gain and Loss	0
Other Revenue	0
Investment Income	3,880
Expenses	-1,042,852
Recurrent Expenses	-1,042,852
Employee Related	-871,092
Operating Expenses	-171,760
Capital Expenses	0
Employee Related	0
Operating Expenses	0
SURPLUS / DEFICIT FOR THE YEAR	90,354
Balance Carried Forward	409,929

Woodberry Learning Centre receives a limited amount of money that we have the freedom to spend on what we choose. Much of this money has been spent on employing an SLSO who has assisted with the Healthy Eating program and provided an Aboriginal perspective when required.

2018 has been a year of focus on professional development, research based pedagogy and renewal of resources for the school.

After 11 years WLC was in need of refreshed resources such as a new bus, a classroom pilot of state of the art furniture and new interior paint. Our school conducted its first Project Based Learning program, which had immense impact on our students and allowed our staff to be up-skilled in cutting edge practices.

In 2019 we will look to rolling out more school projects and continue to invest in improving our learning spaces.

Financial summary equity funding

The equity funding data is the main component of the 'Appropriation' section of the financial summary above.

	2018 Actual (\$)
Base Total	351,280
Base Per Capita	7,762
Base Location	1,763
Other Base	341,756
Equity Total	38,577
Equity Aboriginal	10,438
Equity Socio economic	28,139
Equity Language	0
Equity Disability	0
Targeted Total	609,570
Other Total	5,830
Grand Total	1,005,257

Figures presented in this report may be subject to rounding so may not reconcile exactly with the bottom line totals, which are calculated without any rounding.

A full copy of the school's financial statement is tabled at the annual general meetings of the parent and/or community groups. Further details concerning the statement can be obtained by contacting the school.

Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction

At WLC we use various ways to gain feedback from our parent/caregivers, students and staff. We host a family barbecue at the end each term as a means of connecting with our families and sharing the progress of their child. Feedback generally suggests parents/carers are happy their child has been paced at WLC because their child now loves attending school every day.

Due to the size of our catchment and the difficulties many of our families have regarding transportation, we choose to conduct phone surveys and regularly seek feedback through phone communication.

Parents/carers have expressed their satisfaction with the program and especially appreciate the benefits of having a smaller setting to send their child to, having school staff who take the time to get to know their child and what is likely and unlikely to work with them and sending their child to a needs satisfying setting where they are learning skills to better manage themselves. Almost all parents and carers have noted a positive change to their child's behaviours at home soon after starting at WLC.

WLC staff actively seek feedback from our former students with all of them noting the positive impact

WLC has had on their lives. WLC staff track our former students to measure the impact of the program on their long term outcomes.

WLC staff have created a Student Survey to better understand the impact of our program on the well-being of our students. this will be rolled out in 2019.

WLC staff regularly discuss the positive impact school culture has on their work life and how they are learning to better understand and manage our students. Despite the nature of our student cohort, staff have remarked that they love being a part of the WLC team and temporary staff have explained that they often go home

Policy requirements

Aboriginal education

Woodberry Learning Centre continues in its commitment to Aboriginal Education and celebrating the history and achievements of Indigenous people – past and present.

Highlights in 2018 include:

- WLC staff continue to support the local AECG's 'Connecting to Country' program with all staff having participated in the program and WLC staff Pauline Mitchell, Nancy Snow and Mark Williams helping run the program
- Teaching staff use the extensive knowledge of Pauline Mitchell to present an Indigenous perspective across academic and social programs.
- The provision of an Indigenous role model allows students the chance to ask questions and gain a deeper understanding of local and broader Aboriginal perspectives and issues.
- Our NAIDOC day included a camp oven cook out and a visit by Luke Russell who taught us how local Stringybark trees are used to build canoes, with a scale model canoe on permanent display in our office foyer.
- Regular visits from Maitland Police Aboriginal Liaison Officer Dean French to spend time and connect with our students.
- Regular attendance at local AECG meetings.

Multicultural and anti-racism education

Currently at WLC there are only Anglo-Saxon background and Aboriginal students. Multicultural perspectives are taught through stories, games, movies and discussions.

All staff have an understanding of what constitutes racism, are always aware of what students are saying to each other and quickly respond to any racist comments. As a school we operate through the values of harmony and acceptance