

2021 Annual Report

Cascade Environmental Education Centre



5731

Introduction

The Annual Report for 2021 is provided to the community of Cascade Environmental Education 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 Strategic Improvement 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.

School contact details

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School vision

Cascade Environmental Education Centre (EEC) acknowledges the traditional custodians of Australia and will always keep First Nations Peoples' relationship with the land at the centre of our programs. Cascade EEC aims to provide relevant and influential educational experiences and opportunities that will engage and motivate all students and teachers to become the best they can be in our context. Every student that participates in a Cascade program has the opportunity to achieve their personal best through engaged, active learning in a safe, respectful, collaborative and supportive environment.

Every student and teacher that participates in our programs is excited to do so, safe when participating, is interested in the activity and what will result from it, engaged in a practical and hands on way, is able to utilise applicable resources and technology, becomes inspired and sees the linkages to these experiences, their life and their local community.

School context

Cascade EEC is surrounded by a World Heritage listed, 250 million year old rain forest on the Dorrigo Plateau. Cascade is one of 25 Environmental and Zoo Education Centres (EZEC) in NSW.

Cascade EEC is a local school, a regional and state wide resource that supports and partners with schools to meet their curriculum requirements. With these partners we utilise environmental education, sustainability education, outdoor learning and creating a sense of wonder for our natural world. This development of hands on and real learning strengthens every individuals ability to grow and develop.

As part of a collaborative team of EECs, schools, government and non-government organisations, Cascade provides a variety of experiences that are founded in the curriculum at a number of locations within NSW. Whilst we have local networks and communities of schools, we provide support to any public school in NSW. The Centre continues to support schools in their implementation of the curriculum, Departmental sustainability goals and aspirations, the Environmental Education Policy and to provide essential natural and sustainability based experiences both inside and outside of the classroom.

We aim to provide quality experiences that enhance student engagement and learning outcomes and to empower students and their communities to become well informed, confident, practical, educated and empowered environmental citizens.

It is the privilege of Cascade EEC to be in a position to work with a large variety of schools and other organisations across NSW. Over the coming four years we will be focusing on delivering programs that are curriculum-relevant and meet the needs of teachers and students. These programs will be developed in consultation with schools in order to meet their situational needs.

Cascade EEC Teachers will be given the opportunity to grow and develop within their profession through attending a variety of curriculum and sustainability education focused learning opportunities and to collaborate with their environmental education peers.

Self-assessment and school achievement

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 and participated in an external validation. The Framework is a statement of what is valued as excellence for NSW public schools, both now and into the future. 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.

Each year, we assess our practice against the Framework to inform our Strategic Improvement Plan and annual report. Every four years, our school undergoes an external validation process.

During the external validation process, an independent panel consisting of a Principal School Leadership and a peer principal considered our evidence and assessment of our school's progress against the School Excellence Framework.

Our self-assessment and the external validation process will assist the school to refine our Strategic Improvement 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/school-excellence>

Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

Elements	2021 School Assessment
LEARNING: Learning Culture	Delivering
LEARNING: Wellbeing	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Curriculum	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Assessment	Delivering
LEARNING: Reporting	Working towards Delivering
LEARNING: Student performance measures	Working towards Delivering
TEACHING: Effective classroom practice	Sustaining and Growing
TEACHING: Data skills and use	Delivering
TEACHING: Professional standards	Sustaining and Growing
TEACHING: Learning and development	Excelling
LEADING: Educational leadership	Sustaining and Growing
LEADING: School planning, implementation and reporting	Delivering
LEADING: School resources	Sustaining and Growing
LEADING: Management practices and processes	Sustaining and Growing

Cascade EEC had a pleasing result from the External Validation conducted in 2021. The panel agreed with all areas except an aspect of school planning, implementation and reporting.

Purpose

To facilitate quality learning, through meaningful and contextually relevant environmental and sustainability education experiences.

To develop students' and teachers' knowledge and skills.

To develop a planned and systematic approach to staff Professional Development.

To enable students to engage in informed, curriculum relevant, programs.

To empower program participants and teachers to become capable of positively influencing their future.

To Learn about and within the environment.

Initiatives

This year our school implemented the following initiatives to support the realisation of the four year Strategic Improvement Plan and the achievement of system-negotiated and school-determined targets.

- Excellence in learning and teaching
- Teacher Professional Development

Resources allocated to this strategic direction

Professional learning: \$4,001.63

School support allocation (principal support): \$13,604.80

Location: \$647.00

Summary of progress

What did we do?

Despite the challenges face in 2021 regarding COVID, Cascade staff excelled themselves in their application and productivity.

The staff contributed meaningfully to the development of home learning resources, brain breaks and the development and delivery of off site programs to a range of schools across NSW.

In 2021 Cascade undertook, a range of teaching and PL activities to address the following areas:

- develop and deliver authentic and engaging learning opportunities and engaging learning experiences (Kitchen Gardens, Learn like a geographer, Duke of Edinburgh, Aboriginal Education),
- guided learning package training, planning and development. Developed skills in the science teaching and learning (cognitive load theory / building on knowledge / cumulative learning and teaching progressions).
- measuring impact of teaching (EZEC Principals conference),
- Staff collaborated to teach and mentor each other during sustainability outreach,
- Orienteering course, compost and team building incursions were created and refined to deliver during incursions,
- Partnerships were developed with elders groups, local schools and councils to strengthen and deliver programs.

What did we do well?

Generally Cascade was able to meet and in many cases exceed our goals in regards to delivering authentic learning and teaching experiences and providing high quality professional development.

Through collaborations with schools our lessons and programs were systematically designed and adjusted as needs arose.

Partnerships with EEC's and members of the EZEC were developed to create a supportive network to create high quality learning resources based around cognitive load theory. The guided learning packages were very well received.

Have we seen a difference?

Impact on at home learning was stated as being effective via departmental Liaison officers when providing feedback.

We starting to get a deeper sense of how we measure teacher and student satisfaction with our programs via our evaluation google forms.

Implications for this learning?

Due to the above, in 2022 we are going to prioritised the development of more incursion and camp activities.

We will support teachers to embed evaluative practice by routinely reviewing student "work" and ensuring all students have a clear understanding of how to or how they have improved.

Leadership capabilities are developed through deep collaboration with EZEC and other peers, and by supporting staff on their leadership journey. This will be mapped through staff PDP's.

Teachers attend a range of education and environmental education based PD Conducted by our partners.

Teachers work in partnership with other EEC's within the EZEC to support each other's operations and develop our skill base.

The programs are developed and evolve to meet the needs of students and teachers.

Programs are evaluated via qualitative and quantitative means and student learning goals are informed by the analysis of this data.

3 steps in DATA..

1. Data collection and organisation how are we going to become efficient at collecting, and organising data. student assessments, teacher feedback, whole of EZEC, AECG
2. Analysis and interpretation of data. At what point at with whowhat does this info tell us...when doing our term plan block out a couple of days to analyse data...perhaps end of term....for a day or so, reflecting on the time....then give time to do something with this information....step 3
3. Acting on what the data telling us, then changing it etc.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

The annual progress measures indicate the expected annual level of achievement for each improvement measure, aligned to the initiatives, in the Strategic Improvement Plan. Schools evaluate their achievement against annual progress measures to determine progress and inform future planning.

Annual progress measure	Progress towards achievement
Learning experiences with the Cascade team: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are of a high standard because they reflect the needs of the teachers and students and provide experiences that develop and are improved via program feedback and evaluations,• Attending schools re-book programs with Cascade EEC in line with their cyclical requirements.	Our achievement was able to be demonstrated in this area as our professional learning was aligned with our school plan. Cascade staff were able to develop systems that enabled effective collaboration, program delivery and feedback with the goal of sustaining quality teaching practice.
Cascade EEC teachers are provided with a range of professional development activities in curriculum, environmental and sustainability education and other areas that are deemed appropriate. This PD: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• enhances teachers' ability to create	Cascade teachers were able to demonstrate achievement by not only attending the professional learning opportunities we targeted but engaging in these to ensure that professional learning in our school emphasised important teacher attributes like instructional leadership, management skills and leadership capabilities in our staff. These skills have ensured that we were able to deliver engaging and relevant learning opportunities for students.

high quality environmental, well-being and other learning experiences, and

- to effectively design, deliver and evaluate engaging and curriculum relevant activities in an outdoor setting.

Strategic Direction 2: Innovative Collaboration

Purpose

To be innovative in our modes of collaboration in achieving our goals.

To be reactive and agile in the pursuit of excellent learning and teaching opportunities that arise.

Develop and improve teaching and learning spaces at Cascade.

Initiatives

This year our school implemented the following initiatives to support the realisation of the four year Strategic Improvement Plan and the achievement of system-negotiated and school-determined targets.

- Collaboration with the community
- Improved Assets and administration practices leading to program enhancement

Resources allocated to this strategic direction

Per capita: \$7,395.50

Summary of progress

What did we do?

In 2021 Cascade collaborated with a range of community and school partners so that we could develop and deliver authentic and engaging learning experiences for our students we achieved this by:

- Cascade developing solid working relationships and continuing our existing relationships with Aboriginal people, organisations and communities.
- partnering with Southern Cross University, University of New England, Macquarie University, local government and non-government agencies and schools to deliver projects. These include Dawkins Park Project, AUSMAP, Waterwise etc.
- partnering with a range of local school communities to develop and deliver relevant and authentic learning experiences for their students,
- collaborating with the NSW Environmental and Zoo Education Centres to support each other and to enhance our reach and impact
- being responsive and innovative by staff demonstrating our expertise with other schools to meet and enhance their students learning journeys.

Enhancements were made to the following assets at Cascade:

- adventure playground equipment,
- rural access gap infrastructure roll-out,
- Guttering replacements,
- Telstra school network upgrade.

What did we do well?

Cascade staff were receptive to innovative ideas and collaboration opportunities and responded with the creation of authentic and engaging learning programs.

We were able to adapt to our uncertain learning and teaching environment and re-direct our energies and focus to best meet the needs of our students and teachers within the bounds set by various public health orders and operating procedures.

Have we seen a difference?

Feedback, evaluations and work samples provided by schools suggest we are meeting the expectations of schools. Our embedded systems and willingness to seek and facilitate professional dialogue drives ongoing school wide improvement..

We starting to get a deeper sense of how we measure teacher and student satisfaction with our programs via our

Implications for this learning?

Cascade will continue to improve its data collection around program evaluations to ensure continuous improvement of its programs and resources.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

The annual progress measures indicate the expected annual level of achievement for each improvement measure, aligned to the initiatives, in the Strategic Improvement Plan. Schools evaluate their achievement against annual progress measures to determine progress and inform future planning.

Annual progress measure	Progress towards achievement
<p>Collaboration with a variety of partners strengthens and enhances the programs conducted by Cascade EEC.</p> <p>Collaboration partnerships will include other EECs, Southern Cross University, Bellingen, Coffs Harbour, Clarence and Macleay Valley Councils, Mid North Coast schools and other government and non - government agencies.</p>	<p>Cascade was able to demonstrate achievement through our effective collaboration with a variety of partners. This is apparent through the variety of engaging and relevant programs we developed and delivered during 2021.</p>
<p>Assets at Cascade are continually improved and developed to ensure that all program participants have a great learning experience in a combination of safe, comfortable and appropriate facilities.</p> <p>Aspects of the schools to be improved include adventure playground equipment, rural access gap infrastructure roll-out Air-conditioning and heating upgrades, Telstra school network upgrade.</p>	<p>Cascade demonstrated achievement in this area by supporting and following up during the various processes in order to reach high quality outcomes.</p>

Attendance

NSW student attendance data in 2020 is not comparable to previous years due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The NSW Government encouraged students to learn from home, where possible, for a seven week period from 24 March to 22 May 2020. During this period, schools monitored engagement with learning to determine whether students were marked present. This changed the attendance measure. There was also some evidence of varied marking practices as schools adjusted to the learning from home period, with some schools recording higher attendance rates while others recording markedly lower rates.

Attendance figures in 2021 were calculated differently to align with the third edition of ACARA's National Standards for Student Attendance Data and Reporting. Changes include treating partial absences over 120 minutes as a half day absence (instead of their actual value, calculated as a proportion of a nominal 6-hour day) and covers all weeks during Semester 1. Prior to 2021, the final week of Term 2 was excluded.

Furthermore, the Department implemented an automated attendance feed (AAF) system in Semester 1 2021. AAF transfers data automatically from third-party attendance management systems to the Department's centralised data warehouse every night. The AAF has significantly improved data quality in 2021, which has affected data comparability with previous years.

Although there were no state-wide or regional lockdowns in NSW during Semester 1 2021, COVID-19 continued to affect student attendance. Analysis of attendance codes showed a change in the structure of absence reasons in 2021.

Management of non-attendance

Attendance at school has a big impact on longer term outcomes for children and young people. When a child is not at school they miss important opportunities to learn, build friendships and develop their skills through play. Regular attendance at school is a shared responsibility between schools and parents. By working together we can have a positive effect on supporting our children and young people to regularly attend school.

Our teachers promote and monitor regular attendance at school and all our schools have effective measures in place to record attendance and follow up student absences promptly. They are guided by the School Attendance policy which details the management of non-attendance.

Workforce information

Workforce composition

Position	FTE*
Principal(s)	1
School Administration and Support Staff	1.03

*Full Time Equivalent

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce composition

The Department actively supports the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees through the use of identified positions, and scholarship opportunities to become a teacher and by providing a culturally safe workplace. As of 2021, 4.3% of the Department's overall workforce identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People.

Workforce ATSI

Staff type	Benchmark ¹	2021 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation ²
School Support	3.30%	4.40%
Teachers	3.30%	3.20%

Note 1 - The NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2019-2025 takes a career pathway approach in that it sets an ambitious target of 3% Aboriginal employment at each non-executive grade of the public sector by 2025.

Note 2 - Representation of diversity groups are calculated as the estimated number of staff in each group divided by the total number of staff. These statistics have been weighted to estimate the representation of diversity groups in the workforce, where diversity survey response rates were less than 100 per cent. The total number of staff is based on a headcount of permanent and temporary employees.

Teacher qualifications

All casual, temporary and permanent teachers in NSW public schools must hold a NSW Department of Education approval to teach. Teachers with approval to teach must be accredited with the NSW Education Standards Authority, and hold a recognised teaching degree. All NSW teachers must hold a valid NSW Working With Children Check clearance.

Professional learning and teacher accreditation

Professional learning is core to enabling staff to improve their practice.

Professional learning includes five student-free School Development Days and induction programs for staff new to our school and/or system. These days are used to improve the capacity of teaching and non-teaching staff in line with school and departmental priorities.

Financial information

Financial summary

The information provided in the financial summary includes reporting from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021. The Principal is responsible for the financial management of the school and ensuring all school funds are managed in line with Department policy requirements.

	2021 Actual (\$)
Opening Balance	177,820
Revenue	403,102
Appropriation	310,633
Grants and contributions	92,242
Investment income	226
Expenses	-396,385
Employee related	-330,903
Operating expenses	-65,482
Surplus / deficit for the year	6,717
Closing Balance	184,537

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.

Financial summary - Equity loadings

The equity loading data is the main component of the 'Appropriation' line item of the financial summary above.

	2021 SBAR Adjustments (\$)
Targeted Total	0
Equity Total	0
Equity - Aboriginal	0
Equity - Socio-economic	0
Equity - Language	0
Equity - Disability	0
Base Total	298,015
Base - Per Capita	7,396
Base - Location	647
Base - Other	289,973
Other Total	9,018
Grand Total	307,033

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.

Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction

Covid has significantly disrupted our operations of the past 12-18 months. Based on previous evaluations conducted with our client schools Cascade is meeting or exceeding the expectations during the programs.

We received pleasing feedback from the Department in the form of awards and recognition for the creation of high quality home learning packages.

Policy requirements

Aboriginal Education Policy

The responsibility for enacting the Aboriginal Education Policy rests with all Departmental staff. The policy should underpin and inform planning, teaching practice and approaches to educational leadership in all educational settings.

Evidence of effective implementation of the policy included:

- Establishing, building and strengthening relationships with the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Aboriginal people and communities.
- Providing, in partnership with Aboriginal people and communities, education which promotes quality teaching, is engaging, and is culturally appropriate and relevant.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will match or better the outcomes of the broader student population.
- Implementation of Personalised Learning Pathways for all Aboriginal students in a school culture of high expectations.

Anti-Racism Policy

All teachers are responsible for addressing incidents of racism and supporting students to develop an understanding of racism and discrimination and the impact these may have on individuals and the broader community. The Principal is responsible for examining school practices and procedures to ensure they are consistent with the policy. The school has an Anti-Racism Contact Officer who is trained to respond to concerns in relation to racism.

Multicultural Education Policy

Teachers are responsible for addressing the specific learning and wellbeing needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds through their teaching and learning programs. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that school policies, programs and practices respond to the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of the school community, and provide opportunities that enable all students to achieve equitable education and social outcomes.