

2023 Annual Report

Gibberagong Environmental Education Centre





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Introduction

The Annual Report for 2023 is provided to the community of Gibberagong 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

Gibberagong Environmental Education Centre Bobbin Head Picnic Area North Turramurra, 2074 https://gibberagongeec.nsw.edu.au/ gibberagon-e.school@det.nsw.edu.au 9457 8245

Message from the principal

Gibberagong Environmental Education Centre (EEC) aims to inspire young people and other members of the local school community to develop a positive behaviour change for the environment through unique experiences that foster a connection with the natural world.

The strength of Gibberagong EEC is the connections it makes with local school communities and other partner organisations to deliver high quality, syllabus-focused student learning programs that explore the natural world and support classroom learning.

During 2023, Gibberagong EEC continued to meet the needs of the growing local school community, delivering high quality excursion, incursion and overnight programs to over 17,500 students during the year - the highest number seen in the 51 year history of the Centre.

The year also saw a record number of teacher professional learning programs delivered to over 550 local teachers by the Centre, including the first school accredited PL program, Learning on Country.

In collaboration with the Environmental and Zoo Education Centres (EZECs), Gibberagong continues to develop innovative practices to share expertise, joining EZEC colleagues to deliver environmental education programs in Tamworth as part of the EZEC Regional Engagement Strategy.

To ensure that the quality of programs remains high, the Centre has built a culture of continuous improvement through regular reflective practice, informed by data from students, visiting teachers and Gibberagong staff to improve outcomes for all our students.

I look forward to continuing to lead the school in 2024.

Message from the school community

The following testimonials are a selection of feedback received from teachers K-12 who have attended Gibberagong EEC excursion, incursion or professional learning programs during 2023.

Today was an amazing practical way for the students to experience the bush and all its features including the Aboriginal features. The teachers were clear and engaging and so knowledgeable. Thank you for a great excursion.

Wonderful staff were adaptable to our needs and brilliant with the kids. Thankyou!

This was our first time attending Gibberagong EEC and we were so impressed by the exceptional teachers, great organisation and wonderful learning experiences. Thank you for your work, our children had a really meaningful and significant experience connecting with nature and engaging with the cultural significance of the local sites.

Thank you so much for accommodating our changes, being so flexibe and supporting our students with special needs.

Many thanks Gibberagong! Thank you also for providing the off-road wheelchair for one of our students and being so accommodating, ensuring that everyone had a great day, both teachers and students!

My school loves coming to the excursions with Gibberagong, the staff are friendly and knowledgeable, the children are learning all day and the learning links with our units of works/syllabus. Thank you for providing a fantastic program.

School vision

Inspiring school communities to know, value and act for the environment.

Inspiring school communities through quality pedagogical practices that are developed through a cohesive and innovative quality teaching process.

To know, value and act for the environment is assessed through researched-based student and teacher assessment processes that inform what, how and why we teach.

School context

Gibberagong Environmental Education Centre (GEEC) is a Department of Education (DoE) school located on the traditional lands of the GuriNgai people at Bobbin Head in the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park.

Our students attend the Centre from local primary and high schools for one to three day programs that aim to inspire students to know, value and act for the environment.

Our school achieves this through the provision of high quality field work and environmental and sustainability education programs for school students K-12 at excursion locations in northern Sydney or at sites near or within schools.

Our teaching staff are qualified and experienced educators in outdoor and environmental education who are passionate about connecting students and visiting teachers with the important natural, cultural and built environments that we have access to.

Our school is informed through **our collaboration** as a member of the DoE's Environmental and Zoo Education Centres (EZEC) network, who is committed to being a leader of environmental education in NSW.

Our school has achieved rich learning outcomes for visiting students through the development and nurturing of **our strong partnerships** with many local schools, the local Aboriginal community, local councils and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

This School Improvement Plan was developed through a consultation with students, Gibberagong staff, teachers from local schools and the AECG.

The Situation Analysis provided insight into the operations of the school and highlighted two significant areas of school improvement; assessment of student learning and developing teacher capacity. Over the next four years, we will implement initiatives in these areas that improve what we teach and how we teach it.



Teddy Bears Picnic

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. 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.

Our self-assessment 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

Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

Elements	2023 School Assessment
LEARNING: Learning Culture	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Wellbeing	Excelling
LEARNING: Curriculum	Excelling
LEARNING: Assessment	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Reporting	Delivering
LEARNING: Student performance measures	Delivering
TEACHING: Effective classroom practice	Sustaining and Growing
TEACHING: Data skills and use	Sustaining and Growing
TEACHING: Professional standards	Sustaining and Growing
TEACHING: Learning and development	Excelling
LEADING: Educational leadership	Sustaining and Growing
LEADING: School planning, implementation and reporting	Sustaining and Growing
LEADING: School resources	Sustaining and Growing
LEADING: Management practices and processes	Excelling

Strategic Direction 1: Assessment of Student Learning

Purpose

In order to maximise student learning outcomes during our one day excursion programs, we intend to research and implement student and teacher assessment methods that will monitor student achievement and inform student learning to ensure students learn what is taught.

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.

- · Embedding assessment strategies
- · Data informed practice

Resources allocated to this strategic direction

Summary of progress

Initiative 1 - Embedding assessment strategies

Evidence of activity: Meeting agendas and minutes, presentations and conference programs are evidence of teaching staff collaboration and professional learning on assessment strategies and how they apply in the EEC context. Completed LISC (Learning Intentions, Success Criteria) for secondary excursion lesson plans indicate staff are deeply thinking about teaching and learning for all aspects of the program. EZEC collaboration is evidenced by Collaborative Practices Team agenda, minutes and presentations. Two primary and two secondary programs have formative assessment strategies that have been written into lesson plans.

Process quality: Gibberagong EEC staff developed LISC statements in lesson plans for 80% of secondary excursion programs. This template and practice will be extended when all lesson plans are developed. Formative assessment strategies were developed in four programs (two primary, two secondary). This methodology of focusing on a different program each term will be replicated each year demonstrating a culture of assessing learning and reflective practice. Assessment and survey data is analysed by all teaching staff during Staff Development Days. Regular staff meetings that focus on an aspect of the SIP and Reflective Practice Meetings enable Gibberagong teachers to focus on selected teaching programs to share practice, analyse data and adjust lesson plans and teaching practice.

Evidence of Impact: All primary programs and 80% of secondary programs have LISC statements and are continually updated in response to data review. Staff reflective practice meetings focused on teaching and learning programs has improved the quality of lesson plans and teaching practice. Focusing on one program each term to develop a formative assessment strategy and collecting and analysing the data has provided the staff an opportunity for rich and deep discussions about teaching and learning. Teacher evaluations indicated that of the 103 primary teacher responses, 100% indicated that the Gibberagong teacher demonstrated effective teaching practice almost always or usually.

Initiative 2 - Data Informed Practice

Evidence of activity: Meeting minutes and agendas from SDDs and regular SIP meetings indicate that teachers reflected on their practice and teacher and student evaluation data was analysed resulting in modifications to lesson plans and program resources.

Process quality: Surveys are sent to all teachers and senior students that have attended excursion and/or PL programs. This data is analysed by all teaching staff during Staff Development Days or SIP meetings. Reflective practice meetings are regularly held enabling Gibberagong teachers to focus on selected teaching programs to share practice, analyse data and adjust lesson plans and teaching practice. Formative assessment strategies were developed in four programs (two primary, two secondary). Data was collected over a 3-4 week period and analysed with a focus on improving teaching practice. This practice will be replicated each year demonstrating a culture of assessing learning and reflective practice.

Evidence of Impact: All primary and 80% of secondary programs have LISC statements and are continually updated in response to data review. Culture of reviewing data from teacher and high school student surveys embedded in meetings. All visiting teacher evaluations responses indicate that the Teacher evaluations indicated that of the 103 primary teacher responses, 100% indicated that the Gibberagong teacher demonstrated effective teaching practice almost always or usually.

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

- All Gibberagong secondary programs have learning intentions and success criteria explicitly identified
- All new programs developed include LISC statements
- Two primary and two secondary excursion program have formative and summative assessment strategies developed
- Processes in place to collect and and analyse data collected
- Learning activities and teaching practice are revised effectively using data

Progress towards achievement

Professional Learning and collegial discussions on assessment of learning achieved at Gibberagong SDDs and meetings, EZEC PL events and the engagement of an academic partner.

Reflective Practice or SIP meetings enable to teachers to analyse data and reflect on best practice. These meetings were held five times each term and provided an opportunity to focus on achieving aspects of the School Improvement Plan.

80% of secondary excursion programs have learning intentions and success criteria explicitly identified in every activity and are continually reflected upon and updated at regular meetings.

Formative assessment strategies were developed in four programs, one each term. Data was collected and analysed by Gibberagong teaching staff at SIP meetings. Lesson plans were adjusted and new resources created as a consequence of these meetings, resulting in improved teaching and learning.

Teacher and student evaluation data from many program was collected and analysed by Gibberagong teaching staff at SIP meetings. This resulted in amendments to teaching resources, program information and lesson plans.

The EZEC Collaborative Practice Team - Assessment, meets each term to develop strategies for sharing assessment across the EZEC network. This included two Assessment Sharing afternoon PL sessions during 2023

- Systems in place to consistently and regularly review teacher program evaluations for 2023
- Systems in place to consistently and regularly review teacher PL evaluations
- Systems in place to review assessment data collected for two primary and two secondary excursion programs
- Data is used to inform practice for two primary and two secondary excursion programs

Primary teacher evaluation data is collected from all teachers that attended an excursion program. This data is analysed at the end of each term allowing for amendments to teaching resources, program information and lesson plans when required.

Teacher PL evaluation data is collected from all teachers that attend Gibberagong PL programs. This data is analysed at the end of the PL program and at SDDs allowing for amendments to teaching resources, program information and lesson plans when required.

Teacher and student evaluation data is collected at the conclusion of every senior secondary program. This data is analysed at SDDs allowing for amendments to teaching resources, program information and lesson plans when required.

Formative assessment strategies were developed in four programs, one each term. Data was collected and analysed by Gibberagong teaching staff at SIP meetings. Lesson plans were adjusted and new resources created as a consequence of these meetings, resulting in improved teaching and learning.

Strategic Direction 2: Develop Teacher Capacity

Purpose

To increase the quality of teaching at Gibberagong EEC, teaching staff will develop and undertake a robust process of collaborative practice, observation and reflection which suits the context of our Centre. Through an innovative process of investigation, we will deepen our understanding of different contextual teaching pedagogies and utilise the data collected to help inform our community.

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.

- · Effective Teaching Practice
- Collaborative Practice, Expertise and Innovation

Resources allocated to this strategic direction

Summary of progress

Initiative 1 - Effective Teaching Practice

Evidence of activity: Completed QTR coding sheets for lesson observations and resource review indicate the Gibberagong teaching staff use the QTR process for reflecting on teaching and learning. A newly developed Gibberagong Observation Sheet template and completed lesson observations indicate Gibberagong staff are using best practice for observing and reflecting on teaching practice. Meeting agendas and minutes indicate Gibberagong staff attend PL, EZEC Collaborative Practice Meetings, afternoon PL and conference workshops that focus on teaching pedagogy, including QTR. Meeting minutes, presentations, lesson observation sheets and updated lesson plans indicate there has been a focus this year on effective feedback.

Process quality: Following on from 2022, the QTR process was this year embedded into the schools culture of continual improvement. Staff completed two activities - coding a video recorded lesson and coding a program resource. Both activities provided for rich and deep discussion about teaching practice resulting in changes to teaching plans. The EZEC Collaborative Practice - Shared Pedagogy Team continued to provide PL sessions at EZEC conferences and meetings demonstrating a network-wide focus on teaching pedagogy in our unique setting.

Evidence of Impact: Changes to lesson plans reflecting the collegial discussions resulting from the QTR process. Completed lesson observations from staff indicate the deep discussions about teaching practice and how to improve. Teacher evaluation - 100% of visiting teachers rated the Gibberagong teacher as almost always or usually demonstrating effective teaching practice.

Initiative 2 - Collaborative Practice, Expertise and Innovation

Evidence of activity: Staff attendance at PL sessions on outdoor teaching pedagogies at the EZEC Conferences and Staff Development Days as evidenced by conference programs, meeting notes, meeting minutes. Gibberagong staff are part of the EZEC Collaborative Practices Team which has developed collaborative ways of working as evidence by meeting notes, meeting minutes, programs. Gibberagong staff share expertise with local teachers as evidenced by implemented PL programs and presentations, staff sign on sheets and teacher evaluations.

Process quality: Gibberagong staff regularly attend Collaborative Practice meetings and implement network-wide goals at a local level. Gibberagong EEC works closely with its local community, including the Aboriginal community, to share expertise through the delivery of a series of Aboriginal PL programs. The Centre has 10 PL programs that it offers to visiting schools. The Learning on Country TPL program was accredited this year - the first school-based accredited program in the state. Twilight PL was developed and delivered to three schools during the year.

Evidence of Impact: Through the collaborative work of the EZEC network, Gibberagong EEC has been able to consider more broadly the teaching and learning programs that are delivered. The Centre's PL programs were attended by over 550 local teachers. The evaluation data, created teaching sequences and completed student products are indicative of the impact of these PL programs. Evaluation question - 100% of visiting teachers rated the Gibberagong teacher as almost always or usually demonstrated effective teaching practice.

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

- The QTR process is an established and on-going part of sharing effective teaching practice at Gibberagong EEC
- A robust observation and reflection process has been implemented for all staff to share teaching practice.
- Gibberagong staff work innovatively with the EZEC network to share effective teaching practice.
- Gibberagong staff have completed professional learning on different pedagogical practices within our context
- Gibberagong staff have collaborated with the EZEC network to share innovative teaching and learning strategies.
- Gibberagong staff have shared their expertise with local schools
- Gibberagong staff have completed PL for effective feedback in our context
- There has been a focus on effective feedback within observation and reflection sessions

Progress towards achievement

Gibberagong teaching staff coded, analysed and discussed a Stage 1 lesson and Stage 4 Geography program resources against the QTR framework during 2023.

Gibberagong teaching staff created a Gibberagong Lesson Plan Observation Template after reviewing templates from the DoE, NESA and other schools.

All Gibberagong teaching staff completed formal observation and reflection of their teaching practice with a focus on effective feedback.

Gibberagong staff worked innovatively with the EZEC network through attendance and involvement at the EZEC Collaborative Practices Team, EZEC Conferences, meetings and afternoon PL sessions.

Gibberagong teaching staff members attended and collaborated with colleagues at the Environmental and Zoo Education Centres (EZEC) conference and monthly on-line meetings to share innovative teaching and learning strategies.

Gibberagong staff attended four Collaborative Practices meetings to develop innovative and collaborative programs across the four focus areas of 1. Shared Teaching Practice 2. Shared Assessment Strategies 3. Partnerships for Sustainability 4. Regional Support.

Two Gibberagong staff travelled to Tamworth to deliver programs to regional schools as part of the EZECs Regional Engagement Strategy.

Gibberagong staff completed PL for effective feedback which was incorporated into the lesson observation.

Gibberagong shared their expertise with over 550 teachers from local schools at TPL sessions including the Cultural Immersion SDD PL course, the Caring for Country PL course, Twilight PL sessions and at local AECG (Aboriginal Education Consultive Group) meetings and Hornsby NEST (Network for Environmental and Sustainability Teachers) meetings.



Student engaged in learning

Student information

Gibberagong EEC does not have a permanent enrolment of students, instead hosts students from local schools for one to three day excursion, incursion and overnight programs.

The visitation data collected indicated the number of students attending face to face programs programs during 2023 was 17553, an increase of 14% from the previous years figure of 15443. This is the largest student attendance figure in the Centre's 51 year history.

Attendance

NSW student attendance data in 2020 is not comparable to other 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 from 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 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.

Although there were no state-wide or regional lockdowns in NSW during Semester 1 2022, student attendance was impacted by a range of factors:

- * Families evacuating and relocating due to NSW floods
- * Sick students staying at home until a negative COVID-19 test was returned
- * Household members testing positive to COVID-19
- * The easing of COVID-19 border controls at the beginning of 2022 which allowed families to travel inter-state and overseas.

While there were no lockdowns or learning from home periods in Semester 1 2023, there was still a high prevalence of sick attendance codes as students were encouraged to stay home if they were even slightly unwell. Advice for families were still in place, recommending students and staff to stay home when sick and only returning to school when they were symptom free. (See https://education.nsw.gov.au/schooling/covid-19/advice-for-families for advice).

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
Classroom Teacher(s)	1
School Administration and Support Staff	1.19

^{*}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 2023, 2.5% of the department's overall workforce identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school workforce composition

Staff type	Benchmark ¹	2023 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation ²
School Support	3.00%	3.60%
Teachers	3.00%	3.40%

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 2023 to 31 December 2023. The Principal is responsible for the financial management of the school and ensuring all school funds are managed in line with department policy requirements.

	2023 Actual (\$)
Opening Balance	78,281.09
Revenue	868,799.44
Appropriation	493,276.54
Sale of Goods and Services	556.73
Grants and contributions	70,771.50
Investment income	2,035.42
Other revenue	302,159.25
Expenses	-905,316.28
Employee related	-787,256.77
Operating expenses	-118,059.51
Surplus / deficit for the year	-36,516.84
Closing Balance	41,764.25

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.



Students camping

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

	2023 SBAR Adjustments (\$)
Targeted Total	0
Equity Total	0
Equity - Aboriginal	0
Equity - Socio-economic	0
Equity - Language	0
Equity - Disability	0
Base Total	481,805
Base - Per Capita	15,616
Base - Location	0
Base - Other	466,189
Other Total	10,969
Grand Total	492,775

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.



Student wellbeing in nature

Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction

During 2023, 103 primary teachers completed an on-line survey to support on-going analysis of the school's programs. The evaluation found:

- * 97% of visiting teachers rated the excursion program as almost always or usually supporting classroom learning.
- * 99% of visiting teachers indicated their students as almost always or usually demonstrating engagement and enjoyment in experiential learning activities.
- * 100% of visiting teachers rated the excursion activities as almost always or usually appropriate to the ability of their students.
- * 99% of visiting teachers rated excursion activities as almost always or usually meeting syllabus outcomes.
- * 100% of visiting teachers rated the Gibberagong teacher as almost always or usually demonstrated effective teaching practice.



Students dip-netting as part of a science program

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.



Students engaged in nature