Strategic Improvement Plan 2021-2024

Finigan School of Distance Education 4661

School vision and context

School vision statement

At Finigan School of Distance Education we provide quality, personalised learning experiences for each of our students. We recognise the significance of the relationship between the teacher and the student and actively work to establish and maintain a learning relationship so that every student is engaged, supported and achieving success. Our teachers embody a dynamic culture of collegial, innovative and reflective practice. We actively build strong learning partnerships with local and distance education communities.

School context

Our school continues the legacy of Walter Finigan, the first Principal of a distance education school in NSW (The Correspondence School). Finigan School of Distance Education is a purpose built K-12 distance education school committed to innovation and ensuring each and every student achieves their personal best.

Based in Queanbeyan, we acknowledge the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples who are the traditional custodians of this land on which we teach and learn. We pay our respects to the elders past, present and emerging on all of the lands where our students are learning.

We cater for a diverse student population over a broad geographical area. Student learning is supported through self-paced online lessons, live (web-based) lessons, phone lessons, email discussion, field visits and excursions. The school has a number of dynamic and flexible learning spaces. Teachers may visit students at their home or at one of the 9 learning hubs distributed across south eastern NSW. Learning hubs are run by the school and staffed by qualified teachers.

Our school has state of the art facilities including 20 live lesson studios, 3 video production studios equipped with lightboard, green screen and podcasting technology.

We have a current enrolment of over 800 individual students. Our staff includes over 90 (full-time equivalent) teachers and 17 support staff. The school employs a second Deputy Principal (Wellbeing), a Head Teacher Wellbeing and a Head Teacher Supported Learning from school funds to support the complex and diverse nature of our full-time students.

Our school is committed to determining and delivering best practice in teaching and the delivery of quality learning experiences for all students in the distance education context. Since commencing operation in 2019 over one third of staff have engaged in Quality Teaching Rounds. Our 2021-2024 strategic direction initiatives include a commitment to the implementation of research supported Visible Learning strategies to our unique context.

Strategic Direction 1: Student growth and attainment

Purpose

Improve the learning experience for all students through research informed quality teaching practice and learning experience design.

Improvement measures

Target year: 2024

Improve the percentage of HSC course results in top three bands to 67.6% or above.

At least 75% of teachers have engaged with Quality Teaching Rounds to model and share best practice in online teaching and learning.

Increase full-time student live lesson attendance to at least 80%.

Increase engagement with eLearning courses (return rates) for all students to at least 70%.

At least 90% of teachers believe 'listening to students is more important than talking to them' (Mindframes Survey).

Target year: 2024

At least 40% of secondary students are achieving NAPLAN top 2 bands in Numeracy.

At least 36% of secondary students are achieving NAPLAN top 2 bands in Reading.

At least 70% of primary students are achieving NAPLAN top 2 bands in Numeracy.

At least 60% of primary students are achieving NAPLAN top 2 bands in Reading.

Initiatives

Quality Teaching & Learning

A shared understanding of quality learning. Embed a whole school (staff, students, supervisors) understanding of what it means to be an effective learner. Ensure learning intentions and success criteria are consistent and inform each student's next steps. Students can clearly state what they are learning and 'where to' next. Establish a culture where feedback is embedded across all activities to inform a continual culture of improvement and progress. Empower staff through a common understanding of Visible Learning strategies and their application to our distance education context.

Quality live lessons. Continue growth in the uptake and application of the Quality Teaching Model with leadership and support from the Connected Teaching & Learning Team. Expand the program to incorporate the University of Newcastle's Quality Assessment Practice program. Ensure all staff have a clear understanding of to the expectations of quality distance education practice.

Quality learning experiences. Continue the implementation of the Finigan template for programming for all new and revised courses. This will ensure effective backward mapping, connection to live lesson content and formative assessment is built into the online learning modules to inform the teacher of individual student progress.

Tracking & Sustaining Progress

Effective systems, analysis and pathways. Improve tracking of student progress to ensure students not meeting expectations are identified and supported at point of need using eLearning and DEMS (school database) data. Improve subject selection processes to ensure students are selecting appropriate courses for their career path and for success. Further develop non-ATAR curriculum pathways for students wishing to access traineeships including increasing the number of VET course options. Deepen HSC analysis so that it is cross-curricular and gaps are addressed in stages 4 and 5 to support HSC success.

Success criteria for this strategic direction

The school has an embedded culture of collegiality, shared practice and a commitment to the continual improvement of the teaching and learning experiences of our students. Teachers use formative assessment strategies to actively reflect on and improve their practice. All teachers, students, parents and supervisors have a clear and consistent understanding of what it means to be an effective learner.

Live lessons are embedded as part of the school culture and lesson time is valued, collaborative and engaging. Live lessons are planned to enhance independent learning experiences.

All courses are backward mapped using the Finigan SDE programming template. Courses are designed with consideration of learning design principles and theories. Formative assessment is built in. Online learning experiences are innovative, interactive and engaging.

All staff are committed to the delivery of quality distance education practice.

All students receive tailored support and advice to identify and build their strengths and goals ensuring successful learning pathways.

There is a common understanding of the Literacy and Numeracy Progressions and a collective responsibility for embedding literacy and numeracy strategies across the curriculum.

Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

Question. What has been the impact of embedding a whole school understanding of what it means to be an effective learner? Has the integration of formative assessment strategies into eLearning courses and live lessons provided teachers with a clear and ongoing method of reflecting on and refining their practice? Are students actively engaging with learning during live lessons? Are students being developed as self-directed learners?

Strategic Direction 1: Student growth and attainment

Initiatives

Embed formative assessment practices. All teachers know their impact and effectiveness through the application of assessment for learning, assessment as learning and assessment of learning strategies. Formative assessment strategies are expertly used in all lessons.

Reading, writing and numeracy. All teachers understand and explicitly teach literacy and numeracy to students at all levels of achievement, in all subject areas. Extend the Literacy and Numeracy Progressions from Primary to Middle School and then extend to mainstream 7-10 curriculum. Use Check-in and Best Start (K and Year 7) to identify individual needs and to track and support students. Apply resources from the Literacy and Numeracy Hub to facilitate whole school understanding and implementation of literacy and numeracy strategies. Students are able to articulate learning intentions and success criteria in reading and numeracy.

Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

Data. HSC, NAPLAN, Best Start K and Year 7, PLAN 2, Check-in assessment and internal student performance measures (Literacy and Numeracy Progressions, live lesson attendance, eLearning engagement data), Visible Learning Mindframes Survey.

Analysis. Analyse the data throughout the school planning cycle to identify initiatives that are working and those that needed refining.

Implications. Adapt the Strategic Improvement Plan dynamically, build on successes and maintain its relevance.

Strategic Direction 2: Supporting Every Learner

Purpose

Embed and communicate a culture of high expectations with tailored and tracked support for every student using thorough wellbeing processes and strong partnerships with supervisors and external agencies.

Improvement measures

Target year: 2024

Student TTFM data improves from baseline 38% to be above 75% in the area of students with a positive sense of belonging.

Student TTFM data improves from baseline 34% to be above 80% in the area of students with positive relationships.

Increase the proportion of Aboriginal students attaining Year 12 while supporting their cultural identity.

At least 90% of teachers 'spend time teaching all students the strategies of learning' (Mindframes Survey).

Target year: 2024

Student TTFM data improves from baseline 59% to be above 80% in the area of students that value schooling outcomes.

100% of staff understand how to access and apply strategies from each student's IESP to support their learning.

All Middle School students successfully attain a RoSA and/or transition to mainstream.

All Supported Learning students successfully attain a RoSA.

Initiatives

Learning Partnerships

Establish and sustain a culture of high expectations. The Engagement Team will establish the initial relationship and expectations with families. Develop strong learning partnerships with supervisors through clear induction processes and ongoing communication. Ensure expectations are clear on enrolment and adequate support, supervision and services are in place for every student. An Engagement Officer will liaise directly with families of students with low engagement, to build relationships and coordinate re-engagement plans.

Supporting our Aboriginal students and families. Develop and implement strategies to build and sustain learning relationships with our Aboriginal students and their families through the networks of ACLOs, AECGs and our Aboriginal Education Worker. Ensure Aboriginal perspectives are mapped and embedded across all KLAs. Provide opportunities for all Aboriginal students to connect with and express their cultural identity with pride.

Ensuring all students are connected, thriving and succeeding. Further develop and embed wellbeing procedures to support all students. Learning & Wellbeing Coaches deliver wellbeing programs designed for our distance education context and student needs. Embed trauma informed practice through the professional development of all staff. All staff are skilled in tailoring curriculum to individual needs. Student voice is valued through the student leadership development program. Success is celebrated through the implementation of merit recognition processes.

Tailored Support for Learning

Building Middle School. Continue to develop the Middle School program for students in years 7-10 performing below Stage level. Embed Literacy and Numeracy Progression support. Streamline processes for transition to and from Middle School and mainstream faculties.

Leveraging small group support at the learning hubs. Strengthen the role of learning hubs to support vulnerable

Success criteria for this strategic direction

Students and families commence distance education with a clear understanding of expectations and with a strong sense of shared responsibility for each student's success. Relationships with the school are strong and established early.

Schools with shared enrolments work in partnership and have a clear understanding of the role of distance education.

Appropriate internal and external support services are in place and monitored for every at risk student. Support is coordinated as required through internal strategies and external agencies.

The individual learning needs of each student are carefully identified and supported by all staff to ensure learning progression and successful outcomes.

The school has strong connections with all Aboriginal communities across our enrolment zone. Our school is directly connected with each community through the local AECGs. Aboriginal students are provided with opportunities to celebrate their cultural identity and local community while sharing their pride with the school community.

Students feel connected with a strong sense of belonging through student voice and the recognition of success.

Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

Questions. Do our processes ensure all students and supervisors have a clear understanding of our expectations on enrolment? Do our students have a sense of belonging and connection with our school? Does every Aboriginal student have an authentic and dynamic PLP? Are all students supported on their learning journey?

Data. TTFM Student data. Student management system (DEMS) data. Student exit data. Engagement Team data, student support and tracking, Visible Learning

Initiatives

students. This includes embedding clear processes and expectations with the home schools and clear processes for transition in and out of the hubs. Review hub locations annually based on local community needs.

Extending Learning & Support processes.
Identification, tracking and case management support with the department and external agencies for students and families with extreme disengagement concerns. Embed the role of Supported Learning across the school to ensure the individual learning needs of students are being provided for by all teachers. Every NCCD student has a dynamic and detailed Individualised Education Support Plan (IESP). IESP strategies are implemented by all staff.

Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

Mindframes Survey.

Analysis. Analyse the data throughout the school planning cycle to identify initiatives that are working and those that needed refining.

Implications. Adapt the Strategic Improvement Plan dynamically, build on successes and maintain its relevance.

Strategic Direction 3: Leading Learning

Purpose

To involve all staff in the improvement journey through research and pilot projects and disseminate our findings to the broader education community including NSW Public Education and the NSW and Australasian distance education schools.

Improvement measures

Target year: 2024

Every teacher has a dynamic PDP which is directly integrated with their self-evaluation and focused on professional growth and progression.

Teacher TTFM data increased from baseline 71% to be above 85% in the area of collaboration.

Teacher TTFM data increased from baseline 78% to be above 90% in the area of learning culture.

Teacher TTFM data increased from baseline 75% to be above 85% in the area of data informs practice.

At least 90% of teachers believe 'all of my students know what they are learning and why they are learning it' (Mindframes Survey).

Target year: 2024

Teacher TTFM data increased from baseline 66% to be above 80% in the area of leadership.

Teacher TTFM data increased from baseline 65% agree or strongly agree to be above 80% in the area of school leaders leading improvement and change.

Initiatives

Collective Improvement

Build our professional learning community. Build the culture of collegiality across the school by providing the opportunity for shared practice. Facilitate and encourage staff to invite feedback from students to inform, reflect and improve practice. Embed explicit systems that facilitate professional dialogue, collaboration, lesson observation, the modelling of effective practice and the provision of feedback between teachers.

Informed growth in collective teacher efficacy. Engage with Corwin Education's Visible Learning implementation program to investigate and improve practice over the first 3 years of the SIP. This will be a dynamic whole school program which will provide deep analysis of our current practices and facilitate a shift to research supported strategies, applied to the distance education context.

Strengthen PDP (Performance Development Plan) processes and expectations. Embed clear school processes to develop the capacity of all teachers to confidently measure and reflect on their teaching effectiveness and identify and apply strategies for improvement.

Learning Leadership

Contribute to research and the broader education community. Establish ways to contribute to the Visible Learning research, adding a distance education perspective. Actively contribute to the distance education lens for the Quality Teaching Model and the Quality Assessment Model (University of Newcastle). Actively contribute to the co-development and sharing of best practice resources with the distance education networks, AADES (Australasian Association of Distance Education Schools) and the broader education community.

Deepen and distribute instructional leadership capacity. Develop the leadership capacity of the executive team. Provide opportunities for leadership development within the school through a future leaders program. The executive team have a collective

Success criteria for this strategic direction

The school has a strong culture of collegiality and shared practice where teachers feel comfortable and safe to open the doors of their online classrooms and are skilled in providing and receiving feedback.

All teachers are instructional leaders and collaborate to identify and apply best practice with a focus on the collective improvement of teaching and the learning experiences of all students.

All teachers value the PDP (Performance and Development Plan) with a strong sense of ownership of the process with measurable outcomes.

The school provides opportunities for leadership development and deepens the collective confidence and capacity across the school.

The school contributes to broader educational research with a distance education lens. The school is a leader of best practice across the distance education community and beyond.

Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

Questions. Do teachers value the PDP process and feel that it supports the development of their practice. Are teachers open to providing, receiving and actioning feedback? Do teachers have a collective sense of responsibility for improvement? Do all teachers feel part of the process for improvement and change? Do teachers have a shared understanding of quality teaching in distance education?

Data. TTFM teacher survey, Visible Learning survey data, PDP evaluation, internal staff professional development evaluations (DEAL), conference presentation evaluations, QTR surveys, internal staff surveys, Visible Learning Mindframes Survey.

Analysis. Analyse the data throughout the school planning cycle to identify initiatives that are working and those that needed refining.

Initiatives

responsibility to sustain a culture of evidence-based teaching to ensure every student makes measurable progress.

Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

Implications. Adapt the Strategic Improvement Plan dynamically, build on successes and maintain its relevance.