

# Strategic Improvement Plan 2021-2024

## Cascade Environmental Education Centre 5731



# School vision and context

## School vision statement

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.

# Strategic Direction 1: Student growth and attainment - Excellence in Learning and Teaching

## Purpose

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

To develop students' and teachers' knowledge and skills.

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

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

## Improvement measures

### Target year: 2024

Learning experiences with the Cascade team:

- Are rated to 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,
- significant numbers of attending schools re-book programs with Cascade EEC in line with their cyclical requirements.

### Target year: 2024

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:

- enhances teachers' ability to create high quality learning experiences, and
- to effectively deliver engaging and curriculum relevant activities in an outdoor setting.

## Initiatives

### Excellence in curriculum delivery

Cascade will ensure 'Excellence in Curriculum Delivery' through:

- integrating stage appropriate KLA curriculum outcomes into programs as negotiated with client schools,
- facilitating quality learning, through challenging, engaging, meaningful and contextually relevant Environmental and Sustainability Education experiences,
- supporting high expectations for student learning,
- meeting the expressed specific needs of individual students as required,
- supporting student and teacher well being,
- supporting teaching colleagues to develop skills and expertise in the delivery of Environmental and Sustainability Education content across KLAs, and
- developing students' knowledge and skills in the curriculum areas their program is designed to address, enabling them to be engaged, informed in and demonstrate environmentally sustainable behaviour, capable of positively influencing their future.

### Teacher Professional Development

Staff at Cascade spend time as a team both as a school based and an EZEC based team to develop skills, learn about and grow content, teaching methods and strategies.

To Develop a partnership with Thalgarrah EEC to form a learning community that facilitates professional dialogue, collaboration, teaching observations, and the provision of specific feedback to improve practice.

Teachers presenting the programs have the opportunity to develop knowledge and teaching practice in a supportive and collaborative environment.

## Success criteria for this strategic direction

Progress in learning and achievement is identified and acknowledged.

Programs are developed with the whole school community and demonstrate aspirational expectations of learning progress and achievement for all students, and is committed to the pursuit of excellence.

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

Structures and practices are developed that enhance curriculum delivery.

Well being in a variety of forms and for all stakeholders is integrated into the programs and experiences.

Cascades curriculum provision supports high expectations for student learning. The curriculum is enhanced by learning alliances with other schools or organisations, where useful and practicable.

Online resources continue to be enhanced, developed and delivered.

Programs are marketed.

The leadership team actively supports changing programs that leads to improvement, creating opportunities where feedback about programs can be shared and monitored.

Leadership capabilities are developed through deep collaboration with EZEC and other peers.

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

## Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

**Question:** To what extent did Cascade staff collect and utilise evaluations from school camps and engage in deep discussions with visiting groups about their programs and amend programs as a result of this to reflect feedback?

# Strategic Direction 1: Student growth and attainment - Excellence in Learning and Teaching

## Initiatives

---

School staff are supported to develop and deliver goals through the PDP process.

## Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

---

To what extent did Cascade Staff attend a variety of Professional Development events and have regular discussions and meetings about programs support and administration that resulted in program improvements?

To what extent did Cascade staff collaborate with EZEC partners to enhance teacher development and programs.

**Data:** These data sources will be collected and analysed by relevant teachers, leaders and teams: internal student performance measures and engagement (during camps and programs); teaching programs; practical observations; Performance and Development Plans; School Excellence Framework self-assessments, professional learning evaluations.

**Analysis:** Data is analysed and triangulated regularly to determine the extent to which the purpose and improvement measures have been achieved.

**Implications:** Rigorous analysis of the data to determine impact will guide both ongoing implementation as well as future school planning to provide continuous program and teacher improvement, ensuring schools continue to book programs.

## Strategic Direction 2: Innovative Collaboration

### Purpose

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

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

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.

### Improvement measures

#### Target year: 2024

Collaboration with a variety of partners strengthens and enhances the programs conducted by Cascade EEC.

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.

#### Target year: 2024

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.

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.

### Initiatives

#### Collaboration with the community

Partnerships are seen as a major contributing factor to Cascades programs. Cascade staff attend meeting, workshops and initiatives in order to grow and enhance partnerships and collaboration.

Partnerships are developed as opportunities arise.

Cascade budgets for time to be allocated to partnerships in order for them to flourish.

Collaboration results in programs becoming better learning experiences for students as expressed in observations and evaluations.

#### Asset improvement leading to program enhancement

Cascade continues to work in partnership with the AMU and other funding bodies to achieve strategic improvements and innovations to the school as per the negotiated maintenance plan.

Assets gained through regional and state initiatives are implemented.

Assets are constructed in accordance with appropriate standards and guidelines.

### Success criteria for this strategic direction

Cascade teachers engage in professional discussion and collaborate to improve teaching and learning in their classes, staff, or for particular student groups. This includes negotiated observations of classroom teaching practice, with feedback, to improve professional knowledge and practice.

Cascade develops solid working relationships and continues existing relationships with Aboriginal communities and agencies.

Partnerships 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 etc.

Professional learning in the school emphasises developing effective instructional leadership, management skills and leadership attributes to facilitate whole school improvement and build a strong pipeline of teachers and leaders.

Partnerships with other schools are continued and developed. For example with CAPA, science and HSIE faculties to develop and improve programs conducted by Cascade. CAPA skills development, NAIDOC, Thalgarrah EEC.

The leadership team takes a creative approach to use of the physical environment to ensure that it optimises learning, within the constraints of the school design and setting.

### Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

**Question:** To what extent did Cascade staff collaborate with various stakeholders to ensure programs are of a high quality?

To what extent were the facilities at Cascade enhanced, developed or maintained to ensure safe and engaging experiences at Cascade?

## Strategic Direction 2: Innovative Collaboration

### Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

---

**Data:** Data sources be collected and analysed by relevant teachers, leaders and teams: Work programs and resources, grant applications and success, discussions and meetings with Asset management unit staff, budget planning and allocations.

**Analysis:** Data is analysed and referenced regularly to determine the extent to which the purpose and improvement measures have been achieved.

**Implications:** Rigorous analysis of the data to determine impact will guide both ongoing implementation as well as future school planning to provide continuous program and teacher improvement, ensuring schools continue to book programs.

# Strategic Direction 3: SD 3

Purpose

Improvement measures

Target year: 2024

Target year: 2024

Initiatives

Success criteria for this strategic direction

Evaluation plan for this strategic direction