

Annotation to Focus areas 1.4, 3.6, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4

The Jump Start program was developed to support new students following an increase in class and behavioural issues involving new students, which was affecting the student community as a whole. I was one of three teachers invited by the school counsellor and principal to form a working party to develop and implement a new teaching program that would model effective strategies and support my colleagues to address this need. (4.1, 4.3).

My colleagues and I worked together to devise behaviour management and inclusive strategies using analysis of student records and our combined knowledge of the school and community and embedded them in the program, implementing them over a period of 10 weeks. Each session of the Jump Start program involves introducing the students to a different aspect of the school, discussing a core school value and consolidating this learning by reflecting on the session. My working party colleagues and I modelled these practices for our teaching colleagues in order to instill long-term change in students by providing ongoing support and counselling for new students. We created a supportive network of students and staff for new students, developing leadership skills to assist in fostering effective interaction between students. We also created and maintained positive and inclusive learning environments, subsequently improving connectedness and engagement in learning for all students (4.1, 4.3).

Structuring the program around key topics allowed my colleague and I to specifically address issues with wellbeing and engagement (see Artefact A – New student induction program). This structure also supports the National Safe Schools Framework and the focus area of 'Participation, Retention and Attendance' within the Department of Education and Child Services Aboriginal Strategy 2005–2010 (1.4, 4.4). The strategies employed in this program support the ongoing participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, such as the provision of peer support networks within the school community. Communicating with parents and carers about the program, and inviting feedback and discussion, helps build collaborative relationships with families and the wider community (1.4, 4.1, 4.4).

I implemented the delivery of the initial phase of the middle years program, thus modelling for colleagues this range of targeted strategies, including behavior management, designed to support the participation and engagement of particular student groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (1.4, 4.1, 4.3).

Along with my colleagues, I evaluated the program to investigate its effectiveness and impact on the safety, well-being and learning of the students. This involved collecting core baseline data at the beginning of the initial phase which showed new students' profiles and if they were experiencing behavioural or social issues. (See Artefact B – Core baseline and final data). By the end of the first year 100 students had participated in the program, including 10 ATSI students from 6 different families. Data collected at the program's conclusion showed that 97 per cent of these students were very settled. This was determined through discussions I led with their teachers and the school counsellor and was also supported by student feedback which overwhelmingly highlighted the program's positive impact on their feelings of connectedness, confidence and leadership skills (see Artefact C – Program evaluation) (3.6, 4.1, 4.4).

Additionally, school data which was collected by the school counsellor supported these findings, showing unexplained absences had decreased by 350 cases from 2006 to 2007 and incidents of bullying had dropped from 95 incidents in 2006 to 29 in 2007. Of these bullying incidents, only 2 per cent were reported by new students in 2007, down from 16 per cent in 2006. Students for whom the program did not elicit a positive response took part in smaller consultative groups where they discussed issues with myself, their teachers and the school counsellor and came to agreement about the role of each party in addressing and resolving these issues (1.4, 3.6, 4.3, 4.4).

Feedback and data confirms the success of the program in supporting students settle into their new environment quickly and become more confident in communicating with peers both within and outside of the classroom (3.6, 4.1). We documented a proposal to continue the program in the following year, which also outlined suggestions for modifications and improvements (see Artefact D – Future directions), which was presented to the Leadership Team. The program now forms a vital part of the ongoing Health and Well-being Strategy at the school.