

Case Study – Bellaire Primary School

Background

Bellaire Primary School has approximately 560 students and is a growing school with a strong focus on 'personalised learning' for all. All students work within learning community teams at Prep, junior, middle or senior levels. Each learning community is resourced directly with fulltime instructional coaches. Teachers in the senior learning community have a range of roles depending on the learning context: learning advisor, creating and teaching a range of workshops or roving for supporting independent study.

Situation

The school's challenge has been how to maintain the sense of community of the students, teachers and the parents and community in the context of growth. The website and the student blogs have been a strong vehicle for involving parents in their child's learning in very real and authentic ways.

What did you do?

We developed blog sites for every class and learning community. Starting at Prep, the teacher scans writing samples, inserts digital images of hands on activities, and may even make an audio of a book for reading. Parents can see the type of activities the students are doing at school then leave messages on the blog. By Grade 3/4, students develop and manage their own blog site and then undertake and record 'personal' projects. Year 5/6 students work as open learning communities and use the blog site to track personal learning.

Students are encouraged to undertake 'passion projects' and parents become informed and involved through the blog. Parents are involved at the beginning, middle and end of the year, if needed, in a planned interaction or meeting at the school. Parents are also encouraged and welcome to attend as many weekly one on one student teacher conferences as they can in the senior learning community. These are scheduled at the same time every week between the student and the teacher for 15 minutes. Parents are invited and encouraged to look at their child(ren)'s blog at least once a week.

Results

- Student Attitudes to School survey has improved, morale doubled and there has been significant improvement in student motivation and confidence in learning.
- Staff surveys indicate an increase in curriculum coordination and student motivation and student decision-making is in the top quartile in the state.
- Student achievement data is strong and improvements across the school have been evident at all levels, particularly in the senior years.

