School Improvement Unit
Report

Tully State High School

1. Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report is a product of a review carried out at Tully State High School from 4 to 6 May 2015. It provides an evaluation of the school's performance against the nine domains of the _National School Improvement Tool_. It also recommends improvement strategies for the school to consider in consultation with its regional office and school community.

The review and report were completed by a review team from the School Improvement Unit (SIU). For more information about the SIU and the new reviews for Queensland state schools please visit the Department of Education and Training (DET) website.

1.2 School context

Location:	Bruce Highway, Tully
Education region:	Far North Queensland
The school opened in:	1964
Year levels:	Years 7 to 12
Current school enrolment:	634
Indigenous enrolments:	15 per cent
Students with disability enrolments:	6 per cent
Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:	943
Year principal appointed:	2011
Number of teachers:	46
Nearby schools:	Feluga State School, Lower Tully State School, St. Clare's Catholic Primary, Tully State School, El Arish State School, Mission Beach State School, Murray Upper State School, Kennedy State School, Cardwell State School.
Significant community partnerships:	Tully Queensland Police Service – Truancy, Mackays Bananas, Tully Rugby League
Unique school programs:	National Rugby League partnership, POSITIVE Education, Orpheus Island, Droughtmaster Stud.

1.3 Review methodology

The review was conducted by a team of three reviewers.

The review consisted of:

- a pre-review audit of the school's performance data and other school information

- consultation with the school's Assistant Regional Director

- a school visit of three days

- interviews with

  - Principal and two Deputy principals

  - Heads of Department (HODs), Head of Inclusive Practice, Master teacher

  - 26 teachers

  - Business Services Manager (BSM), two admin staff and three teacher-aides

  - Parents and Citizens' (P&C) association president and 12 other parents

  - Five principals of local primary schools

  - Guidance Officer and Youth Support Coordinator

  - Community Education Counsellor and a Community Elder

  - Information and communications technology (ICT) coordinator and ICT technician

  - Facilities officer and one cleaner

  - Editor, *Tully Times* newspaper

  - State Member of Parliament

  - Representatives from AG White Banana Farm and Tully Tigers Football Club

1.4 Review team

Valerie Hadgelias	Internal reviewer, SIU (review chair)
Robert Gilbert	External reviewer
Kate Van Der Meulen	Peer reviewer

1.5 Reading the report

The executive summary outlines key findings from the review. The key improvement strategies prioritise future direction for improvement. The executive summary should be read along with the findings and improvement strategies outlined in the nine domains which provide a strategic view for improvement.

2. Executive summary

2.1 Key findings

- The school has a wide-ranging Annual Improvement Plan and the key priorities for the explicit improvement agenda are not clear to staff. This challenges the school's capacity to drive a deeply embedded change agenda in key areas.

  While the improvement plan has been successful in improving practice in the use of data and explicit teaching, other aspects of the agenda have been less successful. Timelines and targets are not widely communicated and understood. Some staff members said they feel overwhelmed by the breadth of the agenda.

- Highly effective data processes have been implemented in recent years and this whole school approach to using a range of student outcomes and other data is showing benefits in staff responses to students' needs.

  The school has undertaken an extensive program to build staff capability around the collection and use of student achievement data, and staff members indicate that data literacy amongst teachers has grown considerably over the past 2 years. All staff indicated they recognised the benefits presented by using the data within the dashboard. A process of 5 week data grabs has been implemented to facilitate the regular collection and analysis of Level of Achievement data.

- Significant recent improvement in school culture has enhanced the positive learning environment of Tully State High School.

  Many members of the school community spoke about a significant shift in the school's culture over the last five years. Respectful, positive and caring relationships are evident between staff and students. The learning climate in the school is responsive to student wellbeing. Parents, teachers and students speak with pride about the school.

- The school has not yet developed a systematic approach to feedback, coaching and mentoring for all staff.

  Walk-throughs are frequently conducted by school leaders. Teachers are open to constructive feedback and welcome the opportunities to have school leaders observe and discuss their work with them. However, there is no systematic whole-school practice of providing formal feedback. Mentoring relationships are formalised for beginning teachers and teachers new to the school, though for the latter group, this seems to be unevenly implemented. For remaining staff, mentoring is often informal and ad hoc.

- Use of data provides a strong base for differentiation but carry through to personalised learning for all students is inconsistent.

  Regular data on the achievements, progress, strengths and weaknesses of individual students is used in classrooms to make judgements about individual needs. There are some examples of high quality practice in the application of data analysis to the organisation of student learning. However, some staff expressed a lack of confidence in developing differentiated classroom practices. There is a detailed Standard of Practice document on differentiation but it is not widely implemented.

- School leaders are committed to continuous improvement in teaching practices. The school recognises the need for a strong pedagogical approach appropriate for its context. It is presently undertaking a collaborative, evidence-based review to further develop and refine its teaching and learning framework.

  Explicit Teaching has been widely taken up by staff as the model of pedagogical practice across the school in recent years. A thorough review of the school's pedagogical framework is presently underway beginning with an innovative approach to engaging staff in a survey of teachers' current effective teaching practices.

2.2 Key improvement strategies

- Collaboratively sharpen and narrow the focus of the school's improvement agenda. Ensure rigorous school-wide implementation of agreed strategies. Allow sufficient time to fully embed these priorities before moving the developmental focus to the next priority area.

- Develop a whole-school approach to the development of a culture of continuous professional improvement that includes a formal program of feedback and classroom based learning, mentoring and coaching arrangements for all staff.

- Build the capacity of teachers who lack confidence in their skills to differentiate their teaching to meet the needs of all students. Encourage and support teachers to monitor closely the progress of individuals, identify both learning difficulties and opportunities for acceleration and enrichment and to tailor classroom activities to levels of readiness and need.

3. Findings and improvement strategies against the domains

3.1 An explicit improvement agenda

Findings

The school has developed a broad agenda for improvement and school leaders can describe the improvements they wish to see in student outcomes.

The school's Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) identifies a broad range of priorities for 2015 which includes improving teaching practice, refining and embedding data based decision making, refining and embedding planning and accountability systems, connecting parents and caregivers with their children's learning, a service commitment, Junior secondary, reading, writing, numeracy, retention, closing the gap, and attendance.

However this broad agenda lacks the focus, targets and timelines necessary to drive the work of teachers in the classroom.

Teachers most frequently identified attendance and/or 100 per cent Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) attainment for Year 12 students as the main priorities for the school. However, Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L), Explicit Instruction, data literacy, improvements in literacy and numeracy, improvements in teacher practice, and the service commitment were all mentioned as key priorities by various members of staff.

Timelines and targets are not clear, nor are they widely communicated and understood. Therefore, the impact upon the day-to-day work of teachers is uneven.

Parents have not as yet been enrolled as partners in the school's improvement agenda and are generally unable to identify the key priorities.

Ongoing work is being directed at redefining the roles and responsibilities at the Head of Department level to ensure these key school leaders are well positioned to drive improvement priorities.

Supporting data

Headline Indicators, TSHS Strategic Plan, 2015 Annual implementation Plan, School Data Profile, interviews with staff, students, parents and other community members.

Improvement strategies

Sharpen and narrow the focus of the school's improvement agenda. Ensure rigorous school-wide implementation of agreed strategies. Allow sufficient time to fully embed these priorities before moving the developmental focus to the next priority area.

Collaboratively establish clear school-wide targets for improvement expressed in terms of measurable student outcomes with accompanying timelines.

Engage staff and the school community members in the improvement agenda through consultative processes and effective communication strategies.

3.2 Analysis and discussion of data

Findings

The principal and school leaders articulate a belief that reliable data on student outcomes is crucial to the school's improvement agenda. A systematic plan for the collection, analysis and use of a range of data is being implemented.

The school has undertaken an extensive program to build staff capability around the collection and use of student achievement data, and staff members indicate that data literacy amongst teachers has grown considerably over the past 2 years. All staff indicated they recognised the benefits presented by using the data within the dashboard.

Staff talk of analysing student data as an expected whole-school practice. Teachers recognise the value of collecting and analysing data on individual and class performance and progress. Some teachers also talk of the value of data on student performance as evidence of successful teaching.

There are documented plans for the collection of data on student achievement in both the junior and senior school. A range of diagnostic tools are used including National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), PAT-M and PAT-R. A process of 5 week data grabs have been implemented to facilitate the regular collection and analysis of Level of Achievement data. Some teachers express concern about the potential influence of the data agenda on assessment schedules.

The Deputy Principal, Education Services, has been assigned the responsibility for implementing the annual data plan, analysing the full range of school data, summarising, displaying and communicating student outcomes data to staff.

The newly established Master Teacher position has been assigned a major role in continuing to build the data culture among teachers in the junior school. Significant data collection from primary schools informs the transition process.

The Deputy Principal, Student Services, leads the analysis of student behaviour, attendance and wellbeing data and subsequent intervention processes.

There is strong evidence of very effective and systematic tracking and monitoring of student progress in the Senior School towards all students attaining a QCE. Intervention strategies are implemented to support students at risk of non-completion. Similar tracking systems of student progress in Queensland Core Skills (QCS) preparation and Overall Position (OP) attainment are being developed.

2012-2014 NAPLAN data indicates that in terms of relative gain, Tully SHS is performing at a level similar to other similar Queensland state schools in all areas other than numeracy where it is slightly below. The percentage of students performing at or above national minimum standards has shown significant improvement in both spelling and numeracy during the 2008-20014 timeframe. Mean scaled scores in each strand indicate the school is placed similar to Queensland state schools.

Supporting data

Annual Implementation Plan 2015, interviews with staff and leadership team members, School Data Profile, data walls, the school's data plan, differentiation placemats, curriculum planning documents.

Improvement strategies

Develop a systematic and consistent approach to data conversations between Heads of Department (HODs) and faculty staff to ensure a whole school approach. Support HODs to lead sophisticated data-focused conversations with all teachers to assist in identifying gaps in student learning, measuring progress over time and gaining feedback on the effectiveness of teacher planning and classroom instruction.

Provide further professional development for teachers in the analysis of student data and the use of this information to inform their planning for example, differentiation, intervention.

3.3 A culture that promotes learning

Findings

Respectful, positive and caring relationships are evident between staff and students. Interactions between staff, students and parents are respectful and polite and all speak very highly of the Positive Education culture.

The learning climate in the school is responsive to student wellbeing to enhance student outcomes, including the utilisation of support staff (Youth Support Coordinator/ Community Education Counsellor) in the classroom.

There has been a significant improvement in the learning culture and morale over recent years, evident in stories shared by students, staff, parents and community members. In the 2014 School Opinion Survey (SOS) data indicated that 94 per cent of parent respondents, 97 per cent of student respondents, and 97.4 percent of staff indicated that they believe students at Tully SHS are getting a good education.

Attendance is an issue for some students. In 2014 the school's attendance rate was 86.7 per cent. 31.4 per cent of students attained an attendance rate of less than 85 per cent. College leaders have identified this concern and are working to address the issue.

The school has strategies in place to promote appropriate behaviour, particularly PB4L, evident through the school's Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students document. Positive Education classes focus on student wellbeing and resilience. There has been a significant reduction in school disciplinary absences between 2010 and 2014.

The physical environment of the school is well maintained and conducive to learning.

The tone of the school reflects a strong collegial culture of support. SOS data indicated a 75 per cent positive response from staff in regards to morale. Staff overwhelmingly indicated that they wished to teach at Tully State High School and that they are committed to the students.

Interviews suggest that some staff feel that the rate of change arising from the improvement agenda is distracting from their daily practice and in some cases creating a stressful work environment.

Supporting data

Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students; School Data Profile, School Opinion Survey, staff, student, parent and community member interviews, Headline Indicators.

Improvement strategies

Ensure that the development and implementation of PB4L remains a high priority. Look for opportunities to further engage parents and community members in the PB4L process.

Ensure high attendance and commitments to every student learning continue as the foundations of a high expectations culture for Tully SHS.

Investigate strategies to promote staff wellbeing.

3.4 Targeted use of school resources

Findings

The principal and other school leaders have given priority to understanding and addressing the needs of students and are sourcing and applying available resources to meet those needs.

The school demonstrates flexible and innovative use of human resources. The HOD junior secondary position is above the normal allocation of HODs to the school and the school funds this position in order to address an identified priority. A 0.5 full-time equivalent Behaviour Management role has been established this year with a focus on student well-being and attendance. The staff allocation of a 0.5 full-time equivalent Master Teacher has been augmented by school funds (Great Results Guarantee funding) to become a full time leadership position in the school.

The school works hard to ensure the curriculum in the senior school offers a broad range of academic and vocational subjects.

Recruitment of specialist staff in some areas is problematic due to the school's location.

Resources are allocated to maximise opportunities for students at risk. For example, a Rugby League program is implemented to support boys at risk of disengaging from learning. A Community Education Counsellor (CEC) and a Community Liaison Officer (CLO) support Indigenous and Islander students.

The student services team meet regularly to case manage students and to address student individual needs.

The current bank balance is $910,147. There appears to be sufficient discretionary funds available to the school to respond to emerging trends and identified needs.

A small but active Parents and Citizens' (P&C) association offer good support to the school. Community support centring on the school's golden jubilee allowed for the acquisition of a school bus. This essential transport facility allows students to access excursion opportunities that would otherwise be unaffordable.

A highly successful and self-sufficient Droughtmaster Stud has been established as part of the Agricultural Science program.

Programs have been developed and resources allocated to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities and high learning needs.

There is strong support, both in terms of personal support and modified curriculum programs, for students with disabilities and students with learning difficulties.

The resourcing of Information and communications technology (ICT) is problematic. While computers and other devices are available, ongoing replacement is extremely costly. Many teachers expressed concerns over both the availability and maintenance of computers and other ICTs for classroom use. Bandwidth capability is becoming an issue.

Supporting data

Annual implementation Plan 2015, Great Results Guarantee 2015, budget overview report, interviews with school leaders, BSM, teachers, non-teaching staff, P&C president and other parents, community members.

Improvement strategies

Establish explicit success criteria in terms of student outcomes for the programs offered and positions created. Monitor, review and evaluate these initiatives.

Investigate programs and classroom strategies to enhance the learning opportunities for high performing students.

Develop a plan to address the growing concerns about the adequacy of ICT hardware and network.

3.5 An expert teaching team

Findings

The school has in place a professional learning process based on the construction of professional development plans for all staff. Staff use the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) self-assessment tool to identify strengths and weaknesses, and are in the process of developing goals to guide their professional development over the coming year.

This process is on schedule, though the timeline means that actions arising from it will primarily be taken in Semester 2, with possible loss of opportunities which may have arisen earlier in the year.

Senior staff implement a consistent and active practice of classroom walk-throughs, with prompt feedback ranging from informal oral feedback to written feedback using the TeachScape application.

Arrangements are in place for mentoring of staff by Heads of Faculties and other senior staff. Mentoring relationships are formalised for beginning teachers and teachers new to the school, though for the latter group this seems to be unevenly implemented. For remaining staff, mentoring is often informal and conducted as the need arises.

Mentoring is less consistent in other cases where it could be useful, such as when teachers take on new subjects outside of their expertise or professional development for new policies or programs.

Teachers are open to constructive feedback and welcome opportunities to have school leaders observe and discuss their work with them.

The school provides opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles outside the classroom.

Supporting data

Strategic Plan 2012 – 2015, 2015 Annual Implementation Plan, Great Results Guarantee 2015, school budget, School Data Profile, staff interviews; school planning documents and templates.

Improvement strategies

Implement the professional development plan process earlier in the year, or at the end of the year before, in order to give access to professional development activities earlier in the school year.

Develop a whole-school approach to providing feedback to staff including formal written feedback on teaching on a regular basis.

Develop a systematic, whole-school approach to coaching and mentoring which will ensure the provision of modelling, mentoring and coaching to all staff.

3.6 Systematic curriculum delivery

Findings

Heads of Department lead curriculum and offer guidance to staff to ensure that it is linked to Australian Curriculum (AC) and Queensland Curriculum and Assessment (QCAA) documents. They ensure that the curriculum remains a focus for discussion and collaboration between teachers.

The school has effectively adapted Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) units to become more relevant to local contexts while still maintaining the key elements and principles of the curriculum intentions.

The leadership team develops teacher timetables to reflect the Junior Secondary principles, ensuring students have consistent teachers for their core subjects.

Moderation is an embedded practice across the school.

Vertical alignment of the curriculum is evident across several core subject areas.

Assessment and reporting processes are well established within the school, including a whole school assessment task template and the use of R6 ladders.

The different needs of verified students including program adjustments and modification are incorporated in teachers' planning documents. However, this was not observed in all cases.

Some incorporation of Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum is evident, particularly the "Boomerang" project with a local elder and the Manual Arts staff. Some students also mentioned an increased awareness of cultures throughout the school through activities like 'cultural days'.

The school leadership team has enabled staff to use OneSchool as the single, central location for curriculum documents by ensuring that all unit plans and assessments across all year levels and subjects are available.

Supporting data

Tully SHS Standards of Practice documents, faculty scope and sequence documents, 2015 Annual Implementation Plan, Strategic Plan, TeachScape data, staff and student interviews.

Improvement strategies

Ensure that the Standards of Practice policies and procedures are known and consistently embedded in practice by all staff.

Continue to explore opportunities to further embed cross-curricula perspectives, including Indigenous perspectives, ICT skills and higher-order thinking skills.

3.7 Differentiated teaching and learning

Findings

The school places a high priority on ensuring that classroom teachers identify and address the learning needs of individual students, especially low-achieving students.

A school Standard of Practice document exists to support staff in differentiation planning and practice, but few staff know of it, including senior staff with important roles in promoting differentiation.

Teachers are encouraged and supported to monitor closely the progress of individuals, identify learning difficulties and tailor classroom activities to levels of need.

Regular data on the achievements, progress, strengths and weaknesses of individual students is used in classrooms to make some judgements about individual needs.

While there are examples of excellent practice in the application of data analysis to the organisation of student learning, in many cases staff expressed a lack of confidence in developing differentiated classroom practices.

Support is available for students with learning needs and their teachers through the use of special education staff and teacher-aides. There is lack of clarity about the role and development of Individual Curriculum Plans (ICP), Individual Education Plans (IEP) and Individual Support Plans (ISP).

Differentiation is seen by some staff as predominantly focused on the needs of low-achieving students. Extension classes are provided for high-achieving and talented students.

The Rugby League program is having positive effects in assisting some students to remain engaged in school and the QCE process.

Some parents express concern about the apparent lack of academic success by boys in the senior school as reflected in recent school academic awards.

Supporting data

2015 Annual Implementation Plan, Great Results Guarantee 2015, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, school data plan, Standards of Practice documents, differentiation placemat, staff, parent and student interviews, school planning documents.

Improvement strategies

Review, update and put into effect the Standard of Practice document No. 7 on Differentiation Planning and Practice to support staff in developing differentiated teaching practices.

Develop a cohesive whole-school plan to ensure effective use of ICPs, IEPs and ISPs in the support of student learning.

Develop further strategies to meet the needs of high-achieving and talented students.

Investigate the concerns expressed about boys' levels of achievement in the senior years.

3.8 Effective pedagogical practices

Findings

The school principal and other school leaders recognise that highly effective teaching is the key to improving student learning throughout the school.

Explicit teaching has been widely taken up by staff, though initially in a relatively rigid form, which is now being made more flexible as part the development of the school's pedagogical framework.

A thorough review of the school's pedagogical framework is under way, beginning with an innovative approach to engaging staff in the process through a survey of teachers' current teaching practices.

This is being combined with a consideration in staff meetings of research and evidence-based approaches such as Marzano's Dimensions of Learning[1] and Hattie's Visible Learning[2] and its use of effect size as a measure of impact on student learning.

Students indicated that teachers gave them good feedback on their learning and made clear what students need to do to improve their achievement outcomes. Regular and timely feedback is provided to students through five weekly assessments and the use of achievement ladders.

Supporting data

2015 Annual Implementation Plan, Great Results Guarantee 2015, School Data Profile, Headline Indicators, staff, student and leadership team interviews, school professional development days, school planning documents.

Improvement strategies

Continue a collaborative approach to the development of the school pedagogical framework.

Ensure that the school pedagogical framework is clearly documented and consistently implemented through staff professional development, mentoring and feedback on practice.

Plan and implement an ongoing process for evaluation of the pedagogical framework in terms of its effects on teachers' practice and student learning outcomes.

---

[1] Marzano, Robert J. 2007, *The Art and Science of Teaching: A Comprehensive Framework for Effective Instruction.* ASCD, Alexandria, VA

[2] Hattie, John 2008, *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*, Routledge, New York.

3.9 School and community partnerships

Findings

The school has established sustainable partnerships which provide opportunities to students to improve educational outcomes and training opportunities, namely Mackays Bananas, White's Bananas, Tully Queensland Police Service, and Tully/Cairns Rugby League (NRL).

The school has engaged feeder school families and students prior to entering Year 7, ensuring a seamless transition for students and a successful start for Year 7 students entering secondary in 2015.

A productive association exists with the Indigenous elders in the community, some of whom visit the school and have been involved in school programs. This is enhanced by the positive work of the CEC.

The school provides a range of training opportunities for students through links with local businesses and TAFE North Queensland, and has expanded the range of vocational certificates offered at a school level.

It is evident that the school and the community have worked effectively together to establish and embed the 'Tully Truancy Accord' to address the truancy issues and lateness of some students.

The school plays a pivotal role in the cluster, working closely with the primary schools for the Junior Secondary transition and the annual Sports Awards. Collaboration on professional development of staff occurs across the cluster.

Parental engagement is evident through staff and parent interviews and some teachers actively seek ways to invite more parents to be involved in subject specific activities.

The school invites the community to be involved in the school, through programs such as the ANZAC Day ceremony, Sports Awards, sporting events.

Supporting data

School Opinion Survey, Annual Implementation Plan, Strategic Plan, School Data Profile, Next Step Survey, staff, student, parent and community interviews.

Improvement strategies

Evaluate the range of identified student needs in regards to student learning, attendance, engagement and wellbeing. Investigate further opportunities to establish innovative and sustainable partnerships that can strengthen the schools ability to address those identified needs.

Ensure there are documented plans for monitoring and reviewing each partnership to ensure they are having their intended impact of improving outcomes for students.

4. Follow-up timelines

- School to publish the executive summary on their website within two weeks.

- School to meet with Assistant Regional Director to discuss review findings and improvement strategies.