

Strategic Improvement Plan 2021-2024

Sydney Distance Education High School 8587



School vision and context

School vision statement

We provide flexible blended learning opportunities for quality individualised education, ensuring excellence and equity. We lead to challenge and support both students and staff to achieve personal success with high expectations. We inspire creative and engaged learning with strong student and teacher connections. We work in partnership with our wider school and distance education communities.

School context

Sydney Distance Education High School is a public school committed to excellence and equity in distance education. We provide flexible blended learning programs, serving students from areas north of Wollongong, south of Newcastle, and west to the Blue Mountains. Close to the central business district of Sydney, we work on the land of the Traditional Custodians, the Cadigal People of Eora Country.

Students who meet specific enrolment requirements attend our school because they are not able to attend another school on a fulltime basis. We teach courses for fulltime and part program students who include students with medical conditions and those with additional support needs. We also teach students studying single courses which they are not able to access at their home schools. We offer a range of courses in Years 7-10 with our middle school program providing further courses for students who need additional literacy and numeracy support. We teach approximately 40 courses for Years 11-12.

The school enrolls approximately 1500 students with a fulltime equivalent student number of around 750 and employs more than 200 fulltime and part time staff.

We provide flexible blended learning opportunities for quality individualised education. Students may learn in many ways: through online lessons, written materials, web lessons, email and phone. We also engage students through videoconferencing, student online forums, study days, open days, excursions, peer support activities and teacher visits to schools and homes. Almost all of our Years 9 and 10 courses are delivered online and we have a number of learning hubs where students may work with teachers and other students in places closer to their homes.

Engagement with creative, challenging and blended learning opportunities is supplemented by inclusive student wellbeing programs and the school's partnerships with communities, families and other schools. We encourage students to take advantage of these opportunities to enhance their learning and sense of connection to their peers, their teachers and their school. Our high expectations are supported by a caring and nurturing environment with strong commitments to sustainability and social justice.

Distance education helps build independence and self discipline. We are proud of our students who have been placed into the top 10 in the state in Higher School Certificate courses and whose work has been selected for a range of prestigious exhibitions and performances. We are equally proud of all students whose courage and commitment is reflected in their determination to do their best.

Our website is for communication, collaboration and the celebration of student achievement. We inspire students to learn and to live their dreams.

Strategic Direction 1: Student growth and attainment

Purpose

To increase the academic achievement of students, we will implement whole school strategies and programs that focus on data driven targeted support.

Improvement measures

- Improvement in the percentage of HSC course results in top three bands at the lower bound system-negotiated target of 64.3% or above.
- Improvement in the percentage of students achieving NAPLAN top 2 bands in Numeracy at the lower bound system-negotiated target of 41.2% or above.
- Improvement in the percentage of students achieving in the NAPLAN top 2 bands in Reading at the lower bound system-negotiated target of 36% or above.
- 60% or more of students achieving expected growth in Numeracy.
- 60% or more of students achieving expected growth in Reading.

Initiatives

- Develop stronger processes that improve individual teacher analysis and understanding of student achievement data to inform teaching practice.
- Explore, recommend and implement new evidence-based approaches to embed high academic expectations for HSC students, including a Stage 6 Senior Study Coach Program.
- Explore, develop, implement and embed assessment tools and strategies that accurately identify and provide targeted intensive literacy and numeracy support for students.

Success criteria for this strategic direction

- The whole school community demonstrates aspirational expectations of learning progress and achievement for all Stage 6 students, and is committed to the pursuit of excellence.
- School data shows that student progress and achievement meet or exceed growth targets for the HSC and NAPLAN.

Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

Question: What has been the impact of the targeted Stage 6 Senior Study Coach Program and the intensive literacy and numeracy support programs?

How do we know that these initiatives are creating a culture of high expectations?

Data: External student performance measures (HSC, NAPLAN, HSC Minimum Standards) and internal student review data.

Analysis: Analyse the data to determine the extent to which the purpose has been achieved and what data was most useful.

Implications: Where do we go from here? Future directions and next steps.

Strategic Direction 2: Teaching Excellence

Purpose

The school's situational analysis identified the need for greater focus on explicit teaching strategies to increase student intellectual engagement and achievement, particularly in Years 7 to 10. With real time lessons firmly embedded in the school culture the focus is now on developing and embedding a range of pedagogical approaches to give students more opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and achieve success.

Improvement measures

Target year: 2024

80% of permanent and temporary teachers have participated in at least one set of Quality Teaching Rounds in PLCs that cross stage and subject areas.

Target year: 2024

The SEF-SaS for the Learning Domain/Curriculum Element/ Differentiation Theme is Excelling.

Target year: 2024

Tell Them From Me survey student responses to the Intellectual Engagement composite statement: "Students are intellectually engaged and find learning interesting, enjoyable and relevant" is 60% or above (2020 NSW mean).

Initiatives

Quality Teaching Rounds

QTR is underpinned by the Quality Teaching Model (QTM), which supports schools in developing a shared vision of quality teaching and learning. Teachers engage in collaborative professional learning with a focus on pedagogy throughout the teaching and learning cycle. This will include analysis and discussion of their own and each other's teaching in QTR Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

Personalised Learning

Explore and embed models of best practice to enhance processes within and beyond the Learning and Support Team for teachers to successfully implement all aspects of Personalised Learning and Support Plans and a whole school approach to differentiation.

Online Real-time teaching

Continue to develop and embed quality teaching practice in web lessons (including Microsoft Teams) to intellectually engage students. This will also include a consistent and coordinated system of recording formative assessment integrated with elearning (eg Exit Tickets), as well as induction and support process for students, teachers and supervisors.

All teachers teach a minimum of 20 web lessons each year.

Success criteria for this strategic direction

- Teachers are empowered through knowledge of relevant, evidence informed pedagogy, enabling them to refine their practice to effectively meet student needs.
- There is a whole school approach that ensures the most effective evidence-based teaching methods are used to optimise learning progress for all students, across the full range of abilities.
- Web lessons are a fundamental aspect of teaching and learning in all courses.

Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

Questions: How has QTR supported a culture of evidence-based teaching and ongoing improvement? How do we know that the understanding and implementation of PLSPs and differentiation have improved? Have quality teaching practices and formative assessment in web lessons increased the intellectual engagement of students?

Data: Surveys including TTFM, QTR participation data, web lesson data and elearning data, SEF-SaS staff survey.

Analysis: Analyse the data to determine the extent to which the purpose has been achieved.

Implications: Where do we go from here? Future directions and next steps.

Strategic Direction 3: Inclusive, supported and positive school community

Purpose

The focus is to support students and staff with increased opportunities to build wellbeing, inclusivity and connection to the school and within the school community.

Improvement measures

Target year: 2024

Tell Them From Me student survey data for "Students feel accepted and valued by their peers and by others at the school" to be at or above 66% (2020 NSW Government Norm).

Target year: 2024

Tell Them From Me student survey student participation in extracurricular activities to be at or above 24%. (2020 NSW Government Norm).

Target year: 2024

80% or more permanent and temporary teaching and non-teaching staff have participated in Mental Health First Aid training.

Initiatives

Student Community Connections Program

Implement the Student Community Connections Program (SCCP) at offsite learning hubs and raise student attendance at the learning hubs. Implement a new student mentoring program focusing on advocacy and personal support to help students thrive at school.

Increased opportunities for peer interaction

Increase the range of extra-curricular activities available where students build positive relationships and develop a stronger connection to school.

Staff Wellbeing

Enhance staff wellbeing through strategies such as Implementing Mental Health First Aid training for staff and establishing a Staff Wellbeing Committee.

Success criteria for this strategic direction

- The school provides opportunities for students to meet regularly with staff members who can provide advice and support.
- Students feel more connected to the school community as reflected in the student TTFM survey.
- Staff morale is maintained or improved as reflected in the teacher TTFM and school SASS survey.

Evaluation plan for this strategic direction

Questions: Are more students building trusting connections with students and staff in SCCP, mentoring program and at learning hubs? Are staff feeling more supported personally with Mental Health First Aid Program and Staff Wellbeing Committee?

Data: Learning hub attendance data, TTFM student survey, TTFM teacher survey and school SASS survey.

Analysis: Analyse the data to determine the extent to which the purpose has been achieved. The findings of the analysis will inform future actions and annual reporting on school progress measures (published in the Annual Report each year and on the School Website).

Implications: Where do we go from here? Future directions and next steps.