

REPTON PUBLIC SCHOOL

Engaging and empowering the school and wider community



Parents watching the Easter parade

Repton Public School is a small school located on the Bellinger River in the Coffs Harbour Network on the mid north coast.

The school:

- is a P5 school with a teaching principal
- has an enrolment of 62 students
- has 3 classes, a learning and support teacher one day a week and a specialist librarian/relief from face to face teacher two days a week
- has a Family Occupation and Education Index (FOEI) rating of 98 (2014/15 average)
- has a diverse demographic that includes a transient population and also many families who have been at the school for several generations.

The school focuses on literacy, numeracy, sport, music, environmental education and

the creative arts and works in partnership with the community to achieve the best possible outcomes for all students.

Rationale

In preparation for the school centenary and the development of the 2015-2017 school plan, the principal seized the opportunity to encourage and engage not only the school community, but the wider community in planning and decision making. The purpose of the planning was to develop strong working relationships with the community, increase participation in decision making and promote the school.

Enhancing community consultation

Initially a committee was established to consult with the community and plan an inclusive centenary celebration. Meetings were held fortnightly and included the principal, community members and past students. Three working groups were formed to organise the production of a school book, a DVD, a fair and a reunion dinner dance. Awareness was promoted through social media, invitations, print, press and radio. Through this consultation process strong relationships were fostered.

We wanted to know what the beliefs and inspirations for our school are.

Principal

Previously, the school had regularly surveyed families and the wider community. In planning for the centenary, personal phone calls were also made to encourage community members who had not responded. This strategy was successful and has been pursued with other

surveys and participation in all surveys continues to increase.

The surveys, which are designed by staff, are delivered in three ways: online using Survey Monkey, in hard copy and over the phone. The surveys seek opinions of the community in relation to changes that are relevant at the time. Examples include the organisation of events, reporting to parents regarding student progress and general questions regarding satisfaction with the school. Parents are also given the opportunity to make suggestions.

As a result of the surveys and formal and informal conversations with parents, staff, and the centenary committee, the school put in place a structured meeting to engage the community in consultation which are held once a term. All staff attend the meetings and to support maximum attendance, child care is provided. The staff provide afternoon tea and a coffee van is utilised.

Community members are invited to begin the meeting with general comments about what the school is doing well and where improvements could be made. This is followed by structured focus questions which are presented by staff members.

Following consideration by the staff and the P&C, suggestions for improvements are actioned and reported in the school newsletter. Examples include a suggestion box for students and parents being placed in the playground and discussions regarding student reports have been referred to a staff meeting for consideration.

The P&C is active in the school and P&C meetings are used as a platform to review the school plan. To maintain open communication, responses from surveys and discussion meetings are taken to staff and

P&C meetings and social media is utilised to increase awareness. The principal makes personal phone calls to families who have not responded to surveys to personally invite them to participate. Responses are used as bench marks to compare changes in responses over time.

Analysis of survey data, student outcomes data and interview responses were used to assess the impact of the actions undertaken and continue to be carefully considered. In addition, the [National School Improvement Tool](#), the [Collaborative Inquiry Continuum](#) and formal and informal conversations all inform planning and decision making.



Repton Public School Centenary celebrations

Achievements

The consolidation of strong relationships has empowered members of the community to become more actively involved at various levels of engagement suited to the particular needs and interests of the parents. Parents have become more confident and are encouraged to express their ideas and give constructive feedback. Staff have valued this input from the community.

The centenary celebration delivered the production of a school book, a DVD, a fair and a reunion dinner dance. It also solidified a strong relationship between the school and the community.

A kitchen garden was developed through listening to parents and has been a powerful force in increased parent and community participation in the school. Parents volunteer weekly to support teachers in the garden and kitchen and are also part of the planning for activities based around the produce harvested, for example counting potatoes or making gnocchi. The school kitchen garden program would not have been possible without the support of the community.



Gardening workshop

Apart from the support of the parent volunteers, a dishwasher was recently donated by the Country Women's Association, with whom the possibility of further involvement is being explored.

The number of parents volunteering has increased and there are opportunities for participation at many levels. Parents assist with reading groups, literacy groups, crafts, drama productions including props and costumes, the garden and the special events and excursions and special events. Examples of excursions include a trip to a saw mill and the beach with a marine biologist.

Success factors

The key to success at Repton Primary School was ensuring that the voice of the community was heard through the survey process and was the driving factor in determining actions.

The personal invitations to engage in decision making, the school collectively engaging in the analysis of feedback and ensuring that the community was well-informed regarding suggestions, supported the success of the consultation process.

The kitchen garden came about from listening to parents and has been a powerful force in increased parent and community participation in the school.

The centenary provided a clear goal and focus for getting the community on board. It gave parents and the wider community a voice and an opportunity to engage in decision making.

Key messages

The school identified communication as a critical factor for engaging the community and using a variety of approaches ensures engagement right across the community.

It has been crucial for the school to listen to what parents and the wider community wants.

It is worthwhile to seize on opportunities and build on them to increase engagement.

It is important to identify where the social capital is, identify the key people in and beyond the school community.

We identified someone who was able to write grants – one from the National Historical Society and one from local government.

P&C President

Sustaining the community focus

To ensure communication and consultative decision making at Repton Public School are sustained, the school will continue to source information through regular surveys. Regular afternoon teas will provide the community with a forum for contributing their thoughts and ideas. The process for conveying information to the staff and P&C for further discussion and decision making will continue.

Events and celebrations will continue to include the wider community. Advertising and promotion through a variety of sources will keep lines of communication open.

Further readings and links

[The National School Improvement Tool](#)

[Collaborative Inquiry Continuum](#)

Contact details

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