Building a Whole-School Approach

Woonona Public School
Woonona, NSW

Identifying a need

In 2014, Woonona Public School were looking to improve student outcomes in response to NAPLAN writing data, and to develop greater consistency in teaching and learning. To do this, they created a whole-school model of pedagogy and language of learning.

By exploring Professor John Hattie’s Visible Learning, they learned that effective feedback had a high effect size on student outcomes. They also drew on the work of Carol Dweck, Dylan Wiliam and Shirley Clarke. This supported the school’s goal of providing clarity to students about what they were learning and being assessed on.

The school’s first step was to implement feedback strategies such as learning intentions and success criteria. Providing learning goals and collecting evidence of student progress opened a new way for teachers to understand their impact on student learning.

Wiliam’s formative assessment has been a real game changer. We use it constantly throughout the school.

Lorraine Bradwell – Principal
Implementation narrative

The leadership team at Woonona participate in an “executive book club,” chaired by the principal, to explore educational research. The group discuss new strategies and practices and, where appropriate to the context of the school, explore these further through professional learning. New practices are also mapped to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers to demonstrate the relevance of embedding them in everyday teaching.

The leadership team, which includes classroom teachers, are the first to trial new practices with their students. This provides the opportunity to tweak or modify these practices to fit the school context. Other teachers observe the initial trials during instructional rounds and through video footage taken in classrooms.

The adaptation of a lesson according to a specific student need was one element of feedback that needed to be demonstrated in the initial stages of implementation. Seeing a leadership team colleague use this practice gave other teachers confidence to trial the approach in their own lessons.

Woonona teachers use pre-tests before every unit to determine students’ prior knowledge. These tests are analysed at grade level meetings, and inform what will be taught throughout the unit. This ensures consistency across classes and that teaching is focused on the point of need.
Curriculum level targets are identified as students’ “Where to next?” The learning intention is common to all, but the success criteria are differentiated so students access the appropriate level of challenge and skill development. Teachers then use further assessment tasks to determine whether the growth targets have been met, and work together to ensure consistency of marking.

When a new strategy is being investigated, such as feedback, the school leadership team source a range of practical ways to implement it. Teachers are then able to select an approach that suits their classroom context. This empowers teachers to have a voice in developing practice throughout the school.

Classroom practices are discussed at grade level meetings, which take place twice each term, and at fortnightly all-staff professional development meetings. These meetings offer the opportunity to evaluate and refine classroom feedback practices. Observations and instructional rounds also support teachers in sharing of best practice.

Feedback strategies being used in classrooms include entry slips and random selectors. Entry slips are small pieces of paper, such as post-it notes, that students fill in to tell the teacher what they already know about a topic at the beginning of the lesson.

There are a number of ways to use random selectors, but a common method is to write each student’s name on a pop stick, then draw these at random to choose which student to direct questions to. This ensures that every student needs to be paying attention, rather than the same students consistently responding to teacher questions.

---

**KEY FEEDBACK PRACTICES**

**Learning intentions and success criteria** are shared at the start of each lesson. Teacher feedback is connected to this success criteria and linked to the learning in the classrooms.

**Self and peer assessment** enables students to review their own and each other’s work using the success criteria to provide both positive and constructive comments.

**Classroom techniques** include:
- using pop sticks to randomly pick students to respond to questions
- questioning to gauge where students are in relation to the learning intentions
- students respond in a range of ways, such as verbally, using whiteboards, thumbs up / down, and red, yellow and green cups
- exit passes at the end of a lesson for students to record something they have learnt or something that is still confusing
- displaying WAGOLLS (What a Good One Looks Like) in the classroom for student reference
- bump-it-up walls display example responses along a continuum of improving quality
- asking “Why?” is an important strategy, and used to provide insight into student thinking and understanding.
**IMPACT**

Since 2014, student NAPLAN achievement:
- in writing has risen 1 band
- in reading has risen 1.5 bands
- in numeracy has risen 2 bands.

These feedback strategies are also implemented within the staff meetings themselves, giving teachers hands-on experience with new approaches. When teachers share tactics they have been using in their classrooms, the group discusses whether it focused on a task, a process or self-regulation.

The goal is to move from task-based feedback to process-based feedback and from there into self-regulation. Concentrating on moving along this continuum ensures an ongoing focus on developing and improving feedback strategies.

Staff at Woonona Public School are now able to share their knowledge of feedback strategies by mentoring colleagues from six schools in the region. They run workshops and information sessions that can quickly upskill teachers to begin their own feedback implementation journey.

They know exactly where they are and where they need to go to get to the next level. Each student has a different goal or different level to get to and they own it.

Tristan Loosemore – Teacher