Little Yarra Steiner School
Administration and Fee-Paying of Music Tuition

School Description

Little Yarra Steiner School is a Prep to Year 12 school in Yarra Junction with 350 students. The school is an innovative learning environment, open to change while remaining constant to its core educational philosophy. The needs of the student at each stage of development are fundamental. Little Yarra Steiner School’s early years education focusses on the child rather than national testing benchmarks. In the senior school, the aim is on success in life, career and tertiary education. The school’s Class 12 project provides a culminating challenge for rounded education. The school does not teach students what to think, but engages them in rich learning experiences to stimulate their own thinking, and to discover value in themselves, their world, and their place in a nurturing human community.

Project

Music programs can be numerous in some Steiner schools. At Little Yarra Steiner School, it is compulsory for all students from Class 3 to Class 8 to play an instrument. Students may also attend additional and non-compulsory music lessons, where extra tuition is given by either staff teachers or private music teachers. Some may attend extra classes to play in the school ensemble, and some students may choose to learn a second instrument.

These variations, however, had led to serious problems in billing parents for music classes and therefore in paying teachers and tutors accurately. Subsequently, there was often confusion amongst music staff and administration staff, and some parents.

‘We had an intractable problem,’ said the school’s Education Manager, Jean-Michel David. ‘There were breakdowns in communication and tension between administration and music staff. For example, there was often duplication and even triplication of requests for information.’

Process

With no resolution in sight, five staff members attended a Southern Cross training program in early 2012. As well as Mr David, there were two music coordinators, the Finance Manager, and the school’s Marketing Manager.

Through mapping out the problems, the group were able to simplify the issues so that they were more manageable. The school set itself two eventual measures of success: prompt and accurate payments to staff, and prompt and accurate payments from parents.
‘The first major insight was realising that the overall problem was not a particular person’s fault, but a problem in the process,’ said Mr David. ‘We learnt that all parties needed common and accurate information, and that that would help us to cut down the number of steps in the invoicing and billing processes.’

The group saw that they needed to revise and reword forms so that there would be clarity about particular payments for particular music programs.

Results

Little Yarra Steiner School put its new music billing systems into action in Term 3, 2012. ‘It’s been very smooth,’ said Mr David. ‘We now have prompt and accurate payments from parents and prompt and accurate payments to staff.

‘As well as better processes, we also now have a greater understanding of each other’s roles.’

Mr David added that Little Yarra Steiner School is considering applying the lessons learnt from the Southern Cross training to other aspects of the school.

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