Southern Cross Program Case Study

Student Engagement

St Mary’s Coptic Orthodox College
Enhanced Learning Program

School Description

St Mary’s Coptic Orthodox College in Coolaroo was established in 1991 and has approximately 630 students. It provides a spiritual environment where students are nurtured and developed in faith to grow, learn and develop a high level of personal integrity and a respect for others with varying cultural, academic and socioeconomic differences. St Mary’s Coptic Orthodox College focusses on being a community school and has a strong Student Welfare program. Over 90 per cent of students come from a non-English speaking background.

Project

St Mary’s Coptic Orthodox College is keen to introduce an Enhanced Learning Program across the secondary division of the school to improve standards and the overall academic results of the College as a result of community feedback.

The project aims to surpass national benchmarks by increasing the retention rates from Year 7 to Year 12 to 90 per cent, maintain a VCE median study score of over 33, and maintain over 95 per cent of students transferring from primary to secondary.

Process

St Mary’s Coptic Orthodox found that defining the scope and terminology of the project was a very important step. It was paramount for the team to understand exactly what they needed to do and realise that they could ask for assistance from people outside of the project group. Defining the terminology ensured that everyone had clarity on what needed to be done.

The Southern Cross tools also assisted the team in identifying and understanding its stakeholders. The St Mary’s Coptic Orthodox project team identified the importance of focussing on the school and the community’s future to ensure success and sustainability. The team developed a process to engage and begin working with its community to advance the school to meet the community’s needs.

Results

Prior to attending the Southern Cross training program, St Mary’s Coptic Orthodox College had trialled a Year 9 Enhanced Learning Program in English. The program was monitored and as a result from stakeholder feedback, St Mary’s Coptic Orthodox College embarked on the introduction of an Enhanced Learning Program in both English and mathematics. Through the use of a range of tests, interviews and empirical research, the program has been implemented from Year 7 to Year 11. Feedback from all stakeholders is very positive and it has provided the missing 'encouragement' that many of the students were looking for in their secondary education. St Mary’s Coptic Orthodox College’s dedicated and very professional staff are already planning on adding science into the Enhanced Learning Program for 2013 at Year 7 and Year 8 levels as a trial.
The Southern Cross training provided St Mary’s Coptic Orthodox College with a range of tools that have been applied across the secondary school. The Enhanced Learning Program now has a framework that can be adopted to ensure that future projects can be defined, analysed and implemented in a structured and professional manner.

‘The training provided by Carolyn and Evans (Southern Cross Project trainers) has enabled our project team to apply a disciplined, structured and coordinated approach to dealing with all stakeholders involved with the project,’ Principal Father Tadros Sharobeam said. ‘Initial results are having a major impact on the secondary division of the College.’

February 2012