Southern Cross Program
Case Study

School Processes

Westbourne Grammar School
Introducing a New Staff Performance Review Process

School Description

Established in Williamstown in 1867, Westbourne Grammar School is a non-denominational, coeducational, Independent school catering for Prep to Year 12. Its two campuses serve the western and north-western region of Melbourne. A small campus on The Strand at Newport provides for Prep to Year 3, while the main 50-hectare site in the rapidly developing city of Wyndham accommodates students from Prep through to Year 12. Westbourne Grammar School has an outstanding academic record; its students consistently achieve a 100 per cent pass rate in the VCE Year 12 examinations, and approximately 98 per cent of these students proceed on to further tertiary studies. An extensive co-curricular program enables students to discover their interests and talents beyond the classroom and enjoy a balanced life. The school's enrolment in 2013 is 1250.

Project

Westbourne Grammar School had known for some years that its staff appraisal system was lacking. It was time-consuming and offered few tangible results. 'We were looking for a process that is ongoing and assists staff to further develop their standard of teaching,' said Westbourne Grammar School Principal Meg Hansen. 'This, in turn, would raise student outcomes.'

Process

Six staff attended the four days of Southern Cross training in June 2012, some with small teaching loads, some with larger teaching loads: the school's Human Resources Director, a Human Resources and Payroll Officer, the junior school campus head, the deputy head of the junior school, the director of science, and the director of humanities. 'It's important to have 'captains', to distribute the leadership with such a whole-school project,' said Ms Hansen.

The team learnt about particular processes that are required for bringing about change, including the DMAIC model: define, measure, analyse, improve, control. 'The most useful tool of the training was breaking down everything into smaller, manageable parts.' said Ms Hansen.

For Westbourne Grammar School, the Southern Cross training not only clarified the issues of creating a new staff performance review but also lead to skill gains amongst the group.
Results

After surveys and consultation with staff in the latter half of 2012, Westbourne Grammar School began trialling its new staff performance reviews in the first term of 2013. The new method includes coaching of staff by either peers or senior colleague. ‘There has been a very positive response,’ said Ms Hansen. ‘The performance reviews are no longer a tick-the-box system.’

Ms Hansen noted that the Southern Cross training had expedited the switch from the old to the new. ‘The change – and it is very significant change – has happened more quickly via the Southern Cross training.’

Ms Hansen said schools with a defined project in mind would find the training ‘really valuable.’

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