

Context

Hoxton Park Public School has an enrolment of 676 students and is situated on the western edge of Liverpool, Sydney. The school has an ICSEA score of 981 and more than 70% of students have a language background other than English.

Hoxton Park PS prides itself on developing outstanding leadership for all, recognising the importance of wellbeing and preparing its students to become successful global citizens. The teaching staff strive for excellence through dynamic teaching based on collaboration, guided by current research. The school has a future-focused pedagogy in a dynamic learning community.

Key priorities for 2018-2020 are future learning, leadership and wellbeing. As a future-focused school, Hoxton Park PS puts high emphasis on the 4Cs: communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity for staff, students and the school community. The aim is for students to be both highly engaged in learning and owners of their learning and the school recognises that student voice and choice are paramount in developing global citizens who are independent learners.

Hoxton Park PS identified that teaching staff were inexperienced with future-focused learning and that their understanding of futures learning pedagogy was varying and often limited. They acknowledged that authentic and differentiated professional development was required to build consistent practice amongst all staff and create a more future-focused culture in the classroom.

Project overview

Issues Identified

Varying teacher understanding of futures learning pedagogy means students are not being provided with the essential future-focused skills and capabilities they need to thrive.

Vision

Highly trained staff will build a community of future-focused, life-long learners and critical thinkers.

Actions

Hoxton Park PS provided differentiated professional learning through expert school mentors and team collaboration based on identified staff needs around futures learning pedagogy. Project-based learning was embedded across the curriculum to promote critical thinking and incorporate more opportunities for student voice and choice.

Outcomes

This led to teacher clarity around how to develop future focused learners, more authentic learning and, over time, higher student engagement with deeper understanding of the skills and capabilities needed beyond school.

Impact

The project resulted in independent learners who can articulate their learning and a more engaged school community.



What happened during the project?

SVA provided an opportunity to hear Professor Bill Lucas speak. Listening to his talk encouraged Hoxton Park PS school leaders to continue their pursuit of future-focused education and to review their work and consider the direction they were taking as a whole school.

From there, the team set about developing a range of other opportunities for staff to build their understanding of future-focused education. A variety of learning points were established for teachers, including team meetings, staff meetings, one-on-one instruction in and out of the classroom, project-based learning (PBL) coaching with school experts and development of explicit teaching in literacy and numeracy.

Staff began to collaboratively plan PBL units across stages, encouraging students to co-create projects and provide input into planning sessions alongside teachers. This resulted in an increase in student choice in authentic tasks in the classroom and more engaging experiences for all students K-6. By the end of the first year all stages had completed successful PBL units with excellent exhibitions.

The school built out these opportunities by increasing the use of digital technology, exploring problems relevant to students' lives and connecting with industry partners. This work included a student constructed mini golf course, designed in collaboration with builders and built in the school playground.

As the project progressed, the team provided opportunities for students to showcase their work externally to parents and communicate their learning successes and areas for development. Open classroom days were set up each term and three-way student-led conferences were held twice a year. This further developed student voice via authentic audiences and enabled parents to participate in their child's learning.

After three years, staff are confidently and collaboratively planning inquiry units of work, there's greater use of research to drive programs and a more collegiate culture of sharing among staff. Some teachers have become leaders in the system for future-focused learning, with strong social media followings, and are sharing knowledge and ideas with other teachers outside the school.



What changed for the students?

Student voice and choice has become central to learning opportunities with students increasingly involved in project design and implementation. A Student Representative Council has been established further supporting student agency and providing the opportunity to develop leadership skills.

Students are visibly more comfortable driving their learning and presenting it to teachers and parents. In turn, this has led to greater community acceptance, with parents commenting positively about how articulate the students are about their learning and recognising the value of future-focused education.

“I came out of my comfort zone and tried new things and had a say.”

Athra, year 6 student

The skills and capacity of teachers at Hoxton Park PS to present a future-focused education has increased. All students K to 6 are now accessing teaching pedagogy that is future-focused in all spaces, with many being agile spaces. A new Learning Hub has become the centre of inquiry learning and authentic tasks and staff and students are more confident and interested in experimenting with STEM.

Overall, the school has seen an increase in student engagement with significant impact on learning outcomes, demonstrated by improved NAPLAN results since 2016. For example, between 2018 to 2019 Year 3 students in the top two bands for writing increased from 32% to 50% and from 17% to 27% for numeracy.

“I learnt I can achieve anything if I put the effort in.”

Skye, year 6 student

“I learnt I can’t do everything. It’s good to work in a team. We all came together to make the mini golf course.”

Emily, year 6 student

18%

increase in the number of Year 3 students in the top two bands for NAPLAN writing between 2018-2019.

10%

increase in the number of Year 3 students and 6% increase in the number of year 5 students in the top two bands for NAPLAN numeracy between 2018-2019.

91%

of students value school outcomes, 91% value the quality instruction & 84% make an effort to engage in learning.

Where to next?

Hoxton Park PS plans to continue with the successful implementation of future-focused pedagogy. They will aim for greater and more frequent opportunities for future-focused learning for all students K to 6.

Staff will continue their emphasis on new learning and research-based work and take proactive steps to stay informed of new ideas. Ongoing differentiated PL in future-focused education and staff collaboration via team meetings and targeted sessions, will be required to ensure outcomes are maintained. Staff will also look to understand any issues with implementation and solutions to these.

Key Insights

Hoxton Park PS learned the following were important to success:

- **Flexibility** – Structures and systems need to be altered to meet the needs of staff planning, which should be inclusive of student needs and interests.
- **Focused PL** – This must be focused, adaptive and ongoing to maintain/ improve learning outcomes. To achieve this, the school has an innovation team that ensures the PL is sufficiently targeted.
- **Educational risk taking** – It is important to establish a culture of risk taking and encourage and enable staff to think outside the box and try new things.
- **Student voice** – This is essential for quality learning; students should be involved in the planning and implementation process to ensure programs and projects are relevant to their needs and context.
- **External experts** – Hoxton Park PS is always seeking connections with experts in the field to review their work and assist in the refinement of it.
- **Shared vision** – Communicating the school’s vision of future-focused learning via regular open days ensures parents are part of the learning and see that it is different but purposeful.

The importance of collaboration

Q&A with the School Principal

Q: What has made SVA a productive partnership for your school?

The partnership has allowed us to deepen our understanding through high quality professional learning and we have been able to collaborate with like-minded colleagues.

It ensured future-focused pedagogy was at the forefront of our school because of the ongoing discussions and input from The Connection. The partnership has also been an opportunity to showcase the work done at Hoxton Park PS and investigate what other schools are doing.

Q: Outside of SVA itself, what has been the most productive partnership you've developed through your SVA project?

Why has it been productive?

The partnership with Salesforce has enabled us to develop professional learning, community links and technology to further future learning. The partnership with local high schools and Hilltop Road Public School has provided shared PL and opportunities in STEM for students. It has enabled transition to high school programs to be effective.

Contribution of another school to your journey

There has been a patchwork of ideas and inspiration from many schools that have contributed to the Hoxton Park PS journey. These have included inquiry learning from the Guise Public School Hub Day; a range of technology platforms showcased by Blairmount Public School students; the Dare to be Different program from Merrylands East Public School and technology ideas from Casula High School.

They have also broadened their work with Hoxton Park High School and engaged in shared professional learning student opportunities with Hilltop Road Public School.

