Our recent professional learning conference was held at two locations - Dubbo RSL Club Resort on Wednesday 16 July 2014 and the Waterview Conference Centre, Homebush, Friday 18 July 2014. More than 550 delegates attended the events, representing 194 schools from as far afield as Yanco, Broken Hill, Lightning Ridge, Murwillumbah, Sydney Metropolitan, to Oak Flats and Warilla and many, many places in between! Special thanks to all delegates who travelled from far and wide.

This conference focused on continuing our PBL journey and building our leadership capacity to support students whose needs are more complex. The idea of a multi-tiered continuum of support for both academic and social learning is fundamental to PBL. Intrinsic to the PBL framework is the concept of wellbeing. Much of the work that has occurred in PBL has focused on establishing solid foundations of universal prevention. Over the past three years, the PBL state-wide teams have been working to build on this foundation to develop the capacity of school teams and coaches to implement Tier 2, targeted group interventions. Approximately 142 schools have begun to implement at this advanced level.

While our schools continue to build foundations to ensure that Tier 1 universal interventions are durable and system-based, there is also a clear need to build the behavioural expertise in our schools for those students who require more intensive support.

Glenwood High School, in The Hills Principal Network, is a wonderful example of what can happen with great leadership and a reflective, collaborative team approach. With a school population of 1550 students, PBL systems are essential to the school’s ethos. A team was sent to Tier 2 Targeted Intervention training in Term 3 2013. Their team included key personnel: Deputy Principal, Learning and Support Teacher, PBL Coordinator and Head Teacher Welfare. This was essential to enable the successful integration of Tier 2 processes into school operations.

The team chose to start with the Check-In Check-Out (CICO) intervention as this was considered the best fit for the needs of their students and their existing PBL, Welfare and LST team structures. They took the clever approach of trialling CICO with a small group of 6 students from one Year group. This proved highly successful with data indicating that all students who participated in CICO showed improvement. The school are “scaling up” their implementation of CICO by training Year Advisors to implement the program with students in their Year groups.

The team is currently reflecting on their systems to ensure the fidelity of CICO and its sustainability over time as they increase the numbers of students accessing the program.
BEING BRAVE

Moorebank High School, in the Glenfield Principals Network, began preparing for PBL implementation in 2012 using staff, student and parent focus groups to establish common learning, social and behaviour expectations. Through this process their new expectations ‘BRAVE’ were established: Be generous, Respectful and Responsible, Act Safely, Value Learning and Excellence. The expectations were informally launched in Semester 2 2012.

The team has recently completed a thorough review of PBL in the school via the Benchmarks of Quality (BoQ) planning and assessment tool. This process generated great team discussion, problem-solving and ideas for future directions while also highlighting successes achieved so far. They have also used a variety of other surveys to be able to measure and report on success. Such reviews are significant when supporting ongoing implementation and sustaining current PBL systems and practices.

Improvements in learning, social and behaviour outcomes have been indicated by:

- The overall average attendance rate for the school in 2013 was 91.5%. A further increase has been achieved with an average attendance of 93.3% for Semester 1 2014. This rate continues to be above state averages.
- The Tell Them From Me survey completed term 1 2014 shows 67% of students reporting a feeling of belonging at school; 9% reporting truancy; and 72% reporting that they try to succeed in their learning (compared to the state averages of 63%, 18%, 65% respectively).
- Suspensions due to persistent disobedience have shown a 52% decrease over two years.
- Quality Learning Environment Survey showed 73% of students reported that their teachers occasionally, mostly or always take a personal interest in them.
- Quality Teaching Survey results showed 75% of teachers reported that the majority of their students are mostly or always able to remain on task with minimal attention to discipline.

Congratulations to the PBL team, staff and students at Moorebank High!

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Having implemented PBL at Irrawang PS, in the Newcastle Principals Network, for the past 4 years with the core values of Safety, Responsibility, Learning and Respect underpinning our commitment to improvement, the 2014 school plan identified forming partnerships with the wider community and promoting students’ positive behaviour in the community as a major focus area.

To support this target, ‘Caught You Being Good’ tickets were delivered to local businesses, service stations and clubs around Raymond Terrace. Business owners, managers and employees welcomed the opportunity to acknowledge safe, sensible and respectful behaviour in their stores by issuing a ‘Caught You Being Good’ ticket to Irrawang PS students who modelled our core values. Students then bring tickets back to their teachers to receive recognition and a reward for taking their Aussie 5 rules with them into the community.

Supporting this initiative, PBL murals were painted around the school to reinforce our Aussie 5 rules and PBL expectations and to acknowledge the support received from the community. Students were asked to draw their ideas on how to promote our PBL expectations and Aussie 5 rules (I Can Listen, I Can Work Quietly, I Can Control What I Do and Say, I Can Follow Instructions and I Can Raise My Hand and Wait). With support from staff, student designs were drawn and painted across the school with students proudly watching as their designs took shape. Six of our student representatives on the PBL team then accompanied staff to Mitre 10 where $600 worth of paint and painting supplies was generously donated to the school.

A community PBL launch will acknowledge and celebrate the contribution the Raymond Terrace community has made in supporting PBL at Irrawang PS and within the wider school community.

COMING SOON - 2014 Australian Association of Special Education National Conference in Manly, 17-19 September

Prof Catherine Bradshaw’s keynote will address cultural relevance and PBL. She will also run a workshop on bully prevention - plus more great speakers. For more details visit http://www.gemsevents.com.au/aase2014/
An integral part of our future focussed planning this year at Mount Hutton PS, in the Lake Macquarie East Principals Network, has been our commitment to Positive Behaviour for Learning. In Term 3, 2013 we undertook a rigorous and extensive survey of students, staff and our community to find the answer to two simple questions: “Where we were at?” and “Where do we need to go next?” Generally speaking, our community told us that things were going well and that they were satisfied that the school was doing a pretty good job on a daily basis. However, they also identified three things they felt that we could improve on. We needed to celebrate the successes of all students. We needed to be more consistent and predictable in our communication systems. And we needed to make our physical environment more inviting, colourful and informative. PBL, as a consistent school wide system of support, has allowed us to do all of these things and more.

Parents often ask me “What is PBL?” and “How will it help my child and our school?” PBL promotes positive student behaviour across the whole school. It boosts student engagement in learning by increasing attendance and delivers highest quality learning programs to improve student academic outcomes and behavioural learning. It is important to realise that PBL is not a program for naughty boys and girls.

The way a school looks and feels speaks volumes about its identity. Perhaps the biggest boost PBL has provided us has come through the arrival of one quirky little Kookaburra named “Dunkley”. He carries the school colours on his wings, a piece of our local history in his name and a sense of purpose and pride in his confident smile. Our community nominated the three areas of “Safety”, “Respect” and “Learning” as the key qualities we wanted to develop in our students. And Dunkley, as our school mascot, represents Safe, Respectful Learners in a positive way which we all can easily identify with.

PBL has required a significant investment of time and money from our school. The importance of having a committed and energetic leadership team cannot be underestimated. Nor can the implementation of eye catching, contemporary signage (visuals). At the end of the day, our data and the positive vibe throughout the school indicates that PBL has been a valuable, ongoing investment in our students and our community.

Steve Gately, Principal, Mt Hutton PS

Brewarrina Central School, a Connected Communities School, began their PBL journey with the development of the River Rules. This incorporated the 8 Ways pedagogy with the symbol that is significant to our students and community - the Barwon River. The challenge was how to make our behavioural expectations more meaningful and culturally significant for our kids and how to help them connect to their community with life values beyond our school walls. Our students have grown up with the river being an important part of their lives: for leisure, traditional values and education. Biame, the creator of the river and teacher of the ancestors, stood out as being the link to our Learning Rule. His symbol is the footprint he left in our river generations ago. The narrative of this is used to reinforce the rule. As you walk along the river, significant landmarks stand out that have relevance and connections to our students and the behaviours we want in our school. 8 ways pedagogies just seemed to “fit”: deconstructing and reconstructing, learning maps, story sharing, land links, community links, symbols and images are all clearly incorporated into the River Rules and the way they are taught. It took some time for this to take shape for us, making sure that we were culturally sensitive as well as accurate.

Our six rules can be paired so that they reflect our Core Values, Safe (yellow) Respectful (orange) Learners (green). We have used this in PBL for the last 4 years, and our students and community see this as a great reflection of our expectations at this school.

Review your progress with your staff annually!

The Self-Assessment Survey or SAS formerly known as the EBS is a tool to gauge staff perception. The survey measures the PBL features that staff think are in place and can also provide valuable information on the areas staff feel need improvement. The SAS comes with excel spread sheets to generate graphs for sharing data with the staff. Use the SAS data to plan and validate your action plans for 2015.

Click here for PBL Wiki link to the SAS
Lights, Cameras, Rewards

Flashing lights, sparkly sequins, an African drum roll, music, an audience and an archway to jump through – these are all symbols of celebration to the students at Clarke Road SSP, in the Hornsby Principals Network. We celebrate when a student is identified as having consistently displayed positive behaviours, taken ownership of their own behaviour choices and, with our more complex learners, begun to co-regulate their behaviour. These wonderful students are identified as our High Flyers and at the end of each term the whole school community gathers to celebrate their achievements.

At Clarke Road our students have a range of intellectual and physical disabilities. PBL needs to be simple and meaningful and our matrix needs to take into account the wide range of communication and cognitive abilities of each student. Key word signing and visual communication strategies are used at all levels of PBL. So, when we are proud of a student’s achievement we have to say more than “Well Done”.

The PBL team came up with the idea of a flashing, glitzy, gaudy, fun archway which is constructed from a garden arch. The students make a grand entrance on the stage. It’s a real “TA-DA!” moment. To make the moment even more meaningful, parents are invited to share the stage with their child. For some of our parents, this may well be the first time they have ever been able to publically celebrate their child’s achievements. It is a very poignant moment to see parent and child come through the archway to a hall full of cheering and applause - a very symbolic moment of triumph and recognition!

The High Flyer is then allowed to choose a gift from a box and pose for a photo with their parent. After assembly, the nine High Flyers for the term have a morning tea with the Principal while all parents gather to share morning tea hosted by the P&C. It’s a great occasion to showcase our performing arts program and last term our Drumbala group put on a spectacular performance.

PBL at Clarke Road is based around four simple triangular flags, each with their own distinctive colour and rule. The Bee is an integral mascot for our junior classes. Students are taught the rules daily and are rewarded with Frequent Flyers and coloured stickers on their classroom rewards charts. The student with the most stickers in each class each term becomes the High Flyer. High Flyers are further celebrated with a gallery of photos in the school foyer and in their classrooms.

Clarke Road School is now in its fourth year of PBL implementation and was one of the early schools in the area to implement this initiative. PBL is embedded within all facets of school life and receives the full support of the Principal, teachers, SLSO’s, parents, volunteers and all allied professionals who have input into our school and our students’ programs. Parents receive a PBL pack including the four flags on fridge magnets. Many families talk of how wonderful it is to be able to have the consistency of the simple language of PBL at school and at home. PBL even moved with us to a temporary school and back into our new purpose built facility. PBL is flying high at Clarke Road School!

New tools on the Wiki to support classroom systems!

NEW tools on the Wiki to support classroom systems!

Visit the PBL Wiki to see some new tools that will provide assistance to school teams with classroom system implementation. Teachers can assess their use of verbal specific feedback to improve their strategies for encouraging positive behaviour. Click HERE to visit the Teams page on the Wiki and click on the link to Classroom Systems Tools in the Resources column on the left hand side.

Visit the PBL Wiki for PBL contacts, up to date data tools, fact sheets, information and more! http://pblsupport.pbworks.com

A big thank you to the schools across the state for their contributions to this newsletter.