



Erindale College

External Validation Panel Report
2007



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Introduction

Since the early nineties, government schools in the ACT have undertaken a review of operations in compliance with the Education Act applicable at that time. The *ACT Education Act 2004*, Section 24 continues to require the review of the operations of government schools at least every five years.

The School Improvement Framework calls for schools to set challenging standards and goals and document the growth toward their achievement. To evaluate the school's process of self assessment of performance, the School Improvement Framework included the establishment of a rigorous, normative protocol for external validation of each school every three years.

The self assessment of performance in all aspects of schooling and the external validation process are intended to help the school determine and gauge its progress toward meeting departmental goals, assessing the quality of its programs, its staff, curriculum, students and administration, and assessing the school's performance and its contribution to the advancement of the Department's overall mission.

School Context

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|------------------------|--|
| Name of School: | ERINDALE COLLEGE |
| Principal: | Michael Hall |
| School Board Chair: | Noreen Jones |
| School address: | McBryde Crescent, Wanniasa 2903 |
| Phone: | 6205 8111 |
| Fax: | 6205 8109 |
| Email: | erindale.college@erindalec.act.edu.au |
| Website: | www.erindale.act.edu.au |
| Age range of students: | 16-19 years |
| Type of school: | Senior Secondary College |

Erindale College is unique in the ACT in that it is part of the larger Erindale Education and Recreation Complex. This complex includes the Erindale Theatre, a joint use Library and an Active Leisure Centre that has both a swimming pool and fully equipped gym. The entire complex provides an environment in which students can achieve their learning goals and avail themselves of opportunities to ensure a well-rounded college life.

College Vision Statement

"A community of teachers, building partnerships in teaching and learning for the success of all learners"

College Belief Statement

- the individual has intrinsic worth
- all people have the ability and the need to learn
- all students have a right to safety, care and learning
- a high-quality, public education system open to all is fundamental to Australian society
- diversity strengthens society and should be honoured and protected
- broad and informed participation committed to a common good is critical to democracy.

This concern for people is enhanced by the development of a healthy college organisation. Specific beliefs are:

- a healthy college organisation purposefully provides for self-renewal
- the culture of the college is a major factor shaping individual attitudes and behaviours
- a healthy college organisation promotes and celebrates successes.

Goals of the 2005-2007 College Plan

- Erindale College will develop its teachers' capacity to address complex problems.
- Erindale College will build a vital and diverse community that shapes teaching and learning
- Erindale College will develop policies and practices that support teaching, learning and leadership.
- Erindale College will commit its resources wisely for maximum value.

Background to the external validation process at Erindale College

The School Improvement Framework was not used as a basis for the 2005-2007 Erindale College Strategic Plan. In February 2007, the original plan was redrafted under the four domains of the Framework to enable some professional reflection to occur.

The capacity of the school to reflect on the achievements of the past three years has been limited due to the nature of the original strategic plan and to a number of changes that occurred in the principalship and in the executive staff during the life of the plan. In addition, the process of collecting, analysing and presenting relevant and rigorous evidence to support claims is a relatively new process for the College community.

Erindale College has therefore viewed the external validation process as an opportunity to improve the strategic planning process and plan for the future.

Learning and teaching domain

Description of school statement

Erindale College has a variety of mechanisms available to assess student achievement, including Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) data, post college destination surveys and subject and pathways data.

The data indicates an increase in retention rates, an increase in the percentage of students achieving Year 12 Certificates and an increasing number of Certificate 1 and Certificate 2 qualifications attained by students from 2005 to 2006.

Erindale College provides a wide range of vocational opportunities for students, a strong Talented Sports Program and a dynamic Academic Excellence Program (AEP) with a focus on English, Mathematics and Science. Individual student success in both class and extra curricular activities reflect how the staff provides for the learning needs of students.

Significant emphasis has been placed on professional learning for staff as a means of influencing the performance of teachers and, therefore, the capacity for students to maximise their achievements. One full day of professional learning was dedicated to the study of Language for Understanding Across the Curriculum (LUAC) and many teachers have recently gained additional skills in Information Communication Technology (ICT), particularly in the use of MyClasses and Interactive Whiteboards.

Many Erindale College teachers take part in course writing for both college specific and system wide courses for years 11 and Year 12. In 2006 four vocational courses were rewritten to reflect the changes in the National Training Packages and industry requirements. Dance was identified as a desirable addition by students and was offered in 2006. The Applied Learning Program was designed and implemented to address the identified needs of students in Year 12 who were at risk of not achieving the Year 12 Certificate. Several courses have expanded their unit offerings.

Evidence cited and its validation

In the domain of Learning and Teaching within the School Improvement Framework, the elements of Learning and Assessment, Teaching Practice and Curriculum have been addressed in the following ways:

Learning and Assessment

The Year 12 Studies from BSSS support the claims made by Erindale College in regard to increased vocational certificates, higher percentage of students achieving the Year 12 certificate and the very wide range of vocational courses available.

Discussion with staff and students and the reading of the newsletter confirm that individual student's success is both valued and celebrated. Students

commented positively on the use of the weekly newsletter to announce student success. The destination photos on the walls of several corridors and AEP meetings also provide useful evidence related to student learning.

Teaching Practice

There is compelling evidence that teachers have many opportunities for a large range of professional learning opportunities at Erindale College. Five teachers attended the Association of Australian Mathematics Teachers' Conference in Tasmania where four teachers presented papers. Three faculties, Mathematics, Science and English attended two days of training at the Centre for Teaching and Learning on MyClasses, which was a collegiate initiative. A number of English teachers attended the national literacy conference held in the ACT last July and a group of Erindale College staff are planning a trip to Adelaide and Victoria to observe different structures and programs particularly in the areas of Mathematics and Science.

There is clear evidence that professional learning is valued and funds are made available to support it. Staff appreciate the fact that they are given these opportunities but see time and the inherent difficulties of being away from their classes as limiting factors. They also indicated that preparing relief lessons and having qualified relief available limits their capacity to seize opportunities.

Teachers are beginning to share their knowledge and learning in staff meetings, informally in clusters and with colleagues. There is an increased profile of teaching and learning in the culture of staff discussions.

Curriculum

Evidence was provided to substantiate the claims of extensive course writing and the adoption of new courses in Dance and those related to the Applied Learning Program. There was some anecdotal evidence of professional learning being incorporated into classroom practice. Teachers found that the AGQTP program for English was a catalyst to improve ICT skills and develop the pedagogy that supports best practice in the classroom.

An exploratory trip to Victoria was the impetus to developing the new course based on project work for year 12 students at risk of not completing their Year 12 Certificate. The Applied Learning Program evolved from this experience.

Many teachers have been actively involved in rewriting courses and have given positive feedback about the implementation of these courses at the beginning of each year.

Commendations

The external validation team commends:

1. College leadership for the development of the notion of the Academy structure and the promotion of the Maths/Science Academy as the first Academy.
2. The leadership team and teachers involved in the Talented Sports Program for their evaluation and planned modification of the TSP program for 2008. Some initiatives proposed include a two-tier structure and further support for students beginning the program through a system of probation.
3. Staff members for their high level of commitment to and passion for teaching. Staff is highly qualified and students interviewed made particular mention of the fact that they see teachers as being approachable and enthusiastic. It was clear that staff generally have good relationships with students.
4. Staff of several faculties who work collaboratively in groups and take an integrated approach to planning their lessons.
5. The vocational education team for increasing the number of completions of vocational certificates. In the past there were many students with statements of attainments and relatively few with certificates. This change could be attributed, in part, to the establishment of a new School Leader C for Vocational Education, providing a focus and extra support.
6. Members of staff and school leadership for the significant improvement over the last two years of transparent and accountable practices that are now in place for assessment, spreadsheets and scores.
7. The leadership team for making good use of leading teacher positions. The Indigenous leading teacher position has provided transition support and developed an R unit *Indigenous Mentoring and Support* in response to the needs of indigenous students. The AST leading teacher position has been established to facilitate the development of a series of workshop sessions for students preparing for the AST. One of the aims of this program is to reduce the amount of disruption to class but to also improve the students' preparation for the AST. Of the 130 students sitting the AST, only five students failed to attend the workshop sessions. These initiatives, supported through the role of the leading teacher, help improve the learning outcomes for all the students involved.
8. Staff for providing a flexible curriculum to allow a creative response to current issues in the community especially through the media.

9. The school leadership team for its role in establishing the Brindabella Collegiate with the aim of supporting teaching and learning through professional learning opportunities.

Recommendations

The external validation team recommends that:

1. When initiating new programs and projects, all College staff document any baseline data available and the original data that informed them in their decision-making. The panel recommends regular review and analysis of data to monitor progress and develop an evidence culture to evaluate the outcome of programs and initiatives.
2. The College use best practice to align the Registered Training Organisation (RTO) Plan and the College Plan for the benefit of both. The College has just completed an RTO Desktop Audit. This outlines several key goals including the need to have an increased recognition of prior learning, the need to increase the numbers of successful participants in vocational courses and the need to provide more feedback during the year for students and parents about the competencies achieved and still to be achieved.
3. The College review the operational roles of the Executive structure to allow more time for deputies and executive staff to provide leadership, mentoring and induction of new staff.

Student environment domain

Description of school statement

Erindale College is unique in the ACT in that it is part of the larger Erindale Education and Recreation Complex (EERC). This complex gives students access to the modern 450-seat Erindale Theatre in which high quality productions are presented both by the college and community. The Erindale Library, with its very extensive collection, is open during the day and evening all year round and serves both the college and general communities. The facilities in the Active Leisure Centre, available for student use, include a 25 metre swimming pool and fully equipped gym. The entire complex provides an environment in which students can work to achieve their academic goals and at the same time, avail themselves of opportunities to ensure a well-rounded college life. Ensuring that the physical setting of the college provides a safe, welcoming and supportive learning environment for students is a high priority.

The College has begun to explore the use of the Australian Capital Territory Assessment Program (ACTAP) from year 9 to inform subject choice and student service provision. It is also embarking on mapping ACTAP performance with Year 11 performance in order to facilitate every student's opportunities to succeed.

Evidence-cited and its validation

In the domain of Student Environment of the School Improvement Framework, the elements of Student Focus, Student Empowerment and Student Support have been addressed in the following ways:

Student Focus

Exit surveys and post-graduation destination surveys confirm successful outcomes achieved by a majority of students. Destinations include university, the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) and part time and full time employment. The number of students leaving the College for an unknown destination has decreased significantly. Exit details for students in both Year 11 and Year 12 for 2005 indicate some 332 students left the College, while in 2006 this figure had reduced by more than one third to 201. The emphasis on providing advice and support through the Pastoral Care Group (PCG) program and the Cluster Group activities in 2006 might explain this reduction.

The 2006-7 transition surveys conducted by the Department of Education and Training (DET) indicated some student dissatisfaction with teacher support. Validation panel interviews, discussions with various student groups and observations in classes point to positive and productive relationships between staff and students.

'The College Link' transition course was planned in 2006 and implemented in 2007. This course specifically targets the early period of Year 11 and includes a range of topics such as time management, course choices and health and

wellbeing. Discussions with staff involved revealed significant logistic difficulties in delivering the course this year. Interviews with staff confirm that the course is evolving creatively to ensure it meets individual student needs in 2008.

The College is addressing concerns voiced by students in the 2006-2007 transition survey. A Transition Officer from Wanniasa High School attended the College for regular sessions in term 1 2007 to assist students with their transition from year 10 to Year 11. Discussions with staff and students indicated that this was a very positive initiative that will be continued in 2008.

The Talented Sports Program (TSP), with 200 enrolments in 2007, continues to provide elite young athletes with an avenue to pursue both their academic and sporting pathways in a supporting environment. A newly appointed executive teacher initiated refinements to the TSP with an increased focus on personal and group expectations.

The development of an 'Applied Learning Program' has been devised to address the needs of students in Year 12 who were at risk of not achieving a Year 12 Certificate. The program has been successful, having a graduation rate of 80% in 2006 and was continued in 2007.

Indigenous Students

Data provided by the college shows retention and attendance rates for indigenous students have been significantly addressed. The formation of a transition program in 2005 and the development of the Personal Vocational Development (PVD) program have contributed to a retention and attendance rate closer to levels for all students in ACT colleges.

Student Empowerment.

Although the results from the 2005 school review and development survey indicated student concerns over self-determination, panel observations and discussions with students and staff revealed improvements in this area.

The student representative council (SRC) is very active and involved in a range of initiatives including student health promotion, college assembly organization and representation on the College Board. The SRC is also contributing leadership to the Combined Colleges SRC. Active citizenship is evident and acknowledged in the College Bulletin. Two students represented the College at the National Forum held at Parliament House and specifically requested they be identified with the College.

Student Support

College executive structure was redefined during the period of the last strategic plan when a third Deputy Principal was appointed to lead the Department of Student Services (DOSS). The School Leader C teachers (SLC) took leadership over a cluster model for delivering pastoral care and administration. This reorganization was in response to concerns over student attendance and retention and procedures were put in place to monitor and follow up with poor attendees. Panel interviews and discussions with staff indicate widely differing opinions as to the effectiveness of the model.

Results from the 2006/07 transition survey conducted by DET rated the college highly in regard to meeting individual needs and assisting students to balance their learning and lifestyle. Student concerns regarding personal safety and safety of belongings are being addressed, and the construction of a security fence should help to alleviate this situation.

Student achievement is promoted through the College Bulletin and through certificates presented in assemblies. Televisions positioned around the College celebrate student success, and student achievements are highlighted on the website and in the foyer display. Posters promote successful students and the high school they attended together with the university, further training institution or career they have entered. College productions at the Erindale Theatre, part of the Erindale Education and Recreation Complex, are another avenue for students to explore the value of the performing arts in building resilience and confidence.

Commendations

The external validation panel commends:

1. The College leadership and those staff involved in the development of the 'College Link' transition course. Materials and content provided with the program are of an excellent standard. Discussions with staff revealed some creative and student centred approaches to planning which should reduce the logistical difficulties in delivering the course in 2008.
2. The College for its emphasis on celebrations of student success.
3. The leadership team and the Leading Teacher for Indigenous students for the efforts and successes in addressing the retention and attendance rates for Indigenous students.
4. The articulate and passionate SRC group of students and their teacher for their active citizenship.

Recommendations

The external validation panel recommends:

1. That the college leadership team continue its plan to develop a number of indoor and outdoor spaces to provide a precinct where students can congregate and expand their social networks.
2. That the college evaluate the structure and function of the DOSS model with a view to articulating and clarifying roles, streamlining practice and ensuring equitable sharing of responsibilities.

3. That the College continue to build on the 'College Link" transition course in order to overcome some of the logistic difficulties previously encountered.
4. That the College continue to grow its focus on celebrating student success.

Leadership and management domain

Description of school statement

The vision of Erindale College is for “a community of teachers, building partnerships in teaching and learning for the success of all learners”. The school statement indicates that previously the vision was not significantly aligned with values, priorities and actions. In addition, the strategic planning process that led to the development of the school plan 2005-2007 was not an inclusive process and consequently the sense of ownership of this vision was necessarily limited within the school community.

Current school leadership recognises an inclusive strategic planning process as a major goal and is currently working to align the business planning function of the Active Leisure Centre in the Erindale Education and Recreation complex with the strategic planning process of the college.

While recognising that Erindale College has a friendly climate, a versatile and cooperative staff and has made a wide range of pathways and curriculum options available to students, the school statement also identifies the development of the College as a professional learning community as a key goal for the future. A number of steps have already been taken in this direction and a primary achievement in building a learning organisation has been the establishment of the Brindabella Collegiate – a partnership between Erindale, Canberra and Lake Tuggeranong Colleges.

The school statement also outlines an impressive range of initiatives which have improved the physical and academic environments of the College, including the upgrading of the science facilities, the centralisation of counselling and careers services for students, the further development of Information Communication Technology (ICT) learning facilities, the installation of security fencing and the provision of impressive student outdoor areas. The College has also focussed on providing a safe physical environment for both staff and students.

The College has also undertaken a number of strategies to further improve communication around the college and between the college and its community.

Evidence cited and its validation

In the domain of Leadership and Management of the School Improvement Framework, the elements of Strategic Vision, Leadership Behaviour and School Management have been addressed in the following ways:

Strategic Vision

The College identified the need to articulate a shared vision for the future and to develop an inclusive strategic planning process in line with system and

school community values. An analysis of the Strategic Plan revealed that priorities and actions were not aligned with College vision and values or with the School Improvement Framework. Surveys of students, staff and parents confirmed that many in the community were unaware of the strategic priorities of the College.

A major initiative in striving towards an inclusive strategic planning process has been the approach of aligning the business planning function of the Active Leisure Centre with the strategic planning process of the College. Interviews with Active Leisure Centre staff confirmed that this process is underway and that the team is working harmoniously towards this alignment. There is now a more fully articulated broad vision for the future of the College, a sense of optimism about the future and a determination to involve the community in an inclusive and strategic planning process. This was supported by evidence of a collaborative process already undertaken with staff to identify the strengths of the College, areas for future development and issues for further consideration.

Leadership Behaviour

System survey results and panel observations confirm that Erindale College has a friendly climate, a versatile and cooperative staff and an extensive range of pathways and curriculum options for students. Several members of staff indicated that they felt valued and that the Principal and leadership team acknowledged their successes. Observations of team meetings and interviews with staff members indicated that relationships are based on collegiality and mutual trust.

The College identified the need to further develop as a professional learning community. In particular, staff surveys indicated a desire to have more opportunities to practise leadership, more constructive feedback and greater participation in decision making. A number of staff members indicated that professional learning and leadership opportunities are given to those staff members who indicate interest, but that recent issues in relation to workload influence the capacity and the desire to take up these opportunities.

A number of steps have been taken towards developing the College as a learning organisation. The formation of the Brindabella Collegiate has been a primary achievement. A deputy principal has been appointed to lead professional learning across the three colleges involved and time has been provided for senior executive staff of the three colleges to meet regularly. Executive staff prepared a draft of a strategic plan for the learning organisation and have attended professional learning sessions that they reflected on very positively. The panel also noted that all staff at Erindale College included an action research task related to quality teaching and professional reflection as a priority in their Professional Pathways. Staff meeting and executive meeting minutes and staff interviews confirmed that there has been increased discussion of and reflection on classroom practice. In particular, at executive level, there has been some discussion of the need to make more time available to Executive and senior executive staff to lead a focus on teaching and learning. A step towards this end has been made through a restructure of the operational management of vocational education and the appointment of a School Leader in charge of this area.

School Management

The physical and academic environment of Erindale College has been greatly enhanced by the careful use of financial resources, with \$250,000 of College funds being used from 2005-2007 for the upgrading of a number of College facilities including the science facilities, the centralisation of counselling and careers services for students, the further development of ICT learning facilities, the installation of security fencing and the provision of student outdoor areas. The allocation of funds to professional learning has supported the use of new technologies.

Teacher and student feedback raised “the sense of community” as an issue and the panel noted that Federal Government grant funds and future spending plans centre on providing attractive outdoor areas where individuals can congregate and develop this sense of place. The panel also saw strong evidence both in ongoing maintenance programs, safety checks and staff feedback that financial expenditure has centred on maintaining safe physical environments for students and staff.

Erindale College has also worked to further improve communication with all stakeholders. Newsletters are more regular and more attractive, sms messaging is used to contact individual students using a computerised link and MyClasses has been introduced to the College and is being used by some staff and in particular by the English faculty. The number of phone calls being made direct to parents has increased and follow-up by the executive staff has been well-received and applauded by parents, as confirmed with the Board chair. The College website is current and provides an email portal for parents. *The Echo* is a daily communication to staff, a student newsletter is distributed weekly, roller boards display messages around the school and the College sends regular interim reports to parents, particularly in relation to student attendance and progress. A Staff Diary and Planner provides valuable information to all staff and the promotional material produced by the College is high quality, professional and attractive.

Commendations

The External Validation Team commends:

1. The staff, students and parents of the school for building a very friendly and supportive climate based on trust, co-operation and celebration of success.
2. The school leadership team for the decision to align the business planning function of the Active Leisure Centre in the Erindale Education and Recreation complex with the strategic planning process of the College.
3. The school leadership team for its role in forming the Brindabella Collegiate as a means to develop a professional learning community within the Southside colleges.

4. The School Board, the school leadership team, Parents and Citizens Association and the Business and Facilities Manager for pursuing opportunities to fund improvements to the physical and learning environments of the College and to address safety issues for staff and students.
5. School staff, including administration staff, for the excellent and high quality communications and promotional materials used across the school.

Recommendations

The External Validation Team recommends that:

1. The College works towards the development of a shared vision and uses an inclusive process in planning strategically for the future and in identifying goals, actions, relevant benchmarks and performance measures for future improvement.
2. The College sets in place processes for the collection of relevant and rigorous evidence to support its claims about student achievement and progress towards college and system priorities. It will be necessary for staff to be provided with professional learning on what constitutes good evidence, how to analyse evidence and how to present the results of this analysis.
3. The College continue its growing focus on developing as a professional learning community with an emphasis on developing a more strategic approach to professional learning, the sharing of good classroom pedagogy and the provision of opportunities for reflection on teaching and learning practice.

Community involvement domain

Description of school statement

The College is part of the Erindale Education and Recreation Complex (EERC), made up of the Erindale College, the Active Leisure Centre (ALC), Erindale Theatre, Community Education Program (CEP) and the Erindale Community Library. The College Board and P&C provide valuable input and feedback into the operational aspects of the Erindale College and EERC.

The ALC provides a community service with modern fitness facilities, including squash courts, swimming pools, swim school, crèche, aerobics, weights, cardio gyms and a sports hall. Generally students will use the Leisure Centre facilities in class groups but students in the Talented Sports Program (TSP) have passes for training purposes and may access the facilities.

The Erindale Theatre is a semi professional theatre catering for both amateur and professional users. The College is able to make good use of this facility to meet its curriculum and presentation needs.

The CEP has an enrolment size equal to the College. Interviews with staff indicate that College students are known to take classes in the CEP and that one past student now teaches ICT in this program.

The Erindale Community Library provides a service and library resources to the community and college students. Like the general public, students must become members of this public library. It is in the library that the regular interaction between the community and students occurs. Survey results indicate that this is a harmonious relationship; with the public users stating they appreciated assistance with ICT received from the college students.

Evidence cited and its validation

In the domain of Community Involvement of the School Improvement Framework, the elements of Partnerships with Parents and Carers, Engaging the Community and Promoting Education have been addressed in the following ways:

Partnerships with Parents and Carers

System survey results, parent emails and letters and panel observations confirm that effective communication with parents and carers occurs through the College website, an attractive College newsletter, a college calendar and in Information Evenings and Open Nights held in the Theatre. Parent Teacher interviews have recently been moved to the library location and feedback is positive about the shift. The Parents and Citizens Association (P&C) and Board have been allocated sections in the College newsletter to communicate to the wider community.

Parent awareness of College events, successes and challenges is improved by the mailing of the monthly College newsletter to homes. Parents are made aware of student attendance and progress regularly. Additional communication occurs in response to issues of interest in the community.

Steps have been taken to develop an improved transition program from high school to college for Year 11 students. The transition officer from Wanniasa High school was engaged in 2007 and panel observations confirm that this was successful in retaining students and assisting them with meeting College expectations.

The Chaplain Program is in its fifth year of operation at the College, with initial funding from the Scripture Union. This funding will continue and be supplemented by the Federal Government Chaplaincy grant which will extend the Chaplain's attendance to three days a week. A highlight of this service is the successful weekly soup day that is an opportunity to reach out to at risk students and helps students develop a sense of ownership and place.

Engaging the community

The College seeks opportunities to access community resources to improve student learning. Partnerships exist with the local Football Club through the Talented Sports program (TSP). The Active Leisure Centre (ALC) has introduced pathways for students through the vocational training and education programs. Australian School-Based Apprenticeships (ASBAs) are a feature of the College and future ASBAs in community recreation and childcare are planned. One student has recently gained a traineeship at the Erindale Theatre as a result of completing an ASBA

The Australian Government 'Parent School Partnerships Initiative' (PSPI) provided a grant for the Indigenous students' Personal Vocational Development (PVD) Program. Part of the funding was tagged to promote parent and college partnerships adopting a parent forum where communication could occur and issues could be addressed. Three committee meetings allowed the PVDP to be planned and monitored with student survey feedback being exceptionally positive. The TSP has also provided college mentors for primary school students at Narrabundah Primary School.

Promoting Education

The Principal's commitment to government schooling is evident from his preparedness to communicate readily and openly with parents in relation to issues of concern in the community. The Board Chair confirmed that parents and carers appreciated this.

The Annual School Board Report of 2006 and panel discussions with the Erindale Leisure Centre Business and Facilities Manager documented the success of the Community Education Program (CEP). This program was awarded the National Best Community Education Provider Award in 2006. Further awards achieved were ACT Best Community Education provider award in 2005, 2006 and 2007.

The achievements of students and staff are regularly acknowledged and celebrated through the school newsletters. Students interviewed were aware of and proud of these successes.

Staff and student feedback indicated the need for more attractive, convenient spaces in which students may mingle and socialise. The panel noted that the creation of a student precinct would mean that fewer students would congregate in the car park and shops.

Commendations

The External Validation Team commends:

1. All community members associated with the Erindale Education and Recreation Complex for working together harmoniously to provide an environment in which students can achieve their learning goals and avail themselves of opportunities to ensure a well-rounded college life.
2. The staff of the Erindale College for the development and use of high quality, professional and attractive promotional material.
3. The staff of the College for the wide and effective range of methods used to communicate with parents and students.
4. The school leadership for establishing the Chaplaincy program as a way of supporting at risk students and meeting the spiritual needs of students at the College.

Recommendations

The External Validation Team recommends that:

1. That the college leadership team continue its plan to develop a number of indoor and outdoor spaces to provide a precinct where students can congregate and expand their social networks.

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Key recommendations

The external validation panel selected from various recommendations those which it felt were the most important to draw to the College's attention.

These recommendations are that:

1. The College works towards the development of a shared vision and uses an inclusive process in planning strategically for the future and in identifying goals, actions, relevant benchmarks and performance measures for future improvement.
2. The College sets in place processes for the collection of relevant and rigorous evidence to support its claims about student achievement and progress towards College and system priorities. When initiating new programs and projects, it is recommended that all College staff document any baseline data available and the original data that informed them in their decision making. The panel recommends regular review and analysis of data to monitor progress and develop an evidence culture to evaluate the outcome of programs and initiatives. It will be necessary for staff to be provided with professional learning on what constitutes good evidence, how to analyse evidence and how to present the results of this analysis.
3. The College continue its growing focus on developing as a professional learning community with an emphasis on developing a more strategic approach to professional learning, the sharing of good classroom pedagogy and the provision of opportunities for reflection on teaching and learning practice. A review of the operational roles of the Executive structure would allow more time for deputies and executive staff to provide leadership, mentoring and induction of new staff.
4. The college evaluate the structure and function of the DOSS model with a view to articulating and clarifying roles, streamlining practice and ensuring equitable sharing of responsibilities.
5. That the college leadership team continue its plan to develop a number of indoor and outdoor spaces to provide a precinct where students can congregate and expand their social networks.

Key commendations

The external validation panel commends the College for its genuine commitment to:

1. Establishing harmonious working relationships across the Complex and developing a friendly and supportive environment based on trust, co-operation and celebration of success.
2. Providing an environment in which a diverse range of students can achieve their learning goals and avail themselves of opportunities to ensure a well-rounded college life.

Concluding statement

The panel wishes to acknowledge the difficulties faced by Erindale College in undergoing external validation at this particular point in the College's history. The College community has adopted an extremely professional approach to this challenge.

The College welcomed the panel warmly and were open in exploring the evidence with us. Staff, parents and students responded happily to our requests for discussion and observation. The College's approach to the validation process made the experience very positive and rewarding for the panel.

The panel wishes to particularly acknowledge the Principal, the school leadership team and the administrative staff for their support.

Congratulations to Erindale College for having grown such a dynamic and diverse learning environment.

Statement of validation

The External Validation Panel for Erindale College thank the principal, executive, teaching and administrative staff for the support it received over the three days of our visit.

The panel members examined all materials provided during the visit spoke with teachers, students and parents and observed a range of classes

The members of the panel are pleased to validate the work that Erindale College is doing in providing a quality education environment for the students of their school.

The External Validation Panel completed the validation process at Erindale College on Friday 31st August 2007.

Panel members and professional positions

Colleen Matheson
Principal
Alfred Deakin High School
Signature

Glenda Crick
Deputy Principal
Gold Creek School
Signature

Deborah Listing
Classroom Teacher
Dickson College

Signature

Trish Ghirardello
School of Education and
Community Studies
University of Canberra
Signature
