

South Australia

Alberton Primary School

Learners in the Alberton School are highly engaged in their own learning process. The socio-economic difficulties some of the learners face have been transformed in this learning environment into a learning opportunity. Respect of diversity and endurance are two social outcomes that have helped to change the learning process. A series of innovations includes personalized learning plans, team teaching, multi-age groupings. Students are encouraged to actively reflect on their own learning and to be as independent as possible, though teacher support is always available for those who need it. The “Discovery” program encourages learners to develop creativity, inquiry and problem-solving skills as well as to work in collaboration with other learners, encouraging important components of the learning process.

Main focus of innovation: LEARNERS, TEACHERS, CONTENT, ORGANISATION

Other keywords: equity

General Information

Name of the ILE: Alberton Primary School

Location/Address: 14 Broad Street. Queenstown, South Australia 5014

Website: www.albertonps.sa.edu.au

ILE submitted by: South Australian Department of Education and Children’s Services

Rationale

Why do you suggest that it should be included in the project? How does it respond to 21st century learning challenges?

“At a crucial turning point in global history, we have to make daring and disruptive changes, not incremental adjustments – but without abandoning everything we have valued and achieved in the past.”
Hargreaves and Shirley

Since 2006, Alberton Primary School has engaged in innovation, devising a model of schooling intended to more effectively address the needs of twenty-first century students. New approaches and practices have been adopted to improve both student learning and wellbeing.

These include, a values-based curriculum; R-7 student groupings; shared leadership responsibilities; daily opportunities to undertake interest-based discovery projects; regular learning conversations and reflection; specific wellbeing interventions; parent and community partnerships; and, the development of engaging learning environments. This new and comparatively radical educational approach is underpinned by creativity, flexibility and reflective practice. The transformed curriculum has been devised to nurture thoughtful young people who understand themselves as learners, are able to communicate clearly and confidently, and who understand the real meaning of community.

Prior to the restructuring of learning in 2006, there were concerns that the traditional model of schooling was no longer effective or beneficial for the community of learners at Alberton Primary School, particularly the high percentage of students from low socio-economic backgrounds as well as Aboriginal students. Reflecting a futures-oriented approach, the significant pedagogical, organisational and curriculum innovations which were introduced allow students to have greater power over their learning, input into the processes for learning and connection of their learning to their world-view. The organisation of learning groups, student decision-making structures and community service programs all encourage active citizenship.

There is already evidence that the innovative practices adopted at Alberton have been effective. Students at Alberton Primary School are now consistently achieving higher results in standardised national literacy and numeracy testing, in comparison with socio-economically alike schools. Furthermore, incidents of behavioural issues dealt with through time-outs or suspension from school have reduced significantly since the innovations were introduced. Continuing students have also reported feeling more comfortable in themselves and their surroundings. Anecdotal evidence from staff, students and parents identify improvement in the social and organisational skills of students, including their ability and propensity to take initiative or show leadership.

Learning Aims / Intended Learning Outcomes of the ILE

What are the core learning aims and which knowledge, skills or attitudes are to be acquired? (These may include outcomes related to learners' social, interpersonal, or meta-cognitive development)

Alberton Primary School aims to develop the whole child, that is, to contribute to their social, emotional, physical and intellectual improvement. The key learning outcomes for students are:

- To become thoughtful people who understand things deeply, who develop passion and persistence, communicate powerfully and who work cooperatively to build on the potential of group power.
- To become lifelong learners through the development of 'Learnertic' graduate qualities. The definition of these qualities used at Alberton is based on the work of Guy Claxton and of the International Baccalaureate's Learner Profile.
- To work cooperatively; to build skills for independence; to learn to value difference; to understand the benefits of thoughtful risk-taking and of creativity; to have a clear sense of how best to look after themselves and others; to enthusiastically explore their world and its meaning; to define success and set goals towards achieving this end; to increasingly becoming aware of themselves as learners through reflection; and, a focus on mastering the use of learning tools.

These learning outcomes are pursued within a clear framework defining effective learning. Firstly, students learn most effectively when they are engaged in the learning process, and supported academically, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Numerous approaches contribute to student engagement, including experiential opportunities, choice, inquiry-based learning, scaffolded learning, as well as through rigorous and challenging learning activities. The overall wellbeing of students at Alberton is improved through a multi-dimensional approach that includes health and social education.

Secondly, students need to develop foundational literacy and numeracy skills to not only support effective learning across the curriculum, but to develop learning skills that can contribute to successful engagement in lifelong learning. Thirdly, students should be valued as citizens now, with great potential to contribute to contemporary, as well as future society. This is encouraged at Alberton primarily through links and partnerships with the local community. Finally, students should be encouraged to recognise their personal potential, and to constructively and competently fulfil this both individually and within a group.

Alberton Primary School recognises the importance of achieving and celebrating success; working with children to develop explicit understanding of social action; learning about and valuing cultural differences; having a sense of belonging at school; using specific and intensive interventions to increase individual potential and overcome learning blocks; developing positive relationships; nurturing creativity; and, fostering school-home partnerships.

Learners

Which group(s) of learners is it aiming at? Who is eligible to take part? How many learners are there? What are their ages?

Alberton Primary School has 290 children from kindergarten (~3-4 years of age) to Year 7 (~12-13 years of age). The student population is diverse, and includes ~90 Aboriginal learners this year (2011). This cohort of students is a significant focus, in response to both state and national priority to improve the results of Aboriginal students. The majority of the school's students (~80%) are from a low socio-economic background over multiple generations.

Facilitators

Who are the teachers/facilitators? Who are the leaders? What are their professional backgrounds? What are their roles?

Alberton Primary School employs 23 teaching and leadership staff (15 full-time and 8 part-time). A further 17 ancillary staff (all part-time) are employed to undertake school support and administrative services. Stability within the staff body is supported through a total of 28 permanent staff members (70%). All teachers hold the requisite qualifications for teacher registration in South Australia. All teaching and leadership staff hold undergraduate tertiary qualifications, namely Diploma and Bachelor Degrees. As many as 35% additionally hold a post-graduate qualification. At present, two teachers and one of the ancillary staff members are enrolled in further study.

A model of distributive leadership is used within the staff body. Many members of staff take on responsibility for specific areas of curriculum or organisation, working as 'leaders without labels'. These roles are voluntary, allowing the school to effectively undertake many additional projects and changes. Shared leadership has reinforced the ownership staff have for the success of the school in achieving improved student outcomes. It has additionally increased the number of staff who have experienced leadership, providing them with appreciation for the role. This has increased the sense of trust within the group and allowed initiatives to progress more efficiently and with broader support.

A small team with formal and overall leadership responsibilities includes the school's principal, deputy principal, a coordinator of approaches to learning, as well as a primary school counsellor. This leadership team works with all staff to ensure that the school maintains its focus on innovation and improvement, while also continuing to strengthen existing successes.

A Staff Tenet was developed to focus the group on the creation of a learning community. The introductory statement to this tenet includes the following.

'The tenet is constructed with the understanding that strong relationships, a strong sense of self, the community and good communication will enable successful change to adapt to the changing needs of our wider community.'

Other key features of the Staff Tenet include:

- trust and respect, as well as belief in these values, are key to meaningful relationships;
- diversity and belief in the strength and unity in difference;
- voice and choice, and belief in the need for all to experience voice, is powerful and so needs to be used responsibly.

The Staff Tenet has allowed the staff of Alberton Primary School to develop a love of learning through being active learners themselves, always reflecting on practice and building upon their own expertise across the curriculum. Each teacher works with students from Reception to Year 7. Team teaching of students with this breadth of ages has enabled teachers to learn from and with one another about the full spectrum of student needs.

One of the key elements of the Staff Tenet is *'to value a culture that is wired together and to believe in shared ownership based on positive intent'*. This means that staff will live with the decisions made by small committees or during voluntary staff meetings. The general professional learning community established at Alberton has created a collaborative group of professionals engaged in student-centred practices which undergo continual development and improvement according to the needs of students. As a result, incremental innovation has continued to build on the success achieved to date.

The Staff Tenet has been added to the final section of this document.

Organization of the ILE

How is learning organised? How do learners and facilitators interact? What kind of pedagogy do they follow? What curriculum is used?

Since 2006, Alberton Primary School has been implementing an innovative curriculum, organising learning to better meet the academic, social and emotional needs of its community. The new curriculum is based on the school values of Belonging, Discovery, Diversity, Success and Wellbeing.

At Alberton, Early Years programs from birth involve access to playgroups with a seamless transition into the kindergarten program through safe play experiences, as well as opportunities for risk taking, forming new friendships and developing new skills.

Transition classrooms during the Reception years (4-5 years of age) provide a solid foundation for children to move into the regular Reception to Year 7 primary school level program. Reception classes provide opportunities for children to learn school behaviours and language with adult support. Two teachers engage with each class of 30 children with the support of a School Services Officer. All learning experiences have an emphasis on hands-on activities, where children are encouraged to take risks in their learning and to develop their skills further in a safe and secure environment.

Once students reach the daily primary level Reception to Year 7 (R-7) teaching and learning program, they engage with six key aspects of Alberton's innovative practice: multi-age 'Magpie' groupings, student reflection, student personalised learning plans, concentrated literacy and numeracy work, Discovery multi-age interest groups, and authentic leadership opportunities. Each of these are described in more detail below.

Multi-age Magpie groupings

Multi-age (R-7) groupings of students are called 'Magpie' groupings and are used to foster a spirit of symbiosis between students at Alberton Primary School. Older students generally bring leadership skills and mentor younger students, who tend to bring both enthusiasm and wonderment. There are times throughout the day when students of similar ages will come together to work, just as there are times that students of similar interests will have time to work with one another. However, a significant amount of time is spent within Magpie groups. As a result, the school has noticed a significant growth in students' awareness of others, empathy, tolerance, care, and peer respect, while the incidence of bullying has significantly reduced. Students have learnt to build self-esteem through 'lifting' themselves, rather than putting others down. Students who were previously bullies or disruptive to learning, in the lower years in particular, have lost their dominance.

Student Reflection

One activity undertaken within Magpie groups is Student Reflection. During this time, students are encouraged to become more aware of themselves as learners. Some students have a journal they have maintained for as long as five years at this stage. Students are explicitly taught to use a range of reflective tools and organisers to help them reflect on the preceding week, as well as to recall specific goals they had set for themselves or events that have taken place. Students also use this opportunity to look forward to the following week and set academic, social or behavioural goals for themselves. As well as their reflection time, students have explored their learning strengths/preferences and areas of greatest challenges through exposure to tools, such as Hermann's Brain Dominances.

Question Creation Chart (Q-Chart)

	Is	Did	Can	Would	Will	Might
Who	Who are the people of unhealthy food?	Who did invent healthy and unhealthy food?	Who can switch our brain on and off?	Who would come up with such unhealthy food when they know it's bad?	Who will realize that eating un-healthy food is bad?	Who might ban unhealthy food?
What	What is in your head?	What did you do to keep you healthy?	What can ban unhealthy food?	What would ban unhealthy food?	What will you eat when you're hungry?	What might ban food that is unhealthy?
Where	Where is it that some countries only sell unhealthy food?	Where did they ban unhealthy food?	Where can you find more info on on's and off's?	Where would some countries have only have unhealthy food?	Where will all our waste go after our body is full of unhealthy food?	Where might our brains switch off and on during the day?
When	When is it that our brain switches on and off?	When did people come up with KFC, Macdonalds & Hungry Jacks?	When can KFC, Macdonalds & Hungry Jacks be healthy?	When would your brain switch on and off?	When will food only become healthy?	When might our body realise unhealthy food is bad for us?
How	How is it that when we don't have food our brain switches off?	How do you feel when you're around your friends?	How can you control your brain with on and off's?	How would you feel when your around people?	How will your brain sleep?	How might a Jellyfish swim without a brain?
Why	Why is it that brains have switch on's and off's?	Why did you eat fresh fruit?	Why is it that fat food takes over healthy food?	Why would our brain switch on and off?	Why will our body be affected by unhealthy food?	Why might some healthy food is bad for you?

Student Learning Plans: Tool shed

Students spend one hour each day focussed on developing the skills for learning and building the number of learning tools that they can use in any future context through Student Learning Plans. A 'tool shed' has been developed to highlight the 'graduate skills' students will need for any future learning, work or life context they may encounter.

From this 'tool shed', a smaller 'tool box' is the focus for each of the units of work within this program. The priority for this time is developing contextual knowledge, skills, understandings and beliefs. The context may be based around a big question, a concept or a 'real-life' situation which integrates many areas of learning. Students access explicit teaching of skills to help them organise their thoughts; research using a range of paper and electronic texts; present their learning; use graphic organisers; communicate powerfully; and, develop their skills to solve problems. The key focus is ensuring that students leave Alberton with skills that are transferable to any learning situation. They should know how to learn and be able to do so whenever they need to. If this is achieved, they are empowered to work independently and collaboratively in any situation.

One example of the kind of 'big question' and learning process undertaken by students in the preparation of learning plans is a focus on promoting deep thinking and questioning through the development of a question matrix.

The topic used to illustrate the deep thinking process in this case was: How Can I be the Happiest and Healthiest me? Below is an example question chart developed by one of the students involved in this learning activity.

Reflecting personalisation, those students who are not ready to work independently can choose *“to have extra support [with one of the two teachers] and as we provide a safe and supportive learning environment, this is something that students take on without a second thought, as there is no judgement by the teacher or other children in the class.”* (Laura Scali 2010). The content of their learning becomes a secondary focus to their skills, understandings and beliefs. While knowledge is important, it can be accessed when needed when a student knows how to learn it.

Concentrated literacy and numeracy

The daily program for all R-7 students also involves concentrated learning of literacy and numeracy skills. A two-hour block of time is allocated solely to this learning, in addition to the incidental literacy and numeracy learning which is integrated into other learning areas/activities. Students are allocated to smaller age groups for concentrated literacy and numeracy learning – R-2, 3-5, and 6-7. There is significant flexibility for students to transverse these age boundaries if it is appropriate for an individual student. Only 15 students are allocated to each teacher during these classes. While teachers engage with students on their own, they plan learning activities together to ensure consistent expectations, resources, communication and so forth. The pedagogical approach is intended to scaffold and challenge students, building-on prior success in both literacy and numeracy. Learning activities are increasingly contextualised and student development is intensively monitored. Year 3-7 groups are involved in a national research project involving working on incorporating mathematisation and contextualisation in order to develop mathematical resilience and transference.

Literacy and numeracy learning is also supported within Magpie groups, with cross-age tutoring. Older students listen to younger students read every day. The reading skills of younger students can improve, while the older students become increasingly skilled in guiding the reading of others effectively, and in turn improving their own understanding of the process of reading.

Discovery Multi-age Interest Groups

A highly innovative aspect of the daily program is that students have an opportunity to choose a ‘Discovery’ focus each afternoon that will result in a short-term or long-term commitment or project. During this time, teacher-led or student-led learning experiences are offered. Students choose and book themselves into these sessions. These sessions are designed to encourage students to explore, create and discover. The materials and resources they require are provided accordingly. Some activities allow students to engage in developmental play, while others allow students to design and make or to explore technologies. Some activities may allow students to work scientifically, or express themselves through the Arts, or be physically active. They may be challenged to solve problems that they develop themselves or that are posed by teachers. Many activities are a combination of these opportunities. Students end each day with tales of learning to tell their parents. This program reinforces the value of ‘Discovery’, develops creativity, innovation, inquiry and problem-solving skills, and supports students to keep taking risks, as there are no wrong answers. Students have the opportunity to work on their own or to work collaboratively. They engage in learning across curriculum areas, within contextual and experiential frameworks. Students are aware of different disciplines because they have to record the disciplines that are a focus for any given activity. However, the learning is integrated such that it can be more meaningful, particularly at the primary level.

Leadership

Another key aspect of innovation is that leadership opportunities are available for students in a multitude of formal and informal ways. One of these opportunities is the Children's Parliament which operates at Alberton Primary School (CPAPS). It has elected members across eight Ministries. They are involved in real decision-making and even have their own budget to manage.

The students themselves have documented various other leadership examples:

- One student supported her teacher's Advanced Skills Teacher application and provided the following statement about how the teacher helped her and provided leadership opportunities, "*[the teacher] helped me with the planning of three other discovery activities.... This opportunity has taught me to be more organised and to be more patient with helping the younger students because it can take sometime to get everything right. I felt proud to be responsible enough for the teacher to trust me with running my own discovery lesson.*" (Tayla Hanson 2010)
- The following is paraphrased from a verbal statement by a year 5 boy who was the only person that was able to get a year 2 student (with significant anxiety issues) to engage in swimming lessons, "*I have only two years before I have to go to high school, but I don't think I can go, [he] needs me.*"

Learning Context

In which context does learning take place? What does the physical learning environment look like? Are community resources used to facilitate learning and how?

The physical space is designed to be an engaging learning environment. Specialist learning areas have been created to better enable quality teaching and learning in specific areas of study. Although each space is relatively small, they have been enabling within the Alberton context.

Other spaces have been developed to further engage the participation of parents and community in the school. Improving the physical learning environment is an ongoing process at Alberton Primary School. This continual development promotes a sense of pride, security and enjoyment for all students.

The noteworthy and innovative learning spaces at Alberton include the following. Several were purpose built, funded by the federal government stimulus program "Building for an Education Revolution" (BER). However, the school has also made use of existing spaces, renovating, redecorating and/or re-furnishing old classrooms, tailoring them to meet new teaching and learning practices. All changes have involved both staff and student consultation, where possible.

Many of the facilities are related to the ocean, as the school is particularly close to the coast.

- The Aqua Science Centre – This learning space houses breeding tanks for the repatriation of the endangered Southern Purple-Spotted Gudgeon; breeding tanks for aquarium fish to allow enterprising activities for students to exchange livestock for equipment with fish shops; display tanks relating to many geographic/climate regions of the world; and, demonstration aquariums for species diversity (beyond fish). These displays of fish allow students to engage with authentic learning within scientific and environmental programs. The space used to be a classroom, but has been re-furnished for this new purpose.
- The Aquaculture Shed and Horticulture enclosure – This facility is the latest to be developed, having been recently renovated from existing buildings. The space is used to promote sustainable and self-sufficiency practices in food production. It includes a community garden with vegetable, herb and salad gardens and an orchard.

It also includes a breeding facility for yabbies and will soon include indigenous fish stocks. The facilities will also include a combination of these elements through aquaponics.

- The Visual Arts Studio – This is the centre of the school’s ‘Arts Revolution’ (purpose-built with funds from the BER). The studio reinforces the value of the arts in modelling creativity, providing alternative means of personal and group expression, and contributing to aesthetic immersion throughout the school.
- Indoor and outdoor Performing Arts spaces – There is an Performing Arts space that supports dance choreography and dramatic performances, and an outdoor stage built for presenting performances to the community, as well as for allowing independent student activities during playtimes.
- ‘The Shed’ workshop – This is the base for a program of developing ‘hands-on’ technology and construction skills. This program is primarily in place for students who have lower engagement or achievement in more academic programs. The students are involved in many small building projects or resource construction for the school, giving students a great sense of contribution to the school community.
- The ‘Learning Street’ – This is a purpose-built, diverse space with rooms students and teachers can see into from all sides. This open ‘fish-bowl’ structure allows students to also work out of the classrooms to take part in small group or independent activities whilst still being in a well-supervised space. It also houses facilities for large groups to learn cooking and nutrition programs. The Learning Street is within the same building as the internal Performing Arts space (mentioned above). As a result, students rehearsing, will usually have some sort of audience.
- Aboriginal Education Centre – This is another purpose-built space, equivalent in size to three classrooms and a large corridor. It incorporates a parent lounge, office, design space, ‘Corker Reading Program’ withdrawal office and Immersion Room. The space can exist as distinct spaces or open into one large space to cater for larger community groups. It also includes a kitchen, parent sewing space and an external ‘cafe’ space.
- The Immersion Room for Indigenous languages – This is a base for the learning of language and culture based around Pitjantjatjara, a northern South Australian Aboriginal language, and Maori, the indigenous language of our closest eastern neighbours in New Zealand. The language spreads throughout the school with signs in these languages adorning most rooms. The Immersion Room houses many cultural resources. All language learning is ultimately put into practice with cultural exchanges to New Zealand and to the Anangu lands (Aboriginal lands in South Australia where Pitjantjatjara is one of the main languages spoken).
- ‘Deadly Designers’ Studio – This space is used for learning in Design and Architecture, as well as specialist Ceramics. It is incorporated within our Aboriginal Education Centre.
- ‘The Café’ – This exterior space is designed for parents to gather and talk, as well as for students to sit and eat breakfast (a regular Breakfast Program provides a healthy meal to start the day for students whose families can/do not provide this for their children).

Alberton Primary School has extensive information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure. There is a Computing Room is provided to enable explicit ICT teaching space. All learning spaces have wireless coverage, providing flexibility for students to borrow laptop computers and work independently anywhere in the school.

History of ILE

Who initiated it? For what reasons was it started and with what purpose? Have these changed since?

Alberton Primary School is over 130 years old and part of the government education system within the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS). During 2005, teachers recognised that traditional educational approaches were not working and that there was a need for change. Staff had already been accessing professional development programs in order to generate improvements in students' learning and wellbeing outcomes. However, teachers felt that by implementing new practices individually within isolated classrooms, their efforts lost impetus and created significant frustration. Many students were disengaged from their learning and the learning environment seemed to be under constant tension. During this period, the school underwent an amalgamation, which created an opportunity for extensive and comprehensive change.

Through attending a significant professional development presentation, four staff members were inspired to take action. Several meetings culminated in a presentation to the full staff outlining a proposal for a model for learning that would be more responsive to student needs.

The transformative elements of this original proposal included:

- 'Home Classes', known as Magpie Groups were structured to include students from Reception (5 years of age) to Year 7 (~12 years of age), with two teachers based in each.
- 'Discovery Time' was established 4 afternoons per week. These were times that were primarily discipline (subject area) specific. Some engaged in multi-disciplinary learning, with a focus on developmental play, inquiry and experiential learning. Children could exercise their choice in which to attend each day. During these sessions, staff would prompt, question and encourage, reinforcing discovery and challenge.
- There were daily opportunities for students and staff to engage in 'balance' or 'wellbeing' activities directed at relaxation after lunch time.
- Student Learning Plans were a time that students could negotiate their own learning within the confines of a common theme or big question that applied across the school. The focus for the learning time was on developing skills for learning, for organising their thoughts, communicating their learning and assessing their learning against agreed criteria.
- Teaching became a collaborative and shared experience. The school's staff engaged in planning as a group, determining the structures and learning tools they would attempt to teach in relation to Student Learning Plan topics. Team teaching was implemented across the school to ensure support and challenge was in place throughout the day.
- An open and genuine attempt was made to listen to and include student voices and choices in the functioning of the school. Through daily encouragement, student voice enabled students to engage in learning as equals.
- Students produced journals during 'Weekly Reflection Time', allowing their learning to be mapped over months and years.
- A 'Staff Tenet' was established by the whole staff to govern expectations of their performance, attitudes and understandings.

- Learners and learning were brought to the centre of all activities, so that ‘distractions’ were prevented from derailing the school’s transformation.

The overarching purposes of these original changes continue to accurately represent Alberton Primary School. However, the model has progressed and strengthened through a process of continual innovation and change.

Funding of the ILE

How is it funded?

The school operates within the regular departmental funding structure. The school engages in additional projects through a process of applying for small grants. The infrastructure to support the establishment of engaging learning environments was enabled firstly by amalgamating with another local school early in the innovation process, and has since been supported by the Australian federal government’s stimulus package, ‘Building the Education Revolution’.

Learning Outcomes

What are the learning outcomes achieved by the ILE, including academic, social, interpersonal and meta-cognitive outcomes? How is learning assessed?

Students consistently achieve higher results in standardised national literacy and numeracy testing. Averaged over all elements and all year levels, Alberton Primary School (a category 2 school on the Category 1-7 scale) achieved at the equivalent level to a Category 5 (a much higher category).

In 2009, many student sub-groups achieved improved or higher than expected achievement in the national standardised literacy and numeracy testing, including:

- Year 5 student results were above total state mean in Numeracy, Reading, Spelling, and Grammar and Punctuation.
- Year 7 student results were above total state mean in Spelling and Writing.
- Year 7 boys results were above total state mean in Numeracy.
- Year 7 girls results were above total state mean in Reading, Spelling, Writing, and Grammar and Punctuation.
- About 30% of Year 3 students achieved results above the national mean in Numeracy, Writing, Grammar and Punctuation, and Spelling and about half achieved above the national average.
- Year 7 indigenous students achieved above the state mean in Grammar and Punctuation. (ACARA, 2009).

Excellent Reading results achieved across the year levels in NAPLAN are reflected in daily achievement for students, with higher numbers reaching Reading Recovery benchmarks and students on intervention programs closing the gap faster than previously. 2010 results show 70% of Year 1 students reading levels 1-15 and 30% reading levels 16-26 compared to 68% and 32% respectively across the state. By Year 2 this has changed significantly with 21% in levels 1-15 and 79% in levels 16-26 compared to 32% and 68% respectively (DECS, 2010).

Behavioural improvements have been identified since the school implemented the new, innovative model. Incidents of behavioural issues dealt with through time-outs or suspension from school have reduced significantly. As many as 90% less students are now identified as ‘significantly at risk’ as a result of their behaviour record.

Continuing students have also reported feeling more comfortable in themselves and their surroundings (DECS. *EDSAS database*).

Anecdotal evidence from staff, students and parents identify improvement in the social and organisational skills of students, including their ability and propensity to take initiative or show leadership.

For example:

- The Principal from one of the two main high schools fed by Alberton Primary graduates has recently commented on the very noticeable and positive difference between recent 'Alberton' Year 8 students and others.
- A student who is part of the "Children's Parliament" which provides leadership opportunities in the school recently commented in the 2010 department Opinion Survey that "leadership at our school is good because the older kids, including me, are the leaders of our school, so the little kids look up to us."
- Students involved in 'The Shed' program for students 'at-risk' developed their literacy and numeracy skills in a contextualized framework using a building and workshop model. Their testimonials also highlight the mentoring support they received while working with the tools i.e. receiving social and emotional support through 'guy talk'. The student feedback includes the following comments:

"Johnny has helped me to use tools properly and learn their names. Johnny also helps me solve my problems."

"Johnny has helped me to use tools that I might be using in high school. He taught me that there is numeracy in everything."

"Johnny is very wise because we can talk to him about our problems and he gives us good answers."

Other evidence of the holistic outcomes of the Alberton Primary School program is that in the first year of the Wadu Wellness program (a key professional health checks program for indigenous students which is being considered for wider implementation), significant numbers of students were referred on for medical, dental, hearing or eye treatment/follow up or for social/emotional counselling.

The direct impact on academic learning outcomes has not been analysed but reasonable assumptions can be made. Two of the identified successes of the program were the partnerships between agencies and the heavy involvement of Aboriginal families in the initial program development.

Documentation describing or evaluating the ILE

Is there documentation on this learning environment? Is there a website? Films? Research reports or evaluations? Other forms of documentation? (please supply references or links)

The school's website is www.albertonps.sa.edu.au.

The annual report is included on the website.

Supplementary Information: The 'Essence of Alberton'.

Other information you consider to be relevant to describe the ILE

Support Programs

To ensure that every student at Alberton Primary School has the opportunity to develop to their full potential, many additional support programs are conducted to complement our inclusive curriculum. These include the following.

- The Corker Reading program – a 1:1 daily reading and writing program to give a boost to Year 1, 2 and 3 Aboriginal students identified early as at risk with their literacy.
- The Speech and Language program – offering 1:1 intensive support to children identified with speech or language processing difficulties from Kindergarten to Year 7.
- The ‘Monkey Club’ – a small group program to improve motor skills. This is supported by fine motor skill development for students requiring this level of support.
- ‘The Shed’ – a program to engage ‘at risk’ students through learning literacy and numeracy in a ‘hands-on’ way, while learning technical skills and contributing to the development of the school’s grounds and resources.
- ‘Wadu Wellness’ – A collaborative program with Primary Health Care Services, UniSA and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service to identify physical and mental health issues experienced by students and implement intervention strategies.
- The Bus – A before and after school bus service aimed at increasing attendance of students with transport difficulties.
- Special Education – a qualified teacher and support staff provide intervention strategies in literacy and social development for students with disabilities.
- English as a Second Language Teacher and Aboriginal Education Team – a total of 4 staff implement a range of intervention strategies to support students from traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme Tutors and Aboriginal Mentors provide academic, social and cultural support to Aboriginal students.
- Primary School Counsellor – assists students and families to manage social and emotional situations effectively and work towards effective whole school management of student behaviour.
- Sports Plus program – offers students the opportunity to develop their skills in a range of sports and musical instruments, and to be able to compete at higher levels.
- Choir and Wakakirri – programs enable students to develop higher order skills in the Performing Arts and perform well to large audiences.
- Webmasters, Newsletter Publishers and Clay Animation – small groups of skilled students have the opportunity to develop higher level skills in multimedia through building and maintaining the school website, publishing the school newsletter and making short films.
- Immersion – an Indigenous languages program where students learn Pitjantjatjara or Maori with support staff that speak the languages as their native tongue. The language is developed within the context of cultural understandings, and with the intention of using the languages in the regions of origin.
- Visual Arts program – offers all students the opportunity to develop improved visual arts skills through working with a specialist teacher and ‘Artist in Residence’. Students identified with talents in the area are invited to participate in extension programs.
- Students with High Intellectual Potential (SHIP) programs – are offered for students with high intellectual potential and constantly evolving to meet the specific needs of current individuals and groups. Trained specialists in SHIP programs and in inquiry learning offer these programs.

Staff Tenet

At Alberton Primary School we see ourselves as part of a learning community that is based on shared principles and ethics underpinned by the school values and guided by a Staff Tenet. The tenet is constructed with the understanding that strong relationships, a strong sense of self [the community] and good communication will enable successful change to adapt to the changing needs of our wider community.

We value trust and respect and believe it is the key to meaningful relationships therefore:

- We encourage fun and a respectful sense of humour;
- We discuss issues in a private and confidential environment;
- We are open to offering coaching and accepting coaching;
- We feel respected and safe enough to take risks;
- We work to maintain positive relationships as a foundation which allows us to give each other critical and constructive feedback while avoiding misunderstandings;
- We avoid 'kitchen talk', taking issues to appropriate people rather than via others;
- We develop human to human relationships, not role to role; and
- We provide opportunities for on the job learning and understand competencies increase incrementally.

We value diversity and believe that there is strength and unity in difference therefore:

- We embrace differences in perspectives and knowledge about education;
- We look at the whole person understanding that many factors will influence their interactions;
- We understand diverse world views and are sensitive to group differences;
- We affirm a sense of belonging through recognizing and each others' capabilities and contributions;
- We put effort into developing different ways of working with different people;
- We spend time developing our awareness of other peoples' backgrounds;
- We see diversity as an opportunity to create an environment where different people can all thrive;
- We challenge bias, professional stereotyping, intolerance, racism and public shaming; and
- We seek role models from diverse backgrounds and include them in the professional domain.

We value voice and choice and believe every voice has power therefore needs to be used responsibly with an understanding of the consequences surrounding choice therefore:

- We use respectful language;
- We question cross cultural appropriateness of questions, choices and actions;
- We use questioning as an important tool for deepening understanding of self and others;
- We provide the choice for all to access challenging work, which conveys respect for potential;
- We actively seek multiple perspectives through inclusive processes and policies;
- We choose to be silent if we are not prepared to be part of the solution to a problem, we keep blame and criticism from the workplace; and
- We give others the opportunity to present their whole viewpoint.

We value a culture that is wired together and believe in shared ownership based on positive intent therefore:

- We develop a common language that enables mutual understanding;
- We maintain professional standards with all staff at all times;
- We check assumptions;
- We celebrate success;
- We are aware of people's roles and responsibilities;
- We create a support network to manage stress effectively;
- We put time into understanding ours and others' learning/thinking style preferences;
- We build our self-confidence through meaningful affirming dialogue with people who have positive relationships with us;
- We can walk in opposite directions while remaining side by side;
- We have shared ownership of problems – 'my problem is our problem';
- We look inwards to remedy relationship issues with others;
- We adhere to and support decisions made through agreed processes; and
- We show initiative to do what needs to be done

References

Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). (2009). *NAPLAN School Report*. Canberra: Australian Government.

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Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS). *EDSAS Database*. Adelaide: DECS.