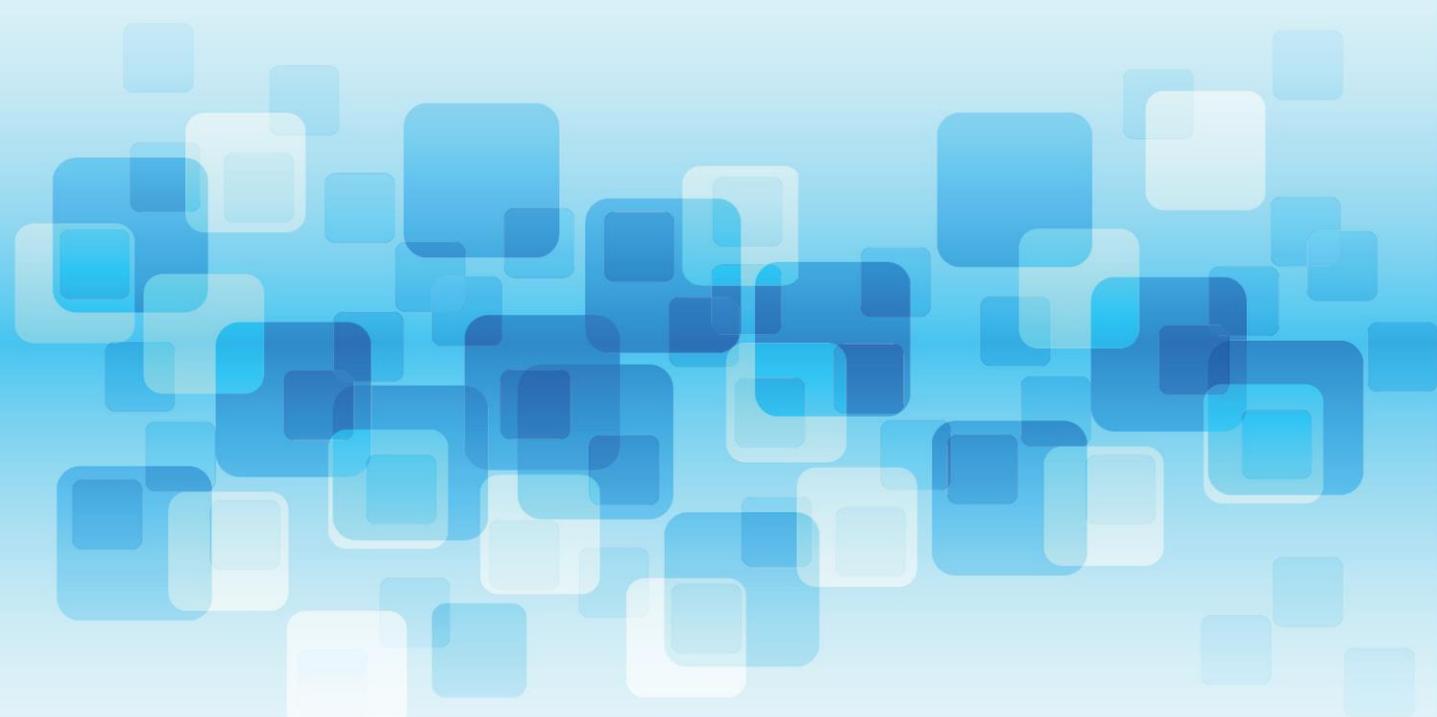




School Improvement Unit Report

Brisbane Urban Environmental Education Centre





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1. Introduction

This report is a product of a review carried out by a review team from the School Improvement Unit (SIU) at **Brisbane Urban Environmental Education Centre** from **17 to 18 November 2016**.

The report presents an evaluation of the school's performance against the nine domains of the [National School Improvement Tool](#). It also recommends improvement strategies for the school to consider in consultation with its regional office and school community.

The report's executive summary outlines key findings from the review and key improvement strategies which prioritise future directions for improvement.

The schools will publish the executive summary on the school website within two weeks of receiving the report.

The principal will meet with their Principal Supervisor to discuss the review findings and improvement strategies.

For more information about the SIU and reviews for Queensland state schools please visit the SIU [website](#).

1.1 Review team

Alan Sampson	Internal reviewer, SIU (review chair)
Kylie Murry	Peer reviewer
Glyn Thomas	External reviewer

1.2 School context

Location:	Banks St, Newmarket
Education region:	Metropolitan Region
Year opened:	1975
Year levels:	Prep to Year 12
Enrolment:	n/a
Indigenous enrolment percentage:	n/a
Students with disability enrolment percentage:	n/a
Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:	n/a
Year principal appointed:	1975
Full-time equivalent staff:	3
Significant partner schools:	Newmarket State School, Kelvin Grove State College, Wilston State School, Windsor State School, Petrie Terrace State School, Brisbane Central State School
Significant community partnerships:	Royal National Agricultural and Industrial Association of Queensland (RNA), Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Lendlease, Toohey Forest Environmental Education Centre, Moreton Bay Environmental Education Centre
Significant school programs:	Brisbane Show Camp, Town Planning, Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM)



1.3 Contributing stakeholders

The following stakeholders contributed to the review:

School community:

- Principal, four teachers, Business Services Manager (BSM) and five students.

Community and business groups:

- QUT Science Faculty and Lendlease.

Partner schools and other educational providers:

- Principal of Tallebudgera Beach Outdoor Education Centre, Principal of Maroon Outdoor Education Centre, Principal of Milton State School, Cluster Chair, Principal of Wooloowin State School, Principal of Newmarket State School, Head of Department (HOD) of Whites Hill State College, two teachers from client primary schools and three teachers from client secondary schools.

Government and departmental representatives:

- Principal supervisor.

1.4 Supporting documentary evidence

Annual Implementation Plan 2016

Centre Improvement Agenda

Investing for Success 2016

Strategic Plan 2013-2016

Headline Indicators

School newsletters and website

OneSchool

School budget overview

Curriculum planning documents

Professional development plans

School improvement targets

School Opinion Survey

School pedagogical framework

Responsible Behaviour Plan

Curriculum, assessment and reporting framework



2. Executive summary

2.1 Key findings

The centre has adopted a business model of response, reacting quickly to the changing curriculum needs of client schools.

Discussions with a range of client schools reveal the centre is held in high regard for its proactive stance in enhancing curriculum variety and enrichment in the areas of geography, science and history. Enrolments (visitations) have increased from 3 562 students in the 2013 to 6 048 in 2016. The centre has recently established a strong brand in geography curriculum across the state.

The principal articulates the Explicit Improvement Agenda (EIA) to be improving curriculum rigour and rich pedagogy.

Centre targets are set for each of the goal areas. The understanding, correlation and monitoring of centre targets in relation to teacher practice is inconsistent across priority areas. A collaborative, explicit strategic planning process, outlining how associated priorities are determined, actioned and reviewed is yet to be clarified.

The centre has a broad pedagogical framework.

Teaching staff are able to articulate how and why students learn in their programs. They emphasise the importance of learners being involved and engaged, promoting deeper learning and higher order thinking skills, authentic learning in a real context, and learning through inquiry. A clear correlation between the framework and teaching practices is not yet demonstrated.

The teaching staff have a common commitment to providing learning experiences that are engaging, promote deeper learning and encourage higher order thinking skills.

The importance of learning in a real world context is emphasised. A program of providing instructional peer feedback to teachers has been initiated by the principal and is yet to be embedded. A professional learning plan for the centre is not yet developed.

The centre staff are continuing to explore the use of data to inform their planning and delivery.

Anecdotal data collected through the review interviews and from school feedback sheets suggests the centre has added value to the richness of curriculum and the variety of pedagogical approaches in their schools. A clear and explicit analysis of the impact that centre programs have had on the learning of students in client schools is not yet occurring.



Some programs are designed to extend groups of talented students in areas of specialisation.

The extended excursions offer an opportunity to identify individual student needs and strengths and to provide a variety of explicit differentiation strategies. Pre-visits to schools by centre teachers offer an opportunity to gather individual student data to be incorporated in differentiation strategies within the excursion/incursion.

Finances have been built up over a number of years for the possibility of having to build an administration space for housing staff members in the future.

Budget allocations for school improvement priorities are not apparent in the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP). Improving teaching and curriculum programs are the two EIA areas. Funds have not been allocated to these areas. The external presentation of the centre as an environmental centre and evidence of outdoor resources within the immediate precinct is not yet apparent.

The centre has developed a wide range of mutually beneficial partnerships.

Cluster schools and businesses acknowledge the work the centre does in enhancing their Professional Development (PD) in specialised areas of the curriculum.



2.2 Key improvement strategies

Develop an explicit, collaborative, strategic planning process which identifies the centre brand for the next four years and which clarifies and regularly monitors progress against centre targets.

Revisit the pedagogical framework so that it is more focused on the evidence-based principles that underpin and inform the way teachers teach and students learn in the centre's programs.

Formalise a Professional Learning Plan (PLP) for the centre aligned with the centre's improvement agenda and the pedagogical framework.

Develop a strategic approach to building explicit differentiation strategies within all long term excursions.

Conduct regular reviews of the budget to ensure targeted funds for centre improvement priorities are being expended effectively over the year, with consideration to the presentation of this centre as an environmental centre.



3. Findings and improvement strategies against the domains

3.1 An explicit improvement agenda

Findings

The centre leadership team is clearly committed to finding ways to improve student outcomes. The centre team is focused on building high quality partnerships with schools to add value to the curriculum and pedagogical depth of the client schools, and to the enhanced engagement of students in the learning process.

The 2016 AIP outlines the centre priorities to be aligning programs to the Australian Curriculum (AC), continual renewal of all centre programs, performance planning, online learning, Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) and data interpretation. The principal articulates the EIA to be improving curriculum rigour and rich pedagogy.

Centre targets are set for each of the goal areas. The understanding, correlation and monitoring of centre targets in relation to teacher practice is inconsistent across priority areas.

A collaborative, explicit strategic planning process, outlining how associated priorities are determined, actioned and reviewed is yet to be clarified.

The centre has contributed significant resources to the integration of technology within programs over previous years. Future plans regarding the role of technology in centre offerings is not yet clear.

Online units are developed to complement units of work, for example 300 students engage in the Royal National Agricultural and Industrial Association of Queensland (RNA) show camp. The future of online programs to respond to geographically isolated students needs to be clarified.

The centre has adopted a business model of response to clients' needs, reacting quickly to the curriculum needs of client schools, which include the STEM initiatives and the explicit links to the AC. Enrolments (visitations) have increased from 3 562 students in the 2013, to 6 048 in 2016.

Discussions with a range of client school partners reveal the centre is held in high regard for its proactive stance in enhancing curriculum variety and enrichment in the areas of geography, science and history.

The centre has recently established a strong brand in geography curriculum across the state.



Improvement strategies

Develop an explicit collaborative strategic planning process which identifies the centre brand for the next four years and which clarifies the narrow improvement agenda and regularly monitors progress against centre targets.

Clarify the correlation of centre targets to individual teacher practices, roles and responsibilities.

Review the role of online learning in future centre provisions.



3.2 Analysis and discussion of data

Findings

Environmental education centres are not guided by the data sets used in mainstream schools.

Headline indicators of school visitations indicate potential instruction hours for the centre are 24 281 compared to actual which is 25 847. This reflects the centre is delivering instruction hours beyond expectations.

The centre staff are continuing to explore the use of data to inform their planning and delivery.

Client school/teacher surveys are collected on satisfaction across a range of areas. The development of client teacher survey sheets, aligned to the elements of the AC in some units of work, provide a snapshot to centre teachers on their success in covering these essential elements.

The centre has a comprehensive data plan.

A clear and explicit analysis of the impact centre programs have had on the learning of students in client schools is yet demonstrated.

A process of interrogating student outcome data in key partner schools is under investigation.

There is some evidence through centre staff pre-visits to schools that student outcome and achievement data from the school is used to guide the planning of centre activities.

Anecdotal data collected through the review interviews and from school feedback sheets suggests the centre has added value to the richness of curriculum and the variety of pedagogical approaches in their schools.

Assessment criteria sheets have been designed and are utilised for some units of work. A plan for the collection of these assessment results to inform further unit planning is not yet developed.

Improvement strategies

Continue to develop strategies to identify the impact centre programs have had on student outcomes by exploring student assessment results.

Expand the use and analysis of client survey sheets aligned to the AC.



3.3 A culture that promotes learning

Findings

Staff morale is high and there is a positive and optimistic feel at the centre. The school experience survey data indicates positive perceptions of the learning community at the centre.

The teaching staff have developed, and are implementing, a range of engaging programs that are linked to the AC and which promote student learning.

Staff members at the centre contribute to a number of professional organisations like the Geography Teachers' Association of Queensland (Qld) and the Science Teachers' Associations of Qld. The presentations that centre staff have given at conferences have led to the establishment of strong connections with colleagues and partnership organisations.

All staff at the centre promote a culture of inquiry and on all programs deeper levels of critical thinking are encouraged with students.

The use of digital technologies is providing excellent opportunities for high quality, differentiated learning experiences.

Interviews with teachers from partnership schools and contacts in partnership organisations indicate a high level of respect for the teaching and learning that occurs in the centre's programs.

Contact with partnership schools before and after programs is mostly conducted electronically.

There are currently limited attempts made to determine the quality of student learning with partnership schools, even though centre staff have contributed to the design of follow-up assessment tasks.

There is an informal process of pastoral care and student wellbeing used in long term excursions. The centre does not have an articulated approach to student wellbeing or explicit pastoral care other than the philosophy exposed in the pedagogical framework.

Improvement strategies

Explore the possibility of pre- and post-excursion visits to partnership schools to strengthen relationships and facilitate the collection of data regarding the quality of student learning outcomes.

Develop an explicit, centre, pastoral care program to enhance student wellbeing during activities, based on the centre values.



3.4 Targeted use of school resources

Findings

The centre has a bank balance of \$360 019. Finances have been built up over 10 years for the possibility of having to build an administration space for housing staff members in the future.

Budget allocations for school improvement priorities are not yet apparent in the AIP.

Improving teaching and curriculum programs are the two EIA areas. Funds have not yet been allocated to these areas, for example, with teacher development 10 per cent of PD budget has been expended, 9 per cent overall curriculum budget is expended.

Investing for Success (I4S) funding is targeted to partially fund an additional teacher and is used for that purpose with 80 per cent expended.

The additional teacher is predominantly funded by revenue from private schools accessing the programs provided by the centre, with 11 per cent non-state school enrolment.

Technology equipment is purchased for use in student programs – 30 iPads (enough for the use with two school groups at once), chargers, bluetooth speakers and data loggers. There has been approximately 30 per cent of learning technology budget expended for the year.

A formal review and stocktake of resources, in-line with the current and future directions, is not yet apparent.

Some evidence exists of targeted resources for Students with Disabilities (SWD) including Dyslexia font and iPad accessibility.

The external presentation of the centre as an environmental centre and evidence of outdoor resources within the immediate precinct is not apparent.

A varied mix of centre-based programs (78 days), and school-based excursions (163 days) exists.

Improvement strategies

Conduct regular reviews of the budget to ensure targeted funds for school improvement priorities of the AIP are being expended effectively over the year.

Collaboratively source relevant PD opportunities in-line with school improvement priorities.

Explore the potential of improving the natural environment in the immediate outdoor school precinct to reflect the values of *'place'*.



3.5 An expert teaching team

Findings

Centre staff are experienced, enthusiastic, and committed to the facilitation of interactive and engaging programs that promote student learning.

There is strong expertise across the history, science, and geography disciplines.

The teaching staff have a common commitment to providing learning experiences that are engaging, promote deeper learning and encourage higher order thinking skills.

The importance of learning in a real-world context is emphasised.

The visiting teachers from partnership schools, and the contacts from partnership organisations, value the opportunity to learn from the centre staff, and consider their time spent on programs as important PD opportunities.

A program of providing instructional peer feedback to teachers has been initiated by the principal and is yet to be embedded. The process focuses on teaching strategies, learning environment and learning outcomes.

Interviews with primary students from one partnership school indicate positive perceptions of the centre's programs and the learning experiences provided. Teachers at the centre are 'more casual' and 'fun'.

Formal individual PD plans are yet to be developed for all staff members.

The formal sharing and moderation of the centre practices within the Outdoor and Environmental Education Centres Principals Alliance (OEECPA) state cluster is as yet inconsistent.

Improvement strategies

Formalise a professional learning plan for the centre aligned with the school's improvement agenda and the pedagogical framework.

Ensure that PD plans for all teaching staff include a process of formal observation of and feedback on teaching focused on the revised pedagogical framework.

Pursue the opportunities to be involved in the state-wide cluster of centres in sharing best practice.



3.6 Systematic curriculum delivery

Findings

The centre has developed a curriculum plan for Prep to Year 12 that encompasses the AC, the Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) resource and senior schooling syllabi.

Programs are developed by centre staff based on AC content descriptors and relevant curriculum syllabi.

The centre leadership team are aware of time allocations for year levels for key learning areas across Prep to Year 12.

Interaction between the centre and partnership schools regarding units of work and assessment is paramount in enhancing the overall programming of the centre.

Continued increase in enrolments over time suggests programs are of quality.

Tracking of student achievement via assessment tasks and student academic data is not yet developed. The centre has developed a program with an assessment task and rubric - Show Camp program.

The centre has acknowledged the need to track curriculum programs over several years in their partner schools to ensure there are no overlaps, for example, students being delivered the same program more than once due to class grouping based on enrolments at their partner schools.

The Centre has developed exemplary curriculum in the key learning area of geography with accolades received from schools, Griffith University and the Geography Teachers Association of Queensland for sharing curriculum in the broader community.

Teachers discuss embedding fundamental cross-cultural skills such as literacy, numeracy and higher order thinking within subjects offered and clear evidence exists of the embedding of literacy skills within some units. This is particularly apparent in some of the Prep-Year 6 history units.

The success of the centre in improving demand from client schools is a result of making the curriculum locally relevant and accessible to all students.

The centre has developed curriculum units in STEM for high achievers.

Improvement strategies

Review and develop assessment tasks that align with the current programs to assess whether programs are delivering the intended content and outcomes for students.

Collaborate with partner schools to access and track A-E data for the centre subject areas.



3.7 Differentiated teaching and learning

Findings

The centre programs are predominantly one-day enrichment activities serving different cohorts of students.

Centre staff do not place a high priority on identifying and addressing individual learning needs and are more focused on teaching the core curriculum.

Some programs are designed to extend groups of talented students in areas of specialisation including the RNA show excursion, the media unit and the STEM unit.

A program offered to some primary schools incorporates planning for students with dyslexia.

The extended excursions, including the RNA excursion of eight days, offer an opportunity to identify individual student needs and strengths, and to provide a variety of explicit differentiation strategies.

Pre-visits to schools by centre teachers offer an opportunity to gather individual student data to be incorporated in differentiation strategies within the excursion/incursion.

Post-visits offer the opportunity to evaluate the success of the activity on student learning, and to reinforce key concepts and learning intent of the units.

The centre has explored and applied the integration of technology to enhance accessibility to curriculum during day excursions.

Teachers tend to teach to the middle of the class because of the short term nature of excursions.

Visiting teachers provide feedback to centre teachers to inform future curriculum planning, including differentiation strategies.

Improvement strategies

Develop a strategic approach to building explicit differentiation strategies within all long-term excursions.

Explore the opportunity to expand pre-and post-visits in selected partner schools to collect assessment data in relation to the impact that centre activities have on student outcomes, and to jointly plan for differentiation strategies within units.



3.8 Effective pedagogical practices

Findings

One of the key improvement agenda foci, articulated by the principal at the centre, is to deliver high-quality teaching.

The centre has a broad and comprehensive pedagogical framework document that draws on the Dimensions of Teaching and Learning (DoTL) framework, the productive pedagogies framework (including the 5th 'Pedagogy and Place' dimension), and digital pedagogies. A clear correlation between the framework and teaching practices is yet not apparent.

The teaching staff articulated their commitment to the 'Pedagogy and Place' dimension of the learning beyond the classroom framework. This framework was developed through an Australian Research Council (ARC) funded research project with Queensland Outdoor/Environmental Education Centres in 2008 that studied the impact of student learning for sustainability.

Teaching staff are able to articulate how and why students learn in their programs. They emphasised the importance of learners being involved and engaged, promoting deeper learning and higher order thinking skills, authentic learning in a real context, and learning through inquiry.

A research project conducted in collaboration with the partnership organisation, the Queensland University of Technology (QUT), found that visiting teachers and students thought their participation in the centre's experiential fieldwork programs improved engagement in urban planning.

An explicit process of teachers formally sharing pedagogical strategies in line with the school framework and receiving feedback on their practice is not developed.

A range of teaching strategies is demonstrated including explicit teaching, inquiry learning and project-based group work.

Feedback is provided to students on progress against the objectives of the unit/excursion.

Improvement strategies

Revisit the pedagogical framework so that it is more focused on the evidence-based principles that underpin and inform the way teachers teach and students learn in the centre's programs.

Build an explicit process of sharing pedagogical practices in line with the agreed signature teaching and learning practices.



3.9 School-community partnerships

Findings

The centre has developed mutually beneficial partnerships with tertiary institutions QUT and University of Queensland (UQ), industry groups - Lendlease, Urban Design, Town Planning, businesses - Architectural firms, other environmental education centres - Moreton Bay and Toohey Forest, partner schools - Woolloowin State School, Ashgrove State School, Kelvin Grove State School, and professional education associations - Geography Teachers Association of Queensland to value add to their programs by delivering authentic 'real world' experiences.

The centre facilitates the development of partnerships for client schools with other schools, businesses and tertiary institutions that continue beyond the program and enhance the depth of service to schools.

Cluster schools and businesses acknowledge the work the centre does in enhancing their PD in specialised areas of the curriculum.

The centre has assumed a proactive role within the cluster of local schools to build curriculum options and approaches to the teaching of science, history and geography.

Collegiality, professional learning and dialogue via these partnerships has increased the integrity of the programs offered.

A highly effective partnership exists between the centre and host school in providing extended curriculum to the school and providing opportunities for the centre to trial new programs.

Improvement strategies

Conduct a regular review of partnerships to ensure the effectiveness of investment in achieving student outcomes.

Extend the relationship with partner schools to build collaborative assessment tasks and access and track the A–E data in key learning areas.