



School Council Update

Nov 2016 – Feb 2017

In This Issue

- School Review
- Councilor Spotlight
- Kevin's announcement of retirement
- Who is on our School Council?
- School Council Elections

Council meeting insights

- Hot topics from our last meeting
- Next meeting

2016 School Council Dates

1. 11th May
2. 15th June
3. 17th August
4. 14th September
5. 19th October
6. 16th November
7. 15th February

2017 School Council Dates

1. 15th March

Contact Us

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School Review

Every 4 years schools review their performance and set a new 4 year plan. The purpose of a review year is to evaluate and diagnose our performance, prioritise and set goals and then develop a plan that we can implement and monitor each year.

The DET Improvement Model: Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO) provides a common language for school improvement across the Victorian government school system. It is structured around four state-wide priorities that are proven to have a strong bearing on the effectiveness of a school:

1. Excellence in teaching and learning
2. Professional leadership
3. Positive climate for learning
4. Community engagement in learning

Following a review, schools are expected to focus their improvement activity on one or more of the **six evidence-based initiatives**. *(These were described in detail back in our July update)*

1. Building practice excellence.
2. Curriculum planning and assessment.
3. Building leadership teams
4. Empowering students and building school pride
5. Setting expectations and promoting inclusion
6. Building communities

As you all know, the school review started last year with a **self-evaluation process**. This involved feedback from you, the students and staff as well as our results and student performance data all of which was then reviewed independently by an external panel.

In **November we began the 2 day formal review** and whilst Kevin and the leadership team will share the final strategy and annual implementation plan at the appropriate time, I would like to give you some insight from my perspective as to what it was like to participate in the review process.

The **review panel** included the accredited reviewer, Kevin, Debbie, Nicole, our leading teachers Adam, Tammie and the newly appointed Tim Jenkins and we also had 2 principals from other schools, our Senior Education Improvement Leader from the department and I was fortunate to attend as the School Council President.

On the **first day** we reviewed the self-evaluation report focusing firstly on our **student performance data**. This was a great discussion utilizing the NAPLAN and **Teacher Assessment** data over the last 3 years across all areas. (Grammar & Punctuation, Numeracy, Reading, Spelling and Writing).

This data shows us that the school performs very well overall and consistently well over the last 3 years. It also shows that for each period where there has been a focus on a specific skill such as reading or writing we have seen bigger improvements in those areas. As hoped, where the effort was needed and focused it has produced improvements.

Our challenge for the future is to consider how we **continue to find areas for improvement** when we have strong overall results. The consensus was to look more into numeracy in the next period and apply some of the learning practices that have been successful in reading and writing to this topic as well. Things like a more integrated and creative approach for delivery, timetabling flexible learning spaces for varied capability and team teaching for math and numeracy. These ideas would be supported through professional development for the teaching staff that will help to deliver that change and be measured to determine how effective it was over time.

In addition to identifying this need, we also discussed how we would continue to focus on the broad guaranteed learning priority areas and maintain those levels. Taking a full view of the requirements is the intention to ensure all areas are maintained and students are continually challenged to grow and extend, even if they are already achieving a high standard.

The way APS approaches individual learning and extension (regardless of ability) is impressive and the knowledge our teachers have about their students and the data they use to analyse and understand their needs is why we are seeing such a high performance outcome for each of our children. **Individual needs and continually extending every student positively so they are each able to see their progress and feel proud of their personal development** is the key.

The discussion around curriculum then expanded to include the **enrichment programs** and the additional opportunities APS provides such as sport, music, choir, art, language (LOTE), and afterschool activities, OSHC, robotics and many more. The extension of the curriculum is very highly regarded within the school community and critical to student engagement. These types of enrichment programs will also be included within the strategic plan to ensure they are maintained in the future and flexible to adapt as needed.

The topic of Student engagement then led to a long discussion about **student wellbeing and the culture of the school**. Student wellbeing takes many forms and the discussion did too. From student behavior to resilience through to effort and achievement, some students need more help in these areas than others and ensuring we provide an inclusive school as well as a safe one is high on the agenda.

Absenteeism was also discussed and systems for improving the management of student attendance through web based or app based systems like Compass was put forward for consideration.

We have a great overall school culture but it is often tricky to articulate that in a simple way. Reviewing our school values, motto, keys to life and overall mission will form part of the next strategic plan. It's a great opportunity given we have just completed the 100 year celebrations and have achieved great success with all these things. We are now in a position to reinvigorate these elements of our school, respecting the past, bringing with us the essence of those traditions and successes and set new ambitions for the future that will all help us describe our school culture in a consistent and simple way. This evolution will involve the students as well as the staff and will give a new focus to school culture over the next 4 years.

The terms of reference for the formal review and report were agreed at the conclusion of the first day and will be the basis for the reviews report against our last strategic plan. This report is then the launchpad for setting up our next 4 year plan where we will clarify the areas of focus over the longer term which was looked at more the second day

On returning for the **second day**, the panel was **joined by the Team Leaders** from each year level and extended the initial thoughts from the first day with insights provided by the leading teachers.

Additional discussions, at a more detailed teaching level included things like the **focus on student growth** between Grade 3 to Grade 5 being a highly important part of the way the teachers set goals for the students.

Setting targets for student learning and student growth was a lengthy topic, considering areas for improvement in **STEAM subjects** (Science Technology Engineering and Math) and balancing this with Spelling Grammar and Writing. Using techniques such as scope and sequence to continue **reinforcing skills throughout Prep – Grade 6** will enable a continued practice of key learning.

Looking at **integrated studies** and considering a concept based approach was an idea to be more explicit about the topics taught. As an example, rather than using "Seasons" or "Weather" as the topic, being more specific that these do include elements of science, change, history etc.

Encouraging more feedback between students, teachers and parents and also student to student feedback was well supported as was lifting motivation and a **growth mindset for learning**.

Maintaining our approach of a **"graduated increase of responsibility"** from Prep all the way through each grade helps the students work towards setting self-directed goals and ongoing self-directed learning after they leave APS. The leading teachers were very passionate about the success this can bring for individual students for their futures, regardless of their path in life.

To support a **consistent approach to classroom instruction**, a number of ideas were discussed and will be a focus for staff Professional Development over the next 4 years. We have a fabulous range of experience and strengths across our teaching staff and working together to leverage these strengths will not only foster peer learning between the teaching staff, it will flow into the classroom and benefit the students.

Student Engagement and Wellbeing and in particular the **social and emotional wellbeing** for students will be another key focus of the new 4 year strategy. It was agreed that a whole school community approach that is inclusive for everyone is the priority and will continue to strengthen the foundation we already have and broaden its reach.

We completed the second day by narrowing down all the previous discussions and fantastic ideas into a draft strategic plan covering 2 key areas of focus.

1. Optimising student achievement in all areas of the curriculum
2. Developing an inclusive whole school culture that fosters resilience and self-motivation

Once finalised, including goals and measures, the draft plan goes through an approvals process with the Department of Education and is ratified by the School Council. Accompanying this 4 year plan is also an AIP Annual Implementation Plan that breaks the strategy down into yearly activities and measures that the leadership works towards and the school council monitor.

After so much work over these 2 days and more since, I am looking forward to seeing the final version and Kevin sharing this with you. I hope this has provided you with a window and a little more insight into the process as it was my privilege to be part of the review on your behalf.

Watching the inner workings of our leadership team reinforced for me that we have a very passionate group of leaders and teachers at APS who genuinely care for our children and want to see them develop and grow while they are here.

Stay tuned for more details about the Strategy and AIP for 2017.

Councilor Spotlight

Each issue we will feature some of our fantastic Councilors so you can learn more about us.



PRATS CHEBOLU Hello! My name is Prats Chebolu and I have been actively involved with the School Council, this being my second year and I feel extremely privileged to be associated with the School. My daughter Archisha was in Grade 6 last year with Ms. McKendrick and she absolutely adored her. My son Vidyut is now in Grade 3, getting to know his new teacher; Ms. Nikki Farrow, and classmates.

We moved from Germany 3 years ago and just stumbled upon the school's website and fell in love with the school, community and atmosphere on our first tour led by Kevin. We value the keys to life given by APS and use it in our day to day life as well!

Kevin's announcement of retirement

As you will have already read in this newsletter, our wonderful principal Kevin Enright has announced his impending retirement at the end of this year. We were all sad to hear this news however we are confident his legacy in the culture and staff he has created and nurtured through his leadership of APS will continue long after he is on his next round of golf and holidays.

We have the remainder of the year to work with Kevin on transitioning to the new strategic plan and the AIP and he remains dedicated to his position and the school, staff and students he loves until the end of the year.

The School Council will work through a highly structured process under the guidance of the Department of Education and our regional leader to select a new principal for 2018. This process won't happen until Term 4 and we will provide more information to you at that time.

Hot Topics from our last meeting...

Our last 2 meetings have covered a variety of topics. In both meetings we conducted our usual review of the reports from each sub committee and also the Principal's report (which is very similar to the messages Kevin puts into the weekly newsletter). We then also covered a number of general discussion topics, some from the Leadership Team and some that were raised by parents.

In **November:** we were advised of a grant to improve some of the facilities around the school, netball and basketball courts, paths, fences and general grounds that need updating. The Extension of the Data Room to become a functional classroom in 2017 was also progressed.

A new approach to starting times for Preps was discussed, and the trial will begin in 2017. This step has been taken to improve planning and assessment and the transition to full time for our new Preps.

16 students were chosen at random for an opportunity to attend Somers Camp in Term 1, with a waiting list of over 350 in our region, more details will be provided to parents on the selections and waitlist process.

One of our parents, John Butler offered his services to refurbish one of our school signs which the council agreed to as it is indeed in need of repair.

The Friends and Family Committee was discussed for some time, highlighting the fantastic work of the committee and also others who focused on community events during the year. A suggestion to bring these groups together and extend the collaboration between these groups and the school community was welcomed and encouraged by the council and we look forward to working more closely with these groups in 2017.

In **February:** our meeting was very procedural, covering a number of formal processes we need to do at the beginning of each year. Approval of end of year financial reports, ratifying policies that need review annually, volunteer lists and sign in processes and re-approving operational processes like approved signatories, card holders and bank related activities. No changes were made to the current list of approved persons, more a formality to ensure the ongoing smooth running of these activities into the new year.

We endorsed the school investment policy that will enable an improved ability to invest school funds into term deposits generating greater interest with our surplus funds.

School Camps was a topic, both the subsidised funding from school council and the coordination of this year's 5/6 camps. More information will be provided about the camps in the coming weeks with the camps planned for June.

Curriculum Days for 2017 were approved, 6 in total with these days being dedicated to a range of activities across the year. We have already had 2 days in January before school started, where the teaching staff dedicated their days to reviewing Student data, preparing for their new students and reviewing the draft of the strategic plan. They also all completed first aid training which is an excellent initiative of the school. Some schools only have a minimum number of qualified first aiders but for the student safety and wellbeing, APS equips all teaching staff with these skills including an annual refresher. One of the days later in the year is always dedicated to report writing. The other 3 will be for professional development and building instructional practice and consistency in teaching across the school, a key aspect of the draft strategic plan.

Progress on the building and grounds work, mentioned in the November meeting, is continuing and you will begin to see some improvements over the next few months.

The new Facebook group for the Family and Friends committee is gaining momentum and we look forward to a report from the Family and Friends committee at our next meeting about all the plans they have for 2017.

The School Calendar of events was raised as was communication about school events and activities with improvements needed to ensure that consistency and more advanced notice of activities occurs. Ensuring all students are adequately informed and understand selection processes, important dates and adequate equipment and uniforms was highlighted. The intention to move to the Compass System is expected to assist with this process but in the meantime regular checking of the calendar on the school website is encouraged.

We also endorsed a wonderful offer from a parent, Sean O'Flynn who happens to be an arborist to work with the students to learn more about the many wonderful trees we have around our grounds.

Who is on our School Council?

2016 School Council	Finance Committee	Policy Committee	Sustainability, Building and Grounds Committee	Family & Friends Committee
Alexis Beckwith - President	Kevin Enright	Debbie Galvin	Kevin Enright	Kylie Farr Rebecca Letson
Peter Roberts - Vice President	Shelley Golz	Nicole Fridey Karen	Claire Carson	Prats Chebolu
Claire Carson	Ekrem Jeka	Hudson Julie Giles	Karen Hudson	Debbie Galvin
Ekrem Jeka	Peter Roberts	Liz Brown		
Karen Hudson				
Prats Chebolu				
Rebecca Letson				
Tim Hargreaves				
Nicole Fridey				
Debbie Galvin				
Kevin Enright				

School Council Elections

February was our last official meeting for 2016, and I would like to thank the current School Council for their dedication and enthusiasm this year. Your support has been invaluable to me in my first time as President and I hope to see you all return in 2017.

Kevin has already begun the nominations process. I encourage anyone who is interested in being on the school council to talk to any one of us if you have questions or are considering nominating for a position.

We meet on a Wednesday night every month (except school holidays) and we look forward to starting our new year with a newly established committee at our next meeting in March.

Our next meeting in March...

If you have items you'd like to raise for discussion at our next meeting, we would all be pleased to talk with you.

In the meantime your child's teacher, the lovely ladies in the office, Kevin, Nicole or Debbie can also assist with any questions or enquiries. We are all here to help.

We hope you enjoyed reading more about the School Council and would love to hear any feedback or ideas that you may have.

Kind Regards,

Alexis Beckwith
School Council President