

SO WHAT, NOW WHAT?

Peterborough High School

BREAKOUT SESSION

SASPA CONFERENCE 2025

“So what, now what?” This session will explore how Peterborough High School transformed its cultures, systems, and student outcomes through bold, relational leadership and a relentless focus on wellbeing and belonging. Grounded in the words of Linda Cliatt-Wayman, we set out to “Lead Fearlessly and Love Hard” in the face of complex trauma, attendance concerns, and disengagement. We’ll unpack how we co-created structures for relational learning, prioritised agency over apathy, and embedded a culture of visibility, safety, and care across every layer of the school. From whole-school mentoring, the joy of ‘Sunshine Gatherings’, to co-teaching, block-timetables and experiential learning, this is our story of equity-in-action—honouring student voice and community connections. This is not a silver bullet story- it’s a story of rolling up sleeves, working together, and asking “So what, now what?” at every turn.

SUE

SLIDE: Title

Good morning everyone, and welcome. My name is Sue Burtenshaw, and I'm proud to serve as Principal of Peterborough High School. I'm joined today by Lauren Lawson, our Deputy Principal, and Jackie McAllister, our previous Wellbeing Leader. Together, we're here to share the story of courageous change in a small, complex school — a story about leading with love, and doing school differently. This has been a three-year journey for us so far, and we are proud of how far we have come together, chasing new experiences, new dreams, new possibilities, and renewing hope.

SLIDE: Acknowledgement

To begin I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land we are standing on. We gather on Kaurua country, hearts open and minds curious. Together we honour the past, and walk towards a future with a shared commitment to first Nations young people. In your inspiration packs, you will find a magnet with this acknowledgement – to put in your office or on the staff fridge, as a reminder of the learning you are doing at this conference, and in this session – and all the work you do each day to reconcile, and work towards reparation and opportunity for our young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

SLIDE: 3 x inspirations

Before we begin with our story, we also want to acknowledge those who've inspired and shaped our work. You'll hear echoes of Linda Cliatt-Wayman's unapologetic belief that "if nobody told you they loved you today, remember I do." You'll hear Pasi Sahlberg's message that "Something will work everywhere, but not everything works everywhere" And you'll hear Brene Brown's reminder that leadership requires both courage and vulnerability.

SLIDE: CONTEXT AND CHALLENGE

At PHS, we serve students significantly impacted by complex trauma. The town of Peterborough is significantly isolated, with minimal access to services. In fact the local doctors surgery has just been closed, and the main tourist attraction, or Steamtown Museum has been shut. Staff turnover at the high school had been high. We were understaffed. Hope felt hard to find. *Staffing was an ongoing challenge*. In 2024, we had no Business manager, no finance person, no front office/secretary, and no ICT SSO.

Staff were being pulled into all directions, putting their hand up to share the load, but we were spread very thin. At one point, we had only one TRT available two days a week. We had different relievers sent to peterborough and given accommodation for a few weeks at a time to help cover (though still remained understaffed).

SLIDE: SO WHAT...

We ached for the impact this had on our young people. Our students often arrive disengaged — not seeing value in school, struggling with relationships, and facing barriers to consistent attendance. But we stopped and asked ourselves, So what?

SLIDE: NOW WHAT...

We used the 'Stop, Change, Start' method to assess many of our processes and procedures, and decided that if it wasn't making us more equitable and excellent, we were going to STOP doing it. We used all the information we had, all the things we saw, to propel us forward.

SLIDE: STRATEGY

We knew our students deserved to thrive, prosper, learn, and achieve — the four goals of South Australia's Strategy for Public Education. We found hope and alignment in that Strategy. Collective responsibility and 'tight and flexible' became our guiding principles. We knew the work wouldn't be easy, but it was necessary. We felt ready to act. In our circumstances, we had to have hope. We put structures in place not just to manage, but to grow — to attract teachers and SSOs to come, and crucially, to stay. At PHS, when someone new joins, it's not "oh great, we've got you," but rather, "come on this journey with us."

SLIDE: LEVERS FOR IMPACT

We started working with the people levers for impact

- Partnering with families and communities — becoming outward-facing.
- Exploring effective teaching — trialing contemporary, engaging approaches.
- Empowering leadership — sharing power and responsibility across our staff.
- Engaging children and young people — deliberately creating opportunities for joy, relationships, and belonging.

SLIDE: AREA OF IMPACT / SITE LEARNING PLAN

Our first area of impact was wellbeing (2023-2024), and From 2025, our focus expanded to effective learners. But our wellbeing work will always be pivotal, and ongoing. From humble, messy beginnings, we rolled up our sleeves — with heads up and hearts open.

Whilst we had completed SMART training as a site, one of our first actions to transform our school, was applying to be funded through the *Trauma Aware Schools Initiative (TASI)* to undertake Berry Street Education Model training. We invited our local feeder primary school and behaviour and disability support services from our local office, and other members of the LET team also joined the training. Every single member of our staff did this – from our teachers, and SSOs, to administrative staff and our groundskeeper. As new staff joined our team, they were included in training, supported to complete any missed sessions, and in 2025, the new group of staff are now undertaking the training together and leaders continued to strengthen their knowledge through Masterclass opportunities.

SLIDE: PUZZLE PIECES

Berry Street gave us shared language and strategies to build and to truly embed trauma-informed practices, and we made a commitment to continue to include and update staff, reinforcing the learning. For years we have had a timetable where students leave at lunch time on a Wednesday, and staff then have time to share lunch together (a valuable social time, nobody is on duty), before joining for PD until 4, every single week.

Previously, the PD was sporadic and attending to whatever was 'next' – Athletics coordination, a brief literacy focus, prescriptive SIPs of the past, and for PHS, work responding to a 1-year turnaround from one of the last rounds of External Reviews before Our New Strategy brought some joy to our lives. After undertaking training, this time was used to discuss how and why the Berry Street and Trauma informed Practice learning would and could be used in our context. Staff co-designed implementation, rollout, changes, and collaborated to reflect and improve. We further committed half of our SFDs to further recap, and design implementation of Berry Street.

SLIDE: SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

We also embedded explicit teaching of neuroscience foundations (like flipping the lid, window of tolerance, polyvagal theory) into socio-emotional curriculum in our wellbeing programs. Not only were staff taught about the WHY, HOW and WHAT again and again, but they were also teaching students the WHY and HOW and WHAT. This has been a long and consistent journey, but every single PHS staff member is fully on board with using common language from Berry Street and approaching their teaching, learning and loving from a trauma-informed lens. It makes all the difference, to know why we are doing things a certain way, and to know we are doing them together.

SLIDE: WELLBEING EVERYWHERE, LESSON PLAN

One of our first Berry Street Practices Lesson Structure. This structure calls our teachers to take responsibility for setting students, and themselves up for success, through regulation, predictability and safety. Check ins and warm ups set the scene, and we build stamina (and resilience) by consistently expecting students to learn to learn, to build capacity to persist on tasks.

So following our launch into Berry Street, our next area of focus was building internal and external community. Our intention echoed again and again “*we are trying to be more outward facing*”. We held off-site meetings with local groups, we invited community members in to speak at assemblies about their positive connection with the wider community, and to encourage students to engage and be active members. The History society visited and were interviewed by students as part of a project. We noticed that when we had special guests, our students came alive and put their best foot forward. They were the people we know they are and ask them to be every day. And so, leading into 2024, we made some big changes.

SLIDE: VALUES WORKSHOP

Our student-developed values — Kindness, Equity, and Growth — and they are at the heart of our renewed culture at PHS. To honour the young people who live these values in their everyday actions, we've embedded a system for celebration and recognition. Staff record moments where students demonstrate these values, which are then shared in Sunshine Gatherings and sent home as written acknowledgements. It's a simple gesture — but one that reinforces what we stand for, strengthens relationships, and builds pride across our school community. Posters are in our learning spaces, to explicitly describe what living those values looks like.

SLIDE: ASPIRE TO BE AWARDS

We have leveraged our new systems and structures to create new awards aligned to our work. We also increased their visibility, referring to them regularly over the year, and encouraging students to aspire to them, rather than scraping to find students who may fit the categories at the end of the year.

SLIDE: CLASSROOM – ESTHERS ROOM

A huge part of our renewal was the enlivening of our physical spaces. We have had DIY days, whole-school working bees, and ramped up maintenance and renovation of spaces that were neglected. Then, continuing on this path, we advocate for ownership of space by staff and students – where values and community are front and centre. We talk about the classroom as our third teacher, a space that influences the learning just as much as our actions and words can. We have colourful welcome mats at each door, plants in every room, and the learning materials adorning walls are purposeful. We have created joyful spaces for learning. We want to show these young people that they are worthy of nice things, and teach them responsibility to care for the spaces along the way.

SLIDE: LUMINATION LAB

One of our endeavours for equity, to increase access to resources, was to build a Virtual Reality Learning Space with Lumination. We may be small but we are mighty, and our rationale was about increasing access to contemporary learning for not only our students, but also nearby schools, and even community groups. It's an incredible sight, when students who have never before followed through on a learning project are engrossed in an assignment, or students who have had non-attendance issues in the past, are arriving on time to complete training as a Lab Champion, and to support their teachers in leading the learning of skills with these tools.

SLIDE: TRADITIONS – OUTBACK

We also want our young people to have experiences that help them extend beyond Peterborough. We have now had four Year 12 retreats, where the goals are relationship building, but we also take the seniors to the Whyalla Uni Hub, and show them how they might continue on a path of learning beyond school. As part of our Aboriginal Studies classes, and now extending our invitation to all year 10-12s who apply, we have taken students on a trip to the APY lands, through Coober Pedy, visiting Uluru, and we have built a relationship with a tiny school – Kenmore Park. Creating traditions and developing shared identity through these avenues is a powerful tool on our trauma-informed journey.

JACKIE

SLIDE: HOME BASE

Building in-house connection was one of our first priorities. Our home groups were previously in year groups. Students came late, they were a place to tick the roll, and nothing more. So, Home group became Sunshine Gatherings. We transformed an underutilized space to be our HOME BASE. Teachers refurbished old furniture, and headed to the local op-shop to find pieces that felt like home.

The whole school, years 7-12, now gathers every single morning. Breakfast is available everyday. They drink their milo on a couch, eat cereal at a dining room table. There is music playing, and there are staff saying “*hey, great to see you, how are you today?*”. Of course there were those who resisted - We positioned staff in the yard when there were high numbers of students coming intentionally late. They would guide students over so that they couldn’t dawdle to lockers.

SLIDE: Circle Time video

In our home groups, we run circle time. No, high school students did not want to stand in a circle to start with. No, they did not want to participate initially. But yes, we persisted. We held the line.

SLIDE: Circle Time Photos + Data Term 1

No, you can’t sit down during circle time. Yes, you must at least greet people next to you using their names. Yes, you can skip speaking during the primer. No, you cannot leave. No, you cannot come late without reason. Yes, we want you here. Yes, we want you here every day. Yes, we want to start each day fresh, share and celebrate, make sure you know what’s happening, and we want to build our community together.

SLIDE: Circle Time survey / feedback Term 3

In our circle, there is always a gap by the door for latecomers. The message is - Come late, but come, please join us. Nobody questions the lateness or points out those coming in after we start, this is addressed later by staff. Our SSOs are in our Sunshine Gathering, sometimes even our groundskeeper joins us. We have a rotating roster so that admin staff are also a part. Over time, students grew in comfortability and willingness.

Staff shared responsibility of running Circle time, and soon students were running the show. It is a point of pride now, to invite guests to the school to our circle, to show them what we are about. Students don't have to love, or even like, all of our morning routines – but over time they have been able to articulate their understanding of why we do what we do, and the things that benefit them the most as individuals.

SLIDE: Mural Photos

On Fridays, student leaders set up our soiree lawns for lunchtime activities. There are picnic rugs, umbrellas, lawn games, music, and staff and students share picnic tables and soak up the sun together. We made decision, after decision, to invest time, energy and resources into building social capital. We had to ensure that school looked, sounded, and felt different for our students, and for their families.

SLIDE: House cup Photos

We created the House Cup, to attend to our students who needed community and connection but are not necessarily sportspeople. We needed to build a foundation for us to leverage school pride and belonging. We ran, on Friday afternoons, following our soirees, weekly challenge activities that reinforced fun, collaboration, and healthy competition. We had fashion design competitions, scavenger hunts, quizzes, puzzles and arts. We had a week themed to winter Olympic themes, offering activities like ice sculpting, snowball fights, and snow-wear relays).

SLIDE: House cup feedback, photos

Student feedback informed changes to house cup as we progressed. We later introduced two activity choices and softened the competitive focus of house cup. We are lucky enough to have a Spanish speaking teacher, and so we lean heavily into Latin cultures for our events. We held celebrations of Dia De Los Muertos (Day of the dead) and have run a pop-up Argentinian food stall.

The allocated time meant that celebrations and events that would normally disrupt lessons could be placed into House Cup, without disadvantaging scheduled learning. This investment in relationships - Student-teacher, and student-student was needed to build a baseline for Berry street and restorative practices to work. We did it again and again and again.

SLIDE: PP Photos

Passion Projects were introduced to reignite student engagement by helping our young people connect to their passions, strengths, and dreams. Students explored what it means to have a passion, looking into the Japanese concept of Ikigai, and identified their personality traits and interests. The process was supported by staff working in small, interest-based groups. Iteration one saw students perfect croissants, improve their personal bests in fitness, or learn a new skill. Now to be honest, - this pilot didn't run smoothly for the most part – wavering staff commitments were tricky and we faced turbulence in staffing that impacted our groups. But more importantly, majority of students didn't yet have the skills to self-motivate and self-manage.

SLIDE: PP Scaffolds

We had to 're-set' on multiple occasions, I brought the group back together, explicitly teaching skills, re-setting parameters, and ensuring all staff were on the same. In 2025, the program is structured differently. Students will have time allocated in each three-week block to work on one or two sustained projects across the year. Staff will continue to support in themed groups, but now, we also invite community volunteers to contribute their skills and mentorship. Passion Projects have become a vehicle for learner agency and are a clear expression of our belief that every student deserves to explore who they are and what they care about.

SLIDE: Assembly

Village Meetings were launched as a new approach to wellbeing curriculum.

Coordinated by the Wellbeing Leader and House Leader, these sessions provide protected time for a rotating schedule that includes the Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum, health and wellbeing workshops, assemblies, mentoring, and student-led goal setting. Assemblies are held three times each term and are run by students. Assemblies are celebratory and outward-facing — and guest speakers are a key part of this.

SLIDE: Timetable visual of attendance, Attendance from handbook

Attendance is one of our key wellbeing levers. We know that students who have experienced significant adversity are far more likely to disengage from school, and that every absence matters. We work proactively to create reasons for students to show up, stay connected, and feel like they belong. The attendance SSO, Wellbeing and House Leader, and Principal hold regular attendance meetings to identify patterns, understand context, and plan the right supports for each student.

Daily breakfasts and whole-school gatherings to build connection from the first moment of every day. We deliberately placed Passion Projects and House Cup on Mondays and Fridays — using joy and agency to lift engagement on traditionally low-attendance days. Ultimately, improving attendance isn't just about chasing absentees — it's about creating a school worth coming to.

SLIDE: Diego

With funding from the Department's mental health and wellbeing grant post-covid, we partnered with the Dogs Connect program to support purposeful integration of a wellbeing dog into our school. Fittingly, Diego was born on the very first day of our Berry Street training. There is growing evidence that dogs in schools can support improved engagement, reduced anxiety, increased motivation, and even contribute to better attendance and emotional regulation, and we see that first hand.

SLIDE: Diego survey results, student comments

We are still at the start of this adventure really, but Diego is already helping build bridges, ease tensions, and spark joy. Like our students, he's learning every day — and we're excited to see the long-term impact he'll have across our school. Diego has been a protective factor for our staff, just as much as our students.

SLIDE: Welcome Week timetable

We knew that throwing what feels like significant change at our trauma-impacted young people could be a recipe for disaster. So to set us all up for success, 2024 featured a Welcome Week and Launch to Learning week, and in 2025 we condensed this to one week. This slow start to the year is now embedded as part of our whole-school approach to belonging and readiness. These programs ensure that every student begins the year with clarity, connection, and a sense of purpose.

Across the week, students engage in explicit learning about our school culture and systems: from brain breaks and co-regulation strategies, to how to use technology, navigate timetables, and access support. They meet their house communities, learn about Diego (our wellbeing dog), and explore our shared language around Berry Street. Time is also dedicated to building excitement — introducing student leadership roles, Passion Projects, and study skills planning. We include welcome BBQ, inviting families to celebrate and connect. The program reinforces that students at PHS are not just dropped into learning — they are thoughtfully and warmly launched into it.

SLIDE: Letter and dot points

Mid-2024, Sue, myself and our local behaviour support coach were feeling exhausted and frustrated. We were stood up by our local SAPOL Officer for a meeting, and whilst they face their own challenges of being under resourced, we were at a loss of what to do. We stared at the list of names on our whiteboard, and we were facing a hard reality: nearly a third of our students — mostly boys — had been suspended or sent home in the last two weeks. We asked ourselves: *what are we going to do for them?*

That's when we created our Mentoring Program, providing targeted, relationship-based support for our most vulnerable students. **Mentoring has become a cornerstone of our renewal at PHS.** Peterborough is a complex, low socio-economic town. There are many unemployed and uneducated residents. But there is a group of older residents who are proud and active members of their community, and there are sprinklings of other dedicated community-minded people who keep the wheels turning, for the football, basketball, and golf clubs, or the historical society.

SLIDE: MENTORING TIMETABLE

So, in semester 2 of 2024, we sent letter after letter to local groups, using our networks, and the networks of governing council members. We ended up with 5 committed male mentors who built strong, trusted relationships with students — starting in small groups and eventually supporting all students alongside female mentors and staff. It wasn't easy, and that group comprised of family members of staff, as well as community members.

They arrived at our school every single Wednesday, for the rest of the year. They attended circle time, and actively supported us in our endeavors to bring life back to PHS. Based on observed needs, we initially had a gendered approach to the mentoring, with options for gender diverse students to choose where they felt most comfortable and safe.

SLIDE: Mentor groups and graph

Students have planted trees with local volunteers, created self-care kits, built terrariums, and participated in Respectful Relationships education through the Keeping Safe curriculum. It made a difference for discussions around domestic violence to be supported by male role models, rather than solely being delivered by teachers with whom students have had combative relationships with previously. This model is more than mentoring — it's a deliberate strategy for culture change, working build strong connections that lead to thriving futures.

SLIDE: EMAIL EXAMPLES

Each of our key structures began with a high level of scaffolding. Over time, as routines became embedded and expectations were established, I gradually stepped back. Staff began taking greater ownership, innovating within the structures, and bringing their own ideas to life — transforming these initiatives from leader-led to community-owned.

We've restructured our finances to serve our educational vision — not the other way around. This reflects a broader cultural shift in our Department too — one that restores trust in professional judgement and puts students, not spreadsheets, at the centre of decision-making. But still, the journey needed to continue in new ways.

SLIDE: Sue – We aren't doing enough

Play

SLIDE: Why?

Despite a 2-year mapped curriculum, our high staff turnover and inconsistent timetable meant that even the best laid plans never played out, and so there were gaps in knowledge and understanding regardless of what had come before. It was not working, so why not try something else? Born from both necessity and vision, Block Learning and Co-Teaching have been two of the most significant innovations in our journey of renewal.

I began brewing this idea in late Term 3. Our structure of senior lessons always fell apart toward the end of the year, as students vocalised the need to work on assignments and competing priorities, and we tried to be flexible and allow them to arrange their own time. I noticed that they always worked more effectively when given longer blocks of time to focus on a task, without having to task change so many times a day. *Why couldn't we do this all the time?*

We also observed that some of our most disengaged students exhibiting antisocial behaviours, could really switch on and engage in VET learning once a week, for their on-site Automotive course. How could we take the best of our students, and the best of this style of learning, and offer it to them every day? So we developed and launched Block learning and co-teaching in 2025.

SLIDE: Bosch – reinvigorated

Play

SLIDE: Timetable for Change

The executive leader team were affirmed in this wild jump through our work in Orbis Leading Future Learning, which challenged us to be brave, be bold, and do school differently. Inspired by models like High Tech High / XP schools, and backed by our contextual data and student feedback, we designed a model that responds directly to the needs *and wants* of our students and staff. We acknowledge that already having a smaller site, with vertically groups 7/8s and 9/10s we had less steps to undertake this process, but it was still an effort to bring others on board.

In Block Learning, students focus on just two subjects at a time, over three-week cycles. This reduces mental load, supports trauma-informed consistency, and enables deeper, hands-on learning. Each block includes co-teaching, with two teachers and at least one SSO in every 7–10 classroom. This allows for in-the-moment regulation and restorative practice — no handballing or deferred reconnection — and gives teachers the freedom to respond relationally without disrupting learning.

SLIDE: Plans

Plans started with sketches, and tables, and ideas and notes. Discussion after discussion allowed a more cohesive concept to be presented and interrogated. Our student voice forums and surveys over the year had echoed the same message – we want camps, experiences, and non-classroom learning. By leaning into this structure, we felt we may actually be able to respond to the wants and needs of our students.

SLIDE: Minutes

We are blessed to be in a system that does not prescribe the same answer to every problem in every school for every child. And similarly, we are given professional autonomy in our curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, to design contextually and appropriate learning for our learners. Remember, there are not curriculum police, there is no rule about how you structure mandated minutes, and the focus should always be on engagement, challenge, progress and achievement – not fitting into a mould. We promise, doing things differently has been worth it for our students AND our teachers.

SLIDE: Esther – Block

Play

SLIDE: TIMETABLE

One of the major concerns raised by staff, was the question around whether grouping 7-10s was appropriate. But for our cohorts, it has absolutely been the right decision. Teachers knew that for our students, particularly those impacted by trauma, social maturity is not necessarily reflective of numerical age, and that there were already many social ties across year levels.

SLIDE: SOCIAL WEC DATA

Teachers have autonomy to split the classes at any point, to work on interest-based projects, or divide groups based on maturity, or literacy needs, or differentiation and intervention foci. And, whilst students did initially raise concerns over being grouped with those younger than them, our WEC data is off the charts in terms of improvements in peer relationships and friendship intimacy. The staff and students are thriving in our new systems.

SLIDE: Esther – Co-teaching

Play

SLIDE: Scott – Co-teaching

Play

SLIDE: Wednesday timetable

Our pilot programs have evolved with the new structures. One Wednesday from each block is a dedicated Village Meeting day. This involves the mentors coming in, and joining for the whole day, every three weeks. This is also reflective of the strengthened relationships of mentors and students – no longer are their interactions based solely around activities for relationship-building, but now we are leveraging that relationship, and mentors can have conversations with our young people about their goals and progress towards them on their journey towards becoming young adults.

At the end of each term, is a week dedicated to wellbeing curriculum, study skills workshops, scheduled SACE catch ups, learning conferences, and whole school experiences. Our relationships are stronger than ever.

SLIDE: Leanne – modelling

Play

SLIDE INTRODUCTION

We introduced the changes to the timetable... slowly and surely. We held a forum for the seniors first... and after cautiously telling them about the plan for block learning one of our boys looked at us in earnest, and just said.... “what...*you’re actually allowed to do this*” and yes, yes we are allowed. You are allowed, to do things differently. This was someone who fought back at circle time, at every tiny change, every pilot, but slowly, as he has reaped the benefits, has been on side... and actually, with all the supports, is loving the changes. Of course, the implementation of something so different has not been without its challenges.

SLIDE: Nic Snippet – Block Learning is hard

Play

SLIDE: Outcome of Block Learning

In Semester 1 alone, Block learning has lead to combined PE/English camps, a Medieval Fair combining History and Technologies, Global Food Stalls for Nutrition, a SALA exhibition, Book-binding workshops, and a Poetry Fest.

SLIDE: LOOKING FORWARD

As the block learning takes hold, more formalised integrated subjects will become possible. This had been planned for and discussed two years ago, but limitations in structures and staffing meant that it was implemented poorly, if at all. Now, we have logistics that mean more authentic curriculum delivery will be possible for us.

I often say that if I could pick Peterborough High school up and drop it closer to Adelaide, to my friends and family, I would never have dreamed of leaving. I knew I would be moving from this time last year, but these investments were a hill I would die on. We worked tirelessly in the last half of the year to ensure the resources, scaffolds and energy were ready to pass on to the incoming staff for 2025. It has been a privilege to witness the continuation of this work by current staff.

LAUREN

SLIDE: BUILD IT AND THEY SHALL COME

I'm Lauren, and I stepped into the Deputy Principal role in 2025. In that first term, our school felt new: three new leaders, three new teachers including one SAT and one TFA, new SSOs, both to our site and our community and a fresh energy as students returned to a school that looked and felt different. It wasn't just physical changes — it was a shift in spirit. Not letting the wheels fall off despite some of the staff who set it up moving on

SLIDE: Nic Snippet – Not a box ticking school

Play

SLIDE: COLLABORATION IS OUR MIDDLE NAME

At the start of the year, we told staff: we don't have a 'model' of how you must collaborate. We'll co-develop it. We asked them: if we were to explain to someone how we collaborate, what would you say? That reflective ownership has shaped our culture.

SLIDE: Sue – Collaboration

Play

SLIDE: TIMETABLE

Timetable logistics were complex — but flexibility and collaboration became our norm. I had never timetabled before, maybe this was a good thing?!?! I run a two line structure. Every member of staff teaches in senior and junior school, this allows for flexibility in team teaching arrangements, and also allows our staff to get a feel for the whole cross section of our students.

Senior classes are vertically grouped, not uncommon in country schools anyway. Our Senior students do not have timetabled classes on Thursday. This supports our students to undertake VET and paid employment, whilst others can choose to study at home, or be supported at school. Another thing to note is that given our staff include those with time for AET responsibilities, SATs, and an ECT through Teach for Australia, staffing is not simple. Some lines require a split between three teachers, and for these, we have one person allocated as the lead, whilst the others may join as the second teacher for a split of time. it costs no extra in staffing to run this model!!!!

SLIDE: WHY NOT?

Staff come with ideas and ask ... most of the time I reply with something along the lines of “I’m not sure, but I will give it a go..!”. We have created a staff culture of having a go. Trying, reflecting, reimagining...

SLIDE: Nic Snippet – Leadership Trust

Play

SLIDE: PD IS SACRED

Professional Development time is sacred. Only two Monday afternoon meetings of 45 minutes are set aside for admin, information transfer and Student Wellbeing check-ins. Our weekly Wednesday early finish is set aside for collaborative learning and planning. This is non-negotiable. The only PD that occurs is that which is relevant to our teaching and learning, for example co-designing learning conversations and student reporting framework, Berry Street implementation....

Adequate time for staff to collaborate is the backbone of what we do. It has evolved in its own organic way, it isn't just pairs of teaching staff working together, but whole staff conversation around the staff room table at lunch time about ideas for the classroom, a combined excursion that includes elements from multiple topics, volunteering expertise and experiences.

Staff work together differently now. Collegial co-teaching, shared planning, and professional trust underpin our daily practice.

SLIDE: Alysha

working together, staff

SLIDE: ASSESSMENT

We redeveloped our assessment and reporting, refining what it is about learning that we want to acknowledge within our students. Is the focus on A-E? The resounding voice was a firm NO. Instead, we want to acknowledge the student who persists, who works collaboratively with their peers, the student who displays curiosity and ****. Whilst A-E forms part of our reporting process, we know that learning is so much more.

Collaboratively, and with robust discussions, we created assessment criteria based on the dispositions:

Positive Learning Mindset , Content Knowledge , Respectful Communication and Collaboration

and have used this to frame our student led learning conversations, which are conducted in Terms 1 and 3, instead of Parent-Teacher Interviews to which almost none of our parent group engaged in. These conversations allow our students to share and celebrate their learning and achievements, plus identify areas for growth.

SLIDE: NEXT GENERATION

Moving forward, we are working in the Next Generation Pilot Program, to further refine our reporting processes to align with our new teaching model and the needs of our students. This is a two year program*** something about how we also have increased capacity to look ahead to improve our systems and processes in the future. ***

SLIDE: Intervention and Literacy

*maybe mention we 'had themm' before, but were not implemented with fidelity due to staffing challenges, attendance etc

Staff now feel as though they have the time and space to take on additional improvement programs. We have adopted Brightpath for literacy teaching, ensuring continuity from our local feeder school, and allowing us to work together to target the prominent gaps in literacy development that so often can hold our students back from achieving in their schooling.

The program has been embraced more strongly than it would have been in previous years — it's part of our shift toward valuing collaboration and professional trust. We have also been firm about the need for the program to fit with "what we do" and not the other way around.

SLIDE: DIVE IN TO DATA

Importantly, we monitor our progress using data:

SLIDE: WEC Engagement With School

Wellbeing and Engagement Collection (WEC) improvements.

SLIDE: WEC Learning Readiness

Wellbeing and Engagement Collection (WEC) improvements.

SLIDE: Nic Snippet – students last year to this year

Play

SLIDE: Pulse Checks / Surveys

Pulse checks for real-time staff and student feedback.

SLIDE: Staff Perspective Data

We're now at a point where tracking data feels meaningful — it's telling the story of our progress.

SLIDE: Behaviour Data

Down 40%

SLIDE: Good People

Our ultimate goal isn't just academic achievement. It's about raising good people — young people who can build healthy relationships, find joy in learning, and participate meaningfully in their communities.

SLIDE: Alisha – Grace and Joy

Play

SUE**SLIDE: Leaders Lead**

At PHS, leading with love isn't just a slogan. It's a commitment. A courageous, sometimes messy, always necessary commitment. We hope our story offers you glimmers of what's possible when you trust your people, centre your students, and choose to do school differently.

SLIDE: QR