Comet Bay College is a large, modern, state of the art educational facility catering for students in Years 8–12. It is located in the suburb of Secret Harbour, approximately 65 kilometres south of Perth, Western Australia.

WHY COACHING?

The College is committed to implementing the Teacher Performance and Development Framework (AITSL, 2012). In line with this the Western Australian Department of Education’s Employee Performance Policy refers to performance management as a continuous process of reflecting, goal setting, improving professional practice and learning, feedback and review about an individual’s performance in relation to achieving organisational goals. The school had been looking for ways to continue its commitment to improving professional practice and was interested in exploring how the development of a broad-based approach to coaching might contribute to that.

WHAT COACHING INITIATIVES WERE UNDERTAKEN?

1. Initial exploration

The leadership team participated in an initial leadership coaching skill development programme in 2011, with a view to investigating the potential use of further coaching as a school-wide approach to continue to focus on and develop teaching practice.
2. Special Appointment

Following the success of this initial programme, the Principal, Jamie Hayres, sought out and appointed an Associate Principal with a high level of commitment and coaching skill to further develop the coaching project at the school. Nancy McNally was appointed Associate Principal and tasked with embedding a coaching culture, which was to include a focus on a broad-based approach to building performance and development; enhancing teacher effectiveness through the implementation of a classroom observation and feedback coaching process; the use of the a coaching approach with teams as well as using a coaching framework for school planning and self-assessment.

3. Coaching Process Used with School Executive

Work began on the use of a coaching model as a group coaching process for school planning review and development in 2012. The Business Plan was rigorously reviewed using the GROWTH model. Goals were established and implementation steps developed. This coaching approach was extremely effective and has led to a continued collective, shared responsibility for using a coaching approach across the school.

4. Leadership Coaching Implemented for all School Leaders

A substantial commitment was made to the development of coaching skills of school leaders during the two year period from 2012–13. This involved participation in customised in-school short course workshops which were highly practical and skills-based in their emphasis.

5. Incorporation of coaching approach into performance review aligned with Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Standards

Given the College’s commitment to implementing the Teacher Performance and Development Framework (AITSL, 2012), the existing performance management process was reviewed in the context of reflection and goal setting, professional practice and learning, and feedback and review. It became increasingly clear that a coaching approach would be central to this process.

As part of this improvement process staff set goals based on the College Business Plan, Learning Area priorities and agreed professional development or career goals which were referenced to the Australian Professional Standard for Teachers (AITSL, 2011).
Staff have been provided with a range of tools to encourage reflection on current practice and each person meets with their line manager, adopting a partnership approach, uses a coaching process – to identify goals and develop a range of goal attainment strategies. As part of the development process staff identify what level of engagement in relation to the College professional learning strategy they wish to commit to. PROPELL (Providing Real Opportunities for Professional Education, Learning and Leadership) is aligned to the Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL, 2012). Three particular characteristics of this Charter have been customised to suit the College context.

In regards to a coaching approach we ensure it is ‘relevant’ by encouraging teachers and school leaders to be solutions focused and challenge their assumptions about their practice using a WWW/EBI (What’s Working Well/Even Better If) framework. We ensure it is ‘collaborative’ by cultivating an inclusive approach through development of high-performing teams, working interdependently to achieve common goals that are directly related to student learning. This includes opportunities to receive feedback on practice, and observe the practice of others and through coaching, mentoring and reflection. We ensure professional learning is ‘future focused’ by promoting action research and inquiry, and promoting innovation in teacher and leader school practice.

6. Team Coaching

School leaders have undertaken training in team coaching in order to bring a team coaching approach to the teams that work across the Comet Bay Professional Learning Community (a K-12 strategic school improvement initiative of the College and its partner primary schools).

7. Peer Coaching

As part of our development of a whole school approach to classroom observation and feedback we have begun development of observation models and a peer based coaching initiative. Preparation for this has seen pairs of teachers work together in a confidential process to reflect on current practice and observe each other teaching. The programme although in its infancy has been very well received and is planned to be made available to other staff.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT OF THESE COACHING INITIATIVES?

The College was reviewed in March 2014 as part of the Department of Education Services’ Independent Public School Review. The review was overwhelmingly positive with particular
reference and commendation of the coaching framework for reflective review for the staff, as well as the College Board.

Coaching is explicitly used for all levels of school planning and review. The GROWTH model is used as the framework for all teacher and school leader performance and development. Team Coaching is used in only three learning areas at this stage but we are looking to expand, as we are with the peer coaching.

FUTURE PLANS

We are building a whole school approach to classroom observation and feedback as part of the professional practice and learning cycle in the P&D process. The peer coaching will be just one element of that whole school approach. It will also include classroom walk throughs, use of our video observation classroom and the use of Classroom Management Strategies conferencing.

From 2015 staff will choose which level of engagement in professional learning (PROPELL) they wish to engage in but this will now also include which level of classroom observation and feedback they wish to engage in.

An exciting new initiative that the College is developing is a pastoral care/career education programme (REACH) for Years 7–9 from 2015. This programme will be explicitly taught to students for two periods a week and will be aligned predominantly to the Personal and Social Capability of the general capabilities of the Australian Curriculum. As part of the programme students will be explicitly taught a coaching model as a framework for them to demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals.

SUGGESTED FURTHER READING


