

# Strengthening Social Cohesion through the Australian Curriculum Pilot Program

## *Pilot Program outline: Woodridge State School*

The Global Learning Centre (GLC) seeks grant or sponsorship funding to ***pilot a program to deliver a comprehensive professional learning package to teachers in schools with a high percentage of disadvantaged students***. Research shows that school-level factors, including a school's location and the proportion of Indigenous and culturally diverse students, impact significantly on educational advantage and disadvantage at the school level, as measured in the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA).

The program that we seek to pilot involves a partnership between schools and the GLC to deliver a comprehensive professional learning package for teachers and staff focused on ***strengthening social cohesion*** within the school through the curriculum. The GLC actively supports educators to build strong, safe and cohesive school communities and has developed a comprehensive professional learning program titled "*Strengthening Social Cohesion through the Australian Curriculum*". With this program, the GLC presents school curriculum leaders and teachers with a distinctive approach to preparing our future global citizens.

Our feedback and research confirm that teachers want to make a real difference for their students. Some acknowledge, however, that they lack the skills to deliver a meaningful program for students who come from diverse cultures. This program seeks to redress this by providing teaching strategies and resources to deliver a curriculum, which embraces the many cultures and strengthens social cohesion within the school.

The school we would like to partner with for this pilot is Woodridge State School, which is a low socio-economic school located in Logan city, south of Brisbane. Around 70% of the students at Woodridge State School come from a language background other than English (LBOTE). With over thirty different cultures and students with special needs, this school has an inclusive approach which focuses on individual needs and learning style which are catered for in whole class, shared small group and individual ways.

## ***Why is this program so vital?***

In a global context of intensifying concern about violent extremism, as highlighted recently during the *White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism*, there is a pressing need to engage deeply with communities. The construction of a socially cohesive, democratic and prosperous nation compels Australians to embrace their cultural diversity. Global education is a powerful philosophical and practical tool for adopting a whole school approach to the social challenges of violent extremism.

Culture is the fundamental building block of identity and plays a critical role in developing a child's sense of being, belonging, becoming. As educators, our own cultural identity and world view plays an important role in shaping our attitudes, perceptions and behaviours. In order to help children explore their own sense of identity educators must become culturally competent themselves. This program encourages educators to identify and challenge their own cultural assumptions, values and beliefs.

## ***Who benefits from this pilot project?***

The 128 teachers and non-teaching staff at Woodridge State School will benefit from this project but ***the real benefactors are the 755 students*** enrolled at the school. Currently around 78% of these students sit in the bottom quarter (against an Australian average of 25%) on the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage scale (ICSEA).

With targeted professional learning workshops, teachers would learn how to use a suite of strategies, resources and activities to ***maximise student engagement, improve their learning outcomes and equip them to become active and informed citizens for the 21st century.***

## ***Outcomes we aim to achieve***

The ultimate outcome of this project is to equip the students at the school with knowledge and skills to appreciate the cultures and contributions of diverse groups of people and develop a better understanding of the forces and influences shaping their lives; their community and their world. ***These skills will enable them to analyse and engage more actively in the world in which they live.***

Despite reforms in teacher education in recent years there are still concerns about teachers' pedagogical skills and their capacity to work in socially diverse schools. We know that effective teaching is the key to improving student learning and teachers are critical to improving outcomes for their students. Research further shows that teacher effectiveness has the greatest impact on student performance than any other Government reform.

## ***How will we measure the impact of our project?***

This project aims to strengthen the school's leadership team's resolve to equip their teachers and non-teaching staff with the necessary skills to enact the school's vision: "Together - providing opportunities - creating futures". The school's teaching programs will be reviewed and revised to align with the Australian Curriculum and enhance the school's teaching framework.

The project strongly supports the school's vision to create and sustain a "safe, supportive, challenging and meaningful environment which builds resilience and responsibility and develops skills of tolerance and respect for others". The long-term sustainability and success of the program will be measured in terms of increased student engagement and performance outcomes. This will be demonstrated through both school results and external assessment outcomes, including NAPLAN.

A full evaluation will be undertaken to determine the impact of this project on the school's staff and students, including:

- Auditing and assessing the school's teaching programs (e.g. intercultural understanding – does your curriculum content contribute to an appreciation of cultural diversity?)
- Establishing a baseline of teacher knowledge and understanding of global perspectives through the conduct of a survey at the start of the project
- Establishing a baseline of student knowledge and understanding of global perspectives through the conduct of a small test of a sample of students across all year levels
- Evaluating change in teacher knowledge and understanding following the completion of the professional learning programs through a survey instrument and compare results with baselines data.
- Evaluating change in student knowledge and understanding following the completion of the program through a small test and compare results with baseline data.
- Preparing a report for the school with recommendations for further development and refinement of school teaching programs, based on evaluation results.

## ***Why the Global Learning Centre?***

The Global Learning Centre is a non-profit community organisation specialising in professional learning, training and planning programs for educators in global education. Our team of Education Consultants present primary and secondary curriculum leaders and teachers with a distinctive approach to preparing globally competent citizens for the complexity of the 21 century.

The GLC also delivers cultural competence training to help organisations effectively engage with clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Using a cultural competence framework, we assist organisations to review their current practices and create targeted training solutions for their staff.

## ***What others have to say about our global education approach***

The GLC is proud of its achievements in supporting schools through a whole-school approach to embed a global perspectives framework into their teaching programs. The value of our work is highlighted in the testimonial provided below.

*“Over the past two years, the GLC has provided intensive support to Kirwan Sate High in our journey to embed the initiatives of Intercultural Learning and Sustainability in our school and community context. They have delivered a range of Professional Development sessions, mentored a number of staff and school leaders, provided tangible curriculum support and consistently provided feedback to the school about these initiatives. They have also facilitated the growth of professional networks by linking the school with their professional networks.*

*Our partnership with the GLC has acted as a monumental change agent in our school. They have been outstanding in each of the contexts described. The organisation has successfully engaged and supported our entire school in embedding the priorities of sustainability and intercultural understanding which are so crucial for a 21<sup>st</sup> century education.*

*The staff of the GLC is highly knowledgeable, highly effective change agents who have the ability to enact organisational culture changes for the long term. Without their assistance, support and mentoring, I am certain that Kirwan would not have had the success that we have with these initiatives, I recommend them highly.” Kate Shepperd, Deputy, Kirwan State High School*