

## LINK 16: Eastfield Primary School Case Study Report<sup>1</sup>

(Note: Pseudonyms are used throughout this case study)

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### SECTION 1: CONTEXT

Eastfield Primary School (EPS) is a South Australian government school for students from 5 years of age at reception level through to 13 years at year 7 level. The school is located just 5 kilometres from the heart of Adelaide and situated in a socio-economically advantaged region. The school ideally offers places for a school size of about 300 students, a number which is a suitable enrolment level for the school facilities. In 2008 it had an enrolment of 280 students.



Eastfield Primary School in its early days

Eastfield Primary School was established in October 1858. The school has been a community school since it began, and it has maintained enrolment numbers throughout its history within a flexible enrolment zone (unless capacity is reached). The school maintains a close connection with the local community through school events, community volunteers and a genuine open classroom policy. The school community values the small size of the school and sees this as an advantage in providing a friendly community atmosphere that encourages community participation. The community is made up of citizens who have significant social and intellectual capital to offer the school learning programs. This close relationship with community enables the

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<sup>1</sup> This case study involved interviews, text analysis and observation for 10 days during term 3 of 2008.

students to receive a variety of authentic learning experiences, supported by the rich social and cultural capital of the immediate community.

Student achievement at Eastfield Primary School is evident in a variety of forms and is described in some detail in the Annual Report. The school has a history of students achieving at high levels measured by a range of performance indicators such as the music performance, <sup>2</sup>Basic Skills Tests and national competitions. For the last three years EPS students have performed consistently above the state average and also in comparison to 'like schools' in the State Literacy and Numeracy tests for Years 3, 5 and 7 students. Many of the Year 3 to Year 7 students enter national competitions for Science, Computing, Writing, story-writing, digital animation and movie-making. Students produce work of a high enough standard to win awards managed by Wakakirri, French poetry reading and SA Young Film-makers.

At Eastfield, facilities upgrades, staff selection and financial management are all directed towards efforts to continuously improve students' access to quality teaching and learning programs, with sustainable approaches to water use, land-use and building design increasingly featuring across the school. The EPS Site Learning Plan 2008 -2010 guided priorities for action in the 2008 school year. The school also claims to enact values of *caring, respect, excellence, persistence and integrity*. Running across all of these values is the school's stated priority of education for *sustainability* which is integrated into the teaching and learning programs, school development plans, the school's intimate connection with and involvement of the local community in school life, and its commitment to prepare its young people for positive, responsible and confident engagement in local and global communities of the future. The EPS strategic plan 2007 declares these commitments succinctly;

A vibrant learning community committed to developing lifelong learners who will have the skills to be successful participants in the local and global community, to interact positively, responsibly and effectively with others and to approach the future with optimism, integrity and wisdom. (EPS Strategic Plan 2007)

The structural and cultural approaches to schooling are strategically aligned to support the school's first priority, its pedagogical approach. The school engenders critical literacy and numeracy approaches in all teaching subjects. They are embedded in thematic approaches to curriculum delivery involving students as researchers, the promotion of project based curriculum, curriculum negotiation between teachers and students and ethical questioning.

The school is a member of the International Baccalaureate (IB) cluster linking with six other primary and two secondary schools in the area for student learning, teacher development and resource sharing. The IB Middle Years Program is implemented in the senior primary levels in conjunction with the South Australian curriculum.

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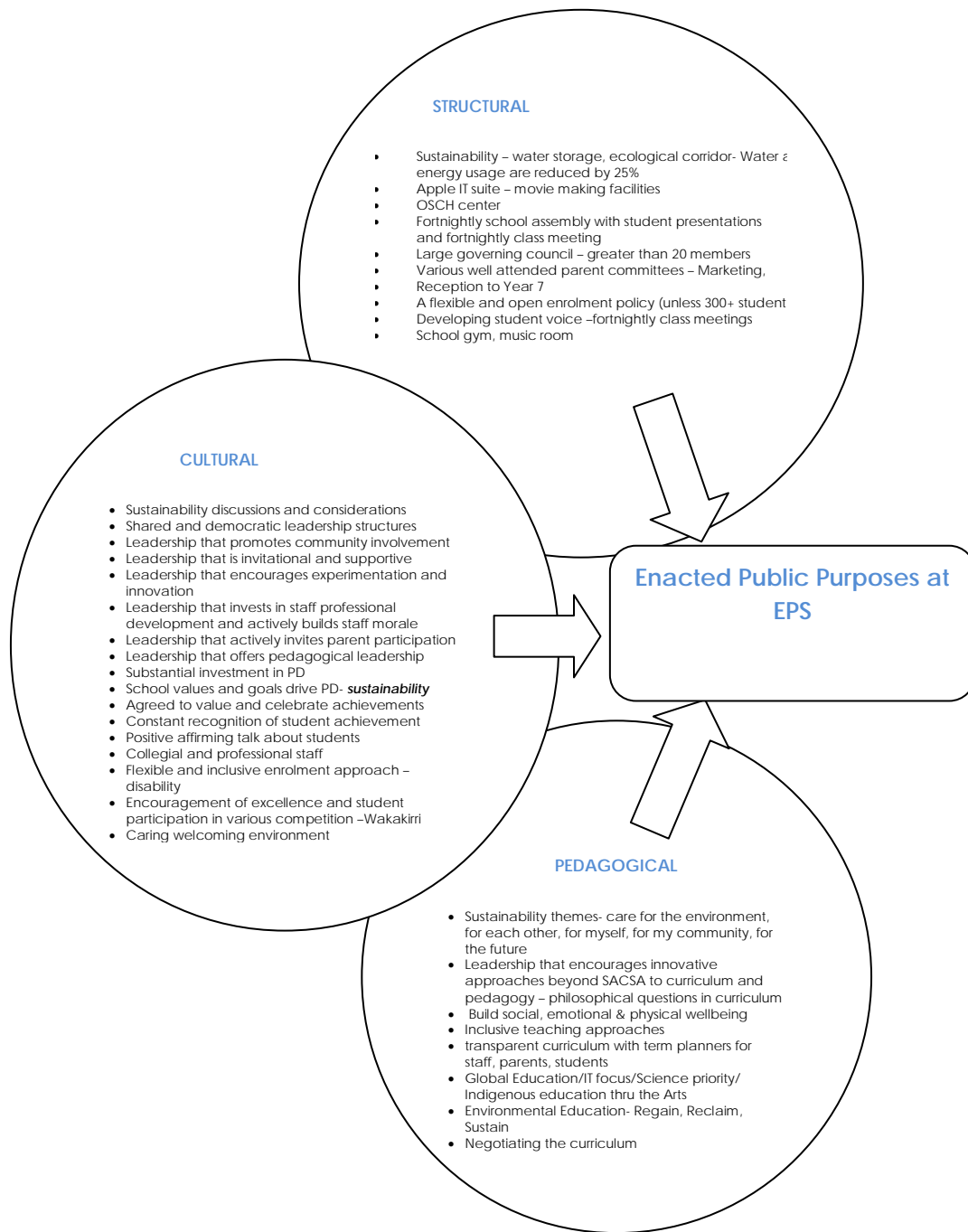
<sup>2</sup> Basic skills tests are now called NAPLAN – National Assessment of Performance in Literacy and Numeracy

## SECTION 2: SCHOOL LIFE CHARACTERISTICS AND THE PUBLIC PURPOSES OF SCHOOLING

A summary overview of school life characteristics is provided below using a schematic adapted from the National Schools Network (Harradine, 1996; Ladwig, Currie & Chadbourne, 1994). For the purposes of this case study, the features of EPS are organised and described within three organising modalities – structural, cultural and pedagogical.

The structural modality considers such matters as school infrastructure, timetabling, staffing, administrative procedures, committees and assemblies. The cultural modality captures things like how schooling impacts upon students, staff, leadership and parents and how these groups impact upon schooling, giving insight into the kinds of social relations that occur in the course of the school year. The pedagogical modality covers the approaches to teaching and learning practiced at the school, including assessment approaches, curricular priorities, leadership involvement, student and parent involvement in extra-curricular activities.

After describing the school using these three organising modalities, I consider which of the school life characteristics contribute to the public purposes of schooling. Thus the central EPS case study question is: *how are public purposes understood & enacted at EPS?* By public purposes of schooling I refer to educational purposes that advance the interests of society as a whole, rather than the interests of individuals or special interest groups, and about which there is a general consensus as determined by democratic processes and structures of that society. The diagram below summarises some of the features, programs and activities at EPS which, I will argue, serve public purposes.



**EASTFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL: key school life characteristics**

## *Structural*

Most government primary schools in South Australia have similar curricular structures in place. For example, most primary schools have one dedicated teacher to a class or have a reading recovery program in place. However, every school because of its unique characteristics and context will have their own nuanced approach to curricular structure. In the case of EPS there are some unique structural features that distinguish it from other schools. These structures have been identified through staff and parent interviews, fieldwork observation and referral to various school artefacts including the school newsletter and website. They are described in this section.

### *Curriculum planning*

EPS has put in place a requirement for all teachers to submit their term teaching plans to the Principal and the parents of children in their classroom, covering the key themes and questions relevant to their teaching program. This document is written in parent-friendly language and provides a format that includes the term's theme, a key critical question emanating from that theme, how the theme is offered in the various curriculum subjects, special activities associated with the theme and an explicit overview of the expected learning outcomes.

### *School infrastructure and facilities*

Thinking about education for sustainability informs and guides all aspects of the school including the deployment of its resources and infrastructure, such as water and electricity use. The decision making policy at the school integrates a sustainable approach to social, economic and environmental factors, with plans well under way, for example, for the harvesting of rainwater and storm water management. Despite three years of drought the school still has a green oval with significant financial and environmental savings.

School buildings are neat, clean and well cared for. The grounds are beautiful with many well established trees featuring throughout the school landscape. A dedicated computing suite is available for students with near new Apple Mac computers available. The buildings and grounds look well cared for despite their age. A recreation park is located near the school and the school utilises this area in many of its learning activities and contributes to the care of this environment.

Out of Hours School Care (OSHC), <sup>3</sup>managed by a Director employed by the school Governing Council is provided before and after school on a cost recovery basis for students, particularly to assist working families.

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<sup>3</sup> OSCH is a facility that offers parents at work or unable to pick their children up or drop them off at school during allotted school hours a safe and friendly school facility that cares for students until they are collected by parents.

### *Enrolment process and policy*

At the time of the case study the Principal spoke of a flexible enrolment policy, despite the school being zoned. At the end of the 2008 school year this flexibility had to be tightened because enrolments had reached near capacity. In previous years the school has accepted all new enrolments which has included students with disabilities (autistic, cerebral palsy), Aboriginal, new immigrants (Indian, Filipino, Malaysian, Vietnamese) and students' eligible for school card or government financial assistance. While limited capacity had the potential to restrict future enrolments, there was no intention to impose a selective enrolment policy to privilege any particular group of students other than those who had an entitlement because Eastfield Primary School was their local school.

## **Cultural**

School culture is about 'how we do things around here' (Boomer, 1992). The culture of a school can guide, enable and/or inhibit various approaches to schooling.

### *A culture of care and collaboration*

Staff at EPS feel supported and valued; they are confident to share their practice or even their mistakes with each other. This supportive and open school culture impacts upon the school's approaches to curriculum and pedagogy in a very positive way. The principal leads a very experienced staff that work collaboratively and closely with the school parent community and with each other. One teacher spoke about the culture of sharing evident across the classrooms.

We visit people's classrooms, we have their overviews, and we look at what they're doing, and they talk about what they're doing, and it works really well - especially that connection between what you teach in reception and how it ends up in grade 7 (teacher p.3, 2008).

The Leadership Team comprises two Assistant Principals and a Coordinator. In addition to the formal leadership team the school operates on a collegial curriculum leadership model with all staff taking responsibility for sharing curriculum programs, ideas and resources with each other and with parents, providing leadership to others in a particular curriculum area and/or other aspects of the school's infrastructure. This collegial curriculum model offers students access to a broad, balanced and transparent curriculum at EPS during their Reception to Year 7 school years. The students and parents get a copy of their term program. Leadership skills in students are encouraged and developed through class meetings, the Student Representative Council (SRC) and a Year Seven Leadership Focus Groups.

EPS is a small and caring school that offers students individual attention and an approach that promotes excellence. Teachers regard the size of the school as an advantage and the principal believes there are no trade-offs of curriculum offerings as a result of its small size. The student culture is quite remarkable. For instance, students think it is *cool* to be on SRC and several teachers remarked during interview or at staff meetings how the Year 7s naturally look after reception students and students with disabilities in the yard. The staff has a positive and

caring regard for all of the students and will act upon genuine student concerns expressed through the Student Representative Council (SRC).

I think kids see the SRC as being an effective voice. ... kids know if something goes to SRC, then some action is taken. (Teacher, p.14, 2008)

In her Year 7 graduation speech the principal spoke about the caring nature of the year 7 group and staff referred to the caring personal approach of the principal, who memorised the name of every parent and student associated with the school. In the principal's end of year graduation assembly address to parents and students, she chose to highlight the caring shown by the students to each other and to those less fortunate within the community.

I value their caring. The Term 1 Sports Day and the Spirit of the Song competition would not have happened without the team captains and vice captains caring approach to all students in the school. From their applications for the roles through to their conduct at the various events, they have shown themselves to be highly valued members of a caring community. (Principal speech, Year 7 Graduation Ceremony, 2008)

Coming into the school is a warm experience. The front office staff greet newcomers and show interest in them. It is normal practice to see teachers sharing programs, planning together, offering term plans to parents, having an open door classroom policy and actively encouraging parents and volunteers to contribute to the life of the school. Parents can be seen each day on the school grounds conversing with each other or in the classroom helping students with their reading or other tasks.

Finally it is their integrity that I value perhaps the most; they understand the importance of being positive bystanders and I hope they take this with them to high school and to their local and global careers. (Principal, Graduation Ceremony address, 2008)

### *Community and parent involvement*

Many of the teachers interviewed spoke about the willingness of the parents to give of their time or, if this was not an option, then generous monetary donations to the school. The school is situated in a community that is willing to give back to the school in many ways.

I've got an old man coming in - and I can say old because he's 80-odd - tomorrow to teach calligraphy and brush strokes, a little bit of tai-chi, and he's bringing in a Nepalese ringing ball. He was professor in child psychiatry, he's retired and he's a volunteer at the Art Gallery (teacher, p.1, 2008).

The school is fortunate to have excellent parent participation across all aspects of schooling life in its committees, voluntary working bees, donations, sponsorship, learning assistance and marketing activities. Governing Council meetings are lively with much discussion about the pedagogical priorities pursued in the school. One teacher argued that there is a strong sense of connection between community and school, a community that has pride in its local school.

Extra-curricular activities held at the school are often managed by parents/coaches out of hours providing additional learning in instrumental music, chess, and a diverse range of sports. EPS teachers demonstrate a strong team-based approach to their work. Teaching programs and teacher resources are regularly shared with each other. Community resources are regularly used in the classroom.

The other thing I love is the resources that I use from the community, because this is a community where there are a lot of people in a great variety of jobs. I've had marine biologists come in and give talks; I've had physiotherapists, when I've been doing the body, bring in whole skeletons and give talks; I've had dentists give whole lessons about teeth ..... (teacher, p.1, 2008).

These classroom visitors are not restricted to 'professionals' - other visitors have included three generations of Italian cooks, mothers and their new born babies, and grandparents sharing their knitting skills. The teachers encourage the participation of community members with skills to offer in the various learning programs. As a consequence, contacts that offer classroom expertise are being compiled as a community resource contact list for all of the teachers.

*School values and goals: the school 'tone'.*

Staff efforts to not only teach the school values but also live them has resulted in the development of respectful relationships. One particular initiative is worth describing in some detail. Significant efforts had been made to work with the Year 7 students to engender in them a sense of responsibility for their role as leaders of the student population. The Year 7 leadership groups offered a powerful opportunity for the staff to build constructive relationships with the Year 7 students. These students then took on the responsibility of setting 'the tone' in the school. Understanding rights and responsibilities were continuous points of discussion. The introduction of the 'Spirit Cup' as part of the annual Sports Day provided a wonderful opportunity for the Year 7 student to put their values into practice. Sports day teams were awarded points for their sense of 'fair play' ie for cheering on others, working as a team, demonstrating leadership, supporting younger students and these efforts were lead by the Year 7 team captains. Points awarded for 'fair play' went towards awarding the 'Spirit Cup' which has become a highly valued prize with sports day teams vying for this award with the same amount of effort as they apply towards gaining the Athletics Cup.

Staff indicated that behaviour management was not a dominant feature or concern at the school. Teachers enjoyed interacting with students during yard duties and felt that the attractive grounds made this aspect of teaches' work more palatable given that all teachers are time poor and yard duty is often a burden in a hectic school day. Generally the students were well behaved, keen to learn and interacted positively with each other. While physical violence is a rare occurrence, students' power plays still exist and are evident in more subtle forms of exclusion.

The generally positive behaviour management 'tone' in the school is also seen by staff to be a



consequence of the high levels of student engagement in the teaching and learning programs. Teachers go to great lengths to develop programs that are both rigorous and relevant to students. Teachers make an effort to ensure that the students understand the purpose of what they are learning and how it connects to their local worlds and beyond. There is a sense of optimism built into classroom learning programs. Students are positioned to see themselves as having agency, being able to take action and make choices that will contribute to the development of better local and global communities.

#### *Professional conversation and development*

EPS has developed as a collegial and supportive staff team that exhibits an openness and honesty with each other about their teaching practice. At EPS, experimentation is often a key feature of classroom practice because innovation is encouraged by both the leadership team and the teaching staff. Staff regularly meet to share new ideas, curriculum plans, or to critically discuss professional articles. The staff is consistently involved in professional debate and discussion, formally and informally, demonstrating a high level of collegial professional maturity. This professionalism appears to be driven by a whole of staff commitment to ensure that all of the students receive an education that extends them and helps them appreciate that they can make a positive contribution to the world.

The staff exhibit a confidence in their teaching practice. They display an open and transparent approach to teaching and learning with each other and with the parent community. Teachers will often visit other teachers' classrooms and have regular collegial discussions about teaching practice, resources and themes.

There is a culture of ongoing learning and a commitment to review and evaluate existing programs as well as to consider new programs. Thus, learning programs proposed for 2009 included a greater emphasis on student contributions to schooling life which involved staff in working to:

1. Make student ownership of learning programs more explicit;
2. Provide SRC with more explicit guidelines about how policy/rules get made and the role of class meetings in this process;
3. Further explore raising issues with classes as part of the Term 1 Curriculum Overview planning - in particular, what counts as interesting and exciting about school work, and what is a reasonable balance between teacher direction and student input.

#### *Pursuit and celebration of excellence*

One member of the school leadership team declared the three Rs at EPS - *relationships, rigour and relevance* - to be something like a teacher pedagogical creed at the school. It is clear that the teachers interviewed expect a lot from their students at EPS. They want the students to think critically about topics, to develop a philosophical approach to their thinking and to be

able to make a reasoned argument on various themes and topics. Quality student work is always celebrated. This is illustrated in the principal's address to parents at the 2008 year 7 graduation ceremony.

I value their pursuit of excellence, the way they have been prepared to take risks and put themselves out there for others entertainment, The Pirates of Penzance was a huge success because all the Year 7s were willing to work towards excellence. (Principal Year 7 Graduation address, 2008)

Other examples of sophisticated learning work in 2008 involved year 7s making models using marbles to create perpetual motion machines, or younger students producing movies for 'claymation' work. Student work and student success, whether individual or group, is celebrated in the newsletter, on the school website and at various assemblies and school performances.

## *Pedagogical*

All schools have their own set of teaching and learning priorities which determine how they will enact curriculum and pedagogy. A school's approach to curriculum and pedagogy is heavily influenced by its cultural dimensions and structural parameters and possibilities. Schools are engaged in a range of activities above and beyond the formal curriculum. EPS teaches to the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability framework (SACSA) <sup>4</sup>across eight broad learning areas but also involves other programs and approaches to teaching and learning. The school has accreditation as an <sup>5</sup>IB school. It has managed to merge the requirements of the SACSA with the IB to be able to provide students with a curriculum that is both challenging and engaging.

Central to all that EPS does is the concept of sustainability. It is considered in school decision making processes, teaching programs and school grounds maintenance and upgrading. This priority is illustrated by a teacher as she spoke about a new schooling resource that involved students, parents, teachers and community businesses.

The junior primary decided to, what we called, 'regain, reclaim and sustain' - that bit of dead land at the back, which was just a dead patch. With the help of the community once again, we had working bees and we cleared it all, and we had a bobcat come in, and somebody donated the frog pond, and somebody donated the post that we put the sweet peas on. We put the sweet

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<sup>4</sup> The SACSA is the guiding curriculum framework used in South Australia for reception to year 10 students.

<sup>5</sup> IB at Eastfield is the MYIB (Middle Years International Bacculaureate program)

peas in to get nitrogen back in the soil, to get it back into the soil, and we had people come around to tell us about frogs and about Water Wise, and now we're just regenerating the soil (Heather, p.4, 2008).

### *Negotiating the curriculum*

As described earlier, EPS requires all teachers to submit to the Principal and the parents of children in their classroom their term plans. This covers the term's theme, a key critical question emanating from that theme, how the theme is offered in the various curriculum subjects, special activities associated with the theme and an explicit overview of the expected learning outcomes.

Students are given a voice in how they present their work, the particular inquiry they wish to undertake within the classroom theme, and the broad parameters of the study. Just as the term planner makes the curriculum transparent to the parents, the students are given their own assessment rubric which clearly shows what they need to do to achieve good marks. The students are also given opportunities to negotiate their projects in terms of presentation, areas of research and questions to be pursued. Negotiation around assessment also encourages the students to pursue academic excellence.

So we try to make sure that the students have a certain amount of say in the way they present things. That is, we say: this is the assignment, what and how you choose to present it within these parameters is up to you..... So the students get a fair bit of say in final products.....We try to use rubrics and peer assessment so that students know what's expected, and can opt for essentially higher marks, if you like, by going that little bit extra (Teacher, p.4, 2008)

### *Sustainability and physical wellbeing*

Throughout 2008 and over the previous three years EPS has developed and demonstrated a commitment to sustainability and physical wellbeing by supporting the 'ride to school' initiative. There was significant community take-up of the initiative in 2008 with the principal offering follow up encouragement to parents to make walking or riding to school a key part of the schooling week. The Principal presents the message of sustainability at every opportunity as evidenced in this excerpt taken from the 2008 Annual report.

What a fantastic response from our wonderfully active students. Wouldn't it be great if this number of students rode or walked to school every day? Think about how much cleaner the air would be? How much fitter the students would be? The students had a great time participating in this national activity. The ride to school day complemented our ongoing commitment to student wellbeing. The daily fitness sessions and the regular specialist sport clinics have ensured that the high levels of students' physical fitness have been maintained again during 2008.

The school-community also successfully worked together during 2008 to actively promote healthy eating through appropriate curriculum activities. In the school newsletters it is argued that *keeping ourselves healthy is a critical component of education for sustainability*. The

school has developed, published and is now implementing a Healthy Food Policy. The Canteen menu has been reviewed and classroom learning programs have focused on integrating learning about healthy eating. As one class reported: *All roads lead to healthy eating these days!*

#### *Promoting intercultural awareness and sustainability*

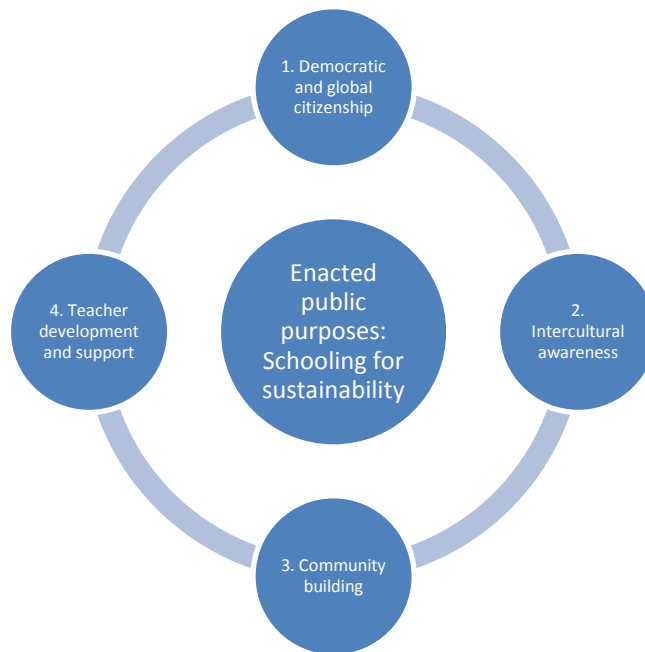
Camps are undertaken every second year at EPS to complement the quality of the classroom teaching and learning programs that are on offer. The staff work above and beyond the call of duty to make the camps happen. The teachers take on a 24 hour duty of care role during the camps. They also thoroughly research and plan exciting and worthwhile experiences for all students. Parent support is always outstanding.

In 2008, the Year 3, 4 & 5 students went to the Aldinga Aboriginal Studies Camp which was sited by the principal as a great success; and the Reception, Year 1 & 2 excursions to Warrawong provided another opportunity for the students to explore issues related to sustainability. In 2008 the school explored the role of the arts in religion and initiated a whole school project and explored the cultural significance of a range of different cultural rituals in drama and dance practices.

### **SECTION 3: ENACTED PUBLIC PURPOSES**

The three modalities described above served as a way to organise the information and data that was collected during the course of my time at Eastfield Primary School. Having gathered and described that data, I am in a position to analyse the purposes of education that drive the school. Clearly, sustainability lies at the heart of what the school is seeking to achieve. It is central to each of four sub-themes that the school is promoting through its formal and informal curriculum – democratic and global citizenship; intercultural awareness; community building; and teacher development and support. This is represented in the diagram below.

Sustainability and its four sub-themes represent dominantly **public purposes** of education in that they are concerned with contributing to the benefit of society as a whole, that is, to the common good. Of course the school also enacts purposes that are private in that they benefit each individual – but it is clear that it is its public purposes which shape the nature of the school. In this section I will briefly outline the contours of each of the four themes.



## Schooling for sustainability

The priority of sustainability runs through each of the modalities: structural, cultural and pedagogical. Sustainability grew to be a key theme and priority at Eastfield after considerable work was done on developing its site plan in 2007. This involved using a democratic process that was highly consultative and creative. According to the Principal, it began by getting parents and staff to consider the big educational picture with the following question prompts; what is happening in the world, and what might it be that education needs to think about?

One of the activities we did with staff was get a whole lot of newspapers, ..... and asked people just to cut out articles that they thought were critical in terms of how the world was operating ..... There were some sort of broad groupings from that, and then we went to say 'OK, what should we be doing? What does it mean for us?' ..... (we talked about) things about understanding kids out of school, what they learn out of school. Sustainability - I don't think we really were using that word then, it was *environmental concerns*, - became our central theme. (Principal interview, 2008, p.3).

An example of sustainability at EPS has involved the transformation of physical facilities and disused spaces around the school to introduce new authentic teaching spaces and pedagogical approaches, such as the school's new biodiversity corridor, planned by students and teachers, developed by the whole school community and supported by local business donations and council grants.

The students and teachers have all been incredibly excited about the transformation of the area at the back of the Junior Primary Building guided by the Governing Council Grounds Committee. Our urban biodiversity corridor has been featured in the local press and our efforts were also rewarded with a grant from the Unley Council. The area is now the home to a thriving butterfly and frog population (School Newsletter).

The school community is proud of this area. The creation of the area involved three well attended working bees. A barren wasteland has been transformed by the efforts of students, parents and staff. This area now supports the delivery of quality learning programs and the quality of the local environments. Building relationships and a sense of belonging is also critical to sustainability. The work that has been undertaken by the Governing Council Marketing Committee has been enormously successful during 2008.

Steps taken towards education for sustainability at EPS have included:

- Teachers' reviewing curriculum through the lens of sustainability and identifying opportunities for learning;
- A holistic approach to wellbeing and the school values are shaping and guiding personal and group behaviour e.g. getting on with others, fitness, nutrition;
- Creating learning opportunities outside the classroom e.g. outdoor cooking area, vegetable gardens and ponds;
- Building student participation in the change process;
- Developing partnerships between agencies e.g. KESAB, the Water Board, CSIRO, Waite and the AUSSi Schools network;
- Providing opportunities for people in the community and families to contribute their expert knowledge and skills;
- A community vision that values education for sustainable development when put into practice and modelled for children is powerful learning.

## 1. Democratic and global citizenship

The school seeks to develop young people who will see themselves as global citizens with a critical mindset that values social justice, environmental sustainability, care for self and each other and democracy.

I have a very strong sense of social justice, and the fact is that we can really ramp up the intellectual challenge for these kids. For example, yesterday a simple warm-up activity headed into the realm of philosophy about what truth is .... - it is a stunning experience as a teacher, to be working with kids that are really challenging me (AP interview, p.6, 2008)

The curriculum is imbued with ethical questions, philosophical content and opportunities for students to be community researchers. Parents interviewed explained how they were delighted

to have access to curriculum plans so that they knew what their children were learning in the classroom. One parent spoke positively about the higher order concepts of globalism and sustainability that the students were learning about.

...it's also just introducing concepts like globalism and sustainability and all those things that you can't rely on every mum and dad to do, because they probably weren't taught it in the first place and .... a lot of them just aren't set up to do it anyway. I wouldn't be, and so this is where it happens, and that's really where I see, you know, a big part of what education is in the community .... (Parent, p.18, 2008).

Not only are globalism and sustainability pursued as educational goals at the school, but the school also promotes student agency through the SRC, giving students a sense of democratic action and social justice.

One parent interviewed spoke about the value of sending their children to a public community school for offering his children learning experiences in a true community setting rather than an elitist one. Getting a balanced view of life seems to be integral to the pedagogical approaches at the school to help develop in young people citizenship values and global awareness that reflects intercultural understandings and respect for other people and other cultures. These are public purposes.

## 2. Intercultural awareness

Intercultural awareness is a strong public purpose at EPS. It is reflected in many of the activities at the school. For example, all classes focussed on Reconciliation in 2008 around the time of the Prime Minister's Sorry Day Speech. This became a theme of classroom programs and school assembly. Activities included students writing and illustrating Sorry Day Poems, placards, with a didgeridoo performance; units of work in Aboriginal Studies; a Yr6/7 exploration of Aboriginal culture through Jila people land rights claim; a Middle Years Unit exploration of the Aboriginal culture through the Arts; a Middle Years Aldinga Camp focus on Aboriginal Studies; a Middle Years Unit undertaken in professional development of staff in Asian Studies; and an exploration of the Arts as part of the Olympics Curriculum Themes eg the Yr 1 & 2 Chinese Opera.

The Arts at EPS involves a strong emphasis upon the arts in Aboriginal culture. The school works hard to involve students in understanding other cultures and in performance to community about their learning. One of the Governing Council meetings last year involved students in presenting their own poems about Sorry Day and providing an explanation about their meaning and significance to Council members. One parent was overwhelmed by the learning demonstrated by students in this experience.

## 3. Building community

The school is open to the community. It acts as a conduit for community get togethers and for members of the community, old scholars and new immigrants, to come together and

contribute to the children's learning. The school is a place for people to meet, to congregate, to arrange events and to offer support, friendship and care for each other. Parents spoke about the value of having a truly community-based school for building social fabric and community connectedness.

The main element of it is the community aspect I think, just the accessibility of all the resources that are here and especially the staff ... I mean there's no barriers or no hurdles, and there's certainly ... a real outreach as well from the school as part of the community ... it's a small school and you basically get to know everyone within the community over a period of time (Parent, p. 3, 2008)

As well as providing community outreach, the school also provides care, which has a special public, rather than individual focus to it. New families to the area are welcomed to the school and made to feel part of the school community in a short timeframe.

One of our things is about caring, but what we've had to confront is caring doesn't mean that I just care about you. You actually have to care about me and care about the other people in this community (Kerry, Principal interview, p.5, 2008).

In short, the school is an integral part of the community. It is a welcoming place where there is active encouragement for community involvement. One parent described it as a community school, a school in the community.

#### **4. Teacher development and support**

EPS develops new teachers, experienced teachers and student teachers. With its open and transparent teaching culture, the school is well situated to provide all teachers with a work environment that has teaching and learning enacted as the number one priority, rather than school management practices and concerns. This learning culture involves staff in sharing programs and resources with each other, team teaching, planning term programs together, and staff meetings that promote critical pedagogical discussions. These are all actively promoted by the principal.

Each year the school welcomes over 30 student teachers from the University of South Australia who spend a day a week at the school for a term observing classes, interacting with the staff and discussing teaching practices with each other. Senior teachers share ideas and resources with the new teachers. This supportive work culture makes for a happy staff that enjoys their work and provides the impetus for teachers to be innovative and creative in their program designs. It also contributes to the public purposes of contributing to the capacity of the future teaching force in South Australia.



## SUMMARY

Eastfield Primary School enacts four distinct democratic public purposes in its approach to educational delivery, all influenced by and contributing to the central concept of sustainability. These are:

1. Educating for democratic and global citizenship;
2. Intercultural awareness
3. Community building and
4. Teacher development and support.

Eastfield Primary School is a wonderful example of a school working towards and delivering an education founded on a commitment to the public benefits that education can bring to a democratic society. Through its supportive and professional leadership team, its highly skilled and committed collegial staff, its strategic approaches to building sustainability, and its culture of professional learning, EPS continues to deliver on critical public purposes and a rigorous and relevant education for all.