



2020 Annual Report

Aurora College



Introduction

The Annual Report for 2020 is provided to the community of Aurora College as an account of the school's operations and achievements throughout the year.

It provides a detailed account of the progress the school has made to provide high quality educational opportunities for all students, as set out in the school plan. It outlines the findings from self-assessment that reflect the impact of key school strategies for improved learning and the benefit to all students from the expenditure of resources.

Aurora College

635 Mowbray Road LANE COVE NORTH NSW 2066

Website: www.aurora.nsw.edu.au

Email: auroracoll-h.school@det.nsw.edu.au

Telephone: 1300 287 629



Message from the Principal

In describing the enormity of the challenges that our communities faced at the start of this year, including drought, floods and bush fires, we were probably all reaching for words such as unprecedented, unparalleled and extraordinary.

As the devastating bush fires were finally extinguished and as promising rain begun to fall in parts of our parched land, I'm sure we all hoped that these adjectives and their synonyms would take a hiatus from our conversations and communications. Little did we know!

When information about COVID-19 first started to appear in news bulletins across the globe, very few of us, I'm sure, would have imagined how the virus would change how we were able to live our lives. I, for one, never imagined how Aurora College, our state's only virtual school, would soon be joined by all other schools in delivering learning and teaching in a virtual environment.

As much as it pains me to say, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our lives in ways that are unprecedented in modern times. Like me, I'm sure you feel we are living a period of world history that will be poured over by generations to come.

Reflecting on the past twelve months, we all look forward to the promise of better times in the New Year. As science makes progress in the development of therapeutic drugs and vaccines, there is cause for optimism that life will soon return to something that more closely resembles 'normal'. You will be pleased to know that at the time of writing this article, we continue to plan for a welcome return of the Residential School program.

In 2021, we will have a record enrolment of more than 480 students from rural and remote communities across NSW. This big jump in numbers is due in part to the addition of our first Year 5 cohort through the state-wide Opportunity Class process. This exciting development follows the highly successful two-year pilot program which verified the need for a virtual opportunity class provision for high potential and gifted Stage 3 students in rural and remote communities across NSW.

As in previous Annual School Reports, here we celebrate some of our many achievements for the year, not least among them, surviving all of the aforementioned challenges that 2020 presented. The year ended on a high note with recognition on the national stage - Aurora College winning the Best Use of Technology category at the Australian Education Awards. My congratulations and thanks to our entire community for the part each of you has played in the ongoing success of our school.

Chris Robertson | Principal

School vision

Aurora College aims to provide great teaching and inspired learning in a completely new context, by allowing students in rural and remote communities to connect locally and to learn globally.

Aurora is committed to building relationships which foster in our students, a strong sense of belonging to Aurora and to their home school. Remaining in their local community, Aurora students benefit from the enhanced opportunities that come from belonging to two education communities.

Aurora College is dedicated to creating opportunities that will build each student's capacity to become an autonomous, life-long learner. Aurora College embraces the philosophy of 'personal best', acknowledging that each student's drive towards self-improvement in a curriculum rich in higher-order thinking provides a strong foundation for success in life beyond the school years.



Aurora's vision is to develop students who are not only at ease in the digital world, but who are empowered through their knowledge, skills and creativity to become influential contributors to the knowledge economies of this century.

Finally, the college recognises the importance of developing each student as a 'whole' person. Aurora students have multiple and diverse passions and interests, and it is the desire of the college that students pursue these and also have a happy and balanced social life.

School context

The establishment of a virtual secondary school was a key deliverable of *Rural and Remote Education – Blueprint for Action*. Through a range of actions, the Blueprint aims to bridge the gap in educational achievement between rural and remote and metropolitan schools.

Aurora College, the state's first virtual school, commenced classes on Monday 2 February 2015. Our students meet specific criteria, including enrolment in a [rural and remote government school](#) as defined by the MCEETYA Geographical Location Classification.

The college is partially selective, with classes in English, mathematics and science in Years 7 to 10. Years 7 to 10 students are chosen in the same way as students in all other selective classes in NSW government schools. With the home school principal's approval, students enrolled in Year 11 and Year 12 may include those students who have been part of the Year 7 to 10 selective stream. The college enables these students to remain in their local school and community while providing the opportunity to study specialist subjects which their home school may not currently offer.

Students at Aurora College connect with their teachers and classmates in timetabled lessons through a virtual learning environment which comprises web conferencing software and a range of online information, communication and collaboration tools. Teachers and students also have the opportunity to work together at a residential school held twice per year.

Aurora College offers students expanded career options through innovative programs and strengthened partnerships with business, and with scientific, cultural and tertiary education institutions. Mentoring opportunities and masterclasses are key features of both the online and residential school programs.

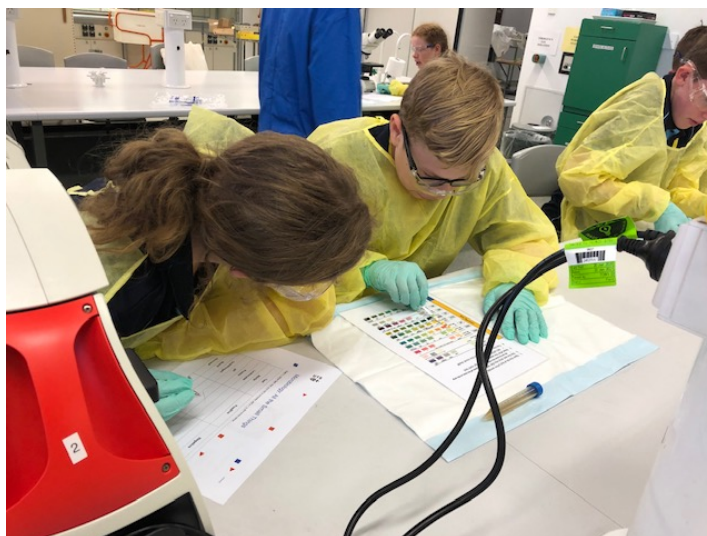
Self-assessment and school achievement

This section of the annual report outlines the findings from self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework, school achievements and the next steps to be pursued.

This year, our school undertook self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework. The Framework is a statement of what is valued as excellence for NSW public schools, both now and into the future. The Framework supports public schools throughout NSW in the pursuit of excellence by providing a clear description of high quality practice across the three domains of Learning, Teaching and Leading.

Each year, we assess our practice against the Framework to inform our school plan and annual report.

Our self-assessment process will assist the school to refine our school plan, leading to further improvements in the delivery of education to our students.



For more information about the School Excellence Framework: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/school-excellence-and-accountability>.

Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

Elements	2020 School Assessment
LEARNING: Learning culture	Excelling
LEARNING: Wellbeing	Excelling
LEARNING: Curriculum	Excelling
LEARNING: Assessment	Excelling
LEARNING: Reporting	Excelling
LEARNING: Student performance measures	Excelling
TEACHING: Effective classroom practice	Excelling
TEACHING: Data skills and use	Sustaining and growing
TEACHING: Professional standards	Excelling
TEACHING: Learning and development	Excelling
LEADING: Educational leadership	Excelling
LEADING: School planning, implementation and reporting	Excelling
LEADING: School resources	Excelling
LEADING: Management practices and processes	Excelling

Strategic Direction 1

Aspirational learners

Purpose

To develop a learning environment that promotes a culture of high expectations and which informs, guides and nurtures all students so they may achieve their goals and aspirations.

Improvement measures

- Increased levels of resilience, confidence and independence in students.
- Increased number of students who feel supported in achieving their goals and aspirations.
- Increase in the number of students selecting higher level English, mathematics and science courses in Stage 6.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Process 1: Aspirational learners

Implement a curriculum that meets the aspirations of the community, promotes high expectations and enhances students' awareness of post school opportunities, through development of the:

- e-Mentor program
- Short course program
- Stage 3 opportunity class program.

Evaluation	Funds expended (Resources)
<p>A major achievement of the school in the period 2018-2020, was the successful implementation of the Aurora Opportunity Class Pilot (AOCP). Phase 2 of the pilot, comprised 46 students in 21 rural and remote government primary schools. An evaluation of the program by the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) was completed in late 2019. Supported by this, and other evidence of the program's outstanding success, the Department approved the conversion of the pilot to an ongoing provision, commencing in 2021.</p> <p>The Minister for Education and Early Childhood, The Hon. Sarah Mitchell, MLC, made the announcement at Dunedoo Central School on Friday 28 February 2020. At the ceremony, Minister Mitchell said, <i>"While Aurora College brings significant equity benefits to students, families and schools in rural and remote NSW, it continues to demonstrate that the learning model it presents also offers dividends for life and study beyond the curriculum."</i></p> <p>A range of data collected in the two years of the AOCP, demonstrated the significant contribution the program made to the engagement, resilience, confidence and independence of the participating students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 95% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the residential school helped them to connect with their teachers and peers• 97% of students agreed/strongly agreed that working with classmates in the virtual classroom was a positive experience• 98% of students agreed/strongly agreed that the coursework was interesting and challenging	\$571,456

- 100% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the AOCPP had a positive impact to their child's attitude towards learning
- 96% of parents agree or strongly agree that AOCPP had a positive impact on their child's learning and a positive impact on their wellbeing

Ongoing evaluation of the e-Mentoring program demonstrated the positive contribution of this initiative in supporting students to achieve their goals and aspirations. Between 2019/2020 and 2020/2021, the program enjoyed a 200% increase in the number of participating students, all of whom completed the full program.

Qualitative testimonials collected from participating students identified their growth in confidence, goal completion, and in time and stress management, as positive outcomes of the program. Comments included the following:

- *"I think anyone who is very enthusiastic about school and their future should apply for the mentoring program."* (Year 7 student)
- *"I wanted to join e-Mentoring to broaden my perspectives and acquire knowledge from people with great life experience. My mentor has taught me to be open minded and see new ideas and views I had never considered before."* (Year 8 student)
- *"My mentor and I have focused on personal development, learning how to function in the workplace and I particularly enjoyed looking at time management."* (Year 9 student)

The program is underpinned by dedicated mentors from a range of professions, including in areas of particular interest to Aurora students - research science and medicine. All mentors reported being well-prepared for mentoring by the induction and training process, with 100% indicating their willingness to continue their involvement in the program next year.

Due to restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, Aurora was not able to deliver a short course in 2020. As previously reported, the courses offered by the school in the period 2018-2019 in partnership with organisations, including: Macquarie University; University of Sydney; and the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, supported a culture of high expectations and a love for learning.

In 2020, the Masterclass program continued to support students in achieving their goals and aspirations by providing access to experts in a range of human endeavours, including: astrophysics; climate change and soil science; cyber safety; archaeology; the craft of writing; visual literacy; and graphic design. The following statistics relate to masterclasses held throughout 2020:

- 85% of students rated the masterclasses as excellent or good
- 55% of students said that the masterclasses inspired them in some way
- 82% of students said that masterclasses deepened their knowledge

A comparison of 2019 and 2020 subject selection data collected from selective stream students entering Stage 6 at either Aurora College and/or a partner school indicates a:

- large increase in the percentage of students selecting higher levels of English
- small increase in the percentage of students selecting higher levels of Mathematics
- small increase in the percentage of students selecting Physics
- small decrease in the percentage of students selecting Chemistry
- small decrease in the percentage of students selecting Biology.

Data from the 2019 and 2020 *Tell them from me* surveys (see *Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction* section) corroborates the efficacy of the *Aspirational learners* initiatives in supporting a curriculum that meets the aspirations of the community, promotes high expectations and enhances students' awareness of post school opportunities.

Process 2: Holistic learners

Implement a whole school integrated approach to student well-being in which students can connect, succeed and thrive at each stage of their schooling, by enhancing the:

- New student transition program
- Student wellbeing program
- Tutorial support program
- Parent outreach program.

Evaluation	Funds expended (Resources)
<p>With the continuing growth in enrolments at Aurora College, the new student transition program has been integral to enabling students to connect, succeed and thrive at each stage of their schooling. Throughout the period 2018-2020, the program has benefitted from the implementation of learnings from pre-program and post-program surveys of students and staff. In 2020, students completed workshops on: the effective use of a range of software applications; adjusting and belonging; safe laptop use and cyber safety; time management; and study skills. All participating students indicated increased levels of confidence in working and learning in a virtual environment.</p> <p>Feedback from staff identified the value of enhanced transition profiles in getting to know their new students. The profiles also assisted the Learning Support Team to identify students with additional needs and to provide necessary support in a timely manner. Late in 2020, transition forms were sent to new students in 7-10, their current teachers and their parents. By collecting data from three sources, the likelihood of receiving salient information for every student was enhanced. The forms also led to the development of a collated handover document for teachers which provided important information about all Aurora students, not only for those students commencing with Aurora in 2021.</p> <p>In 2020, 25 students from Years 7-10 accessed one-on-one tutorial support, a small increase on the number of students accessing support in 2019. Tutorials were provided in English, mathematics and science with 24% of participants accessing the support for more than one subject. The sessions ranged from 8 weeks for support on a particular topic, to 35 weeks for continued support.</p> <p>Students accessed this initiative for additional support for homework, to address perfectionism tendencies and to revise topics covered in class. Participating students reported they felt supported in achieving their academic goals and aspirations. Data analysis of the results of students engaged in long term tutorial support showed an increase in their levels of achievement in the targeted subject(s).</p> <p>Throughout 2020, Aurora continued to provide opportunities for parents to better understand and support the education of their children. Topics included: Learning</p>	\$112,794

in a virtual environment (Virginia Cluff, Head Teacher Science, Aurora College); Accessing and using Sentral (Ben Hillsley, Learning Technology Support Officer, Aurora College); Supporting your gifted child's learning (Dr Ruth Phillips, Learning and Development Consultant); Digital nutrition and teaching tech-savvy teens (Jocelyn Brewer); Neurodevelopment differentiation (Dr Andrew Fuller); and Helping adolescents thrive through anxiety at school (Karen Young). In each session, parents reported increased levels of confidence in supporting their children to achieve their goals and aspirations.

In a coordinated approach to wellbeing, the school engaged psychologist Karen Young to work with staff, students, and parents. Karen explored the different ways anxiety manifests at school and the unique parts of the adolescent experience that can fuel anxiety. Parents gained a range of practical strategies to support adolescents through anxiety, both in the short and long term, and to strengthen resilience and courage. On the same day, our students participated in masterclasses delivered by Karen, and staff completed professional learning with her. The consistent messaging to all three groups illustrated the integrated approach to student wellbeing that is a hallmark of Aurora College.

The Wellbeing Action Team provided staff with a range of ways to support student wellbeing. The inclusion of the 'Be You' program and 'Wear It Purple' day received positive informal feedback from staff and students. The inclusion of wellbeing lessons and themes in Term 4 received consistent positive written feedback from staff members engaging in the program with their students. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the wellbeing initiatives were successful in engaging both staff and students in the process of thinking about and improving their wellbeing. Analysis of the Learning and Support Team minutes and related processes demonstrate the success of the range of student learning and wellbeing initiatives.

Data from the 2019 and 2020 *Tell them from me* surveys (see *Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction* section) corroborates the efficacy of the *Holistic learners* initiatives in supporting students to connect, succeed and thrive, at each stage of their schooling.



Strategic Direction 2

Quality teaching and learning

Purpose

To ensure a challenging, engaging and responsive learning environment underpinned by high quality, collaborative planning, programming, assessing and reporting practices, which maximise the potential of every learner.

Improvement measures

- Increase in the number of students demonstrating active engagement with their learning
- Increase in the number of students who demonstrate a capacity for self-assessment and reflection
- Improved assessment practices inform teaching and learning, and provide meaningful feedback on student achievement.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Process 1: Curriculum differentiation

Draw on research to develop and implement effective planning, programming and instruction practices that provide appropriate learning opportunities for every student.

Evaluation	Funds expended (Resources)
<p>Regular professional learning meetings in the virtual learning environment, school development days, the classroom teacher induction program and twice-yearly executive leadership conferences, continued to underpin the college's strong professional learning culture. These opportunities for professional growth are in addition to applications made by individuals to participate in professional learning courses specific to their curriculum or targeted needs, based on their individual professional goals.</p> <p>In 2020, a priority was continued work with Corwin Australia, focussed on the theoretical and practical applications of learning intentions and success criteria. During these workshops, staff immersed themselves in important new research being conducted by Professor John Hattie and colleagues from Melbourne University Education Research Institute and the Science of Learning Research Centre, about the science behind how we learn. Staff were given the opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• understand the key ideas underpinning the Model of Learning• identify learning strategies that are useful for each phase of the Model of Learning• plan teaching activities based on awareness of moving learners from surface to deep, and then to transfer. <p>Follow-up collaborative planning was facilitated for faculties to further develop teaching and learning programs that explicitly incorporate learning intentions and success criteria, and teaching strategies to help move students from surface to deep, and then transfer learning.</p>	\$79,950

<p>In the week beginning 23 November 2020, Aurora welcomed 16 new members of staff in preparation for the start of the 2021 school year. An intensive induction program included their completion of the University of NSW's mini-Certificate in Gifted Education. Permanent and full-time staff also completed the High Potential and Gifted Education Policy – Tier 1 training, and seven staff also completed the Advanced mini-Certificate in Gifted Education.</p> <p>Analysis of learning and teaching programs and resources affirms the highly collaborative planning, programming, assessing and reporting practices throughout the school. Data from the 2019 and 2020 <i>Tell them from me surveys</i> (see Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction section) corroborates the efficacy of the <i>Curriculum differentiation</i> initiatives in increasing the number of students demonstrating active engagement with their learning.</p>	
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Process 2: Quality assessment and feedback

Draw on research to develop and implement consistent, high quality feedback and assessment practices across the school.

Evaluation	Funds expended (Resources)
<p>Building upon extensive work in this area in 2019, professional learning in 2020 focussed on creating assessments for teaching and learning using the Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome (SOLO) taxonomy. Workshops helped teachers to create effective pre-and post-tests using the SOLO taxonomy as the framework for effective and reliable design. Teachers had the opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create effective classroom assessments using the SOLO taxonomy to evaluate impact of teaching • know and enact three of the mind frames: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 'I am an evaluator of my impact on learning' ○ 'I see assessment as informing my impact and next steps' ○ 'I focus on learning and its language' • know the structure of the SOLO taxonomy • know how to use the SOLO taxonomy to design learning intentions and success criteria • explain why it is important to create robust assessments to measure progress • know how to use the SOLO taxonomy to ask a range of deep and surface level questions. <p>Follow-up collaborative planning was facilitated for faculties to further develop assessment practices that inform teaching and learning, and provide meaningful feedback on student achievement.</p> <p>Analysis of assessment tasks and associated documents affirms the school's progress in implementing consistent, high quality feedback and assessment practices across the school. Data from the 2019 and 2020 <i>Tell them from me surveys</i> (see Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction section) corroborates the efficacy of the <i>Quality assessment and feedback</i> initiatives in increasing the number of students who demonstrate a capacity for self-assessment and reflection.</p>	\$9,852

Aurora College values opportunities to share expertise and experience with all schools. In 2020, Aurora staff were joined by colleagues from across the state in four state-wide professional learning sessions:

- Developing quality Stage 6 assessments
- Neurodevelopmental differentiation
- Anxiety in the classroom
- Digital nutrition - Teaching tech savvy teens

These sessions contributed 6.5 hours of registered professional learning for maintenance of accreditation with NESAs.



Strategic Direction 3

Leading data informed practice

Purpose

To ensure best practice teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy skills, so that all students may access the widest possible curriculum and participate fully in society.

Improvement measures

- Increase of 10% in the number of students demonstrating expected growth in literacy and numeracy from Year 7 to Year 9
- Increase of 10% in the number of Year 9 students in the top 2 bands in literacy and numeracy.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Process 1: Research informed pedagogy

Draw on current research to develop and implement an integrated whole school approach to the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy skills.

Evaluation	Funds expended (Resources)
<p>In 2020, the Literacy and Numeracy Team identified 27 students who would benefit from targeted support. This support was provided in one-on-one tutorials throughout the year by the literacy and numeracy coaches.</p> <p>The coaches ensured content delivered within these tutorials was based on specific areas of need, as identified in the available NAPLAN data, Literacy and Numeracy Check-in data, as well as diagnostic tests undertaken through the Education Perfect and Mathspace platforms.</p> <p>The team also developed Individualised Literacy and Numeracy Plans (ILNPs) for students needing targeted support. The plans were used by staff to ensure best practice, as well as ensuring that the current curriculum supported these strategies at a whole school level.</p> <p>With guidance from the Literacy and Numeracy Team, faculties utilised facilitated opportunities throughout the year to embed specific teaching strategies and activities into Year 8 learning and teaching programs to support identified student weaknesses.</p> <p>A comparison of Year 9 NAPLAN data from 2017 and 2019 shows the progress of the school in achieving an increase in the percentage of students demonstrating expected growth in literacy and numeracy from Year 7 to Year 9.</p> <p>Percentage of Year 9 students showing expected growth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grammar and punctuation: 52% (2017) and 65% (2019)• Reading: 61% (2017) and 66% (2019)• Spelling: 42% (2017) band 56% (2019)• Writing: 67% (2017) and 83% (2019)	\$132,890

- Numeracy: 58% (2017) and 58% (2019)

The following data shows the progress of the school in achieving an increase in the percentage of Year 9 students in the top two bands.

Percentage of Year 9 students in the top two bands in literacy and numeracy:

- Grammar and punctuation: 71% (2017) and 71% (2019)
- Reading: 71% (2017) and 85% (2019)
- Spelling: 74% (2017) and 72% (2019)
- Writing: 58% (2017) and 43% (2019)*
- Numeracy: 71% (2017) and 84% (2019)

*Note: The percentage of students in the top two bands in 2019 at Aurora (43.3%), compared very favourably with all other NSW Department of Education schools (11.2%) and for all selective schools (42.9%).

As agreed by the Education Council, the National Assessment Program (NAPLAN) did not proceed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, efficacy of the school's literacy and numeracy strategies in achieving the identified improvement measures cannot be accurately determined at this time.

The performance of ten students targeted for increased growth based on their Year 7 results was tracked. Where these students did not correctly answer (or omitted) questions from their Year 7 NAPLAN Numeracy paper, a note was made of the specific outcomes requiring attention. Many of these outcomes were re-tested in the Year 9 Numeracy Check-in. For each of the targeted students, between two and nine of these outcomes were re-tested, making a total of forty-nine retests.

Of the forty-nine retests, the Aurora students achieved success in forty individual cases, a rate of 82%. This suggests that the targeted group of students was able to move forward, consistent with expected growth. Internal data tracking the progress of 14 students receiving targeted literacy support showed similar levels of growth.

Strategies supporting improved literacy and numeracy results will again be an important focus of the school in the next planning and reporting cycle.



Key Initiatives	Resources (annual)	Impact achieved this year
Low level adjustment for disability	\$43,753.60 (Staffing) \$11,219.33 (Flexible)	Low level adjustment for disability funding was used to employ additional Learning and Support Teachers (Total 1.2 FTE). Funds were also used to provide targeted professional learning for key members of staff. This enabled the school to provide enhanced levels of support for students in need, in both the virtual classrooms and at the one residential school for the year.
Support for beginning teachers	\$43,443.00	Four beginning teachers were provided with targeted support, comprising: regular mentoring sessions; collaborative lesson development opportunities; lesson observations and feedback; and specific support around a range of administrative tasks. Two teachers were supported to achieve Proficient Teacher accreditation, which included regular meetings to develop and review evidence and create reports.
Professional learning	\$5,486.55	Funds contributed to a range of professional learning priorities within the school. See evaluation of Strategic Direction 2 for details.



Student information

Student enrolment profile

Aurora's 2020 cohort comprised 384 students from Years 6 to 12.

Cohort	No. students
Year 6	46
Year 7	74
Year 8	77
Year 9	57
Year 10	49
Year 11	45
Year 12	36

Management of non-attendance

Attendance data of all Aurora College students resides with their home school. Aurora College collects and retains separate attendance data records for each of our classes.

NSW student attendance data in 2020 is not comparable to previous years due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The NSW Government encouraged students to learn from home, where possible, for a seven week period from 24 March to 22 May.

During this period, schools monitored engagement with learning to determine whether students were marked present. This changed the attendance measure. There was also some evidence of varied marking practices as schools adjusted to the learning from home period, with some schools recording higher attendance rates while others recording markedly lower rates.

Attendance at school has a big impact on longer term outcomes for children and young people. When a child is not at school they miss important opportunities to learn, build friendships and develop their skills through play. Regular attendance at school is a shared responsibility between schools and parents. By working together we can have a positive effect on supporting our children and young people to regularly attend school.

Our teachers promote and monitor regular attendance at school and all our schools have effective measures in place to record attendance and follow up student absences promptly. They are guided by the School Attendance policy which details the management of non-attendance.

Post school destinations

Proportion of Year 12 students moving into post-school education, training or employment	Year 12
University entry	34%
Deferred university entry	19%
Employment	13%
TAFE	6%
Unknown	28%

Year 12 students undertaking vocational or trade training

0% of Year 12 students at Aurora College undertook vocational education and training in 2020.

Year 12 students attaining HSC or equivalent vocational education qualification

100% of all Year 12 students at Aurora College expected to complete Year 12 in 2020 received a Higher School Certificate or equivalent vocational education and training qualification.



Workforce information

Workforce composition

Position	FTE*
Principal	1.0
Deputy Principal	1.0
Head Teachers	5.0
Classroom teachers	4.0
School Administrative and Support Staff	2.0
Learning Technologies Support Officer	1.0
Total	14.0

*Full Time Equivalent

In 2020, Aurora College provided funds to 31 schools across the state to release classroom teachers (8.5 FTE, in total) to teach Aurora lessons.

In addition to the permanent and ACIP positions shown in the table above, Aurora College funded the following positions in 2020:

- Technologies Support Officer (1.0 FTE)
- School Administrative and Support Staff (1.0 FTE)
- Teacher librarian (0.4 FTE)
- School Counsellor (0.2 FTE)
- Learning and Support Teachers (1.2 FTE)
- Community Liaison Officers (0.4 FTE)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce composition

The Department actively supports the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees through the use of identified positions, scholarship opportunities to become a teacher and by providing a culturally safe workplace.

As of 2020, 3.7% of the Department's workforce identify as Aboriginal people. In 2019, one Aurora staff member identified as either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Workforce ATSI

Staff type	Benchmark ¹	2020 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation ²
School support	3.30%	6.30%
Teachers	3.30%	2.80%

Note 1 - The NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2014-17 introduced an aspirational target of 1.8% by 2021 for each of the sector's salary bands. If the aspirational target of 1.8% is achieved in salary bands not currently at or above 1.8%, the cumulative representation of Aboriginal employees in the sector is expected to reach 3.3%.

Note 2 - Representation of diversity groups are calculated as the estimated number of staff in each group divided by the total number of staff. These statistics have been weighted to estimate the representation of

diversity groups in the workforce, where diversity survey response rates were less than 100 per cent. The total number of staff is based on a headcount of permanent and temporary employees.

Teacher qualifications

All casual, temporary and permanent teachers in NSW public schools must hold a NSW Department of Education approval to teach. Teachers with approval to teach must be accredited with the NSW Education Standards Authority, and hold a recognised teaching degree. All NSW teachers must hold a valid NSW Working With Children Check clearance.

Professional learning and teacher accreditation

Professional learning is core to enabling staff to improve their practice. Professional learning includes five student-free School Development Days and induction programs for staff new to our school and/or system. These days are used to improve the capacity of teaching and non-teaching staff in line with school and Departmental priorities.

In 2020, an additional School Development Day was included at the start of Term 2 to assist school leaders, teachers and support staff to focus on the wellbeing of students and continuity of education, such as online and remote learning.



Financial information

Financial summary

The information provided in the financial summary includes reporting from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020. The Principal is responsible for the financial management of the school and ensuring all school funds are managed in line with department policy requirements.

	2020 Actual (\$)
Opening Balance	2,106,780
Revenue	6,612,128
Appropriation	6,473,780
Sale of Goods and Services	4,448
Grants and contributions	129,035
Investment income	4,864
Expenses	-6,606,950
Employee related	-5,346,703
Operating expenses	-1,260,246
Surplus/deficit for the year	5,178
Closing Balance	2,111,958

Figures presented in this report may be subject to rounding so may not reconcile exactly with the bottom line totals, which are calculated without any rounding.

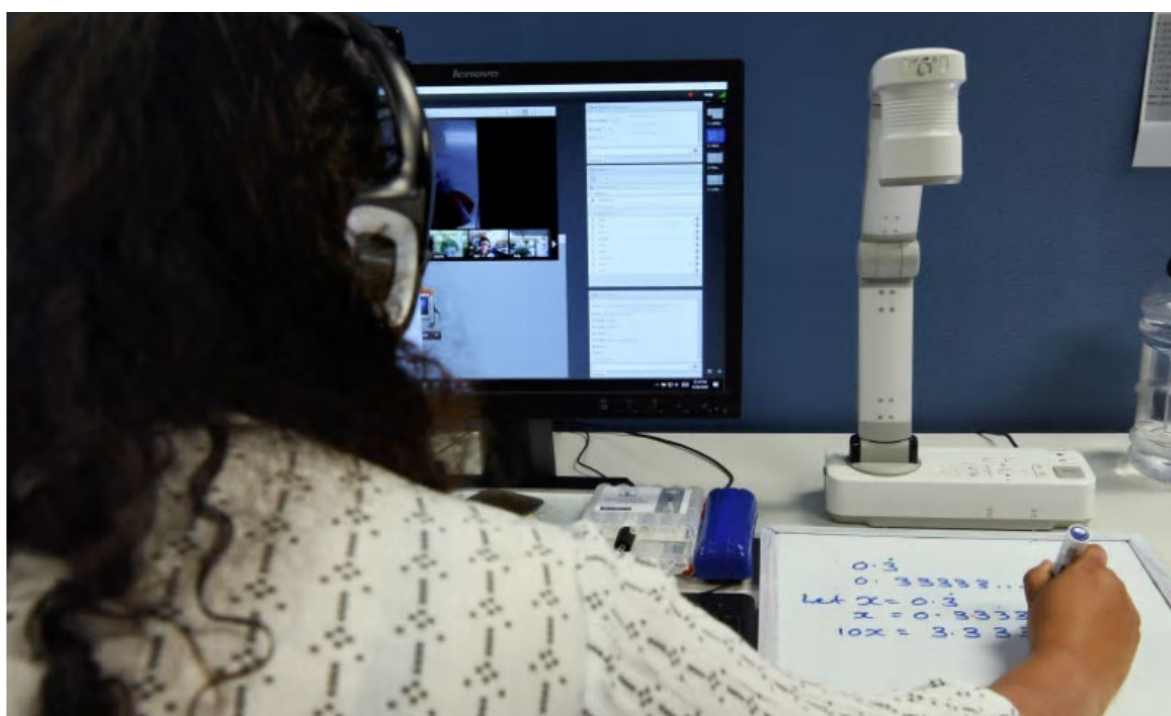


Financial summary – Equity loadings

The equity loading data is the main component of the 'Appropriation' line item of the financial summary above.

	2020 Actual SBA (\$)
Targeted Total	0
Equity Total	54,973
Equity - Aboriginal	0
Equity - Socio-economic	0
Equity - Languages	0
Equity - Disability	54,973
Base Total	6,238,703
Base - Per Capita	0
Base - Location	0
Base - Other	6,238,703
Other Total	3,022,747
Grand Total	9,316,423

Figures presented in this report may be subject to rounding so may not reconcile exactly with the bottom line totals, which are calculated without any rounding.



School performance - NAPLAN

In the National Assessment Program, the results across the Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 literacy and numeracy assessments are reported on a scale from Band 1 to Band 10. The achievement scale represents increasing levels of skills and understandings demonstrated in these assessments.

2020 NAPLAN

As agreed by the Education Council, the National Assessment Program (or NAPLAN) did not proceed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This was to assist school leaders, teachers and support staff to focus on the wellbeing of students and continuity of education, such as online and remote learning.

The Education Council also agreed to defer the full transition to NAPLAN Online from 2021 to 2022 and the continuation of current NAPLAN governance arrangements through 2021.



School performance - HSC

The performance of students in the HSC is reported in bands ranging from Band 1 (lowest) to Band 6 (highest).

The information in this report must be consistent with privacy and personal information policies. Where there are fewer than 10 students in a course or subject, summary statistics or graphical representation of student performance is not available.

In Stage 6, Aurora College is a non-selective school. In 2020, 12 HSC courses were offered at Aurora College with 34 students enrolled, and a total of 40 course completions (with 68% achieving a result in the top 3 Bands).

The best results for the college's non-selective Year 12 cohort, included:

- four notional Band 6 in Mathematics Extension 2
- two Band 5 in Agriculture
- one Band 5 in Economics
- two Band 5 in Mathematics
- two Band 5 in Software Design and Development
- two Band 5 in Physics

In 2020, students who were part of the Aurora selective stream in 2018, but were not able to study Stage 6 courses with Aurora, achieved a further 13 Band 6 results, including a third place in state in Mathematics Standard 2.

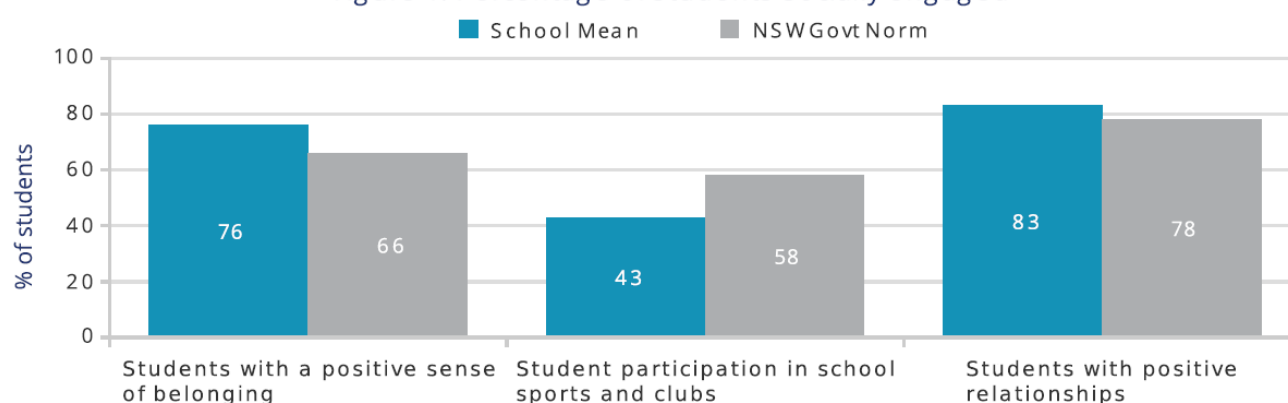


Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction

In 2020, 135 secondary students completed the *Tell Them From Me* survey. Validating the results of surveys conducted over the past six years by the Aurora State Reference Group, the *Tell Them From Me* data measured the social, institutional and intellectual engagement of Aurora students at levels well above the NSW government norm.

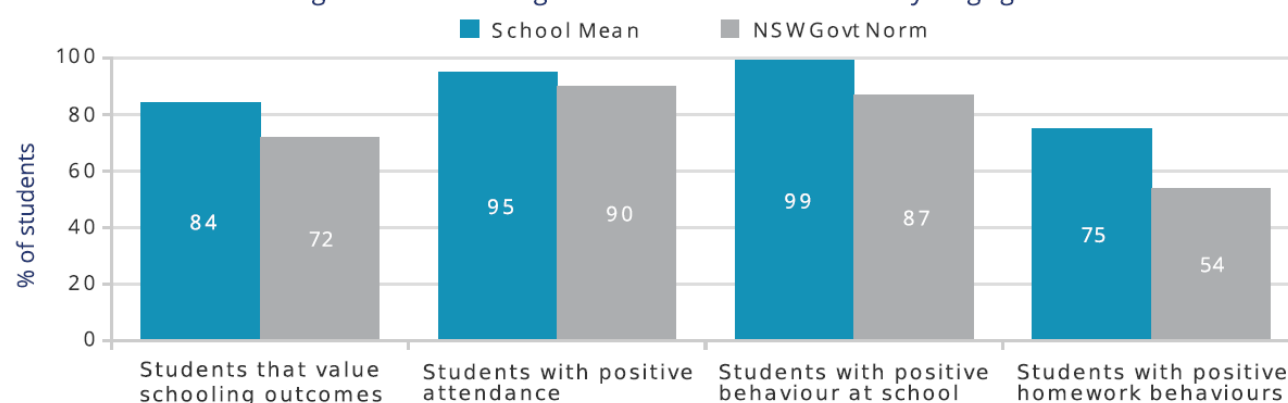
Students who are 'socially' engaged are actively involved in the life of the school; their friends are there and they are involved in sports or other extra-curricular activities. This involvement can give them a sense of belonging at school and increase academic motivation. Figure 1 shows the percentage of students in Aurora College that were socially engaged compared with NSW government norms for students at the year levels assessed in this school.

Figure 1: Percentage of students socially engaged



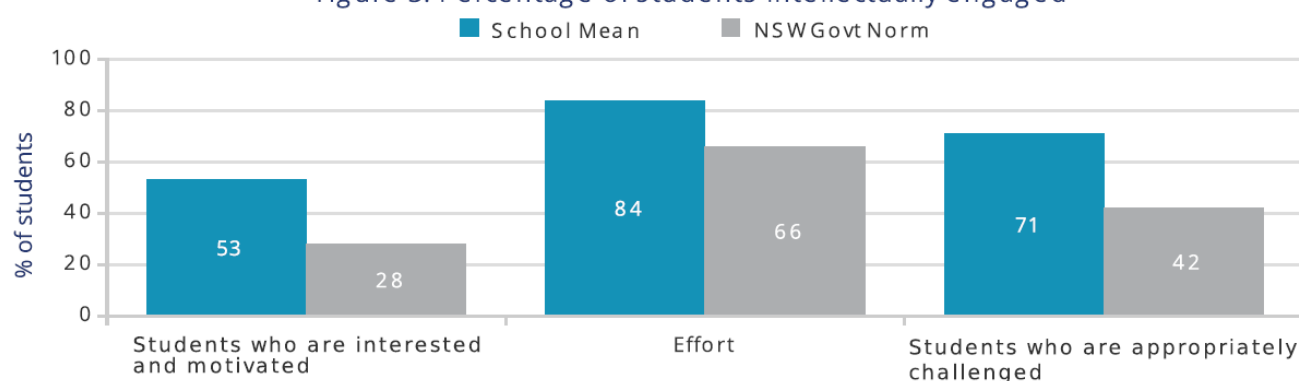
Students who value schooling outcomes and meet the formal rules of schooling are considered 'institutionally' engaged. These students feel that what they are learning at school is directly related to their long-term success, and this view is reflected in their school and class attendance and their effort in doing homework. Levels of institutional engagement in Aurora College are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Percentage of students institutionally engaged



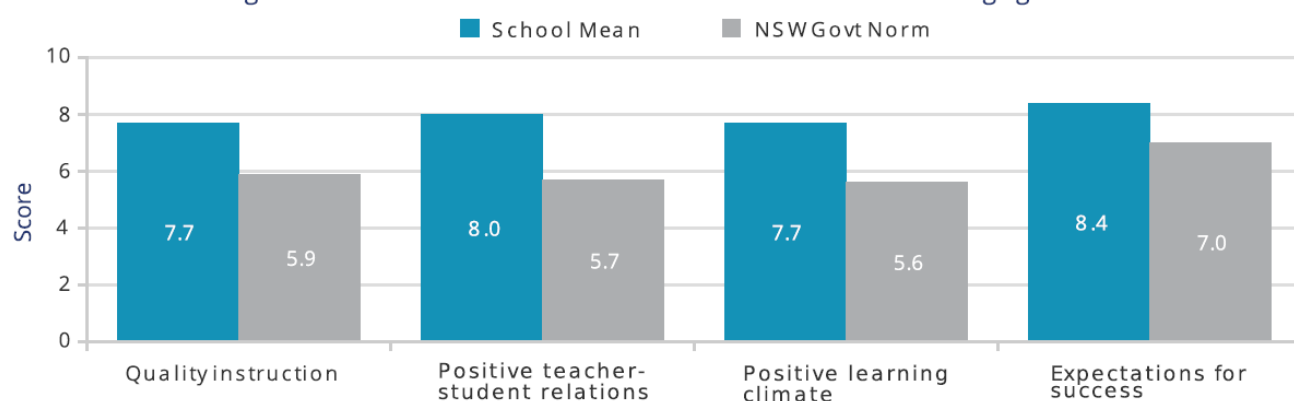
Some students meet the institutional demands of school, but they are not truly engaged in their learning. Intellectual engagement entails a serious emotional and cognitive investment in learning, using higher-order thinking skills to increase understanding, solve complex problems, and construct new knowledge. Students are more engaged when their level of skills is consistent with the challenges presented to them in their classes. These students are often deeply absorbed in academic activities. Figure 3 displays the results for Aurora College on the three measures of intellectual engagement.

Figure 3: Percentage of students intellectually engaged



Research by The Learning Bar found that there were considerable differences among schools in their levels of engagement and only some of this variation was attributable to students' family backgrounds. Four school-level factors were consistently related to student engagement: quality instruction, teacher-student relations, classroom learning climate, and teacher expectations for success. Figure 5 compares Aurora College to NSW government norms for each factor, on a ten-point scale.

Figure 5: School-level factors associated with student engagement



A comparison of 2019 and 2020 *Tell Them From Me* data shows improvement in overall results in 20 of 27 measures.

Social-emotional outcomes	2019 Aurora Mean	NSW Govt Norm	2020 Aurora Mean	NSW Govt Norm
Students believe that schooling is useful in their everyday life and will have a strong bearing on their future	78%	72%	84%	72%
Students do homework for their classes with a positive attitude and in a timely manner	70%	54%	75%	54%
Students are intellectually engaged and find learning interesting, enjoyable and relevant	69%	46%	78%	46%
Students are interested and motivated in their learning	44%	28%	53%	28%
Students try hard to succeed in their learning	82%	66%	84%	66%
Important concepts are taught well, class time is used effectively, and homework and evaluations support class objectives	7.8	6.3	7.9	6.3

Academic outcomes	2019 Aurora Mean	2019 NSW Govt Norm	2020 Aurora Mean	2020 NSW Govt Norm
Students' overall mark in their current or most recent English class was reported as a letter grade and converted to a percentage	78%	68%	80%	68%
Students' overall mark in their current or most recent Maths class was reported as a letter grade and converted to a percentage	77%	66%	80%	66%
Drivers of student outcomes	2019 Aurora Mean	NSW Govt Norm	2020 Aurora Mean	NSW Govt Norm
Students find classroom instruction relevant to their everyday lives	6.4	5.8	6.8	5.8
Students who are subjected to moderate to severe physical, social, or verbal bullying over the Internet	17%	21%	5%	21%
Students feel they have someone at school who consistently provides encouragement and can be turned to for advice	7.3	6.0	7.8	6.0
Students understand there are clear rules and expectations for classroom behaviour	7.3	5.6	7.7	5.6
School staff emphasise academic skills and hold high expectations for all students to succeed	8.2	7.0	8.4	7.0
Students have someone at home or community who consistently provides encouragement and can be turned to for advice	6.5	4.5	6.8	4.5
Students plan to finish Year 12	92%	85%	97%	85%
Students plan to go to university	87%	67%	88%	67%
Students set challenging goals for themselves in their schoolwork and aim to do their best	80%	62%	84%	62%
Students can overcome setbacks and challenges that are typical of the ordinary course of school life	5.2	5.5	5.6	5.5
NSW DoE custom measures	2019 Aurora Mean	NSW Govt Norm	2020 Aurora Mean	NSW Govt Norm
The extent to which students feel hopeful and have positive expectations for the future	52% (high) 31% (medium) 17% (low)	43% (high) 39% (medium) 17% (low)	59% (high) 27% (medium) 14% (low)	43% (high) 39% (medium) 17% (low)
The extent to which students feel they can do well in their school work	79% (high) 18% (medium) 3% (low)	65% (high) 27% (medium) 7% (low)	85% (high) 12% (medium) 3% (low)	65% (high) 27% (medium) 7% (low)

In preparation for the next school planning cycle, situational analysis was conducted in 2020 with parents and staff. Responses from parents reflected the high levels of satisfaction felt by their children. In the parent survey, 96% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Aurora College sets high expectations, and 91% agreed or strongly agreed that their child was engaged with their learning at Aurora.

Similarly, staff expressed high levels of satisfaction with working at Aurora. The aspects of their work that staff felt Aurora excelled in, included:

- “Keeping up to date with the latest initiatives that benefit our students”
- “Differentiating for students with core, extension and support”
- “Faculty communication across vast physical distances and building a positive collaborative environment for staff to belong to”
- “Appreciation of the teaching profession and what we all bring to the table as a team”
- “Keeping parents and partner schools well-informed”

Data collected from all stakeholders during the situational analysis will help to determine the strategic directions for the school in the next school planning cycle.



Policy requirements

Aboriginal Education Policy

The responsibility for enacting the Aboriginal Education Policy rests with all Departmental staff. The policy should underpin and inform planning, teaching practice and approaches to educational leadership in all educational settings.

Evidence of effective implementation of the policy included:

- Establishing, building and strengthening relationships with the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Aboriginal people and communities.
- Providing, in partnership with Aboriginal people and communities, education which promotes quality teaching, is engaging, and is culturally appropriate and relevant.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will match or better the outcomes of the broader student population.
- Implementation of Personalised Learning Pathways for all Aboriginal students in a school culture of high expectations.

In 2020, Aurora College appointed an Aboriginal Education Coordinator. As part of this role, all ATSI-identified students at Aurora College completed a Personalised Learning Pathways Plan, where consultation with parents, carers and students was conducted to create a plan of support and goals for the 2020 academic year. All teaching staff of these students used this data to develop and include support strategies that would ensure these students feel valued, acknowledged, and heard.

Within the Students Learning Support website that all students have access to, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander section was created to provide students with accessible pathways to find further information and support.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) recently released the 'Indigenous cultural competency in the Australian teaching workforce' discussion paper. As a school, Aurora College undertook professional learning unpacking this paper and participating in discussions around what it means to be culturally competent, as well as collaborating on ways to improve this within our school community.

Anti-Racism Policy

All teachers are responsible for supporting students to develop an understanding of racism and discrimination and the impact these may have on individuals and the broader community. Principals are responsible for examining school practices and procedures to ensure they are consistent with the policy. All schools have an Anti-Racism Contact Officer who is trained to respond to concerns in relation to racism.

The staff at Aurora College is committed to the eradication of racism in our society by promoting acceptance of Australia's cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, challenging prejudiced attitudes and ensuring that sanctions are applied against racist and discriminatory behaviours. In 2020, the college continued the development of programs and policies to maintain a cohesive environment, in which all members of the school community can participate in the learning programs and life of a school free of racism.

Multicultural Education Policy

Teachers address the specific learning and wellbeing needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds through their teaching and learning programs. Principals are responsible for ensuring that school policies, programs and practices respond to the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of the school community, and provide opportunities that enable all students to achieve equitable education and social outcomes.

Aurora College is committed to providing opportunities that enable all students to achieve equitable education and social outcomes and participate successfully in our culturally diverse society. Throughout 2020, the school continued the development of teaching and learning programs focused on developing the knowledge, skills and values for participation as active citizens in the 21st century. Our teachers ensured that *Learning across the curriculum* areas, including *Difference and diversity* and *Intercultural understanding* are embedded in units of learning.

Congratulations to the Aurora College community – winner of the Best Use of Technology Award at the 2020 Australian Education Awards

