

KATHERINE HIGH SCHOOL

EVERY PERSON, EVERY OPPORTUNITY



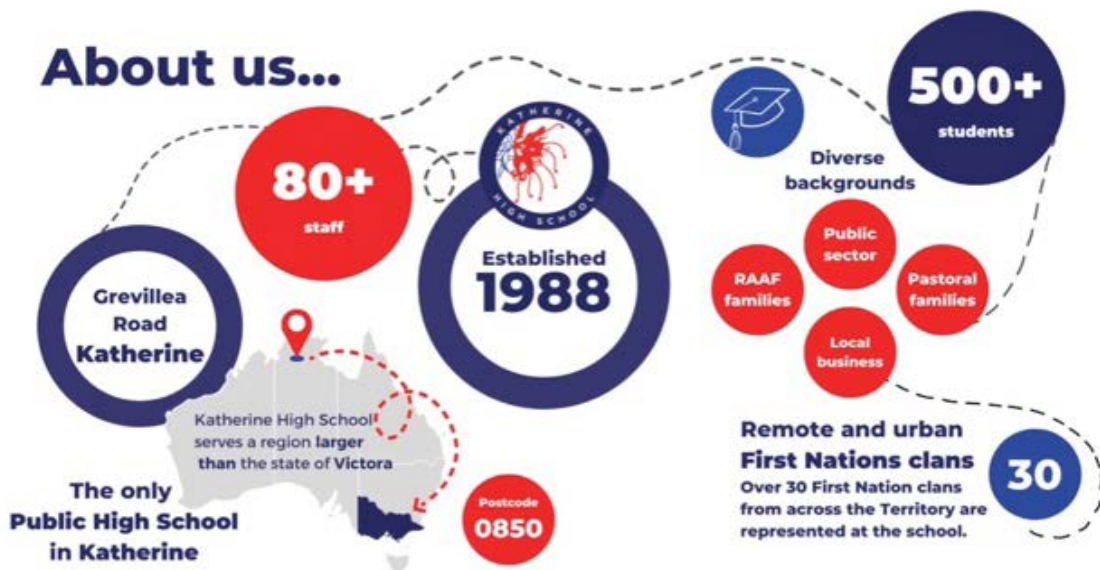
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Katherine High School aims to be a future-focused school where every person is provided every opportunity to learn and work in a supportive educational environment. The school continues to work towards positively developing the learner experience and its operational philosophy.

Sixty percent of students at Katherine High School are in the lowest quartile of the ICSEA scale. Eighty percent are in the bottom half. Sixty-eight percent of students are Aboriginal with 31 traditional first languages spoken including four dialects of Kriol. The school currently has more than 600 enrolments.

Katherine is located approximately 315km south of Darwin and caters for students from Year 7 to 12. The school serves a region larger than the

Figure 1 Katherine High School



Taken from Katherine High School website, 2018. <https://Katherinehighschool.com.au/our-school/aboutus/>

state of Victoria and values the contributions and understandings that are developed through embracing a wide range of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. The school values of inclusion, respect, effort, and resilience are clearly defined for staff and students and underpin the way staff aim to approach all aspects of school life.

Challenges

Figure 2: Building the Narrative of Katherine High School



Developed by Nick Lovering (Principal) and Conor Fennell (Assistant Principal), Katherine High School. Unpublished.

Equity and identity of First Nations students

While understanding what equity means, Katherine High School needs to consider that it does not have a full understanding of how to meet its almost 70% of Aboriginal students' needs. This is a critical and missing ingredient in its current strategy. The school knows that it needs to further its understanding of equity in context, and face the challenge of becoming more familiar with students' wealth of knowledge, skills, values, and beliefs so that students' success is not determined solely by their academic achievement, but also by their development as whole persons. A key concern will be fully embracing students' cultural identity and allowing them to thrive. There is an awareness of the need to value and to incorporate First Nations languages, but at this stage the school is unsure of its next steps.

Members of the leadership team want Katherine High School to be an exemplar of being purpose driven by providing ethical leadership that challenges the traditional notion of measuring students' output based primarily on the completion of university studies and students' ability to compete as individuals in the open market. While school personnel at Katherine High School have already worked with people outside of the school, such as local Aboriginal elders and traditional owners, to support Aboriginal student success, more remains to be done. The school wants to challenge the traditional notion of leadership as it relates to First Nations students, and further consider how it might provide opportunities for students to adopt leadership roles in the school and in the future.

Building cultural capability

In response to the student demographic, Katherine High School is seeking to build cultural capabilities of its staff. A deeper understanding of the bias within the current education system is needed to enable First Nations students to successfully share their cultural knowledge. Teachers in the school are building productive relationships with students that are allowing them to engage in deep listening and learning, whilst understanding that there is work to be done on the deep listening part. Staff acknowledge this and appreciate that a cultural shift is required to encourage more collaboration with students.

In order to engage the Aboriginal community, an open forum seeking input from staff and community members as to how to develop cultural capabilities was held recently. The school learnt that it has a great deal to learn, and it was noted that *the longer you're here, the less you know*.

Attaining and retaining staff

In the past, Katherine High School has described itself as being in *crisis mode*, with a survival of the fittest of staff. Teachers and students were focused on considerations such as:

- how to get through from 8.15-2.40pm?
- how to keep yourself to yourself?
- how to scrape through to finish Year 12?
- how to close the office door quickly enough?
- how to do just what I need?

Staff and student retention is a continuing challenge to enable the community to move from surviving to thriving.

Design principles

This case study has been guided by the work of Valerie Hannon and Julie Temperley in their book, *FutureSchool*, published in 2022. What follows is a presentation of three clusters of design principles, and a discussion of how Katherine High School has addressed each of these principles as a means of meeting future needs to guide their evolution.

1. Design principles: Values cluster

The following are design principles that relate to the concept of values. Hannon and Temperley identify five key values that are listed below and summarised in Figure 3.

Purpose driven: *FutureSchools* are themselves focused on the purpose of both individual and collective thriving, and on helping their learners to acquire personal purpose: building their 'why?'

Equity-focused: such schools should work to address inequities and social justice and help young people to do so.

Promoting identity: this principle suggests that each learner's social and culture identity must be nurtured, cultivating a sense of belonging and value.

Strength-based: this principle asserts that the school recognises, celebrates and builds from each (and every) individual's existing assets.

Relevant: this proposes that learning be relevant to the local and global community. 'Work that matters' should be an important feature. (Hannon & Temperley, 2022, p. 30).

Figure 3: Values



Adapted from *FutureSchool* (p. 31) by V. Hannon and J. Temperley, 2022, Routledge.

Purpose driven

The school’s mission is to develop thriving First Nations learners who contribute to the futureproofing of Katherine. Its leading partnership with the Northern Territory School of Distance Education provides targeted curriculum focusing on agility and the skills required to complete the Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training.

The leadership team is clear about its purpose. Members of the team share a collective vision and seek to reflect and improve on their practice. They see themselves as a community school rather than a school for the community.

Equity-focused

It is clearly understood that this is an area for further exploration and action. The School believes this to be a continuing challenge.

Promoting identity

The mission is to make First Nations students proud to be a productive group of First Nations people for the benefit of their own and the Katherine community. Katherine High School is committed to building high trust and quality relationships with its First Nations students and aims to provide them with relevant and meaningful qualifications that support their life chances.

Strength-based

The school is moving away from the need to *catch up* to recognising students’ point of need and their existing strengths.

Relevant

The school aims to teach students that opportunities are made, created, and developed,

and the staff are working to support them towards embracing these opportunities.

1. Design principles: Operational philosophy

The following are design principles that relate to the concept of operational philosophy. Hannon and Temperley identify four key philosophies that are listed below and summarised in Figure 4.

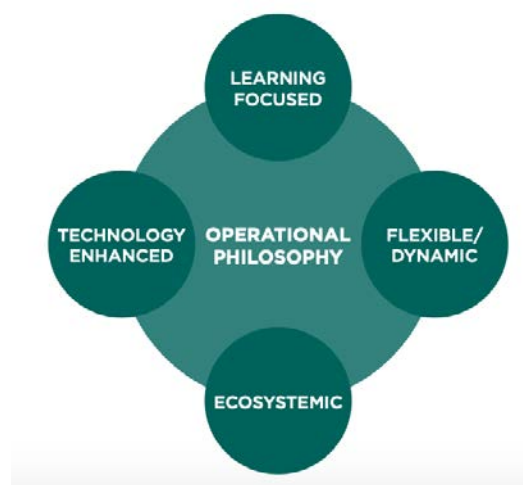
Learning focused: learning is at the heart. Understanding how learning happens, the very best in research on learning sciences, underpin developments. This applies to the adult learning (of all staff) too. This is a critically important principle – and it is not axiomatic by any means in all schools.

Flexible/dynamic: the school should flexibly iterate different modes of teaching and learning to meet the evolving needs of learners and the wider world. In an age of disruption this is an imperative – as schools found out in 2020.

Technology enhanced: *FutureSchools* use technology extensively and responsibly to liberate learning, amplify effective and diverse modalities, and to enable both personalization and collaboration.

Ecosystemic: this principle asserts the school should be seriously porous with many active partners in organizing learning. It will be deeply connected to its local community, and to the global community through technology, to provide richer learning experiences and diverse pathways for learners. (Hannon & Temperley, 2022, p. 31).

Figure 4: Operational Philosophy



Adapted from *FutureSchool* (p. 32) by V. Hannon and J. Temperley, 2022, Routledge.

Learning focused

Quality learning and teaching are the school's core business. Staff at Katherine State High work hard to provide teaching strategies that allow different perspectives to be expressed. The leadership team understands that teachers' professional identity is aligned with who they are as people. Therefore, the professional development on offer is both relevant and personal. Moreover, staff learning draws on best practice coaching and mentoring.

Prior to 2021, Katherine High School was consumed with behavior management conversations. To reduce these, and to increase learning conversations, a systematic School Wide Instructional Model (SWIM) which placed the student at the centre of the learning experience and increased learning dialogue amongst staff and students was introduced. Teachers, including some leaders, were not able to have these conversations, with some having lost their sense of vocation and the sacredness of the job. To enable them to be flexible and dynamic with these discussions, a wellbeing, observation, coaching, and mentoring strategy was successfully implemented that enhanced professional learning and the conduct of meaningful conversations.

Figure 5: School wide instructional model



Developed by Katherine High School, School Wide Instructional Model, Katherine High School Induction Manual, 2022. Unpublished.

Flexible/dynamic

The school has implemented an instructional model based on Rosenshine's (2012) *10 Principles of Instruction*. It is also using Lemov's *Teach like a Champion* in tandem with Knight's *Playbooks* to coach each other in the use of these strategies. The leadership team has developed a reading group centred around the *Teach Like a Champion* strategies, with a focus on how these could be implemented in the school via the use of an instructional playbook that allows for collaborative exchange and reflective practice. This will further the ability to create a desired future for the school.

Technology enhanced

Katherine High School has invested in the IRIS Connect video-based professional learning platform. This will be used throughout instructional observations based on the School Wide Instructional Model and Behaviour Management System to record teachers' use of these systems and provide real time feedback. This will liberate teachers' professional learning and encourage ownership in their classrooms and will be facilitated by a trained coach and mentor. This further encourages a personalised professional learning process in the school and increases collaboration between colleagues.

Ecosystemic

Katherine High School provides *every person, every opportunity*. This involves stakeholders building cultural responsiveness through development activities in partnership with local organisations to address inequities affecting students, and contextualising pedagogies to build cultural safety.

1. Design principles: Learner experience cluster

The following are design principles that relate to the learning experience cluster. Hannon and Temperley identify five key learning experiences that are listed below and summarised in Figure 6.

Personalised: the learner's experience relates to her personal needs, passions and development. These are at the centre: not the institution, the teacher or external bodies of knowledge.

Integrated: the learner experiences meaning through learning that transcends siloes, building relevant connections both within and between disciplines.

Inclusive: the culture is experienced as respectful and welcoming.

Relational: individuals are known, good relationships are the basis for deep learning. Collaboration is the norm.

Empowering: *FutureSchools* build and leverage learner agency, providing opportunities for learners to take increasing responsibility and ownership over their learning. (Hannon & Temperley, 2022, p. 32)

Figure 6: Learner Experience



Adapted from *FutureSchool* (p. 33) by V. Hannon and J. Temperley, 2022, Routledge.

Personalised

Learning is the school’s core business: it is at the heart of everything that is done. With learners and learning conversations placed at the centre of the learning experience, the school has been able to teach students related to their personal needs, passion, and development. Another foundation for good learning is encouraging and supporting students’ responsibility and ownership of their own actions. This was assisted by the development of a classroom management system which encourages teachers use of positive and supportive classroom management strategies that further encouraged the development of positive student relationships. This ensures students are explicitly taught how to best manage and improve their behaviour.

Integrated

The development of a Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics (STEAM) centre of excellence was prioritised, currently undergoing a seven-million-dollar upgrade. This will see students integrating and transferring design processes and principles across disciplines and building good relationships with peers and staff across the school.

Figure 7: Katherine High’s School Positive Behaviour and Values Model



Developed by Katherine High School, Positive Behaviour Values and Expectations, KHS Positive Culture Policy, 2022. Unpublished.

Inclusive

Katherine High School continues to build its practice around this critical principle.

Relational

There is a strong emphasis on teacher collaboration to support teachers in their preparation as well as building a sense of belonging and collegiality. The key premise of the behaviour management system is to build individual relationships with students which may involve getting to know students both inside and beyond the school.

Empowering

The school focuses on maximising learning conversations. The classroom management system enables students to develop autonomy in their choices and furthers personal responsibility for their learning.

The next part of this case study considers archetypes, which are examples or models of practice.

Figure 8: Archetypes



From *FutureSchool* by V. Hannon and J. Temperley (p. 69), 2022, Routledge. Reprinted with permission.

Archetypes

FutureSchool outlines six areas where schools have explicitly and intentionally determined to make a difference to the future - and are employing the design principles to help them do it. According to Hannon and Temperley (2022), there are six archetypes. These are presented in Figure 8. It is important to realise that not all schools will fit into these archetypes, nor is it expected.

Two archetypes emerge clearly from the work of Katherine High School. These are a focus on human identity and fostering ethical leadership.

Our human identity

Katherine High School nurtures a sense of personal identity in its First Nations learners. The school wants them to be proud of their incredibly special place in humanity, being one of the oldest living cultures on earth, and to be systematic in developing their confidence to share this personal identity.

Growing ethical leadership

The leadership team questions whether its First Nations students need a new kind of leadership, or if their place as the first leaders in Australia needs to be made more purposeful. This enhanced and moderately alternative notion of ethical leadership wraps around Australia as a truly democratic nation that includes First Nations peoples. There is a focus on developing the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and beliefs for students to fill this leadership deficit and realise that their leadership is already top of the class.

Celebrations

Katherine High School's *Project 2024* challenge is to increase attendance with the target being simple; pull every lever, meet every family, develop personal learning plans, check in, provide cultural safety, understand the landscape and, in wrapping around, these students will complete their Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training. Greenshoots are starting to emerge, with a foundation for the future being laid.

Learning conversations, attendance and completion

Learning conversations are becoming the norm. In 12 months, there has been reduced impacting behaviours. Students are now sharing new aspirations and there has been an increase in Aboriginal students' attendance. Year 11 attendance has increased by 3.7%. Across Year 11 and 12 it is 6% higher for Aboriginal students than in years 9 and 10, meaning the messages about the benefits of completing school are reaching the target audience. In Year 10 there is a huge opportunity with 114 students enrolled. The largest cohort of students to graduate from Katherine High School is 66.

Team collaboration

Phase 1 of the Team Collaboration Strategy aimed at creating a work environment where staff are engaged and retained has been completed.

Additional planning and preparation time is provided to enable teachers to address the diversity of student starting points. Support is needed to enable staff to value the experience of living and working in a remote outback community.

A shift is demonstrated in the following responses from the school survey:

- *This school cares about my wellbeing* rose from 56% to 76% agreement.
- *I feel safe at this school* rose from 24% to 85%.
- *I have access to appropriate professional development to develop my knowledge and skills to effectively teach my students* rose from 59% to 72% agreement.

Reflections from the school – 3 actions that are making the biggest difference!

1. Clear, consistent expectations for all students and staff.
2. Needs analysis to target specific challenges.
3. Wrap around support for both staff and students.

Next steps

Katherine High School now seeks to better understand deep two-way learning. This involves engaging with community elders and designing programs where students can share their own cultural knowledge in parallel with the Australian Curriculum. This will involve structured “Learning on Country” programs, exchange programs with urban schools from the eastern Australian states, and a school wide commitment to embracing cultural heritage of all our students.

Katherine High School is also pursuing options to fund a family learning model whereby identified students and families will be given access to resources within and beyond the school to build cultural capability and crucial resilience skills so that students can access a range of schooling options.

Katherine High also acknowledges the need to continually promote the relevance of schooling, diverging from the deficit narrative of quantitative

testing, and demystifying further learning pathways for First Nation students so that they develop an inner confidence to exceed their potential, and place themselves in leadership positions now and in the future.

With sincere thanks to Nick Lovering, Principal, Menzies School Leadership fellow 2022; and Conor Fennell, Assistant Principal (Expert Workforce), Home Economics teacher, Teaching in the Territory regional secondary teacher excellence award winner 2022, Katherine High School, Katherine, Northern Territory, Australia.

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