

**Creating a Climate in which Students Can Flourish:
A Whole School Intercultural Approach**

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Abstract

This article reports part of an ongoing process that is taking place at one high school. With the vision of an inclusive school in which all students could flourish, the school deliberately set out to develop a culture in which the students would feel welcome, connected and have a sense of belonging. This article focuses on, first, how the school, with a culturally-diverse student population, implemented a whole school intercultural approach aimed at improving students' views of the school climate and, second, the impact that this had on students' perceptions of the school climate and their self-reports of wellbeing, resilience and identity. These results indicated that, at the end of the 18 month period, students' perceptions of the school climate were statistically significantly higher for four of the six school climate scales. Further, students' scored statistically higher in terms of their wellbeing, resilience, self-anchoring and moral identity.

Key words: inclusion; intercultural; school climate; student feedback; What's Happening In This School? (WHITS); whole school approach

The study reported in this article was carried out in a high school located in a lower-socio economic suburb of Perth, Western Australia. The student population, at the time of the study, was made up of 54 different nationalities, reflecting a wide range of languages and cultures from across the globe. Whilst these demographics added to the diversity of the school, there were also changes in government policy which impacted on the school. These included the federal immigration policies related to visas allowing Australian employers to temporarily employ skilled overseas workers and humanitarian visas (both of which increased the number of students enrolled at the school who were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds) and the raising of the school leaving age (resulting in an influx of students who were marginalised through their disengagement with secondary schooling).

Given the increasing diversity in the student population, and the fact that the school was staffed by mostly white middle-class teachers, the school principal (first author) became aware of the need to establish the processes needed to develop a school climate in which the students would feel welcome at the school regardless of their background or difference. The whole school intercultural approach involved, as a first step, deliberately improving teachers' intercultural competence and understanding of living with poverty. The approach involved the transformational processes that would bring the members of the school together and encourage the necessary change. As part of the process, the school used self-assessment audits and feedback from students to engage in a reflective process to challenge norms. The process included a collective exercise to re-vision the culture of the school. Teachers then created lines of action to enact the new vision, working together towards improvement.

Background

School Climate

A school's culture has been referred to as a school's ethos or climate and it is generally agreed that it involves a group phenomenon based on the quality and character of school life and patterns of people's experiences (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli & Pickeral, 2009). For the purpose of this study, school climate refers to the quality and character of school life, including the norms, values and expectations that a school accepts and promotes (Brookover, 1985). These, in turn, create an environment that dictates whether the staff, students and parents feel safe (socially, emotionally or physically), welcomed and respected.

Positive school climates have been found to be related to increased student engagement (Brady, 2006) and improved academic achievement (Brookover, Schweitser, Schneider, Beady, Flood & Wisenbaker, 1978; Esposito, 1999; Hoy & Hannum, 1997; MacNeil, Prater & Busch, 2009). In addition, past research has indicated that the school climate perceived by adolescents is a strong predictor of emotional and behavioural outcomes (Esposito, 1999; Kuperminc, Leadbeater, & Blatt, 1997; Loukas & Robinson, 2004; Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2000; Wang, Selman, Dishion & Stormshak, 2010). Research evidence supports the notion that changes in the school climate, particularly in terms of improved teacher–student relationships and improved discipline and order, can reduce behaviour problems (Gottfredson, 1989; Wang, Selman, Dishion & Stormshak, 2010) and help to create a safe school (Gottfredson, 1989; Johnson & Templeton, 1999; Sherman, Gottfredson, MacKeenzie, Eck, Reuter & Bushway, 1997).

Whole-School Intercultural Approach

The culture of a school transmits specific socio-cultural values (usually those of the dominant group). By not recognising and valuing cultural differences, educational practices can maintain, stress, and legitimize social inequalities for students from non-dominant or vulnerable sectors of society (Aguado, Ballesteros & Malik, 2003, Bernstein, 1996; Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). As a result, many students can be denied the opportunity of achieving the same educational benefits as their peers from the majority culture. In this respect, schools can promote academic success for students in the dominant group, while presenting barriers to students from non-dominant groups.

The term intercultural, rather than multicultural, conveys more accurately the idea of exchange, communication and negotiation between different interacting cultural groups. The intercultural approach, implemented at the school, assumes that cultural differences exist in all school contexts, rather than only when groups are explicitly defined according to their ethnic or national origins. The intercultural approach used at the school did not involve the implementation of specific programmes for culturally-diverse groups, but rather it entailed a wider perspective that affected all dimensions and participants in the education process. Further, it considered the culture of inclusion to be something deliberately sought after and worked upon, as recommended by Kugelmass (2006). The intercultural approach was underpinned by two theoretical models:

- Critical pedagogy theory which emphasises the need to promote collective advancement and structural equity in a multicultural society (e.g. Breunig, 2005; Smith, 2009).
- Constructivist model in which culture plays an important role in the development of psychological functions (e.g. Zozakiewicz & Rodriguez, 2007).

An important component of the intercultural approach was to develop teachers' intercultural competence. Many definitions and frameworks have been used to conceptualise intercultural competence. For the purpose of this study, we drew on Deardorff's (2008) definition of intercultural competence as "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations, based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes". While the goal at this school was to develop a greater sense of belonging, the critically important role of the explicit development of intercultural competence ought not be underestimated. According to UNESCO (2013, p. 5 and 8), the development of intercultural competences, are on a par with literacy and numeracy and, according to Bertelsmann Foundation (2006, p. 4), the key to "ensuring humanity's ability to experience peaceful coexistence at both the local and global level". By developing the ability to effectively communicate in intercultural situations, including school settings, the ultimate goal of peaceful coexistence becomes a possibility (Deardorff, 2009).

The notion of building a positive school climate in which all students could flourish was a central aim of the principal of the school. Importantly, the changes made needed to be sustainable and to build capacity in the teachers so that they did not unwittingly (or wittingly) perpetuate inequity and were better able to promote social justice and the rights of all students.

The School

The school was situated in a lower socio-economic area of metropolitan Perth, Western Australia and had an enrolment of 323 students; of whom 10 per cent were Aboriginal and 42 per cent were from a non-English speaking background. In addition to these characteristics, the school's Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage

(ACARA, 2014) value was at the lower end of 900 (with 1000 being considered average), with 75 per cent of students being in the bottom quartile and 2 per cent in the top quartile.

The Approach

To provide a more sustainable model of school improvement, the programme involved all students and teachers at the school. One of the driving forces of the change was the development of professional learning groups (described below) in which teachers were able to reflect on their beliefs and what was happening at the school (Fullan, 2007). Through professional learning groups, teachers were involved in a process of reflection, planning, acting and reviewing. This article describes how this school, by working collaboratively and using data (provided largely by students) teachers were able to reflect deeply on what was happening at the school, to make plans for lines of action, to be supported as they made changes, and to review these changes in light of collective action. These are described in terms of providing a shared understanding, development of a professional learning community and reflection and evidence-based decision making.

Shared understanding: Inclusion and intercultural competence

As a starting point, the principal sought to build staff understanding of the changing student demographics at the school. To achieve this, staff undertook two professional development programmes: *Understanding Poverty* (based on the framework established by Ruby Payne, 2005), to provide insights into the factors which young people experience as a result of their exposure to poverty; and *Difference Differently* (Together for Humanity, 2013), to improve the intercultural competences of teachers. This professional learning was followed by a day in which teachers worked together to reflect on their values and beliefs with respect to their competences to help them to embed the competences into practice and to establish a shared understanding of the professional development. These two professional learning opportunities provided the staff with insights into the students' backgrounds and helped them empathise more with the social conditions which framed each student's life.

It was expected that key messages from these professional development programmes would become a part of every teacher's interactions with students. For example, one key message was the use of 'adult voice' in dealing with young people which aligned perfectly to the school's young adult ethos. Therefore, the expectation of teachers in speaking with students would at all times be from a respectful adult voice which indicated students' status as young adults. Another key learning for all staff was to ensure sustained high expectations of student achievement. That is, teachers should not have lower academic expectations for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Development of a Professional Learning Community

To create structures that would allow the development of a shared commitment to intercultural and inclusive principles, it was important to establish a professional learning community (PLC). To facilitate the establishment of the PLC, a full day of professional development was devoted to establishing and understanding of the concept of a professional learning community. Although, professional readings were key to helping teachers to understand the theory, strategies were also employed to give the teachers a broader understanding of the concept in practice. The process of implementing a PLC was modelled through a range of instructional strategies, framed to continue to support teachers' learning. For example, professional readings were studied collectively through the use of a 'jigsaw'

activity. As such, teachers were also being exposed to instructional strategies which they could implement in their classrooms to build on inclusivity in an intercultural environment.

During the professional development day, several teachers presented sessions to their colleagues, thus modelling supportive and shared leadership. In addition, the staff collaborated in groups, sharing and articulating their expectations of a young adult learning environment resulting in eight 'We Believe' statements around these expectations. The Principal reflected on the day:

This process laid the foundations for building teacher capacity to work as a professional learning community. Although the attributes of a professional learning community were not explicitly defined, the processes and structures heralded a new way forward; that staff would be engaged with moving the school forward through collaboration and participation in decision making.

One essential element of developing the PLC was the need to ensure that a 'safe and accountable' learning environment was established for staff. This involved modelling strategies to ensure that all staff had a voice and, hence, felt 'safe' with the contributions that they made. In addition, there was the need to develop accountable practices, that is, staff were required to report back on issues to the rest of their colleagues. Ensuring that this strategy was understood by the teachers was a critical aspect in establishing a PLC and ensuring there was support for students in the classroom.

Reflection and Evidence-Based Decision Making

Evidence-based decision making was introduced concurrently across the school. Developing staff capacity to look at and interpret data and to reflect deeply on the information was an important step in terms of making informed decisions. This was to become a central platform of the cultural reform. The data included a range of evidence, such as individual and whole of school performance data, self-assessment audits and, importantly, feedback from students with respect to an inclusive school. The latter two are described below.

Self-Assessment Audits

Audits were developed to assess the extent to which processes within the school ensured an inclusive school environment that was culturally sensitive. A review of literature was made to identify suitable audits. Although other school culture audits were available (see for example Bustamante, 2009 and Bustamante and Nelson, 2007), these were more related to the organisational culture as opposed to the structures that would promote inclusion. One audit, developed by the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (VFST, 2004) to examine school readiness for the inclusion of refugees, was identified as suitable for the purpose of our approach. The audits were suited to the Australian context and focused on a range of aspects within the school. The VFST audits were modified to provide an audit that was suited to the Western Australian context and that schools could use to assess areas of strengths and weaknesses with respect to the inclusion of students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds (as opposed to just refugee students). The self-assessment audits focused on five aspects of the school, these being, school policies and practices, school curriculum and programmes, school organisation and environment, partnerships with parents and partnerships with agencies. Further, the audits provided a range

of ideas about how to address shortfalls and interventions to help with areas of weakness, such as language acquisition, school policy, school-family links, and assessment and evaluation practices.

During the use of the audits, a transformative learning approach was used, in which critical self-reflection was an important component. As the staff worked together to develop lines of actions, they drew on critical theory to examine the structures within the school and how these might be changed to ensure a more socially just environment. The phase of the study reported in this article, focused on examining the structures of the school as an institution (as opposed to the curriculum and teaching methods), including the school policies, organisation and environment. An example of the types of structures considered as the teachers reflected on the school policies was when one group considered the extent to which parents were encouraged to be part of the education process. It was highlighted, during this process, that some of the parents relied on their child to translate the parent teacher interviews. This created problems on several levels; the parents were not only disempowered but were also not sure whether their children were being honest. Engaging in reflection on various aspects of the school in this way, gave teachers insights into the dominant ways of knowing that were in place.

Student Feedback

The What's Happening In This School? (WHITS) questionnaire, developed by Aldridge and Ala'i (2013), was used to collect feedback from students' about their perceptions of the extent to which the school climate was inclusive. Details regarding the development of the WHITS, the justification of the scales selected and the reliability and validity of the instrument have been previously published (see Aldridge & Ala'i, 2013). The identification of the dimensions to be included in the WHITS involved a review of literature that helped to distil dimensions that have been shown to be important to a positive and inclusive school climate. The dimensions included, Teacher Support, Peer Connectedness, School Connectedness, Affirming Diversity, Rule Clarity and Reporting, and Seeking Help.

The first two dimensions, Teacher Support and Peer Connectedness, provide an indication of the extent to which students were socially connected to members of the school community. Social capital involves features related to the cohesiveness of groups including strong social bonds that provide the foundations for social connectedness (Bourdieu, 1984; Dessel, 2010, Kawachi & Berkman, 2000; Wilkinson, 1996). Increased social connectedness can lead to reduced social conflict and victimisation and increased tolerance of diverse cultures (Goldbaum, Craig, Pepler & Connolly, 2003; Kilian, Fish & Maniago, 2007; Noonan, 2005; Welsh, 2000).

The third dimension, School Connectedness, drew on the work of Rowe and Stewart (2009) and Rowe, Stewart and Patterson (2007) and examines student's sense of belonging within the school environment. Research indicates that students' sense of belonging promotes mental health and psychosocial wellbeing (Bond, Butler, Thomas, Carlin, Glover, Bowes & Patton, 2007) and is an important outcome of an inclusive school. The school connectedness scale was included to assess the extent to which students' have a sense of belonging and are part of the school community.

The fourth dimension, Affirming Diversity, was used to determine the degree to which the school embraces or welcomes diversity. This dimension drew on the notion that ethnically and racially diverse students (and their families) have a right to be recognised, respected and educated for who they are, rather than being required to conform to Eurocentric norms (Gay, 2013). As a microcosm of society, schools provide numerous opportunities for students to learn about differences, conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence (Dessel, 2010).

However, past research indicates that prolonged contact between diverse groups and the celebration of diversity (such as Harmony Day) are not sufficient to alleviate prejudice and break down barriers. Therefore, the affirming diversity dimension sought to determine whether students with different cultural values perceived themselves and their experiences to be valued.

Two important aspects of an inclusive school, is the clarity of the rules and the support mechanisms in place for reporting and seeking help. Students' perception of their safety is an important aspect of the school culture (Cohen et al., 2009; Teddlie and Reynolds, 2000). Clear rules and order provide students with guidelines about interpersonal conduct and what is considered to be acceptable behaviour (Hernandez & Seem, 2004; Wang, et al., 2010). Therefore two dimensions, Rule Clarity and Reporting and Seeking Help, were also included.

A list of the items included in each of these scales is provided in the appendix. Also included in the appendix are the factor loadings, internal consistency reliability and ability to differentiate schools for a sample 1876 students in 8 schools.

The professional learning community structure (described in the previous section) was used specifically in the analysis of the audits and student feedback. Teachers nominated themselves into groups that were aligned with specific aspects of the data to critique the school performance and to implement new strategies. During a professional development day, the staff was required to reflect deeply on the feedback that was provided by students, to discuss the implications for practice and to plan lines of action. Of this process, the principal said:

What was evident to me was the need to build teacher capacity in the area of evidence-based decision making to identify areas that needed improvement which would inform strategies to be implemented.

Initially this was quite a challenge as there appeared to be an individualised process of teachers reflecting on their students' performance. I saw the challenge of moving the staff from this individualised way of operating to one of collective inquiry; one in which they could share personal practice with others and reduce the feeling of isolation. I knew that a professional learning community would provide the impetus for this change.

As time progressed the PLC was used in responding to their collective performance, in establishing plans which linked explicitly to the school plan and in responding to the next phase of planning for the school. The membership of these groups was not set; they changed according to the context of planning, the role of the teacher and, at times, the specific interest of the staff member. The PLC provided for continuous learning for staff in a range of contexts. In this way, the whole of school approach was systematically aligned with a coherent process to bring about cultural reform within the school. As the Principal noted:

This was one of my most complex leadership challenges. The school had very experienced teachers with outstanding curriculum knowledge, however, the policy shifts required an adaptation to a new way of being. Therefore, moving the school forward from a structure which was essentially individualized to a collaborative model of collegiate support required a delicate process over time. During this period, I noticed the sense of empowerment of teachers emerge, not only around their own spheres of influence but in actively committing to the expectations which had been presented to them. The teachers were

responding to whole of school data whether it was their learning area performance or whole of school performance or feedback from students. Ultimately, it was the students who benefited through improved academic results and an improved school climate which they had indirectly influenced through their feedback.

Further, one of the teachers said:

The majority of teachers at our school have been here for years and are very experienced. We believe we have kept up with the many changes in curriculum and have successfully implemented them in all learning areas. Previously, this was done largely in learning areas which had between two and five teachers. When we started to focus on whole of school data during staff meetings and PD days, it was not what we were used to. However, we got on pretty well and we enjoyed sharing observations and strategies in groups with teachers from different learning areas. We found we were seeing our role as an integral part of a whole school team instead of a small part of it. Even our perspective of the students changed in terms of their whole learning program rather than as simply students in our own classes. It was refreshing to be involved in forging changes rather than just responding to them.

Although this study is ongoing, after the first 18 months, student feedback was gathered for a second time. This feedback was compared to that provided by students before the start of the changes to examine whether there were differences in students' perceptions of the school climate and their outcomes (wellbeing, resilience and identity). These changes are described below.

Changes in School Climate and Student Outcomes

Participants included all year 11 students who volunteered to be involved in the collection of the baseline data and those who participated in the follow-up 18 months later (as year 12 students). This provided a sample of 122 students. Two instruments were used - the What Is Happening In This School? (WHITS) survey, to assess students' perceptions of the school climate and the Student Agency Scale (SAS), to assess students' wellbeing, resilience and self-anchoring, and moral identity.

The six dimensions of the WHITS, described earlier, each included eight items or statements, providing a total of 42 items. The items or statements were responded to using a five-point frequency response scale of *Almost Always*, *Often*, *Sometimes*, *Seldom* and *Almost Never*. A list of the items included in the WHITS is provided in Appendix 1, as well as details pertaining to the factor structure, internal consistency reliability for each scale and ability to differentiate between schools for a sample of 1876 students in 8 schools.

The second instrument, the Student Agency Scale (SAS), was used to examine whether making the school more inclusive and improving the intercultural competence might impact on the four outcomes of wellbeing, resilience, self-anchoring and moral identity. The four dimensions of the SAS were measures (modified for this study) that had been previously published and validated. First, the student wellbeing scale was adapted from the WHO-Five Well-Being Index 1998 (World Health Organisation, 1998), and the responses based on how the student had been feeling over the previous two weeks. Second, student resilience was assessed using a modified version of the 15-item Resilience Scale, originally developed by Wagnild and Young (1993) and modified more recently by Neill and Dias (2001). Third, the extent to which students were self-anchoring (or are comfortable in their own skin) was

assessed using a modified version of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992). This scale had been validated in a previous study (Aldridge, Ala'i and Fraser, in press). Finally, the moral identity scale, used as a measure of the extent to which students have a sense of agency, was based on Erikson's (1968) argument that an individual will strive to maintain consistency between conceptions of their moral self and their actions. This scale was also developed previously (Aldridge, Ala'i & Fraser, in press).

Principal axis factor analysis with oblique rotation was used to examine the *a priori* factor structure of the SAS when used with a sample of 1876 students in 8 schools. The criteria used for retaining an item was that it should load more than 0.40 on its own scale and less than 0.40 on any other scale. The results indicate that all items load on their own scale and no other scale for all four SAS scales. Further, the Cronbach alpha reliability, used as an estimate of internal consistency, was higher than 0.80 for all four scales. Given these results, the data collected using the SAS was considered to be suitable for use in the present study.

To examine differences between the two time points (baseline and 18 months follow-up), the average item mean was calculated for each dimension of the WHITS and SAS. The effect sizes were calculated to determine the magnitude of the difference between the pre and post-tests, as recommended by Thompson (2001). Analysis of the data involved a one way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with the school climate dimension and student outcomes as the dependent variables and the time of data collection as the independent variable. Because the multivariate test, using Wilks' lambda criterion, yielded significant differences, the univariate one way ANOVA was interpreted for each dimension. The results for each are reported in Table 1.

Table 1 Average Item Mean, Average Item Standard Deviation and Difference (Effect Size and MANOVA) between Student Scores for Base Line and 18 Months Later

Scale	Average Item Mean		Average Item Standard Deviation		Difference	
	Base Line	18 Months Later	Base Line	18 Months Later	Effect Size	<i>F</i>
<i>School Climate</i>						
Teacher Support	3.77	3.95	0.78	0.74	0.24	6.39*
Peer Connectedness	4.09	4.10	0.79	0.81	0.01	0.05
School Connectedness	3.94	4.04	0.81	0.85	0.12	1.59
Affirming Diversity	3.68	3.88	0.86	0.89	0.23	6.62**
Rule Clarity	4.11	4.23	0.76	0.78	0.16	2.90
Reporting and Seeking Help	3.60	3.83	0.99	0.92	0.24	7.08**
Wellbeing	3.58	3.94	1.00	0.91	0.38	16.73**
Resilience	3.81	4.03	0.83	0.75	0.28	8.75**
Self-anchoring	3.76	4.06	1.06	0.89	0.31	11.71**
Moral Identity	3.67	3.90	0.85	0.79	0.28	9.97**

N= 221 students for the baseline and 18 months later

***p*<0.01 **p*<0.05

For all dimensions, the mean showed an improvement in both school climate and outcome scores. For three of the school climate dimensions, there were statistically

significant improvements in student scores, these being, Teacher Support ($p < 0.05$, effect size = 0.24 standard deviations), Affirming Diversity ($p < 0.01$, effect size = 0.23 standard deviations) and Reporting and Seeking Help ($p < 0.01$, effect size = 0.24 standard deviations). Although these effect sizes can be considered small, it is interesting to note that there was almost no change for both Peer Connectedness and School Connected. For the Peer Connectedness scale, this could be related to the already-high perceptions, thereby creating a ceiling affect. However, this could also be a reflection of the efforts of the school, largely to do with the structures and policies of the school, made in response to the initial audits and students' feedback. Further, the work made by teachers in terms of improving their intercultural competence and knowledge of poverty is likely to have improved students' perceptions of the three scales that showed statistically significant improvement.

There also were statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) improvements in students' scores for Wellbeing ($p < 0.01$, effect size = 0.38), Resilience ($p < 0.01$, effect size = 0.28), Self-anchoring ($p < 0.01$, effect size = 0.31) and Moral Identity ($p < 0.01$, effect size = 0.28). Again, it is of note that, although the scales of the SAS changed, the measures of Peer Connectedness and School Connectedness did not. Notwithstanding the already high scores for the Peer Connectedness scale, this finding might provide an indication of the importance of the teachers and school structures (as opposed to the more informal support of peers and diffuse notion of connectedness) as part of a whole school approach.

Conclusion

The overarching aim of the study was to examine whether a whole school intercultural approach would provide a more inclusive school climate and, in turn, improve students' wellbeing, resilience, self-anchoring and moral identity. The development of the intercultural approach involved not only access to professional development and structures which allowed the sharing of skills and understanding necessary for staff to be able to interact, support and negotiate between different cultural groups, but also provided opportunities for activities and processes necessary to bring about the transformational changes required. The improvements in school climate were achieved through: ongoing reflection at all staff gatherings by connecting staff to the purpose and vision of the school; sharing practices with colleagues around a table in a trusting and supportive environment; developing strategies for whole of school implementation in response to data; and ensuring that the leadership of the school was shared. These key characteristics align to those of a professional learning community, as outlined by Eaker, DuFour and Burnett (2002).

The notion of reflecting deeply on values and attitudes has been noted as pivotal with respect to making changes. Reflection on action and reflection in action (as described by Schön, 1983, 1987) were both used by the staff. It is, according to Elmore (2000), only through reflection that one begins to question and think differently about one's practices. Our findings suggest that, by examining the actions and processes at the school and by involving critical self-reflection, changes in the school climate took place. These findings are similar to those acknowledged as important in fostering an inclusive school culture with other, successful, school improvement innovations (McMaster, 2013, Schein, 1992).

An important component of the whole school approach was to afford teachers not only the structures and processes to evolve to continue a school's journey forward amidst the ever-changing landscape, but also the time structures needed to make the journey happen. Further, staff were given opportunities to explicitly reconnect with the ethos and purpose of the school, as a means of re-establishing the shared values and vision. In this way, teachers were given time to reflect and connect to the purpose of the school, not only on professional

development days set aside for that purpose, but also at regular times throughout the school term. This aspect, acknowledged in past research as important (see for example, Sweetland, 2008), contributed to the success of the approach.

In an increasingly globalised educational environment, the need for whole school communities to explicitly examine school structures to ensure that diverse student populations have an equal chance of flourishing is of great importance. Monitoring whole school efforts, combined with structures facilitating action and reflection on data go a long way towards empowering staff to work collegially for school improvement. Ongoing capacity building in staff (and students) to deliberately develop intercultural competence helps to build more inclusive school environments and further remove barriers to learning for all students.

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Appendix Factor Analysis Results, Internal Consistency Reliability (Cronbach Alpha Coefficient), and Ability to Differentiate Between Schools (ANOVA Results) for the WHITS

Item	Factor Loadings					
	TS	PC	SC	AD	RC	RSH
Teacher Support (TS) At this school ...						
Teachers know my name.	0.41					
Teachers try to understand my problems.	0.75					
Teachers listen to me.	0.65					
Teachers take an interest in my background.	0.63					
Teachers treat me fairly.	0.52					
Teachers support me when I have problems.	0.79					
Teachers go out of their way to address my needs.	0.75					
Teachers are willing to listen to my problems.	0.77					
Peer Connectedness (SC) At this school ...						
I get along with other students.		0.63				
I belong to a group of friends.		0.73				
I make friends with students from different backgrounds.		0.71				
I socialise with students from different cultures.		0.83				
Students talk to me.		0.86				
Students support me.		0.88				
Students help me.		0.83				
I feel accepted by other students.		0.74				
School Connectedness (SC) At this school ...						
I look forward to coming to school.			0.35			
I enjoy being at school.			0.72			
I feel accepted by adults.			0.74			
I feel included at school.			0.76			
I feel welcome.			0.35			
I am part of a community.			0.81			
I am respected.			0.72			
I am valued.			0.84			
Affirming Diversity (AD) At this school ...						
My cultural background is valued.				0.61		
Days that are important to my culture are recognised.				0.74		
I am encouraged to understand the culture of others.				0.56		
My background is known by students and teachers.				0.66		
I am taught about the background of others.				0.55		
Religious days that are relevant to me are recognised as being important.				0.69		
My culture is understood.				0.86		
My cultural background is respected by students.				0.73		
Rule Clarity (RC) At this school ...						
The rules at this school are clear to me.					0.75	
The school rules help me to feel safe.					0.53	
School rules protect me.					0.47	
The rules make it clear to me that certain behaviours are unacceptable.					0.70	
I understand why the school rules are in place.					0.76	
I know the school rules.					0.70	
I am required to follow rules.					0.65	
Teachers help me to follow rules.					0.42	
Reporting and Seeking Help (RSH) At this school ...						
I am able to report harassment to school officials.						0.67
I am encouraged to report racism.						0.71
I feel confident to talk to a teacher if I am harassed.						0.68
I am encouraged to report bullying.						0.76
I know how to report problems.						0.72
I can report incidents without others finding out.						0.71
It is okay to tell a teacher if I feel unsafe.						0.74
I am able to seek counselling.						0.63
% Variance	33.02	8.92	5.91	5.00	3.64	4.32
Alpha Reliability	0.90	0.88	0.93	0.90	0.89	0.90
ANOVA (η^2)	0.01*	0.05**	0.02**	0.02**	0.02**	0.01**

* $p < 0.01$ ** $p < 0.01$

Factor loadings less than 0.40 have been omitted from the table.

The sample consisted of 1876 students in 8 schools.

The η^2 statistic (which is the ratio of 'between' to 'total' sums of squares) represents the proportion of variance explained by class membership.