

Hammondville Public School:

Using *Tell Them From Me* to improve teaching practices.

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Introduction

This case study looks at how Hammondville Public School has been using its *Tell Them From Me* data. In particular, it focuses on how Hammondville Public School has been using *Tell Them From Me* data to improve teaching practices.

Background

Hammondville Public School is a government primary school located in south west Sydney in the City of Liverpool. It has an enrolment of 446. Five per cent of students identify as Aboriginal and 20 per cent come from a non-English speaking background. Hammondville Public School also has a significant number of students from Australian Defence Force (ADF) families due to its proximity to the Holsworthy military reserve (NSW Department of Education 2014). The school's Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA¹) value is the same as the state average. The school is currently working towards improving its NAPLAN results through the implementation of evidence based programs aimed at improving pedagogy. The attendance rate was 95 per cent in 2015 (My School 2016).

Using *Tell Them From Me*

Hammondville Public School participated in the first and second student snapshot of the pilot survey in 2014 and the first student snapshots in 2015 and 2016. They also completed the teacher survey in 2014. The leadership team at Hammondville finds the surveys easy to run and likes being able to compare school averages with NSW state norms, and the option of getting year-on-year trend data if the survey is completed annually.

Tell Them From Me is an online survey system that assists schools to capture the views of students, teachers and parents. The survey system has been devised by Canadian company, The Learning Bar, under the leadership of Professor Doug Willms. Dr Willms is an expert in education who led the development of questions on student engagement for the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

The surveys have been offered to NSW government schools since 2013/2014 (student and teacher surveys) in pilot form, and to all schools since 2015 (student, teacher and parent surveys). The surveys have been adapted to suit the NSW context.

In 2015, 236,000 students from 1,157 NSW government schools completed the student survey; 14,000 teachers did the teacher survey; and 29,000 parents completed the parent survey.

The student survey data has consistently shown that students at Hammondville are engaged, which has tallied with the existing views held by the school leadership team. The data has highlighted, however, that one particular year group has had some issues, and that these issues have carried over as this year group has moved from one year to the next. The student survey has also indicated that positive behaviour drops off from Year 4 to Year 6, which correlates with another survey the school recently conducted. The most recent 2016 *Tell Them From Me* student survey, however, indicates that there has been an improvement in positive behaviour with Hammondville's results above the state norms. This could reflect Hammondville's work around implementing Positive Behaviour for Learning, undertaken in response to previous *Tell Them From Me* surveys.

¹ ICSEA is a measure of school socio-educational advantage created by ACARA.



The *Tell Them From Me* survey data is disseminated at staff meetings and discussed at the executive level. The data has proved to be particularly useful in relation to the school planning process. The results from the surveys are also presented to parents at P&C meetings where the very fact that it is being shared with parents receives a lot of positive support.

Improving teaching practices

The leadership team at Hammondville Public School has found the results from the teacher survey to be particularly useful and is using this data to improve teaching practices at the school.

Verifying feedback

The teachers at Hammondville are mostly very experienced although an increasing number of early career teachers have been employed in recent years. Hammondville Public School felt the teacher survey provided a useful insight into what teachers were feeling about the school. The data from the teacher survey reflected the sort of items teachers were putting into their individual personal development plans, thereby providing the school leadership team with useful evidence to validate what teachers have been saying in their plans. The results also matched another teacher survey that the school ran in 2014.

Putting strategies in place

Two items that the teacher survey highlighted as issues at Hammondville Public School were: lack of collaborative forms of teacher development; and lack of technology at the school. As a result of the TTFM teacher survey results, Hammondville has decided to participate in *Quality Teaching Rounds*². Hammondville is also increasing access to technology for teachers. Fifty iPads have recently been purchased by the school and five will go into each classroom in line with 21st century learning agendas. It is hoped that this will also assist with STEM priorities.

Informing school planning

The feedback that teachers have provided via the *Tell Them From Me* teacher survey has also assisted with formulating the strategic directions in the school plan. The school plan for 2015-17 has three broad strategic directions: high quality teaching and learning; developing exceptional leaders; and effective community partnerships. The *Tell Them From Me* teacher survey informed the high quality teaching and learning direction in particular. The plan now calls for teachers to be provided with exceptional professional learning (such as *Quality Teaching Rounds*) that allows teachers to refine their pedagogy to the highest level and provides the skills and tools necessary to deliver engaging learning experiences to students to meet the needs of 21st century learners. It also calls for lessons that incorporate the use of technology to better meet the needs of learners.

Reference list

My School 2016, *My School: Hammondville Public School*, viewed 31 March 2016, <https://www.myschool.edu.au/>.

NSW Department of Education 2014, *Hammondville Public School Annual Report 2014*, school plan, report prepared by Hammondville Public School.

² *Quality Teaching Rounds* is a specific type of school-based professional development which provides both the processes and substance to initiate and build professional conversations around classroom practice and teaching