

Merri-bek North Education Plan

Community engagement report July 2023

About the Merri-bek North Education Plan

The Victorian Government recognises the importance of enhancing local education in Merri-bek North and, in 2022, announced the development of a Merri-bek North Education Plan. The plan will address the unique challenges and strengths of the community, students and schools, and deliver education excellence.

There are four schools involved in the Merri-bek North Education Plan: Coburg High School, John Fawkner Secondary College, Glenroy Secondary College and Pascoe Vale Girls Secondary College.

There has been strong community advocacy to strengthen and support improved education outcomes in Merri-bek North. The Plan will build on previous community feedback, as well as direct engagement with school communities, and the wider community.

About the engagement

We had the largest community response of any Education Plan consultation to date. We heard from staff, students, teachers, parents, families, carers and the wider community from the Merri-bek North area from February to May 2023. We did this via an online survey, in individual school and combined school student workshops, and staff workshops. We ran parent/carers and stakeholder meetings and workshops.

The goal of our engagement was to identify the wants and needs of the local community for their local government secondary schools. This report provides a summary of what we heard from the community.

What we wanted to know

- What **opportunities** parents, staff and the community want for students in Merri-bek North
- What is **important when choosing** a secondary school
- How **students like to learn** and what education in Merri-bek North should look like going forward
- What **resources schools need** to help drive success for students and **support teachers** to deliver this.

Engagement snapshot

Online survey (5 April - 9 May)



We received a record 561 responses to the Engage Victoria survey



Social media promotion



Survey support for parents and the community with iPads at pick up times at local primary schools and at the Glenroy Community Festival



1700 information postcards distributed



Engagement with the Merri-bek Community Connectors - a group of local people representing the culturally diverse community

Workshops



Combined student workshop



Combined staff workshop



Tertiary partner workshop



Parent workshop



Community workshop with RISE North



120 students participated across individual school workshops



150 staff participated across individual school workshops

What we heard

Students have strong relationships with their teachers, and appreciate their support. They also told us they enjoy hands on learning opportunities. Staff feel well supported by their colleagues and school leadership and are open to offering new experiences.

The Merri-bek North community is motivated to contribute to the future of secondary schools and see positive education outcomes for students. There was strong consistency between what we heard from staff, student, parents/carers and the wider community across the engagement activities.

Key ideas:

- Top priorities for the Merri-bek North Education Plan to focus on include:
 - A diverse and high quality range of subject offerings and learning opportunities
 - Learning environments that promote wellbeing and inclusivity
- A learning environment that supports wellbeing and inclusion and provides a quality education is most important for local parents/carers when choosing a secondary school.
- Better collaboration across the four Merri-bek North Education Plan schools could improve and broaden opportunities for staff and students.
- Students want more hands-on and real-life learning experiences.

From the survey

Across all cohorts we heard that it is important for students to have access to more hands on learning and real-life experiences. Parents, staff, tertiary partners and the wider community agreed that resilience and adaptability, critical thinking, and self-confidence are key skills for student success.

When it comes to choosing a secondary school, access to a quality education and a safe learning environment is most important. School support for student wellbeing and access to a diverse range of subjects are also highly valued.



Online survey snapshot

- 24% speak a language other than English at home.
- A third had children at a Merri-bek North Education Plan school.
- 43% knew about current and announced school buildings and facilities upgrades for Merri-bek North secondary schools.
- School tours were ranked as the best way to find out more about a school and if it is a good fit for families (31%).



Explanation of emerging themes

Hands on learning: We heard that hands on learning opportunities include experiments, practical classes (like woodwork, textiles, jewellery making, robotics), creative classes, group projects and learning career-oriented skills.

Real-life experiences: We heard people wanted experiences like internships to help build key work skills, deep connections with industry professionals, city experiences, and inter-school collaborations such as performing arts/drama opportunities.



What we heard from the workshops

The workshops provided participants the opportunity to hear other responses, engage in discussion, share thoughts, ask questions and provide feedback.

'Quality education' and a 'learning environment that supports wellbeing and inclusion' were identified by parents in the survey and workshops as key themes when choosing a secondary school. We tested what 'quality education' and a 'learning environment that supports wellbeing and inclusion' means to parents in a workshop.

School staff identified that improved resources, support and collaboration across schools could provide a more diverse range of subjects and improve opportunities for staff and students.

What does 'quality education' look like?

- Every school offers excellence in learning
- Schools provide a diverse range of subjects that are well resourced and supported by teachers
- Students have equal opportunity and access as other government secondary schools such as a diverse range of subjects, extra-curricular activities and diverse and modern facilities.
- Students are supported with individual learning plans

What does a 'learning environment that supports wellbeing and inclusion' look like?

- Inclusive of differing cultures, gender and neurodiversity
- Has strong anti-bullying and wellbeing programs in place
- Teachers are well-resourced and supported to cater to differing student needs.

Explanation of emerging themes

Applied learning involves students engaging in authentic and motivating learning experiences. It is a method of learning where theory and practical skills combine in a real-world context. Students' knowledge grows and expands as they take action to learn, reflect on that action and plan how to do it better next time.

What we heard snapshot: parents and carers told us...

A **more diverse range of subjects and broader curriculum** would give students similar experiences as at other government schools.

More teaching that caters to individual learning needs, and inclusion in all its forms for example, cultural, gender and neurodiversity was important.

Learning opportunities for students that teach **resilience, adaptability and critical thinking** are essential.

Every school should offer a **wider range of extra-curricular activities** such as sports and arts (for example music, dance, drama, drawing, textiles, painting or pottery).

What we heard snapshot: students

From 23 individual ideas on what opportunities are most important to them, **more real-life experiences, different ways of teaching and more excursions** stood out as the priorities.

The reoccurring discussions were based around **project-based learning, group work and applied learning**.

Students told us they are looking to **connect with their peers and wider community** within their education.

Students have **strong relationships with teachers** at their school.

What we heard snapshot: staff

Staff told us that improved **collaboration between schools**, including sharing of **resources, facilities and technology** would help to better meet the needs of students.

Staff want to **enhance their knowledge and communication** around **pathway and career options** to improve student success.

More **professional learning** opportunities, **resource sharing, support and facilities** could assist teachers to meet the learning needs of students.

Staff agree that schools need **deeper engagement with families and the community**.

Better utilising the **existing skills and knowledge of current and future staff** including through class observation and moderation.

Staff are **well supported by their colleagues and school leadership**.

Next steps

Based on these findings, along with analysis of local data and educational expertise, the Merri-bek North Education Plan will be developed to meet the needs of students, staff and families now and into the future. While this work progresses, the four schools will continue to work together in and beyond 2023, to help the success of the Merri-bek North Education Plan.

To stay up to date with the progress of the Merri-bek North Education Plan, please visit www.schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/merri-bek-north-education-plan

Contact us

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