

AMPLIFY:

DESIGNING

BRIGHT

FUTURES

**Communicare Academy
Western Australia**



COMMUNICARE ACADEMY



Application

This study school commenced in 2014 and as such is still considered to be relatively young. It is one of 15 Curriculum and Reengagement in Education (CARE) schools in WA, catering for students who have disengaged from traditional schooling environments and need specialist support. Students often have behavioural and mental health concerns and may have a history of trauma, delinquency and/or learning difficulty. Students at the study school are already disengaged from formal schooling, and are usually withdrawn, with many appearing to shut out those in authority from their lives.

The AMPLIFY team

The challenge to be met was expressed by the Principal, who explained; "Students often shut everyone out and not engage with anyone, as well as opportunities to learn. This is a symptom of their disengagement, where they refuse to be a part of a group, due to limited social skills and a reluctance to be vulnerable."

Three of the seven teaching staff of the school, including the Principal, attended the sequence of professional learning sessions run by the UK Innovation Centre sponsored by AISWA during the mid and latter parts of 2016. Although three of the seven teaching staff attended the AMPLIFY workshops, the innovation was inclusive of all staff, including those in administrative and support positions. The Principal engaged staff in her bi-weekly staff meetings.

Snapshot : Reflections on the process

Data collected as a result of the AMPLIFY process indicated that the aims of building resilience, self-confidence and wellbeing was being fulfilled. The data was collected through two focus groups facilitated by a reporter for all staff at the school. The general observation on the AMPLIFY process was that it was slow at the beginning, but there was a gradual increase in community strength and feeling within the school. Innovations have occurred that have improved resilience, self-confidence and the wellbeing of students, and it is exciting how these innovations interact and support each other in an evolving process.

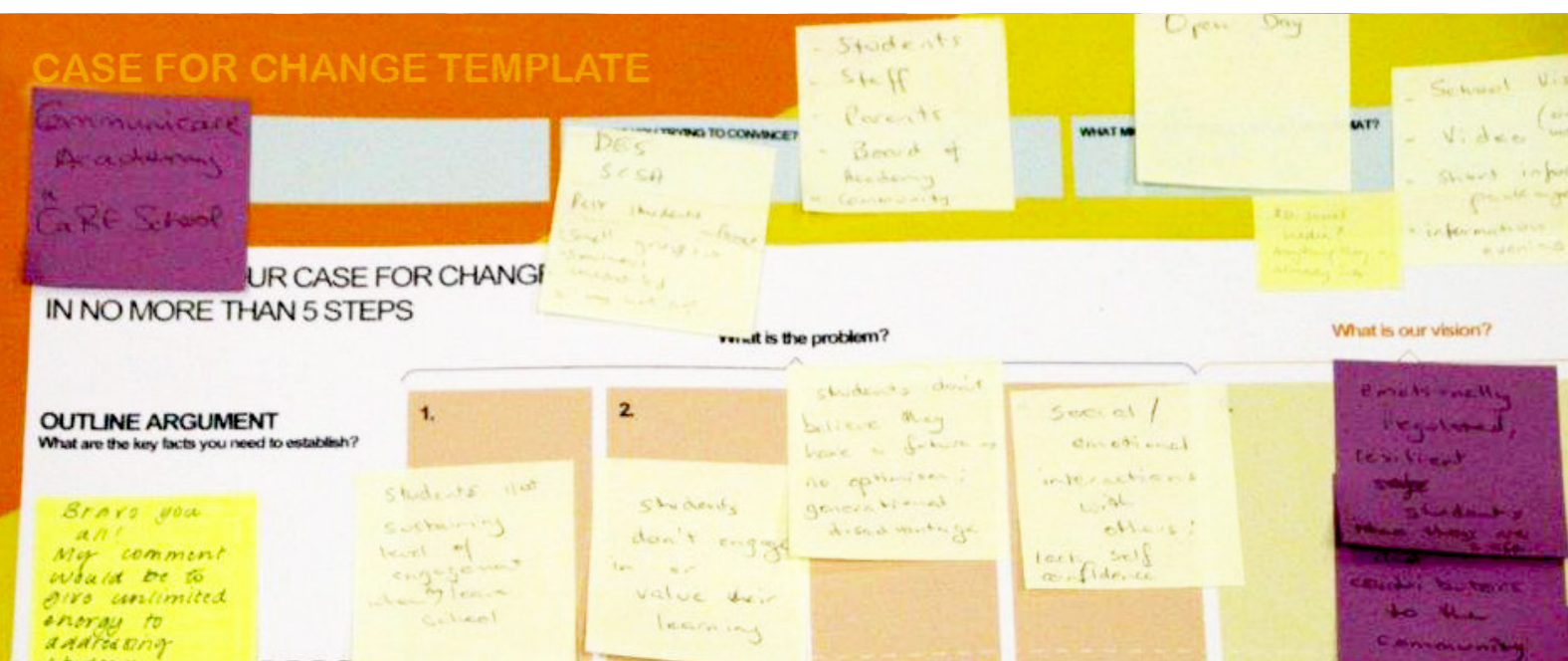
An innovation delivered as a result of the AMPLIFY process was the Wellbeing Day. This was initiated early in 2017, and included games, challenges, programs, and social activities

to strengthen social engagement, while learning strategies to support student wellbeing. Activities included; a welcome breakfast, stalls offering support (from school and community agencies), house team challenges, wellbeing award challenges, a whole school quiz, guest speakers and, a sausage sizzle. The Wellbeing Day was highly successful with students engaging in all activities. Staff and students enjoyed all the events on offer and it provided a great opportunity to boost both morale and relationship in the school community. Due to its great success, Wellbeing Day will now be implemented towards the end of each term.

During the AMPLIFY period, two programs had been implemented at the school to build the students' identity and ability to self-regulate. These are The Rite Journey (TRJ), and MindMatters. TRJ is a rite of passage for adolescents to become responsible, respectful and resilient adults, and has been implemented with Years 7 and 8 at the school. The program deals with physiological changes associated with maturation, targets the understanding of emotions, and builds and supports peer relationships. Sleepovers organised within the program have been found to be especially helpful for students, who often express relief to be away from their home environment. A similar program is being developed for Years 9 to 12 and a program of excursions was supported during the year. MindMatters is a framework for improving mental health and wellbeing for young people, and provides online resources, webinars and mentoring support, with two periods a week being devoted to this program. Plans are in place to bring in a further two programs during 2017.

Conclusion

This study school demonstrates an innovative learning community that works through building a strong relationship with each of its students. Staff show high levels of commitment and motivation in a school that can only be described as extraordinary. The Principal indicated it was important that prospective schools considering innovation know how the AMPLIFY process was slow at the beginning, but as time went on the outcome benefits evolved and interacted in a way that built community and student engagement. The Principal also indicated that the two facilitation focus group sessions were very helpful in engaging staff, and enabled them to consider aspects of their practice -previously thought about - as opportunities for further development.



Developing a more
robust evidence base

Being creative about
common challenges

Helping to
manage risk

Sharing activities
and resources

What is AMPLIFY?

AMPLIFY is an ambitious new initiative from the Association of Independent Schools WA (AISWA) and Innovation Unit Australia.

Our aim is to increase the proportion of Australian students who are deeply engaged in their learning, through the development of teaching, learning and assessment practices that promote engagement.

