

# School plan 2015 – 2017

**Aurora College 8912**



**AURORA**  
**COLLEGE**

# School background 2015 - 2017

## School vision statement

Aurora College aims to provide great teaching and inspired learning in a whole new context, by allowing students in rural and remote communities to connect locally and to learn globally.

Aurora is committed to building relationships which foster in its students, a strong sense of belonging to Aurora and to their home school. Remaining in their local community, Aurora students benefit from the enhanced opportunities that come from belonging to two education communities.

Aurora college is dedicated to creating opportunities that will build each student's capacity to become an autonomous, life-long learner. Aurora College embraces the philosophy of 'personal best', acknowledging that each student's drive towards self-improvement in a curriculum rich in higher-order thinking provides a strong foundation for success in life beyond the school years.

Aurora's vision is to develop students who are not only at ease in the digital world, but who are empowered through their knowledge, skills and creativity to become influential contributors to the knowledge economies of this century.

Finally, the college recognises the importance of developing each student as a 'whole' person. Aurora students have multiple and diverse passions and interests, and it is the desire of the college that students pursue these and also have a happy and balanced social life.

## School context

The establishment of a virtual secondary school was a key deliverable of [Rural and Remote Education – Blueprint for Action](#). Through a range of actions, the Blueprint aims to bridge the gap in educational achievement between rural and remote and metropolitan schools.

Aurora College, the state's first virtual school, commenced classes on Monday 2 February 2015. Our students meet specific criteria, including enrolment in a [rural and remote government school](#) as defined by the MCEETYA Geographical Location Classification.

The college is partially selective, with classes in English, mathematics and science in Years 7 to 10. Years 7 to 10 students are chosen in the same way as students in all other selective classes in NSW government schools. With the home school principal's approval, students enrolled in Year 11 and Year 12 (in 2016) may include those students who have been part of the Year 7 to 10 selective stream. The college enables these students to remain in their local school and community while providing the opportunity to study specialist subjects which their home school cannot currently offer.

Students at Aurora College connect with their teachers and classmates in timetabled lessons through a virtual learning environment, which includes web conferencing software and a range of online information, communication and collaboration tools. Teachers and students also have the opportunity to work together at a residential school held twice per year.

Aurora College offers students expanded career options through innovative programs and strengthened partnerships with business, and with scientific, cultural and tertiary education institutions. Mentoring opportunities and masterclasses are key features of both the online and residential school programs.

## School planning process

The development of the 'Aurora College model' involved extensive consultation throughout 2014 with key stakeholders across the state. The Isolated Children's Parent's Association NSW and the Secondary Principals' Council, in particular, were central to this process. Other groups included NSW Teachers Federation, Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards NSW, NSW Primary Principals' Association, Rural and Distance Education and a range of Department directorates.

A Project Control Group (PCG) was formed in April 2014, chaired by the Director, Secondary Education. Members of the group comprised the Principal Education Officer and representatives from Distance Education, Learning and Business Directorate, Information Technology Directorate, and the Western NSW xsel program. The PCG met each fortnight in 2014 to oversee the planning for and implementation of the state's first virtual school.

Ongoing consultation, development and review of the model is being undertaken in 2015-2017 by the Aurora College State Reference Group. Members include the college's senior executive and representatives from the teaching staff, parents, primary and secondary school principals, and senior officers of the Department.

The brief of this reference group is to provide strategic advice to the Director, Secondary Education and the Executive Directors, Learning and Leadership, Wagga, Tamworth and Connected Communities with respect to Aurora College, to improve learning outcomes for participating students and inform future delivery of the curriculum.

The school plan 2015-2017 draws upon the planning processes of 2014 and 2015. This document was developed in consultation with staff, the Aurora College State Reference Group and the Director, Secondary Education.

# School strategic directions 2015 - 2017



**Purpose:**  
To foster a differentiated learning environment that is engaging and personalised to each student's context and stage of development.



**Purpose:**  
To establish and lead best practice learning and teaching in a virtual environment by encouraging and supporting all staff to be innovative teachers and to assess and critically use established and emerging technologies to this end.



**Purpose:**  
To offer students opportunities to expand career and post school opportunities through innovative programs and strengthened partnerships with business and scientific, cultural and tertiary education institutions.

# Strategic Direction 1: Student learning and engagement

## Purpose

To foster a differentiated learning environment that is engaging and personalised to each student's context and stage of development.

## Improvement Measures

- ❖ Percentage increase in the retention of students
- ❖ Virtual Learners and Personalised Learning initiatives contribute positively to overall levels of student satisfaction and engagement with the curriculum

## People

### Students

- Deepen their content understanding through extension and enrichment of the curriculum.
- Develop their skills in the use of technology through collaborative teaching and learning activities.
- Embed critical and creative thinking skills into teaching and learning activities.

### Staff

- Develop the skills of teachers to successfully plan and manage:
  - extension and enrichment activities
  - collaboration activities that integrate established and emerging technologies.

### Parents/Carers

- Inform parents/carers about school practices, policies and procedures.
- Encourage parents/carers to participate as partners in their child's education.

### Community partners

- Develop partnerships to support the development and delivery of quality extension and enrichment programs through mentoring and masterclasses.

### Leaders

- Develop highly skilled educational leaders who successfully manage programs, faculties, students and resources.

## Processes

### Virtual learners program

- Develop differentiated teaching and learning programs that enhance opportunities for extension and enrichment.
- Provide students and staff with access to robust and reliable collaborative:
  - Learning systems (Adobe Connect, iSee, Moodle, Canvas, Equella, Oliver.
  - Learning tools (Microsoft Office 365, Google Apps).
- Develop programs to support student engagement, including:
  - Masterclasses
  - Mentoring
  - Residential School

### Personalised learning program

- Develop learning support policies and procedures
- Develop a Personal Learning Plan to guide and track the progress of each student

### Evaluation plan

- A range of qualitative and quantitative measures will be used to assess student learning and engagement, including:
  - surveys (parents, staff and students)
  - back-end analytics from technology platforms
  - NAPLAN and RAP data
  - school report data
  - regular meetings of teams and team leaders to assess and evaluate progress.

## Products and Practices

### Product

- Achieve student retention rate of 85% or greater.
- 10% of students participating in the pilot phase of the Mentor/Mentoring program in 2015, with a 30% increase each year thereafter.

### Practice

- **Students** actively and consistently engage with learning that is meaningful and developmental.
- **Students** have opportunities to achieve a balance between virtual and face to face interaction both in their home school and Aurora.
- **Students** demonstrate the following attributes whilst engaged in learning: confidence, resilience, being organised, independence, and critical and creative thinking.
- **Teachers** effectively differentiate their teaching programs to address the learning needs of all students.
- **Teachers** use qualitative and quantitative data to make consistent judgements about student achievement.
- **Teachers** develop high quality teaching and learning practices demonstrated and supported through improved learning outcomes.
- **Parents** encourage and support their children to apply these skills when confronted with barriers to their learning.

## Strategic Direction 2: Staff learning and engagement

### Purpose

To establish and lead best practice learning and teaching in a virtual environment by encouraging and supporting all staff to be innovative teachers and to assess and critically use established and emerging technologies to this end.

- ❖ Learning and teaching programs show evidence of whole school and individual teacher professional learning
- ❖ Staff demonstrate educational leadership by sharing their expertise with the broader education community

### People

#### Students

- Encourage participation and engagement in all learning experiences.

#### Staff

- Engage all staff in ongoing, reflective and evidence based professional learning that focuses on the continuous improvement of teaching, learning and leadership practice and learning outcomes of students.

#### Parents/Carers

- Inform parents/carers about pedagogy and its impact on their child's learning.
- Encourage parents/carers to participate as partners in their child's education.

#### Community partners

- Partner with community organisations to provide high quality professional learning programs.

#### Leaders

- Develop highly skilled educational leaders who successfully support staff learning and engagement.

### Processes

#### Pedagogical innovators program

- Provide targeted professional learning including:
  - Executive induction program.
  - Classroom teacher induction program.
  - Learning systems (Adobe Connect, iSee, Sentral, Moodle, Equella, Oliver online library).
  - Established and emerging learning tools (Microsoft Office 365, Google Apps).
  - Curriculum differentiation for Gifted and Talented Students.
  - Best practice teaching and learning in a virtual environment.

#### Building leadership program

- Host a state-wide Rural and Remote Education Conference for classroom teachers and leaders.
- Present at state-wide educational conferences.
- Conduct state-wide HSC study days for students in rural and remote government high schools.
- Provide mentoring and expertise to NSW public schools.

#### Evaluation plan

- A range of measures will be used to assess staff learning and engagement, including:
  - surveys (staff and students).
  - observations of classroom /teaching practice.
  - Regular meetings of teams and team leaders to assess and evaluate progress.

### Products and Practices

#### Product

- Professional learning is provided which supports the achievement of school learning goals, system requirements.
- Teachers make presentations at educational conferences in 2015 with an increase of 10% per year, thereafter.

#### Practice

- **Teachers** lead improved pedagogy in a virtual learning environment.
- **Teachers** effectively plan and manage collaboration activities with their students that integrate established and emerging teaching and learning technologies.
- **Teachers** engage in regular professional learning activities which are aligned to school learning goals and their own professional career aspirations.
- **Teachers** analyse internal and external assessment data and utilise it to inform and differentiate their teaching and learning programs.
- **Leaders** implement quality educational and organisational innovations within the school to improve leadership, management and administration effectiveness.
- **Students** embrace the changes to their learning environment and utilise the opportunities provided to engage positively and successfully in their learning.
- **Parents** actively engage in learning about current pedagogical practices and programs and attend workshops to keep themselves informed.

## Strategic Direction 3: Community engagement

### Purpose

To offer students opportunities to expand career and post school opportunities through innovative programs and strengthened partnerships with business and scientific, cultural and tertiary education institutions.

### Improvement Measures

- ❖ Percentage increase in the number of businesses and institutions partnering with Aurora College, including in the provision of masterclasses and mentoring
- ❖ Masterclass and Mentor programs contribute positively to overall levels of student satisfaction and engagement with the curriculum

### People

#### Students

- Provide students with quality learning through aspirational learning pathways.
- Provide opportunities for students to develop leadership capabilities.

#### Staff

- Engage all staff in identifying and recommending curriculum links.

#### Parents/Carers

- Inform parents/carers about student career options and post school educational opportunities.
- Encourage parents/carers to support their child's participation in programs to enhance the career options and post school educational opportunities.

#### Community

- Partner with community to provide programs to enhance the career options and post school educational opportunities of students.

### Processes

#### Masterclass Program

- Work with community partners to develop and implement a Masterclass program that enriches and enhances the curriculum and provides opportunities for rural and remote students.

#### Mentoring Program

- Work with community partners to develop and implement a Mentor program that improves students: resilience, awareness to career opportunities, motivation, confidence and exposure to positive role models.

#### Evaluation plan

- A range of measures will be used to assess community engagement, including surveys of partners, parents, staff and students.
- Regular meetings of teams and team leaders to assess and evaluate progress.
- External evaluation of the Masterclass Program to be conducted by the Policy Planning and Reporting Directorate.

### Products and Practices

#### Product

- 10 businesses and/or institutions partnering with Aurora in 2015 in the provision of the Masterclass and Mentoring programs, with a 20 percent increase each year thereafter.
- 1 masterclass per term per stage and subject in 2015, with an increase of 1 masterclass per term per stage and subject each year thereafter.

#### Practice

- **Students** embrace opportunities to interact directly with industry and academic experts.
- **Students** exhibit self-confidence and resilience in career planning and have broad awareness of post school opportunities as well as enhanced long-term academic outcomes.
- **Teachers** facilitate opportunities for the participation of parents in masterclass workshops on topics including: resilience and parenting gifted and talented students.
- **Parents and community** effectively access key communication tools such as the school website, policies, curriculum information and The Auracle and utilise these resources to develop a better understanding of their children's learning at Aurora.
- **Parents** are actively engaged in learning about current educational practices and programs and regularly attend masterclass workshops and presentations to keep themselves informed.