

Sabbatical Report
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Longburn Adventist College
May 2014



Purpose:

The purpose of this sabbatical report is to define our LAC school culture, take a 'stock take' of where we currently are at with our school culture, strategically plan where we aim to be and develop action plans on how we plan to create what, for us, would be our ideal school culture.

Longburn Adventist College is a smallish, decile 6, Year 7–13 college with an attached boarding facility. It has been a state-integrated school since 1993 (when the roll fell so low as to almost cause the college to close). When criteria-based assessment was introduced into New Zealand secondary schools LAC was quick to embrace the new standards, and so began a journey for the college to the situation it is in now, a small school with quite outstanding NCEA results. It is a school which typically has a large proportion of Year 7, 8 and 9 students who struggle academically but most stay on at school through to Year 13 and a very high proportion gain NCEA level 3.

I recently came across a pertinent quote by Professor Ivan Snook: *“When school principals promote their school on the basis of exam results, they are being dishonest; as professionals they must have read the literature which shows that almost all the variance between schools on public exams is explained by the kind of students who go there; a powerful lesson about honesty.”*¹ Unfortunately this statement is all too often true, but at LAC we have ‘broken the mould’ over the last decade. Our results are not typical for a decile 6 school; they are in fact better than the majority of decile 10 schools and our retention rates are among the best in the country, but there is still room for improvements and the question of how and where we make these improvements are important questions that need answering.

There is no ‘magic bullet’ in raising student achievement. Success in raising student achievement involves bringing multiple influences to bear upon students and lifting their performance. I keep a list of all the variables I can identify that have helped LAC students perform significantly above the level at which most decile 6 school perform. Currently I have 25 variables on my list. Some are generic to all high performing schools, such as high teacher expectations, and some are specific to LAC. Our Year 13 Graduation is the highlight of the year for our senior students and their desire to participate in Graduation motivates a significant number to succeed at Level 3 NCEA.

The aim of this brief research is to identify additional factors that will lead to further improvement in student achievement and to further improvements in the culture of LAC.

During the last few years we have explored three initiatives that I as principal believe will enable us to ‘add value’ as a school. These are;

- The ASPIRE programme, a deliberate attempt to purposefully teach the values that we as a special character school embrace.
- SEL (Social and Emotional Learning), *“...the capacity to recognize and manage emotions, solve problems effectively, and establish positive relationships with others.”* Zins and Elias
- PB4L (Positive Behaviour for Learning), a Ministry of Education initiative that uses positive reinforcement and deliberate teaching of the behaviours wanted from students to encourage better student behaviour and better engagement with learning. <http://pb4l.tki.org.nz/About-PB4L>

I believed these three initiatives would enhance the excellent progress the college has made recently and benefit our students academically, spiritually and personally.

Out of these three initiatives have come some positive progress and benefits for students and the college community, but there has also been some confusion for staff in how these three initiatives relate to each other, and how and why these three initiatives are necessary. The aim of this research is to clarify these initiatives, show why each one is useful and how all three can be part of a single integrated approach to improving teaching and learning at LAC.

School Culture

What became apparent is that a very close look needed to be taken at the school culture.

“Culture describes how things are and acts as a screen or lens through which the world is viewed. In essence, it defines reality for those within a social organisation, gives them support and identity and creates a framework for occupational learning. Each school has a different reality or mind-set of school life, often captured in the simple phrase ‘the way we do things around here’. It also has its own mind-set in relation to what occurs in its external environment.” 3 Louise Stoll

Essentially what was needed was a stock take of ‘the way we do things around here’ and how we would like to see things done around here. If changes need to be made it is essential to evaluate how things are ‘done around here’, why they are done that way and how to change the way things are done if change is wanted and needed.

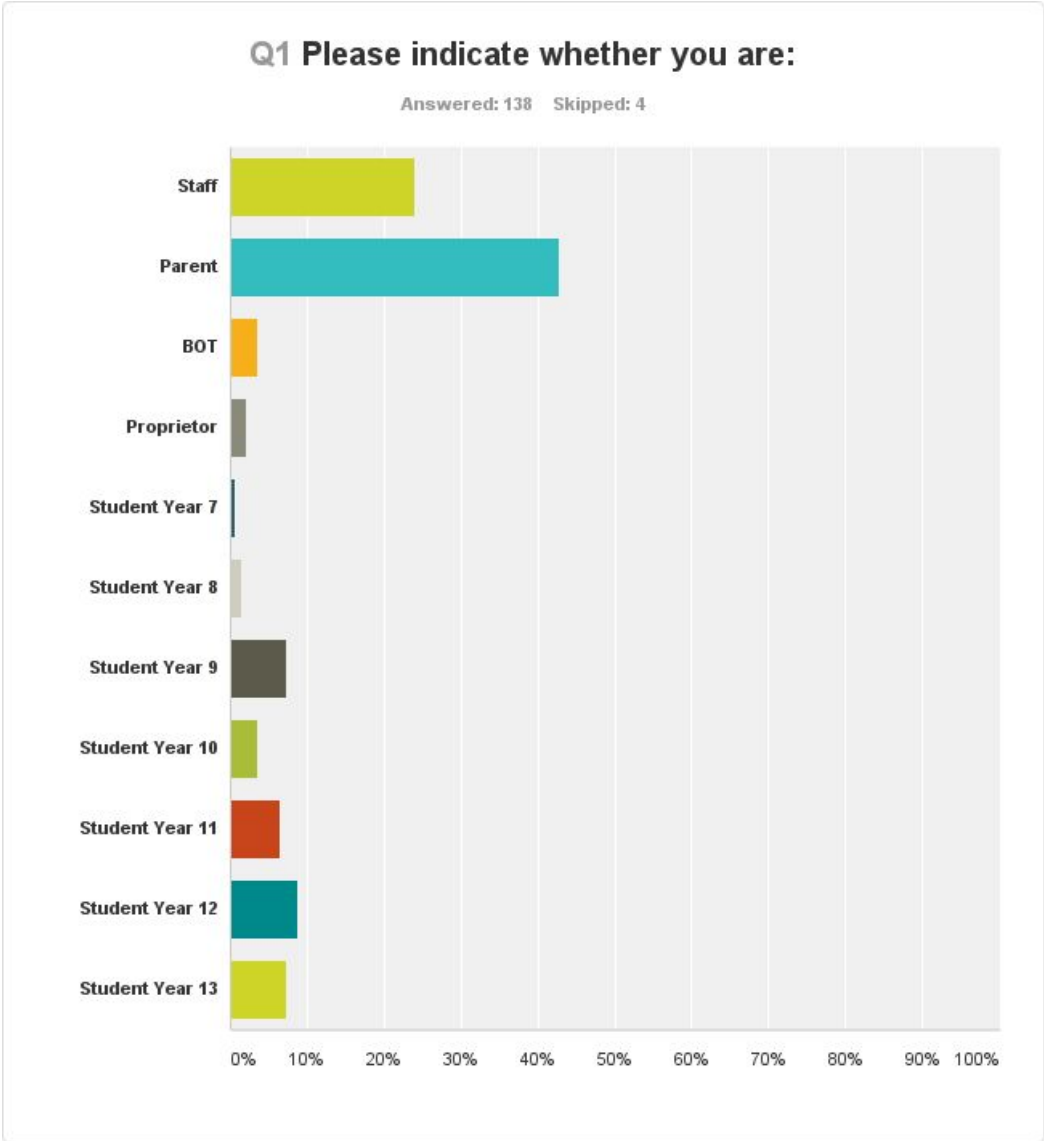
Stage 1 - The ‘Stock Take’

Before deciding on how to maximise the benefits of SEL, PB4L and ASPIRE, I decided to survey the college community (students, teachers, parents, Board of Trustees, Board of Governors, and proprietors) to establish two things – how these groups perceive the college to be doing in a range of areas and where they aspire to or believe we should be. A graphical summary of the results of this survey is attached below.

Survey Monkey was used to collect the survey results, and two observations about Survey Monkey are pertinent:

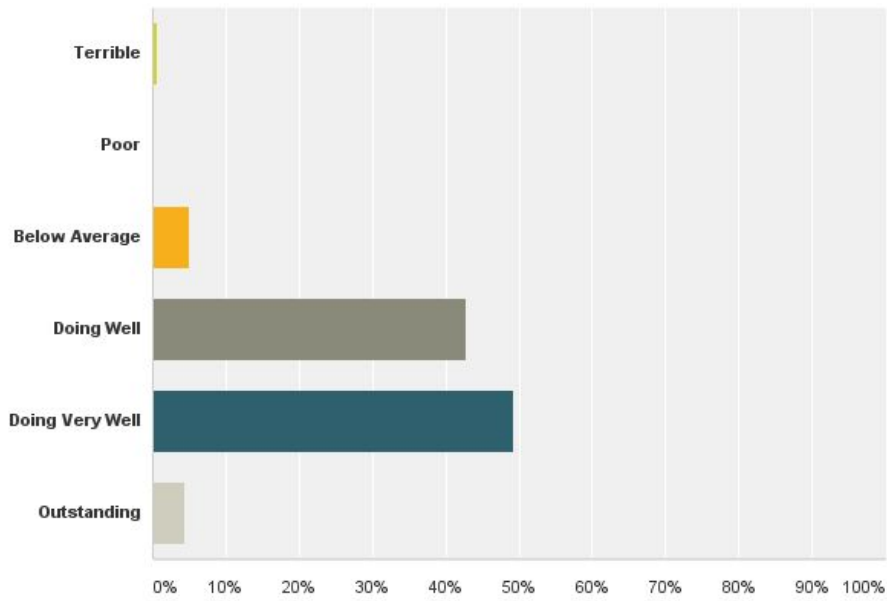
- It is a relatively cheap, easy and useful way to collect data.
- The response to the survey was far greater than any other methods of survey we have used in the past.

Results of the Survey:



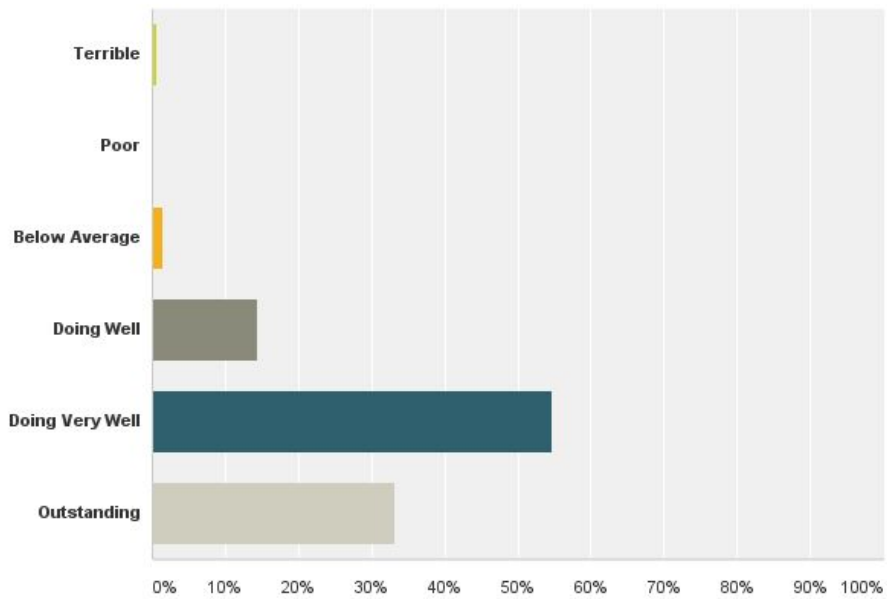
Q2 Where do you believe LAC students generally to be in terms of their academic performance?

Answered: 138 Skipped: 4



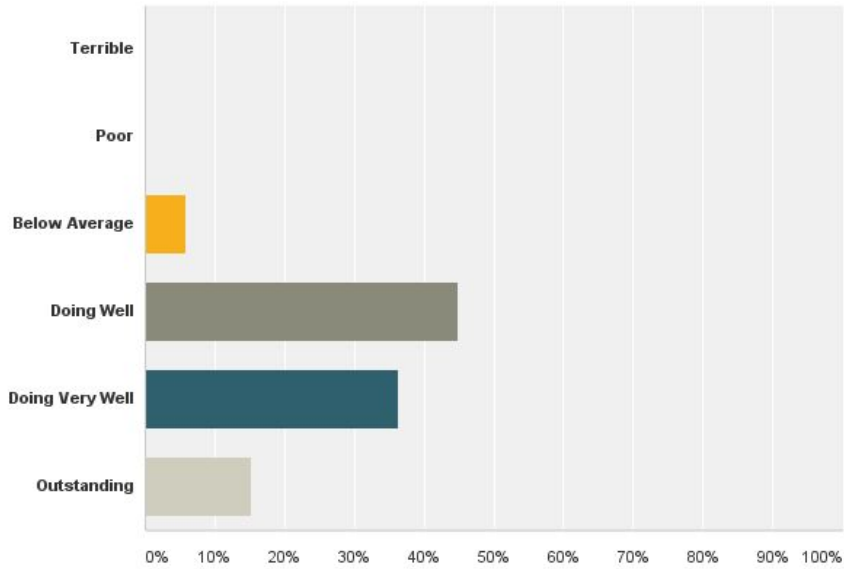
Q3 Where do you believe LAC students are capable of performing academically?

Answered: 139 Skipped: 3



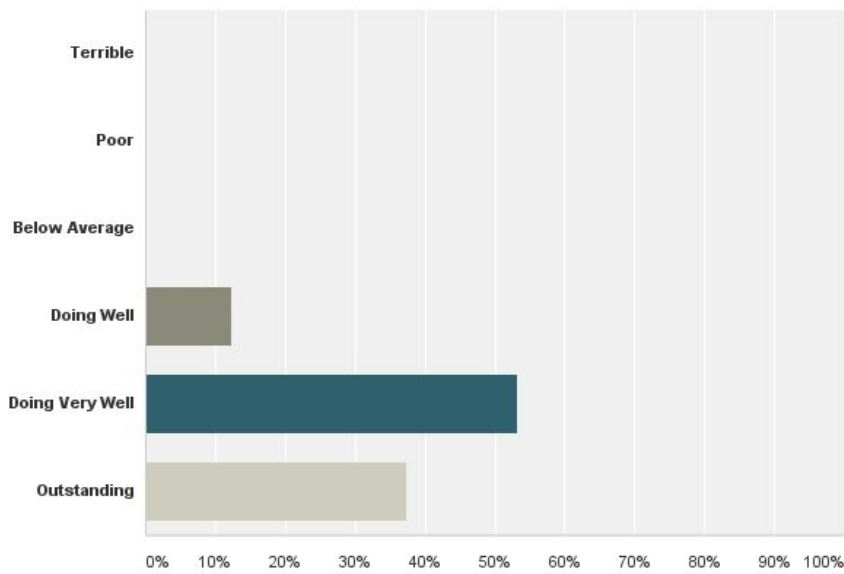
Q4 How would you generally rate the relationships between teachers and students at LAC?

Answered: 138 Skipped: 4



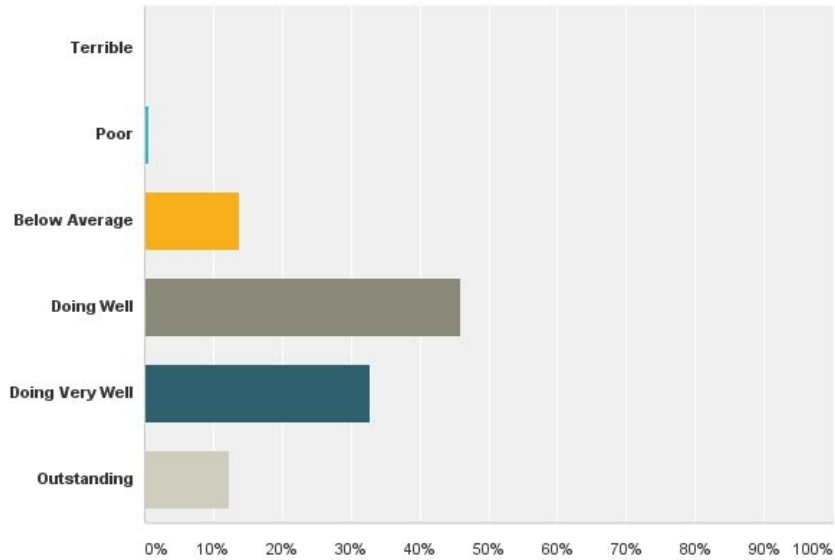
Q5 In your opinion, relationships between teachers and students should be:

Answered: 139 Skipped: 3



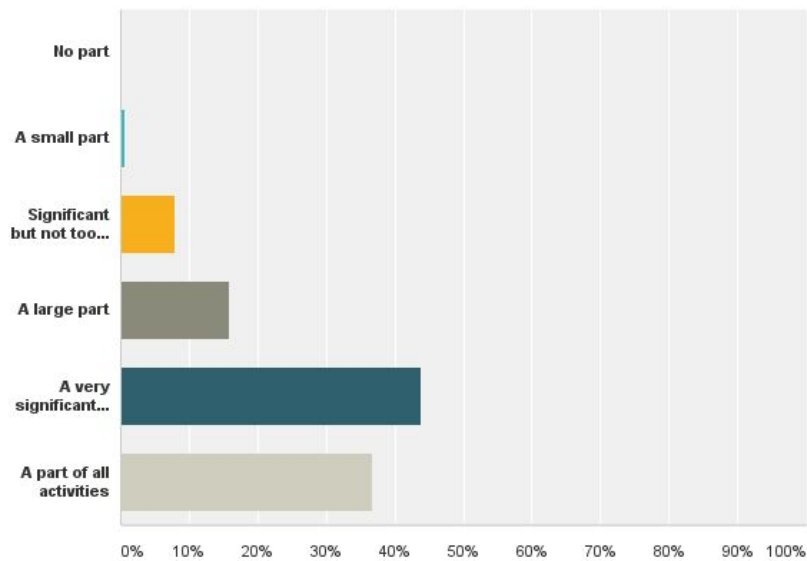
Q6 How well is the special character and the spiritual growth of students upheld in the life, classes and activities of the college?

Answered: 137 Skipped: 5



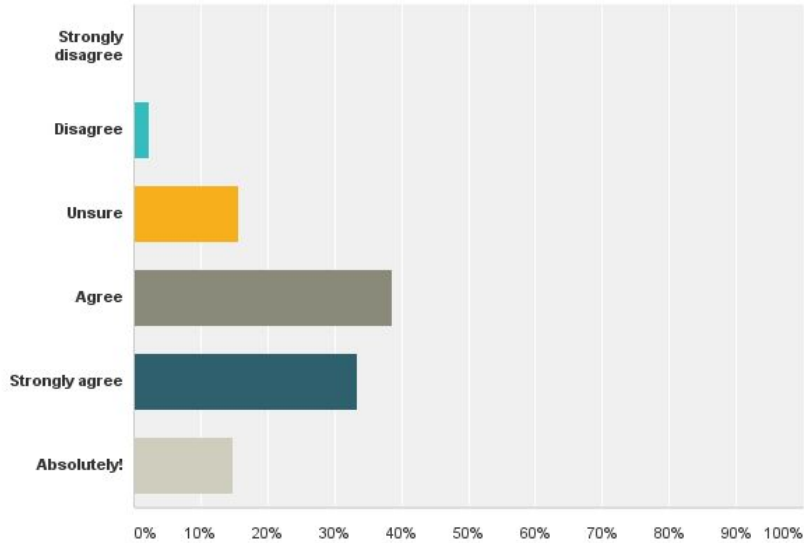
Q7 Where should the special character and the spiritual growth of students be in relation to the life, classes and activities of the college?

Answered: 139 Skipped: 3



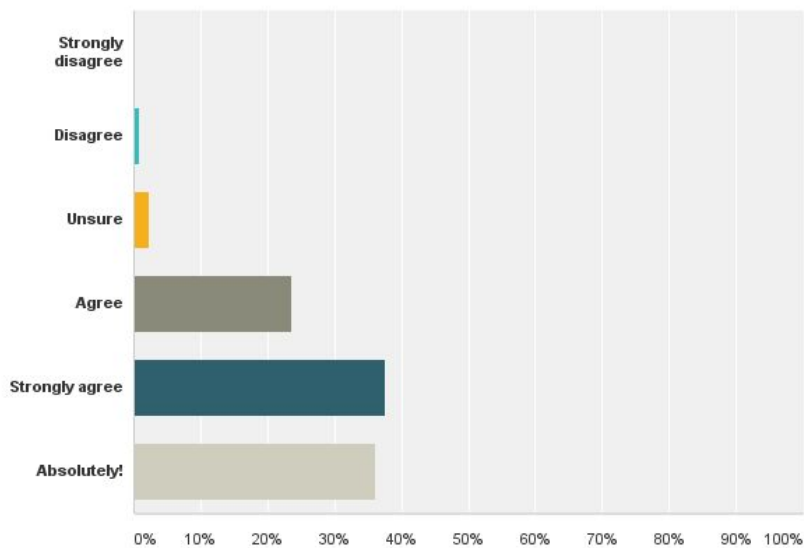
Q8 The personal growth of students is given high priority by staff and in the programmes of the college.

Answered: 135 Skipped: 7



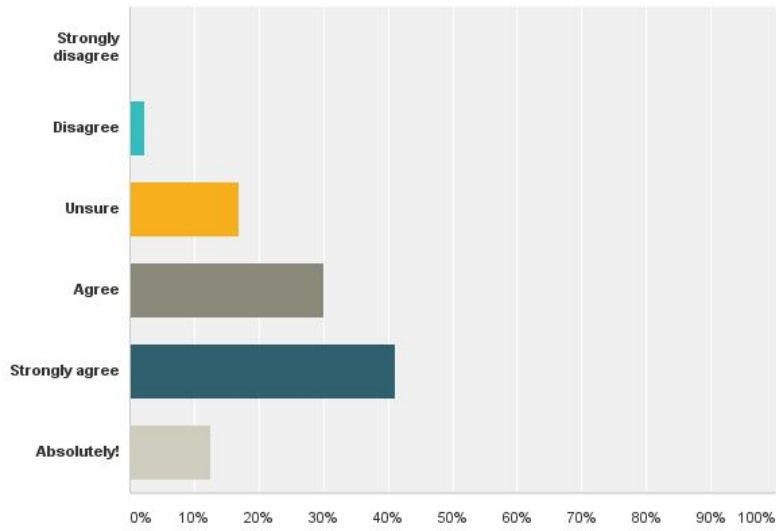
Q9 The personal growth of students should be given high priority by staff and in the programmes of the college.

Answered: 136 Skipped: 6



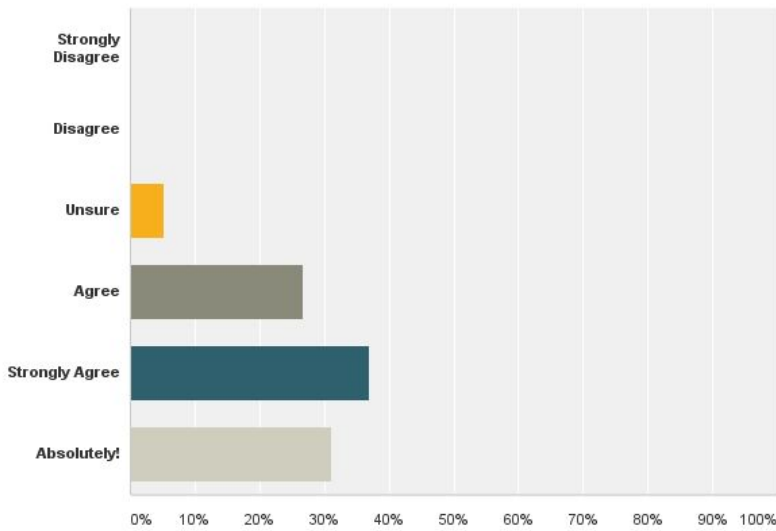
Q10 Cultural diversity is appreciated and celebrated by staff and students and in the life of the college.

Answered: 136 Skipped: 6



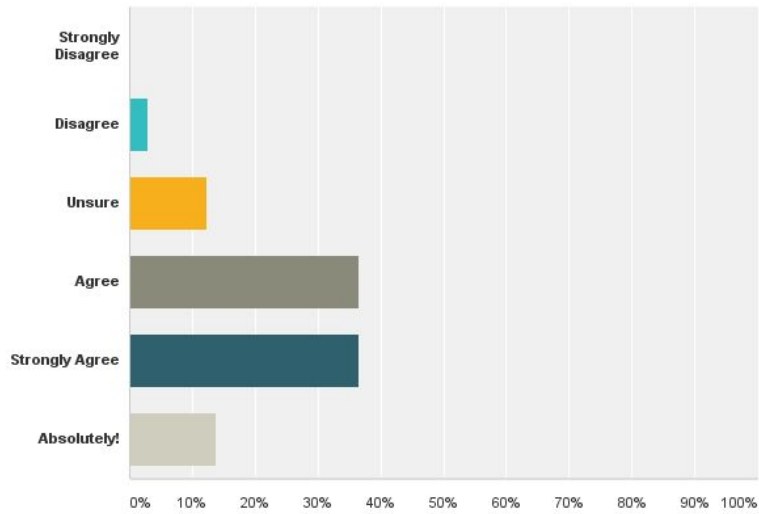
Q11 Cultural Diversity should be appreciated and celebrated by Staff and Students in the life of the college.

Answered: 135 Skipped: 7



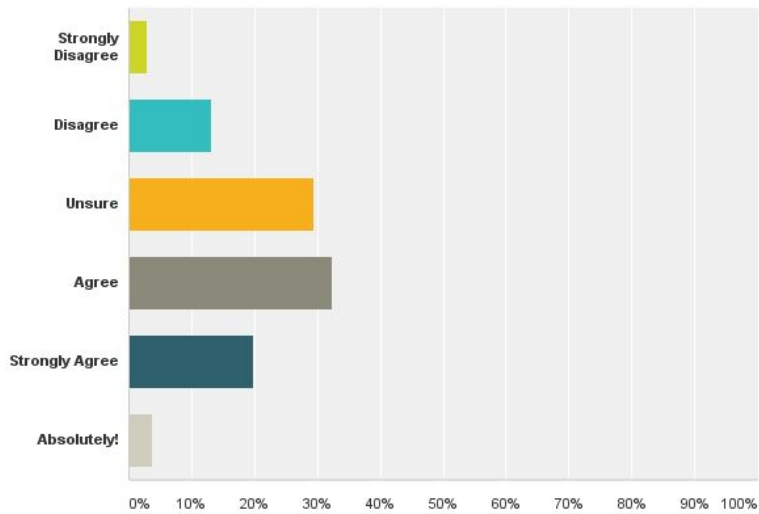
Q12 The culture (how things are done and the tone of the college) of the college promotes a positive learning environment at LAC.

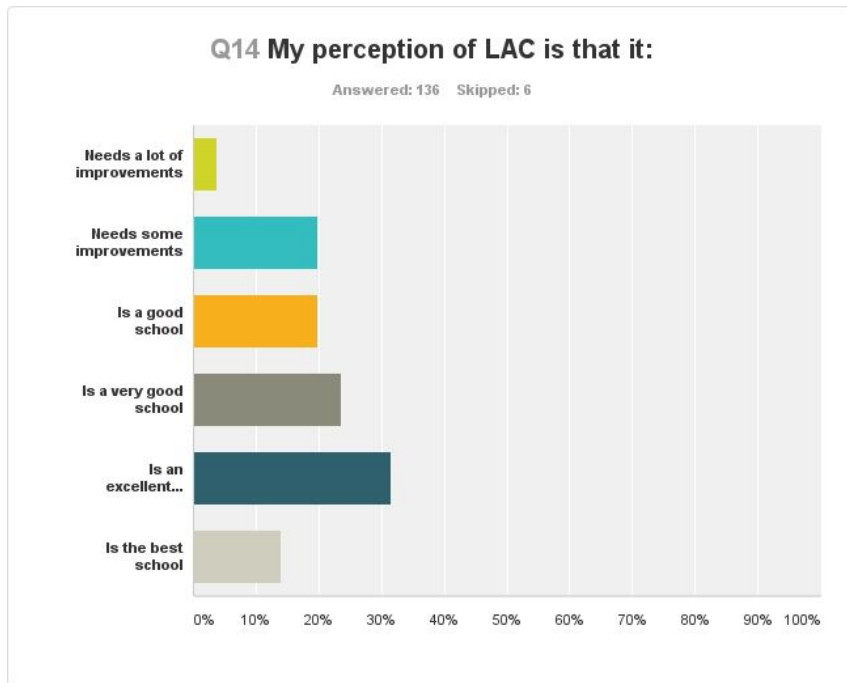
Answered: 137 Skipped: 5



Q13 The culture of the college is positive and needs no change.

Answered: 136 Skipped: 6





Summary of Survey:

In all areas surveyed there is overall agreement that the college is doing well or very well, but still there is some room for improvement. Around 14% of respondents summarised that they believed the college needs 'some' or 'a lot of' improvement. When it comes to academic performance of students, quite a significant number of respondents see room for 'outstanding' results from our students.

Overall the responses show the majority of the college community believe the college is doing well but with some small scope to do even better.

WHAT TO CHANGE?

The five areas the college is currently exploring or working on to effect positive change for students are: PB4L, SEL, ASPIRE, FOCUS and Special Character. Below is a brief description of each initiative followed by an action plan of how further progress will be made.

PB4L (Positive Behaviour for Learning)

The college became part of the Ministry of Education initiative at the start of 2013. This initiative is based on the well-researched premise that students respond more strongly to positive reinforcement than to negative sanctions. Schools need to systematically provide students with positive reinforcement and also systematically teach the positive behaviours they want their students to follow.

A summary of the MOE programme can be found at:

<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/SpecialEducation/OurWorkProgramme/PositiveBehaviourForLearning.aspx>

What really appealed to me about the PB4L programme were the reports that it resulted in much improved classroom tone in the schools that adopted the programme, relationships between students

and teachers were improved - became more positive - and more quality time was spent on teaching and learning in the classroom than before PB4L was introduced. Professor John Hattie's research proves that improvement in classroom behaviour has one of the largest 'effect sizes' of any variable in schools, 0.8, so PB4L has the potential to lead to considerable improvements in the teaching and learning at Longburn Adventist College.

SEL (Social and Emotional Learning)

Society has been well aware of IQ (Intelligence Quotient) and accepted this for many years as a variable that influences the academic success of students. Over the last 20 or so years 'Emotional Intelligence' has come under scrutiny, and now there is a wide body of belief and evidence that emotional intelligence can be just as important as IQ in determining student success.

Being 'emotionally intelligent' is defined as being aware of your own emotions and reactions, being aware of the emotions of those you encounter and able to control your own emotional reaction to others to achieve a positive outcome.

Deliberately raising the 'emotional quotient' of teachers and students means deliberately building positive relationships, making teaching and learning far more relational and potentially far more personally rewarding for both teachers and students.

Fr Pat Lynch's March 2014 Blog "**A Simple Solution**" succinctly summarises the benefits of a 'SEL approach' to teaching and learning:

"Recent education surveys in the United States of America across a broad spectrum of students, administrators, parents and teachers, all come down on the side of the importance of relationships and connectedness as being the foundations and structure of student success.

"Administrators and teachers often think that things are going well within a class or school, when in fact there could be a lot of disenchantment about aspects of what is occurring at a very simple, yet fundamental, level. The following is of great importance to young people, e.g. teachers knowing student names; teachers having high expectations of success; caring about student health and well-being; knowing something about student dreams and aspirations as well as their family connections. All of the above are indicators about a school's engagement with its young people."

Already in place and part of the 2014 Annual Plan is the encouragement of 'one-on-one' talks between teachers and students. The aim of these is to get teachers entering into conversations with students to encourage positive relationships and so teachers are more aware of 'where students are at' and how they can be helped and encouraged. The saying that "every child needs a significant adult in their life" is absolutely correct and these 'one-on-one' talks are aimed at seeing that this happens.

There already are a number of teachers at LAC who unconsciously practise social and emotional learning, and the positive results of this are very obvious in the student survey we have conducted over the last few years. Being deliberate and systematic about using social and emotional learning techniques will ensure the positive 'spin offs' from this approach are more widely distributed.

Deliberately teaching students to be 'emotionally intelligent' needs to be part of this initiative. Many of the discipline issues that arise between students happen because students negatively react to each

other or to a teacher. If students can be taught to be aware of the emotions they encounter in others and their own emotional response and to others, then they too can ensure a response that will facilitate a positive outcome.

ASPIRE

The ASPIRE programme was initially introduced into the boarding area at LAC to intentionally teach values, skills, character development and positive spiritual values that are part of our special character as an integrated school. Over the last two years it has been rolled out to the whole school.

There are obvious overlaps with the PB4L programme, but whereas PB4L is secular in its operation the ASPIRE programme has wider goals that embrace positive spiritual values as well.

FOCUS

Over the last two years, 'FOCUS' has been part of the Annual Plan of the LAC Board of Trustees. The aim of this goal has been to provide students and parents with timely information and feedback about student progress to facilitate better student academic progress as each year progresses. The '5 Weekly Reviews' and class group emails have been part of this initiative and impacted very positively on student progress.

Hattie and Yates in their latest book Visible Learning and the Science of How We Learn note down the 'Willingham Thesis'. Basically this thesis is that students don't like school as success at school requires hard work and individuals are hardwired to avoid work wherever possible. The flip side of this thesis is that whatever can encourage or convince students to develop a positive work ethic at school will greatly aid their chances of success.

FOCUS embraces anything that will enhance the work ethic of our students, as a good work ethic is the largest determining factor in student success, and success later in life.

SPECIAL CHARACTER

LAC is a state-integrated school with its special character enshrined in the Deed of Agreement and reiterated in its Charter.

"The Special Character of the School is determined by the faith systems made up of the Christian beliefs, values and lifestyle of the Seventh-day Adventist Church... The mission includes the provision of Intermediate and Secondary education for all who share its objectives.

"The purpose of the school is to support the home and the Church in the transmission of its faith systems to the children and youth... The achievement of these goals is through a comprehensive and unified programme involving every aspect of the curriculum..." **LAC Integration Deed of Agreement 1993**

In the years since integration a large portion of the local Christian community has chosen LAC for the Year 7–13 education of their children.

Bringing these five factors/programmes/initiatives to work together synergistically for our students' benefit will enable us to 'lift the bar' a little more so that the college's already excellent academic results can be improved even further.

Our concerns for our students are not just for their academic achievement. It is our goal to turn out well-rounded individuals who aspire to serve in the best sense of the word; young people who will be the future leaders in our community and the wider society, and who have a sense of compassion. This is something we need to intentionally and systematically teach our students if we are to be successful as a school.

- 1 www.cve.org.nz/download/Ivan_Snook--Keynote_Address.pdf
- 2 <http://scholar.google.co.nz/scholar>
- 3 <http://www.educationalleaders.govt.nz/Culture/Understanding-school-cultures/School-Culture>

PB4L (Positive Behaviour for Learning)				
Goal: To adopt the PB4L programme to encourage and teach positive behaviour in students leading to more effective teaching and learning throughout the college				
Objective	Resources needed	Responsibility	Target Date	Status
Engage with MOE	Under way, mainly teacher time needed	DP and PB4L Team	End of 2014	ongoing
Keep staff fully informed of PB4L and developments	PD	Principal & PB4L Team		ongoing
Positive reward system	Systems, including a poster showing all the positive reward systems used in the college. Prizes, stamps etc.	PB4L Team	Starting Term 2 and developing during 2014	
Integrate PB4L with ASPIRE	Time	Principal, DP, Chaplain	During Term 4 2014	
Evaluate benefits of PB4L	Time and effective staff/student questionnaire	DP	During Term 4	

SEL (Social and Emotional Learning)				
Goal: To have teachers more aware of the value of a high 'emotional quotient' and how SEL can facilitate more effective and rewarding teaching and learning.				
Objective	Resources needed	Responsibility	Target Date	Status
Identify LAC's current SEL strengths	Time and coordination of a 'stock take'	Principal, SCT and chaplain	End of term 2, 2014	ongoing
To outline benefits to staff of SEL	PD and identify experts who can provide PD in this field	Principal	In place during Terms 2 & 3, 2014	ongoing
To encourage and provide a systematic way of 'one-on-one' talks between teachers and students	Encouragement and systematic organization so 'one-on-one' occurs	Principal, SCT and chaplain	Starting Term 2 and developing during 2014	
To provide a positive reward to teachers who exhibit SEL and who share their techniques with others.	Staff who can be 'eyes and ears' to collect this information and a method of recording. (This can be incorporated into PB4L)	Principal, DP, Chaplain	Starting Term 2 2014	ongoing
Identify key staff who can drive SEL in the college in the future.	Staff who can be 'eyes and ears' to collect this information and a method of recording.	Principal	Have a small team in place before term 4, 2014	

ASPIRE				
Goal: To develop a program that intentionally teaches values and life skills to students and promotes the awareness in the college community that this is happening.				
Objective	Resources needed	Responsibility	Target Date	Status
Identify 'Value of the Week' for a full year program.	Underway	Chaplain and principal	Reviewed before the end of 2014	ongoing
Provide roll mark teachers with devotional material related to Value of the Week.	Underway	Chaplain		ongoing
Use blog to distribute 'Value of the Week' material to the college community.	Underway	Principal	Occurs every two weeks	ongoing
Use the student diary to include inspirational stories illustrating 'Value of the Week'	Time	Chaplain and principal	During Term 4 2014	ongoing
To have the ASPIRE team identify improvements and a 'way forward' with ASPIRE	Regular meetings of ASPIRE Team	Chaplain	Recommendations ongoing with a summary before the end of Term 4 2014.	ongoing

FOCUS				
Goal: To monitor and refine the current FOCUS initiatives aimed at encouraging student achievement through a positive work ethic.				
Objective	Resources needed	Responsibility	Target Date	Status
5 Weekly Reviews	Program and timeline to ensure these occur and follow-up happens	DP and Deans	ongoing	ongoing
Class group emails	Expertise provided to teachers to facilitate these and monitoring to ensure they are used.	AP and HOD's	ongoing	ongoing
To ensure students receive useful feedback that will facilitate better achievement levels.	Staff PD on feedback including the use of outside experts where appropriate	Principal and SCT	Starting Term 2 and developing during 2014	ongoing

SPECIAL CHARACTER				
Goal: To ensure that the college's special character is central to all teaching, learning and activities.				
Objective	Resources Needed	Responsibility	Target Date	Status
To ensure that the proprietors' most recent audit recommendations are carried out.	Time and key staff made aware.	Principal	By the end of Term 4, 2014	underway
To ensure teaching staff understand the college's obligations re special character as outlined in the Deed of Agreement, Charter and proprietors handbook.	PD time, access to documentation	Principal	Before the end of 2014	ongoing
To ensure the college community is kept aware of the college's Special Character	Principal's blog and newsletters	Principal	ongoing	ongoing
Ongoing review of how Special Character can be better implemented.	Time for key people to review Special Character. Intentional meetings.	Principal, management team, Chaplain	ongoing	ongoing

NCEA Results between 2006 and 2013 at LAC

Year level Roll	2006	2007	2008	2009	<i>National average</i>	2010	<i>National average</i>	2011	<i>National average</i>	2012	<i>National average</i>	2013	<i>National average</i>
	63	40	47	54		43		43		56		44	
NCEA L1	86	90	89	78	63.6	79	63.9	87.8	76.0	73.8	78.3	81.4	82.6
Achieved	73	55	70	56	41.2	60	39.5	49.0	40.4	56.1	40.4	48.8	40.1
Merit	13	30	15	22	17.3	16	18.6	26.5	23.7	14.8	27.5	18.6	28.4
Excellence	0	5	4	0	5.0	3	5.9	12.3	10.1	3.0	11.7	13.2	14.0

Level 1 Literacy		97.5	93.6	79.6	77.6	81.4	78.4	92.2	88.3	87.2	88.3	91.1	89.8
Level 1 Numeracy		97.5	97.9	96.3	85.9	88.4	86.6	92.2	86.0	76.9	86.0	88.9	87.0

Year level Roll	2006 63	2007 59	2008 42	2009 45	National average	2010 57	National average	2011 39	National average	2012 47	National average	2013 39	National average
NCEA L2	92	95	74	93	66.3	91	65.5	86.7	81.1	93.8	83.3	81.1	85.8
Achieved	87	88	59	71	49.6	70	47.9	73.3	56.9	52.1	51.1	48.2	51.7
Merit	3	7	12	11	13.0	14	13.3	11.1	17.7	25.0	22.0	10.8	22.8
Excellence	2	0	3	11	3.7	7	4.3	2.3	6.4	16.7	9.6	10.8	11.3

Year level Roll	2006 29	2007 47	2008 58	2009 32	National average	2010 47	National average	2011 47	National average	2012 41	National average	2013 40	National average
NCEA L3	97	89	98	84	52.8	87	53.4	88.7	74.3	92.7	75.9	92.3	79.6
Achieved	86	87	88	50	38.9	55	37.4	60.4	51.3	73.2	50.8	35.9	48.2
Merit	11	2	10	16	11.2	23	12.1	20.8	17.6	17.1	18.4	35.9	22.4
Excellence	0	0	0	18	2.7	9	2.9	7.5	5.4	2.4	6.1	20.5	8.9

Year	2006 29	2007 47	2008 58	2009 32	National average	2010 47	National average	2011	National average	2012	National average	2013	National average
NCEA L3	100	89	98	84	52.8	87	53.4	88.7	74.3	92.7	75.3	92.3	79.6
University Entrance	89.3	71.1	78.7	59.4	62.8	53.2	64.9	60.4	65.2	78.0	67.1	87.2	70.9

