UNSW Matraville Education Partnership

Annual Report 2020

Report prepared by Katherine Thompson, Program Manager UNSW Matraville Education Partnership - April 2021

We aknowledge that the work of the UNSW Matrville Education Partnership takesplace on the unceded lands of the Bedegal people and honour the traditonal owners who have cared for this Country forever.

UNSW Matraville Education Partnership

UNSW Students undertaking Professional Engagement placement showcasing their holiday decoration made from book pages with Matraville Inclusive Learning Centre student Joanna.

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Executive Summary

For the last five years, the UNSW Matraville Education Partnership (MEP) has been a significant contributor towards all goals of the UNSW 2025 Strategy. The partnership encourages academic excellence, has a positive social impact and supports our society through engagement with local schools and the community. Its purpose is to enhance learning and teaching, enrich UNSW's diversity and enable collaboration between UNSW and the local community.

The MEP advances **research and facilitates sharing of knowledge** by supplying a rich location for pioneering pedagogical and social science research opportunities within UNSW's local community. The impact of local investigation is reciprocal and beneficial for both UNSW and the Matraville community. **Academic excellence** is upheld not only through the undertaking of research but also through enhancing the UNSW student experience. This partnership enriches UNSW pre-service (undergraduate and postgraduate) teacher experience by facilitating real world in-school experience augmented with community-led Indigenous education course content. **Social engagement** is an essential component of the MEP and its programs encourage and assist students who are socially and/or economically disadvantaged. The MEP achieves **social impact** through advancing local initiatives to enhance outcomes for marginalised groups such as students from low-socioeconomic (SES), migrant and Indigenous backgrounds.

Unsurprisingly, 2020 presented a unique situation for the whole world as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and many of the usual activities of the MEP were not able to be undertaken. However, **our community showed its resilience and ingenuity** in inspiring ways. Some planned excursions became virtual incursions; meetings went virtual and made connecting with people in other states and countries much easier and more commonplace. After restrictions made school-based practicum placements impossible for the first 8 months of the year, the **Matraville staff went out of their way to make record numbers of UNSW students welcome** at the school from September to December so that they could complete EDST2002 and avoid significant interruptions to their degree and career progression. NAPLAN was not able to be administered due to its timing during the height of the pandemic, but this enables us to think about other measures of student success and progress.

In 2020, the partnership's strategic priorities were revised to better reflect the directions its work has taken in the last five years and to leverage the strengths of the MEP within the school and local community. Our strategic work has now been distilled into three goals: **to raise the educational motivations, aspirations and achievement of low-SES and Indigenous students in the Matraville area; to engage UNSW with the Matraville community and build capacity to raise low-SES and Indigenous student outcomes; and to engage UNSW with the Matraville teaching community and build capacity to raise low-SES and Indigenous student outcomes.** This report details the 2020 MEP activities and achievements around those goals.

Each section ends with a "Reflections and Recommendations" block highlighted in blue, offering an evaluation of achievements and ideas for moving forward.

A note on MEP staffing

Among the many challenges felt in 2020 were shifts in staffing at all levels within UNSW and many other organisations. As much of the MEP's success is built on long-standing interpersonal relationships, this sometimes contributed to disruption or delays in workflow and achieving goals. For example, due to university workplace change processes, most of the Work Integrated Learning team was disestablished and re-established, leading to a loss of institutional knowledge and delays in communication regarding student placement issues.

Zoe Backes served ably as MEP Program Manager for the first half of 2020, at which time Katherine Thompson returned from maternity leave at 0.4FTE on a one-year contract to be reviewed in June 2021. MSHS Principal Nerida Walker appointed a school staff member at Head Teacher level 0.4FTE to coordinate partnership activities on the MSHS side as the "School-based Coordinator". Michael Graham served in this position from June-December 2020 and was a very effective member of the team, taking primary responsibility for organising UNSW student placements, gathering results and evaluations, and organising school-based incursions.

Reflections and recommendations:

The MEP is a partnership and team effort driven by the vision and goodwill of many players from both the UNSW and Matraville communities. However, the goals of the MEP cannot be fulfilled effectively without sufficient resourcing. Two days per week (0.4FTE) for the Program Manager's role is enough to stay afloat with limited existing activities, but not enough to grow or develop the MEP or engage in proper relationship-building, reflection and planning processes.

MSHS Principal Nerida Walker has been generous with allocating staff members to assist with many aspects of the partnership's operations, and this is integral to its success. However, there are challenges associated with the fragmentation of duties between the Program Manager and School-based Coordinator positions. The School-based Coordinator position could be withdrawn under a different principal or with future budgetary restrictions. For sustainability and success of the MEP, it is recommended that UNSW support a full-time continuing position for the MEP Program Manager role and recognition of the MEP Director role as part of academic workload allocation.

At the end of 2020, Professor Chris Davison, MEP Director, accepted a voluntary redundancy and moved to Emeritus status with UNSW, and Dr Karen Maras will assume the role. Michael Graham also accepted a permanent Head Teacher – Teaching & Learning position at Chester Hill High School. The expertise and support that both Chris and Michael brought to the MEP will be missed.

Advisory Committee membership

In 2020 one Advisory Committee meeting was held on 22 October (a postponement from the regularly scheduled March/April annual meeting due to Covid-19). Late in the year we welcomed some new members to the Advisory Committee for the Matraville Education Partnership, now chaired by the incoming Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Design and Architecture (formerly Arts & Social Sciences), Professor Claire Annesley. New members include:

- **Nic Accaria**, Director, Education Leadership, Public Schools NSW, Botany Bay Network
- **Dr Avinesh Chelliah**, BMed MD, Conjoint Associate Lecturer, UNSW (former volunteer with the MEP)
- **Noni Hoskins**, Principal, Matraville Public School (representing the Little Bay Community of Schools)
- **Dr Kevin Lowe**, Scientia Indigenous Fellow, UNSW (and lead researcher behind the Culturally Nourishing Schooling project, discussed page 14 of this document
- **Dr Karen Maras**, Senior Lecturer, UNSW School of Education, incoming Director, Matraville Education Partnership

Full committee membership is listed below:

List of Members		
Professor Claire Annesley *(Chair)*	Dean, Arts and Social Sciences	UNSW Sydney
Nic Accaria	Director, Education Leadership	Public Schools NSW, Botany Bay Network
Professor Kim Beswick	Head, School of Education	UNSW Sydney
John Bush	General Manager, Education	Paul Ramsay Foundation
The Hon. Dr Bob Carr	Director	Australia-China Relations Institute
Dr Avinesh Chelliah	Surgical Resident and Conjoint Associate Lecturer	Prince of Wales Hospital/UNSW Sydney
Stanley Cowper	Alumnus	UNSW Sydney
The Hon. Michael Daley MP	Member for Maroubra NSW Shadow Treasurer	Australian Labor Party, Member of the Legislative Assembly
Noni Hoskins	Principal and Representative	Matraville Public School/Little Bay Community of Schools
Professor Ian Jacobs	President and Vice-Chancellor	UNSW Sydney
Dr Kevin Lowe	Scientia Indigenous Fellow	UNSW Sydney
Dr Karen Maras	Director	UNSW Matraville Education Partnership
Calita Murray	Regional Representative	Eastern Suburbs Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
The Hon. Matt Thistlethwaite MP	Federal Member for Kingsford Smith	Australian Labor Party, House of Representatives
Nerida Walker	Principal	Matraville Sports High School
Invited to Attend		
Melinda Harvey (Secretariat)	Executive Officer, Arts and Social Sciences	UNSW Sydney
Shahina Mohamed	Operations Director, Vice-Chancellor Office	UNSW Sydney
Marie Caccamo	External Relations Business Partner, Arts, Design & Architecture	UNSW Sydney
Phebe Chan	Development Manager, Arts, Design & Architecture	UNSW Sydney
Josephine Holecek	School Manager, School of Education	UNSW Sydney
Katherine Thompson	Program Manager, UNSW Matraville Education Partnership	UNSW Sydney

Strategic Priority 1: Raise the educational motivations, aspirations and achievement of low-SES and Indigenous students in the Matraville area

A major aim of the MEP since 2015 has been to share the range of resources that UNSW has to offer with school students experiencing social and/or educational disadvantage. UNSW provides technology, special programs, incursions, excursions, and afterschool activities that would otherwise be unavailable at MSHS due to its school profile, student numbers and SES status. UNSW is now prioritising low-SES and Indigenous student recruitment, retention and support (see the UNSW Gateway program and the "Grow Our Own" pillar of the UNSW Indigenous Strategy) and the MEP has committed to focus on and improve those activities within our portfolio that explicitly support improving students' capability to access UNSW or other tertiary education, should that be their aspiration. In 2020 the partnership provided MSHS students with numerous programs and opportunities, which are outlined below.

Key Components

After School Programs

Homework Centre & Music Ensemble

A snapshot

- The Homework Centre had about 10-15 students attend each day in Sept – December 2020.
- The Homework Centre was attended by a diverse range of MSHS students in 2020, including students in the Inclusive Learning Centre, reflecting the school community.
- 54% of MSHS students report that the afterschool programs offered by UNSW are an important part of their school experience.

MSHS teachers and UNSW students usually staff the afterschool Homework Centre, held in the MSHS School Library three afternoons per week. MSHS and LBCOS students can undertake tutoring and receive assistance with their homework from UNSW students and volunteers. They can access the library's computer and internet resources, read, play board games, and enjoy healthy refreshments in a calm environment. In normal years, the Homework Centre welcomes students in Year 3 and above from the LBCOS to encourage primary students to begin to familiar with MSHS.

In 2020, restrictions on student placements and visitors or volunteers in the school meant that Homework Centre was forced to stay closed for the first two-thirds of the year, and primary students could not attend. However, when it reopened it was welcomed enthusiastically by Matraville students and **more than 20% of those surveyed named it the most important partnership activity**. UNSW student tutors also reported that participating in Homework Centre was a valuable part of their experience, with comments such as:

- *I visited the homework club after school, and I believe it is a very good idea to run it as many schools do not. I found many students hesitated in asking for help and some did not want to work in front of me but having the option of asking for help is very important.*
- *Homework club was very interesting, it helped me connect to some students a bit better outside of a full classroom and assist them with any homework or assignments that they struggled with. I think it was a great program.*
- *I enjoyed that they gave the students an opportunity to access support and equipment they may not have at home*

Reflections and recommendations:

It is always difficult to find tutors for the Music program as most UNSW music students play in university ensembles or have other courses scheduled during the afterschool hours.

Some UNSW student evaluations reported that there were often not many Matraville students who wanted help during Homework Centre and they did not always feel it was worthwhile to stay. In future years a roster system will be implemented so that "supply and demand" is kept balanced between students and tutors, and each student on placement is asked to contribute equitably. UNSW student training is also being reviewed to increase focus on strategies for engaging students who may be reticent to ask for help.

When Covid-19 restrictions were eased, the afterschool music program which has been a mainstay of the MEP offerings for Matraville students resumed. UNSW students support the MSHS music teacher to run an afterschool band workshop that meets each Tuesday afternoon from 3 – 4pm. Music is a popular subject at MSHS and many students are talented in this area despite being unable to access private music tuition or purchase their own instrument.

Holiday Programs

The Covid-19 situation made it impossible to run any programs during the April holidays, and meant that the GERRIC Student Programs and Nura Gili Winter School did not run as in previous years. However, **by the September holidays, we were again able to run the Skills Program for Individual Needs (SPIN) program** focussing on HSC readiness for Year 11 and 12 students. Tutors from the Bachelor of Education program helped students with subject content review, study skills and exam preparation. MSHS teachers also attended to tutor in specific subject areas and review past exam papers with the students.

Organisation of the SPIN program fell under the purview of the School-Based Coordinator. Student attendance numbers were not recorded and due to the "drop-in" nature of the program it was not possible to formally evaluate it, but anecdotally, those students who attended were grateful for the option of extra support leading up to their HSC exams after a year of uncertainty and disrupted schooling.

UNSW Gateway offered their online Year 12 Winter Gateway program for the first time in 2020, to assist students in the uni application process and HSC success leading to a Gateway Early Conditional Offer. Three MSHS students completed the program, though none of those ultimately enrolled at UNSW.

Nura Gili Pre-Programs were offered in an online mode in December 2020, with two Year 12 Indigenous students from MSHS attending (one in Social Work, one in Science and Engineering). Both students received offers from UNSW. Tyrah Chan-Hampton accepted her offer for Social Work and also **received the inaugural Phillip Goldwyn Scholarship** which was established in 2020 to support Indigenous students from MSHS to undertake any degree program at UNSW. The other student chose to accept an offer from UTS to continue his education.

Reflections and recommendations:

For Principal Nerida Walker, holiday program offerings from UNSW are an important support to current MSHS students and "selling point" to prospective families. However, staffing and organising them is challenging as the Program Manager position cannot accommodate these duties on 0.4FTE and it is difficult to engage school staff in the holidays if no extra pay is involved. For SPIN in 2020, a casual teacher was employed to supervise the program at MSHS' expense.

Ideally, in future, some sort of holiday offering during every school holiday period would be welcomed. It could look something like this:

Summer: Nura Gili Pre-Programs; GERRIC Student Programs; Year 10 Summer Gateway
Autumn: MSHS-based Creative Arts, NAPLAN or uni readiness program
Winter: Nura Gili Winter School, GERRIC Student Programs, Year 12 Winter Gateway
Spring: MSHS SPIN program; Year 11 Spring Gateway

Nura Gili is currently reevaluating their Winter School offerings to improve outcomes, and we know these programs have been key to Indigenous student recruitment in recent years. GERRIC Scholarships are welcomed by MSHS, but can be challenging to negotiate when GERRIC programs are run on fees paid by individual parents and places sell out in the first half hour they are made available.

Excursions and Incursion

The TalkLaw program is an Australian community legal initiative run by King & Wood Mallesons (KWM) Pro Bono Legal Services, targeting year 10 students in schools with significant cohorts of low-SES students and providing practical workshops on legal issues relevant to young people. In 2020 this initiative went virtual and Year 10 Matraville students met online with KWM and UNSW Legal Office volunteers. They missed attending the offices in the city for the mock trial component, but we hope that this will be an option in 2021.

UNSW's Gateway program again sent staff to Matraville to help Year 12 students complete their UAC applications, with half of the 2019 Year 12 cohort applying to undertake further study. This was one of the first in-person activities permitted after lockdown and was rewarding for both MSHS students and UNSW staff. Six MSHS students mentioned this as an important component of the MEP in their 2020 evaluation survey.

Sydney Story Factory incursions, Work Experience placements, and UNSW campus visits were not able to take place in 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Special Events and Material Resources

Unfortunately, due to Covid-19, most special events were not able to take place in 2020 – even Graduation and Presentation Day were not open to the public and took place in limited fashion on Zoom. The School of Education Annual Awards night, always a highlight of the year featuring Matraville performers and presenters, did not take place.

Due to austerity measures at UNSW, the university was not able to supply any material resources, such as computer donations or gift cards for prizes, as has happened in past years.

We hope that more special events and material support will be able to resume in 2021.

Scholarships

One bright spot among the many offerings that had to be placed on hold were the ongoing scholarship opportunities that the MEP has helped bring to MSHS.

The GO Foundation offers scholarships to Indigenous students in years 8-12, and the Harding Miller Foundation to girls from Year 8 onwards, with special consideration for Matraville students.

Two scholarships for study at UNSW have been established; the Cowper Scholarship for any graduating Matraville student and the Goldwyn Scholarship for an Indigenous graduate from MSHS. The Cowper Scholarship was awarded in 2019 and will be re-awarded when that student finishes at UNSW and the Goldwyn Scholarship was awarded in 2020 (see page 8).

In-School Academic Support and Mentoring

Formal programs in literacy and maths mentoring were not undertaken in 2020 due to restrictions. However, from September – December, over 50 UNSW Education students were placed at MSHS and offered a great deal of in-class support. **63% of MSHS students reported that having UNSW students in their classes helps them learn. 68% of students reported that they like having UNSW students and staff at their school**, with comments like:

- *They help me and help me brake stuff down,also they make everything easier*
- *Helps us with school work - Tells us experiences in University and what its like - Gives us a good idea of certain subjects they take - Helps us focus on the more important aspects of learning*
- *The uni students help us in class which is way better than having one teacher in the room that provides help. Usually when the uni students are in the classrooms its kind of like a one on one thing which allows students to engage more in their learning.*

Student Academic Outcomes

Due to Covid-19, NAPLAN was not administered in 2020 and thus many of our usual quantitative markers of student academic achievement are unavailable.

At the time of writing this report, difficulties with the Department of Education SCOUT reporting software prevented access to HSC results as well, though small cohort sizes and differences in subject selection year by year make it difficult to chart HSC changes at the best of times.

This year's report will necessarily focus on other ways of evaluating our activities.

Evaluation Results

Tell Them From Me Survey

Each year since 2014, MSHS has conducted the Department of Education's "Tell Them From Me" survey, which collects students' impressions of how their school addresses both academic and wellbeing issues. Below is a chart showing Tell Them From Me data since 2014 – the year before our partnership began. Areas in which the school improved in 2020 are highlighted in green, whereas areas where the school declined are highlighted in pink. (Note that different students and different sample sizes complete the survey each year, so many factors could contribute to perceived improvement or decline). Items marked with an asterisk exceed NSW state norms.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Students with a positive sense of belonging	69%	70%	68%	60%	58%	54%	57%
Students with positive intellectual engagement	52%	46%	46%	45%	44%	43%	46%
Teachers use class time effectively (score out of 10)	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.4	6.6	6.4	6.3
Teachers have high expectations for student success	6.7	7.1	6.5	6.8	7.3	6.7	7.0
Students who plan to finish Year 12	80%	79%	76%	66%	71%	64%	75%
Students who plan to pursue an apprenticeship or TAFE	56%	33%	48%	33%	48%	40%	41%*
Students who hope to attend university	52%	49%	51%	42%	45%	40%	51%
Aboriginal students who "feel good about their culture at school"	n/a	91%	83%	75%	82%	67%	69%
Aboriginal students who feel their teachers have a good understanding of their culture	n/a	82%	74%	69%	65%	53%	48%

Reflections and recommendations:

Many of the measures listed here are bouncing back from a "dip" documented in 2019. This is encouraging, and while some measures are not back at previous levels, trends toward greater numbers of students planning to finish Year 12 and pursue further study are encouraging.

In general one effect of Covid-19 may have been that many students are grateful for a return to the social aspects of school, after a taste of what isolation/remote learning would be like.

The responses to questions for Aboriginal students make it worth reflecting to ensure that as the school grows in numbers and non-Indigenous student diversity, Aboriginal students continue to feel supported and nurtured here. We hope that engagement with Dr Kevin Lowe's Aboriginal Voices project and Culturally Nourishing Schools initiative will help address this, as the project will look at how teacher practices and understandings impact Aboriginal students' and families' experiences with schooling.

Strategic Priority 2: Engage UNSW with the Matraville community and build capacity to raise low-SES and Indigenous student outcomes

Key Partnerships

The MEP's most **significant partnerships continue to be with the Eastern Suburbs Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) and the Little Bay Community of Schools (LBCOS)**. Through enduring collaboration with the community and local schools we continue to identify and work together towards shared goals and initiate targeted teaching and research activities. One unfortunate effect of Covid-19 was that the quarterly meetings of these groups ceased to take place and were not replaced by virtual meetings. Thankfully, by the second half of the year an AECG Working Group providing oversight and consultative support for the Cultural Residents project was able to meet again, and these monthly meetings provided a touchpoint for raising important issues for discussion with Aboriginal community representatives.

Most collaborations with external groups and organisations did not progress in 2020, but we hope to revisit many of the previous partnerships and opportunities in the future.

Aboriginal Community Engagement

Through the MEP, UNSW School of Education has built a strong relationship with the Eastern Suburbs Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, which has enabled mutually beneficial research and education activities to grow and be sustained. In 2020, these included the Cultural Residents Project, Culturally Nourishing Schools project, and the Master of Teaching Indigenous Education Immersion program. Working with Nura Gili, the School of Education also offers Indigenous Winter School and Pre-Programs for prospective students and promotes these programs to the local community.

Cultural Residents Project

Following the conclusion of Ian Potter Foundation funding for the Culture, Community and Curriculum Project (CCCP) in 2018, in 2019 funding was partially secured for an expanded Cultural Residents program from the Crown Resorts Foundation. This gift of $240,000 over three years has enabled UNSW to hire Aunty Maxine Ryan at 0.8FTE, to serve as a "Cultural Resident" in two local primary schools each term.

The challenges of 2020 meant that the project was not able to get off the ground in quite the manner initially envisioned, and for a few months of school terms 1 and 2, when primary schools were on heightened restrictions, she worked in a support capacity at MSHS. However, for terms 3 and 4 Aunty Maxine worked with the students and teachers at Chifley Public School, Matraville Public School, and La Perouse Public School, expanding on work that had begun in those sites under the CCCP.

An exciting development was the unexpected **opportunity to partner with World Vision, whose "Know Your Country" campaign** is undertaking consultation, lobbying, advocacy and public awareness to call for an Aboriginal Cultural Educator in every primary school. Their campaign, very aligned with the philosophy and research base that underpins the Cultural Residents project, will help broaden the reach of this work across the whole country. Reciprocally, as World Vision's "proof of concept", the UNSW Cultural Residents Project will provide a valuable evidence-base to advance the campaign more widely. This relationship has resulted in increased awareness of this work Australia-wide and the formation of valuable connections with other organisations involved in Aboriginal education. UNSW film students were also engaged as volunteers to shoot a short promotional video for the Know Your Country campaign when it is launched in 2021.

At the end of 2020, in preparation for her retirement, Professor Chris Davison handed over the reins of the project to Dr Rose Amazan, who will oversee its completion in 2021-2022 and work toward securing further funding to continue the project.

Culturally Nourishing Schools Project

In 2020, **MSHS signed on to be one of six high schools across NSW to participate in the Aboriginal Voices – Culturally Nourishing Schools (CNS) Project led by Dr Kevin Lowe**. This project follows six case study schools as they attempt to implement whole-school reform that centres Aboriginal voice in the articulation of school policies, structures and strategies, and in teaching and learning.
The recommendations for activities undertaken by the schools are derived from systematic reviews conducted of all relevant studies related to Indigenous education in the last 20 years. The necessary elements of a Culturally Nourishing School are: learning from Country, cultural/language inclusion, epistemic mentoring (of teachers by Aboriginal community members), and teacher professional change (via Aboriginal-led professional learning).

During 2020, members of the CNS Project team met with MSHS leadership and staff to clarify the aims and activities of the project and its alignment with the school's implementation of a new School Plan from 2021-2024. In 2021, CNS activities will expand further, with a small group of teachers experiencing the first cycles of workshops, mentoring, and professional learning.

Master of Teaching Indigenous Immersion

Another casualty of Covid-19 was the in-person Master of Teaching Immersion component of EDST5115: Indigenous and Sociocultural Contexts of Education. This has, for the previous five years, been a 3-day intensive program held at MSHS, with a variety of speakers and activities led by the local Aboriginal community. Unfortunately in 2020, a virtual program had to be substituted. Wherever possible, opportunities were still sought to engage with local Aboriginal people, such as video interviews conducted with the Aunties involved in the Cultural Residents Project and a virtual Walk on Country filmed by Dean Kelly. M Teach students had positive feedback about these activities and found them valuable, though everyone will be glad when they return to being delivered face-to-face.

This activity has become a key pillar of UNSW School of Education's commitment to Indigenous education and to preparing future teachers to work effectively with Indigenous students and communities, as well as to include Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in their teaching for the benefit of all students.

Sample of a student reflection "Letter to myself" from the 2020 Virtual Immersion program:

These experiences have raised your confidence in addressing Indigenous culture within the curriculum, meeting the Professional Standards in relation to Indigenous learners and knowledges, as you have gained insight into the cultural practises of your future students. Emphasize these principles of learning within your classroom, such as excursions that provide on country experiences and knowledge. Encourage your students to view the world from another's perspective and feel that sense of connectedness. You do not have to have all of the answers, but at least now you are a little more equipped to extend empathy, understanding and compassion to this newly learnt way of life. These three concepts will guide your practises as a teacher, and I believe they are the three that will enable you to truly make a difference to your current and future students, as well as play a role in the change needed within the educational system, and the broader society in addressing change for a better future for all its members.

Nura Gili Programs

For many years, the School of Education has offered both a Winter School (for students in grades 10-12) and Pre-Education Program (for recent high school graduates) as part of Nura Gili's suite of recruitment and alternative entry pathways. Unfortunately, for the past two years, we have not received applicants into these programs and they have not been able to run. However, after Nura Gili's restructure, relationship-building has recommenced between MEP and Nura Gili staff, and the MEP Program Manager is participating in a cross-faculty working group to evaluate and strengthen these programs, and to improve recruitment strategies. When they do run again, the MEP and MEP Program Manager will be instrumental in their planning and execution, ensuring maximum engagement with the local community and hands-on experiences in local educational contexts.

Additionally, **through the MEP, Nura Gili programs are promoted among the MSHS and La Perouse communities, which resulted in two MSHS Aboriginal students attending the Pre-Programs in 2020 (one in Social Work, and one in Science and Engineering), both of whom received an offer to study at UNSW. One issue that has arisen is an interest among Aboriginal school employees, parents and other community members to continue their educations.**

Faculty Indigenous Strategy

As part of a commitment to improve UNSW's structures and processes, the MEP Program Manager sits on the Faculty of Arts, Design & Architecture (previously Arts & Social Sciences) Indigenous Strategy Working Group, which is made up of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff working to support the Associate Dean Indigenous, Dr BJ Newton, and the Faculty Indigenous strategy. This role particularly centres on local community engagement via the relationships built through existing MEP activities, and improving education delivery across the Faculty in terms of cultural reflexivity and inclusion of Indigenous knowledges and perspectives.

Reflections and recommendations:

Because of strong and long-standing relationships with the AECG, the MEP's activities around Aboriginal community engagement are among its most successful initiatives. In particular, the Cultural Residents Project, Culturally Nourishing Schools Project, and MTeach Immersion are flagship examples of success that many groups around Australia could turn to as they seek to improve their practices.

We can still improve Indigenous student preparation and aspiration to attend university (whether at UNSW or elsewhere) through better support across their high school years and a closer relationship with Nura Gili.

Recommendations include:
1. Continue to prioritise future funding for the Cultural Residents project.
2. Return the M Teach Immersion to face-to-face delivery.
3. Work with Nura Gili Future Students team and School of Education advisors on pathways for Aboriginal community members working in local schools to attend USNW as mature-age students (e.g. for an Aboriginal Education Officer to continue their education to pursue a teaching qualification while continuing to work).
4. Reinstate ability to purchase gift cards from UNSW funds. These have provided a valuable source of honoraria for Aboriginal Elders and community members who contribute time and expertise to our events and projects but who may not be able to or want to be paid by invoice or casual employment.

Many of these ideas will be difficult to implement without further resourcing.

MSHS Parent Community

For the second year in a row, MSHS conducted a Tell Them From Me Parent Survey. Results in most areas declined from the previous year, which may have to do with the strains of Covid-19 arrangements, the difficulty of remote schooling and reduced extracurricular activities which drew many families to the school.

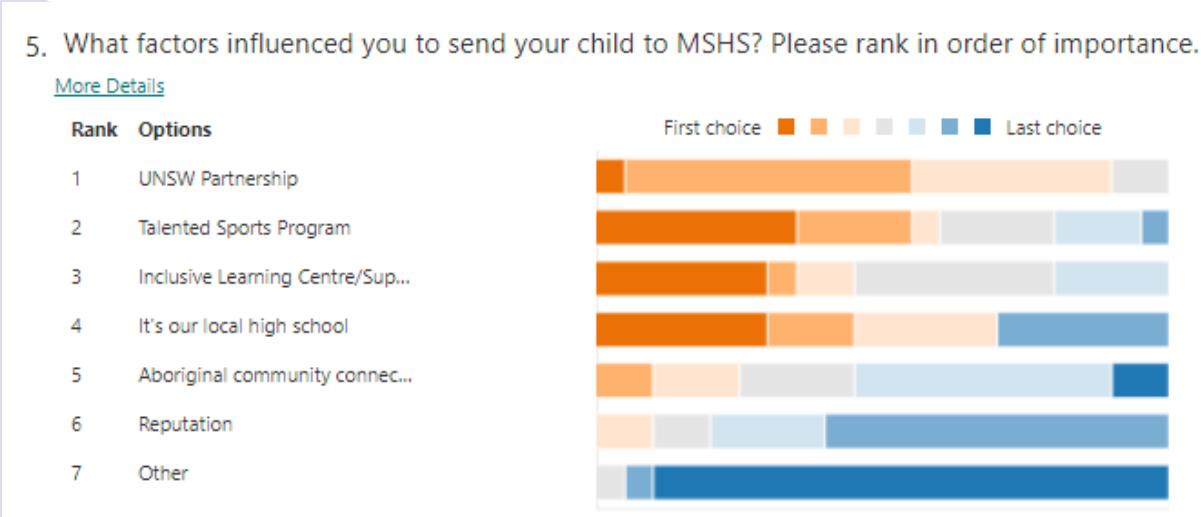
Interestingly, none of the respondents identified as being on the P&C or having any involvement in school committees or volunteering. Despite a lack of formal involvement, **the school performed well around being inclusive and keeping parents informed**:

	2019		2020	
	MSHS	State	MSHS	State
Parents feel welcome	8.3	7.4	7.1	7.4
Inclusive school	7.4	6.7	6.7	6.7
Safety at school	7.9	7.4	6.6	7.4
School supports positive behaviour	8.1	7.7	6.7	7.7
School supports learning	8.0	7.3	6.5	7.3
Parents support learning at home	6.7	6.3	6.0	6.3
Parents are informed	8.3	6.6	7.2	6.6

While all areas declined, the weakest area remained in parent support for learning at home, with fewer parents than average saying they “discuss how well your child is doing in his or her classes”, “talk about how important schoolwork is”, “ask about any challenges your child might have at school”, or “take an interest in your child’s school assignments”. This is interesting as these are results from parent self-reporting, not teacher perception.

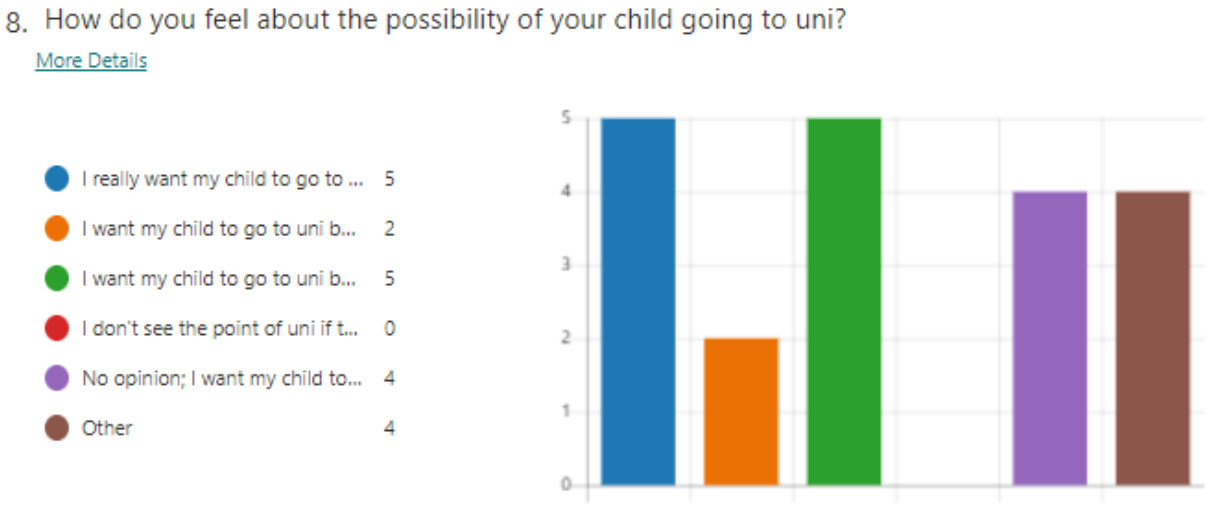
Other items of interest from this survey are that **64% of parents report that their child is at their first choice of public school, and 93% agree that students with special needs are made to feel welcome**. **61% of parents would recommend the school to others.**

No MEP events were held for parents due to Covid-19 measures, though the Program Manager recorded a Zoom presentation for Year 7 Orientation and distributed a parent survey which received 20 responses. Of interest from this survey were that the UNSW Partnership was not the number one reason parents chose to send their children to MSHS, but it was very likely to be the second or third ranked reason – this makes sense given the school’s other specialised offerings such as the Talented Sports Program and Inclusive Learning Centre.



Among the different Partnership activities listed, parents were most aware of afterschool programs, UNSW students assisting in classes, and excursions to UNSW.

The majority of parents who responded expressed an interest in their children going to university. However, a significant number expressed concerns about how to afford it (orange bar) and whether their child would succeed academically if they were to go to uni (green bar).



Parents reported that their opinion of both UNSW and MSHS had improved because of the Partnership, which is encouraging, as improving public perception of the school has long been one of our goals. **80% of parents recognise that their child gets opportunities they wouldn't get at another school because of the Partnership, and 90% of parents are happy with their decision to send their child to MSHS:**
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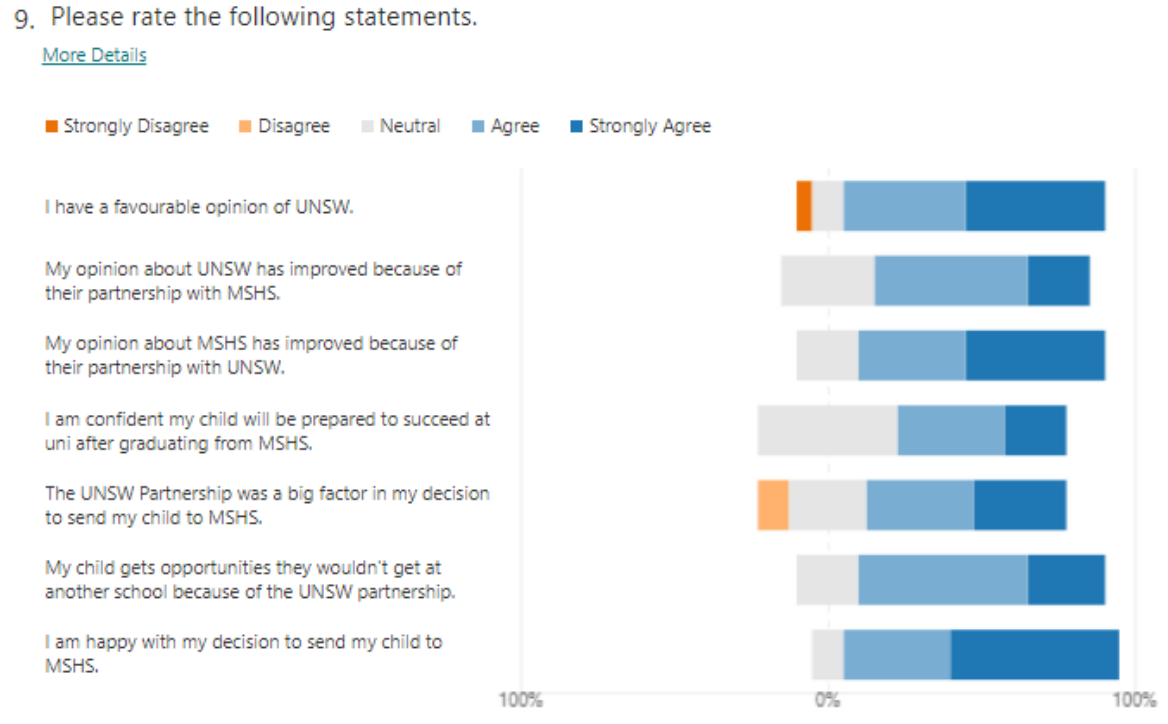


Parents also weighed in on what sorts of programming they would like to see from the MEP in the future, **with a substantial proportion expressing interest in workshops to learn more about uni**, how to support their child to get in to uni, and what attending uni would be like for their child. Several parents also expressed they would like support for parents of children with special needs who want to attend uni.

Comments about the most valuable things about the UNSW Partnership include:

- *Helping the kids with their education. Reassuring them that they are good enough to attend university.*
- *Learning opportunities from both parties.*
- *A possible academic pathway for children*
- *My son really enjoys the support of the homework club and has a positive outlook on school as well as attending university.*
- *The scope of opportunities offered*
- *In-class teacher and student support.*
- *I think it's terrific promoting academic links within the school known for sports*

Ways the parents thought the Partnership could be improved were through further programming for parents, better access to university pathways for their students, and better communication about MEP offerings.

Reflections and recommendations:

These comments from parents reinforce the importance of improving our communications, ability to publicise our offerings, and ability to build relationships with the local community. These are all elements of the MEP that could be improved with more time/resourcing/staffing but which are difficult to address under current arrangements despite them being one of our three strategic priorities.

It is helpful to know how to focus our efforts with any resources we do have, and that parents are interested in what they can do to support their children to attend university.

Strategic Priority 3: Engage UNSW with the Matraville teaching community and build capacity to raise low-SES and Indigenous student outcomes

Initial Teacher Education

A record total of 110 UNSW undergraduate education students completed a 15-day placement in 2020 for their EDST2002: Professional Engagement (this is the first official placement in a school as part of their Bachelor of Education). An additional 15 Master of Teaching students began the In-school Teacher Education Program (INSTEP) before Covid-19 meant the placement had to be withdrawn. Four students completed longer-term placements for Professional Experience 1 toward the end of the year when these placements were allowed again. As many schools were still not open to teacher education students, the students who attended in the latter half of 2020 were very grateful for the opportunity and went above and beyond to contribute to the Matraville community. Despite some of them having extreme commutes (one lived in Newcastle!) they maintained positivity and professionalism and developed strong group rapport.

Oversight of these cohorts of UNSW students was largely conducted by Michael Graham, the MEP School-based Coordinator in 2020. Michael conducted a variety of orientation activities and organised the students to contribute to special projects such as AVID Passion Projects and assisting the school Learning Support Team with Quicksmart tutoring. There were some MSHS staff who were wary of hosting a large concentration of UNSW students after the challenges of Covid-19, and ameliorating factors were implemented such as the students using the UNSW building as their “staff room” in which to spend breaks and lunch, so as not to contribute to crowding in MSHS staff rooms.

Feedback summarised in this report focuses on the EDST2002 undergraduate cohort as the most substantial group hosted by MSHS.

Professional Engagement Student Feedback

Of the 110 Professional Engagement students placed at MSHS across the year, 42 completed a voluntary end-of-semester evaluation of their experience (38% response rate).

In addition to an array of short-answer questions, students were asked to rate 11 statements on a Likert scale of 1-10 (1 = Strongly Disagree; 10 = Strongly Agree):

Student responses about their in-school experience varies from year to year as expectations can vary. In 2020, **feedback across most areas improved.** This may be attributable to the personal attention received by the Site-based Coordinator and the general enthusiasm and gratefulness displayed by this cohort of students to be able to complete their prac given all the challenges of the year when many schools were not accepting any teacher education students. We are extremely happy that **96% of students reported that the teaching staff were helpful and made them feel welcome,** as this has been a measure we have worked hard to improve over the years of the partnership.

Survey item	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Gain or loss
I had a positive experience overall in my Matraville placement.	75%	87%	100%	73%	86%	+13%
The teaching staff at the school were helpful and made me feel welcome.	80%	88%	100%	80%	96%	+16%
This placement helped me confirm whether teaching is the right career choice for me.	80%	79%	100%	73%	92%	+19%
This placement helped prepare me to teach students from diverse backgrounds.	75%	79%	100%	87%	88%	+1%
This placement taught me a lot about behaviour management in the classroom.	70%	71%	100%	100%	81%	-19%
This placement taught me about the role of student relationships and wellbeing in schooling.	80%	79%	95%	73%	96%	+23%
I learned a lot about teaching from this placement.	65%	79%	95%	73%	96%	+23%
This placement helped prepare me to teach students with a range of abilities.	75%	79%	90%	60%	88%	+28%
The afterschool programs were a valuable part of my experience.	65%	58%	75%	47%	48%	+1%

Comments on findings:
Student responses indicate that their time at Matraville was a valuable learning experience and that they were made to feel welcome at the school. The placement prepared them with practical experience to address the great variety of student backgrounds they will encounter in their careers. More neutral or negative comments related to students being required to attend after school activities when sometimes there were not enough MSHS students who needed their help, and some responses were generally neutral rather than negative to a range of questions. A few comments addressed the large numbers of students placed at the school all at once, with some students feeling that staff were overwhelmed, that there were more UNSW students than were needed for certain activities, or that their experience was not as personal as it might otherwise have been. Surprisingly, **the majority of comments about the numbers of fellow UNSW students were positive**, with many students finding value in the sense of community built among their peers. Many of them said they finally have made friends within their degree program and built relationships that they had not been able to forge in classes prior to this placement.

Thanks and credit must be extended to Matraville Sports High School staff for welcoming the UNSW students and providing them with guidance in this initial professional teaching context, supporting and enhancing pre-service teachers' learning.

Qualitative student comments:

- *The experience has been insightful and enjoyable. During placement it felt like I had an impact on the students and the students were friendly so they weren't hard to get along with. I love how we were given a variety of opportunities during placement such as joining other faculties, participating in the inclusive learning centre, participating in programs and tutoring etc. I really was able to get a lot out of the placement at Matraville, thank you so much for giving me an opportunity for that!*
- *Rewarding. It helped me to solidify my decision to become a teacher.*
- *Really impressed by how supportive and accommodating teaching staff were to preservice teachers*

- *Could not have been a better practical experience.*
- *The experience was very lovely. The school executed placement wonderfully during such challenging time.*
- *Matraville is an incredibly rich school with a lot of learning opportunities. The students are great to work with and the staff are very inviting and I felt included while at MSHS.*
- *Overall I had a positive experience at MSHS. The teachers made me feel welcome, I was able to participate in the classroom and most students gave me the same respect as the other teachers. I made positive and respectful relationships with the students and I really enjoyed helping and learning in a practical environment.*
- *It was really interesting to experience being in the role of a teacher for the first time. I learned a lot about what it takes to effectively be a good role model for students and promote engagement and fun during learning.*
- *I really enjoyed my placements at Matraville. Despite the travel, it was fortunate that I was able to learn so much from a school with multiple learning programs especially the inclusive learning department which has made me further look into special needs learning. I'm also appreciate that I was able to further connect with my student teacher peers.*
- *Very good experience, as an international student it is my first chance to step into real Aussie high schools and i learned a lot.*
- *An enjoyable placement showing a high school very different to the one I attended.*

Reflections and recommendations:

The results seen from pre-service teachers' experience at Matraville are among the strongest outcomes of the MEP. The aim of improving UNSW teacher education and the teaching community at large is being achieved through equipping these students with diverse practical experiences and through teachers having positive experiences of mentoring incoming members of the profession.

Given the feedback about numbers of UNSW students, it will be important to retain the elements of group cohesion and social support that so many students found valuable, such as the School-based Coordinator regularly checking in with each day's cohort, while also being careful not to overwhelm the school with pre-service teachers in a way that negatively impacts on the experience of either the school or the UNSW students.

MSHS Teacher Experience and Capacity Building

Tell Them From Me Survey

MSHS teachers, like parents and students, completed a Department of Education Tell Them From Me survey. While many items measured by this survey do not relate directly to the MEP, some findings are interesting. For example, on the question of whether teachers set high expectations for student learning, teachers' responses averaged 8.2; students' averaged 7.0 (aligned with the state norm), and parents' averaged 6.1.

Discouragingly, only 20% of teachers agree that staff morale at the school is good, and less than half of teachers (48%) believe that school leaders clearly communicate their strategic vision and values for the school. The stress of 2020 may have a lot to do with these numbers, as well as the fact that there was turnover in many key positions, including the Deputy and several Head Teacher positions, meaning that many faculties had a colleague relieving in these positions. This can mean workloads are temporarily higher and middle leaders are learning on the job without sufficient training.

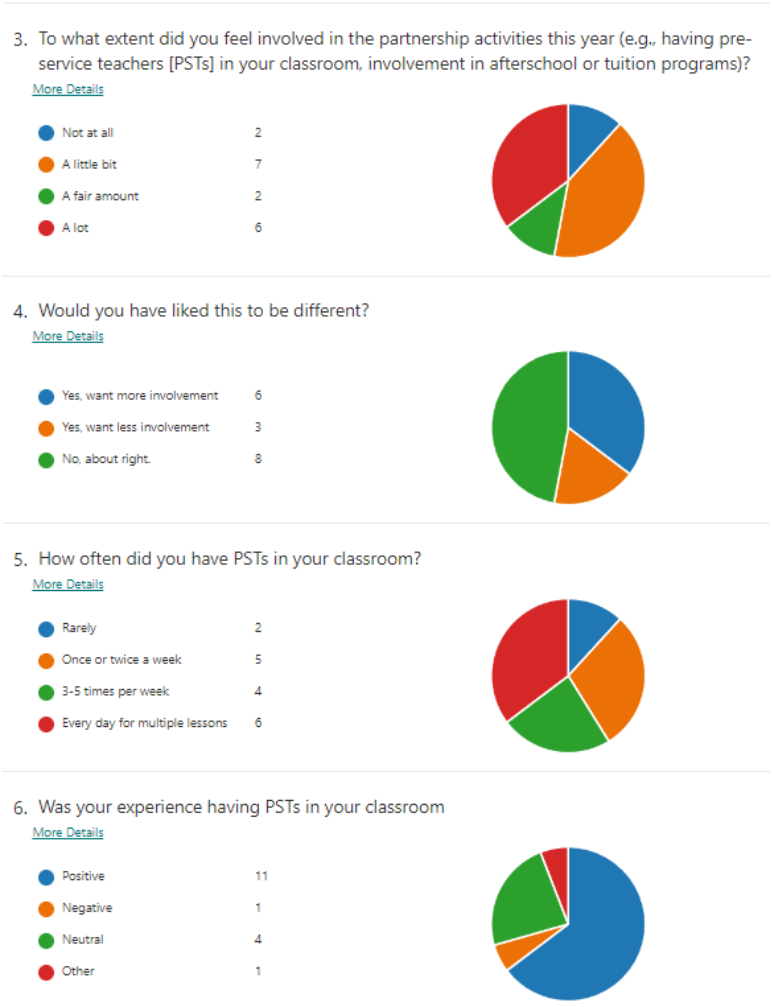
Reflections and recommendations:

It is important that UNSW and the MEP staff reflect on our processes to ensure we are not creating extra burdens for already-stressed teachers. Relationships with people and familiarity with various dynamics at play within the school community are imperative for the success of this partnership. These challenging issues also illustrate where future UNSW professional learning or mentoring could be of value, such as that being undertaken as part of the Culturally Nourishing Schools Project (including support for school leaders as they craft a new strategic vision) or revisiting the Mentoring and Coaching modules presented to all staff a few years ago.

MEP Survey

In late 2020 Matraville staff members were emailed a survey seeking feedback on the UNSW Matraville Education Partnership undertakings that occurred that year. They were asked to reflect on their experience of having pre-service teachers (PSTs) in their classroom, professional learning opportunities and their attitudes toward the school.

In terms of their experiences with PSTs and involvement in MEP activities, **very few teachers wanted less involvement, and 65% had positive experiences with working with PSTs. 59% of teachers reported that they used more group work and interactive teaching strategies when they worked with PSTs,** or that students were able to receive more individualised help.



Teachers were asked to rate 10 statements on a Likert scale of 1-5 (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree).

Most items were positive, with the strongest being:

Survey item	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Gain or loss
The UNSW partnership adds value/is beneficial to our school	96% agree	96% agree	97% agree	100% agree	100% agree	88% agree	-12%
I am proud to say I work at Matraville	96% agree	88% agree	97% agree	100% agree	82% agree	88% agree	+6%
Matraville students have benefited from the partnership	87.5% agree	92% agree	90% agree	94% agree	91% agree	94%	+3%
I felt I was able to share valuable knowledge and experience with the PSTs I worked with	82% agree	75% agree	90% agree	76% agree	100% agree	82% agree	-18%

The most evident areas for improvement are:

Survey item	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Gain or loss
The UNSW partnership has allowed me to update my skills/pursue professional learning opportunities	45.5% agree	44% agree	43% agree	69% agree	55% agree	41% agree	-14%
It is useful having a UNSW staff member on site at our school.	74% agree	96% agree	80% agree	100% agree	91% agree	59% agree	-32%
I feel my voice is valued by those administrating the partnership	63% agree	64% agree	52% agree	82% agree	82% *agree*	53% agree	-29%
Working with PSTs has helped me feel more energised/engaged with the teaching profession						53% agree	(new measure)

Reflections and recommendations:

Teachers need to feel their voice is valued by those administrating the Partnership, and this could speak to general low staff morale in 2020 as well as the need for more frequent touchpoints for evaluation and reflection, and to show them that we are using their feedback. One teacher's qualitative comments make a case that time spent with PSTs should be considered registered Professional Learning and that teachers should receive time release so they can plan and reflect with these students: "Perhaps next year teachers with PSTs could be given an allocation of time to recover and reflect on the experience and time to chat to the PSTs in depth and with a clear set of goals to enrich the experience for both PST and teacher."

This is a worthwhile suggestion, but one that will be hard to actualise given resourcing constraints and new restrictions on NESA-accredited PL.

These areas for improvement make sense in light of the changed conditions seen in 2020. Very little professional learning was offered by UNSW and across the board, providers are just starting to offer online sessions as a matter of course. Additionally, the changeover in UNSW staff and reduced hours for the MEP Program Manager, as well as remote working for a good part of the year, probably impacted the perceived usefulness of that position at the school.

Participation in Professional Learning

As mentioned previously, Covid-19 severely impacted on UNSW's ability to offer professional learning courses or for MSHS teachers to access these courses for free or reduced rates, as has been the practice in previous years.

However, toward the end of the year, several activities were able to take place. In her role as incoming Director of the MEP, Dr Karen Maras offered two sessions to the full staff of MSHS during staff meetings: an update on the NSW Curriculum Review and a workshop on integrating the ACARA General Capabilities in teaching. This was in addition to her work as "Academic in Residence" where, through her Mentoring Project, Dr Maras met regularly with MSHS Early Career Teachers on areas they identified for further development and support. This involved meetings as a community of practice and structured observations and feedback sessions.

Additionally, two staff members from the Inclusive Learning Centre were able to access the two-day "Supporting Students with Autism" modules offered online by the UNSW School of Education.

Free professional learning through UNSW undertaken by staff in 2020:

Number of Staff	Course	Topic
40	NSW Curriculum Review: Terms of reference, recommendations and progress so far	Education policy, curriculum
40	Integrating General Capabilities in Learning and Teaching	Curriculum and pedagogy
1	Supporting Students With Autism in Your Class	Special needs education
2	Culturally Nourishing Schools – leadership forum	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education
6	Early Career Teacher Mentoring	various

Comment from MEP teacher survey:

I benefited from attending special education based PL. I would like development in the following areas: 1) Delivery and assessment of NSW Curriculum; 2) Students with disability; 3) Aboriginal education and supporting Aboriginal students and 4) Student mental health.

Reflections and recommendations:

If the teacher's comments above are representative of others' needs as well, UNSW is well-poised to offer PL in these areas in 2021 and beyond. With Dr Karen Maras as "Academic in Residence" the school has access to someone well versed in NSW curriculum and assessment, and participating in the Culturally Nourishing Schools project will see much more direct professional learning about supporting Aboriginal students.

Support unit teachers have worked closely with UNSW Special Education academics in the past, and this could be extended more to involve teachers in the mainstream who would like to further their skills in supporting students with disability.

The MEP Program Manager and UNSW Professional Learning Coordinator are having discussions to streamline processes around MSHS teachers accessing PL and to ensure that appropriate opportunities are publicised.

Publicity

In 2020 the following MEP related activities received positive publicity and the community impact of the partnership was spotlighted.

Links to selected media:

5-Mar-2020	UNSW Website	Academic adversity does not guarantee resilience in high school students	https://newsroom.unsw.edu.au/news/social-affairs/academic-adversity-does-not-guarantee-resilience-high-school-students
2-Jun-2020	UNSW Donor Impact Report	Stan Cowper and David Barnsdall: A Lifetime of Giving	https://www.alumni.giving.unsw.edu.au/stan-cowper-and-david-barnsdall-lifetime-friendship-and-giving
12-Jun-2020	GO Foundation Blog	Yarn with GO: Yarraan Doyle	https://www.gofoundation.org.au/blog/yarn/yarraan-doyle/
25-Jun-2020	RN Breakfast	Are students learning enough about Indigenous history?	https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/are-students-learning-enough-about-indigenous-history/12390722
25-Jun-2020	GO Foundation Blog	Yarn with GO: Jamie-Lee	https://www.gofoundation.org.au/blog/yarn/jamie-lee/
17-09-2020	UNSW Newsroom	A tale of the Three Little Pigs and their low-cost solar energy wows judges in 3 Minute Thesis Final	https://newsroom.unsw.edu.au/news/students/tale-three-little-pigs-and-their-low-cost-solar-energy-wows-judges-3-minute-thesis

Reflections and recommendations:

These instances of publicity for the MEP are positive, and the school enrolment numbers are growing (345 in 2020; a gain of 100 students since the commencement of the partnership). However, more can always be done, and as is a recurring theme in other sections of this report, better resourcing of the MEP would enable both more outreach to UNSW and external media units as well as more new activity to warrant media attention and publicity.

Summary of Strengths and Challenges

This report has highlighted many notable strengths of the Partnership, including:

- Providing meaningful learning experiences for UNSW education students; preparing them to be effective teachers of diverse students
- Building positive perception about MSHS and UNSW among the Matraville community, including teachers and parents
- Collaboration and community engagement which support key research and teaching initiatives, particularly with regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education initiatives
- Several success stories among MSHS students, e.g. admission to UNSW and receiving scholarships

Resourcing for the MEP is the principal challenge faced, which is reflective of the broader university environment in 2020 as a result of Covid-19, but was an issue even before the financial pressures of the pandemic. The Program Manager's role was only renewed for a one year contract following her return from maternity leave, and is due for renewal in June 2021. The current activities of the MEP can be maintained by the Program Manager working 0.4FTE with the support of the MSHS staff site coordinator, but this has proven to be just enough time to cover the reduced level of business-as-usual activities under Covid restrictions. It is not sufficient resourcing to reflect, plan, or implement new initiatives.

In last year's report we highlighted the change in strategic directions, stating that the MEP "has now grown to be a UNSW-wide program which works in tandem with other university programs to ensure greater equity, access and success for low SES and Indigenous students… At the same time the number of research and development projects hosted by the partnership, and the need for community outreach, have both increased significantly." **While many aspects of the MEP are flourishing, particularly in the areas of pre-service teacher experience, research, and community engagement, the actual translation into access to uni for low-SES and Indigenous students is a major area to be strengthened.**

Ideas for future focus

If time and other resourcing allow in 2021 and beyond, we hope to pursue the following ideas/projects/initiatives.

- In-depth follow-up with recent MSHS graduates from the last 4 years – students who experienced MEP activities while at high school – to understand reasons for their post-school decisions – why they did or did not attend uni (and UNSW in particular), what factors enabled or constrained their ability to either attend uni or remain there if admitted.
- Parent workshops/offerings to help support their children's admission to or success at uni
- Mature-age student clinic/outreach: one-on-one support for local community members – primarily parents and non-teaching staff in local schools such as AEOs – about their options for further study

- Microcredentialing and transfer into M.Ed. degrees – work with MSHS and LBCOS staff on further PL options and support those who may wish to pursue an M.Ed. or research degree to enrol at UNSW
- UNSW School of Education “hot desk” at Matraville so staff members other than the Program Manager can get to know the programs and community
- Informing UNSW committees and processes around low-SES and Indigenous student recruitment and retention based on the experiences of Matraville students and local community engagement via the Partnership
- In-depth literacy support for MSHS students who arrive from primary school with significant literacy difficulties. Nerida Walker has prospects for a collaboration that would involve academics and students from University of Sydney as well as for the UNSW students undertaking placements at Matraville
- Revive in-person M Teach Indigenous Immersion and Nura Gili Pre-Education Programs supported by on-the-ground collaborations with MSHS staff and students and local AECG.
- Revive pre-Covid initiatives such as in-person excursions to UNSW, Maths Ambassadors volunteer program, Work Experience offerings at UNSW
- Revive quarterly newsletter for parents and wider community subscribers
- Make connections with UNSW teaching staff from a range of departments who are open to have MSHS students visit their lectures or tutorials as a uni “taster”, and implement excursion program
- Work with Development Manager and UNSW Sport and Scholarships representatives to offer clear pathways for elite sporting scholarships for MSHS students to attend UNSW.