

What Works Best 2025

Illustration of practice

Effective feedback at Cabramatta High School

Cabramatta High School provides structured opportunities for students to meaningfully reflect and act on feedback. The school uses feedback processes that position students as active participants in their learning across all year groups and faculties. These practices contribute to a positive feedback culture where feedback is seen as an opportunity for growth. The school also uses verbal feedback and technology to provide feedback that is timely and time efficient.

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

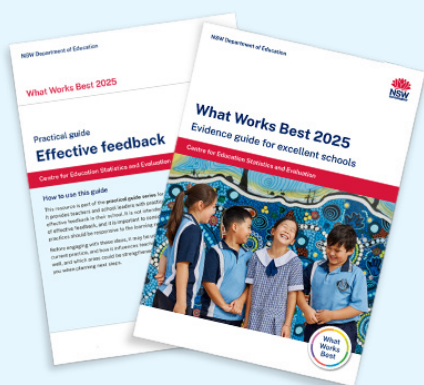


How to use this resource

This resource is part of the illustrations of practice series for What Works Best 2025. It provides teachers and school leaders with descriptions of some of the key strategies used at Cabramatta High School to implement effective feedback. It is not intended to capture all aspects of effective feedback at the school, and it is important for readers of this resource to consider how strategies and practices should be responsive to the learning needs and goals of students in their own school.

Teachers and school leaders can read, consider, discuss and implement strategies highlighted in this illustration of practice and its accompanying resources as part of school-developed High Impact Professional Learning (HIPL). The appropriate time to use this resource may differ for each school, leader and teacher.

Other What Works Best 2025 resources on effective feedback



- What Works Best 2025 evidence guide for excellent schools – Chapter 3: Effective feedback
- What Works Best 2025 practical guide – Effective feedback



School details

- Cabramatta High School is a comprehensive co-educational high school for Years 7 to 12 located on Cabrogal land in south-west Sydney.
- The school has 1,600 students, including an Intensive English Centre with an enrolment of approximately 170 students and a Special Education Unit for approximately 50 students. The Special Education Unit comprises 2 mild intellectual (IM) classes, 2 moderate intellectual (IO) classes and a moderate intellectual disability/autism (IO/AU) class.
- The majority of students (96%) come from a language background other than English, with 47% of students learning English as another language or dialect (EAL/D). Currently, there are 77 students who come from a refugee background.
- The school has a FOEI of 155,¹ with 64% of students in the lowest quartile of socio-educational advantage.² Cabramatta High School receives substantial equity funding to support the additional learning needs of its students and to reduce the impact of disadvantage on student outcomes.
- NAPLAN results for Years 7 and 9 were above or well above similar schools in all domains in 2023 and 2024. The school's HSC top 3 band rate has improved in the past year, increasing from 48.6% in 2023 to 54.8% in 2024. The school is also rated as Excelling in Value added 9-12, indicating above average growth from NAPLAN 9 to HSC compared to demographically similar schools.
- There are 130 full-time equivalent (FTE) teaching staff, most of whom are experienced teachers. School leaders report that staff turnover is low and 14 teachers are former students of the school.
- The school engages different cohorts and populations of students through its Aboriginal Education Committee (comprised of 12 staff members) and dedicated roles such as a speech pathologist, a school psychologist, a student support officer (SSO) and 19 school learning support officers (SLSOs), a refugee support teacher and 3 community liaison officers (CLOs) who provide language and cultural support to Chinese, Vietnamese, Khmer and Pacific Islander students and families.³
- Cabramatta High School prides itself on its strong community partnerships to support its highly aspirational learners, bolstered by its highly collaborative school culture.

1 Family Occupation and Education Index (FOEI) is a school-level index of educational disadvantage related to socioeconomic background. The average FOEI value is 100. A higher FOEI value indicates a higher level of disadvantage.

2 Distribution of socio-educational advantage (SEA) school-level data was obtained in March 2025 from My School, ACARA.

3 For the purposes of this and other What Works Best practical guides and illustrations of practice, 'families' includes biological parents, adoptive parents, step-parents, legal guardians, kin carers, out-of-home (foster) carers, extended family members and other significant adults with caring responsibilities.

Strategy 1: Structured opportunities support students to meaningfully reflect and act on feedback

Cabramatta High School dedicates time and provides structured opportunities to enhance students' engagement with feedback. One example is the scheduling of one-on-one NAPLAN feedback sessions for Years 7 and 9 students. The school implemented this strategy following concerns that many students did not understand and were not engaging with their NAPLAN results. The one-on-one sessions are scheduled immediately following the release of individual student reports and take place over 2 days. To minimise disruptions to student learning, the sessions are run in a structured timetable format with set class groups scheduled to attend during a particular period.

The NAPLAN feedback sessions are run by teachers, including year advisors, learning and support teachers and representatives from the English and mathematics faculties. Each one-on-one session lasts approximately 10 minutes, during which teachers run through the results with students to ensure they have a clear understanding, and support students to create a learning plan to improve their future performance. Student autonomy drives the learning plans as students identify (with guidance from teachers) their strengths and areas for improvement as indicated by the NAPLAN results.

As well as supporting students to understand and reflect on their NAPLAN results, the feedback sessions can serve as a springboard for other discussions. For example, teachers can inform high-achieving students about potential scholarships, enrichment programs and other opportunities that might interest them. During discussions, students may also disclose potential wellbeing concerns, which then allows

teachers to take appropriate next steps in response. The learning plans are uploaded to Sentral so that teachers and the school's Data and Student Engagement committee can use them as a potential point of reference when determining how to best to support a student's strengths and needs. Following the NAPLAN feedback sessions, the school runs masterclass workshops for students that focus on overall areas for improvement in key areas of literacy and numeracy identified from NAPLAN data analysis.

Cabramatta High School's English faculty also harnesses the school's strategic timetabling to organise structured feedback sessions for Stage 6 students. For example, English Advanced students all have English scheduled in the same periods. To provide assessment feedback, the faculty runs a whole-of-cohort feedback workshop in the school's hall during a double period. The faculty implemented the workshops to ensure consistency in the feedback being provided to all classes. Teachers collaborate to create PowerPoint presentations, contributing slides that address the respective sections of the assessment they marked. During the workshops, marked assessments are returned to students, and teachers deconstruct exemplar responses and share common successes and areas for improvement.



Practice point: Sharing best feedback practice through cross-faculty and within-faculty collaboration

“Feedback needs to be something which we have the opportunity to work on together as a school leadership team, but it’s also important that different faculties and teams in the school also have the opportunity and flexibility to bring their professional expertise to consider and discuss what effective feedback looks like in their subject context.”

Lachlan Erskine, Principal

School leaders attribute part of Cabramatta High School’s success in providing students with effective feedback to their approach of sharing best practice through collaboration. Quality feedback is embedded throughout all 3 strategic directions of the school’s School Excellence Plan, which helps guide and focus whole-school collaboration efforts.

Cross-faculty collaboration can be a challenge for large school contexts. One way Cabramatta High School is able to facilitate this is by strategically allocating funding and time to run an annual executive conference. Held across 1.5 days, the executive conference is an effective way of creating time for school executive and head teachers to discuss topics that reflect whole-school priorities – effective feedback was one of the focuses for 2024. The conference allows head teachers to share practices that are working well in their respective faculties.

Following the annual executive conference, head teachers use scheduled faculty meetings to involve teachers in the implementation of promising new practices and refinement of established practices. This includes collaborating on adjustments needed to make practices suitable for different key learning areas and stages.

Teachers describe the whole-of-cohort feedback workshops as an effective way of ensuring consistency of feedback across large student bodies. Dedicating time for the workshops is also an efficient way of delivering timely feedback. The workshop preparation process also helps ensure all teachers are aware of common areas for improvement. This can help teachers make responsive adjustments in their lessons, and also informs practice workshops the faculty offers to help students prepare for their HSC examinations.

“With the post-assessment workshops there’s equity with the feedback. Students would be saying to us, ‘Oh, this teacher gives more feedback than this teacher here.’ So the workshops achieve better equity between the classes.”

Andrew Simpson, Head Teacher, English

Strategy 2: Prioritising feedback processes that support student agency

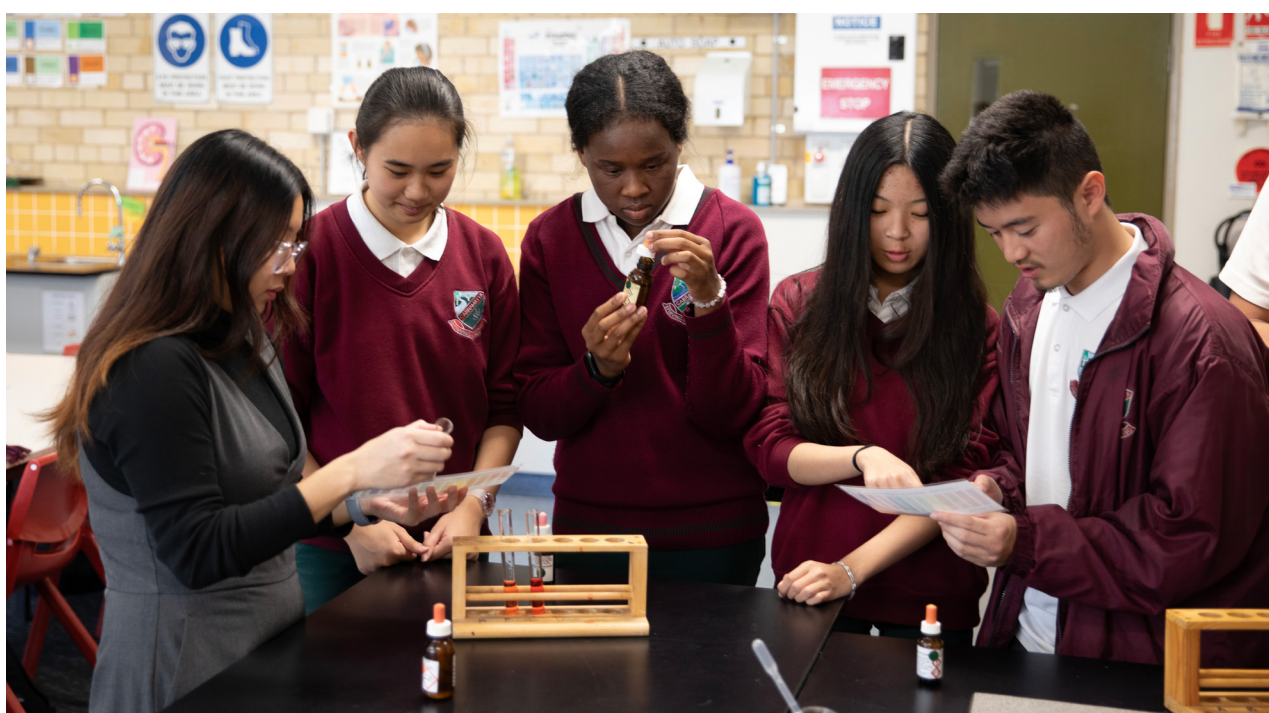
Cabramatta High School uses feedback processes that position students as active participants in their learning across all year groups and faculties. One way the school achieves this is through the mathematics faculty's use of annotated marking rubrics which contain detailed solutions and sample responses. When students – across all stages – receive their exam papers back, teachers allocate time in class for them to cross-reference their work against the annotated rubric – this usually takes half a period for students in Stages 4 and 5, and a whole period for Stage 6 students. Students use these rubrics to self-identify areas of success and areas for improvement. To assist with this, teachers will also provide targeted annotations directly onto students' papers where there are misconceptions or 'grey areas' that require further explanation to supplement the sample responses.

Students can seek clarification if they still have questions after referring to the annotated marking rubric and annotations

on their response. During the time allocated for the feedback session, students can go to different classrooms to speak with teachers who marked specific sections. Teachers note that this process is well received, with students taking up the offer to proactively seek clarification or additional feedback from the marker. In particular, teachers observe that students, while motivated to seek additional marks, are also interested in discussing how they can improve their responses in the future.

“ [Students] will reflect on what they've done, they evaluate what they've done, and they will compare. ... And when you discuss things with students ... whether they get awarded an additional mark or not, what usually comes out of it is a discussion about what they could possibly work on in the future to improve their response so they are more accurate with their answers and they can get a better result ... even if we award them the mark we say, 'All right, this is valid. I did not understand your working. In the future, you can write your responses more concisely by laying it out like this ...' ”

Peter Chau, Head Teacher, Mathematics



Practice point: Returning assessment marks after students have engaged in self-assessment

“ [Students] usually just look at the mark – they’re excited or they’re disappointed, and that’s where it ends. They don’t tend to pay much attention to the feedback we provide even though that’s what really helps them improve. That’s why we changed our approach – we no longer hand the marks out with the returned papers. Instead, students are required to review and reflect on their work with reference to the marking criteria and guidelines, and to mark their own work first. Only then they receive their actual marks. Afterwards, they are also encouraged to reflect on the accuracy of their self-assessment.”

Linh Nguyen, Head Teacher, Languages Other Than English (LOTE)

“ Teacher feedback is good but I’ve been teaching for a number of years and if you’re going through a big exam [to give feedback] it might take 2 periods and then the eyes start to glaze over ... you wonder how much did the students actually understand or take in. I’m trying to move more towards students engaging in self-assessment where they take on that responsibility.”

Lynette Nguyen, Head Teacher, EAL/D

Teachers also position Stage 6 students as active participants in their learning through the use of extensive scaffolding and exemplars to model how they can self-assess their work. For example, Vietnamese Continuers teachers first run through a presentation deconstructing sample responses at various levels of proficiency. This helps to set students up for success when undertaking self-assessment as it builds their understanding of what a high-quality answer looks like with reference to the marking rubric and success criteria. Students are required to complete their self-assessment prior to receiving their official marks.

Since prioritising scaffolded self-assessment, Vietnamese Continuers teachers have reported that students are engaging more with feedback and are also less likely to appeal their marks as they have gained a better understanding of the task requirements. Other faculties who have implemented self-assessment have also observed these impacts. English EAL/D teachers, having incorporated personal reflection as part of the self-assessment process, also found that students’ comments indicate a greater awareness of how to action the feedback to improve in future tasks. Teachers report that supporting student agency through these processes has contributed to a positive feedback culture where students appreciate the value of feedback as a means for growth, and are encouraged to seek, welcome and – most importantly – reflect on and act upon it.

Strategy 3: Using verbal feedback and technology to give timely and time-efficient feedback

Teachers at Cabramatta High School use a range of verbal feedback techniques to correct misunderstanding and errors as learning is happening. Teachers give verbal feedback to individuals or small groups of students when circulating the classroom to check on task progress, and give whole-class feedback if they notice common errors while circulating. In the Intensive English Centre, teachers also use choral response and cold calling when students are learning new vocabulary to check pronunciation and give immediate corrective feedback, and adapt their instruction in response to students' level of understanding and needs.

Teachers at Cabramatta High School also embrace technology to deliver timely feedback to students efficiently. For example, as part of Cabramatta High School's whole-school reading strategy, the HSIE faculty has used Reading Progress, a free tool on Microsoft Teams, to give students immediate feedback on components of their reading.⁴ The HSIE faculty worked collaboratively during scheduled faculty professional learning time to identify and plan texts that aligned with the scope and sequence of their units for Years 7 to 10.⁵ Using Reading Progress, students record themselves reading an assigned passage and receive immediate feedback on criteria such as accuracy and speed. This allows students to act on the feedback to improve their performance in a subsequent attempt. Reading Progress is also used to provide immediate feedback to students on their literal comprehension of the assigned passage. Students' inferential comprehension of the text is checked using

in-class tasks that are manually marked by teachers. Teachers can use recordings and other Reading Progress feedback alongside their in-class task results and observations to program 'challenge assignments' that offer additional practice in identified areas for improvement for the whole class.

“We initiated [Reading Progress] where we incorporated not just feedback, but the reading strategy that we are doing as a whole school. We thought we'd take it a step further where we can actually utilise 2 things as one. ... [Students] record themselves reading [a text] and get automatic feedback. ... We use the data not just to inform students on where they need to improve, but we [also] use it holistically to inform our future teaching practices. Each teacher monitors their class ... and we have seen improvement week to week from students utilising feedback [from Reading Progress].”

Adriana Mikulic, Head Teacher, HSIE

Teachers at the school also use Microsoft Teams to provide individual avenues for students and teachers to seek, provide and receive feedback. For instance, every Stage 6 student studying Society and Culture has their own separate Teams channel. Students can work with their teacher to refine their personal interest projects in the Teams channel, with teachers providing feedback in comments that students can action or respond to on live documents (for example, Google Docs). Students also have set in-person appointment times with their teacher to discuss their progress, achievements and areas for improvement. Teachers indicate that the use of technology ensures students receive timely feedback, has streamlined feedback processes and has assisted in managing teacher workload.

4 Refer to Technology 4 Learning's Microsoft Teams webpage for key considerations when using Reading Progress, including adjusting the pronunciation sensitivity settings to allow for varying accents, using it in conjunction with other reading assessments and not using it for summative assessments.

5 The school schedules fortnightly 50-minute faculty professional learning sessions after school hours.

Resources

Strategy 1:

- NSW Department of Education (2025) [Strategy learning module – using effective feedback \(PPTX 10.5 MB\)](#)

Strategy 2:

- NSW Department of Education (2025) [Peer and self-assessment for students](#)
- NSW Department of Education (2025) [Peer and self-feedback – technique guide \(PDF 685 KB\)](#)

Strategy 3:

- NSW Department of Education (2025) [Checking for understanding](#)
- NSW Department of Education (2025) [Teacher feedback – technique guide \(PDF 682 KB\)](#)
- Technology 4 Learning (n.d.) [Google resources](#)
- Technology 4 Learning (n.d.) [Microsoft Teams](#)

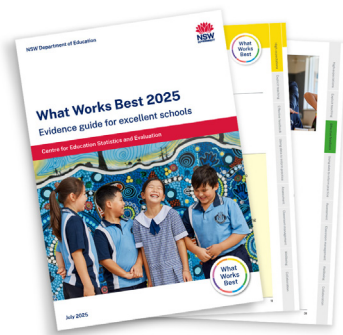


Access the full suite of What Works Best resources

What Works Best 2025 is a suite of resources for teachers and school leaders that outlines 8 effective practices that are known to improve student learning and wellbeing:

- high expectations
- explicit teaching
- effective feedback
- using data to inform practice
- assessment
- classroom management
- wellbeing
- collaboration.

The resources can be used individually or in conjunction with one another to implement evidence-based, quality teaching and learning practices and inform school excellence planning.



The What Works Best 2025 – Evidence guide for excellent schools provides an overview of the evidence that underpins each of the 8 themes.



The What Works Best practical guides translate evidence into practice by providing teachers and school leaders with practical ideas for implementing each of the themes in their classrooms and schools. The guides unpack not only ‘what’ should be done to successfully implement a theme, but also the ‘how’ and ‘why’.



The What Works Best illustrations of practice provide teachers and school leaders with examples of how some of our great schools from across NSW have implemented the themes.

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

GPO Box 33, Sydney NSW 2001, Australia

✉ info.cese@det.nsw.edu.au

🌐 education.nsw.gov.au/cese

🌐 yammer.com/det.nsw.edu.au

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