

Introducing Blaxland Public School

Blaxland Public School is a primary school located in the lower region of the Blue Mountains, Greater Western Sydney. It is a small school with approximately 130 students across Kindergarten to Year 6.

This case study describes how Blaxland Public School utilised the SunSmart Hat-Wearing Toolkit to help achieve 100% of students wearing SunSmart hats.

Identifying the challenge

The SunSmart project was championed by Relieving Principal, Mr Martin Zoglmeier.

Prior to the project, Blaxland Public School had around 80% of students wearing SunSmart hats and despite several attempts to improve SunSmart behaviours, could never seem to increase it much further.

“Students didn’t see the value of it and would only do it because the teachers were nagging them to – the moment we looked away, they’d take their hats off,” Martin said.

He explained that there were also different expectations across the school in the monitoring of hat wearing behaviour and inconsistencies in how often sun safety was taught.

“Teachers didn’t always wear a hat themselves on duty either, which the kids would see.”

Creating change

“The Action Plan and resources made it so much easier to start to teach kids those deeper understandings about UV. It was just a matter of ticking which aspects we would focus on and organising the resources into an order that would suit us,” Martin said.

“The PowerPoint presentation was a great place to start for reminding teachers of the importance of being a SunSmart teacher and role model for the kids.”

Strategies implemented to support SunSmart hats

- The ‘Got your hat?’ poster was displayed near the entrance of the school as a visual reminder when students and parents arrived.
- Educational posters were used at weekly whole school assemblies.
- SunSmart hat wearing was rewarded at a class level and individually, as part of the school’s Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) program.
- SunSmart communications were regularly inserted into school newsletters.
- Each class was provided with three spare hats, identified with a different coloured cord to ensure they were returned to the right class.
- All staff were offered a free school hat to support role modelling.

The result

“It didn’t take much before we started to see improvements – near the end of our trial period, it really took off and we were consistently hitting 99-100% hat wearing,” Martin said.

By starting off with the same message across the school, Martin explained that teachers were able to take the focus, such as UV facts and myths, back to the classroom and make it grade-specific.

“In English, we had the older students write persuasive text on the importance of SunSmart hats for the younger students. We had the message running through the whole curriculum, which was quite powerful,” he said.

“Now, kids are just grabbing their hats, we don’t have to remind them they are just doing it!”

The description of a SunSmart hat and the reasons for having a SunSmart hat as part of the school uniform is also included at Kinder orientation to inform new parents about the rule and they are happily purchasing one.

“All of the resources Cancer Council provided made that so much easier to achieve. We could aim for those high expectations, because we had the explicit teaching supported by the resources,” Martin said.

Advice from Blaxland

“Definitely use the resources, definitely have a plan and definitely don’t expect it to happen overnight. There’s no real quick fix when it comes to changing old habits. It takes time, and a bit of persistence and patience.

Make sure that all your staff are on board because if there are different expectations in different classes, kids can get confused.

Having a consistent whole school approach helps and is a great place to start.”



Martin Zoglmeier – Relieving Principal, Blaxland Public School