



Girton Grammar School

2022 Stakeholder Feedback Report March 2023

Introduction

Dear Parents and Carers,

Nurturing a culture of learning and growth for our students requires input from all members of the School community, including students, parents, and staff.

In 2022, Girton Grammar School took several steps to gather feedback from the community, including students, parents, and staff, through various channels such as surveys and focus groups. The purpose of seeking this feedback was to identify areas where the School could improve and make informed decisions to create the best possible learning environment for students.

The LEAD Survey, conducted by Independent Schools Victoria (ISV), was one of the ways in which the Girton community was invited to participate and provide feedback. This annual

survey measures the sentiment of students, parents, and staff and helps the school understand their perceptions and experiences.

The Principal's Focus Groups were another channel through which feedback was sought from the community. These sessions provided an opportunity for students, parents, and staff to share their thoughts on the school's strengths and challenges.

A number of feedback themes emerged in the 2022 LEAD Survey and Principal's Focus Groups, which are summarised in the following report. Each challenge raised by the Girton Community provided us with an opportunity for improvement, and we thank you sincerely for taking the time to share your thoughts.

Sincerely,

Dr Emma O'Rielly
Principal





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Highlights

The appreciation of our students for Girton's culture of learning and the diverse opportunities available to them were evident in both the LEAD Survey results and their participation in the Principal's Focus Groups.

Senior students reflected on their increased enjoyment of their subjects as they begin to select their educational pathways and expressed gratitude for the unwavering support of their teachers throughout their journey.

Numerous parents and carers highly value Girton's focus on academia, emotional intelligence, and school culture, in addition to the many co-curricular opportunities provided to students of all academic abilities. Some parents expressed that the "bar is set higher" at Girton than other schools, and students are "motivated and challenged to achieve more."

Many parents and carers believe that Girton provides a secure and welcoming environment for their children. Junior School parents value the RULER Programme and its emphasis on social and emotional learning, while Senior School parents appreciate the House system and the school's focus on student wellbeing. Several parents whose children transferred from other schools reported a seamless transition to Girton, and their children felt welcomed and included right away.

According to feedback, Girton's teachers and staff are motivated to instil a passion for learning in their students and take pride in seeing them thrive. Positive and supportive relationships are essential to Junior School staff, who value building strong

relationships with their colleagues and working together in the "pursuit of excellence." Teachers and staff report being delighted to see their students succeed and leave school happy, and they are inspired by feedback from parents such as "I never thought my child could do that."

Challenges & Opportunities

Purposeful and constructive feedback provides excellent insight and the opportunity for ongoing improvement, which is at the heart of a high-functioning school system.

Girton parents and carers raised a number of challenges and opportunities for the School, each of which has inspired action, as outlined below.

Junior School Parent and Carer involvement

Following social limitations during the peak of the COVID pandemic, Junior School parents and carers missed the opportunity to enter school grounds to drop off and collect their children. In particular, they longed for social interactions and "incidental" conversations with teachers and other parents that make them feel more connected with their children and the School community.

Next Steps

As the height of the pandemic has now subsided, the Junior School is pleased to welcome parents and carers back into the classroom this year. Parents are also welcome to attend Junior School Assembly on Fridays. There will be a number of events for Junior School parents to attend in 2023, including the Swimming and Athletics Carnivals

and Grandparents' and Special Friends' Day.

School Language Program

While many parents and carers appreciate the value in learning a language other than English, some questioned the compulsory nature of learning two languages in Junior School. Some parents would prefer their children to learn one language and "learn it well", rather than "spreading themselves thin" over three languages, i.e. two LOTE plus English.

Next Steps

The School is conducting a review of Girton's LOTE (Languages Other Than English) program from Prep to Year 10, which will include a Whitepaper compiled by Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) that researches best-practice for teaching languages other than English. The resulting recommendations will ensure Girton delivers an appropriate school-wide LOTE Program that maximises the benefits of developing literacy in more than one language balanced with the most effective use of class time.

School Communication

Parents and carers place great value on strong communication with the School, and we know from research that regular communication between teachers and parents is an important part of student success. Feedback from parents and carers revealed confusion about the current lines of communication with teachers and the School. Some parents find Girton's learning management system, Astra, difficult to navigate and are unsure about how they should expect to be notified about academic progress and important notices, and the best way to find the information they need.



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Next Steps

When schools foster healthy and strong partnerships and clear lines of communication with parents, students benefit greatly. Girton's Learning Management System, Astra, is a leading digital solution for Schools, and a single platform to connect, communicate, and collaborate with parents, teachers and students. However, work is needed to clarify lines of communication for parents and staff, and ensure all members of the Girton community are utilising Astra in the best way.

One of the fundamental roles of Astra is to enable connections and interactions between students, teachers and parents. Astra information sessions will be conducted for parents and carers to ensure they feel comfortable and confident using Astra and have their accounts set up to receive tailored notices and information. We will continue to work with teachers and staff to ensure the platform is used consistently and in a timely manner, and review the layout to ensure all users can easily access the information they need.

Co-curriculum Program

Many parents and carers consider Girton's Co-curriculum Program to be a point of difference for the School and high value for their children. It is important to parents and carers that the Staff Member in Charge (SMC) of each co-curriculum activity has the expertise to benefit students. Specifically, for sport co-curriculum activities such as Netball and Basketball, parents would prefer a professional coach to ensure students learn the right skills and techniques. Some parents suggested they would contribute to the cost of a professional coach if required.

Next Steps

The School's Co-curriculum Program is integrally entwined with the academic curriculum as one of the major pillars of education at Girton. A review of Girton's Co-curriculum Program is underway to better plan offerings for students and match skills and preferences to the best-suited SMC. The review will include a survey of students regarding their areas of interest and the implementation of a detailed co-curriculum matrix to support us when matching expertise with staff allocated to each activity.

Year 6 to Year 7 Transition to Senior School

The transition from Junior School to Senior School is a time of critical change in a child's life, and understandably, is a strong focus for parents and carers. A number of questions were raised about the transition process at Girton, in particular about the communication between teachers in Girton's Junior and Schools to ensure a positive experience for students.

Next Steps

Whether students are transferring from Girton's Junior School or another school to Year 7 at Girton's Senior School Campus, the transition from primary to secondary school is a time of great change. We understand how important it is to provide parents and carers of Year 7 students with communication, support, and resources during this time, working together to provide a smooth and enjoyable transition for each student into secondary school. Girton is developing a Year 7 Parent Engagement Program for this key year of transition to help parents and teachers ensure the move is successful and socially and behaviourally positive for our Year 7 students.

Senior School Emotional Intelligence Program

Emotional intelligence is highly valued and a key reason many parents and carers send their children to Girton. Some parents and carers with students who have transitioned from Junior School to Senior School questioned the impact of the RULER Programme in Senior School. They feel the program is executed extremely well in Junior School, but does not seem to have the same influence in Senior School.

Social and emotional learning forms the foundation of adult and student interactions and relationships at Girton. In 2011, a team of Girton teachers were sent to Yale University to study under Professor Marc Brackett, Ph.D, the Director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. These teachers returned to Australia with a plan to implement the RULER programme, firstly in the Girton Grammar Junior School and then, gradually, across the whole school population.

Next Steps

The RULER Programme is now deeply embedded in Girton's curriculum, programs, and activities from Prep to Year 6, however we acknowledge that the program has not had been as effective in the Senior School. We understand the critical importance of social and emotional learning (SEL) and therefore in 2023, we will conduct a review of the SEL program at Girton and research other effective programs. Based on this research, we will develop a proposal that delivers age-appropriate Junior and Senior School SEL programs at Girton that resonate with our students and impact them positively.



Conclusion

In the pursuit of excellence, we value the opportunity to obtain valuable insight and feedback from the Girton community to identify and understand where the School's strengths lie as well as opportunities for improvement.

We appreciate the time the Girton community has dedicated to providing their input through the 2022 LEAD Survey and Principal's Focus Groups.

It is important to note that, while it was not feasible to detail in this report every feedback comment and suggestion received from the Girton community, we have included the most common and impactful themes that have been prioritised for immediate action. We must reiterate that every opinion is still valued and valid, and we will continue to take appropriate action where possible to address any issues or concerns raised.

We remain committed to working together with the Girton community in the spirit of collaboration and partnership, as we strive towards our shared goal of delivering the best possible learning experience for our students.

Once again, we extend our thanks to all those who have provided feedback, and we look forward to continuing our journey towards continuous improvement.

If you have any questions about the themes raised in this report, please contact Ms Olivia Zan, Strategic Business and Communications Manager at oliviazan@girton.vic.edu.au.