



# Spotlight Schools

## High expectations at Maleny State High School

### What the research says

Evidence shows that equity can go hand-in-hand with quality<sup>1</sup>, and our high-performing alternative settings demonstrate that quality teaching and learning and complex wrap-around support can be delivered concurrently.

Holding explicitly high expectations and aspirations for every student in classrooms and across the whole school is a powerful positive influence on student achievement and attitudes<sup>2</sup>. In both mainstream and alternative settings, there are many ways high expectations are communicated to the student cohort — this includes maintaining expectations for behaviour and attendance, and implementing structures and policies that prioritise instructional time and academic gain.

When students in alternative settings have access to broad curriculum offerings, multiple certification options and opportunities to participate in standardised testing, they are encouraged to hold high aspirations of themselves and supported to reach their full potential.

### High expectations in practice

The Maleny State High School Flexi School operates as what is clearly communicated as ‘a learning space, not a drop in space’. The Maleny Flexi School places significant emphasis on student outcomes through diverse curriculum offerings and vocational qualifications, with staff exercising creativity to ensure individual needs and aspirations are not restricted or limited by local pathway options.

The Flexi School operates on a Monday – Friday, 9:00am – 2:30pm timetable, and its students have access to the full range of subjects on offer at the mainstream campus, including relevant assessments, exams and benchmark testing. Students also enjoy the same rites of passage as their mainstream peers, such as extra-curricular activities, sports day and senior formals.

The Flexi School motivates students to motivate themselves, and all students are encouraged to maintain a 20 Queensland Certificate of Education point goal upon exiting. Structures are in place to support partial and full reintegration back to the mainstream campus.

1. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2012), *Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools*, <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/50293148.pdf>, accessed November 2019.

2. Education Northwest (1989), *Expectations and Student Outcomes*, School Improvement Research Series, <https://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/expectations-and-student-outcomes.pdf>, accessed December 2019.

### School profile

Maleny State High School is home to approximately 670 students in Years 7–12 in Queensland’s North Coast region.

The Maleny Flexi School is delivered from the Maleny Neighbourhood Centre to approximately 30 students in Years 10–12. The Flexi School runs as a separate school, though is closely aligned to the mainstream campus and upholds the same attendance and behaviour requirements — with expectations for academic gain consistently reinforced.

### Principal insights

‘If you set the benchmark for mediocre, mediocre is what you’ll get — and so our Flexi School has always and will always be a learning space, not a drop-in space.

Our Flexi School ethos is “success without pressure”. We know that success looks different for every student and strive to provide offerings based on individual skills and aspirations.

Flexi students are encouraged, not forced. Though we refer to behaviour incidents, academic performance and attendance to identify students who may benefit from attending the Flexi School, ultimately the choice to participate is made by the student — no different from signing up to the Touch Footy Team.’

*Deborah Stewart – Principal*  
Maleny State High School



## What does good practice look like?

### Communicating high expectations for all students

#### Timetable

A full and productive timetable can be achieved by:

- limiting the frequency and length of enrichment programs and activities, job readiness, sporting pursuits, pastoral care and school assemblies
- utilising the Australian Curriculum to develop students' personal and social capabilities (rather than through stand-alone Wellbeing programs)
- maximising the time available for academic instruction and coursework
- referring to the Australian Curriculum guidelines where applicable for recommended hours of instruction per semester for each learning area.

#### Attendance

Expectations for attendance can be communicated through:

- induction and enrolment processes to ensure students and their parents/carers are aware of attendance requirements and expectations, and discussions about flexible and part-time schedules where necessary
- processes for monitoring attendance, and early identification of students whose attendance is not regular.

#### Curriculum offerings and pathway options

Students can be supported to reach their full potential and high aspirations of themselves through:

- access to full and rich curriculum offerings, with differentiation and flexible delivery in place of streaming and limitations to subject choice
- pathway options that cater to individual skills, interests and aspirations — including multiple certification levels across a range of industries and pathways to tertiary education.

### Maleny Flexi student voice

- 'We have choice and freedom but also responsibility. We know why we are here, we chose to come to Flexi, we chose our subjects, we want to graduate and get our Year 12, we know that everything we are doing is helping us to get there, so there's no point in wasting time.'
- 'I am more relaxed, which means I am more confident and I want to try stuff and I don't even care if I make a mistake, nobody is going to judge me. So weirdly I am getting better at stuff because I am more chilled out and I care about my future now.'
- 'Variety is available, we can do heaps of different things and if we want to do something we are supported to find out about it and we can try it out without pressure or competition.'
- 'We don't worry about the small stuff, like if you have the right socks.'

### Maleny Flexi outcomes

Maleny Flexi School offers pathway options that suit individual aspirations and potential – which can require creativity to overcome restrictions on what is offered locally. In addition to supporting students to pursue tertiary education pathways, there are multiple certification options across a range of industries, including:

- Cert II Agricultural Studies
- Cert II Music Industry
- Cert II Hospitality and Tourism
- Cert II Construction
- Cert II Horticulture
- Cert III Hospitality
- Cert III Community Services
- Cert III Business
- Cert III Mechanics
- Cert III Sport and Recreation
- Cert IV Hairdressing.