Context
Winton State School has been running a 7/8 Middle years program for a number of years. In 2015 Year 7 will officially become part of Junior Secondary state-wide. Winton State School is in an advantageous position due to the P-12 context of the school and the already embedded research based practices that form the foundation of the existing Junior Secondary class. Winton State School has reviewed its Junior Secondary philosophy to align with the six guiding principles. The principles also provide an evidence-based approach to teaching and learning practices that meet the needs of students in early adolescence.

Philosophy Statement
Winton State School believes that each student has the right to feel valued as a member of the school community. The transitions between phases of learning are planned and deliberate; so are the experiences each child undertakes within each phase of learning.

The Junior secondary class provides two years of transition into the 9/10 middle secondary structure, which in turn acts as a two year preparation period for entering senior schooling. The Junior Secondary class has its own distinct space within the school which is located away from both the primary students, and the middle and upper secondary wings.

Due to the small nature of our school, students are exposed to a small core group of specialist teachers for their subjects. Pedagogy is research based and supported through quality professional development and collegial coaching processes at a whole school level. Leadership and student council positions allow specific opportunities for this age cohort to be involved in decision making processes within the school and they are highly valued by the student body. As a school-wide positive behaviour support school, expectations are explicitly taught. Goals are continuously set and monitored and achievements are celebrated.

Preparing for Junior Secondary and the Consultation Process.
In preparation for the introduction of Junior Secondary, Winton State School has evaluated its readiness against the six guiding principles. Representatives from a cross-section of the school community have been part of a self-evaluation process. The planning and reflection tool was completed and using the PMI information gathered during the consultation process actions and priorities have been identified.
Distinct Identity
This principle refers to students feeling a sense of belonging and connectedness to their school and to feeling safe and confident in this environment. Group identity in this context refers to their status as lower secondary students, distinct from either primary or upper secondary students. Establishing designated areas and holding special events are intended to reinforce the sense of belonging and connectedness to a school. The Junior Secondary school teacher plays a critical role in this forging of group identity (Rumble and Aspland, 2010).

Kenny and Quigley (2006) report on the effort that went into setting up a middle school in New Zealand which was based on a common pedagogical approach; a common values base; and a house system within the school. The aim was to: ‘develop a common language of learning across the school – a common understanding of how we learn, some common organisational and thinking tools and some common habits and expectations of learning for our students’ (p. 41).

Rumble and Aspland (2010) identify three key features associated with forging a distinct identity in the lower secondary school years:
- the presence of a dedicated school space for learning;
- a changed teaching and learning culture; and
- new leadership patterns.

A Flying Start for Queensland Children identifies several strategies for smoothing the transition from Year 6 to Year 7 which build on the principle of establishing a distinct group identity, including establishing a separate physical space within the school environment and a home room ‘to aid students’ sense of security and stability.

At Winton State School we address the domain of distinct identity in Junior Secondary by:
- Providing a distinct and clearly identifiable Junior Secondary Wing.
- Branding Junior Secondary with our distinct and identifiable logo.
- Assigning the Junior Secondary Portfolio as a leadership opportunity for select staff.
- Providing sector meetings opportunities as part of a rolling cycle of staff meetings.
- Allocating a Junior Secondary form teacher.
- Utilising specialist teacher for across all subject areas.
- Providing Junior Secondary Leadership opportunities.
- Providing space within the schools newsletter to celebrate the Junior Secondary achievements.
- Promoting high expectations and achievements of Junior Secondary students through visual displays.
Quality Teaching

International literature shows that the most important factor in determining the effectiveness of a school system is the quality of its teachers (Barber and Mourshed, 2007). Hattie (2003) found that excellence in teaching is ‘the single most powerful influence’ on student achievement. High quality staff development is considered to be ‘an important and necessary prerequisite’ for improvement in student learning (Guskey and Sparks, 1996). Rowe (2006) argues that: ‘educational effectiveness for all students is crucially dependent on the provision of quality teaching by competent teachers who are equipped with effective, evidence-based teaching strategies that work, and are supported by capacity-building towards the maintenance of high teaching standards via strategic professional development at all levels of schooling’ (p. 14).

Junior Secondary school teachers need both the generic qualities associated with effective teaching and the specific attributes relevant to teaching adolescents.

Specific skills are needed in the lower secondary school years, including:

- the ability to forge a middle school identity (Rumble and Aspland, 2010);
- the ability to design an integrated curriculum (Rumble and Aspland, 2010; Flockenhaus, 2006);
- skills in working collaboratively within a small learning community for team planning and team teaching (Flockenhaus, 2006);
- an in-depth understanding of the concerns and needs of adolescents and a willingness to develop positive relationships with students, families and the community (Rumble and Aspland, 2010; Flockenhaus, 2006); and
- a capacity to sustain middle school reform (Rumble and Aspland, 2010).

Schools need to ensure teachers are appropriately trained and confident in their ability to teach in the Junior Secondary years.

At Winton State School we address quality teaching in Junior Secondary by:

- Providing opportunity across the school year for collegial and administrative coaching.
- Embedding within our annual professional development cycle programs responsive to the needs of Junior Secondary teachers.
- Explicitly identifying in the schools Pedagogical Framework core elements/strategies related to Junior Secondary.
- Explicitly developing literacy and numeracy skills across all subject areas.
- Utilising a range of formal and informal assessment instruments to triangulate data on students.
- Communicating each student’s position and negotiating goals with parents and students through the schools Individual Student Action Plans and Individual Learning Plans.
- Mindfully seeking to build strong, positive and supportive relationships with every student.
- Communally being responsive to the changing needs of the Junior Secondary Class.
- Using both Explicit Instruction and Marzano’s High Yield Strategies.
Student Wellbeing

Student wellbeing has been defined as ‘a sustainable state characterised by predominantly positive feelings and attitude, positive relationships at school, resilience, self-optimisation and a high level of satisfaction with learning experiences’ (DEEWR, 2008). It is strongly linked with learning and ‘is enhanced when evidence-informed practices are adopted by schools in partnership with families and community’ (DEEWR: 9).

Seven ‘pathways’ of student wellbeing have been identified in the literature, each of which has implications for the approaches adopted for supporting adolescents during the Junior Secondary school phase:

- a supportive, caring and inclusive school community that fosters school connectedness
- pro-social values, such as respect, honesty and compassion
- physical and emotional safety, such as anti-bullying policies and programs
- social and emotional learning, such as interpersonal skills, goal-setting, self-awareness
- a strengths-based approach which identifies and builds on students’ intellectual strengths
- a sense of meaning and purpose, reflected in peer support, participation in school clubs and teams and collaborative group projects; and
- a healthy lifestyle, including good nutrition and exercise (DEEWR, 2008).

Learning and wellbeing are inextricably linked — students learn best when their wellbeing is optimised, and they develop a strong sense of wellbeing when they experience success in learning (DETE 2012). Enhanced student wellbeing can contribute to improved academic achievement by increasing student motivation to participate and achieve; student engagement with, and participation in, learning; student attendance; and by decreasing the incidence of problem behaviour at school (DEEWR, 2008).

At Winton State School we address student wellbeing in Junior Secondary by:

- Articulating student wellbeing strategies through the Student Wellbeing Framework.
- Maintaining and communicating amendments to the school’s Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students.
- Continuously developing the strength of our School Wide Positive Behaviour Support Processes.
- Explicitly teaching social and emotional skills in planned/timetabled social and emotional learning lessons.
- Maintaining a strongly governed Social Justice Committee who are responsive in supporting students of concern.
- Working closely with the school’s guidance officer, health nurse and external health and family support networks. For example: CYMHS, Winton’s Indigenous and Family Support Workers and CQ ID.
- Providing students the opportunity to develop a culture of wellbeing and support through feedback loops within the student council structures.
- Negotiating, where appropriate, changes within class structure with students.
- Running a Junior Secondary Transition Program in term 4 each year.
- Actively encouraging goal setting and reviewing.
- Running lunchtime and after school activities.
- Providing multiple opportunities for Junior Secondary students to develop strong, positive and supportive relationships with multiple staff within the school.
- Maintaining a “bucket filling” program.
Parent and Community Involvement

We want parents to stay connected with their students’ learning when they enter high school. Parent involvement in assemblies, special events, award ceremonies and leadership presentations will be welcomed.

Masters (2004) identified ‘high levels of parent and community involvement’ as one of the key characteristics of an effective school. He suggests that in a good school parents would take an active role in their children’s learning (through discussing, monitoring and supporting) but that their role would also include contributing to school goal-setting and school policy development. An effective school would also identify ways of working more closely with local community and business to improve outcomes for students. ‘In highly effective schools, principals are in constant and meaningful communication with the school community and work to build partnerships beyond the school in pursuit of the school’s objectives’ (Masters, 2004).

There is a growing body of research to show the importance of engaging parents, families and the community in education. Westmoreland (2009) from the Harvard Family Research Project reports that families play an important role in supporting children’s learning not only in school but also in non-school settings, such as museums, libraries and out-of-school programs. Bouffard and Stephen (2007) show that while family involvement in secondary school decreases compared with the earlier years, it remains a ‘powerful predictor of adolescents’ achievement and other positive outcomes’ and is associated with higher rates of college enrolment in the United States.

The research shows that all families, regardless of their background, ‘if given the tools’, can help bring about improved outcomes for their children (Mapp, 2004). Mapp also reports that the programs and interventions which engage families in supporting their children’s learning at home are linked to higher achievement and that family engagement in their children’s learning is ‘critically important’.

Hattie (2003) suggests that ‘the major effects of the home are already accounted for by the attributes of the students’. That is, these effects are more related to levels of expectation and encouragement rather than to parental involvement in the management of schools.

At Winton State School we cater or parent and community involvement in Junior Secondary by:

- Involving parents in the goal setting process with our ISAPs program.
- Assisting students in the maintenance of effectively utilised diaries.
- Making positive phone calls home to parents about their children’s learning.
- Maintaining positive communication loops with parents through the school’s ISAP and ILP processes.
- Maintaining and continually encouraging new membership on the school P&C.
- Maintaining a calendar of events on the school website, QSchools smartphone app and in the school newsletter.
- Working closing with support agencies like ATODs and other Qld Health services to ensure proactive responsiveness to local concerns.
- Hosting parent information sessions.
Leadership

The establishment of a Junior Secondary phase of education potentially offers leadership opportunities for both teachers and students.

Teachers as leaders
Crowther et al (2002) argue for a new paradigm of the teaching profession that recognises the capacity of teachers to provide new and dynamic kinds of leadership. Teacher leadership is here defined as facilitating ‘principled action to achieve whole-school success’ (p. 32).

Pendergast et al (2005) note the importance of innovative leadership in the lower secondary school years, not only in terms of providing direction and support but also in liaising between middle school and the rest of the school and in easing transition to and from the middle school. Giving leadership opportunities in the form of decision making and implementing changes ensures ‘they become more committed to reform efforts. In a collaborative culture, reform is not imposed upon teachers but created by them’ (Centre for Collaborative Education, 2006: 5). This principle supports the role of Junior Secondary teachers in helping to establish a safe school environment where students feel they belong, are respected and valued (Fletcher, 2011: 64).

Students as leaders
Bell (2010) suggests that introducing leadership concepts to adolescents, and giving them the language of leadership, empowers them, enabling them to become more aware of their suitability for leadership roles in the future. Truss (2006) offers the following definition of student leadership: Leadership pertains to getting students to be of service to others, while teaching them to effectively influence and motivate others. This can be successfully accomplished when students work in inclusionary groups or teams that create and take advantage of opportunities to act as servant leaders (p. 11).

Truss identifies two key elements as being critical to any meaningful student leadership program: it is service-based and it trains students and gives them skills that will affect their lives beyond the immediate school environment.

At Winton State School, in the Junior Secondary phase of learning, we encourage teachers to be leaders by:

- Assigning the Junior Secondary Portfolio as a leadership opportunity for select staff.
- Allocating a Junior Secondary form teacher.
- Allowing the Junior Secondary Teaching Team to communally resolve issues within the Junior Secondary class.
- Providing structured time for Junior Secondary staff to meet and address student and teacher needs in this phase of learning.
- Identifying staff with leadership aspirations through the Developing Performance Framework Process.

At Winton State School, in the Junior Secondary phase of learning, we encourage students to be leaders by:

- Providing Junior Secondary representation on the student council.
- Making available leadership camps.
- Explicitly teaching leadership, social and emotional learning skills.
- Class representatives on the Students Council.
Local Decision Making

The principle of local decision making (sometimes called decentralisation, devolution or school-based management) refers to the empowerment of schools through the transfer of decision making from central bureaucracies to principals, teachers, parents and community members. Local decision making means that schools are able to develop policies and practices in response to the particular needs and aspirations of their communities. In a Junior Secondary school context, strong engagement with parents and the community will provide schools with the opportunity to shape curriculum, teaching and leadership practices in a way that meets the needs and aspirations of the local community.

The principle of local decision making ‘requires a unique approach at each school because local management by its nature relates directly to the needs of the particular school and its community’ (DETYA, 2000).

Increased parental involvement in school-based decision making strengthens the role of parents in the formation of school policies and increases their sense of ownership in the school’s objectives and programs (Guskey and Sparks, 1996).

At Winton State School we address local decision making in Junior Secondary by:

- Communicating targets and achievement levels to parents through our ISAPs program.
- Maintaining and continually encouraging new membership on the school P&C.
- Providing professional learning opportunities for parents. For example, Triple P Parenting courses.
- Providing parent and community representation opportunities on our School Wide Positive Behaviours Support Committee.
- Providing parent and community representation opportunities on within EATSIP planning committees.
Actions for the future.
After consultation in the development phase of this document the following actions have been put forward. As such the school will strategically rollout these suggestions over the coming year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term One 2014</th>
<th>Term Two</th>
<th>Term Three</th>
<th>Term Four</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distinct Identity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Quality Teaching</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student Wellbeing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Parent and Community Involvement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish J.S calendar</td>
<td>Induct new staff around J.S Modules</td>
<td>All staff explore in detail Learning and Wellbeing Framework</td>
<td>Explore expertise held in parent and community body which might value add to programs.</td>
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<td>(Form Teacher)</td>
<td>(School Based J.S. Trainer)</td>
<td>(Principal)</td>
<td>(All teaching staff)</td>
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<td>Develop and rollout a classroom display policy</td>
<td>Book work policy reviewed by all staff and students, and displayed in every classroom</td>
<td>Include in Newsletter wellbeing item</td>
<td>Consult on possibility of vertical form classes.</td>
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<td>(HoC)</td>
<td>(school nurse, G/O)</td>
<td>(school nurse, G/O)</td>
<td>(J.S Team)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Continued Practice</strong></td>
<td>Colleial Coaching around J.S strategies</td>
<td>Review Learning and Wellbeing Framework with all staff.</td>
<td>Continuation of practise</td>
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Calendere development for 2015 (Form Teacher) | Colleial Coaching around J.S strategies | ACER Wellbeing Assessment (Principal/STLAN) | Review parent & community engagement framework (Principal) | Finalise student paperwork for Term One 7/8 camp in 2015 (Form Teacher)