

Education Perfect covers all bases for New South Wales Head of Science

SCHOOL

Narrabeen Sports High School

COUNTRY

Australia

EP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Science, Languages

CURRICULUM

NSW

EP provides all the tools to support development of strong learning culture

Narrabeen Sports High School on Sydney's northern beaches, is a co-educational institution catering to students from Years 7 to 12. While it offers a comprehensive academic and cultural curriculum to over a thousand local students, the school is distinguished by its specialist sports program, attracting around 100 students from outside its catchment area who seek advanced athletic development. The student body reflects a diverse socioeconomic background, ranging from families with professional, university-educated parents to those in social housing, contributing to a rich and inclusive school environment. The school maintains strong connections with nearby primary

schools, notably Narrabeen North Primary, which serves as a major feeder for incoming Year 7 students.

Cameron McDonald is the Head Teacher of Science and is marking his 10th year both at the school and in teaching, after transitioning from a coaching career. He teaches across all science disciplines, including physics, chemistry, biology, earth and environmental science, and science extension. Currently he's responsible for a senior physics class and a senior science extension class.

A fully online science curriculum

Technology plays a significant role at Narrabeen Sports High School, "We have been a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) school since 2014, with students expected to bring a laptop daily, and most lessons incorporate digital learning. Today, fewer than 40 students require school-provided laptops."

The science curriculum is fully online, with resources, coursework, and assessments delivered digitally, while practical experiments provide hands-on learning experiences. Before adopting Education Perfect (EP), the school relied on freely available resources from the Academy of Science Australia. These resources provided a structured curriculum across various subjects and were used for several years "Maintaining and updating these materials required a significant workload, much of which I initially undertook during my early years of teaching. Yet while I was willing to dedicate my own time, I didn't want to impose the same burden on my faculty."



With the school having already implemented EP for Languages, Cameron saw value in consolidating learning platforms to streamline student and teacher experiences. He transitioned the Science Faculty to EP in 2021, recognising its flexibility and alignment with their digital-first approach. The decision to move to EP was reinforced by the strong support received from EP representatives whose guidance made the transition smoother.

One of the standout advantages of EP was how well it mapped to the New South Wales curriculum, which differs from the Australian curriculum, “With the introduction of the new syllabus for Years 7 and 9, we’ve found EP’s extensive library of lessons incredibly valuable. Whether the lessons were designed for the previous syllabus or newly developed for the updated curriculum, we’ve been able to easily align content with specific syllabus points. The variety of resources means we can select materials that best fit our students’ learning needs. It has made the transition to the new syllabus heaps smoother, allowing us to focus on effective teaching rather than resource development from scratch.”

For Cameron, EP’s ease of customisation is one of its greatest strengths. His team modify lessons to better suit their students’ learning styles and needs, ensuring content is engaging and appropriately scaffolded, “Take for example some of the discovery-based activities that might work well in high-achieving schools. They don’t suit all cohorts and my younger students struggle without sufficient guidance. With EP, these lessons can easily be adjusted by rewording activities, adding extra explanations, or altering the structure to provide more direction. It is like having a dynamic, editable textbook, giving us teachers complete control over how we deliver content.”

“Initially, we adopted EP with minimal customisation due to time constraints, but now we are refining lessons to maximise student engagement and understanding.”



EP & Valid Science: balanced assessment

Measuring student growth has been another key benefit for Cameron of the integration of EP, “We use two complementary approaches to assessment to track student progress and measure learning outcomes effectively. We use EP to monitor ongoing student growth in real time. EP has this amazing built-in student growth tool that allows teachers to create pre- and post-tests, generating clear visual data that illustrates learning progress over time. It gives students and teachers immediate feedback, ensuring learning gaps are identified and addressed as they arise. The ability to track growth week by week has transformed the way students engage with their coursework, reinforcing a culture of progress and achievement.”

As faculty leader, Cameron also sees the wider advantages of this continuous assessment model,

“It provides the senior executive team with regular evidence of student improvement, helping to justify the investment in digital learning resources.”

The second arm of the assessment approach is the use of Valid Science, a New South Wales standardised testing program that includes Valid 8 and Valid 10, for years 8 and 10 respectively, developed by the Department of Education’s Centre



of Educational Statistics and Excellence. Cameron has also encouraged feeder primary schools to adopt Valid 6, further expanding the data set, “I have actively integrated Valid Science into our curriculum. It offers an accurate picture of student learning without the influence of teacher familiarity or school-specific testing styles. By administering Valid 8 and Valid 10, and with the data collated at Valid 6, we are accurately measuring long-term academic growth.”

“The data provides a consistent foundation for conversations between staff and between teachers and students. As teachers, we reflect on teaching strategies, share insights across the faculty and refine our approaches. And with students, we have ongoing, meaningful conversations about their progress. Different teachers use it in different ways. Some, like me, walk around with their laptop and show students their progress one-on-one, while others put the data up on the board and turn it into a fun class competition.”

Really, it's all about relationships

For Cameron none of this works without effective teacher-student relationships and EP has a role there too, “EP gives teachers more time to actually connect with students instead of just standing at the front of the room going through everything step by step. Because it cuts down on resource development and marking, teachers can get around the class, check in with students, and have those quick, meaningful conversations that can make a big difference, like

noticing when a student is having a rough day and helping them reset. The key is how EP is used. Our teachers see it as a way to free them up rather than replace them. It helps them build stronger student relationships and create a more engaged classroom.”

At Narrabeen Sports High School the combination of strong teacher-student relationships, EP's aligned curriculum resources, and the science faculty's two-pronged approach to assessment using EP's growth tool and Valid Science is powerful. The faculty has created a data-driven positive learning environment that supports continuous improvement. The continuity, from primary to Year 10, is building a strong learning culture where expectations and success metrics are clear and consistent.