



school
silkwood



THE SILKWOOD WAY PARENT GUIDEBOOK

BE INSPIRED...GET CONNECTED...MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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The Purpose of this Guidebook

This guidebook supports families to gain a deeper understanding of The Silkwood Way (TSW) to enable them to make an informed decision as to whether Silkwood School is the right learning environment for their family.

We do this by covering:

- *TSW Philosophy*
- *Overview of TSW design (why, what, and how)*
- *TSW specific terminology*
- *How TSW links to the Silkwood Vision*
- *Our working in partnership commitment*

Glossary of Silkwood Terminology

The following terminology is used consistently throughout this document; please refer to this glossary to better understand the meaning and examples of the Silkwood language.

Advisor = Teacher	At Silkwood, we refer to Teachers as Advisors.
Advisory Group = Class	At Silkwood, we refer to the individual class as an Advisory. When you hear the word Advisory or Advisory Group, this refers to a year-level class of around 18 students.
Learning Community	The school campus is structured into smaller learning communities of around 200 students.
Learning Cycles	Students work with the same Advisor for either a 2 – 3 year Learning Cycle.
Heads of School (HOS)	Heads of School Principals for a Learning Community. They are expert educators in the year-levels they oversee. Using this expertise, they support the partnership between school and home and our Advisors to deliver The Silkwood Way effectively.
Learning Continua Matrix	Every student has a learning continua dashboard as part of their PLP. This outlines each student's learning continua progress.
Individual Learning Plan - (ILP)	Each student has an Individual Learning Plan as part of their PLP. This sets out the plan for each student's learning for that term, including their goals to progress along their Learning Continua Matrix. This is continually updated throughout the Student Learning Cycle (SLC).
Personal Learning Profile (PLP)	Every student at Silkwood has a PLP, which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A profile of the student • An Individual Learning Plan (ILP) • Portfolio of work • Progress dashboard
Personal Interest Learning Time (PILT)	Every student designs their own interest-based project as part of their ILP. Each student is allocated time to work on their personal interest project each week.
Learning Through Internship (LTI)	These are real workplace projects created by the student under the direction of a workplace mentor.
Learning Continua	We have taken the Australian Curriculum general capabilities, subject areas, and 21st-century educational goals and developed our own unique curriculum model, which we call our Learning Continua.
Student Learning Cycle (SLC)	The student learning cycle is a series of steps for the student to develop their PLP in partnership with their Advisor, parents, carers, and mentors.

Message from The Silkwood Way Founder

Twenty-one years ago, as a mother seeking an empowering educational experience for my two young girls, I set about creating something new. A seed was sown, and so grew the Silkwood vision:

Empowering young people to be inspired, get connected and make a difference!

This vision has guided us, from Silkwood's humble beginnings as a school of two students (one being my daughter) in a rented house to our dynamic and beautiful Silkwood campus educating 650 young people from Prep to Year 12. It is this vision that inspired the development of what we proudly know today as The Silkwood Way, our innovative 21st-century educational design.



For this reason, you won't find our program anywhere else – it is unique!

We know our students are our future leaders, design thinkers, creatives, innovators, change agents, enterprise makers, and entrepreneurs of our world. We believe it is our duty to support them in seeing the boundless possibilities for their lives and create and take opportunities to make magic happen in their world.

We believe that Silkwood can be right for every child. However, we respect it must also be suited to each family's hopes for their child's future; our partnership with families plays a key role in this journey. We are committed to giving our best, exploring possibilities, and thinking outside the square to enhance the learning adventure for each student and to ensure that your child's Silkwood journey is the one that is right for them.

I am proud and privileged to be part of a team committed to making a difference in young people's lives in our community and improving education in our world. I look forward to supporting you on the Silkwood journey so that you can discover firsthand what makes The Silkwood Way unique.

Valerie Campbell-Hogg
CEO & The Silkwood Way Founder

The Silkwood Purpose

Simply put, we value young people's learning time. We value them as individuals, and we want to make a difference to their lives by offering a meaningful learning adventure relevant to the world they are growing into.

The traditional education model was born out of an era when intelligence was focused on content knowledge and the need to grow an industrialised workforce. Whilst we value knowledge, the world and the workplace have dramatically shifted.

Success in the 21st-century will require design thinkers, innovators, change agents, and entrepreneurs – people who are able and empowered to adapt in a quickly changing world, take charge of their work choices, communicate effectively, and turn ideas into action. We believe education must evolve to reflect this shift.

Traditional schooling supports a subject-centered learning style, test-focused, and standardised; it is not designed to lead this change. Young people need something different; they need an opportunity to:

- Learn in different ways;
- Learn in the real-world;
- Self-manage their learning;
- Learn about things they are interested in;
- Learn things that are purposeful for their future.



In response to this, The Silkwood Way gives each child a personalised way of learning, one that focuses on 21st-century capabilities and individualised, interest-based goals. It is a way of learning where knowledge, real-world experience, creativity, and thinking are developed in ways that grow a young person's life capabilities while keeping their curiosity alert. One where they learn to reflect, assess, and set their own goals for improvement, empowering them to take charge of their learning.

It is a change for the better – a transformative educational model that places the student, rather than a standardised curriculum with test scores, at the centre of decision making. The Silkwood Way model is purposely designed to lead this change.

Why?

Because our goal is to see every Silkwood student go on to lead a meaningful life, and:

- Use creative, innovative, and critical thinking to make a difference.
- Use their passions, talents, and skills to create a future that excites them and contributes positively to our world.
- See the adventure, opportunity, connections, and possibilities in life.
- Act with respect towards themselves, others, and our world.
- Create their own financial independence in win/win ways.
- Turn dreams and ideas into reality.
- Accept life's challenges with a resilient and flexible attitude.
- Create a happy and healthy life balance.
- Communicate with empathy, openness, and integrity.
- Embrace fun and live with curiosity.

These are Our ten 21st century AIMS, and these are what stand Silkwood apart from other schools.

Silkwood has reimagined education, reclaimed a love of learning for young people, and prepares our students for a changing workforce and world.

We are transforming how students and families engage with education.

This is **The Silkwood Way!**



We value young people's learning time



We value young people as individuals



We value that they learn purposeful things that are relevant to their future

The Silkwood Way – Learning Design

The Silkwood Way (TSW) learning design began to take form in 2015, in response to our High School Program's development and defining our purpose for a student's learning journey at Silkwood.

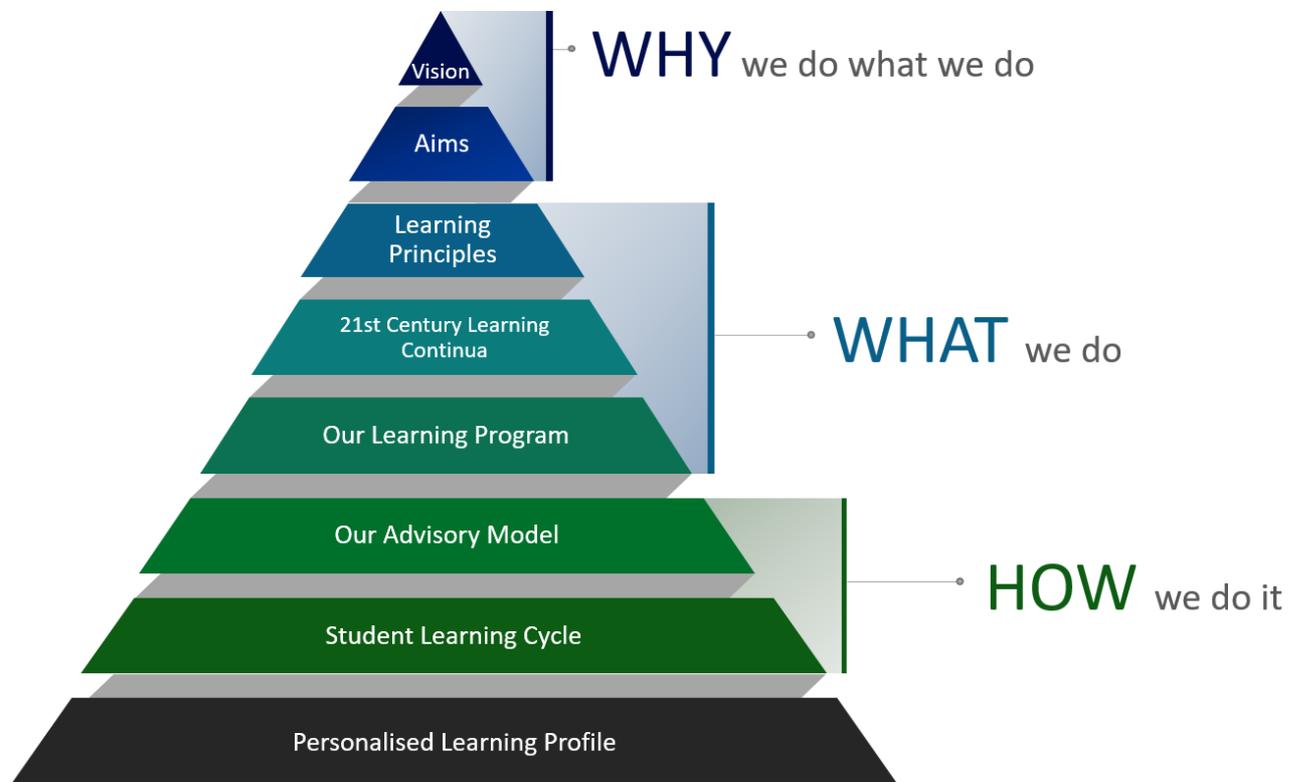
Our vision and mission were redefined during this process, and ten unique 21st-century Aims for a student's learning journey at Silkwood were created.

This was a significant moment in bringing clarity and alignment to the focus of our learning program. It also set Silkwood apart from traditional schooling frameworks and on a path to designing an innovative and transformative model for learning.

Shortly after this, we began collaborating with Big Picture Education and other 21st-century learning schools to develop our own learning model that would deliver on our Aims.

The outcome from this work is our unique learning design called **The Silkwood Way**.

The framework for our Learning Design looks like this:



The Silkwood Way – An Overview

In simple terms, The Silkwood Way offers students a personalised learning pathway focussed on developing the 21st-century skills needed to live a meaningful life. It places the student at the centre of teaching and learning, rather than a 'one size fits all' curriculum with standardised tests.

The Silkwood Way learning design begins with our vision and mission:

Our Vision:

Empowering young people to be inspired, get connected and make a difference!

Our Mission:

We create innovative, small learning communities led by Advisors, who use the world as their campus, to support young people to develop personalised learning pathways focused around:

- their interests
- inspiring and meaningful content
- essential and emerging 21st century skills
- real-world mentors and learning experiences

To help them go on and lead purposeful and fulfilling lives.

Our Aims

Designed to deliver this vision and enable our mission is **The Silkwood Way**, our transformative educational model that focuses on students achieving our ten unique 21st-century Aims:



Learning Principles

Eight Learning Principles frame the Silkwood Way. These act as our compass to guide and align our learning model. We embed these principles into what and how we do things at Silkwood, forming **The Silkwood Way** philosophy and culture.

21st Century Learning Continua

To support the achievement of our Aims, we have taken the Australian Curriculum general capabilities, subject areas, and 21st-century educational goals to develop a unique model of curriculum, which we call our Learning Continua. This Learning Continua differs from traditional curriculums as it is not structured according to year-levels. Instead, it sets the pathway of learning that each student progresses along at their own individual pace to achieve Silkwood's ten 21st century Aims.

Our Learning Program

Students progress along their continua by setting goals around three learning areas:

1. **Personal Interest Learning** - a project-based program focused on exploring students' personal interests and passions and connecting these to real-world learning.
2. **Essential Learning** – an individualised program focused on mastering core language and numeracy skills needed for success in the 21st century.
3. **Exploring Learning** - a developmental year-level program focussed on learning useful, real-world knowledge, skills, and capabilities that develop a student's awareness of self, others, and our world.

Learning Communities and Advisory Approach

Students work in small learning communities centered around 2 or 3-year developmental learning cycles, in an Advisory (class) of 18 students with a dedicated Advisor (Teacher).

Personal Learning Profile and the Student Learning Cycle

Using a unique student learning cycle, the Advisor works in partnership with the student and their family to create a Personalised Learning Profile (PLP) for each student. This profile includes a dynamic Individual Learning Plan (ILP) that outlines the students' learning goals and how they will learn and progress these goals using Silkwood's three learning areas.

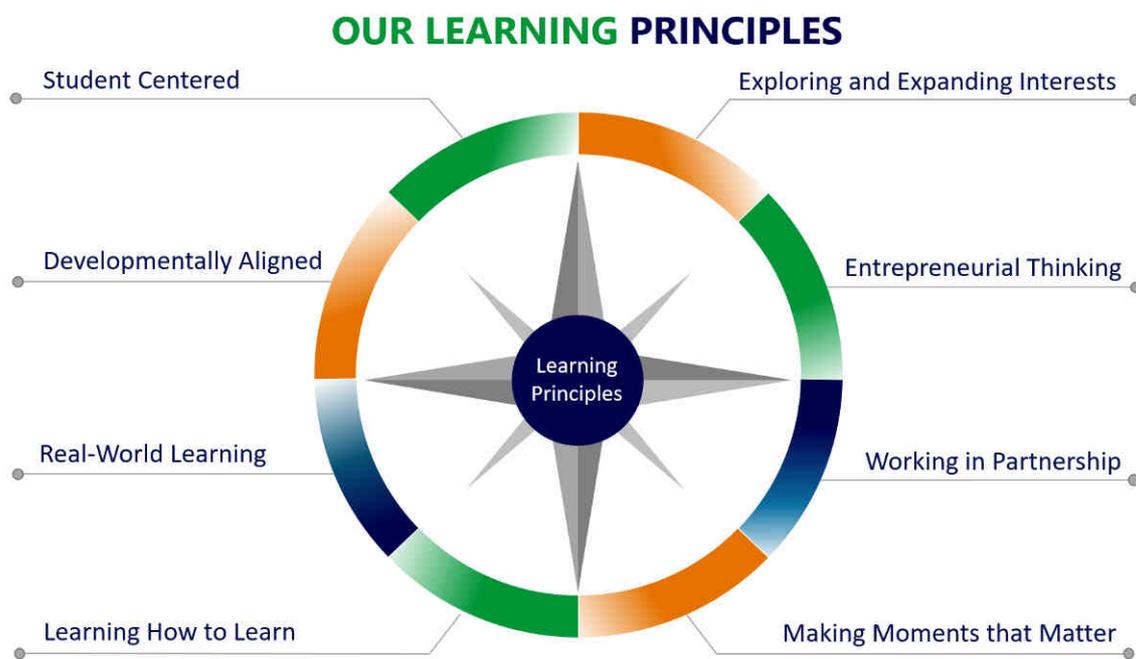


"I love watching our students explore and seeing the wonder in their eyes when they find something new that excites them. They have a natural enthusiasm to discover more about life, so it's my job to ensure they never lose their love for learning."

— Eva, Year 5 Advisor

Our Learning Principles

Eight Learning Principles frame the Silkwood Way. These act as our compass to guide and align our learning model. These principles are embedded into what and how we do things at Silkwood, forming **The Silkwood Way** philosophy and culture.



Student-Centred Learning

Students work in partnership with their Advisor and parents/carers to design a Personalised Learning Profile and self-manage their progress.

We value our students learning time and know that students have improved outcomes when:

- They feel in charge of their learning
- They are interested in and see meaning in what they are learning
- Their progress is visible
- Learning is personalised and individualised to their interests and needs

For this reason, student-centered learning is one of our learning principles, and it means that at Silkwood:

- Each student works in partnership with their Advisor and parents & carers to design a Personalised Learning Profile that sets out an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) around their interests, essential and exploring learning needs.
- Students learn how to self-manage.
- Advisors design learning opportunities that are differentiated to their student's needs and interests that support each student to achieve their learning goals.

Developmentally Aligned

We match learning experiences and opportunities to young people's developmental stages.

There are different stages of physical and psychological development that young people go through. Understanding, considering, and integrating developmental approaches is vital to supporting student engagement and responsiveness – it says to the student, "We understand you and what is happening for you."

To support this, The Silkwood Way uses a developmental scaffold that highlights four phases of development and the strategies, contexts, and approaches to learning relevant to each developmental phase. More detail about this is provided under the section *Learning Communities and Advisories* on page 25.

Real-World Learning

We connect student learning to real-world experiences.

At Silkwood, making learning meaningful by connecting students to real-world mentors and learning experiences is fundamental to our model. This increases student engagement and expands their understanding of the world while contextualising learning into real-life opportunities.

"In a traditional schooling approach, teachers and facilities are the learning environment. At Silkwood, we see the world as our campus."

— Greg Gapp, Business Development & Operations Leader



Learning How to Learn

We make the process of learning visible for students, so they can discover how to become better learners.

We value our students becoming learners for life. Learning to learn helps strengthen this process by making 'how' they learn visible. The Silkwood Way adopts the well-researched [Habits of Mind](#) and [Growth Mindset](#) approaches for this process. These are habits that help learners learn more effectively by developing their ability to:

- Pursue and persist in learning;
- Organise their own learning;
- Motivate themselves;
- Behave intelligently when they do not know the answer;
- Have the self-confidence to succeed.

Exploring and Expanding Interests

We continuously engage students in learning experiences that grow their knowledge, skills, and expand their interests.

Students learn and work best when they are passionate about and interested in what they are doing. For this reason, all students from Prep to Year 12 spend time deeply exploring things that interest them.

We also recognise the ongoing development of a young person's interests as an integral part of their learning. A part of the Advisor's role is continually seeking out opportunities for their students to discover new interests. Therefore, they balance the time needed to do other work with a student's need to explore and discover.

Entrepreneurial Thinking

We encourage students to think like a businessperson, see opportunity where others may see obstacles, and be unafraid to take considered risks.

Every student at Silkwood has an interest, passion, or idea that they can turn into practical and meaningful real-world work. Our role at Silkwood School is to equip them to do just that. This is our message for every Silkwood student!

We actively support our students to 'think entrepreneurially' – it is a thinking process that leads to:

- Searching for and finding solutions that exist outside of the norm;
- Understanding business thinking and how it impacts our world;
- Being unafraid of taking considered risks;
- Being prepared with the mindset and real-world know-how to take on challenges.

We know that these skills set people up on a path to leading a meaningful and fulfilling life.

Working in Partnership

Learning is a partnership that involves our School Team, Students, Families, and the wider community.

It takes a village to raise a child! Learning is a partnership that involves the student, their family, our team, and the wider community.

At Silkwood, parents and carers are Exploring members of our learning team. This begins with the application process and progresses through developing the student's Personal Learning Profile, attending semester exhibitions, and milestone graduations. We know that working together with shared goals enhances outcomes for the student and their community. We have developed our Student Learning Cycle to support the coming together of this partnership.



"At Silkwood, we embrace a student-driven and learner-centered approach that encourages and challenges every student to follow their passions through projects that matter to them, their Advisors, and the world beyond the school. Understanding that the development of identity and personal growth occurs in the context of community, Silkwood fosters a culture of trust, care, and mutual respect among students and adults through school programs and real-world connections."

— Sebastian Sasin, Middle School Advisor

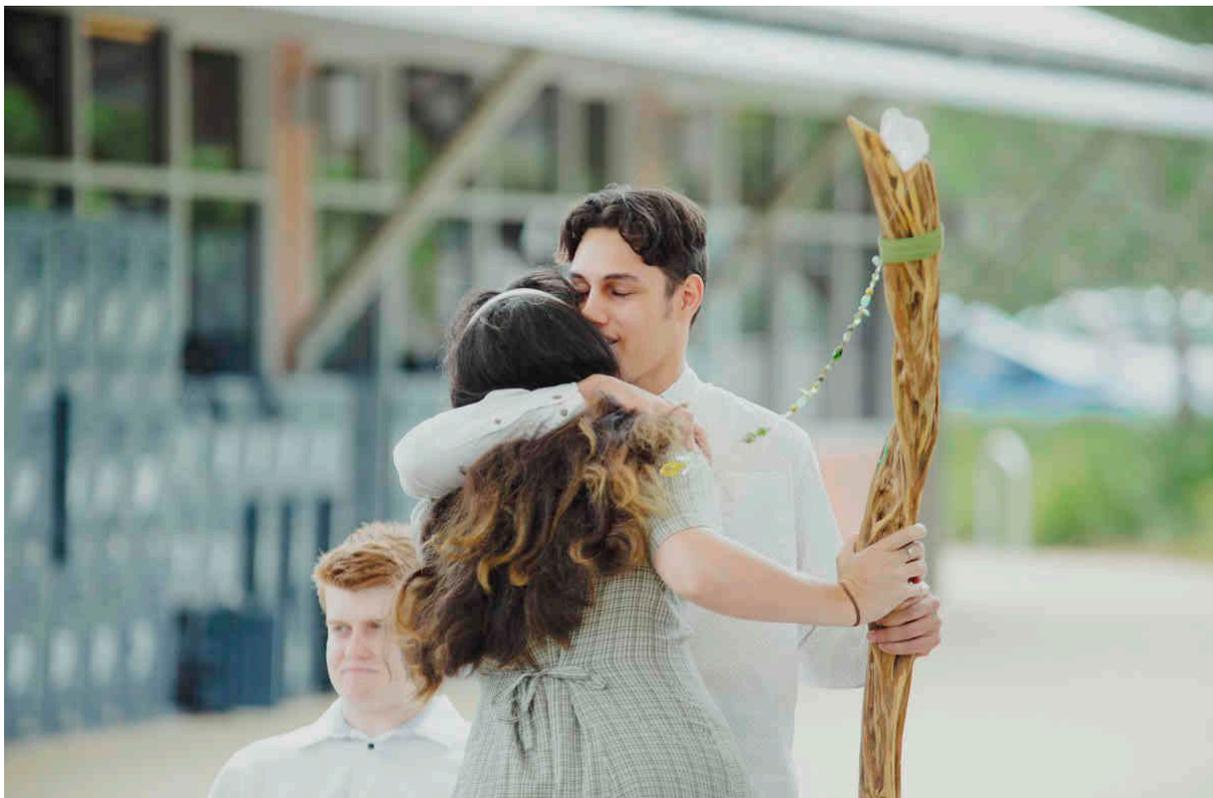
Making Moments that Matter

We create defining moments on a student's learning journey that lead to wonderful and enduring memories of their school days.

While learning is special every day at Silkwood, we take time to consider, plan, and create some deliberate moments worth acknowledging, celebrating, and honouring on a student's journey. These moments create unforgettable memories that young people can draw on as meaningful support throughout their life.

These include transition ceremonies to mark the changing of learning communities, Year 12 graduation, seasonal festivals, camps, and individual moments that are milestones for each individual student.

More details on Moments that Matter can be found on page 37.



Our Learning Continua

At Silkwood, we have taken the Australian Curriculum general capabilities, learning area objectives, and 21st-century educational goals and developed our own unique model of curriculum, which we call our Learning Continua.

This Learning Continua differs from traditional curricula as it is not structured according to year-levels. Instead, it sets the pathway of learning that each student progresses along at their own individual pace to achieve Silkwood's ten 21st century Aims.

Our Learning Continua pathways are:



In their Individual Learning Plan (ILP), students set learning goals from every learning continua. Each student has an individual Learning Continua Matrix, which they use to help them identify their goals and keep track of their progress. We use a digital learning management system to help with this.

This makes the pathway to achieve Silkwood's ten 21st century Aims visible, enabling the student, Advisor, and family to see where a student is at and the next steps on their learning journey and for an Advisor to be responsive to a student's needs.



Our Learning Program

Students progress along their continua by setting goals around three learning areas:



Essential Learning

An individualised program focused on mastering core language and numeracy skills needed for success in the 21st-century

Exploring Learning

A developmental year-level program focussed on learning useful, real-world knowledge, skills, and capabilities that develop a student's awareness of self, others, and our world



Personal Interest Learning

A project-based program focused on exploring student's personal interests and passions and connecting this to real-world learning



"With only 18 students in my class, I get to spend more one-on-one time with my teacher. She knows a lot about me, and she helps me set my learning plan and manage my learning time. It's the best!"



Essential Learning

Essential Learning is mandatory for all students and focuses on:

- Language and numeracy skills that a student needs to succeed in the 21st-century
- Skills needed for the achievement of a QCE (Queensland Certificate of Education)

We achieve this through the following programs:

Essential Math and English Learning

This program focuses on gaining mastery over the Essential Maths and English skills that a student needs to succeed in the 21st-century. These are set out in our 21st-century Literacy and Numeracy Continua.

This program is delivered using a short, targeted, instructional approach with a school-based standardised assessment to ensure students are making tangible progress and skills are being assessed at a mastery level.

Students set their Essential Math and English goals in their Individual Learning Plan (ILP) every term with their Advisor. Their goals are designed to progress them along the Literacy and Numeracy Continua. As such, every student has individualised goals. Advisors then plan their Advisory Essential Math and English Learning Program around each student's goals to ensure all students are well supported and able to make progress on their learning journey.

Once a student has mastered all the Essential Math and English program skills, they have completed this program. Therefore, it is no longer required in their Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and, as such, allows the student to spend increased time on their Personal Interest Learning Program.

Italian

At Silkwood, the junior and primary school students engage in the process of gaining verbal mastery over a second language to develop cognitive flexibility, broaden cultural horizons, and support with the development of Essential English skills.

We have chosen Italian as it:

- Shares the same alphabet as English - Italian developed from Latin, and an estimated 60 percent of the English vocabulary also comes from Latin.
- Is easy and fun to learn - it is a phonetic language, which means it is spoken the way it is written.
- It opens doors to easily learning other languages. It is a romance language spoken by over 60 million people around the world. It forms the basis for easily learning the other romance languages, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Romanian.

We have a specialist Italian teacher who delivers these lessons in an age-appropriate way. It is supported by a program called Word Perfect, which helps the teacher individualise lessons to a student's level.

QCE Essential Learning

Essential Learning in the senior school allows students to achieve their QCE (Queensland Certificate for Education).

A crucial part of our point of difference is how we approach obtaining QCE points. As with everything we do at Silkwood, we have found a meaningful way to include earning QCE points in a student's Individual Learning Plan (ILP), so it does not dominate but rather compliments their learning.

Our senior students work towards completing the following Essential Program to evidence the points they need for their QCE. This program is assessed against standard government criteria, and the students who pass will be eligible to receive their QCE.

Individual students may opt out of the QCE Essential Learning Program and design their own learning pathway with parents/carers and Head of Schools' approval.

QCE Essential Learning Program	Commitment	Points	QCE Element
QCAA English in Year 11 & 12 + The Autobiography Project	4 Semesters	4	Essential
QCAA Math in Year 11 & 12	4 Semesters	4	Essential
Social and Community Studies Applied Senior Syllabus (student subject sections of the Senior Thesis Project and Learning Through Internship (LTI) projects for QCCA assessment)	4 Semesters	4	Essential
Certification of skills and courses attained throughout their project work + Microsoft Certified Courses	4 Semesters	8	Complementary
Total	20 points guaranteed on successful completion of the QCE Essential Learning Program at C standard or above.		



Exploring Learning

Exploring Learning is the skills, capabilities, and content knowledge from our Learning Continua focused on:

- Expanding a student's awareness of self, others, and our world
- Extending skills to improve communication and financial literacy
- Developing 21st-century life skills to enhance wellbeing, thinking, and artistic creativity



Using our developmental scaffold, we have designed our Exploring Learning into three year-level frameworks. Each frame has a distinctly different purpose and, as such, uses different teaching strategies.



Discovery learning takes students on a journey of self-discovery, one that expands their awareness of themselves, and their world.



Integrated learning is designed to give students time to deeply explore content in highly engaging ways, to foster a love of learning and spark new interests.



Experiential learning supports students to explore opportunities in the arts, music, design, sports, and how these skills can be turned into work in life.

Discovery

Discovery learning takes students on a journey of self-discovery through opportunities to:

 **IMPROVE THEIR
COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

 **SEE LIFE THROUGH
DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES**



 **EXPAND THEIR INTERESTS
AND FIND INSPIRATION**

 **PARTICIPATE IN IMPROVING
THEMSELVES, THEIR LIFE,
COMMUNITY, AND THE
WORLD**

We do this by engaging students in adventure, challenge, inspiration, and introspection through guest presenters, philosophical inquiry, restorative practices, outdoor and adventure learning, social, emotional, and wellbeing development, and community projects that solve real-world problems.

This is done in daily sessions at the start and end of the day, in extended workshops, in excursions, and through our camp program.

Our Camp program is an exploring part of discovery learning, created to develop character through adventure and challenge. Camps begin in Year 2 and have been carefully considered to have enough challenge, relevance, and enjoyment for students' age.



Integrated

Integrated learning is explored from Prep to Year 10. It is designed to give students dedicated time to deeply explore content from the traditional subjects of science, humanities and the social sciences, technology, and the arts.

INTEGRATED LEARNING APPROACHES



Our learning continua outlines this content and has been organised developmentally into year-level content. Using a cross-curricular approach, Advisors plan this content into either developmentally themed units of work or project/inquiry-based learning. They then deliver this planning in two-hour learning blocks that run most days for 3 – 8 weeks.

This gives students time to deeply explore new knowledge in highly engaging ways to:



Foster a love of learning



Spark curiosity and new interests



Develop a connection to the wider world

...and bring alive learning about new content and concepts in meaningful and developmentally appropriate ways.

Experiential

We believe every student has the capacity to be an artisan, musician, maker, designer, developer, and sportsperson. Experiential learning supports students to explore this through a range of opportunities that develop skills from our learning continua that support:



We do this by offering a developmentally designed year-level framework incorporating:



Games and sport



Languages



Performing Arts



The Arts



Creating Enterprises

Experiential learning is delivered either in weekly sessions over a term or through extended blocks of dedicated time set throughout the term.

As the student's skills grow, they are given increasingly more choice over the opportunities offered. In the High School years, students develop their own personalised experiential projects.

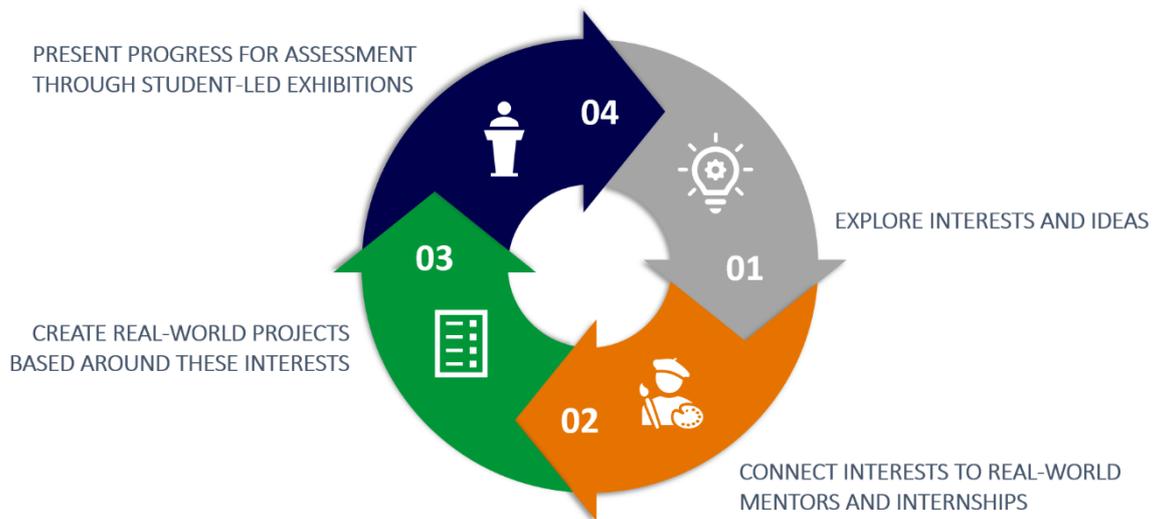
Personal Interest Learning

Personal Interest Learning Time (PILT) is project-based, focused on exploring students' personal interests and passions, connecting this to real-world learning. PILT is designed to give students an opportunity to:



It is planned and led by the student and supported by their Advisor and parents/carers. During PILT, we support students to:

PERSONAL INTEREST LEARNING



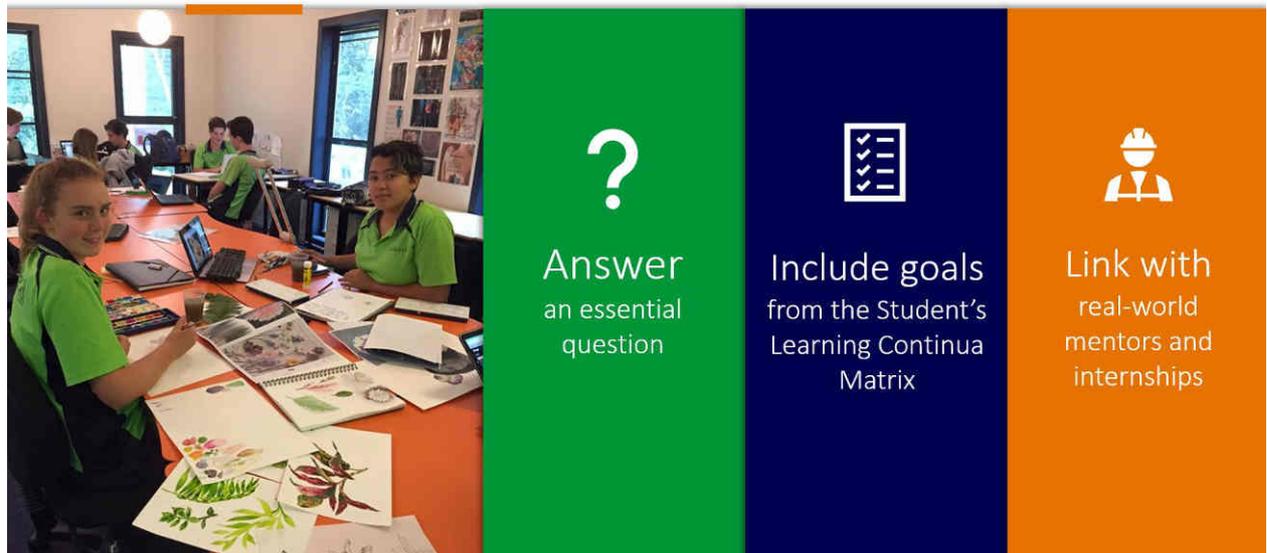
"Being an entrepreneur isn't about starting a business it's a way of looking at the world: seeing opportunity where others see obstacles, taking risks when others take refuge." — Michael Bloomberg

PILT begins in simple ways right from Prep, with the students exploring their interests through play-based learning and provocations. As students begin to articulate their interests, a simple project plan is introduced.

As a student's skills and self-awareness develop, their project plan grows in complexity. This, combined with the mastering of Essential skills and Exploring learning, leads to the student's PILT increasing in their Individual Learning Plan (ILP).

When students reach the senior school, their Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is mostly dedicated to PILT, including a Learning Through Internship (LTI) project.

PILT projects are rigorous as they include:



Real-World Mentors

Fostering links with real-world learning is an expected part of the project planning process. This link is vital for developing students' entrepreneurial spirit and creating a meaningful connection to real-life through their work.

In the **Primary School**, we do this in developmentally appropriate ways with family and school-community connections.

In the **Middle School**, students find and draw on expertise from mentors in their field of interest, and they include mentorships and opportunities to leave the school to extend their learning.

In the **Senior School**, this process develops to include more complex or advanced Learning Through Internship (LTI) opportunities, which are a fundamental part of the seniors' Personal Interest Learning. All senior students are expected to be out engaging in an LTI two days a week.

Engagement with real-world mentors can be individualised and tailored to a student's personal learning profile.

Learning Through Internship (LTIs)

LTIs are designed to build knowledge, understanding, and skills in the context of authentic work that a student feels passionate about. They differ from work experience as they are real workplace projects created by the student under the direction of a workplace mentor.

To do this well, under the guidance of their Advisor, students learn a range of skills to motivate themselves, and organise, plan, and follow project guidelines. Parents/carers support this learning experience by making it possible for their young person to get to and from their LTI work placement on their out-learning days.

Real-World Learning Coordinator

To support this process, Silkwood has a dedicated Real-World Learning Coordinator (RWLC) who helps students make connections by developing and maintaining a database of available mentors, exploring opportunities for new mentors, and helping students develop the skills they need to find their own mentors. They oversee the required paperwork needed to ensure our students are safe and mentors are meeting the school's compliance measures.



"The best part of my role is helping students connect to real-world learning experiences directly related to their passions and interests. It is such a rewarding and positive experience to see them learn in this space, and it is truly special what these young people get to do in Year 11 and 12 at Silkwood – it is an exciting chapter of their learning journey!"

— Tai Hood, Real-World Learning Coordinator



A group of children, seen from behind, are walking away on a path. They are wearing bright orange t-shirts with a circular logo on the back, dark blue shorts, and blue bucket hats. The path is made of concrete and is bordered by a bed of brown mulch. In the background, there is a white building with a porch and some greenery. The overall scene is bright and outdoors.

HOW WE DELIVER THE SILKWOOD WAY

Our Advisory Model

After much research, it was determined that the best way to deliver The Silkwood Way was the innovative **Big Picture Education Advisory Approach**. We integrated Silkwood's developmental framework with this approach to create our own unique Advisory Model. This moves the traditional teacher/student relationship into a partnership between the Advisor and the Learner, supported by:

- Smaller campuses we call Learning Communities
- Extended learning cycles with one Advisor
- Developmental Phases
- Small learning groups called Advisories

This forms a close, connected, and supportive community around each student, giving more time for one-on-one learning conversations and self-discovery and allowing personalised learning to flourish.

Silkwood Learning Communities

This model has designed our school campus into:

- Learning communities of approximately 200 students, each with a different developmental focus *and*
- Year-level Advisory Groups of around 18 students set across 2 or 3 year Advisory learning cycles.

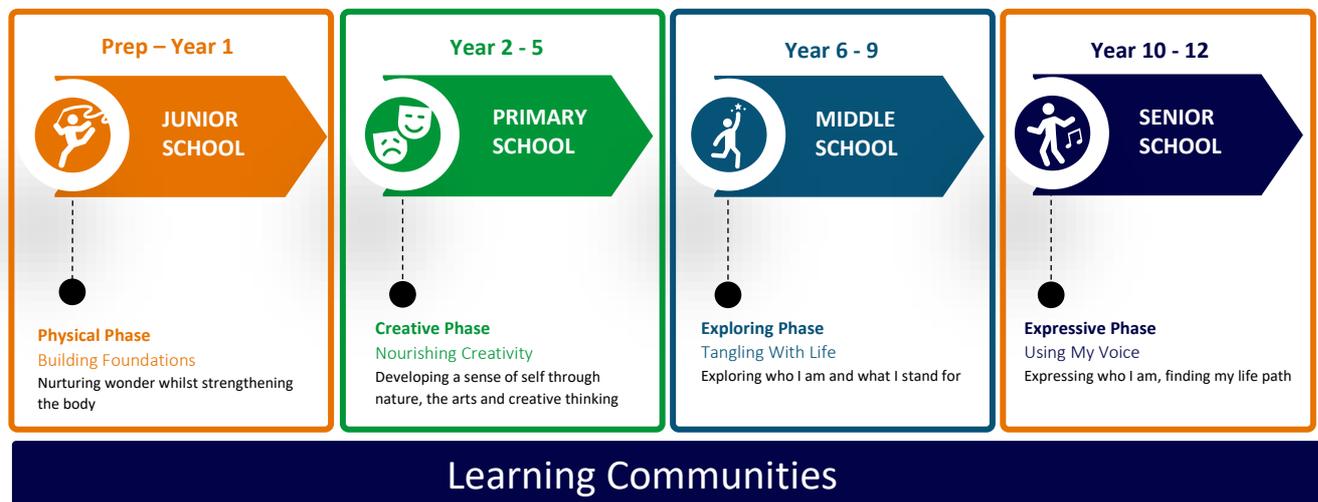
LEARNING COMMUNITIES	LEARNING CYCLES
Junior Primary School	Prep-Year 1
Primary School	Year 2 - 3
	Year 4 - 5
Primary School – Learning Enrichment	Year 2 - 3
	Year 4 - 5
Middle School	Year 6 - 7
	Year 8 - 9
Middle School – Learning Enrichment	Year 6 - 7
	Year 8 - 9
Senior School	Year 10 - 12
Distance Education	Year 4 - 12

A **Head of School** leads the teaching and learning in each Learning Community and, as such, is the Principal of their Learning Community. Their focus is to bring leadership and teaching expertise to the role and foster positive partnerships between students, families, and Advisors by giving support and professional guidance.

We have meaningful, age-appropriate ceremonies to mark the journey of students transitioning from each Learning Community.

Developmental Phases

Each Learning Community's unique developmental phase brings an age-appropriate focus and feel to learning. This helps students feel affirmed and supported with developmental changes as they move through their Silkwood learning journey.



Junior School (Prep-Year 1) - *The Physical Development Phase*

Building Foundations – Nurturing wonder and strengthening the body

Our junior years program has been designed with the knowledge and understanding that the foundations of physical and brain development are still being laid up until the age of 7. Children learn best through doing, imitating, and in an active, wonder-filled, multi-sensory environment to support this development.

In response to this, The Silkwood Way learning program is focused on children learning through exploring their own rich and rewarding world of self-directed play, movement games, kinesthetic activities, music, storytelling, singing, cooking, arts, and craft, and teacher developed inquiry provocations that slowly increase in difficulty over the years.

Primary School (Year 2 – 5) - *The Creative Phase*

Nourishing creativity and imagination – forming a sense of self

This is a stage of emerging reality, of active participation when the young person's picture thinking and imagination changes into a hunger to know what the world is all about. It is a time of questioning: How? What? Why? When? and What for?

This quest for knowing underpins our primary school program, which is focused on enlivening creativity through traditional stories, the arts, music, physical activity, and exploring and constructing learning from the students' world, dispositions, and interests.

Middle School (Years 6 to 9) — *The Exploring Phase*

Tangling with life – exploring who I am and what I stand for

In these years, there is a sense of growing independence and individuality for each student to explore and express their emerging personality. They need to connect with the world in real and tangible ways, discover what they feel passionate about and how they can make a difference in the world.

The sudden and rapid physical changes that adolescents go through can make them self-conscious, sensitive, and concerned about their own body changes. They pull away from their parents in a search for their own identity, and their friends become a significant influence.

The Silkwood Way gives personal development time by offering safe opportunities to learn more about themselves, their impact on others, and the world, through Discovery lessons, school camps, and several rites of passage experiences.

Here, we give students more choice, we raise expectations and responsibility, and we engage them in robust debate to challenge their learning and understanding of the self. This supports the development of their identities, sharpening their meta-cognitive minds and building capacity to face the many challenges of their future.



Senior School (Years 10 -12) - *Expressive Phase*

Using my Voice - Expressing who I am, finding my life path

Here, our emerging adults are fully immersed in the complication of real-world projects, life-changing experiences, and exploring their unique pathways to their future. They are more than ready for a learning program that is theirs, one that treats them like adults and shows them they are more than capable of doing great work in the world.

Our program is designed to give them just that. They benefit from having more pathways open to them than afforded by a traditional school – the world is their oyster, and we empower them to live from that space.

Advisory Groups

Inside every Learning Community, students learn in year-level classes called Advisories, led by an Advisor (Teacher).

- In the **Junior learning community**, each Advisory has **21 students** with the addition of a Teacher Aide. The students remain with the same Advisor, Teacher Aide, and Advisory group for a two-year Advisory learning cycle.
- In the **Learning Enrichment Communities**, each Advisory has between **10 – 12 students** (depending on student needs). The students remain with the same Advisor and Advisory group for a two-year Advisory learning cycle.
- In the **Primary and Middle School Learning Communities**, each Advisory has around **18 students**. The students remain with the same Advisor and Advisory Group for a two-year Advisory learning cycle.
- In the **Senior School** each Advisory has around **18 students** they remain with the same Advisor and Advisory group for a **three-year Advisory learning cycle**.



Students work with their Advisor in their Advisory Group as much as possible to ensure a strong learning community is formed. During these times, the Advisor deepens their understanding of each student and the group through the Discovery learning program.

The Advisory Group helps one another to manage their time, plan work, find real-world mentors, build on their learning goals, and complete projects.

This way, the Advisory becomes a great support system for each student, like a family group at school with its own culture and personality. As part of their learning program, students actively participate in becoming respectful, caring, and productive members of their Advisory Group.

When students move into a new learning cycle, some Advisory Group adjustments are made to balance learning needs. Advisors are best placed to make these decisions. They work in partnership with the other year-level Advisors to consider the student needs across the year-level before making the final decisions on student placements in Advisories. Changes to Advisory placement outside of this time only happens if a student is not progressing or settling in, and the learning team believes a move to a new Advisory is the best solution.

The Advisor – More than a Teacher

Each student at Silkwood is assigned a dedicated Advisor for their learning cycle who works in partnership with the student and their family to develop a Personalised Learning Profile.

An Advisor is a qualified teacher and does teach; however, they do significantly more; they are committed to individualising and personalising student learning and supporting a student to achieve their learning goals by:



WHAT DOES AN ADVISOR DO?

- Develops student awareness and self-management
- Ensures the student is connected, to and responsible for their Learning Plan
- Knows the student well and understands how they learn best
- Advocates for their students
- Encourages a growth mindset
- Links learning to real-world opportunities
- Delivers quality Core and Essential Learning Programs
- Focuses the student on tangible progress



Student Learning Cycle (SLC)

The Student Learning Cycle is a series of steps that involve the Advisor, parents/carers, mentors, and most importantly, the student in developing their Individual Learning Plan (ILP). It works alongside our Advisor Planning Cycle to bring The Silkwood Way's learning program together.

Although a student and their Advisor work together to develop the student's ILP, all students learn to self-manage the steps in the SLC in age-appropriate ways. By the time they reach their senior school years, they have the confidence and ability to self-manage this process entirely.

There are two student learning cycles every year, corresponding with the school semesters. All parents/carers are actively involved in attending:

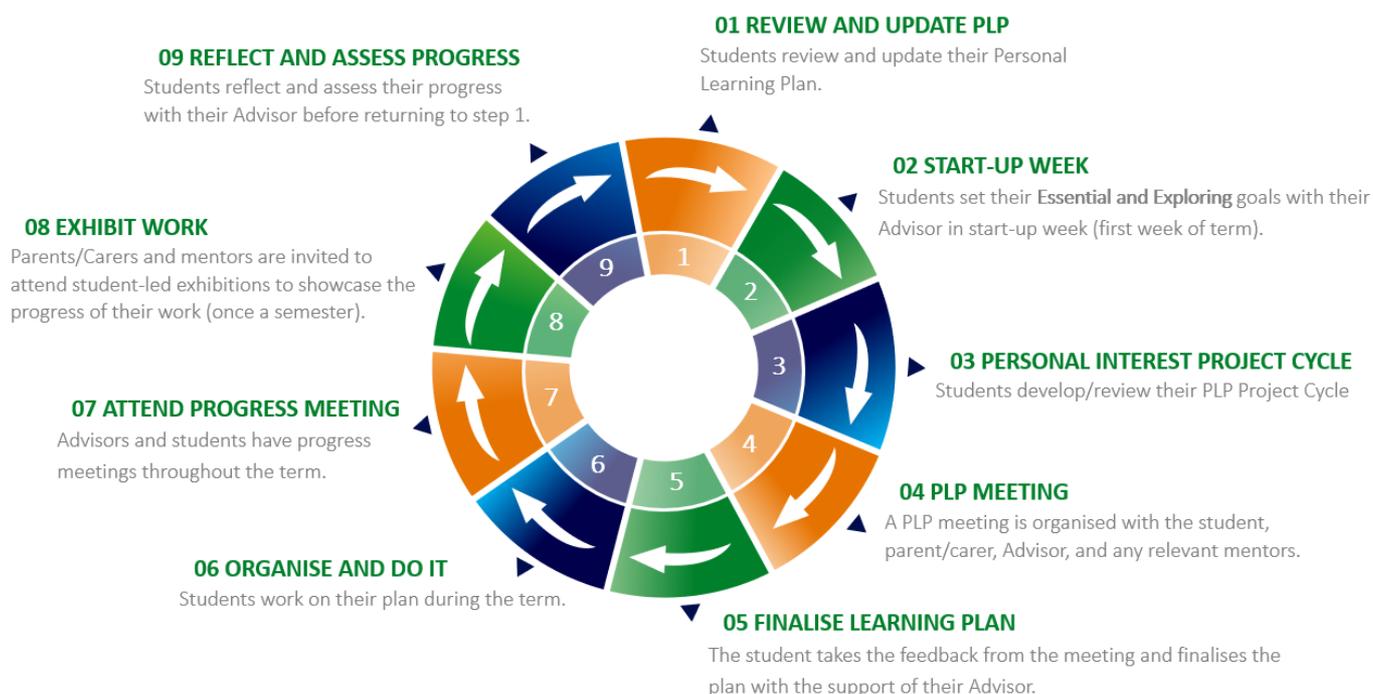
1. Family PLP meetings (step 4)
2. Exhibition meetings (step 8)

We ask parents to prioritise these times, to support the partnership between home and school.

Advisors regularly meet one-on-one with their students during the term to support the ongoing development of the ILP, so it is always relevant, evolving, and progressing for every student.

The Student Learning Cycle consists of the following nine steps:

STUDENT LEARNING CYCLE



Student's Personal Learning Profile

At the very heart of The Silkwood Way lies the student's Personal Learning Profile, referred to as the (PLP). Each student's PLP is developed and progressed using our unique partnership approach and through the student learning cycle.

The PLP is the starting point for student and Advisor planning. It drives progress and enables student self-management and ownership over learning. So, let's take a look at what makes up a PLP.

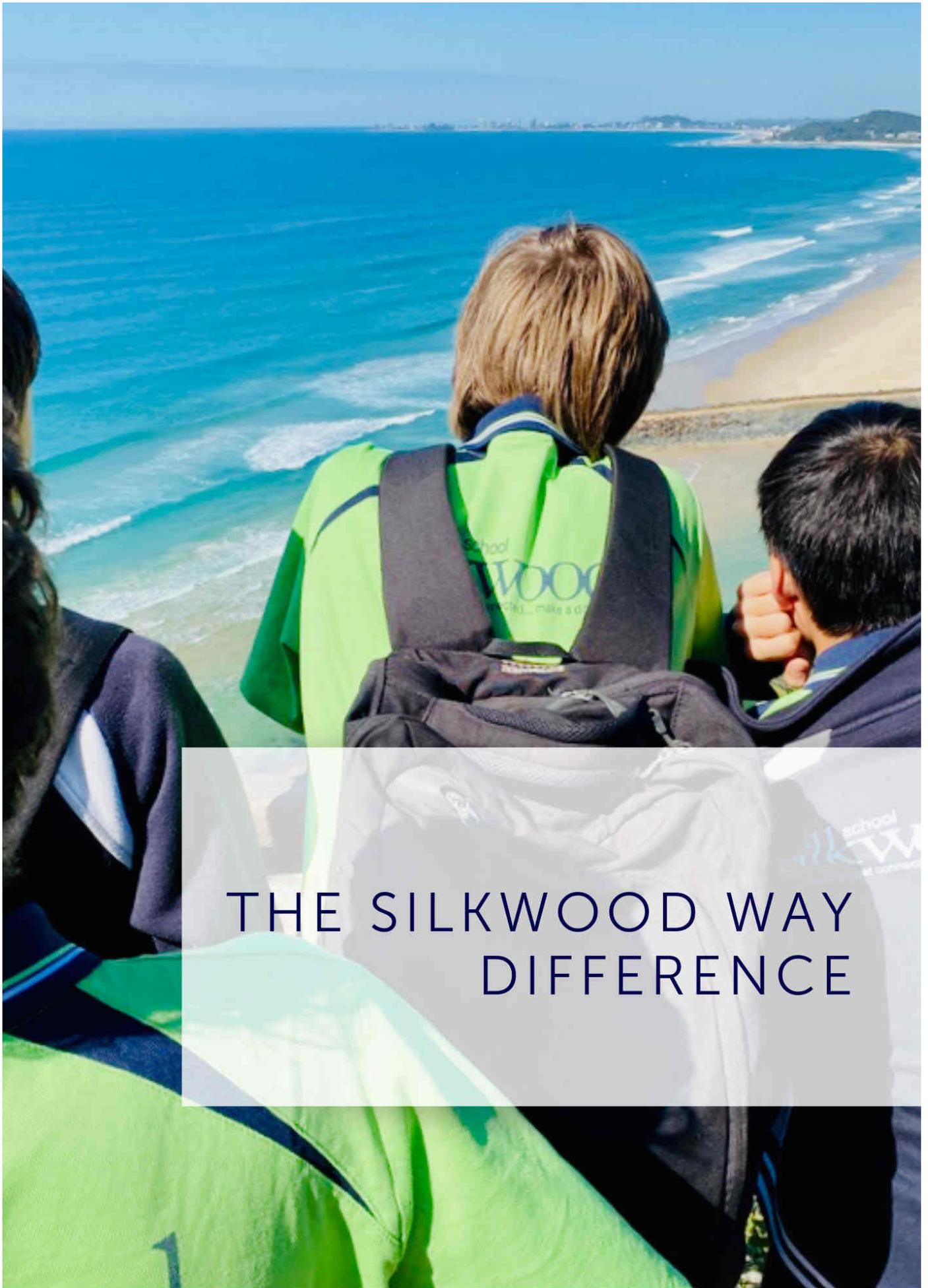
A student's Personal Learning Profile (PLP) includes the following:



This connects student interests to their learning, maps out the pathway for the student to achieve our Aims, sets out the student's individual learning goals, and provides information on progress, enabling students to self-manage and have ownership over their learning.

Students' PLPs are also central to Advisor planning. Advisors take student profiles and individual goals and use this to design their year-level and Advisory planning to ensure it is personalised to each student's interests and needs.

As students move through their Silkwood learning journey, their ability to self-manage and develop their own PLP grows. However, no matter where the student is at on their self-management journey, they are always central to the process of developing their PLP through our student learning cycle.



THE SILKWOOD WAY
DIFFERENCE

Student Exhibitions and Assessment

Most learning at Silkwood is assessed formatively, which means we apply authentic learning experiences to identify and improve outcomes, and we focus on student-led assessment processes where possible.

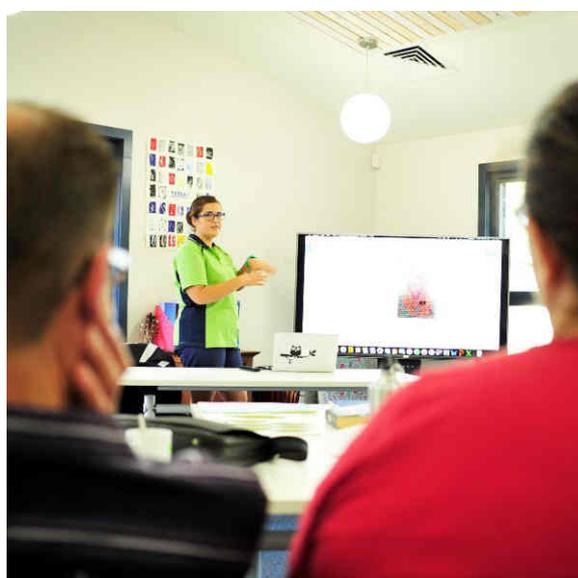
Standardised assessment practices are used by the school where consistency of data and mastery of skills is required. Essential learning is one such area. Rigorous, consistent assessment is necessary to measure a student's successful integration of learning skills.

Student-Led Exhibitions

In addition to having visibility of progress through the PLP, our students also lead an exhibition to present their portfolio of learning, share their progress, and receive relevant feedback. These are held once a semester on scheduled pupil-free days at the end of Terms 2 and 4.

Students are supported by their Advisor to prepare their exhibition. They invite their parents/carers, mentors, Advisor, and other self-selected people to be a part of the feedback panel. The growth of the student and progress with their learning is evident from one exhibition to the next. It is a highly visible and authentic way to demonstrate student-centered assessment and is an empowering student-centered format to support and measure progress.

Delivering their learning progress in this way supports a process that is highly accountable for the student. Improving the standard of their exhibitions is an expected part of their learning and forms part of their learning goals.



Formal School Reports

Silkwood complies with the standards set out for all accredited schools and issues parents with a formal school report card every semester. However, we do not see the value in traditional school reports as a way to measure a child's capability or progress or development as a learner. We value a partnership approach, so we connect our families, students, and Advisors with up-to-date information on a student's progress through their PLP.

NAPLAN

Silkwood is required to participate in Years 3, 5, 7, and 9 NAPLAN testing as an accredited school. Parents can withdraw their child from these tests, and the school supports parents in whatever decision they make. The school does not actively encourage participation in nor teach to the tests, as they are of no use to the school to improve individual student learning or measure where a student is.

Doing Senior School Differently



"Young people matter! Teaching them unnecessary things we know they don't need and centering 13 years of successful schooling on an exam mark, I feel is disrespectful to them. School should be a time of curiosity and exploration, where we give young people time to try out real-world work, exploring things important to them and their future... wouldn't that be a better use of their time?"

– Valerie Campbell-Hogg, Founder & CEO of Silkwood School

Here at Silkwood, we are passionate about doing senior school differently. We set ourselves apart from traditional high schools by not standardising our program around an unvarying assessment regime designed for university entry. Instead, we focus students learning time around their interests, needs, and 21st-century skills and build Personalised Learning Profiles and alternative pathways to life after school through our Graduation Portfolio.

Whether a student wishes to be an entrepreneur, artist, university graduate, explorer, or tradesperson, our program can and does personalise a pathway for them to get there.

Many parents have in the back of their minds the question, "will doing school differently disadvantage my teen?" – this is a great question. We confidently state, if a student commits to their Individual Learning Plan (ILP), the answer is "no" and boldly say that our personalised pathways will even get them there more efficiently, more confidently, and in more meaningful ways than what traditional schooling can offer. Because at Silkwood, we have the magic of flexibility, and our student results can back that up.

EXTRAORDINARY RESULTS

Higher Education	Graduation Portfolio	University Placements	Post-School Pathways
100% of our students completed Year 12 with one or more Vocational Education and Training (VET), QCE or higher education qualification.	100% of our graduates , who sought a university placement, were accepted using our Graduate Portfolio process.	Many of our university placements were confirmed months before traditional schools sat their final exams.	Every graduate left Silkwood with a post-school pathway .

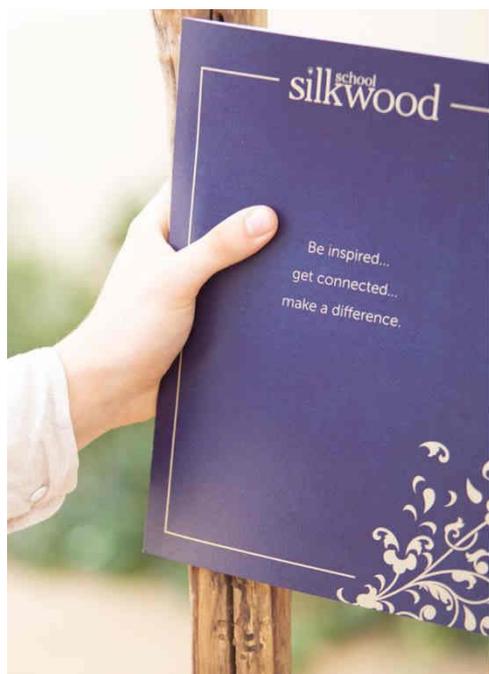
While results like this are great – what matters most is that our students left Silkwood having explored many real-world pathways, they were confident about the post-school pathway they had designed, and they were skilled enough to turn their ideas into reality.

Graduation Portfolio and Pathways to Further Learning

The Graduation Portfolio is an integral part of the learning model offered at Silkwood. It is a compilation of a student's work from Years 10 through to 12. It demonstrates their capacity to explore, research, and develop as learners in their fields of personal interest.

Although it supports a student's pathway to a career, further study, and university, its purpose is to focus the student on the development of their life-long learning skills, interests, dreams, business skills, personal development, and community citizenship – it more than just a number on paper!

The Graduation Portfolio includes:



OUR GRADUATION PORTFOLIO

- A Senior Thesis Project
- Learning Through Internship Projects
- A Series of Learning Plans
- A Series of Project Exhibitions
- Service-Learning Project
- An Autobiography
- A Post-school Project or University or Tertiary Study Pathway

Silkwood graduates can use their portfolio to pursue employment, vocational education, or university pathways. Notably, Big Picture Education Australia has made valuable connections with a range of Australian universities on our behalf. This organisation assists our students in using their portfolio in gaining entry into these universities.

For students who seek entry into other universities, an individualised pathway to the university of their choice is established through their Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and included as part of their Graduation Portfolio.

The Graduation Portfolio is not offered as an easier assessment pathway; it is a substantial project which requires as much commitment and effort as traditional methods. This effort is rewarded with a more authentic, engaging, and meaningful way to demonstrate a student's talents, skills, and achievements.

Using this approach, we are delighted to say that our senior student's results are very successful. In 2019 - 20, all students who sought a university placement received one, and they received an offer of placement months before traditional school students.

Learning Enrichment at Silkwood

At Silkwood, we recognise that some students have higher learning needs than others. We focus on using our personalised approach to cater to these needs inside our year-level Advisory classes. To support this process, each Advisor at Silkwood is assigned a specialist Learning Enrichment Advisor.

When an Advisor identifies a student who:

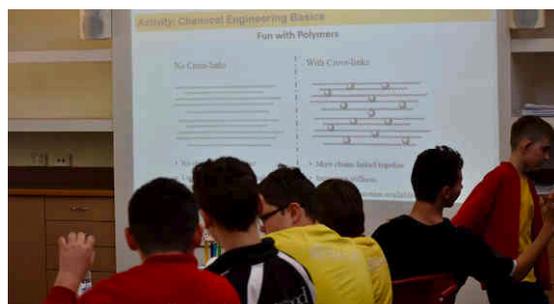
- Is not progressing adequately;
- Is displaying challenging behaviour that is holding them back from learning;
- Is struggling with the Advisory learning environment;
- Needs more than what the Advisor can offer;

The student is then entered into the Learning Enrichment Process. This provides the Advisor with immediate case management support from their Learning Enrichment Advisor and gives the student the support they need to continue their learning journey.

Learning Enrichment Advisory

In some cases, a student may need additional specialised support for their learning. We have designed our Learning Enrichment Advisories to cater to these students specifically. These Advisories enhance their engagement and individual progress by delivering The Silkwood Way with additional support features such as:

- Lower student to teacher ratio (1:10) for students who require higher levels of support;
- The Advisor has additional specialised training in how to tailor learning to support students with special needs;
- A quiet, calm learning environment (fewer students and less noise);
- Targeted support programs to cater to specific learning needs.



Moments that Matter

While learning is special every day at Silkwood, we take time to consider, plan, and create some deliberate moments worth acknowledging, celebrating, and honouring on a student's journey. These moments create unforgettable memories that young people can draw on as meaningful support throughout their life.

These include transition ceremonies to mark learning communities' changing, Year 12 graduation, seasonal festivals, and camp adventures.

Transition Ceremonies

At the transition point of each developmental phase, a significant developmental shift happens physically and emotionally. We acknowledge these transitions with a move into a new learning space, the assignment of a new Advisor, and a specially designed transition ceremony to mark this change.

These ceremonies are held when students transition from:

- Year 1 – Year 2
- Year 5 – Year 6
- Year 9 – Year 10
- Year 12 (Graduation)



High School Graduation

We see bringing the Silkwood learning adventure to a close as a significant chapter in young people's lives, and we treat it as such with a memorable ceremony.

Once the students have completed their final exhibition, we mark the closing of their time at Silkwood with a special ceremony. The graduation ceremony is a celebration of the silkwood adventure in its entirety, a time of closure and well-wishes for new beginnings. Here we take time to acknowledge every student's individuality with a special gift, words, and song as we come together and wish them the best for their new beginnings.

Festivals

At the end of every school term, Silkwood celebrates the close of the term with a seasonal student festival. The celebration of these festivals brings a sense of enrichment to school life and the schooling experience by uniting the school community and nurturing the sense of reverence that is often lacking in today's fast-paced, modern world.

School Camp Adventures

Camp adventures are an opportunity for students to develop character and self-awareness through adventure and challenge. They are an integral part of our Discovery Learning and Exploring to supporting the achievement of our ten 21st-century aims.

Camps begin in Year 2. They are carefully considered and developmentally appropriate for the year-level and ensure activities have enough challenge, relevance, and enjoyment for the age group.

Locations are thoughtfully selected not only for their significance to our country but also to support the students with:

- Growing independence from home;
- Connections to their classmates;
- Self-awareness of their relationship to our country.

View our annual [School Camp Adventures Handbook here](#). Note, COVID directives and restrictions can cause camp arrangements to change. Families will be advise as soon as possible if this should happen.

Technology at Silkwood

Digital Technology at Silkwood is used, first and foremost, as a tool to enhance learning. This means that technology use at school for social and entertainment purposes is not supported.

It is important to remember that learning at Silkwood is developmentally aligned. It is one of our learning principles. Using technology as a tool to enhance learning at Silkwood is done with this principle in mind and an understanding of each student's unique needs and our commitment to deliver on our AIMS.

Due to our developmental focus, we advocate for young people to spend less time using technology for social and entertainment and more time outdoors, active and engaging face to face with people. We see this as vital for a young person's physical and psychological development. For this reason, do not be surprised at Silkwood if your Advisor asks you to minimise or, in some cases, stop your child's digital use for entertainment and social purposes. They ask because they care and know that this will help your child learn to navigate the modern digital world safely and understand the power of this tool for learning.

Technology use at Silkwood has three primary purposes, all of which are in the service of learning:

- Developing digital fluency in preparation for the 21st-century world;
- To enhance and personalise learning;
- As an administrative tool to support the management of a student's PLP.

These three purposes keep the integrity of the intent behind digital technology use and gives Silkwood a framework to align questions about appropriateness.

Digital fluency

An important outcome of Silkwood's developmentally based learning program is that students develop skills that prepare them to succeed in the 21st century. Some digital skills are important to this outcome, and at Silkwood, we developed our own Learning Continua to support this. The teaching of these skills is introduced in age-appropriate contexts in our Exploring learning program. The goal is for all students to achieve digital fluency, and critical technological skills for the 21st-century, by the time they graduate from Silkwood.

It is important to note that the explicit teaching of specific digital literacy skills comes after developing critical personal (non-technological) skills. For example, students develop handwriting skills before learning how to type.

Our Exploring digital technologies skill program formally begins in Year 4, when students begin learning how to type. Our BYOD program begins at this Year-level to support the start of this work. Students may use school devices to learn some of these skills in earlier years during their personal interest learning time or to support a specific learning enrichment goal.

Enhance and Personalise Learning

Digital technologies are used to enhance students' learning and bring alive learning content in a meaningful and authentic way, from Prep to Year 12.

The use of technology to enhance and personalise learning is underpinned first and foremost by our developmental framework. We stand by our developmental focus of only using technology for learning enhancement and personalisation where needed and appropriate.



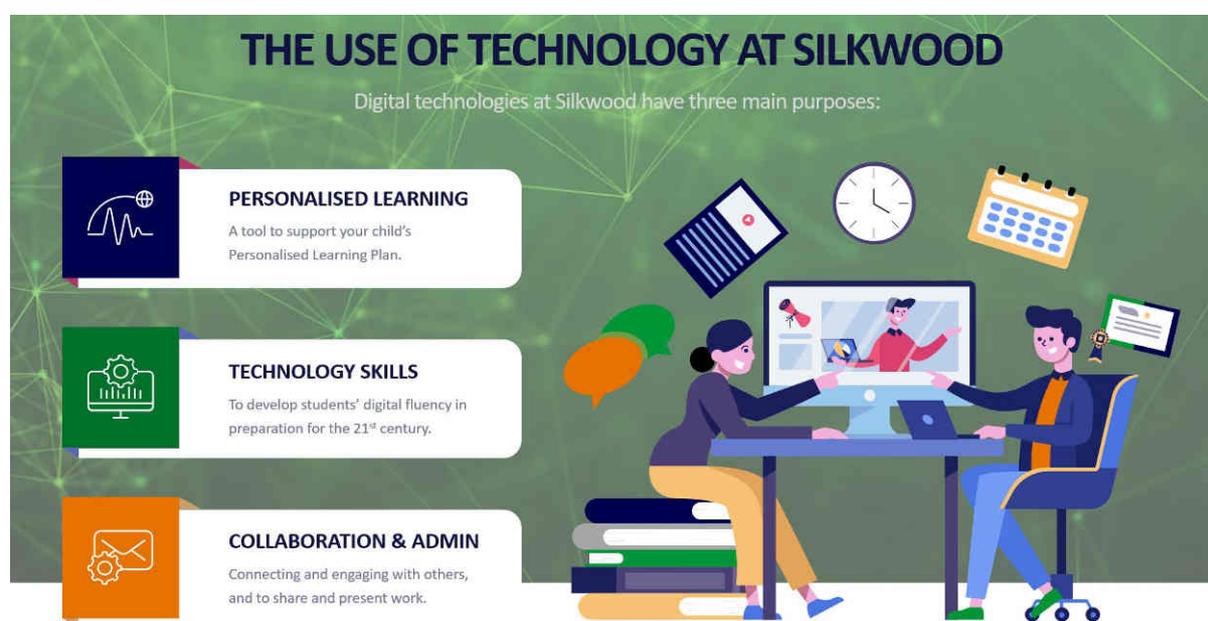
Administrative Tool to support the management of Learning

Given our highly personalised program, the use of digital technologies is vital to ensure we store, record, track, plan, and make learning visible. Digital technologies are used across the school from Prep-Year 12 as an administrative tool by both students and Advisors to:

- Plan effectively and efficiently;
- Access real-time data quickly;
- Store, manage and access work easily;
- Make personalising and individualising student learning easier.

This allows students to:

- Easily see and track progress;
- Self-manage goals and see what impacts their progress;
- Share their work easily with their families and Advisors.



BYOD Program

[BYOD Program Guidebook](#)

All students in Years 4 to 12 participate in the BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) Program. Details for this program are released to parents in Term 4 every year for the following school year. Students in these year-levels are required to supply their own technology device, as per the BYOD Program.

In the earlier years, digital equipment that students may need to enhance their learning is provided by the school.

PERSONALISED LEARNING PROFILE (PLP)



Inclusivity and Diversity at Silkwood School

Silkwood School is an inclusive and secular school. This means it is not connected to any specific religious or spiritual faith and supports people to live their lives in ways they believe are best. For this reason, Silkwood does not oppose or support any religion or specific personal philosophies on life or health. Instead, it provides an open ground where different faith and philosophy types can be discussed and explored openly, freely, and respectfully.

Silkwood provides an equal playground: to play, believe, converse, and think. Therefore, it is openly inclusive and respectful of everyone's beliefs when it is not impacting or replacing societal laws, human rights, or harmful to people.

Here at Silkwood, we state that:

- We value the freedom of a young person to engage democratically with others who have very different worldviews from one's own;
- We value the idea that religious faiths and non-religious worldviews can co-exist within the same community;
- We value the freedom of people to be non-religious or religious;
- We value inclusivity and equality;
- We actively seek respect for others.

The Silkwood Difference

It takes courage to step off the traditional path.

Stepping onto the Silkwood path is a considered decision, a decision to select a school with a different purpose than traditional schooling – one designed with ten 21st-century outcomes for our students at its heart.

Our Ten 21st Century Aims



With a unique and innovative educational model, The Silkwood Way is purposefully designed to support young people to achieve these outcomes by creating personalised learning pathways for every child, valuing their time and individuality.

This stands Silkwood apart from traditional schooling, and a traditional model whose purpose is to deliver standardised subject content and one size fits all testing to drive academic outcomes.

It is a powerful difference that can make an equally powerful difference to a young person's future.

At Silkwood, we offer:

- A Personalised Learning Profile for every student;
- A dedicated Advisor for every student, who supports them on a two-year learning cycle;
- Small classes, called Advisories, with a maximum of 18 students;
- A unique program that adopts a variety of learning styles, strategies, and options designed to develop the capabilities needed for success in the 21st-century;
- Life preparation through real-world learning opportunities, connections, and mentors;
- Student-led assessment and exhibitions;
- A tailored High School assessment process called a Graduation Portfolio;
- Personalised pathways to tertiary study and life after school.

We focus on student self-management through:

- A partnership approach with the family, student and their Advisor;
- Developing a student's awareness of themselves, others and our world;
- Ensuring students feel connected to and responsible for their Individual Learning Plan (ILP);
- Demonstrated progress related to their learning goals;
- Supporting the student to find the best way to achieve their learning goals;
- Developing meaningful pathways to future work.

Whilst we have lovely facilities located in a beautiful Hinterland setting, this is not where we focus our attention. Silkwood invests in keeping the student-to-teacher ratio low, we avoid learning that has no clear purpose to the student, and we value real-world learning.

This means Silkwood does not look or feel like other schools; you will not see:

- Subject teaching with specialist teachers (excluding Music and Italian in primary years);
- Exams and tests as a way of measuring student success;
- Traditional infrastructure, facilities, and resources – we use the world as our campus!;
- Year-level teaching which is the same for every student regardless of their needs;
- Standard or traditional pathways to tertiary education.

We are uncompromising on our differences. They are what sets us apart, and we proudly stand firm on these.



Our Families - Partnership Commitment

Enrolling at Silkwood means saying YES to the Silkwood Difference and committing to The Silkwood Way.

We are here to walk alongside our families in partnership on their Silkwood journey. We respect that selecting an education for their child/ren is a big life decision, and paying school fees is a commitment.

Our commitment to this partnership is that we will do our best to deliver on the Silkwood AIMS for our young people every day. We will be clear with parents and carers about their child's needs, what support we need from them, and what The Silkwood Way is all about. We will support them with opportunities to learn more about parenting and ways to support their young person on this journey.

We seek parent and carer support, at a home level, with:

- Providing a home life that actively supports their child on their self-management journey;
- Engaging in parent education at the school and in the community;
- Providing nutritional food, quality family time, and an active outdoor homelife;
- Participating in their child's learning cycle by prioritising Personal Individual Learning Plan (ILP) (PLP) meetings, exhibitions and giving feedback and encouragement;
- Supporting the Learning Team with their requests;
- Being respectful about school decisions;
- Directing grievances respectfully to the School Team.

This will help families to get the best out of their Silkwood learning adventure.

We want families to know that innovation lies at the heart of The Silkwood Way, and innovation makes for a constantly changing and dynamic learning environment. Being part of a community that works on the edge is sometimes challenging, and while we do our best to minimise the change that comes from innovating, it is not always possible. This is part of who we are and what makes Silkwood so unique.

We are dealing with young people and learning, so we do not shy away from the fact that there will be times when things do not go smoothly. At these times, we choose to focus on resolution through respectful consideration of each other's perspectives. If at any time families find themselves at a place where they are unable to support their enrolment commitment, we are more than happy to help them find a school that meets their needs better. Finding the right educational environment for their child is important to us, and we respect that Silkwood is not always for every family.

We are uncompromising on our differences; they set us apart and something we proudly stand firm on. We hope that our differences inspire, connect, and make a difference to our families, every day!