

Introducing Rooty Hill Public School.

Rooty Hill is a primary school located in Greater Western Sydney. There are approximately 650 students at the school, 57% of whom are from language backgrounds other than English and 6% of whom are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

This case study describes how Rooty Hill Public School utilised the SunSmart Hat-Wearing Toolkit to support the implementation of SunSmart hats and the phasing out of caps from their school uniform.

Identifying the challenge

Prior to the project, baseball caps were the best sellers at the school's uniform shop and the most popular hat worn by students.

While students knew what sun safety was, they didn't understand the importance of it nor the message behind the 'no hat, play in the shade' rule.

The school's SunSmart champion and Sports Coordinator, Noele Steward, recognised the importance of teaching students that it's not just about protecting themselves now from the sun, but how it will set them up for a healthy future.

"The implementation of SunSmart hats at our school was chosen as a priority as we could not teach sun safety to our students when we were not providing sun safe hats for them to wear," Noele said.

The executive team were on board from the beginning and were adamant that these changes were a positive step forward for their students' well-being.

Creating change

"We took our proposal to the School Council and P&C groups to explain our reasons for needing to change the uniform policy and culture within our school to best suit the needs of our students and make their safety a priority," Noele explained.

A new uniform policy was created, and parents were notified about the change and why these changes were necessary.

"It has to be a coordinated effort by all community members to actively change the culture of the school."



Strategies implemented to support the change

- All teachers were provided with a school SunSmart hat to role model during outside activities.
- SunSmart hat-wearing resources were used to deliver sun safety lessons during PDHPE and whole school sessions.
- SunSmart posters were displayed around the school as a visual reminder.
- Teachers made them themselves available to discuss any concerns with parents.
- Financial assistance to purchase hats was offered to families where cost was a barrier.
- SunSmart hat wearing is now rewarded as part of the school's Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) program and all Kindergarten students are given a broad-brimmed hat at orientation.

The result

“With the resources provided by Cancer Council, I was able to deliver consistent sun safety messages to all students, which they then took home and were able to discuss with family members,” Noele said.

“I was able to utilise the resources to give accurate information to our students about why we need to make these changes at our school.”

The change has been received well, with some parents saying they are happy with the initiative as they are not fighting with their child over wearing the new hat because there is no other option.

Students are also happily buying the new hats in order to participate in extra curricula activities, such as PSSA sport.

Advice from Rooty Hill

“Staff need to constantly reinforce sun safe messages to the students so that it becomes a part of every student’s life.

Having visual reminders displayed around the school is very effective for the students - six months after starting the project, students are still pointing the posters out and coming to let me know that they have purchased the new hat!

Holding a competition to design a new poster for the SunSmart hats is also a good way to promote phasing out caps as students take ownership of their posters.”

Noele Steward – Sports Coordinator, Rooty Hill Public School

