

PRINCIPAL REPORT - AGM 2016

Monday 7 March 2016

Enrolments and staffing

At the end of the year we had 38 students exiting Year 6 to transition to Middle School and had 22 moving from Preschool to Primary. Our enrolment averaged 290. This was a sharp decline on the previous year however reflects the demographic of the area.

We had minimal staff turnover during the year. We had one of our leadership team win a promotional position at the end of 2015 and she is now working in the curriculum division of our Department. The preschool assistant and our maintenance officer resigned to move interstate. Both positions were filled on a temporary basis.

Our Global Budget whereby we manage the salaries of our staff was negatively impacted due to the inordinate amount of sick leave taken. It is a reality that we have an aging workforce and they are more likely to access personal leave for their own or family health. We did not always backfill the position in order to make some savings whilst at the same time aware of the need to maintain quality programs. Reduced numbers in 2015 resulted in one less teaching classteacher in 2016.

Our school improvement agenda continued to focus on value addedness for students. We prioritised engaging with Asia, wellbeing and intercultural studies within our planning. We employ a counsellor through our relationship with CatholicCare for one day per week. We deploy an Indonesian teacher and seek to have a teacher deliver a Mandarin program part time.

The leadership team moved into higher duties positions in Term 3 whilst the principal took long service leave. This is a capacity building opportunity and ensures stability of operations as the team know the school context well.

Programs

- All schools within the NT embarked upon a three year professional learning initiative known as Visible Learning which aims to improve teaching and learning.
- Numeracy was a main area of curriculum focus. Teachers undertook coaching with the aid of a numeracy consultant and we had one pupil free Learning Day in Term 3 with Di Siemens to expose staff to open ended maths tasks.

An audit of staff and student engagement with numeracy has shown a common approach to the subject of maths and we are seeing a growth in confidence and understanding. Staff developed a common outline of quality practice known as 'the Numeracy Hour' which is to become standard in our implementation of Maths.

- History, Science and Geography were other areas of the national curriculum which children were engaged in during the year's learning cycle. Arts, design and technology, health and physical education, and intercultural studies are integrated into the program. The reporting cycle provides evidence of learning in these areas at least annually.

- Improving quality of teaching through professional learning and classroom observation of better practice were ongoing features of our development. Teachers and students set goals throughout the year with a view to achievement targets being met. Teachers work to a set of national professional standards and these are used as a basis to indicate proficiency.
 - Intervention and programs aimed at graduated development were: Mathletics, Reading Eggs, Early Literacy Foundation Support Program, Phonological Awareness for Literacy (University of Queensland), LEXILE and guided reading.
 - Our early years team had to complete an exhaustive survey on the development of our students in their first year of school – Australian Early Development Census (AEDC). It is a national audit of developmental need of children which occurs every three years. Domains covered include: physical health; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive skills (basic literacy & numeracy); communication skills and general knowledge. Of the 39 students assessed 18 were considered to be developmentally vulnerable in one or more Domains. The area of health and language and cognitive skill development were the two domains in which we need to focus. This data validates our improvement agenda to promote wellbeing and oral language development within the school.
 - Attendance is a Territory wide improvement goal. School staffing is impacted if attendance falls. Our attendance averaged 91% in 2015 it was particularly pleasing to see that our indigenous average attendance increased from 87% to 90% by year end.
 - Arts as a vehicle to engage and inspire children continued to be a part of student programs at Wagaman. We deployed a Visual Arts teacher across the school and engaged Corrugated Iron Youth Theatre to run elective programs in circus skills and animation. We continue to be successful in gaining Artist in Schools grants to support these value adding programs.
 - Our partnership with The Smith Family continued to reap benefits with access to music workshops such as Topology at Darwin Festival time and ongoing parent workshops on topics as diverse as cyber safety.
 - Intercultural studies continued to be promoted in 2015. Children were exposed to the language and cultures of Indigenous Australia, China and Indonesia.
 - Our Engagement with Asia was enhanced in Term 4 with the launch of a sister school partnership with Maubara, in Timor Leste. It is hoped that this cultural exchange will be of mutual benefit to staff and students of both nations.
 - A new federal government initiative called *Sporting Schools* saw funding provided to the school to enable in and out of school hours activities such as: squash, golf, soccer. This is provided free to the students wishing to participate. NT Government provide \$100 sports vouchers to families twice per year to participate in club activities (out of hours).

Facility and grounds improvements:

The School Council continued its staged improvement of the facility with furniture replacement, storage upgrades, shadecloth installation, reflooring of three classrooms.

The major expenditure project of the year was the renewal of the early childhood playspace in the Area 1 courtyard. \$128,000 of prior year earnings was used to upgrade the area.

Repair and maintenance to the facility occurred throughout the year with our plumbing and irrigation infrastructure being the biggest area of need on our aging site. Our caretakers who are engaged by Council to keep the facility secure after hours, resigned after being on site for 7 years. Council has since engaged a replacement.

The annual arborist report identified trees that needed to be removed or lopped for safety. Several of our African Mahogany trees needed to be removed.

The childcare centre continues to be a worthwhile enterprise for the School Council. Monies raised through the lease agreement enable our school to resource some of our special value-added programs within the school. Ownership of the business changed hands at the end of 2015. Anchorage are the new owners, however, they have sought to have Affinity remain as centre management. A new director is in place. Council acknowledge the need to improve the facility if it is to meet standards. Quotes have been sought to improve the ablution area, staffroom and toddler space. Works should commence in 2016.

Michele Cody
Principal