

WA Premier's Excellence in Aboriginal Education Award: Wiluna Remote Community School

Wiluna Remote Community School (**WRCS**) provides High Care, contextually-relevant and holistic education and training to 83, predominantly Martu, students. The school has progressed its mandate to improve student outcomes utilising an approach that prides itself on being culturally responsive through individualised and integrated learning programs. The intent of the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework (ACSF) is embedded WRCS documents, and serves as the structure this nomination (in bold).

Successful student outcomes can only be achieved with significant time and effort being invested into the 'Standard' of **relationships**. We recognise that Wiluna people – students, Martu teachers, elders, families and the School Council – are the core of the school. It is essential for growth and development of the school's integrity and learning program that their values and views are embedded in the school's strategic direction. They support students' learning on-country and see a role for the school in facilitating the intergenerational transfer of knowledge, which is a key community value. They recognise that two-way science is what children need to understand to both keep their knowledge systems going and learn about western scientific knowledge and inquiry processes. WRCS has developed strong relationships throughout and beyond the traditional limits of our school community to meet learning needs of our students, the aspirations of families and the requirements of employers. There is a range of practices and mechanisms to build and maintain relations: teachers visit families, and families visit classrooms; whole school programs, like two-way science, Bush Rangers and (soon) Big Picture Education, are based on community involvement; strategic community partnerships ensure we commit to key relationships. For example, WRCS, community elders, CSIRO and Desert Support Services (DSS, who run the local ranger program) have collaborated to win two key grants this year: Connecting to Country (2018) and Women in STEM (2018-2020). The former project, led by WRCS, involves creating two sets of videos: vignettes, similar to AITSL's Illustrations of Practice (IoP), and video clips about traditional knowledge. These videos respectively seek to continue culturally responsive teaching practices to maintain the positive school/community relationships of today, and continue Martu knowledge transference into the future. The latter, over-lapping project, led by DSS, funds local female rangers to work with our female students and scientists on STEM activities. One of the outcomes of this project will be VET training of rangers and eligible students, which links in with our new training program. Combined, these grants will support the development of working relationships between aligned agencies, and consolidate the strategic direction of the school.

The School Council has set the school's broad strategic priorities of Language and Culture, Health and Attendance. Regular consultation with, and involvement of, Elders in school and training matters ensures consistent Martu **leadership**. Specific examples of community contributions to school leadership include the:

- Continuous development of the Martu Calendar through community workshops at school and on-country. The Calendar is an invaluable Martu-developed **resource** in guiding teachers to become more effective in their cultural responsiveness. Community representatives have also provided leadership in establishing a local Martu language orthography.
- The Matuwa Kurrara Kurrara Management (MKK) team is comprised of School Council and family members. It provides direct input into the school's leadership as they are regularly consulted to advise on meaningful education and training opportunities;
- As proud winners of the national 2017 CSIRO Indigenous STEM Award, and joint-grant recipients of \$100,000 of extra funding to support the embedding of two-way science knowledge and practice at the school and community level, WRCS school is ensuring that Martu leadership and involvement in the school's operations for at least the next 3 years.

The school's **learning environment** stretches from the classroom to established learning sites on country. It has been shaped by ongoing community counsel and projects, evidenced by welcome signs, rooms and resources that are presented in the local language, and the establishment of outdoor learning areas, including a dedicated fire/yarning area, native plants which are used in science/literacy walks, cooking and gardening programs. There are Vocational Education and Training (VET) training areas and projects around the school and town. Our VET students, for example, have eradicated local cactus infestations in the town, and created new learning environments for the K/PP class as well as for their own horticultural training in the school. The results have positively enhanced the school facilities, the VET students' sense of pride, and the motivation of younger students to be involved in training when older. Our approach reflects the Principles of Teaching and Learning – Connection and Challenge, which states that *"learning experiences should connect with the students' existing knowledge, skills and values while extending and challenging their current ways of thinking and acting"* (School Curriculum and Standards Authority).

WRCS has maximised its human, physical and financial **resources** by working closely with Martu rangers and Elders to develop VET. In February, 2018, WRCS celebrated its first VET Certificate I graduates. In consultation with DSS, local pastoralists and Martu enterprises, we have developed Certificate I and II training courses (Automotive, Conservation Land Management, Rural Operations) that reflect the values of the community, student skills and interests and the needs of employers. By securing nearly \$50,000 of donations, we have created the first successful, nationally recognised Martu land management training program in the history of the town. Through our Martu ranger/DSS partnership, rangers have shown leadership and taken teaching staff on country to develop their ecological knowledge, such as by teaching them track-plotting monitoring and tracking. The teachers now have the skills and knowledge to bring this meaningful ranger activity into the learning program and link it to the WA curriculum.

Another example of WRCS's diverse learning environment is the development of four inter-connected campuses: early childhood education, the primary school, the secondary training and enterprise space and the bush campus. We have developed a multi-generational training model that brings together secondary students and rangers (who are family members) to train. Through the school's training program, we have created new connections with pastoralists and scientists, who support the training with opportunities to train using their resources, such as land, fuel and knowledge. These new resources allow us to run more contextually meaningful education and training experiences that foster relationships between the participants and potential employers. The school has also established a range of professional development opportunities for local teachers and community language speakers including a Documenting and Revitalising Indigenous Languages Program and our whole-school Managing Behaviours for Learning, which is a locally designed, school-wide approach to classroom management. WRCS maximises its resources, **teaching** and learning outcomes in different ways:

- WRCS has arranged for local teachers to represent the school at National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Conference (NATSIEC) 2015. Furthermore, two School Council Elders attended the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education (WIPCE) 2017 in Canada to talk about our two-way science program.
- In 2013, WRCS established a School-Health Partnership with Ngangganawili Aboriginal Health Service (NAHS) to ensure better health and wellbeing outcomes for students. Martu-led longitudinal research is currently underway to understand ways of improving total wellbeing, including school attendance and learning, at the community level.
- The MKK Management Team, represents the local Native Title group. The group works with the school to ensure our science trips are attended by local rangers, are meaningful and consistent with local cultural protocols. This process supports the development and use of the Martu Calendar, which enables a whole-school, community-inspired approach to teaching and learning, building on students' knowledge to access the WA Curriculum and develop Standard Australian English (SAE) competency. By ensuring that cultural knowledge and respect are embedded in school-wide processes, like our Wiluna Literacy Strategy, the school fosters an environment where students are valued for skills learnt at home, on-country and in the classroom. Equally, for students who are returning from remand centres, our partnership with local rangers and learning on country provides safe, accessible and meaningful learning and engagement opportunities.

Specific strategies that promote **effective teaching** at WRCS include:

- Use of EAL/D Progress Maps to plan, monitor and assess development in SAE.
- Engagement in moderation sessions using the Progress Maps. The effectiveness of these sessions at school has seen WRCS teachers go on to lead moderation sessions with network teachers at the 2017 network conference.
- Teachers are provided professional learning and in-class support on EAL/D pedagogy specifically for the Martu context.
- Teachers are focussed on meeting student needs through individual education and behaviour plans. We are now a Big Picture Education school, which will allow for more project-based individualised plans and further community engagement.
- All teachers develop their term planning based on Integrated Overviews, which put the Martu Calendar at the centre of the learning program and link this into the Two-Way Science and other Western Australian curriculum outcomes. This planning is then supported by our Integrated Brainstorm sessions where staff, Martu Rangers and community Elders brainstorm the next term's learning. WRCS has also developed a two-way science flowchart to guide teachers. The Connecting to Country videos will provide vignettes of each step of the flowchart ensuring 1) consistent practice and quality teaching across the school; and 2) enhanced transparency for, and understanding by, the community about learning at WRCS.
- Teachers engage in and are supported to continually reflect on and develop their practice in key impact areas such as behaviour management, two-way science through the WRCS performance, development and learning cycle: observations, reflection, goal setting, coaching, support and performance meetings are a focus for ensuring continuous improvement.

In developing its **resources, leadership, teaching and relationships**, WRCS has school documents (such as the pedagogical framework, Cultural Ways of Working, two-way science flowchart) which have been created with local teachers and Elders. These documents serve as an important reference points for staff and new teachers or visitors to the school. WRCS has been selected to participate in education innovations such as the EAL/D Hub Online Resource (2015) that supports teachers to use the Capability Framework, the Department's Aboriginal English Storybook Project (2016) and to contribute IoP videos to demonstrate best practice in ACARA's cross-curriculum priority of *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures* (2018). We are to participate in a research project named "Towards Culturally Inclusive Language Assessments for Indigenous Students" (Curtin University) which will investigate the pathway to spoken competence in Standard Australian English of multilingual/multidialectal Aboriginal students who are in EAL/D programs. This project is an opportunity for staff and community members to transcribe together the digital recordings of students' speech, fostering greater understanding for all of the students' linguistic repertoires and greater understanding and buy-in about EAL/D pedagogy.

According to the Department's media team, WRCS has had more positive media coverage in 2018 than any other school in the state. This is because WRCS is a community-driven school that is culturally responsive to the wisdom of its local community and mindful of the need to provide students with choice and enhanced life chances through high quality, individualised, integrated and two-way learning. Mechanisms are in place to ensure Wiluna students have options they decide, and for them to become cross-culturally competent and ready to participate meaningfully in their community, whilst successfully engaging within the broader Australian context.