Alice Springs School of the Air

Annual Performance Report to the School Community

2014
School Overview

OUR SCHOOL
Alice Springs School of the Air is one of two distance education schools in the NT providing programs to students from Pre-school to Year 9 who access their learning from more than 60 sites including our Corella Creek Annexe.

In 2014 ASSOA completed its third year as a P-9 school. The Middle Years numbers dropped in Semester 2 after Mulga Bore School moved to a different form of delivery. Our delivery reduced to 3 remote school sites in addition to the traditional distance education sites.

OUR STUDENTS
Our students come from a wide range of backgrounds, including pastoral families, police, health workers, rangers, teachers, store keepers, travellers, aboriginal community members, and resort managers. In 2014 the whole school enrolment was consistent in the 110-130 range for most of the year. Corella Creek maintained an enrolment across the year of 22 students including students in a mobile preschool program.

Dual enrolments continued to be a growing cohort within our school with students in remote schools accessing our Primary and Middle Years Programs and likewise other ASSOA students attended urban schools when they were in Alice Springs for the day.

OUR STAFF
The school leadership team consisted of the Principal, Assistant Principal, Administration Manager, and Middle Years Team Leader. In total 14 teachers were employed with two part-time teachers to support the students with special needs and extra Maths classes. 2 extra teachers were employed in Semester 2 to begin writing new curriculum units that were to better suit our needs and the NT Multi Year Level units of work. These were to replace the WA sets.
There were 11 classes in total from P-9 with a number of students accessing our programs in Alice Springs from a range of locations.

In March we employed an IT apprentice through GTNT and the DoE Employment Pathways Unit. Our apprentice gained knowledge and experience in managing the installation and repoint of satellite dishes to new and existing families, and general IT support for REACT, Google Drive, and ASSOA IT hardware.
Principal’s Report

There were many highlights at ASSOA in 2014. Despite substantial staff changes throughout the year the school gained momentum in moving further into the “Google Space”, Visible Learning, and curriculum writing. These three main areas of teaching and learning were our foci for professional development.

The staff changes were due to many unavoidable reasons such as, family sickness, individual sickness and spouses gaining employment interstate. We were fortunate to be able to recruit effectively to vacant positions and our whole staff are to be congratulated for the support given to each new recruit. Through this support and mentorship the new teachers were able to quickly gain the skills required to operate in the distance education context so there was little disruption to our students.

In 2014 ASSOA moved closer to achieving the aspiration of the school’s Visible Learning Action Plan in that all students will understand what they are learning, how they are going and where they go to next. At the end of the year the Visible Learning Plus team from New Zealand conducted a capability assessment on our school. The four areas of concern were the visible learner, know thy impact, inspired and passionate teachers, and feedback. Each of the capability ratings for the above strands have been rated at a higher level than in 2013.

The introduction of the Australian Curriculum (AC) and the realisation that the Western Australian sets were not directly aligned to the AC, saw ASSOA begin writing English, Geography and History units. Middle Years and the Year 5/6 classes were the first year levels to dispense of sets and are now delivering their English program on-line. In Semester 2, 2014 two teachers were employed to write some early childhood units. By the end of the year the draft Narrative units for all years from Transition to Year 4, Persuasive units for Transition and Year 2/3, and History and Geography units for Year 2/3 were ready for distribution.

2014 saw all class teachers develop their own class websites using “google sites” where students accessed their weekly program. The Home Tutor website was also created for home tutors to access information to help them support the education of the children in their care. Google Drive was used throughout the school for students to upload their assignments/work and teachers used Google Docs to provide “just in time” feedback to their students.

In October ACARA, the team who has developed the Australian Curriculum, spent a day at ASSOA observing our lessons and interviewing staff, parents and students on the impact of the AC. This is the feedback we received from one of the team members:

“The visit to The School of the Air was inspirational for us personally and for the ACARA team. The teachers are doing exemplary work in developing units of work for your varied clientele, focusing on the Australian Curriculum to provide a universal curriculum for all Australian students and striving for the standards established for all Australian children. Additionally we were so impressed by all staff members as they delivered focused yet relational lessons in such a demanding medium. The tight timetable established to cater for families and teachers, was adhered to diligently but also facilitated feedback to students in such a timely way. I loved the way that the teachers balanced the technology, focused on finely developed lessons and at the same time were sensitive to the personal needs of the students, providing immediate feedback and follow up where required. The entire school environment, as staff teach the broader curriculum and strive to create awareness and empathy amongst students was magnificent. With such obvious passion and commitment, the students are receiving a first class education catering for their individual needs and unique environments.
The student engagement was so high as they thoughtfully responded to questions and comments, this is another factor that is a proven way of achieving high standards. Congratulations on your outstanding efforts in the Australian Education arena, and thank you for the privilege of being a participant for the day.

Laraine Lucas: Senior Manager Primary Curriculum Lead ACARA

Mel Phillips
March 2015
Teaching and Learning

The following information is a brief outline of the questions asked and information gathered as written in the December 2014 Visible Learning Capability Assessment report.

The Visible learner:
- To what extent do all students exhibit the characteristics of assessment-capable visible learners?
- How deliberately is the school teaching students to exhibit the characteristics of a visible learner?

The Visible Learning Plus team noted that at ASSOA there was evidence of:
- extensive and authentic consultation and collaboration with home tutors to establish and agree on a set of learner characteristics
- the establishment of ‘learning characters’ associated with the habits of the mind (mind frames) the school is supporting students to enable purposeful learning, progress and achievement
- innovative and participatory staff professional development to enable and support the development of a shared language of learning, learning intentions, success criteria, collection and use of formative and summative data, and feedback
- the establishment and embedding of high quality interactive technology to support purposeful, co-operative, and power-sharing learning relationships between staff, home tutors and students.

Know thy impact:
- What does the school know about their impact on all students?
- How do they know it?
- To what extent does data and evidence drive school practice?

The Visible Learning Plus team noted that:
- there are an increasing number of ‘data conversations’ taking place between teachers, between teachers and students, and between teachers, students and families.
- the discussions between teachers are informing planning and the design and use of classroom diagnostic and formative assessments to guide learning intentions, success criteria and reporting. Staff are sharing data, questioning the validity and use of tools, and problem solving together.
- learning discussions between teachers and students using data, and enabling students to self-reflect and assess using tools such as rubrics and checklists are beginning to emerge.

The introduction of online PAT Maths and Reading tests across Central Australia has increased our capacity to measure the impact of our teaching and learning programs and practices.

Inspired and passionate teaching:
- To what extent are the teachers in the school inspired, passionate and focus on impact?
- What evidence do they have to demonstrate this?

The Visible Learning Plus team noted that:
- Professional development has been designed and facilitated weekly to enable staff to access the knowledge, understanding, tools and practices to maximise their impact in the classroom
- Time has been made for teachers at each year level to plan together. The staff professional learning in small groups has been aided and supported by access to the Regional Department of Education Office learning and performance team resource. Penny Weily contribution to the school has been highly valued.
Feedback:
- What is the nature and quality of feedback students in the school receive?
- What is the nature and quality of feedback teachers receive?

As a measure of the school’s success in 2014, members of the Guiding Coalition note that:
- home tutors and teachers are beginning to use a similar language
- there has been a noticeable shift in the relational trust at all levels of the school
- teachers have become more open to reflection on their practice, and observation is being introduced
- teachers are actively using learning intentions and success criteria to provide just in time feedback, just for individual and small groups of students when it can have the most effect. The use of the ‘google space’ is enabling of the cultural shift, and enabling of student feedback to teachers at the same time.

In 2014 teachers implemented the Sound Waves Spelling Program across the school and in response to requests from Home Tutors we subscribed to Sound Waves online. This provides access to all levels of Sound Waves resources. A session focussing on this program and the support materials was included in the Home Tutor Conference program.

In October the school’s new website was launched. Every teacher created their own class website in Google Sites which are accessed by the students and home tutors via the extranet on the main website.

Teachers participated in PD with Larapinta and Braitling Primary School to compare student work samples against the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards. This was part of a focus on consistent assessment of student work and saw our three schools sharing best practice in assessing narrative and persuasive texts.
Wellbeing

During the year the students were very fortunate to have some special guests visit our school and present some entertaining lessons. In February both the Parramatta Eels and the Australian Cricket Masters visited our school and spoke with all students on Tackling Bullying and Team Work. This was a good foundation for the work that followed during the year in both the Bluearth Program and our You Can Do It! (YCDI!) Program. In November Joffa Toonschool delivered three presentations on drawing cartoon characters. The quality of the cartoons that were sent in by students of all ages was testament to the student’s interest and focus. The students thoroughly enjoyed the visit.

Connections between our ASSOA Effective Learner qualities and the YCDI! Foundations emerged. Resources were developed and shared with families and tutors that enabled this to be an integral part of classroom discussions. This was a big focus in the Home Tutor sessions in Term 4 and teachers reinforced the messages in lessons and private learning times. Assembly awards reflecting the YCDI! Foundations became more frequent towards the end of the year and reinforced these good messages to our students.

Our art teacher, Mrs Skoss successfully entered many beanies into the 2014 Beanie Festival exhibition this year. She also submitted art work in the 2014 Alice Springs Show. Including our students in these events is wonderful and increases community awareness of ASSOA as well as enabling our students' work to be appreciated and celebrated along with other Alice Springs students.

In 2014 we continued to be an alternative learning option for students who require a different educational setting. ASSOA has proven to be a flexible option for a number of students in both the Primary and Middle Years. Staff used our growing data base to better inform the choices about programs and resources to support these students and we accessed the expertise from the regional Student Services Support Team throughout the year for both students and families in need. We received funding for 3 students in 2014 and used these resources to employ a Special Education Support Assistant (SESA) for 3 days each week. The SESA provided additional PLTs and IDLs for all these students. We supported 3 Special Needs students placed at our school who resided in Alice Springs and engaged them in meaningful learning programs both on and off-site.
Participation, Transitions and Pathways

In 2013 we continued to provide the opportunity for remote students to engage in our Middle Years (MY) Program. The support of 3 of the onsite Remote Teaching Principals was critical to the successful student engagement in our MY Program and we supported the learners with site visits throughout the year.

We provided successful orientation for our ongoing Primary Students to the ASSOA Middle Years program and collaborated with NTOEC to provide a smooth transition for the 3 students who progressed from ASSOA to NTOEC.

The 4 Inschools were very successful and provided the students with excellent opportunities to engage with their teachers and classmates face to face. NAPLAN and PAT tests were conducted and students participated in sports clinics, swimming lessons, and excursions.

In August the Year 5/6 students visited Sydney for 5 days. The trip included visits to Taronga Park Zoo, the Maritime Museum, The Sydney Aquarium, Parramatta Eels Education Centre, and the Blue Mountains. The students enjoyed staying at the Sydney Harbour YHA and viewing the archaeological dig over which the building was erected.

Our MY students had a successful residential at Ross River in May. Corella Creek staff and students joined in for this event and with the support of School Sport Development Officers, visiting astrologers, orienteering and minerals experts, everyone had an amazing experience. They also had the opportunity to utilize the resources of CDU, CSC and a number of external providers to add to the itinerary for the 5 day camp.

In September MY students were given the opportunity to attend a Maths Enrichment Camp at TiTree. Miss Keipert attended with one of our Yulara students and they both enjoyed the experience and the learning.

In December the MY students participated in a very rich and exciting week long educational program at ASSOA. Their activities included: interacting with a school in Switzerland on IDL and with some science professionals via a blog; doing a First Aid course; art with Mrs Skoss; and robotics with Mrs Scott-Wilson.

During 2014 teachers made excellent use of the chroma-key or green-screen technology in IDL with parent and tutor feedback on increased levels of engagement very positive. Each week teachers attended a 45 minute PD on ICT that had a direct impact on their teaching practice and the high quality of our IDL delivery.

At the end of the year one of our Year 9 students, Alex Bruer, was awarded a scholarship from the ASPIRE program. The Aspire Program is a partnership initiative between Charles Darwin University (CDU) and Northern Territory secondary schools. It aims to help students from diverse backgrounds to achieve their best results in secondary school and to raise the aspirations of young people to pursue tertiary study. The Aspire Scholarship is a four-year scholarship targeting students with demonstrated financial need, good academic results, leadership potential and an interest in serving their communities. This scholarship offers financial assistance for students in Years 10 to 12 and the first year of university, should they choose to study at CDU.
Partnerships

Parents and home tutors continued to remain our strongest partners in student learning and in 2014. Home Tutor PD sessions were held every fortnight and the Home Tutor Conference in March was very well attended. In total 40 hours of PD was provided to Home Tutors by ASSOA staff and invited experts and professionals across a broad range of areas including:

- Literacy and Numeracy
- IT
- Assessment
- Australian Curriculum
- Behaviour Support
- Social and Emotional support and counselling
- Sport and PE
- Middle Years
- Visible Learning

In 2014 Blueearth and PE IDLs continued each week till July. In Semester 2, with the loss of our PE teacher, Blueearth IDLs were delivered every fortnight. Even though Blueearth IDLs for Primary students were compulsory not everyone attended. Those who did attend participated with enthusiasm. In addition to the Blueearth IDLs, the Assistant Principal who is a Blueearth coach and trained PE teacher, started a weekly HPE challenge. These challenges were co–constructed by the Blueearth Coach/Coordinator for the region and allowed the students to explore movement in their outside environments. Parents and Home tutors are to be commended for their commitment to encouraging this. The Middle Years PE programme was delivered by the Desert Storm School Sport Coordinator.

Sports Day was actively supported by Blueearth, the Australian Sports Commission- through the Active After School Communities (AASC) program and Desert Storm School Sport. The day was a huge success due to the contributions by personnel from these programs.

AASC also contributed to a swimming program and allowed us to purchase a sports kit for each family to enhance the HPE challenges.

ASSOA continued to be a Teaching School during 2015. Two pre-service teachers successfully worked through a teaching placement at our school.

In 2014 ASSOA was reclassified as a Remote School by the Department of Sport and Recreation (DSR) for the purposes of the Sport Voucher system. The Sport Voucher increased to $200 and we were permitted to offer families a rebate on fuel costs to attend our Sports Week and Swim Week.

Our Pre-schoolers attended Teppa Hill Pre-School for two of our Inschools and we based the preschool at ASSOA and Bratling Hall for the other two visits. This enabled our preschool students to interact with those of Teppa Hill Preschool.
Leadership

Our Student Leaders were very active in 2014, meeting regularly and planning events including a bake sale, Jeans for Genes Day, and a disco during Swim Week. The most successful fundraising event which was totally organized by the Student Leaders was a drink stand at the Harts Range Races weekend supplying refreshments and snacks to the camp draft participants.

Bil Newman was invited to address an IT Conference in Melbourne in Term 3 and also attended a Google Summit with educators from around the country. We hope this might bring us further innovations to our school in 2015 and beyond.

Two staff successfully completed probation in 2014. This process is mandatory and provides a supportive framework for teachers in the early career stage and/or teachers new to the Territory teaching service. Both staff were supported to complete their probation within the twelve month period, one as an experienced teacher and the other as a highly performing early career teacher. The panels for both these staff were rigorous in the execution of their roles and the learning outcomes for all involved were significant.

The Principal, Assistant Principal and Admin Manager attended a number workshops around Global School Autonomy, School Budget and Workforce planning, between October and December. Preliminary budgets were generated by the system in the first week of November to be followed up by Final Budgets in March 2015. This new model is complex with much of the corporate workload being shifted to schools. The knowledge required to operationalise this in our school is considerable and the PD and support from the Department has been very valuable.

While Belinda Pearson was on leave in September, Mel Phillips acted as the Principal and Debbie Liddle from Student Services acted as the Assistant Principal. Mel and Debbie again stepped into these roles in the last 4 weeks of the year when Belinda was seconded to another school.
Audited Financial Statements
ATTACHMENT B

NAPLAN data
Student Enrolment, Attendance and Learning