

Daradgee Environmental Education Centre

Executive Summary





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1. Introduction

This report is a product of a review carried out by a review team from the Education Improvement Branch (EIB) at **Daradge Environmental Education Centre** from **8 to 10 November 2021**.

The report presents an evaluation of the school's performance against the nine domains of the [National School Improvement Tool](#). It also recommends improvement strategies for the school to implement in consultation with its regional office and school community.

The report's executive summary outlines key findings from the review and key improvement strategies that prioritise future directions for improvement.

Schools will publish the executive summary on the school website within two weeks of receiving the report.

The principal will meet with their Assistant Regional Director (ARD) to discuss the review findings and improvement strategies.

For more information regarding the EIB and reviews for Queensland state schools please visit the EIB [website](#).

1.1 Review team

Lesley Vogan	Internal reviewer, EIB (review chair)
Howard Nielsen	External reviewer
Matthew Glen	External reviewer



1.2 School context

Location:	McAvoy Street, Daradgee	
Education region:	Far North Queensland Region	
Year levels:	Prep to Year 12	
Enrolment:	n/a	
Indigenous enrolment percentage:	n/a	
Students with disability:	Education Adjustment Program (EAP) percentage:	n/a
	Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) percentage:	n/a
Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value:	n/a	
Year principal appointed:	1995	



1.3 Contributing stakeholders

The following stakeholders contributed to the review:

School community:

- Principal, three teachers, boat officer/Unit Support Officer (USO), cleaner, head cook and Business Manager (BM).

Community and business groups:

- Representative of Rotary Club of Innisfail Fitzgerald, representative of Innisfail Variety Club, Elizabeth Honey author/illustrator and program coordinator of Mission Australia's Circles of Care program.

Partner schools and other educational providers:

- Principals of Bibbohra State School, Weir State School, Richmond State School, Dalveen State School, teachers of Kirwan State School, Edge Hill State School, Redlynch State College, Roma State College and 12 students of Roma State College.

Government and departmental representatives:

- ARD.

1.4 Supporting documentary evidence

Annual Implementation Plan 2021	Explicit Improvement Agenda 2021
Investing for Success 2021	School budget overview
Headline Indicators (April 2021 release)	Curriculum planning documents
OneSchool	Professional development plans
Professional learning overview 2021	School website
School Opinion Survey	Student Code of Conduct
School pedagogical framework	



2. Executive summary

2.1 Key findings

The centre provides students opportunities to explore the Australian Curriculum (AC) through experience-based learning within the context of a rural environment on the edge of a rainforest.

The centre harnesses local geographical areas including the Johnstone River, Babinda Boulders and ETTY Bay to immerse students in challenging and engaging experiences that are aligned to specific learning areas of the AC. Challenge and team building activities are a focus of the camp and interwoven throughout the camping program. Many of these challenges are aligned to the personal and social general capability of the AC. Camp facilities including climbing walls, low ropes, farm and boat further enable the experience-based learning approach.

Visiting teachers value the contact the centre has prior to a visit and express the belief this pre-contact lays the foundation for student success whilst on camp.

These visits are scheduled approximately 10 school weeks prior to a camp and occupy a whole day on site. During these visits, client school teachers and centre staff collaboratively develop a program reflective of school curriculum and student social needs, incorporating past camp program evaluations. The visits allow for sharing knowledge of student needs including individual behaviour, health, dietary and medical issues. The pre-camp visit allows for some consideration of structural differentiation of programs, pedagogical methods, equipment, and resources required to support all students. An array of documentation is required to meet health and safety criteria and to ensure risk management processes are well established before school camps begin.

Over the last strategic planning cycle the centre has utilised the expertise of regional personnel to build their knowledge of the AC and align centre programs with the AC.

Centre programs are predominantly aligned to the learning areas of science, Health and Physical Education (HPE), Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS). Most programs are adapted to suit Prep to Year 6 and can be adjusted to suit older students. Program overviews clearly outline achievement standard extracts, content descriptions and centre-specific elaborations relevant for each year level. Following the Writers and Illustrators (W&I) Camp this year, centre staff worked with several participating schools to review the program to determine what could be improved in the future. This moderation process is yet to be replicated with other centre curriculum programs.

The centre articulates a number of pedagogical approaches to support students in their centre-based learning.

These approaches include 'Direct, Interactive, Indirect, Experiential, Problem-based instruction'. References are included to the application of collaborative team teaching and peer mentoring as an essential part of the centre's operations. Embedding of these pedagogical approaches varies with some teachers reporting utilising effective instructional

approaches based on practitioner expertise and application of practical methods suited to environmental education. Teachers articulate varying levels of understanding and application of pedagogical approaches as applied to the key learning programs delivered by the centre. Specific application of contemporary research associated with evidence-based learning theories is yet to be fully embedded within the centre's practices.

The centre actively seeks feedback on their practices and the impact of programs on student learning and wellbeing.

Conversations with teachers and sessions with students during pre-visits enable centre staff to prepare for groups and individual students, differentiating activities if required. Visiting teachers, parents and sample students complete written questionnaires at the end of the camp, rating the quality of activities they participated in, levels of engagement, practices of centre staff and improvement in their learning outcomes. These surveys are collated and reviewed by the centre teaching team and shared with the visiting school as a point of discussion for improvement. Some staff question the relevance of this data in determining centre impact on student improvement and effecting change at the centre. At this time there is yet to be alignment with the pre-visit conversations on student identified needs and sample students providing feedback on their camp experience.

The principal encourages all teachers to engage in continuous improvement of their own teaching and to be focused on the development of knowledge and skills to improve student learning.

The school has an extensive Professional Development (PD) agenda that includes a range of outreach and in-reach initiatives. These initiatives include Department of Education (DoE) mandatory annual prescribed training modules in a range of areas. Teachers articulate that they value peer-based mentoring, observation and feedback as a key element of their professional learning and desire to continue building their instructional knowledge and skills in all aspects of the centre's programs.

Staff members articulate enjoying their work at the centre and the level of professional challenge the residential program provides.

Staff express a strong commitment to the centre and collaborating with visiting teachers and each other. Staff members indicate there are unique challenges working in a residential environmental education centre. Some express a desire for clear strategies for enabling a collaborative and supportive workplace culture that is inclusive of everyone's wellbeing. The centre principal and some centre staff express the need to enhance relationships through open communication and appropriate issue-resolution processes.

Visiting teachers, principals of visiting schools and community partners all express high praise for the way the centre promotes and facilitates the achievement of significant outcomes for student learning and wellbeing.

There is a clear expectation by centre staff that all students will learn in challenging situations and students are observed to respond very positively to these high expectations. Central to this achievement of outcomes is the importance placed on forging positive



relationships between all those engaged in centre programs. This is prioritised by the centre's policy and practice of conducting intensive full-day induction sessions on school sites prior to the students participating in the camp program. This practice and the availability of informative written communications play a large part in establishing good rapport and respect between school teachers, principals, students, parents and centre staff.

Over a number of years, the centre has sponsored a unique learning experience, the W&I camp.

Each year, schools are invited to nominate a small number of students who may benefit from involvement in the W&I Camp. Leaders who are directly involved in the design, running and evaluation of the W&I Camp identify it as a unique learning experience for selected students who participate in a high cognitive challenge that integrates writing an original text with artistic merit. Combining a creative experience of producing an original text with artistic value is described as a demanding and inspirational process by some school leaders. A strong reason for the success of the W&I Camp, articulated by leaders, is its comprehensive evaluation process that incorporates within-program reflections, multi-layered feedback between teachers, students and external consultant writers and artists.



2.2 Key improvement strategies

Replicate the centre process for reviewing the W&I Camp program to quality assure all curriculum programs through different lenses including pedagogical approaches, 21st Century learning and the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities of the AC.

Collaboratively develop a systematic process including backward mapping from centre programs to relevant evidence-based pedagogical and assessment practices best suited to the centre's context.

Explore a marker student and case management approach for collecting centre impact on student improvement by aligning conversations on student needs in the pre-visit with student feedback at the end of a camp.

Further develop professional learning for all teachers to collaboratively participate in a systematic approach to coaching, observation, mentoring and feedback aligned with the centre programs.

Collaboratively develop and implement clear strategies for enabling a supportive workplace culture that facilitates open communication and centre decision-making processes.