

## Recipient Details

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State or territory: NT

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## Responses

### Curriculum and assessment

In the Northern Territory Catholic schools delivery of the curriculum has many challenges. We generally have good access to the curriculum through the available technology, however in some of our schools some of the content of the curriculum is not connected to our students.

Some of the students lack the background and situational knowledge to comprehend some of the curriculum. Their life experiences have not put them in touch with some curriculum topics. The National Assessment program Literacy and Numeracy (Naplan) is very metro centric, a simple reference to a train can be a challenge for students who have never seen a train, especially when they are completing a test that might be their third or fourth language.

The publication of Naplan results on the myschools website is inappropriate for many of our schools. The low student numbers makes the data unreliable and prone to strong variations due to the high turnover of students in very transient populations. The like school comparisons have many of our schools ranked poorly, especially when the NT schools are ranked against school with stable students and staff populations.

Rating: 7

### Teachers and teaching

Finding teachers for our school can be a real challenge. There can be few applications for a position, sometimes there are no applications, sometimes only one or two. Many of the teachers do not stay very long in their positions, thus making it difficult to embed good practice in our schools. We generally have young and enthusiastic teachers who work extremely hard, however they can be put into situations where they do not have enough experience for considering some of the behavioural needs of our school.

Professional development is expensive to provide and difficult to have a long term strategy. Schools can fly in an expert from interstate, but cannot afford to get them back to revisit and deepen learning. Staff would like to attend university courses to extend their learning, however distance and time make it very difficult to attend.

Teaching staff need more time away from schools in the Northern Territory. Living away from home means needing to leave to attend weddings and other family occasions. Other staff find they miss family events and this can be the eventual cause for them leaving the school and the community. These absences also affect the students as their regular teacher is away and in many of our communities and schools, relief teachers cannot be found.

Specialist teachers can be very difficult to find and many teachers end up teaching outside of their speciality. The Teach for Australia has been of some benefit to schools in regional and remote areas and should be continued.

Rating: 7

### Leaders and leadership

All schools need a good leader. Many of our Leaders are young and have moved from interstate to take up positions. They are given great opportunities and can get promoted quickly. The challenge for our leaders is that they do not have the support or training they need. They can be isolated from other leaders and family. Training is difficult with access to university level courses and other training courses difficult because of distance and technology.

Ours leaders can have high levels of stress as they are isolated, inexperienced and have difficulty accessing support. Asking for support in a small system can also lead to poor career prospects, so many leaders will not seek support.

Training opportunities around leadership are limited with support systems having difficulty employing education advisors, principal consultants etc. So the system set-up to support schools has the same problems employing people as the schools do.

Lack of relief teachers can be a challenge with leaders having to take over classroom duties. There are occasions when the leader cannot attend training as there is no teacher to cover the class. Many principals have a high teaching load as there is no one to take a class. This also adds to the stress of school leaders as parents and community get frustrated when a teacher leaves mid-year and the school cannot find a replacement. The principal or other leader to cover the class themselves or simply not offer the subject at the school. This reduces the time a leader can have to manage the school and provide strategic direction.

Rating: 7

### School and Community

Schools can become the social core centre which is a great thing. Schools work with local services to provide the best support for each student. Teachers take on many roles within the community sporting, spiritual and other community groups. Schools really want to be part of the local community.

In regional, rural and remote, the school can be the real centre of the community. The school can be the biggest employer in the community so it plays an important role. The school can end up managing other community facilities and the community also using many school facilities at night time and on weekends. This can lead to school leaders needing to come to school at odd times to reset alarms, lock gates, turn off air-conditioning etc.

In some of our centres, vandalism is a real problem when the community access the school facilities on the weekends and on holidays. After a holiday break, many schools can spend a lot of time and money fixing broken items and cleaning up the school. The distance of some of our schools means the school can be without replacement parts for a number of weeks. Getting good local tradesmen can be a challenge, schools sometimes have to fly in plumbers and electricians at great cost just to fix minor problems.

In some of our communities, students need to attend many funeral and cultural events. They can miss a lot of school. Sometimes the whole school needs to close for cultural reasons. Many

students travel from community to community resulting in many students being enrolled in a number of schools. Enrolment numbers can be large, but daily attendance can be quite small.

We have some issues around accommodation in some of our communities. Staff may be forced to share accommodation with little choice of who they share with. Schools have to manage the housing with much time being taken up with this.

Rating: 7

#### Information and Communication Technology

Technology can be a challenge. Internet can be limited or nearly non-existent. Staff to support the technology can be hard to find and school will have long periods of time when equipment cannot be used. Technology costs more and many of our families do not have the income to buy the latest technology. Many school have gone Bring your own device, but our poorer families cannot afford the technology or buy technology of a poorer quality. Virtual and Augmented Technology are a real opportunity for schools. There needs to be a heavy investment in this area as it has the potential to take away many aspects of the isolation. If we can use technology to allow poor students to visit the museums and galleries of the world, much of our physical isolation could be taken away.

The digital literacy of some of the support staff in our schools is very poor as they have had very little exposure to technology and with the use of education programs this can be a challenge if the staff cannot use the technology provided to support the students.

In many of our homes, although there may be technology, it would be mainly phones and tablets used for social media and gaming. The difference between a middle class family use of technology in the city and the use of technology in some of our remote communities is vast. Quite simply, in some of our homes the technology is rarely used for educational purposes.

Rating: 7

#### Entrepreneurship and schools

Some of our Northern Territory Schools have connections to industry and businesses. This appears to happen more often in our secondary schools.

In Primary Schools we work a lot with outside agencies like CatholicCare, St Vincent De Paul, Department of Children's Services and other similar organizations.

Rating: 6

#### Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding

The Northern Territory is very Transient and our enrolment numbers go up and down regularly. This can be quite challenging when new students arrive regularly. (It can also bring great rewards.) When a student with special needs arrives, there can be delays getting the child assessed and setting up support structures. this happens in any school, but in the Northern Territory it happens regularly.

Many of our brightest students are offered scholarships to elite boarding schools interstate. This takes away the best role models in our schools. This takes them away from families and although offering them opportunity, there is yet to be any research to investigate the success or failures of this.

We do not work in clusters in the Northern Territory, more often working in competition of each other as we compete for enrolments in a transient environment.

Rating for enrolments: 7

Rating for clusters: 6

Rating for distance education: 3

Rating for boarding: 2

### Diversity

Many of our schools have very diverse populations. This adds to the richness of our school. The challenges can be around delivering the support these students can need. English lessons, trauma support and other supports can be difficult to access. There can be no local staff able to support the students and families and very little training for staff to support the families. Teachers are doing their best, however, they may not have the expertise to meet the needs of the students.

There can much diversity between the teaching staff and students in our schools. Many of our teaching staff come from very different backgrounds than the students they teach. Understanding cultural differences and feeling comfortable in the community can be a challenge for a staff that turns over regularly. Finding a staff member who has the right qualities to work in some of our communities is ; those staff who want to engage with the community, learn a some language and work with local staff.

Rating: 6

### Transitioning beyond school

Many of our students must travel vast distances to further then education past a secondary level. It is expensive and isolating. Leaving home to attend university is a normal practice for students from a rural, regional or remote location.

Many of our Indigenous students are granted scholarships to elite schools in capital cities. This can have many advantages, but it is questionable the success of this. Many students find it very difficult to adapt to the new environment and return to their community disillusioned. On return to their community they can be isolated from their community as they don't fit in in their community anymore. Interstate schools need to work with the community where the student comes from instead of taking the best academic and best role models that the community can have.

Rating: 3

Additional Comments