

Recipient Details

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Responses

Curriculum and assessment

Connection to place enhances learning: Cross curriculum priorities (sustainability and indigenous) provide opportunity to contextualize learning for children living in Remote, Rural & Regional areas. Curriculum Connections - Food & Fibre reads "students bring wide range of abilities, needs & interests..." Greater emphasis should be explored in regard to the abilities and interests of RRR students, in Foundation, Primary and Secondary years, using contexts that are "real" to their world. For example, Food & Fibre across curriculum, provides for "applied learning" experiences in Science, Maths, Geography, Technology, that are relevant and meaningful to students in this demographic. Observing the enthusiasm of learning outcomes by teachers & students using these contexts is found at Manning Primary School in Perth, who saw increased engagement across subject areas. (Video testimonial can be found PIEFA website, Primezone Partner Schools). For students in RRR areas, it has capacity to further connect them to their backgrounds, engage them in identifying the skills sets education provides, to enable occupations around them, allows deeper parental and community engagement.

Food and Fibre production is ubiquitous, and seeing Science, Maths, Technology as having a relevance in real life context, enhances connection to that learning.

An Innovative approach: A useful way of thinking about engaging RRR students could be borrowed from Kings College London's research which explored the concept of "science capital". "Research evidence shows that the more science capital a young person has the more likely s/he is to aspire to continue with science." They identified eight dimensions of science capital, 3 for example are:-

Science literacy: A young person's knowledge, understanding about science and how it works

Science-related attitudes, values and dispositions: refers to extent they see science as relevant to everyday life

Knowledge about transferability of science: Understanding the utility/broad application of knowledge & skills used in science.

If you swapped "food & fibre production" for "science" it can be seen that RRR students could learn in the contexts of their "world", be excited by the applied maths, science, and technology they see in action around them. I commend the reference to you.

Rating: 4

Teachers and teaching

A single teacher can change the course of a child's future. The importance and challenges of attracting, supporting and retaining teaching staff in RRR areas is critical. While Education

Departments are responsible in this area, significantly other factors over broader policy areas play out here also.

Pre-service Teaching – Encourage assistance and incentives offered by university for teaching practicums in rural and remote areas.

Teaching undergraduates by enlarge are from metropolitan backgrounds, having no connection to lifestyles, culture, or primary industries synonymous with RRR communities. The work conducted by Hilman and Buckley (2011) supports the lack of confidence, background, and therefore knowledge of primary industries. This makes it difficult for teachers to use the flexibility of the curriculum, to relate learning to the local context, for example, using food and fibre.

Ensuring exposure to and interaction with resources that provide this, should be part of pre-service education.

Professional Development: - increasing PD opportunities for RRR teachers isn't just a funding issue, although, there is increased cost associated with time away from home, travel and accommodation to participate in PD. A concerted drive to fund PD in RRR communities would ameliorate this strain.

A greater impediment is the ability to find staff to cover absences to PD, there isn't a pool of casuals in many circumstances. Additional permanent staff allocated to school clusters could provide locum relief ,or coordinate further face to face PD opportunities.

Isolation is identified as issue for smaller schools, conversation and comparisons of work samples and assessment data against learning outcomes is challenging if there is not collegial support to share and justify analysis.

Innovation to support: Project work opportunities with local community, Mens sheds, Landcare, field Trials.

Greater resourcing to support children with learning difficulties, or disability, within classroom is a high priority, particularly in areas with low socioeconomic backgrounds, and where disconnect from education are part of the parent cohort. Adult literacy programs connect to school could be an innovative way of driving up literacy outcomes. (Ref SBS Insights program),

Rating: 7

Leaders and leadership

The dual-role of teaching principal is one that deserves more consideration, particularly if addressing their role in leadership of school direction, outcomes and community.

The staffing ratios for RRR schools need to be reviewed. In Metropolitan areas, as families move in and out of area, the student enrollments are not affected as in non metropolitan areas. Here the movement of one or two families can effect student numbers to see staff reduction, which has impact on teaching numbers, on administrative funding, and often continuity of programs driving leadership and innovation. For teaching principals this can have significant impact.

The role of Principal within RRR schools should be seen as a specialist position, and supported and funded accordingly, rather than being seen as a “starting point” for careers. Often placements in RRR have a range of challenges that are amplified by location and isolation. A leader in a RRR is seen as someone who is engaged with community on levels additional to the education role, and requires interaction with the local community. This is not always understood by Principals, and again the cultural differences between metropolitan and non metropolitan play into this. Programs that

provide deeper understanding of this, and skills for effective leadership should underpin any Principals appointment.

Further the ability of community to feel sense of value by the schools, is affected by the attitudes and understandings of the Principals, but further of the Departments that sometimes build the frameworks by which they interact.

Secondments for staff in urban department offices to work for a time in regional, rural and remote schools, to gain understanding of the challenges, and positives, would be beneficial.

Increasing opportunities for decision making at local/school level are requirements for successful education in RRR areas. Enabling school leaders to develop and foster pathways, programs and relationships within local community, and supporting those beyond would follow.

Rating: 5

School and Community

Having the community engaged within the school builds the social and intellectual capital, builds opportunities, for both school students and adults within the community.

An example within Upper Hunter is the partnership with the foundation "Where's There a Will". Following on from the suicide of a young person within the local community, this foundation has been formed, and has galvanised the community to address Youth Mental Health. They are providing funding sponsorship for local teachers one from each of the local schools, to study a psychology course, providing local learning opportunities within communities. the networking across the region is positive, and there is ownership of the goal across the region, as it was a path decided by locals, relating back to the need to have local ownership of learning across schools, parents, and business's.

The relationship with local business's allows for local excursions to work place, or placements for VOC learning, and local business and community connected to education, support and fund other learning opportunities for students in and post school.

The engagement of teaching staff, and school leaders within community organisations has driven this. Often this leads to more effective transition to further study and employment.

One suggestion to facilitating connection, would be to enable Toy box, to locate to a school premise, to enable small libraries to be collocated within the school, to share resources with the community. Enabling the community to view the schools as their asset and wanting to co invest.

Rating: 6

Information and Communication Technology

Improvements of internet connectivity at schools has assisted in embedding technology in teaching and learning programs. However, outside the school grounds, connectivity, and speed and cost, are major impediments to all this engagement with ICT to continue at home. Although there is much rhetoric around the "data drought" its impact within RRR communities is poorly understood.

Ability for students to access the schools connectivity outside school hours, in holidays etc should be explored. Perhaps it is a case of having a community internet room at the school, or staff placement in after hours.

Rating: 5

Entrepreneurship and schools

Local entrepreneurs celebrations within local communities so regional students could see excellence and local entrepreneurship.

Success of projects with entrepreneurs depends on many variables, size of community, flexibility, continuity of the project sustainable over staff changes within the school.

School cafes can provide authentic learning platforms for students in most of 7-10 key learning areas, as well as senior VET courses. Partnerships with local business's can provide expertise and training for the sustainability of these projects.

Perhaps enabling after hours courses to be run at schools to further education for adults would be something developed in partnership with community and schools and foster entrepreneurship.

Rating: 4

Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding

Enrolment numbers for smaller rural and remote schools are important. Over the years zoning has largely gone from these areas, and parents have sought the right to choose where children will be educated. Many enrolments are now determined on the NAPLAN results for schools, which provide only a narrow, if not important, band of the success outcomes of schools, perhaps there is another way to explore the success of schools enabling parents to make more informed choices.

For students in RRR areas, university study means leaving home and community, unless they have boarded for their secondary learning. This is often very daunting and financially constraining. Further exploration of the barriers, and facilitators of the successful transition from RRR schools to large metropolitan universities should be conducted.

Rating for enrolments: 3

Rating for clusters: 5

Rating for distance education: 5

Rating for boarding: 6

Diversity

Students need to be informed from a number of perspectives, and understanding diversity, and social cohesion, is important. Interestingly, the disconnect that is spoken about between urban and rural populations, raises the questions that the diversity side of the RRR is poorly understood within the metropolitan cohort. The authentic experiences of RRR students, may be vastly different from those in urban areas, and I believe that having the food and fibre contexts now within the curriculum, provides opportunity for urban students to understand the diverse environments that their RRR cohort live in. Civilisations around the world rise and fall on ability to feed and water themselves, which ever country you are from, you are dependent of sustainable food and fibre resources, using these contexts enables exploration of diverse cultures, and their use of technologies, or science, their histories, and hence achieves an outcome of understanding diversity, and also of the things that bind us together for a shared future

Rating: 3

Transitioning beyond school

We are limiting pathways to learning for students under the age of 17 if we are reliant only on school attendance, much learning can be done by the "doing" in a work environment, often particularly for students who come from non working families.

Abilities to enhance and increase engagement with VET and other study opportunities need to be explored.

The engagement of community, and ability to cross into local business's for VOC pathways, or casual employment, are part of this.

Rating: 4

Additional Comments

Such a big subject to cover, however, I strongly believe that contextualised learning connects the student to the relevance of the subject matter. the link between Food and Fibre as such a learning context, and our interaction with it every time we eat, or dress, or drink provides this. Engaging RRR students this way, also assists them see the relevance of the subjects to a sustainable future, and their role in such a discussion as something that comes from a place of connection and pride, rather than disinterest, and dislocation.

The Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia is a unique NFP organisation, that is driving outcomes building resources in this area, and creating a portal to house them in www.Primezone.edu.au Securing funding streams for this organisation to provide PD to build capacity and confidence of the national teaching cohort, to engage in this context will I believe deliver outcomes, particularly for RRR.