

2021 Annual Report

Royal National Park Environmental Education Centre



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Introduction

The Annual Report for 2021 is provided to the community of Royal National Park Environmental Education Centre as an account of the school's operations and achievements throughout the year.

It provides a detailed account of the progress the school has made to provide high quality educational opportunities for all students, as set out in the Strategic Improvement Plan. It outlines the findings from self-assessment that reflect the impact of key school strategies for improved learning and the benefit to all students from the expenditure of resources, including equity funding.

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Message from the principal

We actively supported student wellbeing and learning extensively throughout a disrupted school year. Through our provision of high quality programs our team demonstrated focus, creativity, commitment and flexibility like never before. Throughout the extended lockdown we were able to support teachers and students through:

- live webinars
- online resources
- virtual excursions
- targeted video conferences and
- teacher newsletters

As schools were able to open up we were called upon to deliver in school programs, and eventually facilitate fieldwork, with a strong wellbeing focus as Term 4 progressed. We even provided a day program as an alternative to Stage 3 camp, focusing on bush skills for one of the local schools that backs onto the Royal National Park.

Student engagement and wellbeing were at the forefront of our planning and program development.

School vision

At the Royal National Park Environmental Education Centre we aim to facilitate the highest quality education programs. We foster a culture where students, and their wellbeing, are at the centre of everything we do.

School context

The Royal National Park Environmental Education Centre (RNPEEC) is located in the Royal National Park, in the Sutherland Shire, southeast of Sydney. We facilitate programs for K-12 at our centre, throughout the Royal National Park, in other reserves and in schools.

RNPEEC provides authentic, curriculum-based fieldwork experiences which enable students to explore, investigate and understand the natural and human environments. Students are immersed in nature through hands-on inquiry learning.

We have active partnerships across participating schools, local schools, the Environmental and Zoo Education (EZEC) network and the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG).

Through our situational analysis we identified a need to concentrate on explicit teaching practices to improve teacher quality. We plan to incorporate the use of data to inform planning. Work will take place on developing quality formative and summative assessment tasks and data collection practices.

In addition, we have identified a need to deepen the focus on student wellbeing and to develop planning in wellbeing across all our programs, K-12. We aim to increase student engagement through an intentional focus on wellbeing.

Self-assessment and school achievement

This section of the annual report outlines the findings from self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework, school achievements and the next steps to be pursued.

This year, our school undertook self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework. The Framework is a statement of what is valued as excellence for NSW public schools, both now and into the future. The Framework supports public schools throughout NSW in the pursuit of excellence by providing a clear description of high quality practice across the three domains of Learning, Teaching and Leading.

Each year, we assess our practice against the Framework to inform our Strategic Improvement Plan and annual report.

Our self-assessment process will assist the school to refine our Strategic Improvement Plan, leading to further improvements in the delivery of education to our students.

For more information about the School Excellence Framework: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/school-excellence-and-accountability>

Strategic Direction 1: Explicit teaching

Purpose

In order to improve student learning, we will implement explicit teaching practices.

Initiatives

This year our school implemented the following initiatives to support the realisation of the four year Strategic Improvement Plan and the achievement of system-negotiated and school-determined targets.

- Improving quality teaching practice
- Improving student success through explicit teaching

Resources allocated to this strategic direction

School support allocation (principal support): \$3,000.00

6300 Excursion fees: \$1,000.00

Professional learning: \$1,000.00

Summary of progress

Throughout the year we framed what we wanted students to do, and how well we wanted them to do it by providing quality work samples. Through demonstrating what a good one looks like (WAGOLL) and incorporating this in planning our teaching we have raised the bar on student work. It has improved teaching practice with a keen focus on what we want the students to achieve.

We had planned to focus on fieldwork activities, such as nature maps and field sketches, developing rubrics to guide our teaching, identifying one activity per stage where explicit teaching and WAGOLLs could be applied. This began during Term 2. During Term 3 during prolonged learning from home the focus shifted to defining success criteria for online learning activities and modelling samples during webinars and online lessons, on Google Sites and through providing samples for teachers, students, and parents/carers to use. This enabled students to have a guide as to what was expected of them and supported them to achieve success.

Whilst working from home, teaching staff worked collaboratively online, with regular daily meetings, and weekly priorities clearly set. Staff were able to work on tasks together or contribute to each other's work. The spirit of collegial support was most evident in the development and management of the online seminar series. Teachers knew what was needed and were able to contribute according to their skills and expertise. What enabled greater collaboration was the online platforms for communication and the time to focus on teaching. Teaching online allowed rich opportunities for team teaching and observing colleagues teaching practice.

Not delivering regular fieldwork for much of semester 2 has meant that negotiated lesson observations have been put off until 2022-2023. Despite us observing teaching in an online context, we were focussed on delivery of the programs in an online environment and were not able to negotiate feedback sessions. We had made a start on developing success criteria, assessment rubrics and WAGOLLs for discrete fieldwork activities. We were able to apply these techniques to our online learning sessions but have not been able to trial the application to our fieldwork teaching due to the disruption. It has developed staff skills with use of success criteria and use of work samples.

Student, teacher, and parent/carer data was collected for both the webinars and virtual excursions. This data fed into the improvement cycle where we sought to review and improve teaching practice through surveys and online feedback during sessions. The sessions were dynamic with immediate adjustments and improvements occurring through Q and A and chat functions. We used innovative practices to engage and communicate with students in the online environment which enables dynamic teaching.

Teachers have changed how they communicate verbally and non-verbally to students, and how they structure activities. Staff collaboration around a range of field activities, such as field sketches, has led to improvements in quality teaching and therefore improved student work. Learning intentions and success criteria are driving our planning for online and field activities, resulting in improved outcomes.

By collaborating on activities as a teaching staff, and examining them in detail, we have redefined what a good one looks like. For example, while collaborating on field sketches, we shared techniques and re-examined what makes a good field sketch. This has led to modifying our teaching practice and therefore better addressing syllabus outcomes.

Next year, in this initiative/strategic direction, we will develop student feedback surveys and formalise lesson observation and feedback. We will extend the use of success criteria for fieldwork and in school programs because it has made an

impact on our teaching and on student success. Next year in this initiative/strategic direction, we will not continue to collaborate in an online environment because we will be able to meet and collaborate in person.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

The annual progress measures indicate the expected annual level of achievement for each improvement measure, aligned to the initiatives, in the Strategic Improvement Plan. Schools evaluate their achievement against annual progress measures to determine progress and inform future planning.

Annual progress measure	Progress towards achievement
<p>Maintain sustaining and growing in the theme of explicit teaching within the element of 'Effective classroom practice'.</p> <p><i>Teachers collaborate across faculties/ stages/teams to share curriculum knowledge, data, feedback and other information about student achievement, to inform the development of evidence-based programs and lessons, which meet the needs of all students.</i></p>	<p>Self-assessment against the School Excellence Framework shows the theme of Effective teaching practice to be sustaining and growing.</p>
<p>Move from delivering to sustaining and growing in the theme 'Data use in teaching' within the element 'Data skills and Use'.</p> <p><i>Assessments are developed/sourced and used regularly across stages/year levels/ subject areas or the whole school to help promote consistent and comparable judgement of student learning, monitor student learning progress, and identify skill gaps for improvement and areas for extension.</i></p>	<p>Self-assessment against the School Excellence Framework shows the theme of Date use in teaching to be sustaining and growing.</p>
<p>Maintain sustaining and growing in the themes of 'Formative Assessment' and 'Summative Assessment' within the element of 'Assessment'.</p> <p><i>Teachers collect and use assessment data that monitors achievements and identifies gaps in learning to inform planning.</i></p> <p><i>Assessment is planned and undertaken regularly and data is systematically collected.</i></p>	<p>Self-assessment against the School Excellence Framework shows the themes of Formative Assessment and Summative Assessment to be sustaining and growing.</p>
<p>Maintain sustaining and growing in collaborative practice/feedback within the element of 'Learning and development'.</p> <p><i>Teachers engage in professional discussion and collaborate to improve teaching and learning in their classes This includes negotiated observations of classroom teaching practice, with feedback, to improve professional knowledge and practice.</i></p>	<p>Self-assessment against the School Excellence Framework shows the theme of Learning and development to be sustaining and growing.</p>

Strategic Direction 2: Wellbeing

Purpose

In order to ensure all students feel prepared and safe on programs, we will develop resources and improve communication with participating schools.

Initiatives

This year our school implemented the following initiatives to support the realisation of the four year Strategic Improvement Plan and the achievement of system-negotiated and school-determined targets.

- Supporting wellbeing

Resources allocated to this strategic direction

School support allocation (principal support): \$7,500.00

6300 Excursion fees: \$1,000.00

Professional learning: \$2,000.00

Summary of progress

In term 2 we established a survey to collect data on pre-excursion communication and resources that support wellbeing. During term 3, we began the process of evaluating and reviewing our teaching programs in order to declutter our programs, to make space for wellbeing activities. During terms 1 and 2, we began developing a K-6 scope and sequence to support kitchen garden programs.

Due to COVID-19, during Terms 3 and 4, we changed our focus from incorporating wellbeing into fieldwork experiences into provision of online programs that support wellbeing. This led to the development and delivery of a range of online webinars and virtual lessons over the learning from home period and the transition back to school during term 4. Two Google Sites were developed to further support wellbeing and learning from home. An Instagram Photo a Day challenge was facilitated. Students connected and shared through online polls, Q&As, and submitting work to share in our galleries and on our Instagram feed.

Throughout the learning from home period, we had a positive impact on student wellbeing through the provision of online lessons and resources. We had engaged a range of teachers on temporary engagements for semester 2, which provided us with additional staff to support and contribute to a range of programs. Although we were all working from home in isolation, we strongly collaborated through the use of Microsoft Teams. The creativity and passion of our teachers, combined with technical skills, enabled us to develop and deliver programs to thousands of students. Department resources and support, including access to a range of online platforms, further enabled these programs.

The online programs and resources filled a need for students and teachers, by providing a supportive, creative outlet during the afternoon session. Impact of these programs is evidenced by participation in the webinars, sharing of student work, and feedback from students, teachers and parents/caregivers. A further testament to the impact of our programs is schools booked additional programs for their students, both during learning from home and after returning to school. The online resources continue to be used by schools and students now that we are back in classrooms, and some activities are being added to our fieldwork repertoire. Funding from the Arts Unit was used to support the staffing of this program, as an alternative to our planned face-to-face program.

These programs were the right initiative to support student wellbeing given our staff skills, the needs of students and the opportunities that arose from the significant period of learning from home. Next year, in this strategic direction, we will reapply our efforts to incorporating wellbeing into our fieldwork programs, and developing additional pre-excursion support resources.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

The annual progress measures indicate the expected annual level of achievement for each improvement measure, aligned to the initiatives, in the Strategic Improvement Plan. Schools evaluate their achievement against annual progress measures to determine progress and inform future planning.

Annual progress measure	Progress towards achievement
Maintain 'sustaining and growing' in the theme of 'A planned approach to	Self-assessment against the School Excellence Framework shows the theme of A planned approach to wellbeing to be sustaining and growing.

<p>wellbeing' within the element of 'Wellbeing'.</p> <p><i>The school collects, analyses and uses data including valid and reliable student, parent and staff surveys/feedback to monitor and refine a whole school approach to wellbeing and engagement, to improve learning.</i></p>	
<p>Maintain 'delivering' in the theme of 'Caring for students', in the element of 'Wellbeing'.</p> <p><i>The wellbeing of students is explicitly supported by identified staff.</i></p>	<p>Self-assessment against the School Excellence Framework shows the theme of Caring for students to be delivering.</p>

Attendance

NSW student attendance data in 2020 is not comparable to previous years due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The NSW Government encouraged students to learn from home, where possible, for a seven week period from 24 March to 22 May 2020. During this period, schools monitored engagement with learning to determine whether students were marked present. This changed the attendance measure. There was also some evidence of varied marking practices as schools adjusted to the learning from home period, with some schools recording higher attendance rates while others recording markedly lower rates.

Attendance figures in 2021 were calculated differently to align with the third edition of ACARA's National Standards for Student Attendance Data and Reporting. Changes include treating partial absences over 120 minutes as a half day absence (instead of their actual value, calculated as a proportion of a nominal 6-hour day) and covers all weeks during Semester 1. Prior to 2021, the final week of Term 2 was excluded.

Furthermore, the Department implemented an automated attendance feed (AAF) system in Semester 1 2021. AAF transfers data automatically from third-party attendance management systems to the Department's centralised data warehouse every night. The AAF has significantly improved data quality in 2021, which has affected data comparability with previous years.

Although there were no state-wide or regional lockdowns in NSW during Semester 1 2021, COVID-19 continued to affect student attendance. Analysis of attendance codes showed a change in the structure of absence reasons in 2021.

Management of non-attendance

Attendance at school has a big impact on longer term outcomes for children and young people. When a child is not at school they miss important opportunities to learn, build friendships and develop their skills through play. Regular attendance at school is a shared responsibility between schools and parents. By working together we can have a positive effect on supporting our children and young people to regularly attend school.

Our teachers promote and monitor regular attendance at school and all our schools have effective measures in place to record attendance and follow up student absences promptly. They are guided by the School Attendance policy which details the management of non-attendance.

Workforce information

Workforce composition

Position	FTE*
Principal(s)	1
Classroom Teacher(s)	1
School Administration and Support Staff	1.19

*Full Time Equivalent

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce composition

The Department actively supports the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees through the use of identified positions, and scholarship opportunities to become a teacher and by providing a culturally safe workplace. As of 2021, 4.3% of the Department's overall workforce identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People.

Workforce ATSI

Staff type	Benchmark ¹	2021 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation ²
School Support	3.30%	4.40%
Teachers	3.30%	3.20%

Note 1 - The NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2019-2025 takes a career pathway approach in that it sets an ambitious target of 3% Aboriginal employment at each non-executive grade of the public sector by 2025.

Note 2 - Representation of diversity groups are calculated as the estimated number of staff in each group divided by the total number of staff. These statistics have been weighted to estimate the representation of diversity groups in the workforce, where diversity survey response rates were less than 100 per cent. The total number of staff is based on a headcount of permanent and temporary employees.

Teacher qualifications

All casual, temporary and permanent teachers in NSW public schools must hold a NSW Department of Education approval to teach. Teachers with approval to teach must be accredited with the NSW Education Standards Authority, and hold a recognised teaching degree. All NSW teachers must hold a valid NSW Working With Children Check clearance.

Professional learning and teacher accreditation

Professional learning is core to enabling staff to improve their practice.

Professional learning includes five student-free School Development Days and induction programs for staff new to our school and/or system. These days are used to improve the capacity of teaching and non-teaching staff in line with school and departmental priorities.

Financial information

Financial summary

The information provided in the financial summary includes reporting from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021. The Principal is responsible for the financial management of the school and ensuring all school funds are managed in line with Department policy requirements.

	2021 Actual (\$)
Opening Balance	128,841
Revenue	512,016
Appropriation	478,467
Sale of Goods and Services	207
Grants and contributions	33,128
Investment income	213
Expenses	-517,640
Employee related	-497,262
Operating expenses	-20,378
Surplus / deficit for the year	-5,624
Closing Balance	123,217

Figures presented in this report may be subject to rounding so may not reconcile exactly with the bottom line totals, which are calculated without any rounding.

Due to students learning from home for an extended period through 2021 we engaged less teachers. We were able to continue to employ temporary teachers whilst delivering online learning experiences. There was no charge for online teaching programs.

Student fees were capped at \$7 per student due to families experiencing economic hardship.. We did not recoup the full cost of the temporary teachers. Less income was generated through student fees. There were reduced face to face teaching programs.

Financial summary - Equity loadings

The equity loading data is the main component of the 'Appropriation' line item of the financial summary above.

	2021 SBAR Adjustments (\$)
Targeted Total	0
Equity Total	0
Equity - Aboriginal	0
Equity - Socio-economic	0
Equity - Language	0
Equity - Disability	0
Base Total	456,134
Base - Per Capita	14,791
Base - Location	0
Base - Other	441,343
Other Total	10,865
Grand Total	466,999

Figures presented in this report may be subject to rounding so may not reconcile exactly with the bottom line totals, which are calculated without any rounding.

Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction

Student feedback - this has been sourced from 49 student using online resources plus teacher feedback related to fieldwork and online resources.

"Best excursion ever!" Year 4 student who went on the day it poured rain.

Online resources

Stage 5 Geography - Environmental Change and management

That I could do it from home but still get the information I needed

it's giving us an understanding of resource management

Well structured

Stage 4 Geography - Landscapes and Landforms

It helps

Its engaging

Its interactive

Stage 3 Science - Amazing Adaptations

I can see the place virtually and I can learn things without being there.

How I could hear what it would sound like if I was actually there.

There is a range of different activities and virtual tours to guide us.

It is interactive.

It was fun to use and helped me learn a lot of things.

It tells you everything you need to know in a nice way (e.g. Virtual reality).

Interesting…..Easy to understand…. It has detailed descriptions.

Stage 3 Geography - Factors that Shape Places

I really liked the activities :)

I love the interactive work you have for us! :)

How detailed and easy to use it is

Picture and challenges

It is fun and very interesting. thank you for caring about our education:)

Nature Journaling webinar series - student feedback from 226 surveys

Drawing Animals - Today I learned

- *What the different grades of lead pencils do*
- *A lot about phoebe the phasmid. It was super cool to see such a weird animal.*
- *How to break down the things I want to draw into shapes and lines, then add details. And blend with a banksia!*
- *About drawing the main line of an animal first*
- *Nature is everywhere even in our backyards*
- *Much more than I realised I would! Thank you*
- *its ok to make mistakes as I can go over it again.*

Landscapes - Today I learned

- How to use different textures and leaves included into my landscapes
- how to make paint out of natural materials
- I learned that there is more than 1 green.
- Techniques for dividing up my view for drawing.'
- How to do a detailed landscape drawing and how to shade and mix's colours
- How to make paint with rocks and how to draw a landscape
- I learned about how to make drawings/paintings feel more alive and how beautiful nature can really be because once I saw 3 blue tongue lizards on my daily bush walk
- That's it doesn't :)

Interacting with nature webinar series -

Nature Photography - Today I learned

- *About rule of thirds and macro, and exposure.*
- *How to focus on the main thing and make pictures brighter and prettier*
- *How to focus on a specific thing in your photo and not the background.*
- *To look at nature with new eyes and take photos in a new and creative way*
- *new skills on how to take up close pictures*

Soundscapes

- *about the different type of animal sounds*
- *what a sound map is*
- *The importance of listening carefully and trying to work out species*
- *How to make a sound map*

Ephemeral Art

- *That you can make ephemeral art anywhere*
- *About framing with sticks, and going into nature to make the art, rather than using loose parts in the classroom*
- *Ephemeral art can be very quick and simple*
- *I learned that art is awesome*
- *to use loose items of nature*
- *I loved seeing all the beautiful examples of artworks - I like the idea of walking and creating artworks along the way.*

Small and curious

- *I learned that there are lots of interesting things in the world, and if you just look closely you can see so many interesting things!*
- *How many different types of things are in soil*
- *That there are tiny creatures we don't see*
- *How many creatures and living organisms are actually beneficial. To be gentle with them*
- *that there lots of bugs are actually really helpful*

Birds

- *I learned that you can find lots of evidence birds have been somewhere by looking closely, I also learned what types of feathers there are n a bird and what some parts are called.*
- *That you can get close to birds by doing their call*
- *About birds and their feathers*

Teacher feedback

Following comments are representative of 38 responses to post activity evaluations to fieldwork, in-school programs and online resources

our programs support classroom learning

The students were able to observe the biophysical interactions first-hand and conduct skills activities to understand how ecosystems function

The program allowed students to witness a variety of geomorphological process which they had been taught in class, it also allowed them to use geographical tools and enhance their knowledge.

Real life experience of geographical skills

The learning on the excursion tied in so well with the learning taking place in class and gave the students a practical and hands on way to experience the same content

This program gave students the opportunity to learn field work in a practical and engaging way.

It was amazing!!! Supported and engaged all students and catered for their learning needs!

All of the hands-on activities were really memorable for the kids and I believe this will make it a breeze to make lots of connections to our prior and future learning. The Caring for Country activities, in particular the bush walk, really helped students to appreciate nature and have an understanding for living on Dharawal country and what that means.

Students were able to build knowledge from their Nature Journaling Zoom lessons presented to them during lockdown.

The excursion enabled the students to put into practice, all that they had learned in the classroom regarding living things and their needs. Being able to play games and interact with nature in the fabulous way they can do at this excursion, meant they could consolidate their learning in a fun and valuable way. This truly is the best excursion for young students!! It's just a shame I'm not teaching Kindergarten again next year.

The use of digital technology to create art. Creating art using a variety of material, working in collaborative groups, expressing etc.

We were looking for alternatives to a camp program and this fitted in nicely giving students ways of navigating bush tracks, caring for the environment and safety

Students were able to explore their environment, which supports their learning in Science and Geography. This is something that many of them never have the opportunity to do as they live in a built-up area of the city.

our programs support student wellbeing

Well organised, safe, good timing and wonderful RNP teachers! Thank you!

our teachers are high quality

The fact that they ARE teachers made a real difference. They interacted great with the kids and knew exactly what they needed to succeed.

The teachers were knowledgeable, friendly, accommodating of all students

A great team of teachers who were well prepared and very organised!

Very professional, positive, and encouraging. A pleasure to team up with!

Very knowledgeable, easy going, approachable and professional

This was one of the best excursions I have ever been on. Staff amazing and the program itself was both educational as well as fun

Our educators today were really engaging and the students really liked interacting with them. They answered all the students questions and took the time to teach the students extra

Very knowledgeable, easy going, approachable and professional

our programs meet and exceed expectations

It was beyond the expectations. Every child was engaged and motivated.

Very educational, pleasant experience.

The instructors were very competent, and although I was a bit nervous as it was my first time running the excursion, my fears were allayed very quickly.

The program is exceptional

our online resources supported student learning

A variety of activities that engaged students and the adaptation journal kept the students keen and eager to learn more.

Ease of use, colourful and appealing, language is student friendly,

Comprehensive

Webinars

....thank you so much! - your lessons have sparked great curiosity in my students they have loved every session... Your sessions have been the highlight of their at home learning!

Parents/Carers feedback

The following feedback was received from parents/carers of students using online platforms during lockdown.. These comments were sources from evaluation of webinars and Facebook posts.

This is the best! My 7 year old is the most engaged she has been all week. We spent some time on our morning walk collecting different leaves and she is loving how to use them in art. thank you!...we can't wait for next week!

Thanks for the session today, the girls 8 and 10 years old loved it. They made their own nature journals after the session ended!

Policy requirements

Aboriginal Education Policy

The responsibility for enacting the Aboriginal Education Policy rests with all Departmental staff. The policy should underpin and inform planning, teaching practice and approaches to educational leadership in all educational settings.

Evidence of effective implementation of the policy included:

- Establishing, building and strengthening relationships with the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Aboriginal people and communities.
- Providing, in partnership with Aboriginal people and communities, education which promotes quality teaching, is engaging, and is culturally appropriate and relevant.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will match or better the outcomes of the broader student population.
- Implementation of Personalised Learning Pathways for all Aboriginal students in a school culture of high expectations.

Anti-Racism Policy

All teachers are responsible for addressing incidents of racism and supporting students to develop an understanding of racism and discrimination and the impact these may have on individuals and the broader community. The Principal is responsible for examining school practices and procedures to ensure they are consistent with the policy. The school has an Anti-Racism Contact Officer who is trained to respond to concerns in relation to racism.

Multicultural Education Policy

Teachers are responsible for addressing the specific learning and wellbeing needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds through their teaching and learning programs. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that school policies, programs and practices respond to the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of the school community, and provide opportunities that enable all students to achieve equitable education and social outcomes.