

2021 Annual Report

Riverina Environmental Education Centre



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Introduction

The Annual Report for 2021 is provided to the community of Riverina 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.

School contact details

Riverina Environmental Education Centre

Cnr Sturt & Olympic Highway

Wagga Wagga, 2650

www.riverina-e.schools.nsw.edu.au

riverina-e.school@det.nsw.edu.au

6932 9134

Message from the principal

Riverina Environmental Education Centre quickly and successfully adapted to a new model of school support, enhancement and enrichment in the disjointed and uncertain pandemic world of 2021. Where allowed schools continued to utilise school incursions and excursions to the Riverina EEC to support student learning in the areas of sustainability, environmental and outdoor education. When restrictions prevented school excursions and incursions Riverina EEC supported local network and directorate schools through the production, distribution and supply of online learning from home resources. For K - 6 schools, staff and students outdoor learning from home lessons were implemented to allow students a connection with the environment and outdoor learning by engaging in numeracy and literacy outdoor learning activities utilising their home and community environments. Supporting 7 - 12 Geography and Science syllabuses occurred with physical excursions being supported by online virtual excursions supporting mandatory fieldwork experiences. The learning packages were replicated in an online environment with websites, video and interactive learning objects to supplement the lost outdoor learning opportunities usually supported by fieldwork excursions. This shift in pedagogical practice has allowed the teaching, learning and curriculum to become more diverse and inclusive for a wider range of accessibility.

Riverina Environmental Education Centre also developed new outdoor pedagogy professional learning packages that align with the new requirements of NESA. Professional learning support for Numeracy in nature, Sustainability in the primary classroom and English in the environment are ready for 2022 delivery to support new syllabus implementation for mathematics and english.

The challenges of 2021 have been met by the team at Riverina Environmental Education Centre to ensure that we authentically support the schools of Rural South and West directorate with contextualised local support, enrichment and enhancement for environmental and sustainability education.

School vision

Riverina Environmental Education Centre Vision:

Leading the provision of quality teaching and learning to enable students, teachers and their communities to nurture curiosity as environmental citizens for a sustainable future.

School context

The Riverina Environmental Education Centre (REEC) is a facility of the Department of Education located within the grounds of Wagga Wagga Research Centre. The centre sits on Wiradjuri land and most of the studies are conducted on Wiradjuri land.

REEC is one of 25 Environmental Education and Zoo Education Centres (EZEC) run by the Department of Education. REEC provides high quality teaching and learning program enhancement programs to support our community of schools with environmental and sustainability education. REEC is a proud and active member of the NSW Environmental and Zoo Education Centre network, working collaboratively with our lead sustainability education teaching and learning programs and high quality professional learning with Department of Education schools and staff.

The Riverina Environmental Education Centre is committed to supporting Public Education across Rural South and West Directorate. The Centre's K-12 teaching programs place an emphasis on Sustainability cross curriculum priority areas.

REEC has support from the local Aboriginal community to collaborate with Wiradjuri Elders to authentically deliver Aboriginal cultural programs. A strong Aboriginal focus provides opportunities for all students, staff and the wider community to acquire knowledge and develop a deeper understanding of Aboriginal histories, cultures and experiences.

The COVID period of 2021 has highlighted the sudden shift in how we are required to operate in a pandemic era. Analysis of our service delivery over past 5 years has highlighted that our current model of operation is not equitable in provision of services to our community of schools across the ten Director Educational Leadership principal networks in Rural and South West.

Community consultation also highlights that many schools are acquiring bookings that do not align directly with their current teaching and learning sequences. Moving forward we need to move away from the view that we are an excursion centre and instead we are a program enhancement centre that focuses on learning programs delivered in the right place, at the right time for the right educational outcomes.

Through the situational analysis, we have identified two focus areas for school improvement planning for 2021 - 2024.

- Teaching and learning
- Leading improvement, innovation and change

Work will take place to review our teaching and learning programs to identify the future scope of support in an every changing educational landscape. Collaboration with our community of schools will be focused to identify and implement the best mix of K-12 lesson delivery onsite and offsite. These partnerships will be targeted to identify possible strategies for a wider range of formative assessment tools, data use in planning and timely reporting to confirm that students learn what is taught. REEC staff will deliver professional learning packages designed to support teacher capacity building for Environmental education, Sustainability education and learning in the outdoors."

The two last school planning cycle have focused on the opportunities and areas for improvement in alignment with the School Excellence Framework and School External Validation. Along the way our core business and essential school operation have transitioned to business as usual after rapid implementation. This situational analysis process has identified for the need to re-evaluate our current business as usual practice and implement the required change for all our organisational structures.

For leading improvement, innovation and change work will take place to evaluate all operational procedures at Riverina EEC through a critical evaluative lens. A timeline of review of all school procedures with an operational emphasis will be scheduled across the four year school improvement cycle ensuring that the school improvement plan is connected with core business through an operational lens. Embedding authentic processes for sustainable reflective practice will build a culture of continuous improvement rich in evaluative practice for all areas of schools operation.

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>

Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

Elements	2021 School Assessment
LEARNING: Learning Culture	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Wellbeing	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Curriculum	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Assessment	Delivering
LEARNING: Reporting	Working towards Delivering
LEARNING: Student performance measures	Working towards Delivering
TEACHING: Effective classroom practice	Excelling
TEACHING: Data skills and use	Delivering
TEACHING: Professional standards	Sustaining and Growing
TEACHING: Learning and development	Excelling
LEADING: Educational leadership	Excelling
LEADING: School planning, implementation and reporting	Sustaining and Growing
LEADING: School resources	Excelling
LEADING: Management practices and processes	Sustaining and Growing

Strategic Direction 1: Leading teaching and learning

Purpose

To improve the opportunity for access across the Rural South & West directorate for schools, staff and students to access enrichment and enhancement support from Riverina Environmental Education Centre.

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.

- Curriculum
- Data skills and use

Resources allocated to this strategic direction

Summary of progress

Our focus for 2021 was on the critical evaluation of our current bookings, curriculum, teaching and learning practice across all year groups. Focusing on evaluative practices our staff identified the points of need required to improve access across the Rural South & West directorate for schools, staff and students to access enrichment and enhancement. Changes to booking procedures were implemented to ensure that visitations align with school scope and sequence to ensure that student learning opportunities are enhanced. Curriculum audits allowed for the decommissioning of redundant units and new studies identified for future implementation. Professional dialogue on quality teaching practice was a focus resulting from targeted professional learning. Evaluation of external school performance measures has not occurred as planned due to the complexity of accessing these data sets. Further communication with key stakeholders for school performance measures needs further exploration.

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
Implementation of new booking procedures. All Rural South and West directorate schools that have access to Riverina EEC enrichment and enhancement programs have been communicated with regarding the new procedures. Evaluation of new booking procedures to ensure the provision of service to schools has improved from identified baseline data.	100% of rural south and west directorate schools have access to communication regarding the new booking procedures and curriculum offerings via school website and formal communications. Alignment of 2021 Riverina EEC K-6 bookings to visiting school curriculum scope and sequences has improved from 30% in 2021 to 95%. Alignment of 7-12 booking to school curriculum scope and sequences remains at 100%
Riverina EEC staff have access to external and internal school performance measures across the Rural South and West Directorate Schools. Analysis of data with Director, Education Leaderships across the ten networks has occurred providing a baseline data set for analysis and evaluation for Riverina EEC to use to	Riverina Environmental Education Centre staff currently do not have any access to any directorate school performance measure data sets. Processes to identify and access the required data is under investigation. Teaching and learning practice at Riverina Environmental Education Centre is currently informed by a baseline data sets from 10% of educational leadership networks across rural south and west directorate. The absence of permanent student enrolments at Environmental Education Centres results in no access to student performance data sets in SCOUT. This barrier prevents the opportunity for staff to view and evaluate student learning data to inform our teaching practice. and improvement of student learning outcomes.

Strategic Direction 2: Leading improvement, innovation and change

Purpose

To embed a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring research, innovation and creativity are core characteristics of the school through review of the effectiveness of processes and the use of data to improve school performance.

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.

- Management process and practices
- Learning development

Resources allocated to this strategic direction

Summary of progress

In administrative processes an audit of administrative processes and procedures for Riverina EEC was conducted and key areas were highlighted for improvement during the life cycle of the 2021 - 2024 strategic improvement plan. For 2021 changes have been made to the systems and structures for Work Health and Safety compliance and reporting, bush fire hazard mitigation, strategic school finance management and NESA curriculum registration. Monthly monitoring meetings of the finance team using eFPT and SAP finance tools have allowed financial performance to remain within 98% of school budgeting performance. Utilisation of SCOUT as a management technological tool has improved the compliance monitoring for successful school auditing compliance.

In the ongoing development and improvement of all staff high impact professional learning processes have been applied to staff and leadership learning with an increase in staff professional dialogue for leadership and teaching practice more evident. Quality teaching round training has introduced a new lens of evaluation of teaching and learning practice for all staff and adjustments to Riverina EEC delivered professional learning courses has resulted. Outdoor Learning Pedagogy and Sustainability in the primary classroom courses have been rigorously evaluated and adjusted to support alignment for quality teaching, professional standards, what works best in practice and high impact professional learning. Riverina EEC are eager for COVID restrictions to ease to allow our leadership of engagement and support for Rural and Remote education strategy delivery.

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
25% of the schools administrative systems and process have been successfully evaluated against collected data to ensure the effectiveness of delivering anticipated benefits to school performance with new data management methods and technologies having been successfully deployed.	Internal measures indicate that more than 25% of the school administrative systems and processes have been successfully evaluated for effectiveness.
25% of the schools management processes have been successfully evaluated	Internal measures indicate that more than 25% of school management processes have been successfully evaluated and those areas of improvement have been allocated to a current SIP timeline for change management.
Evaluation of 25% of the schools administrative systems and processes, ensuring that they are delivering anticipated benefits to the school community with new management methods and technologies having been	Over 25% of the new management methods and technologies identified have been successfully deployed and are delivering observable benefits for the school community.

successfully deployed.	
<p>Establishment of baseline data measuring the number of interactions by Riverina EEC staff supporting the development of leadership skills for self and others in the professional learning community</p> <p>Professional Learning programs have been implemented and trialed across the four local Wagga Wagga DEL networks. Identification of the range of engagement numbers by staff to establish an effective baseline data for future comparison.</p>	<p>Baseline data has been established the percentage of Riverina EEC staff supporting the leadership skills of others and self in the professional learning community at 40%. The number of interactions per year by staff of leadership for self and others in the professional learning community is not able to be accurately and reliably be established.</p> <p>Professional learning programs were implemented for three of the local Wagga Wagga DEL networks. Due to COVID restrictions zero of these professional learning programs were able to be trialed with the enroled staff. All participants have been moved to a waitlist for 2022.</p> <p>Professional Learning programs have been implemented and trialed across one new DEL networks, Deniliquin, supporting secondary staff in Geography and Science fieldwork and skills inquiry.</p>

Student information

No school enrolment data is available for Riverina Environmental Education Centre as there are no permanently enrolled students.

Students attend Riverina Environmental Education Centre as part of excursions and incursions collaboratively negotiated with their enrolled schools. Students attend Riverina Environmental Education Centre from the 200 plus Department of Education schools of the rural south and west directorate. Students from kinder garden to year 12 attend on a daily basis as booked by their school of enrolment.

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	128,532
Revenue	450,442
Appropriation	447,027
Grants and contributions	3,295
Investment income	121
Expenses	-473,182
Employee related	-431,130
Operating expenses	-42,052
Surplus / deficit for the year	-22,740
Closing Balance	105,792

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.

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	432,350
Base - Per Capita	14,791
Base - Location	647
Base - Other	416,912
Other Total	10,865
Grand Total	443,216

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

Annual survey data collected from visiting schools, teaching and non teaching staff and students reflect a positive and supportive learning culture is provided by Riverina Environmental Education Centre and its staff. Parent and caregiver satisfaction is embedded in the surveying strategies of the students enrolled school and is difficult to extract with accuracy or reliability from their data sets.

Survey data for 2021 is provided below:

1. Student Learning

- Provision of a positive learning culture - 83% excellent rating with 94% of all responses to a very good to excellent level of satisfaction
- High Expectations for student behaviour and learning - 77% excellent rating with 95% of all responses to a very good to excellent level of satisfaction

2. Curriculum Provision

- Riverina EEC curriculum incorporates and delivers learning for sustainability education - 65% excellent rating with 90% of all responses to a very good to excellent level of satisfaction
- Riverina EEC curriculum incorporates and delivers learning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education - 70% excellent rating with 88% of all responses to a very good to excellent level of satisfaction

3. Teaching

- Riverina EEC staff positively promote environmental and sustainability education - 87% excellent rating with 95% of all responses to a very good to excellent level of satisfaction
- Riverina EEC staff modelling of explicit vocabulary for environmental and sustainability education - 88% excellent rating with 97% of all responses to a very good to excellent level of satisfaction
- Riverina EEC staff model culturally, ethical and sensitive practices in Aboriginal education - 80% excellent rating with 92% of all responses to a very good to excellent level of satisfaction

Informal data collected from students during visits to Riverina Environmental Education Centre varies widely across student learning stage, key learning area and excursion site (incursion or excursion). Common trend data from students reflects a deep and strong connection with the physical environments, the outdoor learning strategies, the positive learning relationships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff and making a real connection with the local ecosystems and living communities. Post visit work samples sent back to Riverina Environmental Education Centre from staff and students reflect the positive interactions and connections they have made through their outdoor learning experiences.

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.

Aboriginal Education - School statement

Riverina Environmental Education Centre staff, visiting school staff and students and our wider community network all value highly the role our Wiradjuri Elder in Residence, Aunty Joycelan Williams, leads onsite with Aboriginal education.

Aunty Joycelan leads the curriculum planning and design to ensure the learning activities are authentic and genuine in their representation of local Wiradjuri people, places and experiences. She plays a key role in building the confidence and capacity of all staff to ensure that they are supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students feel valued in supported and included in their education by making their culture visibly and authentically included across all learning areas and opportunities.

Riverina Environmental Education Centre actively promotes and supports our network of schools to establish and build strong local connections within their school Aboriginal community rather than outsource Aboriginal education to external providers. Culturally appropriate and sensitive practices are adhered to ensure that local communities play an active and authentic role in the cultural connections of all students.

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.

Anti-Racism - School statement

Teachers play a critical role in developing intercultural understanding, promoting mutual respect and positive behaviours in the classroom, and in assisting all students to effectively engage with learning. Teachers are expected to reflect on their own behaviour to ensure that it does not result in anyone - other staff, students and members of the school community - experiencing 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.

Multicultural and anti-racism education - School Statement

Riverina Environmental Education Centre is committed to building a diverse and inclusive learning environment that benefits all students including those from language backgrounds other than English. Students are prepared for engagement and participation in Australian society through introduction and inclusion to outdoor, environmental and sustainability education activities through collaboration with the EAL/D network.

Other School Programs (optional)

Sustainability Education

Riverina Environmental Education Centre is an active member of the NSW Environmental Zoo and Education Centre network comprising 23 environmental education centres and 2 zoo education centres. The core business of EZEC is leading environmental education for a sustainable future for NSW schools through coordinated and strategic approaches that provide meaningful learning experiences in, about and for the natural, built and cultural environment.

In 2022 Riverina Environmental Education Centre supported the introduction of the Kreative Koalas sustainability awareness program into the Wagga Wagga network of schools. Kreative Koalas is an action learning program that engages primary school students in sustainability awareness, understanding and action through art, design, creativity, teamwork and project development. Aligned to the learning areas, general capabilities, all three cross curriculum priorities and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Kreative Koalas supports teachers and students to take local action through fun, interactive projects on the important social and environmental justice issues facing the planet.