

2022 Annual Report

Field of Mars Environmental Education Centre



FIELD OF MARS

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTRE

EXPERIENCE ENGAGE ENABLE

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Introduction

The Annual Report for 2022 is provided to the community of Field of Mars 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

One of the Field of Mars Environmental Education Centre's (EEC) aims is to ensure students have high quality and authentic learning experiences in natural settings. The strength of the centre is the connections it makes with local school communities and other partner organisations to deliver high quality, syllabus-focused student learning and teacher professional learning programs that explore the natural world and support classroom learning.

In 2022, Field of Mars EEC continued to develop and deliver these programs, supported by professional learning programs that enable teachers to engage their students within the areas of syllabus related fieldwork, technology, Aboriginal education and sustainability.

During 2022, the centre continued its focus on the development of new and innovative sustainability education programs and resources as well as the renewal and updating of existing core programs.

School vision

Our goal is to develop engaged, environmentally responsible citizens through the provision of exceptional future focused environmental and sustainability education programs for students, world class supporting resources and quality professional learning for teachers.

School context

The Field of Mars Environmental Education Centre (EEC) is one of 25 NSW Department of Education Environmental and Zoo Education Centres (EZECs). The centre is a leader in environmental and sustainability education providing authentic, curriculum based fieldwork learning experiences for exploring, investigating, understanding and connecting with the natural and made environments.

Our programs provide opportunities to understand concepts and systems and develop values that empower learners to become environmentally responsible citizens. By building strong partnerships and developing teacher capacity, our centre enables schools to integrate environmental and sustainability education into all aspects of school operations including curriculum, teaching and learning, physical surroundings and the local community.

Our centre provides authentic contexts for exploring, investigating and understanding values, concepts and systems in the natural and made environments. The centre has been recognised as a leader in the provision of future focused learning and the use of technology outdoors. The centre has begun its journey in embedding Aboriginal perspectives to provide opportunities for all students, staff and the wider community to acquire knowledge and develop a deeper understanding of Aboriginal histories, cultures and experiences.

Field of Mars EEC is located in a reserve of remnant urban bushland in East Ryde. Programs are conducted on site at the Field of Mars Reserve, at other sites such as local reserves and in school grounds. The centre sits on Wallumedegal Country.

The centre is well regarded and caters for around 18,000 students each year. This is made possible through a dedicated team of high quality teachers who are partially funded through excursion fees.

The Field of Mars EEC teaching staff demonstrate specialist expertise in environmental and sustainability education K-12, building relationships across schools and with visiting teachers to develop programs which address specific curriculum targets, tailored to the learning needs of all visiting students.

Through staff and community consultation the centre has identified two focus areas for school improvement and planning for 2021-2024.

- Excellence in student learning
- Developing teacher capacity

Staff will focus on improving pedagogy through the use of data, evidence based teaching methods, collaboration and mentoring. The centre will expand its reach through the development of world class digital resources, digital learning initiatives, face to face student programs and NESA accredited professional learning.

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	2022 School Assessment
LEARNING: Learning Culture	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Wellbeing	Delivering
LEARNING: Curriculum	Excelling
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	Delivering
TEACHING: Learning and development	Sustaining and Growing
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: Excellence in student learning

Purpose

To ensure students have access to high quality, innovative and future focused teaching and learning programs and resources that develop their knowledge and skills, enabling them to engage as informed, environmentally responsible citizens.

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.

- High quality learning
- Resourcing schools

Resources allocated to this strategic direction

Summary of progress

High quality learning

During 2022 the centre investigated the use of explicit teaching strategies to support the development of new and revised face to face programs. In response to increasing student visitation the centre focused on the redevelopment of programs to support larger cohorts of students. Working as a team the centre used rapid prototyping techniques to develop revised and new programs. Feedback from staff and visiting teachers indicated these revised and new programs led to improvements in student learning while catering for larger cohorts of students. As a result the centre saw a significant increase in student visitation.

To move towards achieving our progress measure, we will continue to revise and create new programs. We will examine ways of implementing explicit teaching methods within our face to face programs.

Resourcing schools

During 2022 the centre continued to develop digital lessons and resources to support classroom teachers and centre programs. The centre focused on the development of student fact sheets to provide high quality learning resources to schools. Website analytics indicated these resources were highly sought after and valued often being the most visited pages on the centre website. Teacher surveys indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the resources.

To move towards achieving our progress measure, we will continue to build digital lessons and resources. These resources help to extend the centre's scope and reach beyond schools in the Sydney basin.

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
High Quality Learning All Field of Mars EEC programs are exemplars of high quality learning, as demonstrated by moving towards excelling in effective classroom practice - explicit teaching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-assessment against the School Excellence Framework shows the school currently performing at excelling in the theme of Explicit Teaching in the element of Effective Classroom Practice.
Resourcing Schools Field of Mars EEC has increased its reach through the provision of face to face and digital programs that provide access to high quality supporting digital	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-assessment against the School Excellence Framework shows the school currently performing at excelling in the theme of Curriculum Provision in the element of Curriculum.

content and resources, as demonstrated by moving towards excelling in curriculum - curriculum provision.

Strategic Direction 2: Developing teacher capacity

Purpose

To develop the capacity of staff to lead the delivery of high quality, authentic, innovative and future focused teaching and learning programs, enhancing student engagement in learning and their relationship with nature.

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.

- High quality pedagogy
- Excellence in professional learning.

Resources allocated to this strategic direction

Professional learning: \$5,018.02

Summary of progress

High quality pedagogy

During 2022 the centre trialled the use of Quality Teaching Rounds to support improving teacher pedagogy. Staff recorded lessons and used the Quality Teaching framework to analyse elements of the lesson. Staff shared their findings with each other to determine areas for improvement and implemented changes into teaching and learning programs. A barrier to the trial of using Quality Teaching Rounds has been the limited time available to record and then analyse lessons. As a result of the trial and subsequent discussions the centre staff recognise the value of implementing Quality Teaching Rounds. The impact of this initiative resulted in improved capacity of staff to implement explicit teaching strategies.

To move towards achieving our progress measure we will continue to implement Quality Teaching Rounds and further investigate strategies to adapt the process to an EEC context.

New syllabus

During Term 4 2022 the centre explored syllabus related professional learning provided by DoE and NESA. Participating staff indicated the provided professional learning was beneficial and helped with familiarisation of new syllabus. A barrier to full participation was the time required to complete the professional learning during the final part of the year.

To move towards achieving our progress measure full participation in syllabus related professional learning will be implemented in 2023. This will allow us to develop and modify programs to suit new syllabus requirements.

Excellence in professional learning

During 2022 the centre trialed the delivery of a revised professional learning workshop to selected participants with a focus on Aboriginal perspectives while learning in nature. The evidence showed a high degree of engagement by participating staff from visiting schools. A barrier to the continued development of professional learning courses has been the change in accreditation processes as stipulated by NESA and DoE . As a result of these changes we have not been able to further develop the course.

To move towards achieving our progress measure the development of new face to face professional learning courses will be implemented in 2023 which will allow us to develop, trial and submit courses for accreditation.

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
High Quality Pedagogy All Field of Mars EEC teachers use	• Self-assessment against the School Excellence Framework shows the school currently performing at excelling in the theme of explicit teaching in the element of Effective Classroom Practice.

evidence based teaching methods to ensure high quality pedagogy, as demonstrated by moving towards excelling in effective classroom practice - explicit teaching.	
Provision of Professional Learning The centre is a leading provider of NESA endorsed environmental and sustainability education professional learning, as demonstrated by moving towards excelling in learning and development - expertise and innovation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assessment against the School Excellence Framework shows the school currently performing at sustaining and growing in the theme of expertise and innovation in the element of Learning and Development.

Student information

Field of Mars EEC does not have an enrolled student cohort. Visiting students from Kindergarten to Year 12 participate in an extensive range of programs addressing syllabus outcomes.

2022 student visitation numbers

A total of **19,293** K-12 students visited the centre in 2022. This was the largest year for student visitation in the centres history.

This compares to 9115 students in 2021 and 12,573 students in 2020. The large variance is due to excursions and incursions not operating while COVID-19 restrictions were in place.

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 from 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 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.

Although there were no state-wide or regional lockdowns in NSW during Semester 1 2022, student attendance was impacted by a range of factors:

- Families evacuating and relocating due to NSW floods
- Sick students staying at home until a negative COVID-19 test was returned
- Household members testing positive to COVID-19
- The easing of COVID-19 border controls at the beginning of 2022 which allowed families to travel inter-state and overseas.

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

Workforce composition statement

From 2022 onwards, the new Assistant Principal Curriculum and Instruction (APCI) roles form part of entitlement. The FTE of these roles are counted as per entitlement in line with other non-deputy principal/head teacher executive positions as there is no off-set requirement from the teaching allocation. The APCI is included under the assistant principal(s) position grouping.

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 2022, 4.6% of the department's overall workforce identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school workforce composition

Staff type	Benchmark ¹	2022 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation ²
School Support	3.00%	4.10%
Teachers	3.00%	3.30%

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 2022 to 31 December 2022. The Principal is responsible for the financial management of the school and ensuring all school funds are managed in line with department policy requirements.

	2022 Actual (\$)
Opening Balance	-16,021
Revenue	1,021,343
Appropriation	580,101
Grants and contributions	230,228
Investment income	104
Other revenue	210,911
Expenses	-944,064
Employee related	-842,555
Operating expenses	-101,510
Surplus / deficit for the year	77,279
Closing Balance	61,258

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.

	2022 SBAR Adjustments (\$)
Targeted Total	0
Equity Total	0
Equity - Aboriginal	0
Equity - Socio-economic	0
Equity - Language	0
Equity - Disability	0
Base Total	469,674
Base - Per Capita	15,161
Base - Location	0
Base - Other	454,513
Other Total	12,913
Grand Total	482,587

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

Formal survey data, discussion and unsolicited feedback indicates a high level of satisfaction with the centre's programs, resources and our interactions with staff and students. Comments typically described our teaching and learning experiences as engaging, informative and relevant.

Evaluation comments include:

- I love how each year the campaign incursion is adjusted and it just gets better each year.
- Staff kept the kids engaged and on task. Great to have scientific tools and engage in fieldwork. The observations were linked to the artwork and it was linked together well and at a good pace.
- The program met our unit/syllabus outcomes. The shelter building and hands on lizard making were perfectly suited to ES1.
- Knowledgeable teacher, immersive experience, real life geography skills, take home student fieldwork journal were all amazing.
- The staff are very informative and engaging and the resources are awesome.
- Students loved being able to construct an animal house with real materials.
- Fast paced and engaging. The teacher was very knowledgeable and was great with the kids.

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

Aspects of Aboriginal culture and knowledge are integrated into many centre programs. This includes program elements that educate students about the Aboriginal Custodians of the area, their relationship with the land, their use of natural bush resources, specialist knowledge and technologies.

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.