

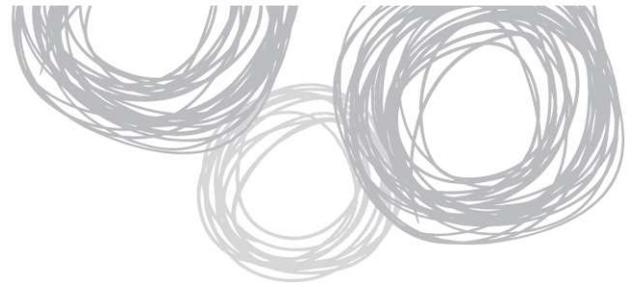
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Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy (CYAAA)

Teaching and Learning Audit
November 2011

Auditor: Mark Campling and Glenn



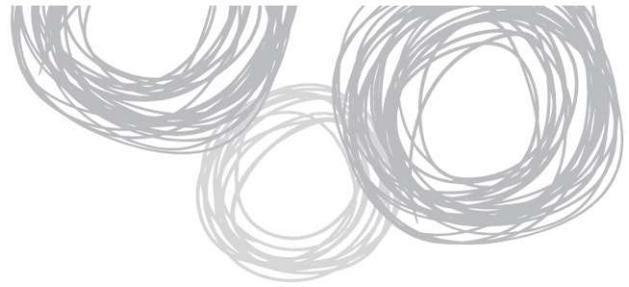


Preface

The Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy (CYAAA) is an educational trial of great significance for all Indigenous communities, parents and students. The Queensland State Government formally approved the trial of a new boutique curriculum and community engagement model delivered through a unique partnership between the CYAAA board chaired by Noel Pearson, the school communities of Aurukun, Coen and Hope Vale and Education Queensland in 2009. The trial is a totally alternate approach to the engagement and education of students in these schools, under a totally different corporate governance model with a new research-based curriculum and delivery model supported by the USA-based National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI). Early stages of the project already show significant improvement in student attendance, engagement and learning outcomes for many students. There are many stories of life changing progress in basic literacy and numeracy skills for young students in communities involved, confirmed by rigorous data collection and analysis. This has been achieved in communities where there has been a long history of student failure through conventional schooling methods.

While this is only the beginning and there is still a substantial way to go, Noel Pearson and his board are to be highly commended for the strength of their vision and their exploration and planning of an evidenced-based model of Direct Instruction and community demand, which has been appropriately resourced and delivered with a high degree of monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance. Similarly the Executive Principal and other school curriculum leaders are to be highly commended on their leadership of a new schooling model and the change required to support mainstream teachers through a significant paradigm shift which asks serious questions of some of the basic values and beliefs they might have previously held about teaching and learning.

Please note the formal approval for a different curriculum and governance model by the State Government has meant that the Teaching and Learning Audit process has needed to be applied flexibly enough to accommodate a non-traditional approach in some key areas (e.g. approved curriculum content), yet rigorously enough to ensure an accurate measure of the basic tenants of the school improvement framework.



Audit findings

Domain 1 – An explicit improvement agenda

“The school leadership team has established and is driving a strong improvement agenda for the school, grounded in evidence from research and practice, and couched in terms of improvements in measurable student outcomes, especially in literacy, numeracy and science. Explicit and clear schoolwide targets for improvement have been set and communicated, with accompanying timelines.”

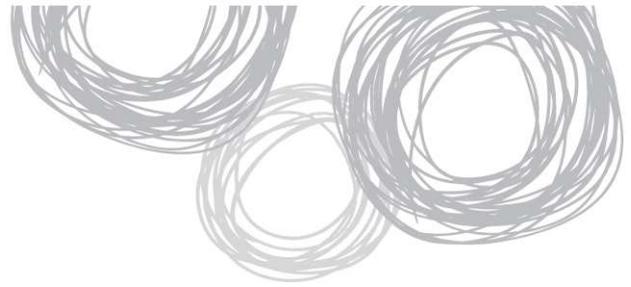
Rating: High

Commendations

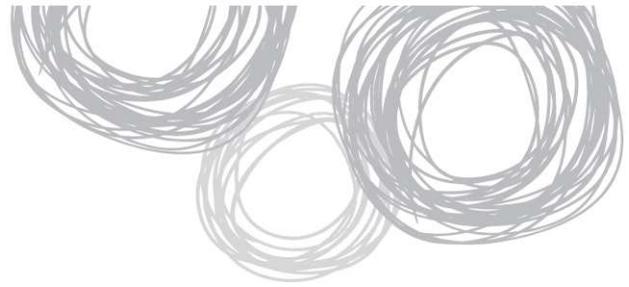
- The school improvement agenda has been very effective in focussing the three school campuses of the Academy (Aurukun, Coen and Hope Vale) attention on Direct Instruction (DI) as a central component of its Academy model, which is aimed at increasing learning engagement and attendance of Indigenous students and to enhance student learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy.
- A comprehensive research paper and business plan was developed by the CYAAA Board chaired by Noel Pearson based on earlier developmental work including programs at Coen State School.
- The efforts of the CYAAA Board, the new Executive Principal and the curriculum leadership teams at each school campus, have refocussed the energy of classroom teachers and paraprofessionals on direct instructional leadership which has already been successful in substantially increasing the numbers of students attending school on a regular basis and reaching National Minimum Standards. There are stories from parents and community members of students at different stages in their schooling actively reading and writing for the first time.
- A unique partnership has been formed between the school communities, the CYAAA Board and Education Queensland (EQ). The National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI) organisation from the USA has been engaged by the CYAAA Board to provide a researched-based education program for the first component ('Class') of its three- phased program of Class, Culture and Club; and to build teacher capability to engage and instruct Indigenous students using the DI model.

Affirmations:

- The Principal and school leadership team have developed an explicit improvement agenda and can describe the required improvements in terms of teacher and student behaviours.
- The Principal and members of the school leadership teams, supported by specialised data analysis coaches both in the US and Cairns, review CYAAA performance data on a weekly basis and are aware of trends in student achievement levels. Follow up teleconferences (also on a weekly basis) provide coaching advice to curriculum leaders on necessary adjustments teachers need to make in their classrooms.
- There are broad program targets in place to guide improvement based on students achieving minimum standards in literacy and numeracy.
- The CYAAA Board and the Academy leadership team are using research evidence to inform their work on Direct Instruction.
- The impact of the improvement agenda is communicated and discussed in all three school communities
- of a regular basis with the Executive Principal.

**Recommendations:**

- Continue to sharpen and narrow the whole school's attention on core teaching and learning priorities by continuing to build teacher capability through mentoring, coaching and feedback, gradually broadening the DI model to other aspects of the program over time.
- Ensure there is a clear strategy for the alignment and comparison of trends in data analysis from NIFDI and other systemic and school data sources, for example, NAPLAN, Pat M, Pat R and A-E reporting data.
- Consider setting targets and/or individual learning goals for students or specific cohorts of students, especially those who have 'plateaued out' with the DI lessons and may need more individualised intervention support.
- Develop processes and strategies to help staff members more independently monitor their own efforts and effectiveness to meet these targets and/or student learning goals, set through data analysis and feedback
- Celebrate success regularly.



Domain 2 – Analysis and discussion of data

“A high priority is given to the school-wide analysis and discussion of systematically collected data on student outcomes, including academic, attendance and behavioural outcomes. Data analyses consider overall school performance as well as the performances of students from identified priority groups; evidence of improvement/regression over time; performances in comparison with like schools; and, in the case of data from tests such as NAPLAN, measures of student growth across the years of school.”

Rating: Outstanding

Commendations:

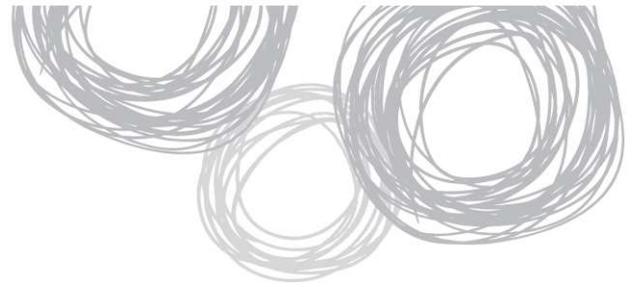
- The schools have established and are implementing a systematic plan for the collection and analysis of student achievement data on a weekly cycle, with support from the NIFDI organisation in both Cairns and the USA. The attention to, and analysis of, data to inform teaching could be considered best practice.
- Data is used to monitor progress and the mastery of student learning related to the DI curriculum and to assist with planning. This is led very effectively by curriculum leaders at all sites.
- The Academy’s Executive Principal plays a very hands-on role in the discussion and follow-up of data reports through direct involvement in weekly teleconferences with support personnel from Cairns and the USA. The progress taken on these reports is a key feature of the discussion with campus principals in follow-up visits by the Executive Principal.

Affirmations:

- There is evidence that the Principal and other school leaders view reliable, timely student data as essential to their effective leadership of the school.
- Members of the curriculum leadership team in each site have been assigned the responsibility for implementing the weekly data collection and to provide feedback to teachers on planning implications.
- Time is set aside for the discussion of data implications with teachers and its implications for the delivery of the DI program and other related school policies and classroom practices.

Recommendations:

- Continue to build the capacity of all teaching staff to decipher, analyse and apply data in teacher planning, through professional development and focussed feedback.
- Consider the development of more integrated class data profiles to provide teachers with a more holistic view of their students and so that their needs form the data analysis.
- Continue the coaching, collaborative planning and supervision of teachers to ensure data in these class profiles are developed into individual action plans for specific cohorts of students.
- Formalise the term-by-term timetable for the discussion of data and its implications for school policies and classroom practices. In particular consider the use of NAPLAN and other school and systemic data in conjunction with data profiles and feedback from the DI program.
- Review the balance of diagnostic verses summative data and its use within the school.



Domain 3 – A culture that promotes learning

“The school is driven by a deep belief that every student is capable of successful learning. A high priority is given to building and maintaining positive and caring relationships between staff, students and parents. There is a strong collegial culture of mutual trust and support among teachers and school leaders. The school works to maintain a learning environment that is safe, respectful, tolerant, inclusive and that promotes intellectual rigour.”

Rating: Medium

Commendations:

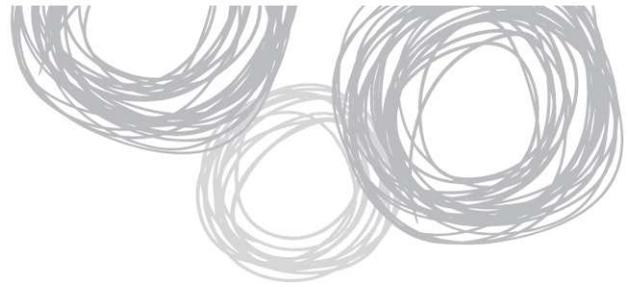
- The school places a high priority on student and staff wellbeing and has processes in place to provide both academic and non-academic support to address individual needs through the balance offered in the Class, Club and Culture programs.
- Teachers and other staff members generally have high expectations of students in terms of both their behaviour and giving their very best effort in the classroom.
- There is a very strong collegial culture amongst the staff at all campuses and there are highly effective partnerships developed with the school communities and other related the NIFDI personnel.
- Staff morale and parent satisfaction is generally high.

Affirmations:

- Classrooms are generally well organised and have a positive tone.
- The DI model and the use of Student Case Managers has led to significant improvements in student attendance, engagement and behaviour.
- There is a strong focus on creating a culture in which all students are expected to engage in learning and learn successfully.
- There is evidence that staff members and students generally treat each other with courtesy and respect in their interactions. There is some variability here from class to class across the Academy and discontinuity of learning is particularly noted around staff turnover and absenteeism of staff members in some campuses.

Recommendations:

- Continue to develop the learning culture of all students and set high expectations for attendance, engagement and behaviour. Consider the development and use of an Academy-wide behaviour plan to help continue to develop greater consistency in behaviour across all classrooms in all sites.
- Develop strategies and structures in the school which build on the strong collegial culture and allow for more systematic and planned sharing of classroom practices and an openness to critique by colleagues.
- Continue to use the promotion of your improvement agenda and unique partnerships to build strong community support for the school and high expectations for learning.
- Continue to develop the curriculum leadership team’s capacity at all sites and foster their involvement in supervising and coaching teachers to achieve the consistent delivery of high quality teaching and learning strategies in all classrooms



Domain 4 – Targeted use of school resources

“The school applies its resources (staff time, expertise, funds, facilities, materials) in a targeted manner to meet the learning needs of all students. It has school-wide policies, practices and programs in place to assist in identifying and addressing student needs. Flexible structures and processes enable the school to respond appropriately to the needs of individual learners”

Rating: Medium

Commendations:

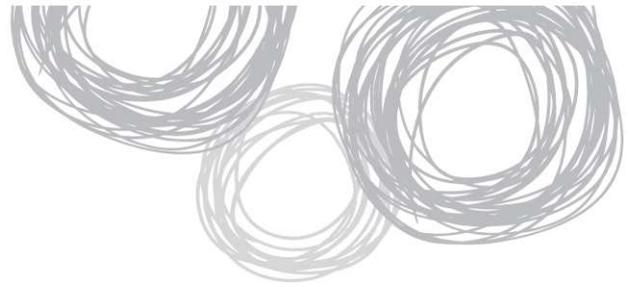
- A school-wide process has been established for identifying specific student learning needs under the DI model in all three campuses.
- This process includes systematic formative and summative assessment to establish learning gaps on a weekly basis
- Budgeting and resourcing are very tightly aligned to the implementation needs of the DI model.
- High quality coaching, mentoring and professional development is provided for all staff members.

Affirmations:

- The skills of data teams, instructional coaches and teacher aides are fully utilised to support learning in classrooms.
- Resources are used in creative and effective ways to address the culturally and academically diverse needs of students.
- Teacher aides have been well trained, however consistency of attendance of teacher aides is still an issue at some campuses.
- The employment of Student Case Mangers has been effective in improving student attendance.

Recommendations:

- Continue to develop the roles and responsibilities of the school curriculum leadership team and curriculum support personnel in leading, discussing, modelling, coaching and reflecting on instructional leadership priorities at a classroom level.
- Review the presentation of external and internal workspaces (especially at the Aurukun campus) and the use of technology to maximise student learning and to help build high student and community expectations.
- Further develop parallel leadership roles for teachers (outside of the highly effective ‘partner practice’) to share the curriculum leadership load and provide growth opportunities for aspiring leaders.
- Clarify protocols and strategies that can be used during ‘supervised independent work’ for students who need some further consolidation and coaching due to intervention or extension needs.
- Review cluster and regional allocations for Special Education and Support Teachers.
- Consider more across-class and across-grade groupings to differentiate learning.



Domain 5 – An expert teaching team

“The school has found ways to build a professional team of highly able teachers including teachers who take an active leadership role beyond the classroom. Strong procedures are in place to encourage a school-wide, shared responsibility for student learning and success, and to encourage the development of a culture of continuous professional improvement that includes classroom-based learning, mentoring and coaching arrangements.”

Rating: High

Commendations:

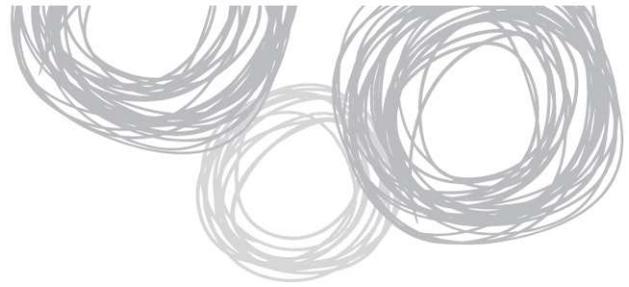
- There is evidence that the Executive Principal and the campus principals see the development of staff members into an expert and coherent school-wide teaching team as central to improving outcomes for all students.
- There is high quality professional learning on offer to all teachers in a variety of forms including the Induction Conference at the beginning of each year, ongoing professional development sessions on the DI model, ongoing coaching from US experts, Cairns-based support staff and school-based coaches, supervised partner practise sessions and feedback from curriculum leaders sponsored by the CYAAA Board.
- Mentoring and induction for beginning teachers or teachers on transfer has been of a very high quality.
- The school provides opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles outside the classroom through the Club and Culture program.

Affirmations:

- The school undertakes a variety of professional learning activities which focus on the development of knowledge and skills required to improve student learning through the DI model.
- Arrangements for coaching are in place to varying degrees through the school-based staff.
- The Executive Principal and curriculum leadership teams are seen as supportive of the day-to-day practice and learning of teachers.
- The school is implementing the Department’s Developing Performance Framework (DPF).
- The school has a staff handbook and induction program in place.

Recommendations:

- Formally map the strengths in the school-wide team in order to use the particular expertise of each staff member to mentor and coach others as an Academy staff profile which parallels the department’s Individual Development Plans.
- Consider the development of a professional development plan for the Academy which not only clarifies the outstanding work provided by NIFDI but also highlights other individual and whole-of-school development needs.
- Continue to build openness of teachers to constructive feedback and coaching.
- Continue to develop a coaching model throughout all sites which extends to their pedagogy and practice in specific areas.
- Encourage teachers to visit each other’s classrooms and give each other feedback on their teaching where possible.



Domain 6 – Systematic curriculum delivery

“The school has a coherent, sequenced plan for curriculum delivery that ensures consistent teaching and learning expectations and a clear reference for monitoring learning across the year levels. The plan, within which evidence-based teaching practices are embedded, and to which assessment and reporting procedures are aligned, has been developed and refined collaboratively to provide a shared vision for curriculum practice. This plan is shared with parents and caregivers.”

Rating: Outstanding

Commendations:

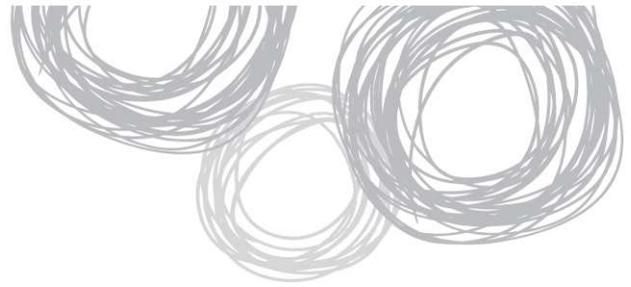
- The school has a clear documented whole school plan for curriculum delivery through its three phased program of Class, Culture and Club.
- The curriculum delivery plan is being consistently implemented throughout all three school campuses despite each site being at a slightly different stage in introduction of the highly effective DI model.
- While some aspects of the program are still under development, for example the Culture Program, there are clear accountabilities for curriculum delivery and reporting.
- The support provided to teachers through the NIFDI, the CYAAA and school-based staff for DI implementation is outstanding. This includes detailed program resources, weekly data analysis, coaching and feedback on every student.
- Vertical and horizontal alignment of the curriculum programs in the Class component supported by the DI model is guaranteed by the nature of the curriculum itself and the continuous review and reflection of its implementation through both the Academy and NIFDI.

Affirmations:

- The Academy’s curriculum plan clearly identifies the curriculum, teaching and learning priorities and requirements for delivery under its DI model.
- The school leadership team ensures that the planned curriculum is consistently delivered and that students are suitably placed in groups for literacy and numeracy learning which best suits their needs. Membership of these groups is constantly reviewed to maximise learning through data profiles and instructions from data coaches.

Recommendations:

- Consider mapping the inclusion of high order thinking skills within the DI model and across other aspects of Culture program.
- Ensure the regular assessment of student progress in relation to curriculum expectations and to enable the monitoring of progress towards individual mastery is also meeting whole school/Academy improvement targets.
- Continue to develop coaching and supervision models which ensure consistency of delivery of programs, especially where there have been mid-year staff changes.
- Continue to develop aspects of the Culture program to ensure the quality of all units and consistency of delivery.



Domain 7 – Differentiated classroom learning

“In their day-to-day teaching, classroom teachers place a high priority on identifying and addressing the learning needs of individual students. Teachers closely monitor the progress of individuals, identify learning difficulties and tailor classroom activities to levels of readiness and need.”

Rating: Medium

Commendations:

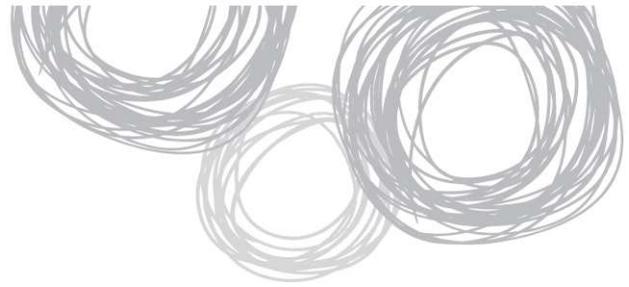
- Data is collected on a weekly basis to monitor the strengths and weaknesses of individual students and regular feedback is provided by NIFDI to direct teachers in relation to the next starting points for student learning.
- Numerous external support staff from NIFDI based in the US and Cairns provide advice to Academy-based curriculum leaders and teachers on what adjustments to the prescribed lesson delivery are needed. In some cases lessons need to be re-taught to consolidate understanding and obtain mastery for individual students and/or whole class groups.
- The other areas of the program, Culture and Club, provide an opportunity for some variety in small group activities but tend to be rotational in nature.

Affirmations:

- Teachers are encouraged to respond to differences in cultural knowledge and experiences and this is evident in the work done with students throughout the school.

Recommendations:

- Continue to build the skills of teachers regarding the design and implementation of differentiated teaching and learning strategies, within the parameters of the DI model.
- Fully exploit the opportunities during the independent work periods of the timetable to differentiate learning for individual students by offering multiple means of representation, engagement and expression within the parameters of the DI program.
- Develop greater opportunities for differentiation within the development of the Culture and Club programs.



Domain 8 – Effective teaching practices

“The school principal and other school leaders recognise that highly effective teaching practices are the key to improving student learning throughout the school. They take a strong leadership role, encouraging the use of research based teaching practices in all classrooms to ensure that every student is engaged, challenged and learning successfully. All teachers understand and use effective teaching methods - including explicit instruction - to maximise student learning.”

Rating: High

Commendations:

- The Executive Principal and other campus leaders have accepted personal responsibility for driving improvements in teaching throughout the Academy.
- Leaders are committed to identifying and implementing better teaching methods for their local school communities through the implementation of CYAAA’s Class, Culture and Club model, with the DI model as a central component.
- School leaders and external coaches from NIFDI spend time working with teachers to improve their teaching practices, including modelling and providing feedback on classroom teaching.
- Teachers should be highly commended for their considerable efforts in committing to, and implementing, a very different curriculum which they may not have been trained to deliver.

Affirmations:

- There has been a particular focus on improved teaching methods in numeracy and literacy through the implementation of the DI model and internal monitoring is showing significant progress.
- The detailed nature of the NIFDI curriculum plans allow for absolute clarity about what students are expected to learn and allow teachers to explicitly teach skills and content accordingly.
- School leaders are explicit about their expectations and desire to see effective teaching occurring throughout the school.

Recommendations:

- Continue to develop staff capability to deliver all aspects of the DI model consistently in all classrooms at all campuses.
- Create more specific school-wide targets to ensure high expectations of every student’s learning.
- Encourage teachers to use timely feedback to guide student learning within the parameters of the DI model.
- Continue to investigate, identify and improve teaching methods associated with the Culture and Club components of the program