



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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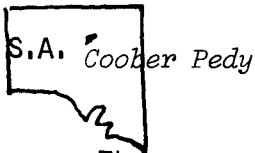
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materials to give confidence in helping with "home-study".

31. Worked with the teacher in carrying out recommendations for home help.
32. Actively involved themselves in community activities, for example, School Committees, Mothers' Clubs, Working Bees, Service Organizations, etc.
33. Attempted to encourage a wholesome educational program (selection of books, comics, TV programs, etc.).
34. Attached value to money, for example, in pocket money.

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ABORIGINAL TEACHER AIDES: BENEFITS AND UTILIZATION*



C. Cameron,
Headmaster,
Coober Pedy Area School, S.A.

There are many benefits gained by employing Aboriginal Teacher Aides. These include:

1. (a) The employment of such people as Yvonne Walker at this school, to undertake work of an experimental nature, in teaching untried courses in language to Aboriginal children.
- (b) The self-respect gained by Aboriginal people in working with teachers in responsible organizations.
- (c) The decreased reliance on Social Services and consequent upsurge in desire to obtain responsible

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**This extremely interesting commentary on the use of Aboriginal Teacher Aides has been reproduced, with permission, from the South Australian Education Department's publication, T.A.B.S. (Teachers in Aboriginal Schools), May, 1973. Use of Aboriginal adults in the education of children will obviously vary from situation to situation. We have now had enthusiastic reports from Cherbourg, Queensland and Coober Pedy, South Australia. Are other schools finding other ways of involving Aboriginal adults? If so, we would like to hear details from you.*

positions. (One Aboriginal person recently asked me if the Police Department have aides).

- (d) The efforts made by employed aides to attempt to standardize their social interaction through accepting norms in dress and general conduct.
2. Of paramount importance with respect to benefits is the fact that Aboriginal children gain immensely:
- (a) They have someone to refer to and to identify with readily.
 - (b) Work standards have increased *tenfold*, and I do not exaggerate, since we have been able to use small group methods under the supervision of aides. In general, work is set by teachers and supervised by aides.
 - (c) The language barrier immediately breaks down. A teacher recently stated that a grade IV Aboriginal child did not know his colours. To prove a point I had an aide ask in Pitjantjatjara and correct responses were immediately given. We work on the theory, which is fairly generally accepted, that skill in the child's first language plus a large vocabulary in that language expedites the learning of a second language.
3. Truancy by Aboriginal children at this school is now almost non-existent. Of approximately 50 to 60 Aboriginal children attending, the following figures showing cases of truancy are most revealing:

<u>Week ended</u>	<u>Number of Truancies</u>	<u>Sicknesses</u>
9.2.73	11	3
16.2.73	14	4
23.2.73	7	6
2.3.73	3	8
9.3.73	1	2
16.3.73	Nil	1
23.3.73	Nil	2

I have included sicknesses in this table as originally there was a corresponding increase in this area with the decrease in truancy. It appears now that parents too are beginning to cooperate but, more importantly, that school is not a bad place to come to after all, and our teachers have not made any dramatic changes in their attitude or

expectancy. Several factors have brought about this change, the most important of which are:

- (a) That school is a better place now that we have aides to talk to, identify with, and help the Aboriginal children.
 - (b) A truancy officer has been selected from the aides. He reports all absences and relays reasons from parents where applicable, then investigates, with a senior staff member, all absences for the day, both Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, by letter or direct interview with parents. This aide has not become unpopular through his work, as has been the case in the past when this scheme has been introduced, because he is not required to confront parents directly but acts as a liaison officer or interpreter as the case may be.
 - (c) We are proud, and I feel justifiably proud, of the work our aides are doing to encourage regular attendance.
4. One condition of employment at this school is that all aides must undertake a study program for self-improvement. As a result five aides are doing a fourth year (internal) English course, one a fourth year (internal) art course and others are doing courses at lower levels. The accent this year has been on language development. All seem to be enjoying their courses and three aides have undertaken voluntary courses in typing to enhance further their personal qualifications.
5. A beneficial aspect, too, is the fact that some aides are looking ahead, beginning to ask how they can become teachers in their own right. Whilst I agree that some aides in the Far North West should have full teacher status *in that area*, I do not think the same applies here at present. Provision of special courses for these people to achieve this status must be considered as soon as possible.
6. I often counsel children as far down in the school as possible. Several Aboriginal children lately have changed their aims for later life to "I want to be a teacher aide", instead of the usual, "go noodling" (searching for opal chips on old dumps).

7. Initiative is being developed. Several children recently approached me - through a teacher aide - to set up a guitar class for them. They requested that their teacher be the teacher aide they had contacted me through. We have 39 children currently learning guitar, all of them non-Aboriginal. The onus is now on me to supply the necessary instruments, as I am certain that this class will be highly successful.
8. It was thought initially that Aboriginal aides could not be used in the secondary section. This argument has been readily refuted through the work of Miss Raelene Hudson at this school. Her efforts with special groups, duplication, special testing, correlation of results etc., is a credit to her.



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THE GRAYLANDS TEACHERS' COLLEGE STUDY

Perth, W.A.

At an In-Service Course for Teachers of Aboriginal children held in Perth in February 1973, Mr. D. Ibbotson reported on the study being conducted by his College. In this study, teachers in the State were asked to provide information relating to their pupils, on

- (a) *general difficulties and problems of language, behaviour, attendance, organisation, parental support (or lack of it).*
- (b) *problems, interest and successful ways and means in curriculum areas of Spoken English, Written English, Mathematics.*

Teachers were also asked to comment on curriculum areas of greatest and least success.

Analyses of the data are still proceeding. When the analyses are completed, Dr. Makin will make these available in an article in the Journal. However, at the February Course Mr. Ibbotson was able to give details of the responses to the pilot questionnaire of teachers from two regions - Kimberley and North West.

With Graylands Teachers' College permission, I have selected some of the information for presentation in this issue.