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Language Experiences in Communication. (Van Allen, 1976, Houghton Mifflin) discusses language experience methods including class-made books.

Teacher. (Ashton-Warner, 1963, Simon & Schuster) is a readable account of teaching non-European children which includes the extensive use of very-own (key) words.

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TECHNICAL STUDIES AT YALATA ABORIGINAL SCHOOL



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In technical studies at Yalata we are trying to cater for two worlds, that of the traditional Aboriginal and that of the present-day Aboriginal.

Incorporated into the technical studies course is a section taught by the Aboriginal teaching assistants, in which the students learn to perfect their own artifact making skills and learn new skills. These new skills are taught by men from the Community. The most frequently made artifacts are wombats, kangaroos, snakes, emus, lizards and the more traditional woomeras, spears and boomerangs. Lessons are held in the shade of a tree, using local myall wood. Artifacts find a ready sale through the Kalinguratja Co-operative and the boys make pocket money as well as raising money for excursions and other class projects.

Another side of the technical studies class includes training for employment. This includes such skills as submitting tenders for local work, keeping timesheets and calculating payments, welding, flame cutting, thread-cutting, mechanics, carpentry, joinery and painting. Numerous minor repairs are carried out for both the school and the community. Some of these include broken window and door replacement, making reinforced septic tank lids, shed construction, demolition of old buildings, fencing and construction of an Adventure Playground.

A work-experience program was run in the third term of 1977, in which the boys worked alongside community workers in the mechanical workshop, the building gang, the roadhouse construction workers and the electrician.

Photographs were taken of the boys at their various jobs, which were used later in the classroom as discussion topics and to construct readers.

Many of the technical studies activities and other activities are photographed by the students and used in the experiential readers. The photographic work is done by the boys as a part of technical studies, thus incorporating language and arts subjects in an endeavour to achieve functional literacy.

Many useful skills, which are planned after consultation with the Building Supervisor and Works Supervisor, are incorporated in the lessons as well. These include working with PVC pipe, wood, lathe operation, building skills such as garage construction, use of chainsaws, pneumatic drills and other machines associated with the everyday jobs done by the workforce.

The boys have their own school utility. They keep the car running both mechanically and financially. A section of the automotive course revolves around problem-solving with the car. Road safety and road laws are taught in conjunction with the automotive course, with the result of capable licensed drivers.

Numerous excursions are taken to give the boys as much knowledge of the real world as possible. In 1977 some of the trips were to places such as Whyalla, to see iron and steel making, ship building and the associated industries. They visited Port Lincoln to see what happens in the fishing industry, and Adelaide to see how cars are constructed. They also saw the dairy industry, from the cows to the matured cheese stage, and the cool drink industry. Apart from the obvious benefits, there were hidden ones, such as visiting the zoo and a national park, using public transport, living as a group in a house, shopping, cooking, dishes, and personal hygiene.

The craft workshop is integrated with all subject areas. We are finding maths and language objectives much easier to obtain using technical studies as the motivating force. Technical studies at Yalata is not just the teaching of technical or manual skills, but more. It is education for life - for this group of Pitjantjatjara boys, a life style that is rapidly changing.