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EVALUATION REPORT

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Now that the 1990 school year is under way, school communities may be preparing applications for special grants for special school projects. Generally at the closure of such projects an evaluation report is made to assess the overall success of the project. The following is one such evaluation report prepared by Cheryl DeLarwelle on a project run at John Willcock Senior High School at Geraldton, Western Australia, during semester 2, 1989, to increase community involvement in the local school. The format of the report would serve as a good model for evaluation reports of school-based projects.

SCHOOL-BASED EQUITY PROJECT - John Willcock Senior High School
PROJECT TITLE - *Aboriginal Parent Participation*
PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR - Cheryl DeLarwelle
PROJECT OFFICER - Ben Shiosaki.

OBJECTIVE OF THE PROJECT

To increase the numbers of Aboriginal parents and community members involved in the school, thus utilizing their influence on students.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

1. Employment of a local Aboriginal person as project officer (0.5 F.T.E.)

2. The project officer worked under the direction of the Aboriginal education support teacher and the Aboriginal Education parent committee through the Aboriginal education worker.

3. The project officer has completed the following tasks:-

   (a) worked with the AEPC to facilitate their plans for activities to celebrate National Aborigines Day.

   (b) Visited students' homes to disseminate information about, and invite participation in, the AEPC and the special programs of the school for Aboriginal students.

(c) Organised parent volunteers to work in classrooms as helpers.

(d) Contacted Aboriginal people in the workforce to find those willing to be involved in the school as guest speakers, thereby providing role models for student vocational aspirations.

(e) Contacted parents of incoming Year 8 Aboriginal students to disseminate information about, and invite participation in, the AEPC and the special programs of the school for Aboriginal students.

(f) Contacted TAFE Access with a view to creating an interface between Secondary and Tertiary Aboriginal students.

(g) Written an Interim and Final Report on his activities.

SUCCESSFUL ASPECTS OF THE PROJECT

1. The employment of an Aboriginal person as project officer provided another role model for Aboriginal students and support for the AEW.

2. Increased parent participation in National Aborigines Day was evident in

a) the increased numbers attending AEPC meetings prior to that day.

b) the increased numbers helping with activities during the day.

3. An increased number of parents now attend AEPC meetings and representation from a wider group is now evident. This is a significant gain.

4. A report was prepared as a result of home visits. This report suggests possible strategies that the AEPC might adopt to make its meetings more accessible to more parents. This has been discussed by the parent committee and some strategies will be trialled in 1990.

5. Where parents attended classes and helped students, disruptive behaviour was minimised. This was evident even in the case of habitual offenders. Referrals to Time-out during

the time fell markedly. Statistics provided by the MSB officer show:-

Term 1 - 7.4 referrals daily
Term 2 - 4.6 referrals daily
Term 3 (till week 6) - 2.6 referrals daily.

DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED WITH THE PROJECT -

1. The need for repeated visits to establish and maintain contact with parents was time-consuming.

2. The apparent reluctance of people to make or meet a commitment, especially an on-going commitment.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The objective of this project has begun to be achieved. Aboriginal parent participation in the school did increase marginally during Semester 2. Also, as a result of the project the AEPC has a blueprint for further increasing its membership in 1990 and teachers have a resource list of local people to call upon when arranging guest speakers.

OTHER COMMENTS

At John Willcock Senior High School we have in place many features designed to promote dialogue with our Aboriginal community. These features include:-

a) An Aboriginal Education Parent Committee.

b) An Aboriginal Education worker is on staff.

c) A "home room" is made available by the school. This room provides a positive and obvious Aboriginal presence on campus. It is open an hour before school, staffed by a member of the AEPC and a teacher.

d) Lunch time activities for Aboriginal students are conducted in the home-room.

e) Homework sessions twice weekly, organised by the AEWs.

f) The school employs an Aboriginal Education support teacher - (to be increased to two in 1990).

g) The school goals particularly target the increased participation of Aboriginal parents.

h) The school supports the celebration of National Aborigines day.

i) Students having difficulty coping with mainstream education are able to be placed into an alternate stream which can more easily utilise Aboriginal learning styles.

j) The school supported the Equity Project officer in his work.

k) The school will introduce Aboriginal Studies during 1990.

Despite these initiatives, however, there remains within the Aboriginal community a resistance to the school. Many of the characteristics of resistance identified by Folds (1987) are evident here. Many Aboriginal parents have negative experiences of schooling during the era of assimilation when schools were used as a means of imposing the majority culture.

Recognising this, and other factors (their lack of formal education; their interest in their children's education; their effect as motivators of their children) it is planned to continue to take the school to the parents, expanding the work of this project. The community development model begun by the Equity Project officer is a two-way process that must continue and expand if we are to improve the outcomes of education for Aboriginal youth. We plan to trial the action research project undertaken by Cotterell (1985) in Brisbane, which skills parents to act as motivators for their children's education while informing about that education.

In summary, the outcomes of this project suggest that we are moving in the right direction and that continued efforts are required now that the Aboriginal community is alerted to the fact that the school is prepared for a two-way dialogue.

REFERENCES

Cotterell, J.L. (1985): Parent participation in education: Ways of fostering school-home co-operation. *The Aboriginal Child at School*, 1:3, 37-42.

Folds, R. (1987): *Whitefella School: Education and Aboriginal Resistance*. Allen and Unwin.