

Mount Magnet District High School [MMDHS] is situated in the Mid-West Region of the Education Regional Structure in WA and is 569 kilometres north east of Perth and 340 kilometres east of Geraldton. The student population of MMDHS comprising Indigenous and Non-Indigenous children is 134, 86 students in the primary sector and 48 in the secondary sector. 72% of the cohort has an Indigenous background compared with a state average of approximately 8%. The school is open to children from Kindergarten to Year 12 with the predominance of enrolment being in the primary sector. The school's enrolment numbers rise and fall in a cyclical pattern as families move in and out of Mount Magnet.

The Mount Magnet Aboriginal people are proudly known as the Badimaya people. There are many Aboriginal sites in and around the town which are of great significance to the Badimaya people and the residents of Mt Magnet. The school places a high priority in addressing the needs of its Aboriginal children with respect for their culture and traditions. The school understands that fostering positive links between the school and community is paramount. Commencing 2017 we have employed an Aboriginal teacher to help us implement the Aboriginal Cultural Standard Framework with staff/families and community members. The school recognises that building relationships and understandings will assist all students to achieve their potential academically and socially.

Mount Magnet DHS became part of the Flexibly Literacy for Remote School at the beginning of 2015 implementing Explicit Direct Instruction (EDI). I personally would not have Direct in the title as it confuses it with Direct Instruction which EDI certainly is not. Direct Instruction is read word for word out of a book; EDI is not but does have a format to follow. **Another element of the project that I believed confuses people is the Curriculum Program written for school to follow. This is not what EDI is. It was put in place so that all schools implementing EDI were teaching the same curriculum for research and data requirements. EDI is the strategies that teachers use to teach the content.**

As stated in the Indigenous Affairs/Educational Opportunities/Interim Report. Direct Instruction and Explicit Direct Instruction.

3.21“Direct Instruction and its affiliate, Explicit Direct Instruction, are ‘forms of explicit instruction pedagogy with a comprehensive curriculum, student assessment and scripted lessons’. **Within these models ‘students are taught carefully sequenced and highly structured lessons and are required to “master” each lesson before advancing on to the next’ .11”**

Is that not what every teacher should be doing? Again I say EDI is the strategies used by the teacher that makes this a key to students learning. EDI is not scripted as Direct Instruction is.

I am also very concerned that your Interim Report is very focused on Direct Instruction and not identifying the benefits seen by educators using EDI. Our data is showing there is an improvement in Literacy and teachers are reporting that behaviour and engagement in lessons is improving.

Committee comment

3.23“In March 2016 the Committee travelled to the Cape York area and observed lessons being delivered via Direct Instruction/Explicit Direct Instruction in schools in Coen and Aurukun. **The Committee also received evidence about Direct Instruction in both submissions and hearings. In some instances, serious concerns were expressed by both parents and teachers that Direct Instruction was not effective as a teaching method in their schools.**”

I would also like to note that you travelled to schools where there are existing complex issues in the communities which would affect the delivery of any educational program offered to students. Again your focus is on Direct Instruction.

3.24 In light of these observations and evidence, the Committee expresses its grave concern regarding the effectiveness of this teaching approach for students of all ages and the extent to which it can equip students for future opportunities. While acknowledging that the pedagogy may be of value in the earliest years in literacy and numeracy fundamentals, it appeared to be limiting for older students studying other subjects. Although it has not undertaken a comprehensive inquiry into this teaching practice, the Committee feels compelled to state its concerns in this Interim Report.

EDI are strategies that teachers can use in all learning areas. Again you are combining the two programs which as I have said before are completely different. Teachers using EDI strategies in their classes are able to make their own lesson plans, it is not scripted but there is a format to follow. By using the EDI strategies and format teachers are able to plan and implement relevant, meaningful learning activities across all learning areas to our students.

EDI is based on the following;

The EDI pedagogy is based on the principles of TAPPLE

Teach first

Ask a question

Pair share

Pick a non-volunteer checking for understanding

Listen to responses

Effective feedback

Pair sharing where students turn to a partner and check their understanding is important for our students whose command of academic language and Australian English is at times low. The checking for understanding which teaches do every 3 to 4 minutes, with the random calling of students names means all students are engaged and practicing Australian English.

EDI encourages students to be actively engaged in the lessons and has “engagement norms” to help students process information so that they master the skill

Engagement Norms

Pronounce with me

Track with me

Read with me

Repeat with me

Gesture with me.

Pair share A-B, B-A

Attention signal

Whiteboards whole class checking for understanding

Complete sentences. Public voice, Academic vocabulary

All staff were consulted before we agreed to join the project with Good to Great School Australia and all teachers attended the initial training in 2015 over 2 days in Perth. Three Administrators, six primary teachers and two Education Assistants attended 2 day training in 2016. We all came back feeling confident in using EDI strategies in lessons.

A large number of our aboriginal students for various reasons have missed out on large areas of curriculum content. For this reason we streamed our students for English. Our teachers initially found the teaching strategies a challenge but with the support from our in school coach and the GGSA coach, we started to see the benefits not only for our student’s progress but the explicit delivery of the curriculum by the teachers. By implementing the EDI strategies in the classroom our teachers are becoming extremely effective teachers. A number of teachers are now using the EDI strategies in other learning areas.

One of the observations I have made during my daily visits to the classrooms is the engagement of the students in their own learning, their ability to understand and give feedback using more academic language. A flow on effect from student engagement and learning is that negative behaviour is at a minimal and we have seen a significant decline in primary students being referred to the office. Part of the project has been support given to implement the School Wide Positive Behaviour Program into the school. This has supported teachers with behaviour in the classroom and is the base of our Behaviour Policy

I have involved in Aboriginal Education for 20 years, constantly seeking a teaching style that would engage aboriginal students, provide a high level of spoken Australian English and would engage students in their learning. This has been a major focus for me. With the evidence we have seen at MMDHS since the implementation of EDI, myself and the staff believe we have found a well-researched program that offers our students the best learning environment and develops highly effective teachers. I have taught Direct Instruction in a classroom setting and with small groups and fully understand the differences between the programs

Part of the Department of Education, “Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework” under the Teaching standard is that “teachers plan for and implement EFFECTIVE teaching practices for Aboriginal students.”

As part of the WA “Focus 2017” it is stated that “schools will find ways to accelerate learning success for every student and bring forward EXCEPTIONAL teaching in every single classroom.”

I believe that by up skilling our teachers to use EDI strategies in all their classes we meet these requirements not just for Aboriginal students but for all our students.

Funding for professional development for staff is always a concern, being in a remote area. It is difficult and expensive to bring in quality presenters or to send our staff out of the school for professional development. With the support of GGSA coaches and our in school coach who is in the school weekly, teachers have been given every opportunity to develop into exceptional teachers which we are very proud of. If for some reason the funding was stopped for EDI I believe we would continue to source persons able to assist us with training but this would be at the expense of other learning area funding.

Another positive for EDI is that we have employed consistent teaching strategies used across our primary classes so when students move from one year to the next they are familiar with the routines. This has been particularly positive for our Aboriginal students who travel a lot in and out of town; they are able to return into the classroom knowing the routines.

We were fortunate to have our Regional Director, Greg Thorne and the Deputy Director General for Education, David Axworthy (a member of the Advisory Committee for the Flexible Literacy for Remote School) visit the school and observe the English lessons. Their comments were, “very impressed with the energy, learning and level of language used by the students in each class.” Our District Office fully supports our involvement in the project.

I ask the Committee when reviewing the Flexible Literacy for Remotes Schools that they look at DI and EDI as individual projects. If this is not possible could I please suggest that monies are allocated to individual schools who are demonstrating successful outcomes through the use of EDI strategies in the classrooms?

I thank you for reading my submission and please contact me if you would like some now information.

Liz Tuckey
Principal
Mount Magnet DHS
Mount Magnet

Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs

Explicit Direct Instruction

By Deborah Dowden, Explicit Direct instruction Coach, Mt Magnet DHS, Western Australia.

Dear Committee Members

I have worked at Mt Magnet DHS and surrounding schools for the past twenty years. Prior to becoming a coach for the Explicit Direct Instruction program I was a Graduate Advocate, and as such, made extensive in class observations in schools with a large indigenous population for the past six years.

I have been directly involved with Explicit Direct instruction for the past two years and would like the committee to note my following observations;

- Explicit Direct Instruction is not the same as Direct Instruction
- Explicit Direct Instruction is good teaching practice. It provides a framework for developing teachers who are often deployed to remote schools with high indigenous populations. EDI teachers quickly learn to deliver powerful and meaningful lessons in a way that maximises the learning opportunity for indigenous students.
- In my observations over a period of time I have seen a significant increase in student engagement and behaviour as a result of the Explicit Direct instruction style of teaching.
- I strongly believe that Explicit Direct Instruction should be the teaching method in schools with a high indigenous population. I believe that it is very sound pedagogical practice and I have not seen a more effective method of teaching implemented across the board in any school.
- I strongly believe that Explicit Direct Instruction should be rolled out into every school where the students are struggling with low literacy levels.
- I believe it would be a great injustice for indigenous children if the program was not continued. The limited data we have obtained so far indicates a strong improvement in literacy rates amongst our younger students. We need more time to prove the validity of the program but I believe its positive impact could be felt for generations if it continues.

Kind Regards

Debbie Dowden