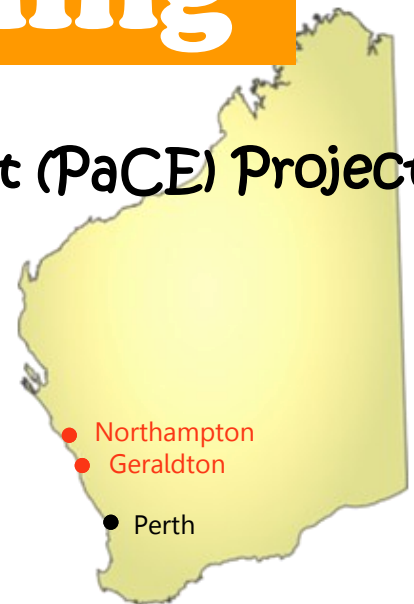


# Solid Learning

## A Parental and Community Engagement (PaCE) Project

### Northampton Western Australia



### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The initial 17 month project experienced such success it's been extended a further 12 months. The ideas for this project were generated from community consultations throughout 2010 which highlighted areas of need.

Northampton Old School Community Initiative (NOSCI) in partnership with key local agencies are delivering activities in areas where Indigenous parents and carers felt they needed more knowledge to support their children's education and acquire the skills to actively engage with the School environment.

The project promotes and reinforces the important role parents have in improving student outcomes. Parents and carers attend regular information sessions, activities and workshops, building on their skills, confidence and empowering them to make effective decisions.

The Coordinator, along with an Aboriginal Project Assistant organise and guide the parents in four key project elements of engagement. Activities focus on:

- Parent Support for High School Transition
- Parents as Teachers – capacity building workshops based around skills development
- Weekly activities on the topic of 'Solid Kids' – 0-4 Years Early Childhood Intervention, including the development of a sustainable playgroup and preparation for school
- Technology Access Support

The project has been operating for 20 months | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |  
**August 2011** **March 2013** **December 2013**

### OBJECTIVES

- Increase the parents understanding and awareness of core values and skills required to guide their children through their education
- Promote good parenting skills and encourage new behaviour
- Build confidence in mainstream schooling
- Improve IT literacy skills of parents



## COMMUNITY INPUT

- A pivotal partnership with Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre (GRCEC), through the delivery of 40 targeted Capacity Building Workshops focusing on topics of Resilience, Conflict Resolution, Early Brain Development, Parenting Teens, Parents in Tune with Education and Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)
- Northampton Old School Community Initiative (NOSCI)
- Northampton District High School
- Various relevant external agencies offering their services to build community capacity through the delivery of 50 information sessions

## PROJECT ASSESSMENT

This project has exceeded the original participation target of 15, achieving a regular attendance of 20 parents and carers.

The participants have formed a strong alliance and encourage each other. Their confidence levels have risen greatly which has demonstrated a willingness and openness to build on their capabilities. The group is strong and united in their achievements.

The original goal of running their own playgroup has now been achieved. ***'It's pleasing to see our parents/carers arrange their own educational activities'***, said the coordinator and project assistant.



***Rhyme time at Geraldton Library  
O-4 Years 'Solid Kids'  
Early Childhood activities***

## QUOTES FROM THE PARENTS AND CARERS:

***'As a grandparent I've learnt so much from this project, especially from the GRCEC workshops, the early brain development was so good'.***

***'I like working with other parents as we talk about situations with our kids education, share ideas and relate to each other. We look out for each other and our kids'.***

***'As a grandparent with full carer responsibilities, learning about education again has been most helpful'.***

***'The GRCEC workshops have been so good. I've learnt ways of dealing with things and situations. Its been really good'.***

***'I now read to and draw with my child. I've brought pencils, pens, crayons and love teaching her the skills I've learnt at our 0-4 year 'solid kids' sessions'.***

***'Rhyme time is my favourite. I think I enjoy it more than the kids. I've discovered I couldn't stop smiling. I now sing to my child, I've brought books and I think this project is great as we are both learning things'.***

## FEEDBACK FROM PROJECT STAFF AT NOSCI:

The most effective activity in the project has been the establishment of their own playgroup following the weekly mat-time sessions. The GRCEC capacity building workshops on topics of core areas of concern for parents are also a 'hit' with participants.

*The skills the parents and carers have learnt through the GRCEC workshops have had many benefits within the group, individually and shown their capabilities when extending themselves. **It's great to see the group now organising their own activities and driving themselves through encouragement and a desire to achieve,** said the Project Coordinator.*



*NOSCI site entrance*



*Weekly Mat time activities  
0-4 Years Early Learning*

One parent commented on what she had learnt from her involvement in the project: *Communication Skills. Rather than being at home I now feel I'm a better mum. Everything I've learnt I've taken home and taught my daughter. **Being involved in this project has really built my confidence!***

The Project Coordinator confirmed *DEEWR has and is always very supportive, encouraging and **our relationship with our DEEWR contract manager has been outstanding which has assisted us to achieve better outcomes.***

The Project Coordinator is extremely pleased with their emerging **Leadership Group**. This group participates in all PaCE activities, however **they have taken on additional roles and provide guidance and direction.** Further development activities are planned for this group with the aim of long term sustainability within the community.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Whilst the project had many successes in the early phase, a contract variation to extend the length of the project also seen the inclusion of additional men's activities. These activities have been a little more difficult to implement than initially anticipated, with the project coordinator indicating their desires to increase outcomes in this area. Whilst the project has been able to include men's engagement activities, those activities outlined in the contract have yet to be fully achieved. However the Provider has the remainder of the year to embed the agreed strategies.

The project assistant indicated a strong desire for the school's AEIO to be actively involved in the workshops. Thus enabling the connections between the capacity building activities and the parents, to their child's education and the benefits when attending school.

This was discussed with the School Principal and it seems there are some timetabling concerns which require the AEIO to be in class at the time NOSCI run their workshops.

Despite this both the School and NOSCI are committed to working together to achieve better outcomes.



*Men's engagement activities  
in Early Learning*

## CONCLUSIONS

Although this project has experienced some delays with their continuation into 2013, the momentum is rebuilding and its evident this parent group now have a real foundation to capitalise on. ***'This (project) has certainly been a positive change within our community' said one participant.***

This project has undoubtedly **built the confidence of the parent group and community. The achievements to date have been exceptional with:**

- The establishment of a leadership group
- Establishment of and running their 'Little Feet' playgroup
- Two parents joined the School Council
- Parent participation in the development of a School Community Partnership Agreement (SCPA) and implementation of the SCPA
- Parents feeling comfortable in leaving their children in a non Indigenous crèche whilst undertaking their workshop activities
- Parents confident to offer and organise activities for School events, like NAIDOC week
- Parents willingness to participate in an external PaCE project (Dolls and Yarning) with great success. This has led to three women having the confidence to enter and display their art work in an Exhibition in Perth, with all pieces sold.
- 'Mat time' children clearly displaying respect and operating within parental boundaries
- Three parents had the confidence to and considered applying for AEIO positions at the School
- Engaging men in what's traditionally seen as a women's role.
- Parent's willing to work with GRCEC, a non Indigenous organisation
- Parents open to receiving further training to assist with community issues
- Parents excelling in areas previously not confident in and demonstrating a willingness to be actively involved and take on more activities.
- Parents empowered and making effective decisions with family, home and school environments
- All parents obtained Geraldton and Northampton Library cards and read every night to their children

The Dolls and Yarning project has created a stronger connection between the parent group in Northampton. The Northampton Project Coordinator said: ***A real bond between the group has formed and the biggest change I've witnessed is the 'I can't do' to the 'I can do' attitude.***

The School Principal stated *'the PaCE project has built a stronger connection with the school. The activities and exchanges help to break down barriers, strengthen relationships with the school system, and create some common ground to build from.'*

The Principal views PaCE as *'very important and valuable for the community. The benefits are positive for the future of our kids and that has a direct impact on our future generations, that attend school. The long term factors influence our community and we're much better for it.'*

***Parent Group Gathering after Workshop***



***Participants child in crèche***

