Araluen Christian College

College Report
2009

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Principal
Araluen Christian College is a distinctively Christian College where the overall aim is to partner with families in guiding their children’s journeys of living and learning, providing hope, in Christ, for their future.

The school prides itself on having committed Christian teachers and support staff who model Christianity as well as teach Christian values and concepts. The College continues to have a strong family feel. All students are well known to each other and to staff, and mix and interact freely regardless of age or gender. It has been a highlight to observe this continue to be part of the College culture, even with a growing Middle School. The College environment continues to encourage inclusivity, care and nurture of the individual and an acceptance and celebration of “difference” – God did not create us to be clones.

2009 saw a change in Parent Council members at the March elections, with Mr Dean Paterson stepping down, Mr Andrew McAllan being elected as Chair and Mrs Barby Rothwell elected as Secretary. Mrs Steph Perry nominated to complete another three year term. Mike Evans and Ian Charlesworth continued their terms of office.

Numbers in 2009 continued to remain consistently around 135, with some turnover of families through the year as is common in Alice Springs. All families who exited did so due to relocation, usually in connection with work, and in two cases due to marital issues.

The College curriculum continues to be soundly based on the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework which extends across all Key Learning Areas (subjects). Towards the end of the year teachers became aware of and started to investigate the proposed National Curriculum. It is intended Araluen Christian College will embrace this curriculum, implementing it as required.

As a member school of the Northern Territory Christian Schools Association, the College uses the NTCSA Framework which includes specially adapted, and approved, “EsseNTial Learnings” which reflect the Christian Worldview from which the College operates.

The College, as a member of NTCSA, employs only committed Christian staff and attracting and holding quality staff is a challenge in Alice Springs. 2009 was a remarkable year that saw a 100% retention rate among staff, as well as the employment of additional staff to help cover the developing Middle School.

Acquiring quality Professional Development for staff is a further challenge. Staff attended various sessions including workshops on Learning Disabilities, Asthma management, Behaviour Management and Indigenous Issues. All staff were fully trained in Mandatory Reporting and Child Protection. Staff worked together on reviewing the College’s Curriculum Overview aligning Topics and Units to suit composite classes.
During the year the College, with the support of the Parent Council, elected to be part of
the KidsMatter Framework and Sandra Cooper and Hilary Saunders were trained as
facilitators in preparation for delivering Component One to staff in January 2010. Cate
Garwood continued in her role as Senior Teacher and attended the Developing Leaders
Conference.

All staff attended the NTCSA Over the Top Conference which provided the opportunity
to network with other NTCSA staff as well as attend plenary sessions and elective
workshops. “Peacewise” training was of benefit, as were the more practical workshops
on Smartboard training and understanding personality.

2009 saw the Official Opening of recent building projects – the Oval Project, Outdoor
Learning Area and new Middle School Classroom. Gratitude was expressed to the
Commonwealth Funding of these major projects through the Block Grant Authority.

The Building Opening provided the opportunity to celebrate 25 years of Education at
Araluen Christian College. The College (formerly Alice Springs Christian Academy and
Araluen Christian School) commenced formal operation in 1984. This celebration
acknowledged the efforts of pioneer families and in particular Dave and Bev Johanssen.

The over-riding good news of the year came in the form of the “Building the Education
Revolution” grants from the Commonwealth “Rudd” Government - $850 000 for a 21st
Century Library and $75 000 for National School Pride projects which included
modifying the toilets, carpeting the Undercover Area to reduce noise and provide a more
pleasant play and sitting area, carpeting the Year 3/4 room and the “old” library room,
and the provision of a smart board and data projector.

Plans for the Library were rapidly drawn up by Cor Koole of Transforming Skills, and
work was well on the way by the end of 2009. A special agreement was reached with the
BGA for this library to be part of a hub and spoke arrangement, with Marara Christian
College as the hub and with other NTCSA schools forming the spokes. It is envisaged
that eventually classes and videoed conferences will be beamed to the “daughter”
schools, enabling students to engage in broader experiences than are currently available.

ICT remained an area of high focus in the College, with a computer lab equipped with 26
lap-tops and a smart board set up and maintained throughout the year. Some difficulties
were experienced in maintaining the lap-tops in working order, but the appointment of a
local technician aided this to a degree. Having to send lap-tops to Darwin for imaging or
other attention remains a serious concern.

Students engaged in a range of successful co-curricular events including sporting events,
musical opportunities, camps and excursions. The swimming program was very
successful, catering for all students from Transition to Year 6, with Middle School
students also competing in their first interschool meet. Athletics was also a highlight,
with Araluen Christian College being well represented at interschool carnivals for both
Primary and Middle School.
Many students were selected for positions in various Desert Storm teams including Swimming, Soccer (boys and girls), Tennis, Basketball, Rugby League and Cricket. For a small school, Araluen performed exceptionally well, and students were congratulated for their high level of commitment and behaviour.

Successful camps were again held for Year 5/6 students at Glen Helen Resort and Year 7/8 students at Ross River. While away Year 5/6’s engaged in Biblical Studies based on “The Good, the Bad and the Totally Aweful” linked to their SOSE topic of Heroes and Villains, and Year 7/8 grew in their understanding of “Becoming a Man/Woman of Integrity”.

The College’s Active After School Communities program was a great success, with Middle School students trained and performing well as junior assistants, and Miss Sandra Cooper receiving recognition as the best coach in the Northern Territory and being nominated for the National title.

Parents contributed many hours of voluntary work which was tallied against the Service levy. Parents assisted with reading groups and other class activities, attended excursions, camps and swimming lessons, ran the canteen, and helped significantly with fund-raising and working bees.

Fundraising reached an all-time high with over $10 000 raised. Major events contributing towards this were the Lawn Sale, Open Day and the Spellathon. Many thanks to Karyn Tapera, Jill Montgomery and Barby Rothwell and many others for their roles in these and other endeavours that allowed us to claim $4$ funding. Funds were expended on sporting and play equipment and Middle School equipment.

Financially the year was very successful due to careful money management and a very high level of fee payments. Only two families ended the year in default.

**Mandatory Areas for Reporting**

**Professional Engagement**

1. **Average Staff Attendance:** Attendance levels continued to be extremely high. Due to the difficulties of obtaining qualified, Christian Relief teachers, staff often attend when they are not well and the Principal provides many hours of Relief.

2. **Staff Retention:** 2009 was an excellent year for retention. All staff continued in their roles, with some minor adjustments due to changes in class organization.

3. **Teacher Qualifications:** All teachers have four year qualifications except one. Mrs Jenny McAllan was allowed to increase her hours while continuing to study for her fourth year. Mrs Hilary Saunders, Principal, has a Master’s Degree while Cate Garwood and Mandla Khumalo have commenced work towards a Masters’ Degree. All teaching staff are registered with the Northern Territory Teacher Registration Board.
4. **Expenditure on Professional Development**: Over $10,000 was expended, with most of this sum contributing to the expenses of the Over the Top Conference in Darwin. Cate Garwood attended the Beginning Leaders Conference on the Gold Coast. Staff also attended a range of local presented inservice sessions, most of which came at nil or minimal cost. Early Childhood Teachers all attended meetings which were a combination of networking and Professional Development.

5. **Workforce Composition**: While the staff at Araluen Christian College reflects the multicultural nature of Alice Springs, no indigenous staff are employed. Steps were taken to try to source indigenous trainees but these were unfruitful.

**Key Student Outcomes**

1. **Student Attendance**: Attendance was consistent: 90.9% in Primary and 91.6% in Middle School, with an overall rate of 91%. Attendance is skewed somewhat by the fact some families take interstate and overseas holidays, for personal reasons, during term time. This is often linked to special events such as birthdays or anniversaries of family members. The attendance rates for indigenous students were comparable overall with that of non-indigenous students.

   Non-attendance is a minor issue at the College. If the attendance of individuals appears to be waning, parents are contacted and the problems, if any, are addressed. Parents notify the College of absences by phone. Follow up phone calls are made daily if the absence of a student is not explained.

2. **Proportion of students reaching National Benchmark**

   All but one student achieved the National Benchmarks in the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). **It is important to note that all students who attend Araluen Christian College sit the NAPLAN tests including those identified as having special needs.**

3. **Changes in Benchmark Results from Previous Years**

   2009 results were comparable with previous years. It needs to be noted that results, where cohorts of students are small, are dependent on the ability of individuals in those cohorts. At Araluen, a year level cohort may consist of 12 to 15 students. In larger schools a cohort may consist of 100 students and results may more readily allow for extremes to be accommodated.

   The full comparison of 2009 results with 2008 results may be viewed on the My School Website: [www.myschool.edu.au](http://www.myschool.edu.au)
Compared with similar schools, Araluen scored above other schools in all areas apart from Writing and Spelling (Year 3 and 5) and Numeracy (Year 7). Compared with the results from all Australian schools, Araluen was above the National Average in Numeracy (Year 3), Reading (Year 7) and Writing (Year 7). This was particularly pleasing as NT schools tend to trend below the National Average. Most other areas were within 10 points of the National average with the exception of Writing (Year 3). The results of Year 5 areas which were skewed by one student who performed well below the Benchmarks.

**Reporting to Parents**

Teachers report on the progress of students according to the following schedule:

**Term 1:** Interim report with three grade scale (Achieving well, Satisfactory, Needs Improvement) accompanied by parent/teacher interview.

**Term 2:** Formal comprehensive A-E report with invitation to interview.

**Term 3:** Student-led conference where students, with teacher supervision and guidance, lead their parents and grandparents through an exposé of their work.

**Term 4:** Formal comprehensive A-E report with invitation to interview.

**School Income**

Income was derived from the following sources:

- **Private Income:** $ 250,184
- **Recurrent Income:** $1,008,349
- **Capital Grants:** $179,200

**TOTAL** $1,437,733

**Value Added**

Throughout 2009, Araluen Christian College offered its students a variety of opportunities to experience a broad education and to develop their faith. The College has a commitment to ensure a solid foundation in “The Basics” while enriching the curriculum with educationally valuable and memorable, community building experiences.

Most of these have been discussed above and included:

- The completion and opening of building projects
- The commencement of the 21st Century Library
- Upgrading of facilities with National School Pride funding
- The consolidation and expansion of ICT programs
- The continuation of high quality Assemblies and special services such as Anzac Day, Harmony Day and Naidoc Week
- The camping and excursion program
- The sourcing of touring groups and performers such as musical and indigenous groups
- The involvement of the College in the community: Eisteddfod, Under 8’s activities, and the provision of facilities for an after-school indigenous children’s program, Lightforce, and the involvement in special days – Plane Crazy Day for Flying Doctors, Jeans for Genes, Daffodil Day
- The further development of the Middle School.

**Parent satisfaction** was not formally gauged in 2009, however anecdotal evidence, emails and letters expressing support, and the fact that no families left the College due to discontent speaks highly of the returning confidence in Araluen Christian College. Many parents are involved in school activities and support fundraising. Attendance is high and numbers continue to climb. The After School program has been a huge success.

**Conclusion**

2009 was a very good year. Visitors comment that the College has a happy feel about it. Staff work well and supportively together as a team. Students are settled, work extremely well in class, and enjoy coming to school. Parents are confident their children are receiving a high quality of education at Araluen Christian College.