

ALNF Engages UWS Pre-service Teachers to Improve Community Literacy

From Monday 19 October, six trainee teachers from the University of Western Sydney (UWS) have had the unique experience of teaching in a community half a continent away from their usual haunts.

The Master of Teaching (Secondary) students - David Bosma, Faith Bull, Mui Luan Choo, Dene Kermond, Imogen Shipley and Laura Wineberg - are part of a trial placement, initiated by the Australian Literacy & Numeracy Foundation (ALNF), UWS and Tennant Creek High School (TCHS).

The student teachers have been teaching in a range of subject areas, including visual arts, drama, dance, English, PE, health, and society and culture. Their placement will be completed on 13 November 2009.

Dr Loshini Naidoo from the University of Western Sydney is committed to producing graduate teachers who can work professionally in a range of contexts and who can respond to a diversity of learning programs and needs.

“The culture of community engagement at UWS, and the School of Education in particular, allows pre-service teacher education students the opportunity to teach and live in Tennant Creek,” said Dr. Naidoo. “This first-hand experience is necessary not only to create attitudinal changes but also to instill confidence and empower pre-service teachers to promote contexts for working with indigenous children.”

The presence of the trainee teachers in the Tennant Creek community has left a positive impact on the high school community, including both teachers and students.

“These trainee teachers bring with them enthusiasm, energy and instruction in the latest teaching methods,” said TCHS Principal Erica Prosser. “By supervising these pre-service teachers, my [TCHS] teachers are exposed to new methods and are encouraged to reflect on their own practices.”

The Sydney-based pre-service teachers have found the opportunity to work in a small community in a different jurisdiction exciting, challenging and, most importantly, highly rewarding.

“The experience of Tennant Creek has been one of total community engagement,” said UWS Student Teacher Dene Kermond. “We have been encouraged to use the school as a platform to access community opportunities. It has far exceeded our expectations and encouraged us to either return to Tennant Creek or pursue teaching opportunities in other regional and remote parts.”

Each partner - TCHS, UWS and ALNF - is confident with the results of the trial placement and are committed to working collectively again next year with a new cohort of student teachers. In 2010, the aim is to include a few fresh faces at the local primary school, in addition to the current high school program.

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