

The Best Way to Learn is to Teach: ALNF's CAS Program Playing a Significant Role in Tennant Creek Community

A variation on an old saying would say, "It takes a village to *educate* a child." The statement would certainly apply in reference to the Community Action Support program - a cross-generational learning initiative conducted in Tennant Creek between the Australian Literacy & Numeracy Foundation (ALNF), Tennant Creek High School (TCHS), Tennant Creek Primary School (TCPS) and the Papulu Apparr-Kari Language and Culture Centre (PAK).

In the program, which has been running weekly over the past twelve school weeks, a group of Year 10 students have been providing language and literacy lessons in English and Warumungu to a Year 2/3 class at the local primary school. The students are guided by Cultural Officers from PAK and Coordinating Teacher Julie-Anne Spina from TCHS who both assist the high school students in their weekly preparation and reflection.

Further support for the program is provided by ALNF and the University of Western Sydney (UWS). ALNF hosts an online wiki space that includes weekly teaching ideas and resources accessible to all participants. UWS Master of Teaching students provide support by creating resources for the wiki space, and, more importantly, have been on placement at the high school from 19 October - 13 November. Over the last four weeks, the university students have provided the young students with further advice and ideas on learning activities and teaching methods.

The program has effectively employed a "cascading" mentoring model as elders mentor young people who, then, mentor the children in language, culture and literacy.

Senior Teacher Julie-Anne Spina, who coordinates this Year 10 class, indicated that the program provides the high school students with an opportunity to take on new roles and responsibilities and to learn by doing.

"The girls are more confident," said Ms Spina. "Each week they are growing, taking on more responsibilities and, more importantly, enjoying the challenge."

PAK Chief Executive Officer Karan Hayward emphasised how the Year 10 students fulfill a significant role in the community.

"These girls should be proud of themselves," said Ms Hayward. "I don't think they realise how important it is for the elders in the community to see young people take an active role in preserving and teaching language and culture."

Both the high school and the primary school are committed to continuing the initiative into the coming year. The program provides the high school participants with opportunities to exhibit leadership and to grow as potential teachers in the community whilst also presenting the children with positive educational role models.

For more information, please contact:

Gabrielle Kemeny, Director of Communications, ALNF
Gabrielle.kemeny@alnf.org or 02 9362 3388