MURRAY BRIDGE SPECIAL SCHOOL

RESEARCH INTO ACTION

Murray Bridge Special School

2020 annual report to the community

Murray Bridge Special School Number: 116

Partnership: Murraylands

	Signature
School principal:	Ms Vicki Smith
Governing council chair:	Ms. Tammie Fabris
Date of endorsement:	**5 March 2021**

Government of South Australia

Department for Education

Context and highlights

Murray Bridge Special School is a specialist public Reception to Year Seven school which provides specialist staff and a specialist learning environment for learners with complex multifaceted disabilities. Collectively these learners are referred to as having Complex Learning Difficulties and Disabilities. (CLDD)

"Children and young people with complex learning difficulties and disabilities (CLDD) include those with co-existing conditions
(for example autism and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder) or profound and multiple learning disabilities. However, they also include children who have newly begun to populate our schools – among them those who have difficulties arising from premature birth, have survived infancy due to advanced medical interventions, have disabilities arising from parental substance and alcohol abuse, and/or have rare chromosomal disorders.
Many may also be affected by compounding factors such as multi-sensory impairment or mental ill-health, or require invasive procedures, such as supported nutrition, assisted ventilation and rescue medication. Children and young people with CLDD are a distinctive group of learners requiring educators to make personalized professional responses to their profile of learning need. We have to equip teaching professionals to offer high quality education to these young people to prevent their disenfranchisement from the school system. We need to remodel our pedagogy and generate teaching strategies which will embrace them as learners." (Professor Barry Carpenter)

Highlights for the 2020 year include:

*Managing COVID-19 with minimal disruption to student learning

*Continued focus on school pedagogy to clearly reflect the global research practitioners such as Carpenter, Greenspan, McDonald, Nielsen and Barber

*Embedding ABLES and the Australian Curriculum into our assessment, recording, reporting and review processes

*Recognition of ANOTHER year of Excellence in Participation in the Premier's Reading Challenge with whole of school participation.

*The continued development of a range of specifically designed and bespoke learning tools to support literacy and numeracy achievement.

*Learners using the school 3D printer to design, problem-solve and create

*Raised garden beds for each of the classes with learners planting, caring for plants and eating produce. Literacy, Mathematics, Science focus.

Governing council report

Recruiting enough Council members to establish a quorum for each Council meeting is a significant challenge. Members often have other family commitments that clash with meetings. Many families prefer not to be pressured by another meeting or commitment. However being a small Special school requires and enables direct connection to families around all school business and feedback indicates families feel adequately informed and involved in their child's learning. We have a School Council not a Governing Council however fulfilling the Departments requirements re: Councils is difficult.

A major decision in 2020 was to continue site funding well above Department allocation of additional learning facilitator and school services officer time. This decision has been made to make class sizes smaller and give more individual support to learners. The result has been safer classes for learners and more opportunity to achieve individual learning outcomes.

A successful program that will be continued on in 2021 is the additional School Services Officer time to support individual children with communication and social development.

The additional Learning Facilitator and SSO support comes directly out of our school budget savings and reserves.

Another major decision has been continued purchases of very specialized pieces of equipment to help our children learn to the best of their capabilities. As this is a specialist market the equipment required is extraordinarily expensive. Staff make individual learning resources based on achieving the learning outcomes in a child's One Plan. This is also very expensive.

The school was awarded another year of 'Excellence in Participation' in the Premier's Reading Challenge with the whole school participating. It demonstrates the importance of reading for all children.

In 2020 the Site Improvement Plan focus is Communication (Literacy) and developing Student Voice through the use of an application such as See-Saw. Issues around access to technology has hampered progress forward this year however significant progress was made at the end of term 4.

The Graduation of our year sevens who have been at the school since starting either in reception grade or year two has been a very proud yet anxious time. It was a special occasion and they were handed on to the next stage of their schooling with a tinge of sadness and best wishes for the future. 2021 will be a significant turning point for our school when the combine year six and seven group transition to secondary school in 2022.

Quality improvement planning

Learning Improvement Goal: Increase number of learners using comprehensive communication systems to participate in two way communications. (ESR Directions: 1,2,3)

Success criteria achieved:

Photographic evidence has been collected twice per term and included in learning journals as evidence of One Plan goal achievement that learners demonstrate an understanding of low or high tech. 2 way communication by initiating the process (or part process) with a communication partner a minimum x 2 per week.

Termly classroom observations by site leader has evidence of learners in the classroom setting using either low or high tech. communication systems to make simple single requests, choices, or measure the progress of the day. (e.g. visual timetables)

Semester One Plan reviews all demonstrate achievement toward learner goals in improved communication/literacy.

Targeted learners are using symbol sequence to develop simple sentences using low or high tech. communication systems. Photographic evidence has been included in learning journals and as evidence of One Plan goal achievement.

Evidence demonstrates 21 out of 23 learners are engaged in using an individualised communication system to participate in 2 way conversations compared to 15 at the beginning of the year.

14 out of 23 learners can be evidenced having conversations of up to 2 back and forth as documented in their learning journals compared to 8 at the beginning of the year.

8 out of 23 learners can be evidenced in the visual 'beginner exchange', or 'single word utterance' stage as documented in their learning journals as compared to 2 at the beginning of the year.

1 learner out of 23 uses eye gaze and vocalisations and has no 'consistently understood by many' communication system.

What actions had the highest impact?

'Learner One Plans will have at least one negotiated goal with a focus on improving communication using low and high tech. systems' Resulted in: - Analysis of previous data sets by Learning Facilitators to identify most appropriate communication system and goals for each learner; Family participation in One Plan decision-making; Collaboration with other agencies to monitor and plan; Budget line support to enable the creation and constant replacement of bespoke communication support materials; Educators moderation of communication systems and strategies via Data Walls; Deeper relationship, learning and understanding of learner needs; Explicit one to one teaching of communication systems.

Learning Improvement Goal: Increase learner voice and participation in sharing learning in literacy and numeracy. (ESR Direction: 1,4)

Success Criteria Achieved:

Documented observations of learners evidence an increasing ability and skills in various aspects of See-Saw e.g. ability to identify learning for uploading, independently uploading, or assisting in the process, developing relevant commentary to uploaded documents.

Learning journals have evidence of learners sharing at least 1 photograph of themselves fortnightly at school working on literacy or numeracy activities with school staff using See-Saw.

As evidenced in learning journals and on the See-Saw platform;

8 out of 23 learners are working within the See-Saw platform on and off-line.

6 out of 23 learners are sharing a minimum of 1 photo of work per week with a school staff member.

Learning journal records describe positive learner reaction to feedback from staff who have received their work through the See-Saw platform.

School performance comment

To track and monitor every learners growth all learners enrolled at Murray Bridge Special School receive vigorous, appropriate and ongoing assessment to specifically pinpoint their entry into learning and to provide the most challenging and relevant experiences for learning. In most cases an assessment for learning takes a minimum of approximately 10 weeks to complete before draft One Plans can be developed.

To value, respect and accommodate our learners' learning and achievement, the staffs at Murray Bridge Special School use the Murray Bridge Special School Individual Learner Developmental Assessment and Record Book. (collated from: SERU Developmental scales and Resource Folder; The Macquarie Program for Developmentally Delayed Children; The Carolina Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers with Special Needs; HELP Strands Curriculum-Based Developmental Assessment and Down Syndrome South Australia Programs) and the Lili Neilsen Developmental Checklist.

Regardless of learner complexity, by using the Murray Bridge Special School Individual Learner Developmental Checklist and Record Book and the Lili Neilsen Developmental Checklist we are able to obtain an entry point to learning for all of our learners. Regardless of learner complexity, by using the Murray Bridge Special School Individual Learner Developmental Checklist and Record Book and Lili Neilsen Developmental Checklist we are able to measure quite specifically learner improvement. Learning Facilitators are able to clearly track and monitor our learners learning by using the Murray Bridge Individual Learners Developmental Checklist and Record Book and Lili Neilsen Developmental Checklist.

In 2020 ABLES became the mandatory assessment and reporting tool in Math's and English for those learners not yet accessing the Foundation level of the Australian curriculum. We have been using ABLES since 2018 to value add to our assessment and reporting suite. Our site continues to participate in professional learning sessions in ABLES to support staffs understanding. Feedback from our site External School review has suggested we continue to use the Murray Bridge Special Individual Learner Developmental Checklist, and use ABLES to value add if required, however we will transition to ABLESA to support consistency and accountability across the State.

Global research provides clear direction to enact changes in pedagogical practice and identify and enact clear intervention processes for learners with multifaceted, complex learning challenges. All noteworthy researchers in the field of young people with complex multifaceted learning challenges (Carpenter, Nielsen, Greenspan, Barber, and MacDonald) agree a carefully considered engineered environment must be the number one priority for a site to enable enhanced learning opportunities.

Therefore based on evidence from current research and school data collection and analysis around the current and projected student cohort, our school improvement cycle includes continued work toward engineering our learning environments to continuously improve learning outcomes.

Attendance

Year level	2017	2018	2019	2020
Year 4	N/A	N/A	N/A	100.0%
Primary Other	88.1%	88.1%	86.6%	84.6%
Total	88.1%	88.1%	86.6%	85.0%

Data Source: Site Performance Reporting System (SPER), Semester 1 attendance.
NOTE: A blank cell indicates there were no students enrolled.

Attendance comment

School attendance for our school during the 2020 school year has been 85%. As the complexity of disabilities increases with new enrolments so to does the complexity of medical and physical complications these learners live with. The data forecast is for more chronic and habitual non-attendance as learners attend medical appointments and experience long-term ongoing minor and major illnesses.
The continued uncertainty generated by COVID-19, and families supporting the school community by keeping their child at home when they are sick is reflected in the current percentage of attendance.

Behaviour support comment

The Department Guidelines of Suspension, Exclusion and Expulsion apply to all of our learners.

The school has clearly documented and published policies and practice regarding Anti Bullying, and inappropriate behaviour between learners, or learners/staff.

The school acknowledges the relationship between complex multifaceted learning disabilities, communication and behaviour.

In 2020 there were no suspensions, exclusions or expulsions.

Much of the success is attributed to research which is reflected in our school pedagogies e.g. strategically engineered adult responses to learner communications and strategically engineered physical environments to reduce anxiety and increase focus to learn. Space to allow our learners to self regulate is of critical importance.

Client opinion summary

The surveys returned to the school in 2020 indicate a continued high level of satisfaction of families with the service provided by our school.

Families demonstrate ongoing frustration at the school and school staff with processes not controlled by the school, for example the Department transport assistance scheme and student placement processes.

There is still a strong perception enrolment in a Special setting should automatically entitle a learner and their family to particular services.

Some families believe the Department special options staffing allocation in general should be much higher.

Some families would like private providers (funded through the NDIS) to be able to provide their service from the school rather than visit the family home, or families having to pick their child up and take them to the individual therapist or service purchased through NDIS funding.

Continued discussion and exploration with school staff continues to indicate they cannot meet the Department guidelines (based on the Nyland report) set for hosting non-government providers on site.

It is an indicator of the high quality staff at the school, as presenting challenges have been embraced with professionalism, deep inquiry and improved learning outcomes for all our learners.

All Learning Facilitators and most School Services Officers positively acknowledge the research based approach to learning, and whole school agreements such as the "Holding the Line" around minimal speech which relate to pedagogy used by the school, have had a significant positive effect on our learners development.

Staff acknowledge the personal (psychological) and professional impact of delivering learning and care to our learners and their families.

Intended destination

Leave Reason	Number	%
Employment	0	NA
Interstate/Overseas	2	28.6%
Other	0	NA
Seeking Employment	0	NA
Tertiary/TAFE/Training	0	NA
Transfer to Non-Govt School	1	14.3%
Transfer to SA Govt School	4	57.1%
Unknown	0	NA
Unknown (TG - Not Found)	0	NA

Data Source: Education Department School Administration System (EDSAS) Data extract Term 3 2020.

Relevant history screening

At two separate Department audits our site received an 'outstanding' rating for compliance with screening verification responsibilities.

Our site continues to sight and record clearance information on HRS systems and maintain copies of clearances if workers are not connected to these systems, for example CYH workers.

Staff verify the identity of first time visiting Department or Women's and Children's Health Network employees and note verification next to their name in the site's sign in book.

Our site maintains the accuracy of screening information on HRS and in site files.

Qualifications held by the teaching workforce and workforce composition

All teachers at this school are qualified and registered with the SA Teachers Registration Board.

Qualification Level	Number of Qualifications
Bachelor Degrees or Diplomas	15
Post Graduate Qualifications	7

Data Source: Department for Education HR Management Reporting System, extracted Term 3 2020 .

Please note: Staff who have more than 1 qualification will be counted more than once in the above qualification table. Therefore the total number of staff by qualification type may be more than the total number of teaching staff.

Workforce composition including Indigenous staff

	Teaching Staff		Non-Teaching Staff	
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Full-Time Equivalents	0.0	5.4	0.8	3.5
Persons	0	7	1	6

Data Source: Department for Education HR Management Reporting System, extracted Term 3 2020 .

Financial statement

Funding Source	Amount
Grants: State	$425,977
Grants: Commonwealth	$0
Parent Contributions	$4,636
Fund Raising	$0
Other	$0

Data Source: Education Department School Administration System (EDSAS).

2020 School Annual Report: Tier 2 Funding Report*

*Tier 2 funding provides additional resources to support students who are unlikely to obtain the desired outcomes without further support.

Tier 2 funding section	Tier 2 category (where applicable to the site)	Briefly describe how the 2020 funding was used to improve the relevant Standard of Educational Achievement (SEA) outcomes	Outcomes achieved or progress made towards these outcomes
Targeted funding for individual students	Improved wellbeing and engagement	Additional School Services Officer time was allocated to support school programs in the areas of Communication and Relationship development	A measurable reduction in anxiety related learner communications
	Improved outcomes for students with an additional language or dialect	N/A	N/A
	Inclusive Education Support Program	Used to support individual learners as described in goals negotiated with local Student Support Services.	Goals negotiated for individual learners with Student Support Services achieved.
Targeted funding for groups of students	Improved outcomes for - rural & isolated students - Aboriginal students - numeracy and literacy including early years support First language maintenance & development Students taking alternative pathways IESP support	Professional learning in Literacy and Numeracy outcomes was provided for all staff. Specific learning opportunities were made available to all Learning Facilitators to improve their skills and understanding in delivering targeted learning programs in Literacy and Numeracy and the relationship to ABLESA and the Australian Curriculum. Learning was provided to all staff in improving 'One Plan' processes. Professional learning and additional time resources was provided to Learning Facilitators regarding ICT skills required to complete 'One Plan' process	Achievement of literacy and numeracy short term goals in all learner One Plans. One Plans for all learners completed within time frames and on-line.
Program funding for all students	Australian Curriculum	Professional learning in Literacy and Numeracy outcomes was provided for all staff. Specific learning opportunities were made available to all Learning Facilitators to improve their skills and understanding in delivering	Achievement of literacy and numeracy short term goals in all Learning Plans. O
Other discretionary funding	Aboriginal languages programs Initiatives	N/A	N/A
	Better schools funding	Additional Learning Facilitator and School Services Officer time targeted toward the development of specialized/bespoke literacy and numeracy learning activities.	Achievement of literacy and numeracy short term goals in all learner One Plans
	Specialist school reporting (as required)	N/A	N/A
	Improved outcomes for gifted students	N/A	N/A