

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Guyula to the Minister for Education:

Remote Schools in Arnhem Land Region

1. In relation to remote schools in the Arnhem Land region:
 - a. How many teachers in these schools have a tertiary accredited TESOL/ESL/EAL qualification relevant to teaching students in remote schools?
 - b. How many Regional Office Department staff have a tertiary accredited TESOL/ESL/EAL Qualification?
 - c. Why are regional positions generalist 'coach' positions and not ESL specialist positions?
 - d. Why aren't TESOL/ESL/EAL tertiary accredited qualifications a requirement for the appointment of regional senior staff who work with teachers in remote schools with almost 100% ESL students?
 - e. How many positions in the Darwin Department Office support ESL learning? What are the titles of these positions? And do the personnel in these positions hold tertiary accredited qualifications in TESOL/ESL/EAL?
 - f. What evidence is there that the programs being used in remote schools, such as synthetic phonics, have been written for ESL students?
 - g. What evidence is there that synthetic phonics programs are successful in achieving age-grade literacy in another language for ESL students like those in my electorate?
 - h. What provision has been made within the Department to support the implementation of Two Ways/ Bilingual Teaching 'on the ground'?

ANSWERS

- a. The purpose of the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) qualification is to equip teachers of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) students with appropriate EAL/D teaching methodology. Five teachers in the Arnhem region have formal qualifications in TESOL as per Table 1 below.

Table 1

School	Total no. of teachers	No. of teachers with TESOL
Lake Evella	12	0
Shepherdson	28	1
Ramingining	14	1
Yirrkala	11	1
Yirrkala Homelands	10	2
Total	75	5

In addition, four teachers in the Arnhem region are enrolled in the Graduate Certificate TESOL through Deakin University on Department of Education scholarships.

To further support teachers of EAL/D students, the department will, from Semester 2, 2019, make available an online professional learning course titled the EAL/D Hub. This course aims to build teacher knowledge and capacity in teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are learning EAL/D. Teachers will build their knowledge base of EAL/D learning and adopt appropriate teaching practices and strategies.

The EAL/D Hub will support all teachers of Aboriginal EAL/D learners in urban, rural and remote settings to:

- have an understanding of Aboriginal languages, Creoles and varieties of Aboriginal English and Standard Australian English
- be able to identify and plan for languages and literacy demands of the curriculum
- plan for, and implement, effective EAL/D teaching and learning strategies
- create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments (adopting culturally responsive teaching practices, differentiating content and learning opportunities)
- assess and provide feedback on student Standard Australian English learning.

All Arnhem (and NT) teachers and regional office staff will have access to this course.

- b.** Of the six senior staff working in Arnhem region schools, one has completed training in teaching English as a second language (ESL) to Aboriginal learners and in the mainstream. This training is not university accredited; however, it does equip the staff member with significant knowledge and skills of EAL/D learning and appropriate teaching practices.

The specialist EAL/D coach position based in the Arnhem regional office is currently vacant and undergoing a recruitment process. Formal qualifications and/or significant experience in teaching EAL/D is an essential criterion for this position.

All teaching and learning staff in the Arnhem regional office will be required to undertake EAL/D Hub training in 2019-20 once this course is available online.

- c.** As outlined above, the Arnhem regional office does have an EAL/D specialist position based in Nhulunbuy that does require EAL/D qualifications or significant experience in teaching EAL/D as an essential criterion. The generalist teaching and learning staff often work together with specialist EAL/D staff.
- d.** The context of the teaching and learning positions and the nature of the students as EAL/D learners are included in the general description of the job descriptions and considered in the selection process. However, the department will review the job descriptions for teaching and learning staff based in Arnhem to ensure that the objectives, key duties and responsibility statements and the selection criteria reflect an expectation that the successful applicant has either a qualification or significant experience in teaching EAL/D students, or a willingness to undertake TESOL or EAL/D Hub training.
- e.** There are three EAL/D officers who work in the Darwin office known as Teaching and Learning Officers EAL/D. All have formal TESOL qualifications at either a masters or a graduate certificate level.
- f.** The Evidence for Learning Foundation is a national organisation that rigorously researches and evaluates teaching and learning approaches. It has completed its findings on the Read Write Inc Fresh Start program. Fresh Start is an intervention synthetic phonics program for older students who need to develop decoding ability. The Evidence for Learning Foundation is now undertaking research into Read Write Inc Phonics, which is a program to teach young students decoding.

Read Write Inc Phonics is a synthetic phonics program being used in three Arnhem schools. Synthetic phonics begins to teach students to identify single letter sounds and blend them into whole words using a systematic and scaffolded approach.

The Department of Education analysed a number of resources using an evidence-based practices framework, and Read Write Inc Phonics and Read Write Inc Fresh Start were selected as they met all of the criteria and most closely matched the six essential reading requirements.

- g.** Emerging data from across the NT indicates that students from remote ESL schools using Read Write Inc Phonics are showing growth; however, Read Write Inc Phonics was introduced into NT schools in 2016 and the department is still gathering preliminary results and growth data.

The department uses Progressive Achievement Testing – Reading Comprehension (PAT-R) as a systemic measure of reading. The department is seeing improvement in PAT-R results in schools using Read Write Inc Phonics over a 12-month period, compared to other remote schools. The department has also developed data collection tools for schools focused on Read Write Inc Phonics, to allow the department to monitor progress in this program and compare it to the broader PAT-R results.

- h.** All schools that have a designated bilingual program receive targeted funding to employ a specialist teacher-linguist to coordinate and support two-way/bilingual teaching, a literature production supervisor and additional language workers.

There are three specialist bilingual staff, two linguists and a principal consultant, based in Darwin who travel to schools to provide professional learning and support on request to bilingual schools. All bilingual schools in the Arnhem region received a school visit in Semester 1, 2019. Regional professional learning workshops for teaching teams to confirm and clarify assessment are also held each semester.

A bilingual meeting for all schools in the NT will be held in Semester 2, 2019.

Two curriculum consultants in Indigenous languages and cultures also work with bilingual schools. Work aligns with the NT Board of Studies plan, known as *Keeping Indigenous Languages and Cultures Strong – A Plan for Teaching and Learning of Indigenous Languages and Cultures in the Northern Territory*.

More information regarding the plan can be found at

https://education.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/413202/Policy_Keeping-Indigenous-Languages-and-Cultures-Strong-Document_web.pdf

More information regarding implementation guidelines can be found at

https://education.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/471712/indigenous-languages-and-cultures-guidelines.pdf