

2020 Annual Report

Penrith Lakes Environmental Education Centre



5752

Introduction

The Annual Report for 2020 is provided to the community of Penrith Lakes Environmental Education Centre as an account of the school's operations and achievements throughout the year.

It provides a detailed account of the progress the school has made to provide high quality educational opportunities for all students, as set out in the school plan. It outlines the findings from self-assessment that reflect the impact of key school strategies for improved learning and the benefit to all students from the expenditure of resources, including equity funding.

School contact details

Penrith Lakes Environmental Education Centre

89-151 Old Castlereagh Road

CASTLEREAGH, 2749

www.penritlake-e.schools.nsw.edu.au

penritlake-e.school@det.nsw.edu.au

4730 3630

Message from the principal

What a year 2020 has been. With large part of the year ruled out for excursions and PL learning opportunities, PLEEC staff had to pivot and devise new ways of supporting schools during this time. PLEEC responded with 5 new additional 'online' programs developed and offered to schools and two school based incursions, where PLEEC staff take all the best parts of a day at the lakes, such as our famous WaterBugs (macro-invertebrates) investigation, directly into classrooms.

PLEEC got recognised for all these efforts during COVID with a DoE Deputy Secretary's Award for an Outstanding School Initiative. These programs have enhanced what we do and have significantly improved PLEEC's pre/post learning resources for all schools. Our inschools Kitchen Gardens program has also gone from strength to strength, with over 4304 students being taught directly by a PLEEC teacher in 2020. This is the highest number ever and up from 1120 in 2019. In addition to that seven other EEC's have expressed interest in our Kitchen Garden program with three of them trialing it in 2020 with their local schools.

PLEEC staff, who make PLEEC the amazing place that it is, have a lot to be proud of and I thank them for all their outstanding care and efforts to support student learning, wellbeing and sustainability in 2020.

School vision

Our motto:

'Education for a Sustainable Future'

Our vision:

'We aim to deliver high quality curriculum based learning experiences for all students and empower them to effect positive changes for a sustainable future'.

EZEC Mission Statement

Leading environmental education to empower learners for a sustainable future.

EZEC Vision

To support NSW Public Schools to integrate sustainability education into all aspects of the school operations, curriculum, teaching and learning, physical surroundings and relationships with the local community.

PLEEC Work Culture Ethos:

Collaboration

Enthusiasm

Opportunity

School context

Penrith Lakes Environmental Education Centre PLEEC is one of 25 Environmental and Zoo Education Centres (EZEC) operated by the NSW Department of Education DoE. PLEEC actively collaborates across this network to set directions and develop the organisation for environmental and sustainability education.

In 2014 PLEEC relocated to the Sydney International Regatta Centre SIRC on a temporary lease agreement due to Penrith Lakes Development Corporation PLDC requesting back the founding site after 18 years of tenure. Future permanent relocation plans are still underway that will see the centre move into the completed Penrith Lakes Scheme. PLDC and the state government continue to negotiate the future of the scheme and PLEEC is unable to relocate until these negotiations are completed.

The centre is distinguished by our unique local partnerships that have been formed with Catholic Education Office, SIRC, Penrith City Council and The Western Sydney Social Sciences Teachers Association WeSSSTA.

PLEEC programs are designed to address primary and secondary key learning areas, including fieldwork and sustainability education as a cross-curriculum priority. PLEEC's unique location within SIRC that is part of the greater Penrith Lakes Scheme and at the foothills of the Blue Mountains National Park, all combine to form an ideal learning environment.

Schools using PLEEC services are drawn primarily from the Western Sydney Metropolitan area. Teachers booking PLEEC are offered support (including phone conversations, pre-excursion visits, written confirmation, program advice and online support via the PLEEC website), to ensure the service we provide meets their needs. Communication covers logistics, special needs of students, syllabus links, learning experiences, resources and risk assessments.

Self-assessment and school achievement

This section of the annual report outlines the findings from self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework, school achievements and the next steps to be pursued.

This year, our school undertook self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework. The Framework is a statement of what is valued as excellence for NSW public schools, both now and into the future. The Framework supports public schools throughout NSW in the pursuit of excellence by providing a clear description of high quality practice across the three domains of Learning, Teaching and Leading.

Each year, we assess our practice against the Framework to inform our school plan and annual report.

Our self-assessment process will assist the school to refine our school plan, leading to further improvements in the delivery of education to our students.

For more information about the School Excellence Framework: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/school-excellence-and-accountability>

Self-assessment using the School Excellence Framework

Elements	2020 School Assessment
LEARNING: Learning Culture	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Wellbeing	Sustaining and Growing
LEARNING: Curriculum	Excelling
LEARNING: Assessment	Delivering
LEARNING: Reporting	Delivering
LEARNING: Student performance measures	Delivering
TEACHING: Effective classroom practice	Sustaining and Growing
TEACHING: Data skills and use	Sustaining and Growing
TEACHING: Professional standards	Sustaining and Growing
TEACHING: Learning and development	Excelling
LEADING: Educational leadership	Excelling
LEADING: School planning, implementation and reporting	Sustaining and Growing
LEADING: School resources	Excelling
LEADING: Management practices and processes	Excelling

Strategic Direction 1

Empower Learners

Purpose

Facilitate high quality learning through the development of learning experiences that are authentic and model quality teaching, so students can become engaged, empowered and responsible citizens with the necessary 21st century skills capable of positively influencing their future.

Improvement Measures

- Increased number of quality programs for a variety of stages and KLA's as measured by teacher and student evaluations (Baseline data = 19 quality programs).
- A 20% increase in the number of students participating in the Centre programs from 7200 to 8600', (the main increase coming from our new incursion programs to be developed and offered to schools).

Overall summary of progress

1. Increased number of quality programs for a variety of stages and KLA's as measured by teacher and student evaluations (2017 Baseline data = 19 quality programs).

We exceeded this target with now **27** quality programs on offer at the end of our school plan, an increase of 8 new programs. This is in addition to another 8 new programs in the 2014-2017 plan. During COVID, PLEEC responded with 7 new additional programs developed and on offer to schools. This included five completely online offerings and two school based incursions, where PLEEC staff take all the best parts of a day at the lakes, such as our famous WaterBugs (macro-invertebrates) investigation directly into classrooms. PLEEC got recognised for this effort during COVID with a DoE Deputy Secretary's Award for an Outstanding School Initiative. Another new program has included our Kitchen Gardens program, that started with 4 schools in 2018 and rapidly become our single biggest program on offer by 2020, with 31 schools participating and **4304** students being directly taught by a PLEEC Kitchen Gardens expert teacher in 2020. Seven other NSW EEC's have also embraced our KG program model with now a number of schools across NSW being supported by their local EEC to participate in the Kitchen Gardens program. PLEEC will continue to build **whole NSW EEC capacity** to deliver this popular program.

2. A 20% increase in the number of students participating in the Centre programs from 7200 to 8600', (the main increase coming from our new incursion programs to be developed and offered to schools).

From the 2017 baseline data of 7137, we increased our reach to 9039 students in 2018, 7304 in 2019 and 7641 in 2020. The main increase coming from our new inschool, year-long Kitchen Gardens program. We fell short of our 8600 students per year target in 2019 and 2020, but in 2020 we would have exceeded our aim if it wasn't for COVID related disruptions.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Process 1: Development of diverse and quality curriculum based fieldwork and sustainability education programs that are aligned with NESA syllabuses.

Professional learning for PLEEC staff in innovative pedagogies to support new program development, delivery and evaluation.

Ongoing program evaluation feedback from teachers and students.

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
Student and teacher surveys.	Release time for teachers to attend TPL opportunities.
Professional discussions with school staff.	New program equipment and staffing costs.
New program development and implementation.	Total Funds Spent: \$436,000
Increasing student and teacher numbers participating in new programs.	

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Growth and success of the inschool Kitchen Garden program across Western Sydney schools.	
--	--

Next Steps

Our identified 'big ticket' school improvement items for the next school plan include:

- Establishing more systematic student impact data collection and it's analysis processes, so we can track student learning and our impact on a more regular basis with more quality data.
- Increasing the type of quality programs on offer at PLEEC, based on the research evidence evaluated.
- Reviewing all of our current programs to suit the new NSW 'curriculum review' syllabuses and the new PLEEC relocation site and its local context.

Strategic Direction 2

Develop Teacher Capacity

Purpose

Engage and empower teachers to effect a positive change for sustainable futures for themselves and their learning communities.

Build and enhance staff capacity as learners, teachers and leaders in 'Education for Sustainability' (EfS) by improving knowledge, understanding and values in sustainability content and pedagogies to enable 21st century citizenship in students.

Improvement Measures

- * Maintain or increase the number of teachers participating in (EfS) based training from 352 to 400
- * All staff achieve professional goals as per Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework

Overall summary of progress

SD 2 - Develop Teacher Capacity

1. Maintain or increase the number of teachers participating in (EfS) based training from 352 to 400

176 teachers directly came to PLEEC during 2018 and 2019 for professional learning related to Stage 6 Science and HSIE, and Stage 1-3 Geography and Science Syllabuses. During 2020 there was no TPL's occurring at PLEEC onsite due to COVID, but our new online program packages were sent out to all teachers. This further built teacher capacity to deliver subject specific teaching and learning at their schools using PLEEC fieldwork as the case study. In addition to direct TPL's led by PLEEC, hundreds of visiting teachers and other staff accompanying their students, also got subject specific professional learning in-directly from their visit to PLEEC.

PLEEC in-schools Kitchen Gardens program has also built significant teacher capacity to deliver sustainability and wellbeing based cross-KLA programs, with **210** teachers and their classes participating over the last 3 years. Our beginning and end of year surveys of participating teachers, shows **55% to 91%** increases in their knowledge and skills, and overall confidence in teaching regular syllabus outcomes via a locally contextualised sustainability and wellbeing program. In addition to that, every time I have visited each participating school, **majority** of staff have spoken very highly of the program and its significant positive impact on their students' learning and wellbeing, personal impact on themselves, and that of wider school community.

2. All staff achieve professional goals as per Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework

This has been achieved with all PLEEC staff completing their PDP's, attending various associated professional learning opportunities and also from collaborating on peer teaching observations. As a result of this staff capacity building, all staff have demonstrated significant growth in their professional practice. Data from observational practice and various teacher and student surveys data reinforces this.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Process 1: Provide teacher professional learning that inspires teachers and builds their professional capacity to deliver NESA syllabuses and implement sustainability as a cross curricular priority area

PLEEC staff engage in professional learning that builds their capacity to deliver 'EfS' in schools

PLEEC staff reflect and set professional goals as per Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
Professional growth is evident in all staff.	Release time for all staff to attend various TPL opportunities and for peer feedback and lesson observations
Completion of at least 18 hours of registered TPL hours by each PLEEC	

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

teacher as per NESAs requirements.

Visiting staff TPL surveys on PLEEC TPL delivered and various professional conversations with school staff.

processes as per APTS requirements.

Funds for various equipment program requirements necessary for effective EfS TPL delivery.

Total Funds Spent: \$3600

Next Steps

- Further building the capacity of all staff (PLEEC and inschool teachers) through both direct TPL opportunities and more explicit collaborative teaching and learning practices as part of the PDP cycle.
- More focus on workforce planning for the future sustainability of all PLEEC programs both inschools and at the centre. We aim to have two full-time teachers on site and a Kitchen Gardens AP managing the inschool programs and four teachers.

Strategic Direction 3

Strengthen Partnerships

Purpose

Ensure innovative and strategic support to schools in learning for sustainability.

Demonstrate sustainable operations through collaboration and innovation, thereby building capacity of learning communities for sustainable futures.

Improvement Measures

- * Increased number of partnerships with non-DEC organisations from 7 to 10
- * 10 + schools participating in an in-school (EfS in the curriculum) PLEEC led project
- * PLEEC relocation to a permanent site within the completed Penrith Lakes Scheme

Overall summary of progress

SD 3 - Strengthen Partnerships

1. Increased number of partnerships with non-DoE organisations from 7 to 10.

This planning cycle we have developed a new very productive partnership with Parramatta City Council, who have very generously funded three schools in their LGA to participate in our Kitchen Garden program. The council has had such positive feedback from this that they now want three new schools every year to participate in the program.

PLEEC has maintained and strengthened our quality partnerships with existing non-DoE PLEEC partners. Our new 2021 MOU with Catholic Education Office, Parramatta Diocese, has almost been completed, which will result in an increase of funding from \$36k per year as has been the case since 1996, to \$65k per year, and more inline with the 3 day per week teaching position at PLEEC, as per original MOU. Our partnership with Western Sydney Social Sciences Association, has this planning cycle resulted in HSC HSIE TPL's at PLEEC, that built the capacity of early career HSIE teachers by the highly experienced WESSTA members. In addition to that PLEEC's permanent relocation has seen us collaborating with many DoE and non-DoE teams and organisations involved in our relocation, such as architect consultants. This has ensured that the new site and facilities developed for our new 'Centre of Excellence' in environmental education will best serve the educational and wellbeing needs of visiting schools for many years to come.

2. 10 + schools participating in an in-school (EfS in the curriculum) PLEEC led project

PLEEC has rapidly grown its in-school year-long Kitchen Gardens program to **31** schools since starting with only four in 2018. Around 5872 students and 210 teachers have participated in this popular program over the last three years. Another 1408 and 51 teachers have participated in the program in schools that have run it with their own staff. This means that around **7280** students and **261** teachers have participated in the PLEEC Kitchen Garden program over the last three years which is a great result. Impact data such as teacher and student surveys show significant growth, with teacher surveys going from **55%** at the beginning of the year to **91%** by the end of the year. With questions such as "I know how to enhance individual syllabus outcomes using the Kitchen Garden program" and "I know what 'Sustainability' LAC means and how to effectively integrate it into my curriculum using the Kitchen Garden program".

3. PLEEC relocation to a permanent site within the completed Penrith Lakes Scheme

PLEEC relocation has made significant progress in the last school plan cycle with now land and building funds being available for the permanent PLEEC relocation to the Wildlife Lake. This year the DoE planning team has handed over the relocation portfolio to the DoE delivery team with architectural drawings of the new PLEEC 'Centre of Excellence' all complete. The planned new PLEEC completion is due by the end of next year and we look forward to our new home.

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Process 1: Strengthening new and existing partnerships that result in collaborative projects which support student learning and a permanent PLEEC relocation

Networking with professional EZEC community

Progress towards achieving improvement measures

Evaluation	Funds Expended (Resources)
<p>2020 EfS project Kitchen Gardens (Semester 1 & 2) survey results from participating staff and students. A further increase in the number of schools implementing the program.</p> <p>Evaluate with the EZEC Collaborative practice team 'EfS' Kitchen Gardens program implementation at a state level. Number of EEC's implementing the program.</p> <p>Evaluate Centre relocation progress with partners. Land allocation for new PLEEC and relocation plans further progressing towards PLEEC permanent relocation.</p>	<p>Release time for all staff to attend various TPL opportunities and for peer feedback and lesson observations processes as per ATS requirements.</p> <p>Funds for various equipment program requirements necessary for effective EfS TPL delivery.</p> <p>Total Funds Spent: \$400</p>

Next Steps

- Establishing a world class 'Centre of Excellence' in environmental education and sustainability with high quality and innovative physical facilities that will best cater to our locally contextualised programs and outdoor learning experiences. This new PLEEC facility will be 'future proofed' and will be able to cater to more visiting schools than ever before as the demand for outdoor 'real world' programs continues to grow.

Student information

Student Visitation Numbers:

2020 = **7639**

Stage 1 = 999

Stage 2 = 788

Stage 3 = 452

Stage 4 = 261

Stage 5 = 116

Stage 6 = 721

Kitchen Gardens In-school Program = 4304

'Tears in Jungle' Program - 50+ schools, and thousands of students and hundreds of teachers participating in the program (we stopped keeping track after 50th school).

NSW student attendance data in 2020 is not comparable to previous years due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The NSW Government encouraged students to learn from home, where possible, for a seven week period from 24 March to 22 May. During this period, schools monitored engagement with learning to determine whether students were marked present. This changed the attendance measure. There was also some evidence of varied marking practices as schools adjusted to the learning from home period, with some schools recording higher attendance rates while others recording markedly lower rates.

Management of non-attendance

Attendance at school has a big impact on longer term outcomes for children and young people. When a child is not at school they miss important opportunities to learn, build friendships and develop their skills through play. Regular attendance at school is a shared responsibility between schools and parents. By working together we can have a positive effect on supporting our children and young people to regularly attend school.

Our teachers promote and monitor regular attendance at school and all our schools have effective measures in place to record attendance and follow up student absences promptly. They are guided by the School Attendance policy which details the management of non-attendance.

Workforce information

Workforce composition

Position	FTE*
Principal(s)	1
Classroom Teacher(s)	1
School Administration and Support Staff	1.19

*Full Time Equivalent

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce composition

The Department actively supports the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander employees through the use of identified positions, and scholarship opportunities to become a teacher and by providing a culturally safe workplace. As of 2020, 3.7% of the Department's overall workforce identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People.

Workforce ATSI

Staff type	Benchmark ¹	2020 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation ²
School Support	3.30%	6.30%
Teachers	3.30%	2.80%

Note 1 - The NSW Public Sector Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2014-17 introduced an aspirational target of 1.8% by 2021 for each of the sector's salary bands. If the aspirational target of 1.8% is achieved in salary bands not currently at or above 1.8%, the cumulative representation of Aboriginal employees in the sector is expected to reach 3.3%.

Note 2 - Representation of diversity groups are calculated as the estimated number of staff in each group divided by the total number of staff. These statistics have been weighted to estimate the representation of diversity groups in the workforce, where diversity survey response rates were less than 100 per cent. The total number of staff is based on a headcount of permanent and temporary employees.

Teacher qualifications

All casual, temporary and permanent teachers in NSW public schools must hold a NSW Department of Education approval to teach. Teachers with approval to teach must be accredited with the NSW Education Standards Authority, and hold a recognised teaching degree. All NSW teachers must hold a valid NSW Working With Children Check clearance.

Professional learning and teacher accreditation

Professional learning is core to enabling staff to improve their practice. Professional learning includes five student-free School Development Days and induction programs for staff new to our school and/or system. These days are used to improve the capacity of teaching and non-teaching staff in line with school and Departmental priorities.

In 2020, an additional School Development Day was included at the start of Term 2 to assist school leaders, teachers and support staff to focus on the wellbeing of students and continuity of education, such as online and remote learning.

During some of the 2020 all PLEEC staff attended teacher professional learning (TPL) as part of their PDP's. As a part of that plan, each teacher is required to attend at least 18 hours of both registered and non-registered TPL time per year. This ensures every 5 years there is at least 50 hours of registered and 50 hours of non-registered (TPL), as part of the mandatory teacher accreditation maintenance. In 2020 PLEEC continued to collaborate with other EEC's in the Sydney region in developing and hosting staff development days (mostly via Zoom). This collegial sharing of professional knowledge, skills and resources has resulted in increased staff capacity and in the delivery of more student learning outcomes across all participating EEC's.

Other professional learning days led and attended by PLEEC staff in 2020 included:

- Annual 2020 PPA Conference attended by the Principal;
- Various EEC professional learning opportunities - PLEEC SAM
- Various other finance professional learning workshops - PLEEC SAM;
- Annual face to face anaphylaxis and CPR mandatory training; All staff
- Annual 2020 three day EZEC Conference held at Ilawarra EEC; All PLEEC teachers;
- Annual 2020 three day NSW EEC 'Zoom' Principals Conference held from Observatory Hill EEC; Principal
- PLEEC's ongoing presence at the 'NSW EZEC Collaborative Practices Team. The aim is collaborative development and implementation of overall EZEC targets, strategies and resources to promote excellence in the domains of learning, teaching and leading, as part of the 'School Excellence Framework', with PLEEC leading the 'Education for Sustainability' inschools curriculum initiative. Principal;

Financial information

Financial summary

The information provided in the financial summary includes reporting from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020. The Principal is responsible for the financial management of the school and ensuring all school funds are managed in line with Department policy requirements.

	2020 Actual (\$)
Opening Balance	539,381
Revenue	842,204
Appropriation	458,329
Grants and contributions	382,068
Investment income	1,807
Expenses	-840,988
Employee related	-793,949
Operating expenses	-47,039
Surplus / deficit for the year	1,215
Closing Balance	540,596

Figures presented in this report may be subject to rounding so may not reconcile exactly with the bottom line totals, which are calculated without any rounding.

Financial summary - Equity loadings

The equity loading data is the main component of the 'Appropriation' line item of the financial summary above.

	2020 Approved SBA (\$)
Targeted Total	0
Equity Total	0
Equity - Aboriginal	0
Equity - Socio-economic	0
Equity - Language	0
Equity - Disability	0
Base Total	447,693
Base - Per Capita	14,430
Base - Location	324
Base - Other	432,939
Other Total	10,600
Grand Total	458,293

Figures presented in this report may be subject to rounding so may not reconcile exactly with the bottom line totals, which are calculated without any rounding.

Parent/caregiver, student, teacher satisfaction

PLEEC visiting teacher surveys are used to monitor and track student and school performance. PLEEC works collaboratively with its visiting schools in gathering student assessment data explicitly based on the fieldwork programs provided so student progress can be monitored.

Overall in 2020, PLEEC again achieved very highly in both student and staff evaluations. For example, in Question 2 of our teacher evaluation 'The program provided a stimulating learning environment, and a variety of experiences to enhance students' engagement with the environment', had over **97%** of teachers give the program the top scores of 4 or 5. In Question 7, 'The staff were knowledgeable about the topics being taught, and interacted well with the students', had **100%** of teachers give the program the top scores of 4 or 5.

This is a great result and evidence of learning for PLEEC and we will continue to collect this important student learning impact data in 2021.

Some of our 2020 'Best part of the Day' Teacher Evaluation Comments included:

"The teachers were fantastic. Mr Clever was very funny and that engaged the students, especially those who have attention and behaviour issues".

"It was an amazing experience for the students and the staff were fantastic. They made the day interesting and fun. Thank you!".

"Well organised and flexible enough to fit in with our requirements. A great day for our students, many thanks".

"The teachers were very knowledgeable of the environment at the lakes and teachers were very engaging and obviously enjoyed working with the students".

The teachers' enthusiasm and passion for the subject area and the environment they work in had a positive influence on our students and their learning".

Overall, these are indicative of PLEEC's everyday performance and the impact we have on student learning.

Policy requirements

Aboriginal Education Policy

The responsibility for enacting the Aboriginal Education Policy rests with all Departmental staff. The policy should underpin and inform planning, teaching practice and approaches to educational leadership in all educational settings.

Evidence of effective implementation of the policy included:

- Establishing, building and strengthening relationships with the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Aboriginal people and communities.
- Providing, in partnership with Aboriginal people and communities, education which promotes quality teaching, is engaging, and is culturally appropriate and relevant.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will match or better the outcomes of the broader student population.
- Implementation of Personalised Learning Pathways for all Aboriginal students in a school culture of high expectations.

Anti-Racism Policy

All teachers are responsible for supporting students to develop an understanding of racism and discrimination and the impact these may have on individuals and the broader community. Principals are responsible for examining school practices and procedures to ensure they are consistent with the policy. All schools have an Anti-Racism Contact Officer who is trained to respond to concerns in relation to racism.

Multicultural Education Policy

Teachers address the specific learning and wellbeing needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds through their teaching and learning programs. Principals are responsible for ensuring that school policies, programs and practices respond to the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of the school community, and provide opportunities that enable all students to achieve equitable education and social outcomes.