



Ziggy, Blue Gum Community School's wellbeing dog

"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."

~ William Butler Yeats

Blue Gum Community School

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

BLUE GUM COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Primary/Middle/High School Campus
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Blue Gum Community School is an initiative of, and auspiced by, Best-Practice Education Group Ltd, a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. (ABN 67 081 081 423)



SCHOOL CONTEXT

Blue Gum Community School is a small community-based, secular independent school offering education programs for 0-16 year olds. Located in Canberra, Australia, Blue Gum is 'Australian-made' and named after a robust Australian native eucalypt tree. Our school values our Australian context, environment and inheritance, but connects globally – sharing with, and learning from, educators in other cultures. Blue Gum adopts a personalised, strengths-based approach to education where *every* student can be a successful, robust learner. Our smallness is our strength, offering teaching teams differing opportunities to work one-on-one or in small groups or with the whole class, as needed, for teacher-led skills workshops or open-ended in-depth research explorations that are responsive to students' interests/questions. Educators can also be flexible in ensuring that the education program responds to contemporary happenings and to the needs/interests of the community, as well as curriculum guidelines. Influential reference points include the Reggio Emilia experience, Project-Based Learning, Slow Schooling, Big Picture Education, Nature Education, Place-Based Education, Positive Psychology etc.

Families choose the school because of our strengths-based educational philosophy and our reputation for offering a personalised approach to learning that is highly responsive to the uniqueness and strengths/needs of each student, and offers learning opportunities imbedded in authentic/real-life experiences and research wherever possible. As a small school with small class sizes, where social/emotional development is as important as academic success, students from a wide range of backgrounds feel safe and can learn at their own pace. Families generally join the school for our Playgroup (0-2 years) and Preschool (3-5 years) programs, but then value the seamless continuation of our strengths-based educational approach into the primary/middle/high school years. Other students may join the school at a later date e.g. on moving to Canberra after enjoying the benefits of a small community school elsewhere; or after becoming disenchanted with, or disengaged from, traditional schooling options. Because our educational approach has a strong interplay with different layers of community, it particularly suits students/families who are creative independent thinkers (or aspire to be!).

2021

School facts

School sector	Non-government
School type	Combined
Year range	K-10
Location	Major Cities

School staff

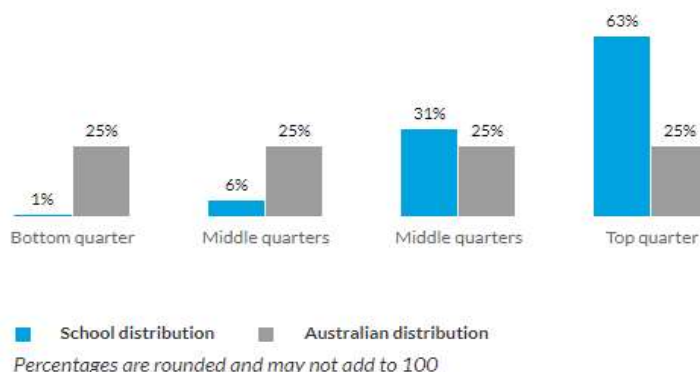
Teaching staff	16
Full-time equivalent teaching staff	15.6
Non-teaching staff	6
Full-time equivalent non-teaching staff	2.6

Student background

Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA)

School ICSEA value	1131
Average ICSEA value	1000
School ICSEA percentile	92

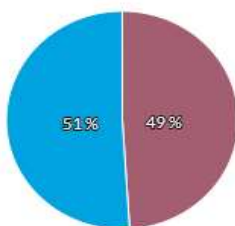
Distribution of Socio-Educational Advantage (SEA)



Students

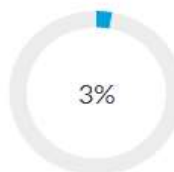
Total enrolments: 161

- Boys 82
- Girls 79



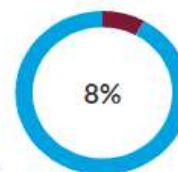
Full-time equivalent enrolments: 161.0

Indigenous students



Language background other than English

- Yes (8%)
- No (93%)
- Not stated (0%)



(from My School website - <https://www.myschool.edu.au/school/49983>)

TEACHER STANDARDS/QUALIFICATIONS

As required in the ACT jurisdiction, all school classroom teachers employed at Blue Gum Community School possess a 4-year teaching qualification; they are registered with, and satisfy the requirements of, the ACT Teacher Quality Institute (TQI).

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Student attendance rate across the whole school for the whole year = 91%.
(NB: COVID-19 adversely complicated attendance records in 2021.)

Families are notified daily of student non-attendance, and required to provide written confirmation of non-attendance.

NAPLAN (National Program – Literacy And Numeracy)

See *My School* website – www.myschool.edu.au – for details of the published averaged Year level results for students who sat the national NAPLAN tests. Please note that minimum student numbers sitting a test must be satisfied before results are published, i.e. at least 5 students must sit a test, to ensure that individual students' results cannot be identified. NAPLAN results within each Year level are averaged – giving an average across those students. As Blue Gum has very small classes, the average score for a Year level can fluctuate dramatically, depending on the number of students with learning disabilities in that small group. A small group of our students, e.g. 5 students, can produce an average that one year will rank first in the ACT, and the next year will rank last in the ACT, or anywhere in-between, depending on the special needs/capabilities within that group of students. In addition, many families seek to enrol at Blue Gum because of our emphasis on 'hands-on' learning, rather than the emphasis on NAPLAN-style worksheets they have encountered at other schools – these students require intensive teacher support to re-discover their love for learning and their willingness to persevere with educational endeavours they find challenging. Blue Gum students sitting successive NAPLAN tests while at Blue Gum show appropriate progress from their first score to their subsequent NAPLAN test score – a more accurate reflection of student progress. As we are a non-selective school, and because our high ICSEA score of 1131 does not accurately reflect our families nor our school's wealth or advantage (due to an ACT-specific problem), comparisons with other deemed 'similar' schools (i.e. schools with a similar high ICSEA score that are actually both wealthy and selective), are misleading.

PARENT/STUDENT/TEACHER SATISFACTION

PARENTS have an open invitation to speak with their child's classroom teachers every afternoon; are expected to participate in a 2-way written and oral discussion, including 30-minute individual Parent/Teacher Meetings to discuss their child's progress (academic/social/emotional) in primary school, as well as Student-Led Conferences with their parents, educators, peers in secondary school; once-a-Term Class Meetings/Learning Celebrations to share/discuss the learning happening in the classroom with families; once-a-Term Families & Friends of Blue Gum Meetings with the whole school community to discuss generic/school-wide/targeted matters (when COVID-19 allows); a Hierarchy of Complaints policy & process for tackling unresolved issues; & a regular School Evaluation survey for families.

STUDENTS are active participants daily in negotiating their Class learning opportunities, as well as personal student-initiated alternatives. They have direct access to their Class teachers; the Assistant Principal; and the school's Executive Director. Students regularly raise questions/ideas with all three.

TEACHERS/EDUCATORS meet weekly, as a whole group, for Professional Learning discussions; meet weekly, in targeted groups with a mentoring Assistant Principal, to celebrate achievements and successes, discuss challenges and programming/planning; have one full day release each week (or the equivalent spread across the week) for planning/programming etc; participate in an annual written and oral Work Review process, including a lengthy two-way meeting and discussion with the Assistant Principal and Executive Director.

INCOME BY FUNDING SOURCE

Australian Government funding	\$ 1,319,257	
ACT Government funding	\$ 430,969	
<u>Fees/charges/parent contributions</u>	<u>\$ 3,734,647</u>	<u>\$5,484,873</u>

CAPITAL WORKS PROJECTS

ART STUDIO:

In 2021, assisted by a *Better Schools for our Kids* capital works grant from the ACT Government, a beautiful award-winning Art Studio was built at our Dickson Campus for our preschoolers.



SCIENCE LAB/PHOTOGRAPHY DARKROOM:

During 2021, work also commenced on a Science Laboratory & Black-and-White Photography Darkroom for our secondary school students at our Hackett Campus, assisted by a capital works grant from the Federal Government. Mock-up images below.



HORNSBY CAMPUS:

2021 also saw the sterling efforts of Jill McLachlan rewarded with children's services and planning approval for our preschool program and building works at our beautiful heritage-listed building and grounds in Hornsby. Next target – school registration for Kindergarten!

