

It's an adventure: Pre-service teachers serve and see in the NT

Brenton Stacey

Avondale University, Cooranbong, NSW

brenton.stacey@avondale.edu.au

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Introduction

Summer starts early in the Northern Territory. This is what our students discovered during school placements that introduced them to the ministry of teaching in indigenous culture.



Figure 1: Chloe Macgillivray teaching a Grades 3 and 4 Science class at Marrara Christin College

Thirteen pre-service teachers have just returned from the Top End after three weeks of professional experience in Darwin. It's a cool destination that's not, says secondary course convenor Dr Jason Hinze. With daytime temperatures in the low to mid-30s, "we felt like we'd travelled to another country." Arts and teaching student Megan Wilson describes the placement as an "adventure," and why not, with the lush waterholes and misty waterfalls of Litchfield National Park and the rugged and remote beauty of Kakadu National Park among the destinations. The students even got to try deep-sea fishing.

But the real catch is the schools. The "enthusiastic" support of Marrara Christian College and Palmerston Christian School creates a sense of belonging, which encourages the students to "feel confident experimenting and being themselves in the classroom," says Jason.

And that's particularly important when teaching indigenous students. "They're so imaginative and playful," says Joel Bennetts, who taught a Year 7-9 class of up to 15 students. "We were using green spray paint, so one of the boys went haywire trying to make the grass green again." The students valued relationships. "Every boy came up to me on my first day, shook my hand and wanted to know my name. They were the most welcoming students."

Megan had a more challenging first day. "The level of energy overwhelmed me. It was the first day of term, so everyone was excited to be back." The experience "reset my expectations." But teaching became easier as the students got to know Megan. "Building relationships is probably the best part." And that goes for outside of the classroom, too. "Coming on placement with your friends makes dealing with challenges easier," says Megan. "They get it because they're experiencing the same thing."

The Top End trip doubles as a service learning initiative called Ministry of Teaching Overseas, which Jason developed and coordinates. About 350 students have participated in a MOTO trip since 2007, with India, Cambodia, Nepal and Tonga the previous destinations. "We want our students to use their God-given gifts from day one of their course," says Jason, "the gifts of teaching, of connecting with children and of showing what a life with Christ looks like." He enjoys leading the trips because "they remind me Avondale exists to train young adults to go into the world." **TEACH**

Author information:

Brenton Stacey is the Public Relations and Philanthropy Officer at Avondale University, being an experienced Public Relations Officer with a demonstrated history of working as a communicator and fundraiser in the higher education sector. Skilled in relationship building, news and feature writing, editing, event management and public speaking.

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