MCS Primary School

**Tiwi kids achieving literacy**

At Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic School (MCS) our policy is to teach strong English and strong Tiwi.

MCS often receives criticism for children not learning well. Sometimes people blame our bilingual program. But our bilingual program is getting some of the best results compared with other indigenous community schools in the Northern Territory. MCS is the only remote indigenous school in the Territory to have students reach the national benchmarks for English reading and comprehension every year. This is something for the school and community to be proud of.

It is important to understand that children from indigenous communities have very different learning needs to children from mainstream towns. Indigenous kids have very different home lives. Many do not attend school regularly, and not many parents read/write with their children at home. So, a program that works in a school in Darwin or Melbourne is not going to work in a remote indigenous community.

When Tiwi kids first start school

- They can speak and understand a lot of Tiwi words, but few English words
- They have an understanding of Tiwi grammar, but very little of English
- They know about the culture and lifestyle of Tiwi people, and not much about the cultural context and grammatical patterns of English speakers
- They have usually had little or no experience reading books

When mainstream kids start school:

- They can speak and understand a lot of English words
- They have an understanding of English grammar
- They know about the cultural context and patterns English speakers use
- They are used to looking at books and have parents reading to them at home

So mainstream kids enter school ready to start reading and writing in English. But when Tiwi kids start school, they are not ready to read and write in English because they do not speak and understand the language well enough. To learn to read and write well, the child must understand and speak the language at a basic level. That is why it makes sense to teach Tiwi kids to learn to read and write in Tiwi, which is the language they already understand.

There is a lot of research that backs up this principle, and that is why at MCS we teach kids to read and write in Tiwi first. At the same time they learn oral English (listening and speaking). They have English books read to them and the class talks about and explores the book.

Once they have achieved literacy in Tiwi, and they have learnt to speak and understand English better, then they begin reading and writing in English. We do this in Year 4. Over the next 3 years, they do less Tiwi and more English. Our goal is that at the end of their primary schooling, the children are literate in both English and Tiwi.

Here are some of our students from the past few years who completed primary schooling having achieved good literacy. All these kids are strong in Tiwi and English.

- **Adonis Wommatikimmi, Beatrice Tipungwuti, Sophia Tipuamantumirri** (15-16 year olds)
- **Charlotte Portaminni, Bernardine Babui, Natasha Puatjimi** (14-15 year olds)
- **Louise Murphy, Edwina Portaminni, Daniel Dixon** (13-14 year olds)
- **Mara Murphy, Cosmos Munkara, Stanalisha Coombes** (12-13 year olds)

At the start of this year Louise Murphy and Edwina Portaminni were accepted in to Monivae College in Melbourne for their secondary schooling. We’ve heard excellent reports about the two girls and how well they’re doing at English. Both girls regularly attended school and were strong Tiwi writers in the younger years.

If more kids come to school regularly and have parents who support their learning, then there will be more success stories.
The kids might be having a great time with all the rain we’ve been having but its not such good news for the roads.

Civil Works manager Frank Kennedy alerts everyone to be extra careful when driving in the wet. Conditions on the roads out of town can be particularly dangerous and there have been a few cases of vehicles getting bogged out bush and some people have been stranded overnight.

Drivers are reminded that they are responsible for their own safety and for the safety of their passengers, and to observe community notices or signs advising when roads are closed.

The Civil Works department says that the Local Government only receives funding for normal maintenance of roads, and it isn’t enough to improve the roads very much. They have been trying hard to secure more funds but haven’t had much luck so far, but they’ll keep trying!

Civil Works welcomes Fred Iso, 2nd mechanic, to the team. Fred will be working on getting the aging roadworks machines back on the road.

There is also a new Civil Works Purchasing Officer, E Heenan (her name is pukumani so she will go as Jane—you might remember her from the Tiwi Travel office in Darwin where she used to work sometime back). She is currently organising orders to get cold mix so the Civil Works crew can start patching up the sealed roads.

Unfortunately, while the rain is pelting down, there isn’t much that can be done to repair the roads. Frank Kennedy asks for everyone’s patience and says that the Civil Works team will get stuck in to it as soon as the rains stop.
The Tiwi Language—how it’s changing

By Leonard Freeman, Teacher-Linguist at Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic School

The Tiwi language has changed a lot over the past hundred years. Only some of the older people speak traditional Tiwi. More and more younger people are speaking a kriol. Kriol is a mixture of English and Tiwi.

The problem with kriol is that it is not proper English and it is not proper Tiwi. Speaking kriol makes the Tiwi language become weaker and it also makes it harder for children to learn to speak English correctly.

For bilingual people, it is important to learn to speak both languages properly, otherwise you will not have one or the other. In other countries like France, Germany, India, China etc, bilingual people speak, read and write in their own language as well as in English. They learn English while maintaining their own languages.

Many aboriginal languages around Australia have been lost forever. In some of these places, the local people are now working hard to bring back their lost languages. It is a very difficult thing to do after the language has died out.

So if keeping the Tiwi language strong is important to you, think about what language you use when speaking to your children. Do you speak to them in proper Tiwi or do you use kriol?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KRIOL/ENGLISH</th>
<th>TIWI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Climbupi (climb up)</td>
<td>tayawurlari / tayakilinga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writimi (write)</td>
<td>nyirrajilarlinga / jilarlinga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutim (cut)</td>
<td>tamakanya / tamankanya / tawurrini / tamajingimpa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hurry up</td>
<td>murruka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>look</td>
<td>tayakurluwunyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>play</td>
<td>pwakayini / wulinjini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makim (make)</td>
<td>takirimi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makeim uppi (make up—telling lies)</td>
<td>kunyani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proki proki (frog)</td>
<td>arlijarraka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pikipiki (pig)</td>
<td>rawaturrunga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pijipi (fish)</td>
<td>miputi / muputi / miputuwi / muputuwi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bustimupi! (bust him up)</td>
<td>Awarrawu! Pirrara, pirrila!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cookim (cook)</td>
<td>tayawumi yurrungurni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killim (kill or hit)</td>
<td>tapirni</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MIXTURE</th>
<th>TIWI</th>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ngagu</td>
<td>ngawurlipariyi / ngawuta</td>
<td>we’ll go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ja luki</td>
<td>tayakurluwunyi</td>
<td>look at me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngajirti humbugi</td>
<td>ngajiti ngintayaparri</td>
<td>don’t humbug/annoy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngarra tellim ngiya</td>
<td>ngarra yimintiyara</td>
<td>he told me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngajirri jump</td>
<td>ngajiti kutupi</td>
<td>don’t jump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ajirri pilipim ngiya</td>
<td>ngajiti kuwa ngimpirimi ngiya</td>
<td>you don’t believe me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>likim ajirri / ajirri likim</td>
<td>puranji ngarimuwaajirri</td>
<td>we like each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngajirri lukajirri</td>
<td>ngajiti kilipigajirri</td>
<td>don’t look at each other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By Anthea Oerloff, Public Health Nutritionist & Dietitian

Hi Everyone! It’s great to be able to provide you all with my nutrition hints and tips again. To start off the year I thought I’d give you some information on what’s in the popular food and drinks that people choose. Hopefully it will help you decide which food or drink to choose the next time you are at the store or takeaway.

**Breakfast choices:**

😊 Wheat biscuits have good amounts of vitamins, fibre, iron and folate. They are low in sugar.

😊 Cereals like choc pops are too high in sugar.

**Lunch and dinner choices:**

😊 Stew with meat, rice and vegetables or meat and salad sandwiches have vitamins, iron, folate and other good things.

😊 Greasy takeaway like hot chips, pie and chicken wing are too high in fat and salt.

**Snack choices:**

😊 Snacks like fruit and yoghurt have vitamins, minerals, fibre and many other good things.

😊 Potato crisps and sweet biscuits are too high in fat, sugar and salt.

**Drink choices:**

😊 Water is the best drink, it keeps our body clean and healthy. Milk is good too, it has calcium and protein for a strong body.

😊 Sweet drinks like cordial and soft drinks are too high in sugar.

It’s easy to make the better choice when it comes to your food and drinks, go ahead and start today!

(08) 89 22 8236    nt.gov.au/health
As part of the AFL’s Kick Start Program a football carnival was held on Friday 7th March to promote healthy eating and exercise.

Special guest, Peter “Spider” Everitt from the Sydney Swans was a big hit with the kids and adults too! A great lunch was provided by Subway and Coca Cola Mount Franklin water.

A big “thank you” to the organisers, especially to Xavier from Auskick, MCS Year 3 teacher Lucas, Alice and Bill from Sport and Rec, the guys from Diversionary and the Tiwi Bombers for all their help.
Superstars outshine the Eagles!

The Tapalinga Superstars secured their place in the Grand Final after a tough match against Rankuwula on Saturday.

After a very close first half, Tapalinga surged ahead and never looked back. The final score was Tapalinga 12-5 (77) to Rankuwula’s 9-9 (63).

Brothers in arms: Tapalinga players console their opponent

All set for a Tapalinga vs Imalu Grand Final next weekend!