

Case study

Yarrabah State School

Details

What:

Yarrabah State School partnered with the Queensland Music Festival (QMF) to deliver workshops for students with leading Indigenous musicians in songwriting, music theory and practice.

Nathan Schreiber, the Languages other than English (LOTE) teacher, assisted by community member Elverina Johnson, incorporated traditional languages into the program. Lead facilitator, Shellie Morris is a successful Indigenous artist who provided leadership within a culturally diverse team of workshop facilitators.

Excited students were also treated to a visit to the school from The Wiggles organised by QMF Artistic Director, Katie Noonan, and they learned a Wiggles song in local language to sing with the Wiggles during their visit.

The project culminated in performances by the students at the Yarrabah State School's 50th Anniversary and also at the Yarrabah Band Festival, watched by an audience of over three thousand people, including extended family members of the students.

When:

October 2015 to November 2016

Where:

Yarrabah, Queensland

Arts Queensland contribution:

\$20,000 – Artist in Residence Program



Workshop with Yarrabah State School students. Photo: Queensland Music Festival

Key stats:

- 6 artists
- 256 students
- 4 educators

Contact for further information:

Name: Wendy Mansell, QMF
Website: www.qmf.org.au

Links:

[Video of the Yarrabah/QMF collaboration](#)

[ABC News story of The Wiggles visit](#)

Outcomes

- Teachers saw how an artistic approach such as songwriting could contribute to teaching and learning outcomes such as creative expression, writing, team work and responsibility toward one another. Students were very engaged in the workshop and developed confidence to perform in front of audiences.
- Students embraced the opportunity to explore current issues impacting their community, with outcomes captured in recordings, including a rap song. There was a strong focus on the use of local language in the sessions.
- Participation in the Yarrabah Band Festival, a high profile community event valued by the wider community, promoted intergenerational engagement and created a strong sense of relevance for students, who saw a direct outcome of what they had worked on in school. Teacher feedback indicated that there was an increase in the level of engagement that parents and caregivers have with the school.



The Wiggles and Katie Noonan visit Yarrabah State School.
Image courtesy: Yarrabah SS, QMF and The Wiggles

Learnings and reflections

The workshop facilitators all had prior experience working with the community in Yarrabah, as did lead facilitator Shellie Morris. They found that these existing relationships underpinned a strong rapport with students and the broader community and were critical to the program's success. They also found that the involvement with the Yarrabah Band Festival was a strong motivator for the students:

The opportunity to build on the Yarrabah Band Festival initiative – which is now in its fourth year, proved very beneficial, both in terms of the trust and communication that the team had already developed, and the opportunity to show students how their persistence at school is important and relevant in other areas of life.

Being able to connect the progress they are making in music with what inspirational role models were doing onstage was a powerful motivator for many students, particularly in seeing successful Indigenous role models. Involvement in the Festival also delivered important messages about community, pride and self-respect.