



Darwin, Australia

Larrakeyah Primary School

How to build healthy lives and healthy futures



**WORLD'S
BEST SCHOOL**
Supporting
Healthy Lives

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**WORLD'S
BEST SCHOOL
PRIZES**

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Introduction

Larrakeyah Primary School, a public school in Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia, designed a model that helps prepare its students for the future by nurturing them holistically. This programme improves students' overall wellbeing as well as their career prospects. The QUEST programme is designed to connect and inspire, bringing real-life contexts to the classroom through the process of inquiry.



Profile:



Country:

Australia



Region:

Darwin, Northern Territory



School type:

Public School



Location area:

Urban



Student population:

301 to 500



Prize Category:

Supporting Healthy Lives

“As a parent, and the chair of the Larrakeyah Primary School, I am exceptionally proud of the success of LPS in preparing students for life.”

**– Chad Banfield,
Chairperson of
Larrakeyah Primary
School Board**



In-depth look

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGE

Larrakeyah Primary School is an accredited Cambridge International School, the first public school to be granted such a status in the Northern Territory. Its students come from diverse backgrounds with 40% speaking a second language at home while 20% having special needs and 2% identifying as Aboriginal.

The school has been on a journey of continuous improvement for several years, growing in enrolments throughout its time and has become an international school of choice. Its future-focused teaching and learning programmes have embraced 21st Century Learning and STEAM, playing a major part in the success the school has experienced on both an academic and a leadership level.

The school's leadership team analysed data collected through the annual Parent Perception Survey, which showed parents wanted to see a programme that nurtured the entire learning experience and prepared students for their future careers. The faculty conducted research into the best teaching practices to achieve this, which highlighted the importance of learning through inquiry. The next challenges were to ideate, develop and administer a programme that would suit its student needs.



“[Students] have expressed a strong sense of who they are and what they want to be in the future and therefore when they are given those choices of activities to participate in, they gravitate to one that will help them feel fulfilled and happier.”

- Carmel Spruhan, Upper Primary Senior Teacher



EXPERTISE AND APPROACH

The aim of the QUEST programme is to allow students to prepare for jobs that do not yet exist by developing the 21st Century Skills of Collaboration, Creativity, Communication and Critical Thinking. Teachers facilitate a small group of students and focus on an area of inquiry, working with industry professionals and members of the community to obtain specific knowledge and skills.

Students can choose projects they are passionate about, leading to higher engagement. Working with industry professionals allows students to explore and discover careers that are of interest to them, eliminating worries about their career prospects. One student when asked why he decided to participate said, “I chose that group because I love nature, I want to be an engineer and to be able to model my buildings on nature”. As he explained his reasoning to a teacher, he referred to the work of other successful engineers, citing a building that’s based on the shape of a spider’s web and being inspired by that concept.

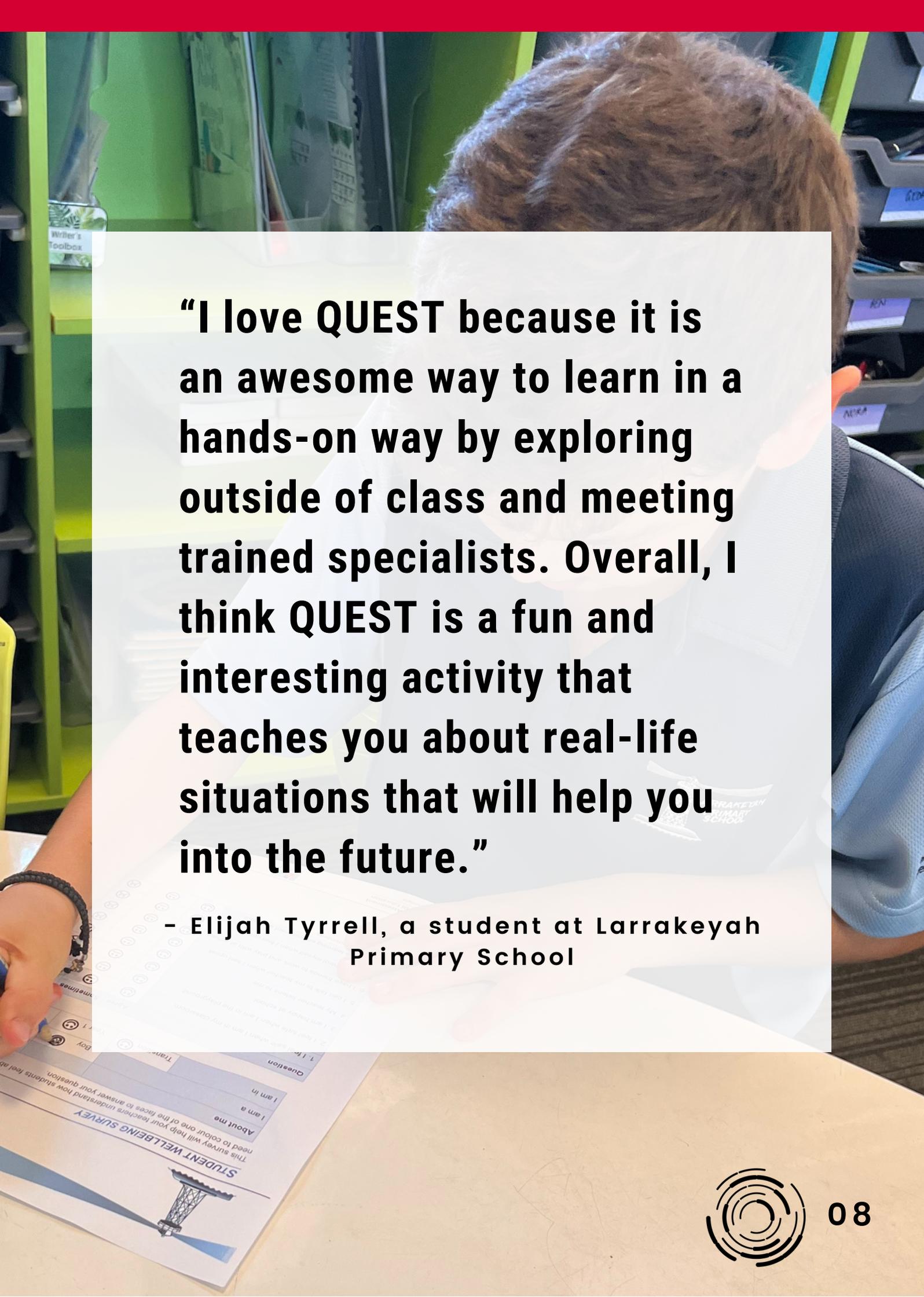
The QUEST projects that students pursue culminate with an Expo of Learning, whereby all learning is showcased by the participants back to industry professionals, parents, students and Department of Education representatives. QUEST shows students their potential, harking back to the saying, ‘they can’t be what they can’t see’ and encourages pupils to take an active interest in sharing what they learned with not only their parents but with members of the wider community.



Larrakeyah Primary School also uses an app to help students monitor their own social and emotional learning. It helps the user monitor their moods and has helped students become more self-aware of their emotions and gain the resilience they need to bounce back from setbacks more quickly. The school also has a Cooking and Gardening Programme supporting health, hygiene and nutrition. Some of the food used in school meals is grown in the school garden and the students play an active part in helping grow the produce. The school runs a 'Friends at Break Programme' in the library during each recess to promote social skills and friendships between students.

In addition to this, the school has encouraged students to take the lead; the Student Leadership Team allows students from Grades 3 to 6 to become leaders among the younger students. There is a transition to Primary School Programme which invites preschool students to visit 'Transition' classes each week. This experience gives preschool students a feel for their new school lives making the transition to primary school seamless. The school provides a creative outlet throughout the whole school performance where students can be part of the main cast in an acting role or participate in an extension dance group.



A student with brown hair, wearing a white shirt, is looking at a tablet. The background shows a classroom with green shelves and a 'Writer's Toolbox' sign. A semi-transparent white box contains a quote.

“I love QUEST because it is an awesome way to learn in a hands-on way by exploring outside of class and meeting trained specialists. Overall, I think QUEST is a fun and interesting activity that teaches you about real-life situations that will help you into the future.”

- Elijah Tyrrell, a student at Larrakeyah Primary School



OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

QUEST helps students feel connected and engaged in learning. It provides opportunities for growth and development for staff, students, and the wider community. It also allows all students to feel successful and have a chance to flourish as they are not graded on how well they can read, write or complete Mathematics sums. Instead, they are assessed on their ability to use 21st Century Skills and communicate their findings with external bodies.

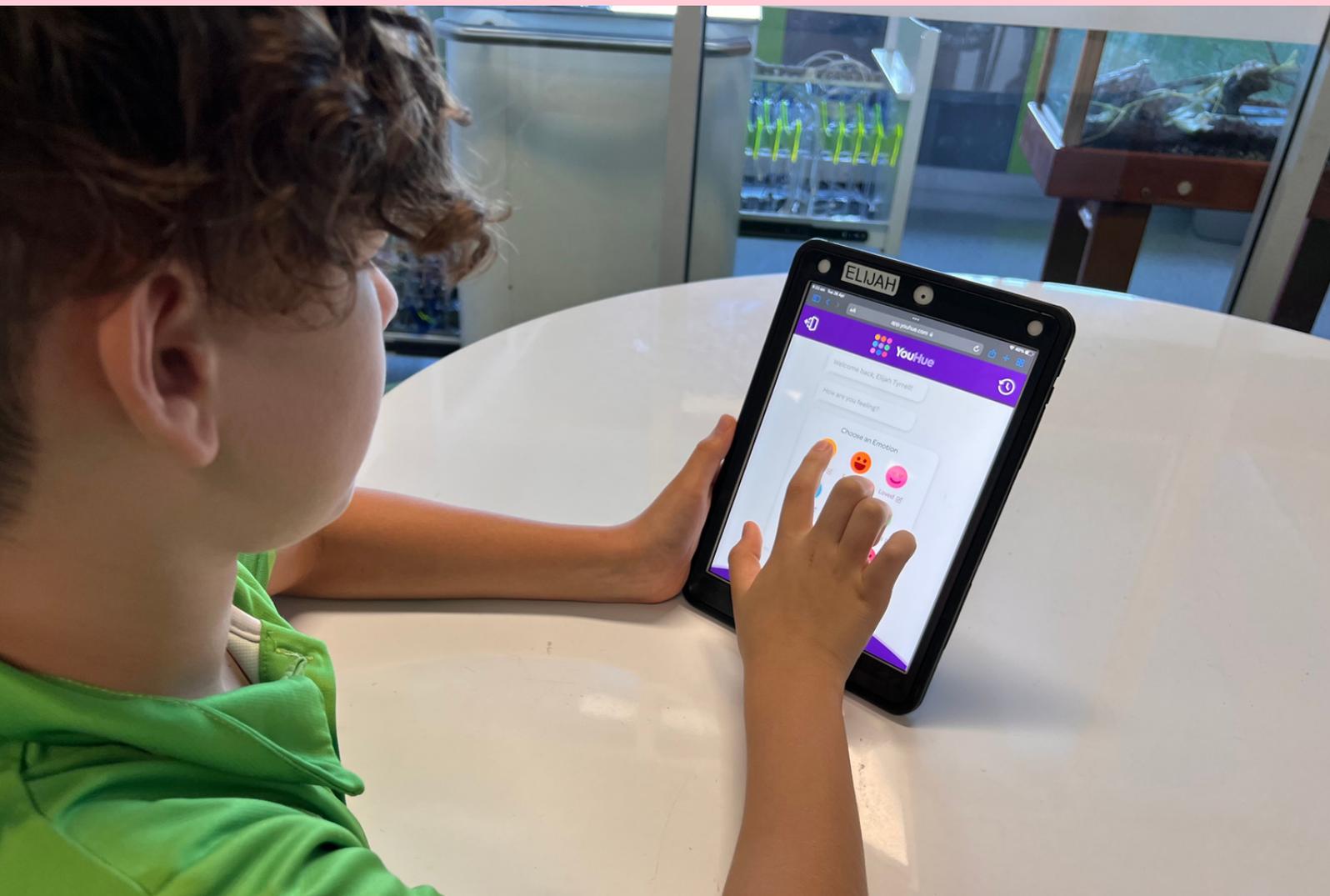
The attitude of all students engaged in the programme exudes positivity and a real willingness and desire to achieve the focus of the inquiry and teach others about their project. Students have demonstrated growth in their abilities to apply the 4Cs for 21st Century Learning beyond the QUEST programme, applying this to all areas of their learning in the classroom and beyond.

Students are now more adept at identifying issues in their own community and developing strategies for positive transformations allowing students to become optimistic problem solvers.

However, the success of QUEST also highlighted an additional challenge to the school faculty, which assumed students enjoyed the benefits that came with QUEST but were unsure how to measure students' emotions towards the programme. At the time there wasn't enough relevant data that informed the faculty of the student's feelings towards the programme. More research was undertaken, and the school discovered YouHue, a classroom app that tracks moods to assist students in their own social and emotional learning.



The implementation of YouHue has helped students with their self-awareness. It continues to help them identify how they feel throughout different times of the day, privately. Being emotionally aware helps the school's students to bounce back from setbacks more quickly and helps them to self-regulate their emotions.



Key Steps



RESEARCH INTO BEST PRACTICES

Time was invested in research about the best educational practices and they looked into schools that are leading in their respective fields. If the school felt that there were other institutions it could learn from, a visit was planned.



DEVISING THE IDEA OF QUEST

The idea of QUEST was conceived and a team of teachers devised a plan to implement it into the school's educational model. Through the planning stages of QUEST, it was discovered that the programme would also address some of the Grade 6 students' concerns around commencing secondary education.



QUEST was set up to act like an elective and encouraged students to select a project based on their passions, interests, and aspirations.



LEARNING FROM OTHERS

A team of teachers had the opportunity to visit a few leading schools in Melbourne. It was at these schools that they witnessed the youngest of students embrace lines of inquiry and present their findings to their peers. The group of teachers passed on this information to the Innovation Focus team – a team of teachers who meet 3 times a term to look at how to bring innovative practices to the classroom. They worked together to develop the inquiry model at Larrakeyah Primary School.



FEEDBACK ON QUEST

After the first year of QUEST was completed, the school reflected on the success of the programme with those who had been involved. It wanted to gain some understanding of what worked and what could change for future year groups. A Google Form was created and Grade 5 and 6 students completed it anonymously.



The questions in the survey asked students what they liked about their project, what they didn't like, suggestions for improvements, and ideas around future topics.



REGULAR MEETINGS

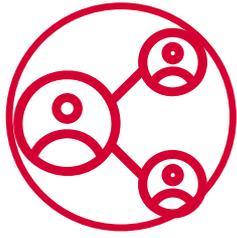
The leadership team meet regularly to discuss the next steps for the school. All types of data were taken into consideration to ensure the right goals were set for the school moving forward.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The school then began to invest in professional development opportunities for teaching staff. The professional development assisted staff with analysing the student wellbeing data. Staff were guided by the data team to respond to the trends outlined in the survey and to address concerns outlined by the student cohort. Staff monitor YouHue check-ins daily, identifying the trends of their students.





SHARING EXPERTISE

The school shares and promotes its expertise within the school and in the wider community, using a range of different media. It promotes students' health and wellbeing through the school's website, sharing articles about its programmes in the school's newsletter.



Advice and Guidance

Using the knowledge of the community was a key lesson for the school when it developed this expertise and it is important to listen closely to students' voices – students can relay what is and isn't working and provide vital feedback about initiatives. The school's principal, Fathma Mauger, recommended engaging with other schools to gain more insight into how best to implement this type of programme, saying "from our research we know how important it is to learn from other schools because I think that really drives school improvement". Finally, any successes or achievements should be celebrated and promoted so that other schools and institutions can be aware of what their peers are doing and be inspired to replicate it in their own school communities.

More information

 <https://larrakeyahprimary.com.au>

 [Education NT](#)

Watch this [school's video](#)

