

# Spotlight

## **Pre-service teacher placements beyond urban settings**

**June 2022**



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## The key messages in this Spotlight reveal that:

- ⚡ Placements beyond urban schools and early childhood settings offer significant learning opportunities for pre-service teachers
- ⚡ Ensuring communities, students and schools/early childhood settings have positive experiences during pre-service teacher placements is crucial
- ⚡ Successful placements hinge on strong relationships between ITE providers, placement settings and communities, and pre-service teachers
- ⚡ There are various supports ITE providers can have in place to make professional experience placements a positive experience for pre-service teachers, as well as for placement settings and communities

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*This Spotlight was written in consultation with the Northern Territory Department of Education. AITSL also acknowledges the valuable insight and contribution from academics and initial teacher education professionals across Australia.*

*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are advised that this publication may contain the names and images of deceased people.*

# Introduction

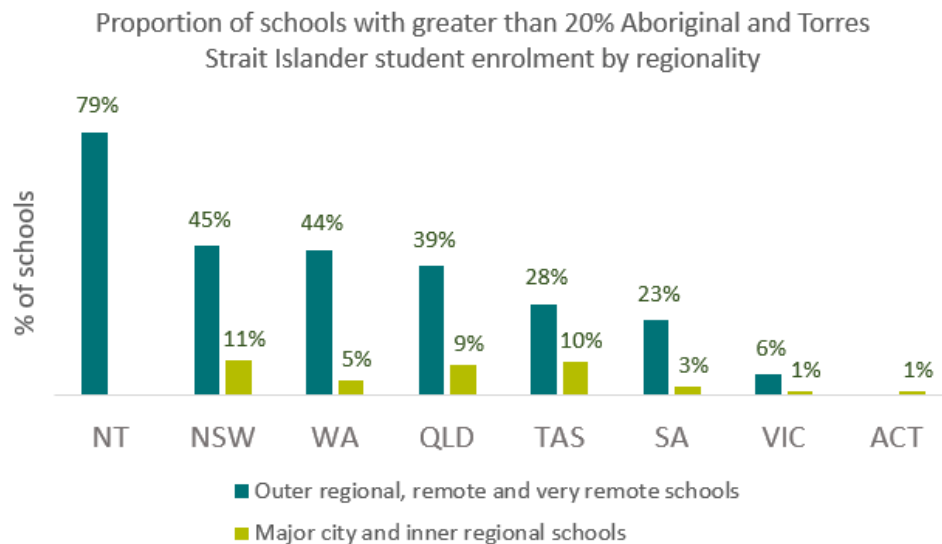
Effective initial teacher education (ITE) prepares Graduate teachers with the skills and expertise to confidently and competently lead a classroom of diverse learners and to respond appropriately to their differentiated needs. Professional experience placements are an important component of ITE programs as they give pre-service teachers the opportunity to develop and demonstrate their skills through a supported, workplace-based learning experience. However, they can be a negative experience for learners, their families, and the community if pre-service teachers are unprepared for the classroom, school and local community contexts. The school community's experience of the placement is just as important as the pre-service teacher's learning experience.

Of the 9,620 schools across Australia, more than one fifth (22%,  $n=2,067$ ) are in outer regional, remote or very remote locations. Pre-service teachers are more likely to consider teaching in a regional or remote school if they have successfully completed a placement in these contexts (Young et al., 2018). Furthermore, pre-service teachers who have already decided they want to teach in regional and remote communities often find the experience reinforces or confirms their decision (Halsey, 2009). With shortages of qualified teachers in some remote regions of Australia, ensuring that pre-service teachers are able to undertake placements in these locations is vital.

Strong, long-term relationships between providers and placement communities help to foster quality pre-service teacher placements (Anderson et al., 2019; le Cornu, 2015). Successful professional experience placements, for both the community and pre-service teacher, depend largely on the quality of preparation the pre-service teacher has received through their ITE program. The support pre-service teachers receive during their placement from both their provider and the community also helps to shape the success of their professional experience (Capraro et al., 2010; le Cornu, 2015).

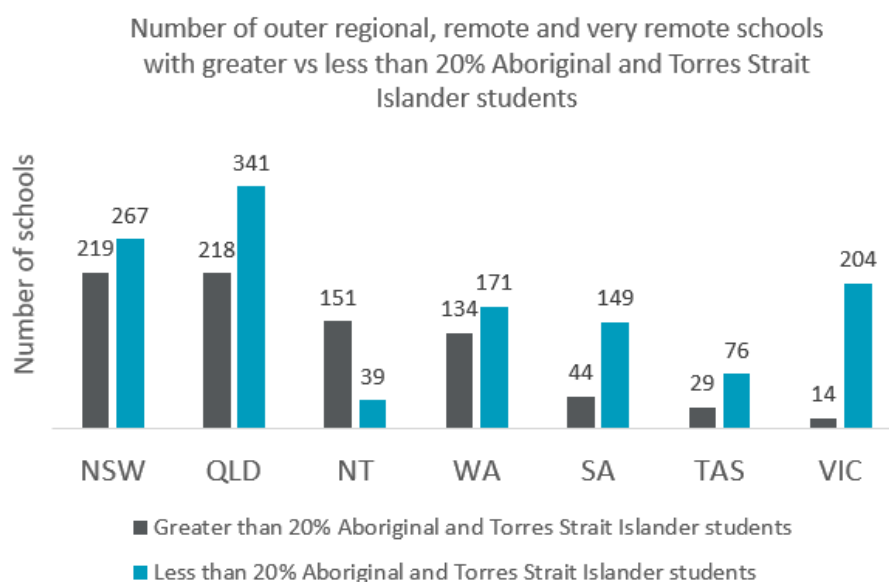
Placements in regional and remote schools may give pre-service teachers an opportunity to work closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and relatively large cohorts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Across the country, a larger proportion of schools in outer regional, remote and very remote areas have a student body in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students comprise more than one fifth of enrolments than in major cities and inner regional areas<sup>[1]</sup> (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. School enrolment by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student background



In almost 40% (n=809) of outer regional and remote schools, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students comprise more than one fifth of enrolments. In the Northern Territory, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students comprise more than one fifth of student enrolments in the majority (79%) of outer regional and remote schools (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Outer regional, remote and very remote school enrolment by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student background



Expectations for beginning teachers are set out in the Graduate career stage of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. These expectations apply across all contexts, including regional and remote schools. Throughout this article the term “rural” is only utilised where the research referenced specifically uses that term. While “rural” is not a well-defined geographical area, in these instances it is likely that “rural” schools are inclusive of, or synonymous with, schools in outer regional or remote Australia.

This Spotlight also showcases three programs and partnerships demonstrating evidence-informed approaches to preparing, supporting and facilitating pre-service teacher placements in outer regional and remote Australian schools and early childhood settings. These programs are presented as case studies throughout the Spotlight. In some instances, semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives from these institutions, and responses are described verbatim where possible. AITSL would like to thank participants for providing their time and expertise to form case studies of successful practices. This information may help inform other ITE providers, pre-service teachers and schools, with the ultimate aim of improving education across regional and remote Australia.

## Before placement

While there are considerable benefits to regional and remote placements, for many pre-service teachers there are also challenges involved, including logistical barriers like accommodation and travel, as well as the personal challenge of being away from employment and family commitments for a period of time (Adie & Barton, 2012; Halsey, 2009). Given these potential barriers to successful remote placements, preparation needs to start long before pre-service teachers enter the school grounds or set foot in a classroom or community. Due to the unique characteristics of regional and remote schools and the significant role they play in community life, pre-service teachers not only need to be classroom-ready, they also need to be school-ready *and* community-ready (Hudson & Hudson, 2019). Preparation that is tailored to regional and remote contexts helps to ensure both pre-service teachers and their students benefit from the experience. Pre-service teachers who have successful, positive placements in rural and remote contexts are well prepared, culturally responsive, resilient and resourceful (Rennie et al., 2018). The relationship between the school community and pre-service teacher should be established before the placement begins, because early connections support pre-service teachers with their transition into the placement schools and classrooms (Adie & Barton, 2012). Where possible, ITE providers should help to build this relationship by involving school communities in the selection process.



📺 Pre-service teachers' ITE programs should help to prepare them for the unique rewards and challenges of a professional experience placement in an outer regional or remote setting.

## Prior learning

Many pre-service teachers complete their ITE program at a metropolitan institution and have limited knowledge of life beyond Australia's major cities and suburban fringes (Heffernan et al., 2016; Trinidad et al., 2014). Courses that highlight the unique characteristics of regional and remote communities, and the challenges teachers and students in these communities face, can help to address this knowledge deficit. An important element of preparing pre-service teachers for success in rural schools and early childhood settings is developing their awareness of how cultural contexts shape their identities and teaching practice (Azano & Stewart, 2015; Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2013). A number of research programs have developed courses and curricula that providers can implement to prepare their ITE students for regional and remote placements.

The Tertiary Educators Rural, Regional and Remote Network (TERRR Network), which was established by educators from four Western Australian universities<sup>[2]</sup>, undertook a research project that aimed to strengthen universities' capacity to prepare pre-service teachers for placements in rural, regional and remote schools (Trinidad et al., 2014). The Network's research revealed that teacher education curricula across Australia are largely silent on issues around teaching in rural, regional and remote contexts. They also noted that other fields, like the health profession, have successfully made rural practice a specialist field that requires unique skills and training and suggested that teacher education could adopt this approach (Boyd et al., 2013).

One output of the project was a pre-service training framework and rural, regional and remote studies curriculum modules linked to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. The introductory module, *Social Networking and Teaching in Rural, Regional and Remote Western Australia*, focused on the role technology can play in helping pre-service teachers address challenges around geographic isolation while on placement in a rural or remote community (Trinidad et al., 2013). The Network also developed teaching guides that covered crucial topics for pre-service teachers embarking on regional and remote placements, including:

- Understanding the impact of remoteness on student learning
- Teaching students from diverse backgrounds in the remote context
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- Engaging in professional learning in the remote context
- Engaging professionally in the remote context
- Teaching and living in remote contexts (Boyd et al., 2013).

Pre-service teachers who have completed units designed to prepare them for rural or remote teaching placements have commented that they were helpful and removed some "fear of the unknown" (Heffernan et al., 2016; Jenkins & Cornish, 2015). This learning is useful for pre-service teachers regardless of where they decide to teach. Engaging with parents and the community, developing and utilising relevant pedagogies, and understanding students' backgrounds, and the impact this has on their learning, are universally applicable and useful skills for any teacher, regardless of their context.

## Engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Pre-service teachers require specialised knowledge and training to undertake placements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. If they are not appropriately prepared, their professional experiences may be influenced by stereotypes and unintentionally perpetuate colonial practices. Pre-service teachers risk marginalising decolonisation agendas if they lack contextual and historic knowledge (Auld et al., 2016).

Under the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* Focus Areas 1.4 and 2.4<sup>[3]</sup>, Graduate teachers are expected to demonstrate broad knowledge and understanding of the impact of culture, cultural identity and linguistic background on the education of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. They are also expected to be able to demonstrate broad knowledge of, understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages. Placements offer pre-service teachers significant opportunities to develop these skills and competencies. These experiences can complement ITE program content, which should embed cultural responsiveness and develop pre-service teachers' understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, societies, cultures, histories and contemporary experiences. The *Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* (Standards and Procedures) require providers to prove that pre-service teachers engaged in their programs have been taught, have practised, and have been assessed against each of the Graduate Teacher Standards, including Focus Areas 1.4 and 2.4.

Specific units on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and cultures can help pre-service teachers develop effective and culturally sensitive pedagogies and engage meaningfully with their students and the broader community (Rennie et al., 2018). The *PREEpared – Partnering for Remote Education Experience* project highlights the importance of ensuring “graduate teachers are well-equipped and expertly prepared to work and teach *within* and *for* diverse geographic communities” (Anderson et al., 2019, p. iv).

### Case study

#### The PREEpared – Partnering for Remote Education Experience project

Formerly known as the Improving Teacher Education for Better Indigenous Outcomes project, the PREEpared project was funded by the Federal Department of Education and Training (formerly the Office of Learning and Teaching) and Monash University from 2016 to 2017. The project's approach to pre-service teacher placements in remote contexts was underpinned by strong school, community and ITE provider relationships. The project's key priority was to foster positive wellbeing and learning outcomes among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students being taught by pre-service teachers. To facilitate this, the project focused on building pre-service teachers' knowledge, expertise and cultural awareness through a developmentally sound and resource-rich ITE curriculum.

As part of the project, researchers developed curriculum and professional experience resources for ITE providers to use to prepare pre-service teachers for placements in schools in remote Aboriginal communities and the Torres Strait. The resources included:

- A literature review providing background information
- A set of protocols and principles to guide remote placement experiences
- An Indigenous Curriculum unit outline for use in ITE programs that focused on Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Education, with topics covering:
  - Protocols of engagement
  - Culture and language
  - Aboriginal identity
  - The history of education policies and practices regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies
  - Personal and professional cultural competence
  - Effective teaching and learning strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
  - Developing culturally responsive curriculum
  - Connecting through the profession to schools and communities
- A capstone professional experience unit divided into pre-, during, and post-placement learning, practice and reflection modules, which incorporated essential videos and resources to guide and strengthen placement experiences (Anderson et al., 2019).

The project team at Monash University established its placement program by first identifying appropriate host schools and building relationships with them. Crucial to this was finding the right contacts within schools and/or communities. The project team also developed an induction pack in consultation with schools and local communities to give to pre-service teachers. This pack included information on the community's geography and environment, cultural and social spaces in the community, languages used in the school and other learning spaces, travel logistics, and health and wellbeing. Schools and communities were given multiple opportunities to contribute to this induction pack.

Pre-service teachers were selected to the program through a rigorous process involving an expression of interest, written application and interview. Selection criteria included their past placement experiences, their level of progress through their degree, their level of cultural competence, work experience, and personal characteristics. Where possible, students were expected to undertake a placement in a school with a high proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students in a context that was familiar to them, before completing a placement in a remote school.

Pre-service teachers were assessed based on whether they were the "right fit" for the context they were to teach in, and schools were involved in their selection. Pre-service teachers were expected to introduce themselves to their school community and to establish a relationship with their supervising teacher and other members of the school community. They also participated in an induction process and professional development experience.

Where possible, pre-service teachers travelled to their placement community accompanied by a Monash University staff member. They were able to help communicate expectations from all parties involved, including the school, community,

pre-service teacher, and Monash University. Ongoing contact with a Monash staff member or mentor throughout the professional experience placement helped the school, community and pre-service teacher to all feel supported.

After placements had ended, members of the project team continued to foster their relationships with host schools by actively reflecting on the process and experience with the community. This was done through interviews and meetings. Pre-service teachers were also given the opportunity to provide feedback on the preparation they received and their placement experience.

In another project that aimed to give pre-service teachers access to high-quality teaching materials in preparation for their placements, researchers from the University of Queensland worked with pre-service teachers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, practising teachers, and communities to develop a DVD teaching resource for use in ITE programs. The resource captures teachers' perspectives on working in an Aboriginal community school and the importance of working closely with the local community, and learning the community's history. Interviewed teachers also discuss misconceptions non-Indigenous teachers may have about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The resource also includes a community Elder's perspective on education and how a fear of school can continue to impact younger generations. Overall, the resource highlights the significance of actively becoming a part of the community and appropriate ways of interacting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, including the provision of both learning and social support. An evaluation of the DVD resource found that it had a small positive impact on pre-service teachers' self-assessment of their learning and understanding (McCluskey & Felton, 2015).

### **Indigenous cultural competency in the Australian teacher workforce**

AITSL is currently undertaking a four-year project to enhance the cultural competency of Australia's teaching workforce, including the development of professional learning resources, and to foster cultural safety in schools. You can read more about this initiative [here](#).

### **Pedagogies for teaching English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) learners**

Considering the linguistic diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, pre-service teachers should also have the skills to teach students for whom English is an additional language or dialect (Auld et al., 2016). Approximately one third (34%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 4 to 14 years speak an Australian Indigenous language. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners in remote areas are more likely to speak an Australian Indigenous language than those in non-remote areas (66% compared to 26%). Approximately one third (31%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in remote areas mainly speak an Australian Indigenous language at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Regardless of the

location of their placement, but especially in remote areas, pre-service teachers need to be prepared to use EAL/D pedagogies when engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners.

You can read more about the learning pre-service teachers undertake before commencing professional experience placements with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners here: [Learning the lessons? Pre-service teacher preparation for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students](#)

## Prior experience in familiar contexts

In line with the [Standards and Procedures](#) for accreditation of ITE programs, pre-service teachers must undertake no fewer than 80 days of professional experience in undergraduate and double-degree programs, and no fewer than 60 days in graduate programs. These experiences should be as diverse as possible and should occur as early as is practicable within a program.

Considering the unique demands and expectations pre-service teachers can expect to face in outer regional and remote education settings, it may be appropriate for them to complete a placement in a major city or familiar context before they face the added demands of a placement in an outer regional or remote area. Pre-service teachers who are planning to complete a placement in a remote Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community may benefit from completing prior professional experience placements in schools in their own context that have a high proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students.

Regardless of how providers and pre-service teachers arrange their professional experience placements, pre-service teachers should be cognisant of the unique characteristics of the community they will be working in. Gaining professional experience in a more familiar context first may help them to work more effectively with their students and the community, resulting in a positive experience for both them and the local community.

## Selection and assessment of suitability

The Rural and Remote Training Schools (RRTS) project highlights the benefits of carefully selecting pre-service teachers for placements in schools in these contexts.

### Case study

#### The Western Australian Rural and Remote Training Schools (RRTS) project

According to Western Australia Department of Education records, in 2010, only 11 pre-service teachers undertook a placement in a rural or remote school in Western Australia (Lobb, 2019). In order to address this and broader issues around teacher attraction and

retention in rural and remote locations, the WA Department of Education established the Rural and Remote Training Schools (RRTS) project in 2011. The RRTS project aims to promote teaching in rural and remote locations by strengthening the relationship between long-term placements and potential employment outcomes. It also aims to improve teacher effectiveness by preparing pre-service teachers for the challenges of teaching in rural and remote contexts (Lobb, 2019).

Entry to the project is highly managed and occurs over several stages. Project team members present to all pre-service teachers during their penultimate year of study to raise the profile of rural and remote schools and highlight the benefits and challenges of teaching placements in these contexts. These presentations include audio-visual aids such as video interviews with current teachers, community members, and former participants filmed on location. Visual examples of rural and remote towns, schools, classrooms, pedagogy, housing and environments are also included. Pre-service teachers are asked to consider their suitability for such a placement and to register their interest (The Nexus Network, 2013).

Project team members then meet with interested pre-service teachers, initially as a group and then one-on-one, and support them in their decision-making around undertaking a rural or remote placement. Project team members then provide a list of interested candidates to university coordinators, who review and assess them in order to formulate a final list of recommended candidates for placement. Together with regional directors and schools, university coordinators arrange appropriate placements and host schools for participants. Project team members also visit host schools to deliver an orientation session on the RRTS project to the school staff. Importantly, the project team also assists in the development of local community initiatives that are designed to support the viability of the project (The Nexus Network, 2013).

The project manager works with schools, regional offices and mentor teachers to ensure the pre-service teachers complete their placement in a supportive training environment. Pre-service teachers participate in a day-long orientation program before they commence their placement. Project team members also visit every pre-service teacher during their placement, regardless of location. Participants receive a stipend from the WA Department of Education and assistance in securing accommodation for the duration of their placement. They are also encouraged to participate in a debrief program upon the conclusion of their placement. The project team maintains contact with former participants, monitoring their progress and encouraging them to apply for positions in rural and remote contexts (The Nexus Network, 2013).

Between 2011 and 2017, more than 400 pre-service teachers participated in the project. Over 90% of participants who completed their ITE program following participation in the project during that time took up employment in a rural or remote school in Western Australia (von Ahlefeld et al., 2018). Of the pre-service teachers that participated between 2013 and 2016, more than one quarter (26%) accepted a position in the school that hosted them for their placement. A further quarter (24%) accepted a teaching position in the same region. Additionally, more than one-in-five (20%) took on a teaching role in either a region that the project targets – the Pilbara, Kimberley, Midwest and Goldfields regions – or another rural region. Only one-in-ten (12%) took up a position in a metro school. The project is growing, with a record number of students (43) participating in Term 2 of 2019 (Lobb, 2019).

A 2013 evaluation of the project found that it is highly valued by the participants, universities and schools involved in its delivery. The success of the RRTS project has been attributed to the extensive collaboration between universities and schools, and the support pre-service teachers receive before, during and after their placements.

According to the evaluation, the program has achieved:

- Expanded access to quality pre-service teacher placements in rural and remote schools
- An increase in the number of rural and remote schools prepared to provide placements
- An increase in the number of pre-service teachers applying for placements in rural and remote schools
- The provision of positive and supportive placement experiences that leave pre-service teachers prepared for and wanting careers in rural and remote contexts
- A high correlation between pre-service teacher placement experiences and subsequent employment with the Department (The Nexus Network, 2013).

As well as highlighting the importance of rigorous screening and selection of pre-service teachers to professional experience placements, the RRTS project demonstrates the success these programs can have in creating a pipeline of teachers for schools in regional and remote contexts.

## Prior contact

Effective placement experiences start prior to the pre-service teacher's arrival, with contact between the supervising teacher, placement school and host community. Together, the pre-service and supervising teachers can plan the teaching and learning that will take place during the placement. This prior contact and planning can help to ensure continuity of learning for students and also gives the pre-service teacher an opportunity to develop an understanding of the students and community (Adie & Barton, 2012).

Some pre-service teachers travel considerable distances to undertake their placement in a remote Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community. In order to demonstrate cultural understanding and respect, it may be appropriate for them to initiate contact with the community before their placement starts through a school leader and/or cultural advisor. This could include a telephone call with community leaders to introduce themselves before they arrive, as well as meeting with community leaders upon arrival. Pre-service teachers should utilise opportunities to learn about the community, drawing on existing community resources (McCluskey & Felton, 2015).

The more embedded new teachers become within their education setting and the local community over time, the greater their intentions are to remain (Watson & Olson-Buchanan, 2016). Early and ongoing efforts to foster personal and professional connections to the school and the wider community can help to build this sense of embeddedness. The Northern Territory Remote Teacher Guide, *Living and teaching in remote Northern Territory communities*, outlines the importance of pre-service teachers' active participation in the local community:

*“... Your success as a teacher will in part be measured by your willingness to learn about the community context of where you live, and the culture and language of the local Indigenous people you meet. Developing productive working relationships with members of the community will enhance your capacity to work and live in a remote context.”*

–Northern Territory Department of Education n.d., p. 4

## During placement

While prior preparation and learning can help to set them up for success, pre-service teachers need ongoing support throughout their placement to make it a beneficial experience for both them and their students. Pre-service teachers may experience geographic, social and professional isolation, and feelings of isolation can be more acute in rural and remote contexts (Jenkins & Cornish, 2015). Research suggests a role for “triangulation of support” for pre-service teachers, encompassing colleagues, mentor teachers, university staff and community members. Some research also suggests that peer mentors or peer-to-peer communication can help support pre-service teachers through difficulties during their placements (Kline et al., 2013).

Connecting pre-service teachers undertaking placements in regional or remote areas with each other and facilitating communication can benefit their emotional health and professional development, and improve the academic guidance they receive as they share information and resources. Pre-service teachers who have undertaken placements without access to support services, such as visits from university liaison officers, explained this was detrimental to their experience (Kline et al., 2013). Pre-service teachers should receive proactive, not reactive, support from their universities while on placements (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training, 2007). Pre-service teachers who feel supported by their university and school community are more likely to indicate they would take up appointments in regional and remote education settings following the completion of their ITE qualification (Kline et al., 2013).

### **School Centres for Teaching Excellence (SCTEs), Victoria**

SCTEs are university-school partnerships designed to provide quality pre-service teacher education. During 2011 and 2012, 65 government schools and six universities (La Trobe University, University of Melbourne, Victoria University, Deakin University, Monash University and University of Ballarat) facilitated pilot programs that supported an estimated 1,017 pre-service teachers.

Each of the seven pilot sites operated slightly differently. For some universities, participation in SCTEs meant slightly altering programs to build and improve on existing school and community relationships. For other universities, participation involved redeveloping and rewriting existing courses to include school and community partnerships. Some universities involved established a rural, regional and remote teaching placement program for the very first time. These programs took the form of extended or weekly placements or internships. In some instances, student instruction

was jointly delivered by pre-service teachers, teacher educators and school staff. Across all the sites, a common theme was increased interactions between pre-service teachers and students on school grounds, often multiple times a week.

An evaluation of the initiative highlighted various successes, including the development of new partnerships and strengthened existing partnerships between schools and universities; strengthened existing site-based or 'clinical' models of teacher education, as well as the development of new sites and models; and more flexible cooperation between universities and schools (Rowley et al., 2013).

## Connection and communication

In recognition of the importance of social connections for pre-service teachers during placements, the University of Notre Dame established a wiki<sup>[4]</sup> to facilitate communication between pre-service teachers and the various stakeholders involved in the administration of their rural and remote placements (Davie & Berlach, 2010). Placements are organised by the university's Office of Professional Placements (OPP), which liaises directly with schools. During their placements, pre-service teachers are also assigned a mentor teacher at the school as well as a university supervisor who visits them periodically. Together, these stakeholders form the pre-service teacher's performance evaluation team. Prior to the introduction of the wiki, communication between the OPP, course coordinator, university supervisor and mentor teacher took place via phone, email and in-person meetings. The different modes caused repetition and reliance on various methods of data capture and storage. This time-consuming process was exacerbated when multiple concerns required immediate and simultaneous attention. Due to their geographic isolation, pre-service teachers in rural and remote schools worked through university units individually during their placements, while their peers in metropolitan areas were able to support each other.

To address these issues, the OPP created a multi-purpose wiki for the use of both pre-service teachers and evaluation team members. Pre-service teachers used it to share comments, photos and resources, while evaluation team members used it to share information on pre-service teachers that were at risk of failing their placement. These at-risk pre-service teachers often faced issues around professionalism, relationships with their placement school, attendance, teaching ability and personal health. While some cases could be addressed offline, others required ongoing management. Folders were set up on the wiki to facilitate and store communications among evaluation team members. Pre-service teachers could also upload documents and evidence to the wiki that could be viewed by evaluation team members. Email notifications alerted relevant evaluation team members to additions to the wiki. Overall, the establishment of the wiki resulted in streamlined communication between members of the evaluation team and pre-service teachers (Davie & Berlach, 2010). While wikis are now largely considered to be outdated technology, the merits of an approach like this (the usage of a platform for pre-service teachers to share comments, photos, resources, and questions with their supervisor and mentor) continue to be relevant.

## Online mentoring

Some pre-service teachers at small schools may be the only teacher instructing a certain discipline and have limited opportunities to engage in professional learning dialogues with peers. This professional isolation can compound feelings of personal and geographic isolation. Online mentoring offers one solution to this problem.

Researchers at the University of Southern Queensland conducted a trial of online mentoring using a wiki with 50 secondary pre-service teachers in regional, rural and remote schools (the mentees) and 10 practising teachers (the mentors) (Redmond, 2015). Over an 8-month period, participants generated 578 posts and 12,832 views on the platform. The most common discussion topics included homework expectations, student engagement, content relevance, literacy, classroom management, professional experience expectations and pedagogical approaches. Notably, discussions were driven by the pre-service teachers and all of the discussion was largely discipline-specific, with 10 different curriculum areas represented on the platform. The pre-service teachers involved in the trial appreciated the opportunity to connect with peers in different locations that were teaching the same disciplines. They also appreciated the flexibility for engagement afforded by the wiki.

## **Liaison personnel**

Some placement programs appoint a liaison officer to facilitate and manage relationships between the ITE provider and the pre-service teacher's school. Liaison officers often maintain phone and email contact with the pre-service teacher and the school. They may also visit the school before the pre-service teacher arrives to ensure the school is prepared for the placement, and again during the placement to check on the pre-service teacher's progress and experience. In one placement program in Queensland, the liaison role is designated to a registered teacher from the local community, who is given the title of University Liaison Academic (ULA). As part of their role, they may help pre-service teachers forge relationships with local community members and discuss expectations of pre-service teachers with the school and staff. Overall, they are a valuable link between pre-service teachers' placement and university experiences (Adie & Barton, 2012).

*"[The ULA] met with us, and our teachers, and then the teachers left and she spoke to us, and said do you have any issues with your teachers, and gave us her home phone number, gave us her mobile [number], if we needed to contact her at any time..."*

–Pre-service teacher cited in Adie & Barton 2012

### **Case study**

#### **The Teaching Schools Partnership Agreement between the Northern Territory Department of Education and Charles Darwin University (CDU)**

Established in 2006, the Partnership facilitates professional experience placements for pre-service teachers enrolled at CDU in partner schools across the Northern Territory.

The Partnership's key focuses are:

- Improving student learning outcomes,

- Building a common language of instruction,
- Offering pre-service teachers opportunities to learn using modelling and coaching principles, and
- Providing professional learning and development in accordance with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Northern Territory Department of Education, n.d.-a).

Since its inception, 104 schools from across the Northern Territory have joined the partnership. Pre-service teachers must apply to take part and, ideally, do not complete a placement in a remote community as their very first or very last placement. The Partnership Agreement builds a relationship between placement schools, the NT Department and CDU through networking and communication. Partner schools are involved in placement planning and school staff are given opportunities to participate in professional learning to help them mentor and support pre-service teachers. Schools also receive financial support from the university to help them host pre-service teachers. Pre-service teachers can apply for a travel grant to help facilitate their placement in a remote context. Aboriginal Educators working in remote and very remote education settings who aspire to become classroom teachers may be supported through the Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education (RATE) program.

A mentoring relationship between pre-service teachers and mentor staff is coordinated by a Professional Learning Leader, who also liaises with a university-based Teacher Pipeline Coordinator to develop assessment tasks and provide on-site tutorials for pre-service teachers. CDU and the Department are responsible for establishing and maintaining relationships with Professional Learning Leaders. Placement schools receive detailed, structured support to enable them to assess pre-service teachers against the Graduate Teacher Standards, including:

- Identification of the Standards to be assessed during the pre-service teacher's placement;
- Provision of assessment tools, protocols, practices and guidelines;
- Clarification of expectations and roles in assessment, particularly designated roles for supervising teachers in practical assessment of pre-service teachers;
- Timely identification of pre-service teachers at risk of not satisfactorily completing the formal teaching practice, ensuring appropriate support for improvements; and
- Mandating a satisfactory formal assessment of pre-service teachers against the Graduate Teacher Standards as a requirement for graduating from the program (Northern Territory Department of Education & Charles Darwin University, 2021).

In 2018, 260 mentor teachers supported 400 pre-service teachers from CDU undertaking professional experience placements in urban, regional and remote schools across the Northern Territory (Northern Territory Department of Education, n.d.-a). Under the Agreement, pre-service teachers can elect to volunteer in a school before undertaking a professional experience placement in order to develop an understanding of the school's context and ways of operating.

## Placements in the Torres Strait Islands

Placements in the Torres Strait Islands offer pre-service teachers unique opportunities and challenges. Most pre-service teachers will travel thousands of kilometres to undertake a placement in this region. Life in the Torres Strait Islands continues to be shaped by strong cultural, linguistic and community traditions. The [Torres Strait Regional Authority's Cultural Protocols Guide](#) offers important information on communication and community engagement, including guidance on working and staying in Torres Strait communities.



📷 Placements in the Torres Strait Islands offer pre-service teachers unique opportunities and challenges.

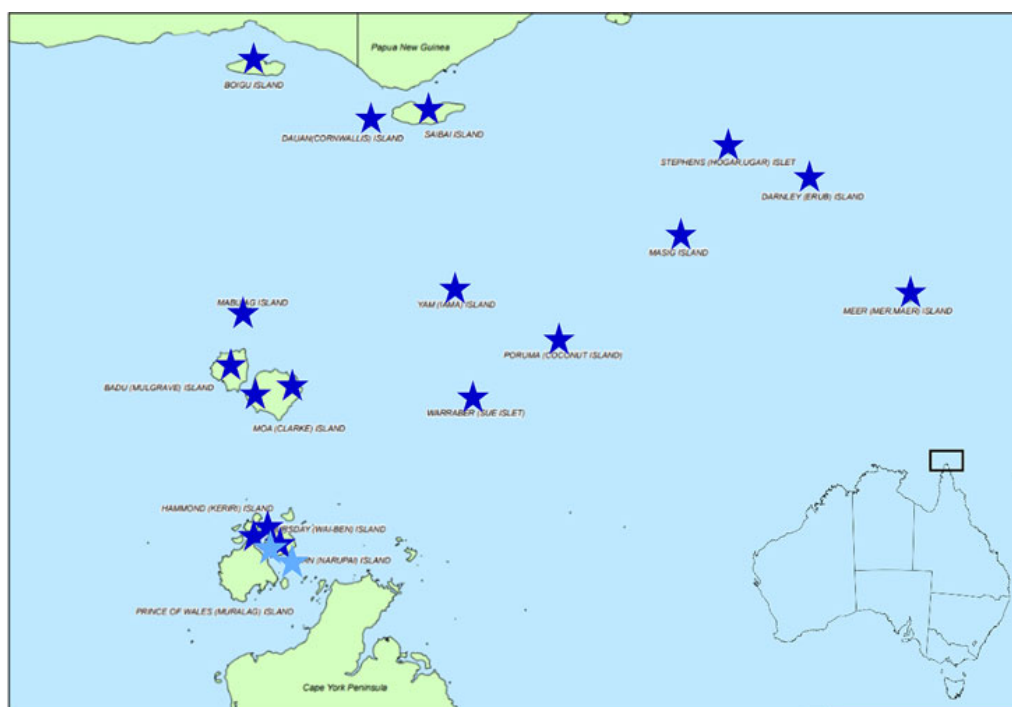
### Support for pre-service and early-career teachers in regional and remote Queensland

Pre-service teachers who undertake a placement in a priority region – Central Queensland, Darling Downs South West, North Queensland and Far North Queensland – can apply for a **Beyond the Range Professional Experience Grant** to assist with travel and accommodation expenses.

ITE graduates who accept an offer of employment in a priority region can apply for a **Regional, Rural and Remote Generalist or STEM Graduate Teacher Scholarship**. The one-off payment aims to assist with study expenses and costs incurred in the transition from studying to teaching.

In 2007, the 17 state schools across the Torres Strait region amalgamated into one single college, Tagai State College. The College provides education from Prep to Year 12 as well as a kindergarten program and vocational education and training. As of 2020, the College had 17 campuses across 15 islands with an enrolment of 1444 students (see Figure 3, dark blue stars). The school's workforce comprises 161 teaching staff, including school leaders, and 190 non-teaching staff. 149 members of the school staff identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (Tagai State College, 2020). Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School also has two campuses in the Torres Strait Islands. The Thursday Island campus caters for Prep to Year 6 and the Hammond Island campus caters for Prep to Year 3 (see Figure 3, light blue stars). Approximately 120 students are enrolled across both campuses (Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School, 2021).

Figure 3. School campuses across the Torres Strait Islands. Map source: Torres Strait Regional Authority.



Belinda Crook completed her second-year teaching placement at the Saibai Island campus. During her time at the school, she became an active member of the local community, regularly participating in various community events. She ran weekly lunchtime drama lessons, established a cross-country running club, joined the local basketball team, participated in the school's homework club and travelled across the island to read to children outside of school hours (Queensland College of Teachers, n.d.).

*"[The students] make fun out of what they have got and they don't need these big fancy things to have fun. I think that personally has made me appreciate things a lot more... I have learnt so much from when I first came up to now. My learning journey – personal and professional – I believe has come a long way. ... You are always thinking, you are always reflecting ... thinking 'How can I do better? Just like the curriculum – the curriculum hasn't always been the same; it's always developing and always changing and I think as a teacher you have that challenge, especially with the 21st century and all of the digital technologies coming into it."*

–Crook cited in Queensland College of Teachers n.d.

Australian Catholic University student Elise Milner completed a four-week teaching placement at the primary school campus on Ngurupai (Horn) Island through the National Exceptional Teaching for Disadvantaged Schools (NETDS) program (outlined below). She travelled from Melbourne to Ngurupai Island for her placement during the second year of her ITE program. Her time spent teaching students aged four to six years was her very first teaching experience (Rowbotham, 2019).

*“I loved it... I felt that as a school it was not so different from other schools I have been in. ... I found the teachers there were really passionate about what they were doing and I learned so much from them about how to work on strategies, and it broadened my perspective.”*

–Milner cited in Rowbotham 2019

Fellow Australian Catholic University student Jess Micallef also completed a month-long placement through the NETDS program. She travelled from Brisbane to complete her placement at the campus on Poruma (Coconut) Island (Australian Catholic University, 2020).

*“... I took them outside to play sport and they loved it. You see them in the afternoons. You swim with them, hunt with them, go fishing with them. ... Once they knew I cared there was a real connection. ... Unless you’ve been there you can’t understand. It would be my dream to work somewhere like that.”*

–Micallef cited in Australian Catholic University 2020

## **The National Exceptional Teaching for Disadvantaged Schools (NETDS) program**

The NETDS program began at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in 2009. It aims to identify and prepare high-performing pre-service teachers to take up positions in hard-to-staff, low socioeconomic status (SES) schools. Entry to the program is based on academic achievement. It exposes participants to notions of advocacy and social justice and explores theories around cultural capital, culturally relevant pedagogies, and anti-deficit theory. Participants also complete professional experience placements in low SES schools and have access to mentoring. By December 2017, the program had partnered with 60 low SES schools across Queensland (Burnett & Lampert, 2019). It is now offered at the Australian Catholic University, Deakin University, University of Newcastle, University of South Australia, University of Western Sydney, Victoria University, University of New England and QUT (Department of Education and Training, 2018). More than 90% of program participants have accepted teaching positions in low SES schools upon graduation (Burnett & Lampert, 2019).

When working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, pre-service teachers should be aware of their “professional blind spots” and the stereotypes they may use to inform their teaching practice. By viewing themselves as “allies” that play an important role in supporting the education and self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners, they can overcome these challenges. Listening to

community members and drawing on the relationships they have developed during their community can help them to strengthen their culturally competent teaching practices (Auld et al., 2016).

## After placement

Pre-service teacher placements in regional and remote education settings have long been regarded as an effective mechanism through which to attract more teachers into these contexts (Halsey, 2018). Research conducted with 217 pre-service teachers who had undertaken a placement in a “country” area found that, for more than 60% of them, the experience had “reinforced or confirmed” their preference to take up a permanent teaching position in a rural school (Halsey 2009, p. 4). Pre-service teachers are more likely to consider teaching in a regional or remote school if they have successfully completed a placement in these contexts (Young et al., 2018).

*“My enjoyment of teaching in this area has allowed me to put my hand up for country service.”*

–Pre-service teacher cited in Halsey 2009

Placements in rural schools can help pre-service teachers expand the range of contexts they would consider teaching in, awaken an interest in rural communities, and help them to reassess their employment options (Halsey, 2009). These findings align with research conducted with health care professionals, which found that practitioners with more rural clinical placement experience were more likely to be working in rural, regional and remote contexts, regardless of their background, the university they attended, their family/carer obligations or their financial situation (Thomas et al., 2021).

*“[A rural placement] broadens horizons, exposes pre-service teachers to different lifestyles, attitudes, priorities, approaches, prepares us for likelihood of teaching in country school, get to see and understand more about Australia, and Australians, takes us out of comfort zone, develops networks (professional & social), is character building and helps to put the course & future into a different perspective – uncovers some unknowns.”*

–Pre-service teacher cited in Halsey 2009

Research conducted with pre-service teachers from urban areas has found their experience of teaching in a rural community enhanced their connectedness with the profession. They were also able to gain information about practical considerations such as professional expectations and living arrangements for teachers in rural contexts (Adie & Barton, 2012).

*“I know that if I never had my experience, I wouldn’t have realised that I have the ability to teach in rural areas.”*

–Pre-service teacher cited in Kline, White & Lock 2013, p. 10

It is important for pre-service teachers to be adequately prepared for experiences of reverse culture shock following the completion of their placement. They may require support to re-enter and adjust to their “normal” life (Auld et al., 2016). Debriefing programs can help pre-service teachers to work through their experiences and process what they have learnt during their placement, both inside and outside of the classroom.

### **Jurisdictional guidance for pre-service teacher placements**

The New South Wales Government has developed guidance for pre-service teachers undertaking placements in rural and remote schools, which includes interviews with pre-service teachers.

The Queensland Government has developed a Professional Experience Reporting Framework that guides the assessment and supervision of pre-service teachers during their placements. The resource also contains final professional experience recommendations, a reflection tool, checklists, and a glossary of terms and outlines expectations of pre-service teachers during their placements.

The Northern Territory Government has published a Remote Teacher Guide for pre-service teachers and other educators preparing to live and teach in remote Northern Territory communities.

The Western Australian Government has released specific information for pre-service teachers looking to complete a placement in a rural, regional or remote school.

## **International examples**

### **United States**

In the United States, (Azano & Stewart 2015; Schulte 2018) many teacher preparation programs have focused on ways to integrate meaningful experiences of rural education with training on place-based pedagogy, so that pre-service teachers develop the awareness, sensitivities, attitudes, knowledge and capabilities that would set them up to live and teach in a rural setting. The Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) federal grant initiative is designed to support programs that prepare teachers for high-needs schools and high-needs subject areas (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education 2021). Under this initiative, tertiary institutions partner with high-needs schools and districts and then compete for funding to develop master's level residency programs or to reform undergraduate pre-service preparation programs. One such funded partnership is Chico State's (California) residency programs: the Rural Teacher Residency (RTR) for elementary teachers and the Residency in Secondary Education (RiSE) for secondary teachers.

### **Rural Teacher Residency (RTR) for elementary teachers**

Chico State's RTR program aimed to prepare pre-service teachers for positions in rural schools. The program's key elements included course-based learning on rural education and a year-long placement with a mentor teacher using co-planning and co-teaching strategies. This model differed from other placements in that pre-service teachers would typically change classrooms after one semester, whereas under this model they remained with the same teacher for their entire placement. Along with the year-long residency, pre-service teachers completed credential requirements including Master's level coursework and classroom action research, earning them a Master's degree in Education and a teaching credential in the state (Schulte 2018).

Two years after the program ended, program faculty collected quantitative and qualitative data on the impact of RTR on graduates' teaching preparation. Findings indicated participating in the RTR gave graduates a high sense of self-efficacy. Furthermore, more than half of graduates were committed to teaching in rural locations (Schulte 2018). Of those who committed to teaching rurally, about 25% indicated that their participation in the program may have influenced their decision to seek rural employment when they had not intended to do so initially. A highly valued component of the program was a community study assignment. This assignment was part of the summer course pre-service teachers had to complete before their year-long placements (Schulte 2018). The assignment was a group community study of the rural town that was hosting their placement, which they conducted together with peers assigned to the same school.

## **How it worked**

### **Before placement**

Pre-service teachers completed their first course before the classroom residency/placement started. Course readings centred on theories of place and youth in rural communities, such as place-based education, strengths-based pedagogy, and social capital in rural places. A major assignment of the summer course was a group community study that aimed to inform or challenge pre-service teachers' understandings of "place", such as deficit narratives or negative stereotypes about rural places in general, or preconceived ideas about their placement town. The assignment also aimed to connect pre-service teachers to the local life of their students by requiring them to talk to local residents and become familiar with local places and events. Through these connections, pre-service teachers could build their understanding of place-based pedagogy. In order to complete the assignment, pre-service teachers had to undertake two school/community visits and create a map of community resources and other significant attributes.

### **During placement**

Throughout their year-long placement, pre-service teachers were encouraged to engage with activities outside of the school and enact the place-based curricula they had designed and planned during their summer classes. While most pre-service teachers were able to connect more closely with their students through the community study, many were unable to implement their place-based learning plans because the mentor teachers already had established curriculum (Schulte 2018). New approaches or learning outside the classroom were more difficult to incorporate.

Nonetheless, pre-service teachers found the community study helpful, especially if the process had challenged their assumptions about a place. Many pre-service teachers used the knowledge they gained to frame their pedagogical and classroom management approaches (Schulte 2018).

## **Canada**

The majority of Canadian university-based ITE programs are located in central and southern urban centres, and opportunities to study in rural Canada are limited (Thompson & Gereluk 2017). Aspiring teachers from rural areas are typically required to undertake their face-to-face instruction at larger centres or satellite campuses. A data linkage study examining the migration patterns of young people from rural areas revealed that youth with college-trade and university or higher education were more likely to migrate from rural to urban areas than those who achieved high school education or lower. This pattern of migration may be explained by limited post-secondary education opportunities in rural areas (Sano et al. 2020).

To address the risks of out-migration<sup>[5]</sup> and ensure rural schools remain viable and continue to deliver high quality education, post-secondary teacher education programs in Canada have explored ways to attract individuals who already live in rural areas and are committed to the sustainability of their community (Gereluk & Burns 2018). Considerations include alternative delivery models, such as online instruction and using synchronous learning technologies, and the expansion of on-campus supports to community-based students (Eaton et al. 2017).

## **Memorial University**

ITE students at Memorial University in the largely rural province of Newfoundland and Labrador are required to complete specific courses before and after their placements. Reflecting the changes to teaching and learning occurring in local schools, the courses focus on digital education environments, including synchronous and asynchronous learning, and the sociology of classrooms and schools (Stevens 2017).

Following their placements, pre-service teachers engage in 'cybercells' alongside practising teachers. Cybercells are professional networks that meet both in-person and online. In these cybercells, pre-service teachers discuss the application of sociological theories with practising teachers working in classrooms across the province. Pre-service teachers are asked to relate these theories and discussions to their own recent placement experiences. The practising teachers engaged in these discussions are also graduates of the course, and are therefore able to offer meaningful and relevant mentorship and advice. By meeting online, pre-service and practising teachers are not constrained by their location within the rural province and also gain an insight into the online learning environments their students are engaged in (Stevens 2017).

Pre-service teachers were asked at different time points about the value of including the practising teachers in the course, and about their role in developing pre-service teachers' understanding of educational and sociological theory. Over three years, pre-service teachers' perceptions of the value of practising teachers increased, with 62% saying they had high value in the third year compared to only 14% in the first year. Value was described in various ways in the comments, such as the opportunity to learn from another teacher's style and experience, having

a direct professional link between university and schools, and exposure to new ideas. Pre-service teachers also indicated that access to rural teachers' knowledge enhanced their understanding of the educational theories taught in their ITE program (Stevens 2017).

## **Heritage Fair Program**

A collaborative school-university research project in British Columbia aimed to provide pre-service teachers undertaking a language and literacy curriculum subject the opportunity to learn about Aboriginal students' language and literacy practices through a situated, participatory approach. The project involved three interconnected research participant groups – pre-service teachers, classroom teachers and their primary students. The groups partnered for a literacy initiative that considered ways to merge students' out-of-school resources (at home, community and peer networks) with school literacy practices. The project had a particular focus on students from minority backgrounds (Wiltse 2016).

Select pre-service teachers from a small undergraduate university in interior British Columbia were paired with a Grade 4, 5 or 6/7 student at a school in a First Nations reserve, as part of a case study assignment in the first year of a two-year ITE program. The students' classroom teachers provided input into the literacy initiative, which for this study centred on the Heritage Fair Program. Heritage Fair was a multimedia educational program aimed at increasing awareness and interest in Canadian history, unique community events and/or family culture. Students were required to examine and document linguistic and cultural practices in their local communities, and display their projects at school, regional and/or provincial fairs. Pre-service teachers provided mentorship on the research and project displays. Data for the study mainly used pre-service teacher case studies and semi-structured interviews of select students and pre-service teachers.

In examining the experiences of pre-service teachers, the research study questioned whether coursework alone was enough to effect substantive changes in pre-service teacher perspectives on Aboriginal people (Wiltse 2016). Study findings indicate pre-service teachers were unprepared for teaching Aboriginal students. Pre-service teachers demonstrated gaps in their understandings of Aboriginal people, history and culture, and acknowledged they held misconceptions and implicit biases about these students and their families (Wiltse 2016). Lessons learned from their partnership with the students included disconfirming stereotypes or preconceived notions, challenging what they took for granted as non-Aboriginals, and improved self-awareness of any discriminatory judgements they were making about their Aboriginal students that could negatively impact the academic achievement and opportunities of the students (Wiltse 2016).

Findings suggest personal experiences are more likely to affect change in teachers' beliefs and feelings about cultural differences. The research also found that engagement with students from diverse backgrounds offered a way for pre-service teachers to begin to understand the historical and contemporary realities of Aboriginal communities.

## **How it worked**

### **Before placement**

The case study assignment was part of a language and literacy curriculum class during the first year of a two-year ITE program. Pre-service teachers participating in the case study assignment also took a history education course in which they learned about residential schooling.

## **During placement**

For the case study assignment, pre-service teachers from the two language and literacy curriculum classes were split between two primary classrooms, collaborating with Grades 4, 5 or 6/7 students for the Heritage Fair project. The pre-service teacher-student partnership involved one-to-one mentorship, with students receiving research, data collection, writing and visual representation support, and the partners meeting four times at the school over the course of the project.

## **After placement**

In the second year of their ITE program, pre-service teachers took a course called 'Teaching First Nations children'. This course covers the history of First Nations education in British Columbia and Canada more generally, and examines First Nations content in school curricula and the role non-First Nations teachers have in curriculum development. It also introduces effective teaching practices for First Nations learners, including the importance of building relationships with parents and communities.

## **New Zealand**

In New Zealand, Maori language and culture are embedded in the education system, including initial teacher education. For example, Matauranga Maori was a compulsory Māori specialism program, firstly offered within the Diploma of Teaching and Learning, and then in the Bachelor of Teaching and Learning degree at the Christchurch College of Education (CCE) in the Rotorua region (Hunt 2011). The program was developed as a regional response to two identified national concerns: (a) a shortage of quality applicants for primary teaching positions in the Rotorua region; (b) the provision of a pre-service teacher education program that prepares teachers with particular skills to teach Māori children, who make up a substantial proportion of students in the region (Hunt 2011).

The program was designed and developed locally as a wananga, or "experiential learning in a Māori context, operating under Māori structures, according to Māori cultural values and beliefs" (Hunt 2011, p2). Each wananga lasted for two days and one night and took place in a marae – a communal community space. Through the wananga, pre-service teachers were given the opportunity to integrate their professional studies with practical experience and design appropriate learning experiences for the Māori children involved. ITE programs were also delivered for a half day each week at the marae.

All Rotorua regional student teachers between 1997 and 2010 were required to participate in six wananga during their three-year teacher education program. Research was conducted with four principals who had hosted program participants on placements and then hired them following the completion of their ITE qualification. The principals perceived them to be committed to the local area and to show an ability to connect and relate effectively with Māori children (Hunt 2011).

# Conclusion

Placements in regional and remote settings can help pre-service teachers make informed decisions about where they would like to teach, and to understand the demands and rewards of taking up a position in a regional or remote community (Adie & Barton, 2012; Halsey, 2009). In order to get the most out of these placements, it is important that pre-service teachers are supported by their ITE provider, school and community before, during and after their experience. Before placement, this includes developing the pre-service teacher's awareness of how cultural contexts shape identities and teaching practices to better facilitate their transition into a remote context, which may be quite unfamiliar (Azano & Stewart, 2015; Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2013). Importantly, pre-service teachers entering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for placements must be appropriately prepared to ensure no harm is caused, to students, schools and communities, by unintentionally disrespectful or discriminatory practices that may perpetuate the impacts of colonisation (Auld et al., 2016). To mitigate this risk, pre-service teachers can be supported in their learning by undertaking specific units on Aboriginal and Torres Islander languages and cultures to develop effective and culturally sensitive pedagogies (Rennie et al., 2018).

During placements, successful support for pre-service teachers includes facilitating engagement in critical learning activities that help them make connections between what they have learnt in their ITE program and what they are experiencing in the classroom. Debriefing after a remote placement is also important for this purpose, to help pre-service teachers embed their learnings in their ongoing practices. Outside of the classroom, strong mentoring and social and community links can help pre-service teachers decide to return to a regional or remote community after they have completed their ITE program (Kline et al., 2013).

Ensuring pre-service teachers are appropriately prepared then adequately supported both during and after their remote placements is critical. Such wrap around support is most likely to lead to positive learning experiences during placements. The benefits of positive placement experiences are significant for pre-service teachers, as well their students, the school or early childhood setting, and the local community.

## Resource List

### Special programs for placements or study in remote areas of Australia

#### La Trobe University's Nexus program

In a highly competitive application process, La Trobe was selected by the Department of Education and Training to deliver the [Nexus Program](#) as part of the Federal Government's [High Achieving Teachers Program](#). A carefully selected group of students will study their Master of Teaching (Secondary) while working as Education Support Workers in often hard-to-staff regional, rural and metropolitan schools in Victoria. You can read more about the program [here](#) and about the first graduating cohort [here](#).

## **Aboriginal Community-Controlled Cultural Immersion Program, New South Wales**

This three-day program was designed by a local Aboriginal community for local teachers who would be teaching Aboriginal students from the community. It aimed to increase teachers' understandings of contemporary Aboriginal society, specifically in the context in which they were working. Research conducted with 130 teachers, 26 Aboriginal students and eight Aboriginal parents and community members highlighted various positive outcomes stemming from the program (Burgess & Cavanagh, 2012). It was found to have immediate positive impacts on participating teachers' attitudes towards Aboriginal people. It improved participants' ability to confidently engage with the community and increased participants' motivation to incorporate appropriate curriculum, pedagogy and classroom management approaches to their teaching (Krakouer, 2015). The program is available through the NSW Government's [professional learning platform](#) for educators.

## **Cultural competence self-check, Catholic Education Northern Territory**

The [Aboriginal Catholic Community Schools Handbook 2021](#), released by Catholic Education Northern Territory, outlines a self-check that educators can utilise to gauge their level of cultural competence. The tool explores questions related to awareness, skill, knowledge, encounters and desire to become culturally competent. The resource also outlines ways educators can develop cultural competence in their classrooms, including through family background and structure; education; students' independence and dependence; interpersonal relationships; discipline; time and space; religion and beliefs; food and drink; health and hygiene; history, traditions and holidays; and having fun.

## **Connected Communities strategy, New South Wales**

This strategy positions schools as community hubs to facilitate stronger connections for teachers, school leaders and schools communities with local Aboriginal communities and community leaders. It is grounded in country and culture and aims to encourage the use of these principles in whole-school practice, curriculum and classroom planning. Under the strategy, cultural awareness training is mandatory for all staff, as well as the teaching of Aboriginal languages and culture (NSW Department of Education, 2021). The strategy prioritises recognition of students' culture and identity and aims to embed that recognition in all levels of schooling, from early years programs onwards. It was initially implemented in 15 schools in 2013 (Krakouer, 2015) and information about the strategy is available to all schools online. The strategy has since been expanded and is currently operating in 33 schools within highly complex and vulnerable communities, across NSW, including several metropolitan locations (NSW Department of Education, 2021).

Teachers are provided with effective professional learning led by the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG Inc) that builds their local knowledge, understanding and respect for Aboriginal people, histories and culture.

## **Professional Experience in Isolated and Rural Schools (PEIRS) program, Tasmania**

The program provides accommodation and travel supports to pre-service teachers who relocate to undertake a placement in a rural or isolated school. You can read more about the program [here](#).

### **Place-based elective (rural/remote), University of Melbourne**

Students enrolled in the Master of Teaching can undertake a two-week placement in a rural or remote school. Students must complete a reflective journal and a critical reflective essay as part of this [elective course](#).

## **Footnotes**

1. No areas in the Northern Territory are classified as major cities or inner regional, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). No areas in the ACT are classified as outer regional, remote or very remote, according to the ABS ASGS.
2. Curtin University, Edith Cowan University, Murdoch University and the University of Western Australia.
3. [AITSL 1.4, 2.4 assessment criteria \(pdf\)](#).
4. A wiki is a web-based communication tool that allows asynchronous communication between participants. Members can add images, files and videos. Wikis are accessible from anywhere that internet access is available. *Wikipedia* is a well-known example of a wiki. While wikis are now considered to be somewhat outdated, the ideas underpinning the technology still remain relevant and useful.
5. Occurs when residents leave one place to settle in another, especially within a country.

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Variable that is controlled or changed and assumed to impact the dependent variable.

Variable being measured that is 'dependent' on the independent variable.