

ACER Foundation

LATEST NEWS

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN LESOTHO

In the week starting the 23 October 2017 construction began on five classrooms for Mollele Primary School. Despite worries about the looming wet season the buildings have taken shape at a good pace. Photos received mid-November show the walls already well on their way.



The ACER Foundation are proud to be able to make a difference to the students of Makhalong village.

Partner organisation Donations in Kind have assisted in sourcing tables, chairs and stationary for 230 students as well as desks, whiteboards and shelving for teachers and classrooms. These have been packed into a 20 foot shipping container and are currently making their way to Lesotho. The shipping container is also laden with a terrific selection of books donated by ACER staff and the Glenroy Primary school as well as some cosy knitwear created by the lovely Caritas ladies of the Mt Eliza Anglican Church.

We are pleased to advise that the vegetable garden now has a fence, and that the teachers and students of Mollele Primary are working to re-establish the garden. This has been watched on closely by a group of what we can only assume are very hungry goats.

Fundraising for school water tanks has begun and we would like thank the ACER staff who have contributed to 'Calories for a Cause', and those that have generously donated. We are still looking for additional funds – if you would like to contribute please go to the ACER Foundation website:

<https://acerfoundation.acer.edu.au/donate>
Simply nominate 'Water tanks'.

We extend our thanks to all those that have contributed to our Lesotho project so far, and acknowledge the hard work and dedication of Pam Munro-Smith in co-ordinating all the aspects of this initiative.





SUCCESS FOR LITTLE J & BIG CUZ

Little J & Big Cuz (Series 1) has been well received after its screening on both the ABC and NITV earlier this year, and we are pleased to announce that the series has recently won the Best Children's Television Series category at the 2017 SAE ATOM Awards (AUS). At these awards *Little J & Big Cuz* was also a finalist in the categories of Best Educational App or e-book, Best Educational Game, and Best Indigenous website.

In addition to this success, the series has recently been acquired by USA broadcaster First Nations Experience (FNX), and in October the series was screened as part of the Chicago International Children's Film Festival.

Discussions around the development of Series 2 are currently underway and we look forward to sharing news about this in the New Year.

On August 4 the ACER Foundation proudly supported project partner SNAICC in their National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day event held at Scienceworks. We donated stickers and books and ran 'Super snot workshops'.

This annual event is the major children's event run by SNAICC each year. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children were invited, and approximately 2,000 children attended. The whole of Scienceworks was available to them with special age-appropriate activities being run across the museum.

Museums Victoria provided ACER with a fantastic presenter (see photo below) who did a fine job of entertaining the children with 'Super Snot', just like Little J and Levi in *Episode 1: Lucky Undies*.

We have also been involved with the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair (DAAF). The DAAF Foundation asked permission to create a kids lounge using *Little J & Big Cuz* as the main attraction. The series was screened complete with beanbag seating, colouring in and various art activities. We provided a selection prize packs so that DAAF could run a kids art competition.

Finally, the ACER Foundation recently donated 650 copies of the 'Where's Aaron?' book to the Indigenous Literacy Foundation for inclusion in their book packs going out to Indigenous children across the country.





STEM VIDEO GAME CHALLENGE 2017

Winners of this year's STEM Video Game Challenge were presented with their awards at a ceremony at PAX on the 28 October 2017. This year we were lucky enough to have Stephanie 'Hex' Bendixson known from the gaming TV series' *Good Game* and *ScreenPLAY* kindly donate her time to present the awards to the winners.

This year the entrants had to work to the theme of 'Reaction'. Responses were varied and very creative. All types of reaction were explored including emotional, physical, chemical, agility, and response reaction time. We had over 300 entries and competition was tough! Congratulations to all those that entered, it is no mean feat to build a playable game.

Over the weekend of PAX many connections were made, including a great many conversations with educators who passed through the stand. Our 'Challenge' was new to them and many expressed an interest in participating in 2018. At various points across the weekend the Mentors from the winning teams were on the stand and spoke to others about the merits of the challenge, including its ability to fit many aspects of the curriculum such as literacy and wellbeing, as well as the learning journey of the students.



Two of our six winners were not able to make it to Melbourne, so awards were presented to the students at their schools. Thanks to Jude from our Brisbane office and Sacha from WA for taking time out of their busy day to represent the ACER Foundation.

A special thanks to the all the ACER staff and friends of the ACER Foundation that generously donated their time to help with the judging process and manning the STEM VGC stand at PAX - we couldn't have done it without you!

Thanks also to our challenge sponsors and supporters.

SKYLINE EDUCATION FOUNDATION

ACER supports the Skyline Foundation by providing access to online assessments which are used as part of their selection process. In 2016 they again had very positive results confirming that this approach of intensive support for high performing but disadvantaged students is very worthwhile.

Program Manager at Skyline Olwyn Gray recently shared one student's story with the ACER Foundation Board:

This student is about to conclude her Year 12 studies and what she's written is quite poignant I think. The ACER Foundation has been part of her story.

Before I began Skyline, I was questioning my life ambitions – if I was going to continue my swimming (at an elite level), as well as wondering if I was going to stick with leadership. Since joining the program, I have been gifted school captain, club captain, and house captain. I have set up multiple volunteering and fundraising days at school and now I have connections and friends I will cherish for years to come. I now believe I have the whole world in my hands through Skyline's support and guidance. I already have a uni offer which has dramatically decreased the stress in my life.

This student has just received an advance offer to study nursing/midwifery which is what she's always wanted to do – it's her "dream career" as she said.

EVALUATION OF THE KIMBERLEY EDUCATION EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

ACER continues to assist with the evaluation of the Wunan Foundation's Kimberley Education Excellence Program (KEEP), which operated in NSW in 2011. The evaluation is a partnership between the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and Social Compass. The focus of the evaluation is on the boarding school program for students from the East Kimberley attending Mercy College and Parade College in Melbourne.

The final round of data is currently being collected with interviews at the two schools undertaken in early October and student interviews scheduled for early November.

A final report will be provided to the ACER Foundation in 2018.

WHAT'S OUR NEXT BIG IDEA?

We are keen to hear from anyone that has a brilliant idea for a new initiative to address educational disadvantage in the community. Particularly in the 'Early Years'. We are looking for another ambitious project that addresses a significant need that the ACER Foundation could champion.

If you have an idea please come and have a chat with Lisa, or email lisa.norris@acer.org



***Best wishes for a happy festive season to all ACER staff, alumni, sponsors and volunteers and their families.
Thank you for supporting the work of the ACER Foundation during 2017.***