

Assessment

Assessment is carried out in a variety of ways. Teachers use every available opportunity to measure achievements through returned set work, In-Town weeks, IDL (live lessons), private lesson times & home visits. It is the responsibility of the home tutors to mark student work as it is completed to provide students with instant feedback on their progress.

Years 3, 5 & 7 students are required to participate in the National Assessment Program (NAP) each year. It is encouraged that children come into town for tests if possible—the school usually conducts this assessment program during Sports Week held during term 2 of the school year.

School Holidays

Being a public school the holidays are the same as scheduled for all public schools in the Northern Territory. We have 4 terms per year with a longer yearly break over Christmas & New Year.

School Fees & Government Allowances

ASSOA is a government school so the fees are very low with a maximum of \$100.00 per child per school year. The only additional amounts that a family is asked to contribute is \$300 annually for the ongoing maintenance of computer and associated equipment as issued and at the time of enrolment, a \$100.00 resource fee (one-off) to assist with the wear & tear on all the technical items supplied by the school.

Isolated Students can access a non-means tested Correspondence Allowance of \$750 paid every 3 months. Also available is an allowance for attendance at a maximum of two (2) school functions during the year (such as Get Together Week, Sports Week etc)—this depends on the distance that a student needs to travel to attend these functions and ranges from \$70 to \$210. Any other allowances depend on individual circumstances.

Comparison with town school education

Alice Springs School of the Air prides itself on a very high quality education for the students. The school is in the top 10% of the education system in the Northern Territory. Students go onto their secondary education having had all the preparation assistance possible provided by ASSOA. If going to boarding school, students may take a few months to settle into their new educational environment but generally they do very well in a minimum of time.

The school community (students, families, teachers and other staff) thanks all its visitors for their support during their visit. All profits raised through entry fees and retail sales along with the much appreciated donations (including contributions to library books) are directed to the school to enable us to offer enrichment programs to the students ensuring that the education provided is of the highest quality possible.

*So tell all your friends to visit our school,
The way that we learn is unique and so cool.
Our history is famous, our future is bright,
We'd like to show you the School of the Air site.*

Alice Springs School of the Air Visitor Centre

Web: www.assoa.nt.edu.au

Email: visitorcentre@assoa.nt.edu.au



ALICE SPRINGS SCHOOL OF THE AIR (ASSOA) FACT SHEET

*In outback Australia, we kids who live there,
Are clever, we do our school on the air,
Through satellite, email, with home tutors who care,
We're great kids, the kids on School of the Air.*

The first of its kind in the world

ASSOA was established on 8 June 1951. It was the inspiration of Ms Adelaide Miethke who recognised that children living in remote conditions were lacking social contacts and believed radio could be used to provide a community aspect to the education of children living in these areas.

Our main purpose

ASSOA is a distance education organisation involving teachers, support staff, parents, home tutors and students to optimise the learning outcomes for isolated students by providing quality teaching, education materials and personal communication with parents and home tutors.

"The largest classroom in the world"

1,300,000 sq km or 521,000 square miles. That's double the size of Texas USA (678,000 sq km or 261,797 sq mi), 10 times the size of England (130,410 sq km / 50,352 sq mi), 3 1/2 times the size of Germany and a little over twice the size of France.

The Students

Children may enrol in pre-school at the age of 4 1/2 years. Children who turn 5 years on or by 30 June may begin Transition at the beginning of the school year whether or not they have had previous enrolment in a pre-school program. ASSOA offers an education to students in pre-school, primary and middle school years after which they continue senior years via an alternative mode. The options available include leaving home to attend boarding school or through correspondence studies through the Northern Territory Open Education Centre (Darwin).

Student enrolment at Alice Springs School of the Air has averaged 120 over the past 20 years. Enrolments do fluctuate throughout the year on a needs basis—such as new start pre-schoolers when they turn the required age of 4 1/2 years. Our closest students are located approx. 80kms from Alice Springs and the furthestmost is 1300kms away.

Our students reside on cattle stations, aboriginal communities, tourist facilities (such as roadhouses), national parks and military bases as well as students travelling with their families. (*Our guides will provide you with up to date student numbers during your visit.*)

Indigenous students

Most bush communities in Central Australia have a school house where the children attend classes with a qualified teacher employed by the government; children in indigenous communities may not be fluent in the English language and therefore some require additional support during their early childhood education – it is more appropriate that they have the educational resources and support directly available to them within their community.

Dual Enrolment

The flexible nature of this mode of education allows for possible dual enrolment of students where they can attend both ASSOA and a local community school. It is considered an option for those students whose academic needs cannot be met by the local community school due to the ESL (English as a second language) nature. ASSOA encourages students' participation in suitable programs at local and community schools and provides individual students with the course material to be completed in the normal way. This form of enrolment varies according to individual circumstances.

*Our teachers come visiting, just once in a year,
But we talk to them daily to keep learning, no fear!
In-school's a great time to meet friends far and near,
We have classes together a few times a year.*

The Teachers

All teachers hold the appropriate qualifications and are employed by the Northern Territory Department of Education; additional workplace training is conducted when a teacher commences at ASSOA. Each class level has its own teacher; for 2008 composite classes have been formed for years 4/5 and years 6/7. In addition to the class teachers ASSOA has other support teachers on staff (such as for physical education, languages and special needs).

The Home Tutors (Govies)

Home tutor is a term applied to both Govies (Governesses—employed tutors) and other tutors (usually parent/guardians) of students on School of the Air. All ASSOA students must have an identified tutor and supervision is required for a minimum of four (4) hours per day. In effect, tutors are the teacher's eyes, ears and hands in the child's classroom. Tutors are also responsible for marking student work and providing feedback to the teacher for review & assessments purposes.

Home Visits

Once a year the class teacher will visit each student; depending on the distance to be travelled this visit may be one day or overnight. It is usual that two (2) members of the school staff will attend at each home visit.

In-town events & visits

3-4 events per year (each being 1 week duration) are arranged by the school, these are: In-school, Sports Week, Get Together & Swim Week.

Families coming into town during the school term are encouraged to visit the school so their children can spend time with their teacher and participate in their IDL lessons if scheduled while visiting.

*We're clever with IT, we scan, type and chat,
But our teachers make sure we do much more than that;
We do our set work, on line units, that too,
Our learning is always on display for you.*

IT Equipment

The school provides all of the satellite & computer equipment as required... about \$10,000-\$15,000 worth of equipment fully installed at each site. All equipment must be returned to ASSOA at the end of enrolment.

Curriculum

The curriculum that the school follows is the same as all other public (town) schools in the Northern Territory. Our teachers are responsible for the preparation of set work throughout the year.

Correspondence Material

This refers to the set work & materials sent to each child to enable them to participate in the education process. This can be written, online, visual or audio and is usually accompanied by guidelines or instructions for the tutor. Students are provided with the timeframe that work is to be returned by and this is followed closely by teachers in communication with the children and tutors.

Correspondence packs are generally mailed to each student in special mail bags (as donated by the Connellan Airways Trust); the school covers the cost of all outgoing and incoming mail packages when using the regular mail service (free of charge to the students' families).

Art & Stationery Supplies

ASSOA families are supplied with art & stationery packs at the time of enrolment. During the year top-ups are at individual expense although the school will (upon request) replenish these packs at the beginning of each school year during a child's enrolment.

*Radio, not long ago, was how we talked,
But static was something at which we all baulked.
Now we use IDL and "teamspeak" OK;
This new gear shows us that we've come a long way.*

On Air Lessons

With the introduction of IDL (Interactive Distant Learning) in 2003, flexibility in the delivery of on air lessons has become possible. Teachers use IDL to deliver lessons and PLT's to students. Changes to the delivery are ongoing as teachers use the technology available to ensure the best possible use for each student. All students with IDL computers participate in lessons broadcast live from the studio in Alice Springs by their class teacher. The children are not online for the entire school day—depending on the year level they will have up to 1-hour per day, the rest of the day is spent with their home tutor working on correspondence material.

The final lesson via radio was broadcast at the end of 2005. ASSOA still has the HF radio license for the 3 frequencies used in the past but these are no longer used for the purpose of school lessons.

Private Lesson Time (PLT)

Each student has a weekly 10-15 minute time slot scheduled using either phone or IDL. In addition to this all students are encouraged to contact their teacher by phone or email whenever assistance is required and not to just wait for the scheduled PLT.

Learning Support

Specialist programs are well catered for. Teachers work with home tutors to adapt programs ensuring the needs of individuals are met. An "Individual Education Program" will be written to assist with the coordination of these programs—our School Principal coordinates all special needs programs.

Religious Education

Students are offered religious instruction. The family discusses their requirements with the school. ASSOA is a non-denominational school.