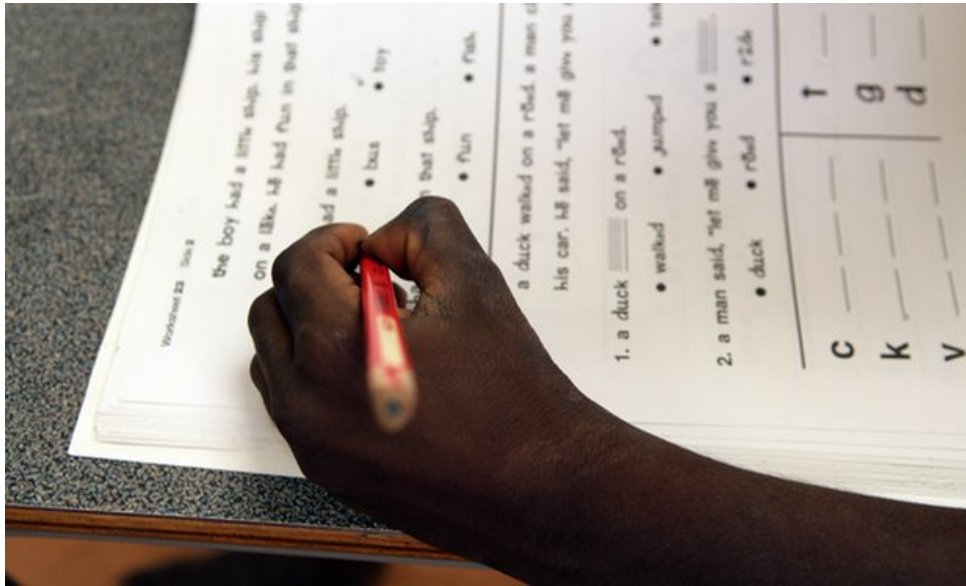


Aurukun review: children learn more about US than Australia and Indigenous culture

Queensland government to adopt all 27 recommendations from review into the US-based direct instruction teaching at Cape York Aboriginal Academy



Students in Aurukun were taught using a method devised in the US and learned more about America than about Australia and Indigenous culture, a review has found. Photograph: Peter Holmes A Court/supplied

Australian Associated Press

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Children in the troubled north Queensland community of Aurukun learn more about US holidays such as Thanksgiving than they do about Australia and their own Indigenous culture, a review has found.

The state government on Tuesday announced it would adopt all 27 recommendations from a review into the US-based direct instruction model taught at Aurukun's Cape York Aboriginal Academy after violent attacks and threats against teachers prompted them to evacuate the community.

Queensland's education department will now take the lead in the delivery of education services in Aurukun, while the current stand-alone direct instruction model will be taught alongside the national curriculum.

The review found the rigid direct instruction curriculum, which heavily focused on numeracy and literacy, did not emphasise culture or students' first language, Wik.

It heard worksheets, developed in the US, were adapted for use in Australia, but in general terms the curriculum was "completely Americanised".

"They learn about the 4th of July, Thanksgiving and the stories they listen to are about American states," one teacher told the review.

"The kids know more about American states than Australian.

"They then go to boarding school with no Australian culture or Wik culture."

Indigenous leader Noel Pearson, who founded the school and introduced the direct instruction curriculum, dismissed the criticism as trivial.

"The teachers are told to convert Americana into Australian examples and the capable teacher is able to do that all the time," he said.

Pearson said the review did not consider the high levels of disability students suffered, stemming from severe disadvantage in the community.

The department was believing a "fairytale" if it thought it could run the school better than he could, he said.

Annastacia Palaszczuk, the Queensland premier, insisted the Department of Education and Training taking control of the curriculum was not a reflection on Pearson.

"Noel shares my commitment for the very best for the children living in remote Indigenous communities," she said.

Teachers will return to the Aurukun school next week to increased security measures, including upgraded fencing, new security lights and personal distress alarms issued to teachers.

The review was sparked by ongoing violence from a group of young, armed offenders in the community, which saw the school's principal Scott Fatnowna carjacked twice in two weeks.

Fatnowna will also return next week, while interim principal Matt O'Hanlon will stay on in a mentoring role for the rest of the year.

The government will also add Year 7 and 8 to the school and offer distance education to older students to ensure moving to boarding school was a choice, not a necessity.

The education minister, Kate Jones, said a financial audit into the school was about finding value for money, not because there were any examples of misappropriation of funds found.