



Currambena Primary School & Preschool Amy Mortimer's Introduction

Progressive Education: The Lived Experiences Of Currambena School (1969 to 2001) AMY MORTIMER

In the mid to late 1970s I attended Currambena School, an Aboriginal word meaning 'Happy Place'. I spent approximately five years there and have very fond memories of my education during that time. In the early 1980s my family left Australia and moved to England where I attended a London based government school.

The two worlds could not have been more different. Yet, I survived as did my siblings. We learnt the ropes of our new school, played the rules, adopted the North London accent and all along had the confidence within ourselves to know that we could manage. Academically we were not at a disadvantage and our social skills helped us to adapt.

However, my unhappy experiences in the latter school stuck with me. In 1994 I was back visiting Australia and found myself attending Currambena's 25th Birthday celebration. As I sat in the 'dust bowl' (now the basket ball court), I was reminded of the sort of education Currambena provided. As I spoke to people about my experiences there, it came to me that one of the reasons I wanted to become a primary school teacher, was to give children the experience of schooling that I had at Currambena and not the kind that I experienced in London.

To this day, I have been fascinated as to why Currambena meant so much to me and why, when I went back in 1994, I still sensed that feeling of happiness in and around the classrooms. Furthermore, I wanted to find out how others had experienced the school and to allow those stories to be shared. So in March 2000, I made another visit to the school, but this time not to be lost in self indulgent rosy memories, but as researcher (well, a novice one).

At the beginning, I wondered if I was trying to close a chapter on my life by studying Currambena but I was aware how relevant this research would be to me as a beginning teacher. I wanted to look at this school with new eyes and be challenged by all that it held, to learn from people's experiences and to be able to question and to develop my own educational philosophies.

I wanted to look beyond the square I may have lived in, to push the boundaries of my comfort zones and to really explore why Currambena had (and still does have) such an impact on me and was my 'Happy Place'.

