

# GROWING AND RESOURCING 'GREAT IDEAS' TO MAXIMISE IMPACT

*Storied accounts of practice by the Tender Bridge*

## Tender Bridge Case of Success: Case 5

### A series of successes - Two Rocks Primary School, Western Australia

*Two Rocks Primary School have been a Tender Bridge subscriber since February 2010. In the last two years, the school has been successful in securing funding for a range of projects to support its Strategic Plan.*

Successes have included:

- *The Australia-Asia Bridge Program – this initiative aims to increase knowledge and understanding between Australia and Asia through school-to-school partnerships. Two Rocks has set up a virtual classroom with a sister school in Jakarta, Indonesia and two of the school's teachers had the opportunity to travel to Melbourne to engage in a 4 day professional learning program on ICT and international understanding. The school also hosted teachers from Indonesia for two weeks, providing teachers and students with increased knowledge of Indonesian culture and strengthen intercultural understanding. Two Rocks was one of only two schools in WA to receive national funding through the Bridge Program in 2011.*
- *The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program – this national program focuses on the creation and care of a kitchen garden, teaching children about growing, harvesting, preparing and sharing fresh, seasonal produce. In 2010, Two Rocks successfully applied for funding for their kitchen garden and in 2011 established a kitchen garden coordinator role in the school.*
- *Healthway – this is a Western Australian Government initiative designed to 'promote and support healthy lifestyles to reduce the burden of preventable disease in Western Australia'.*

**Two Rocks received funding through the Health Promotion Project Grants to develop a new school health policy, some parent workshops and equipment for the Kitchen Garden.**

- *Crunch n' sip – this program encourages a school break to eat fruit and drink water in the classroom. Two Rocks were provided with support from the program to assist sports day events, such as providing fruit for participants.*
- *Capricorn Connect – this is a community portal established by Capricorn Village (a joint venture between Yanchep Sun City Pty Ltd and the Capricorn Investment Group Pty Ltd). A grant from Capricorn Connect helped in the construction of the school fitness track, a shade house for the garden and outdoor play equipment for the Early Learning Centre.*
- *The Myer Foundation – Funding from this national philanthropic organisation will help support Two Rocks Primary School's new nursery program.*
- *Junior Landcare Grants -Coles/Yates - Funding from this ensured a garden bed, soil and seeds for a bush tucker garden.*
- *PALS- The funding from PALS has given the school the opportunity to liaise with the Noongar choir Madjiti'l Moorna to perform at an assembly with the Two Rocks choir.*

Eliza Yeo, Teacher, Media and Marketing Officer and Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Coordinator at Two Rocks Primary School, spoke with the Tender Bridge's Emma Curtin about the school's programs and why she believed they had been so successful in securing additional resources through grant seeking.

### About Two Rocks Primary School

Two Rocks Primary School is located in the northernmost suburb of Perth, about sixty kilometres from the central business district. The current population of this coastal community is approximately 3,000.

Two Rocks Primary School is a relatively new school, opening in January 2007 with 100 students. Today the school has a student population of approximately 380. In 2012, Two Rocks will become an Independent Public School, giving the school the opportunity "to

operate with greater autonomy in increased local decision making, particularly in the areas of school resources, finances and staffing".<sup>1</sup>

### What are the current areas of focus at Two Rocks Primary School and how do grants 'fit' with their priorities?

"Fundamental to seeking funding or additional resources", says Eliza, "is that it must support our current programs or help us implement new programs in line with our school goals".

Early intervention is a prime focus for the school, particularly in literacy and numeracy. In 2010, the school introduced a new nursery program,

<sup>1</sup> Quoted on the Department of Education and Training, Western Australia, website: <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/independentpublicschools/detcms/portal/>



l to r: Elizabeth Wildish (Principal) and Eliza Yeo (Teacher/Media and Marketing Officer/SAKG Coordinator), Two Rocks Primary School, Western Australia

with 3-year olds attending school one day a week as part of an early years framework. The most recent grant received by the school came from The Myer Foundation, which is helping to support this program as part of the Foundation's commitment to "leverage the best outcomes in educational settings for young people aged 0-25".<sup>2</sup>

Two Rock Primary School also has a strong IT focus with interactive whiteboards and a bank of computers in each classroom. There are currently over twenty dedicated staff members who provide innovative programs using the available technology. The Australia-Asia Bridge program connected very well with the schools commitment to ICT, with its focus on fostering "professional learning (ICT, cross-cultural understanding, etc) and online engagement".<sup>3</sup> It also had obvious links to

the school's Indonesian Grades 3-7 LOTE program, creating opportunities for students to improve their cultural understanding through connections with a sister school in Jakarta, as well as teachers' professional learning.

Health and wellbeing is also very important consideration in Two Rocks Primary. "The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program is related to the whole cycle of growing and eating, but it also promotes round-table discussion, etiquette, and manners. Last year was trial period with the program, this year we are planning to make it more in-depth and cross-curricula. Again, it's important to make sure everything dovetails into what we are striving to achieve".

**Factors considered important for success**

*School leadership and community support*

2 This is the key objective of The Myer Foundation Education program, see <http://www.myerfoundation.org.au/programs/overview.cfm?loadref=19>

3 Quoted on the Australia-Asia Bridge program website: [http://www.bridge.edu.au/en/about\\_bridge/about\\_bridge\\_landing.html](http://www.bridge.edu.au/en/about_bridge/about_bridge_landing.html)

[http://www.bridge.edu.au/en/about\\_bridge/about\\_bridge\\_landing.html](http://www.bridge.edu.au/en/about_bridge/about_bridge_landing.html)

For Eliza, one of the key reasons for their success in seeking and applying for grants, as well as initiating programs, is the leadership provided by Elizabeth Wildish, the school's Principal. "She's a very progressive leader", Eliza says, "who believes in distributed leadership and encourages staff to take ownership of various innovative projects". Part of Eliza's role is to speak to leading teachers about their own portfolios, what ideas they may have and how these would fit into the strategic direction that the Principal is driving. These are then shared and openly discussed amongst the leadership team through a collaborative approach before Eliza investigates any grant opportunities that might support them.

"The school community is also really collaborative and we are careful to remember that many programs or initiatives have an impact beyond just the school. We like to include parents and other community members and make sure we keep them informed about what's happening in the school". Two Rocks is supported by an active group of parents who participate in the School Board, Parents and Citizens group, and canteen, as well as assisting in classrooms.

Eliza is currently exploring opportunities for forging genuine partnerships within their community that might assist in accessing further support for current and future initiatives in the school.

### **Finding dedicated time for grant seeking is a bonus**

Part of the Principal's commitment to improving student outcomes included finding ways to support more innovation in the school. To this end, the 2011 Strategic Plan specifically outlined the need to provide resources to support planned strategies, including: the *Provision of a media and marketing officer to assist in accessing grants and raising the profile of the school*. This is where Eliza came in. She'd been working at the school since 2009, but was now "freed-up" to focus some of her energies on grant seeking. "At the moment", says Eliza, "I have about 1 hour extra a week but when the need arises and I have a deadline to meet my timetable becomes a bit more flexible."

Eliza brought to the school, and this new role, extensive experience in grant seeking and writing applications. However, she had come from an Independent school with quite a different demographic. Coming to a state government school, she admits "was a big change! The lack of Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status, for example, makes things a bit tricky and tax issues are out of my field, so I needed to do some more research". Eliza continues, "I am currently working with the school's registrar and another expert from the Department to see if we are eligible for any tax endorsements that would allow us access to some philanthropic organisations. When the Tenderbridge updates are sent to me I will scan through and see which ones are applicable. I contact people via email, telephone or in person. For example, in the holidays I arranged to meet the grants officer from the City of Wanneroo and discussed programs that we had in mind that would fit in with their funding criteria." Wherever possible, Eliza also submits articles to community newspapers and education focussed journals and magazines.

When funding has concluded, Eliza prepares the acquittals, under the direction of the principal, and ensures that she includes an overview

and any evidence of how their funding helped the school to achieve their stated goals – "I use photos, newspaper and newsletter articles to highlight our achievements".

### **Know what you need and provide good evidence**

A critical point for Eliza throughout our discussions is that schools must write grant applications to suit their own needs – "any program has to complement your school's objectives" – but it's also really important to make sure that you know what the application criteria for each grant is and how your application meets them.

Also, she continues "make sure you have evidence to support what you are saying – it's important to provide a good back-story to help the funder understand the context. I try to include some data, particularly longitudinal data if we have it. We also use formative and summative evaluation material, but some of the information is simply anecdotal; as long as we develop a well-rounded picture".

### **Make connections**

"I think it's really important, if possible, to create a personal link with those who are offering funding or resources", says Eliza, "it's great to build a personal rapport and be able to 'bounce' ideas around with a potential funder." Eliza also says that she found it really useful to talk to other schools, whether about specific funded programs or about their experiences more generally.

"It's also important", she reiterates, "for us to connect back to the community. We firmly believe in including our parents – part of the Myer funding, for example, will be used for parent workshops, helping them to understand the process of reading a book and numeracy in every day life".

### **What key lessons have you learnt?**

- **Perseverance** - *Don't be disheartened, keep preserving. I have certainly put in some applications that have not been successful, but you have to learn from the experience and move forward. Remember that you might have a fantastic application but the competition may be simply too great. Seek feedback if you can.*
- **Add value** - *Make sure things really connect with your school programs – you want to value-add not simply add on.*
- **Do your research** - *Be sure that you address the grant criteria – you don't want to waste all your effort by simply overlooking requirements or failing to see how the grant might connect with your project or program.*
- **Be flexible** - *Have a 'Plan B'. Sometimes if things don't work so well, re-evaluate them and talk with others about how they might be improved. Programs do evolve to meet the needs of the school.*
- **Leadership** - *Good leadership and support is fundamental; if you don't have your leader behind you, your ideas won't go anywhere. It is important to ensure you have likeminded people on your committees and where possible support from members of the community.*
- **Risk Management** - *Like any good business plan it is important to conduct a SWOT analysis or something similar and be aware of change management issues that may arise.*