Integrating Outdoor Education, English and a whole lot of opportunity

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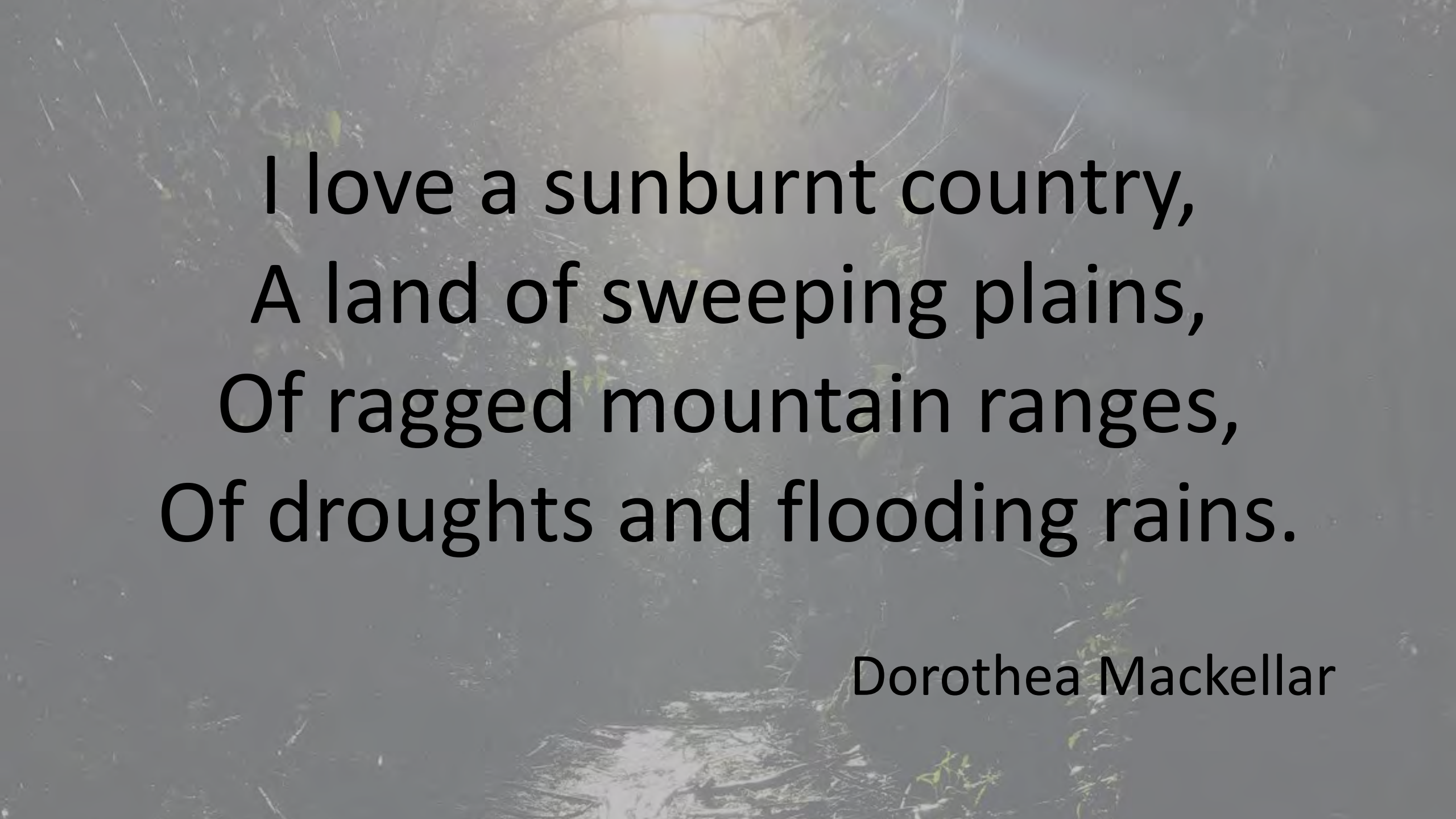

I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.
Dorothea Mackellar

What is Outdoor Education?

What is Outdoor Education?

Adventure education, environmental education and recreational education.

(Larsson, 2014)

What is Outdoor Education?

Environmental education projects, personal development courses, leadership training, expedition programs and residential camping.

(Wattchow and Brown, 2011).

What is Outdoor Education?

"…environmental education, conservation education, adventure education, school camping, wilderness therapy, and some aspects of outdoor recreation."

(Lappin, as cited by Neill, 2008)

What is Outdoor Education?

"…experiences outdoors, the use of the senses, experiential... learning by doing, personal and social development, of communities and individuals, development of the 'whole person', informal education, education in, for, and about the outdoors, and relationships."

(Neill, 2008)

What is Outdoor Education?

Nurturing learning through reflection upon one's experience, of which is grounded on practical observations and authentic experiences.

(Gustafsson, Szczepanski, Nelson & Gustafsson, as cited by Larsson, 2014)

What are the benefits of Outdoor Education?

What are the benefits of Outdoor Education?

Develop team work, leadership, and aid students in recognising their inner strengths and weaknesses, and assist them to overcome hardship through the development of resilience.

(The Outdoor Education Group, 2016)

What are the benefits of Outdoor Education?

Improve self while developing consideration of others.

(Griffiths, 2011; Wattchow & Brown, 2011; Outdoor Education Australia, 2015)

Here is our opportunity…

Here is our opportunity…

In the article '*Outdoor Education in the Schools: What can it achieve?*', James Neill (1997) highlights an interesting point;

There is an abundance of literature readily available to provided so called evidence in support of these exceptional claims relating to **physical, social, intellectual and psychological** benefits.

Outdoor Education in the Schools: What can it achieve?

James T. Neill
B.Sc.(Hons), AMAPsS

A paper presented to the 10th National Outdoor Education Conference, Sydney, Australia
January 20-24, 1997

Abstract

Introduction

Claims, Aims, and Evaluation Practices

Here is our opportunity…

A few academics such as Hattie, Marsh, Neill & Richards (1997) are willing to advocate;

…*some* outdoor education programs are aimed at improving academic goals, however caution, *most* outdoor programs lack academic objectives all together.

Here is our opportunity…

Craven, (as cited in Brookes, 2002) states:

“Outdoor Education …[is] devoid of serious academic content”

and

“…academically Mickey Mouse.”

Here is our opportunity…

Outdoor Education for many is simply ‘camp’, providing participants with a break from the traditional classroom, and an opportunity to run around outside for a few days.

Griffiths (2011)

Here is our opportunity…

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) implemented the ‘Australian Curriculum several years ago, and since then Outdoor Education has persistently requested inclusion, however has struggled to discover its natural place within the Australian Curriculum.

Here is our opportunity…

More recently there has been a mounting consensus suggesting outdoor learning experiences are essentially more inspiring and pertinent to the student (Braund & Reiss, 2006).

These learning experiences outside the traditional classroom, have been acknowledged for a number of years now, as a distinctive and influential approach to improve learning within the classroom (Jung & Tonso, 2006; Braund & Reiss, 2006).

Recent academic research into the integration of Outdoor Education and other key learning areas like Science, Mathematics, Geography, and English, provide positive conclusions upon student learning outcomes in the majority of cases.

Here is our opportunity…

While Outdoor Education governing bodies continue their push to be included into the Australian Curriculum, perhaps they are better off avoiding inclusion and utilising their abilities to effectively teach the current learning areas and the content of the general capabilities.

A brief overview of the study

The aim of my study was to investigate the effect of integrating an Outdoor Education pedagogy into an English unit of work, and to determine the student perceptions upon such an intervention on student learning.

A brief overview of the study

3 English elective classes

- 2 X Year 7
- 1 X Year 8

44 Students took part in the study

Two classes were originally taught in the traditional classroom

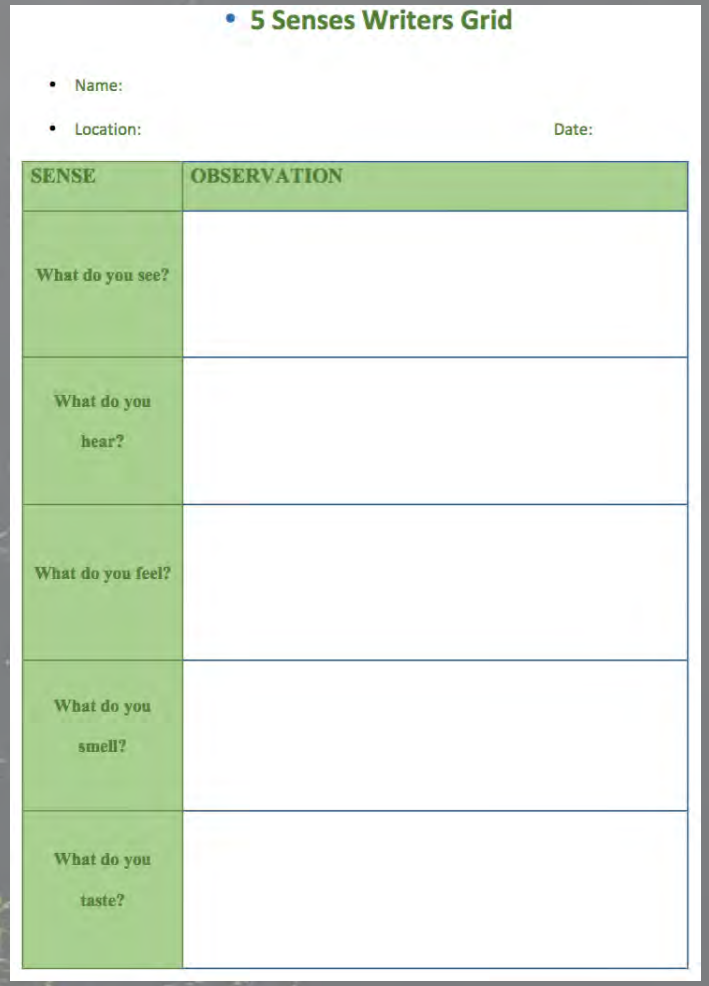
All three classes were taught in the bush

A brief overview of the study

Students were first asked to select one of five scenarios, titled as follows:

1. A Young Aboriginal Hunter / Gatherer
2. The Early Australian Explorer
3. A Bushranger
4. The Bunyip
5. When the War Began

Students then completed a 5 Senses Writers Grid before writing a 400 word short creative story.



- 5 Senses Writers Grid

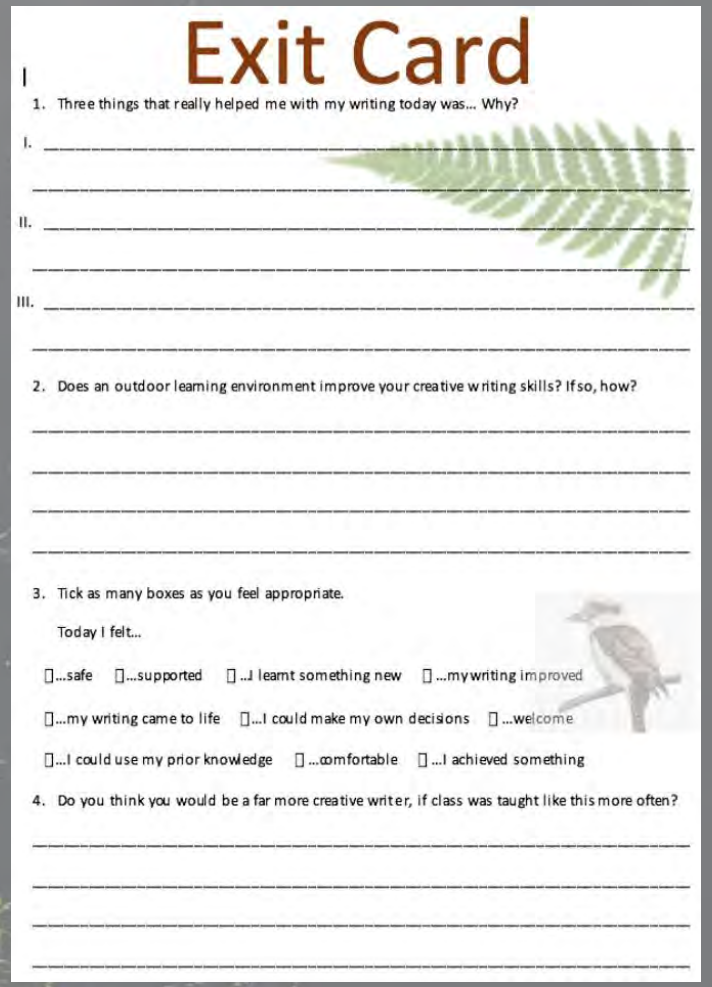
- Name:
- Location: Date:

SENSE	OBSERVATION
What do you see?	
What do you hear?	
What do you feel?	
What do you smell?	
What do you taste?	

A brief overview of the study

At the completion, students were asked to complete an ‘Exit Card’ in order to obtain their perceptions of the intervention – qualitative data.

Students work was graded by an independent English teacher in order to obtain quantitative data.



Exit Card

1. Three things that really helped me with my writing today was… Why?

I. _____

_____

II. _____

_____

III. _____

_____

2. Does an outdoor learning environment improve your creative writing skills? If so, how?

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Tick as many boxes as you feel appropriate.

Today I felt…

☐…safe ☐…supported ☐…I learnt something new ☐…my writing improved

☐…my writing came to life ☐…I could make my own decisions ☐…welcome

☐…I could use my prior knowledge ☐…comfortable ☐…I achieved something

4. Do you think you would be a far more creative writer, if class was taught like this more often?

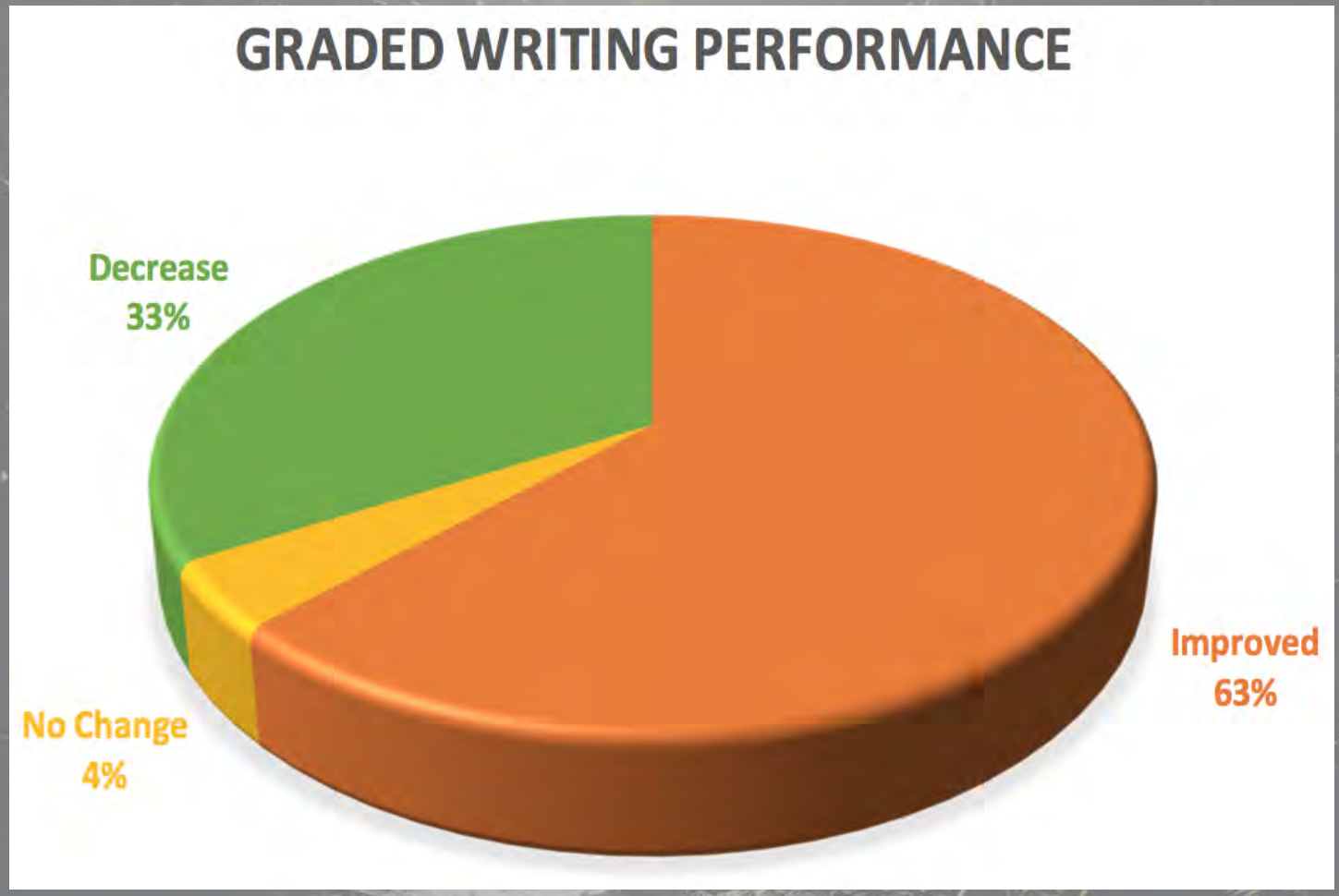
_____

_____

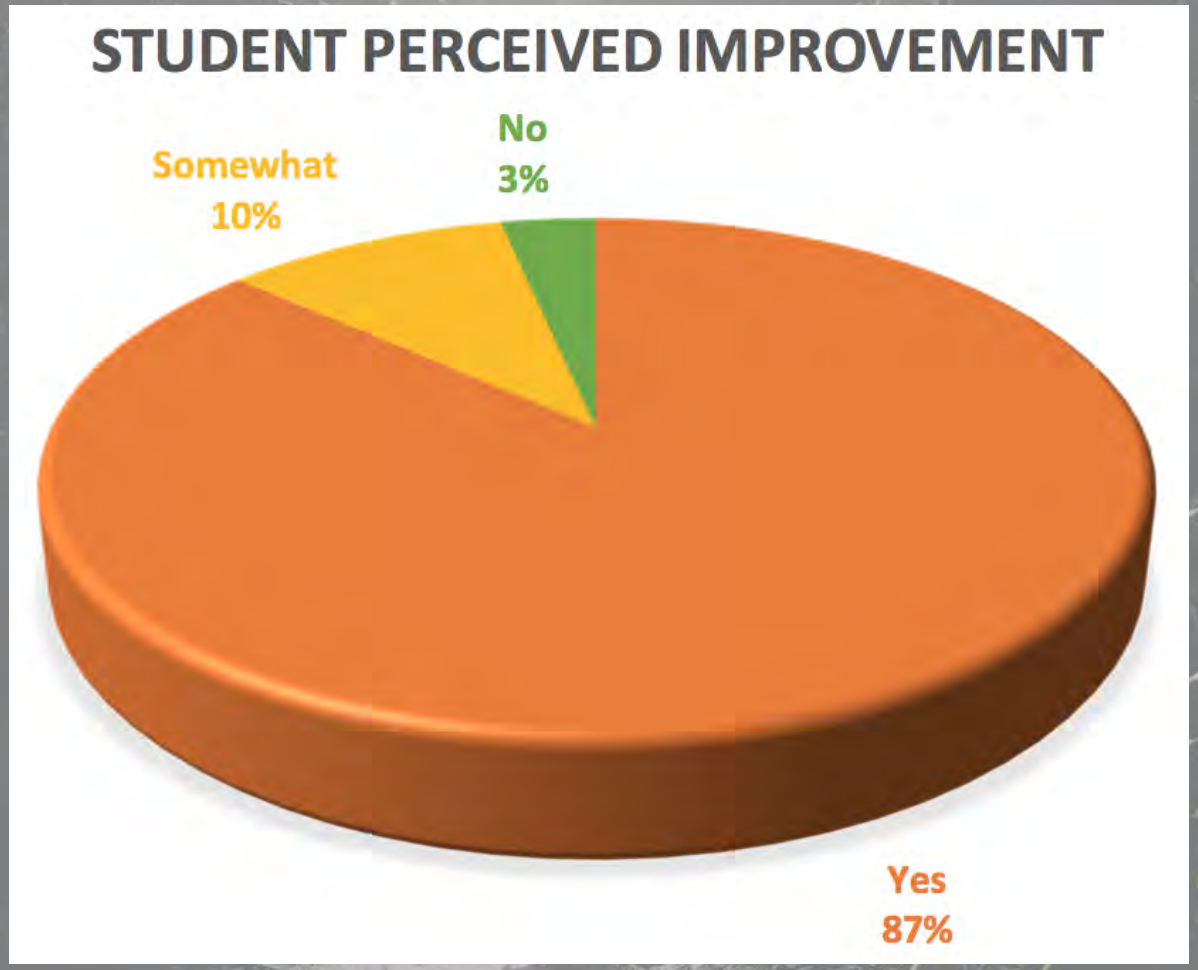
_____

_____

The Quantitative Results



The Qualitative Results



Student Engagement

Student Engagement

- “The surroundings because it helped me feel how it would be like in the story.”
- “I explored every nook and cranny of the bush to get the benefits for my writing.”

Student Engagement

- “…the scenery was extremely beautiful and stimulating for many ideas.”
- “The bush helped me visualise my setting for the backdrop of the story.”

Student Engagement

- “Feeling immersed in the ‘full experience’ – mud, rain, etc.”
- “The weather helped me to get an idea of how the characters would feel in the harsh conditions.”
- “The weather conditions; inspired description.”

Student Engagement

- “Being able to see what The Canyon looked like.”
- “Being in the same environment that the story is set on.”

Student Engagement

- “I could hear the natural noises (bird calls, gurgling water and rustling leaves).”
- “To be able to touch, smell, hear things.”
- “Reflecting on my 5 senses and how that could be incorporated into the story.”
- “Close my eyes and listening.”

Student Engagement

- “Being in a quiet area. Being alone. Sitting still.”
- “It was nice and peaceful which meant I could concentrate and write.”
- “The peace and quiet helped a lot because I could take things in.”
- “The surrounds that were around me because it was relaxing.”
- “Not being next to someone. So I wasn’t disturbed.”
- “Being on my own made me feel like I could really write whatever I wanted, without being judged.”

Who is teacher?

- “I think sitting alone… and writing, because it taught us well.”

The challenges to an Outdoor Education Pedagogy

The challenges to an Outdoor Education Pedagogy

- Time constraints
- School Heads / Leaders
- Cost
- Other teachers of other learning areas

The benefits to an Outdoor Education Pedagogy

The benefits to an Outdoor Education Pedagogy

- Improved perceived academics
- Improved actual academics
- Ability to incorporate numerous learning areas and streamlining the curriculum
- Ability to truly incorporate the physical, social, intellectual and psychological

What I hope for…

- That Outdoor Education consolidates its position as a legitimate tool for academic learning
- That you will take on the challenge and implement your own program involving academics and integrate Outdoor Education with other learning areas
- That we seek to understand our field of study further, in order to improve its application, allowing greater understanding of what we do and its benefits

All you who have not loved her,
You will not understand

Dorothea Mackellar

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