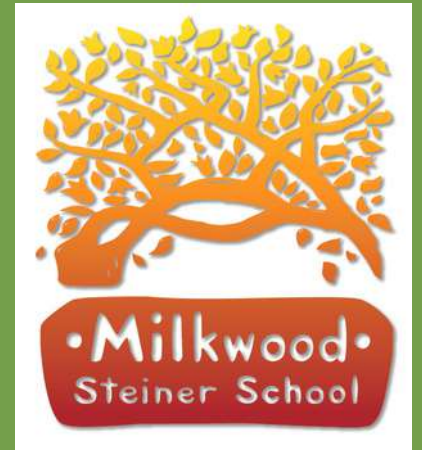


# 2023 SCHOOL SURVEY REPORT



MILKWOOD STEINER SCHOOL (DJANDJAG)  
REPORT PREPARED OCTOBER, 2023



# OVERVIEW

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The Annual School Survey collects feedback from parents of Milkwood Steiner School students.

Quantitative and qualitative data is collected through the Survey. This data is analysed in this report. This analysis provides the school with insight into parent perceptions of Milkwood Steiner School's performance, culture and service in the year 2023.

2023 saw a significant increase in parent participation in the Survey with 46 detailed responses, and I acknowledge the time and care parents took in completing it. This survey is an essential part of a bigger picture which guides our focus areas for improvement in 2024.

**NETANELA MIZRAHI**

Principal, Milkwood Steiner School  
Larrakia Country, 2023

# HOW DO PARENTS FEEL ABOUT MILKWOOD?

In 2023, almost all parents stated that their child likes, feels safe at and makes good progress at Milkwood. While there was an overwhelming perception that Milkwood acts with the best interest of children at heart, there was a slight drop in parent perception of educators' skills for supporting individual children's learning needs. In 2023, there was an increase in parent attention to the management of student behaviour, although most parents still agreed that behaviour is well managed at Milkwood. Student behaviour was a polarised theme in the feedback provided; most parents provided high praise for the school's approach to behaviour management and commented on the strengths of relationships, learning, pedagogy, pastoral care, excursions and supported social and emotional development. Other comments expressed frustration at a period of teacher shortages, and a perception that academic learning may be compromised in an inclusive classroom setting with children of diverse academic, cultural and social backgrounds. Two parents commented on experiences of a teacher using a raised voice at children. Parents commented on the care and intelligence of educators. Several comments described their children as "thriving" at Milkwood and praised the school's approach to inclusion.

Almost all Milkwood parents value the specialist programs at Milkwood, including Music, Indonesian, Indigenous Knowledge, Outdoor Classroom, Festivals, Learning Enrichment and Library. Some comments reflected a wish for more information about the Learning Enrichment program. Several comments expressed a wish for more communication about the Library program. Several comments supported the development of a specialised movement based program, such as physical education or dance. The music program featured with high praise in several comments, with one comment suggesting expanding the program to offer students more instrument lessons in additional instruments to those already offered.

With the exception of "Festivals", an increased number of parents answered "I don't know" to questions about the specialist programs. This result may partly reflect the increased participation in the survey by parents of Kindergarten-aged children in 2023 as these families will not experience the school's specialist academic programs until their child enters Primary School. However, comments reflected a need for the school to bring attention to sharing more and more frequent information about our specialist programs as these are valued by our families.

# WHAT DO PARENTS THINK ABOUT MILKWOOD'S MISSION AND VALUES?

All Milkwood parents stated support for the school's mission and values. All parents believe that at Milkwood, the Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework is adapted to the local culture and environment of our community. Other than 1 parent, Milkwood parents believe the school's commitment to learning and growth and adapting to time and place is visible at Milkwood. Two parents somewhat disagreed that the school's commitment to sustainability and self-improvement were visible, while all others felt these are visible at Milkwood in 2023. 96% of parents would recommend Milkwood to other families; 1 parent didn't know if they would, and 1 parent somewhat disagreed that they would. Parents commented that the school's values are alive, intentional and reflective. The school's visible values of community, culture and inclusion emerged as additional themes in comments. Two responses expressed concern about the teaching of the world's religions in class. These important comments highlight a need for the school to proactively and better explain how stories from different faiths are presented in the Steiner Curriculum across the grades. These also reflect a need for the school to learn more about our community's experience of religious Trauma, in order to continue in our wish to apply a critical, culturally-safe, culturally-responsive and anti-oppressive lens to all aspects of our curriculum.



# COMMUNICATION

In 2023, parents received the most relevant information about their children from Student Profiles (reports), Informal Conversations, Class Information Nights and Parent-teacher Interviews. Many parents also received relevant information about their child through Parent Teacher Meetings, Educational Adjustment Plans, Emails and Newsletters. Parents reported receiving the most relevant information about the school from the newsletter, written communication from the Principal, written communication from the Administration and Enrolments Officer and Milkwood's Facebook Page. 87% of Milkwood parents always or almost always read the school Newsletter. Almost all parents feel well informed about what is happening at Milkwood and know who to speak to when they have concerns about their children or the school. The majority of parents feel well informed about their child's progress at school, but 7 parents surveyed did not agree with this statement. This lets us know that communicating about children's progress is an area for improvement in 2024. All parents who communicated with the school in 2023 reported that they received a timely response. Parents feel heard when they raise a concern. 91% of parents are satisfied with the responses they receive from the school. Parents feel comfortable bringing their concerns to their child's teacher or the Principal. A significant percentage of parents did not know whether they would feel comfortable bringing their concerns to the Board, but over half the parents felt comfortable bringing concerns to the Board.



# ADULT EDUCATION & CONTRIBUTION

The top areas of adult learning that parents want to access at Milkwood in 2023 are:

1. Steiner Education
2. Steiner Philosophy / Indigenous Knowledge
3. Child Development
4. Artistic/craft experiences
5. The local environment and history
6. Parenting
7. Lewis Deep Democracy
8. Health and nutrition
9. Anthroposophy

In 2023, parents contributed most of their volunteer time at festivals, fundraising, volunteering in class, working bees and class jobs. Some parents also volunteered their time by contributing their professional skills or as class guardians. 9% of parents did not identify as having volunteered at the school. Parents say that the greatest barriers to being able to contribute in the ways they want to at Milkwood are commitments to paid work, caring responsibilities, scheduling conflicts and other volunteering commitments. A small but significant number of parents perceived that they didn't have the relevant skills to contribute to Milkwood, or hadn't been asked to contribute.



# WHY MILKWOOD?

Significant themes emerging from parent responses to why Milkwood is their school of choice included:

- Indigenous Knowledge
- Philosophy and Whole of Child approach
- Community
- Child's happiness to be at school
- Inclusion and Respect
- Adaptability
- Leadership
- Aligning values
- Love, care and kindness
- Creativity
- Integrity
- Quality of teaching, specialist programs and curriculum
- Staff to student ratios



# YOUR REASONS!

My children's individual needs continue to be met in a way that sees them for who they are becoming and considers the best way for them to thrive. Each and every issue or idea I have raised has been responded to in a caring, wholistic way and has brought me and my family closer to the school and the community as a result. I feel extremely comfortable with speaking freely and see that decisions are made by management and teachers with consideration of children's unique needs, collective community values and a very progressive approach to Steiner curriculum. I am deeply grateful we have found this school.

My children have great relationships with friends and their teachers. They're happy to go to school and regularly demonstrate their learning through storytelling, songs and in their growing confidence navigating their world.

My child's personal growth, confidence and abilities have flourished this year under the wonderful guidance and enthusiasm of his teacher.

My child has been allowed to be himself, while being nurtured and supported to develop socially, academically and spiritually.

We love Milkwood. I never knew schools could really be safe and caring like we've found at Milkwood, I'm beyond impressed.

I feel totally at ease leaving my child in the care of such intelligent and caring educators. My child comes home emotionally regulated, even when tired, that tells me everything about how he's being managed and cared for.

My children are thriving. There is nowhere I would rather my children be.

My son is thriving at Milkwood

I am pleased with how expansive my child's world view is, as it moves outward from the lessons and experiences garnered through the class and the school.

My child cherishes excursions and incursions. Their identity is affirmed and their confidence has grown.



My children love being at Milkwood and it is one of the things that keeps us in the Territory!

My son found it difficult to be adapted because he didn't speak English at all. However, he is so happy now because his teachers and friends make him feel loved everyday.

Milkwood's approach to First Nations education has changed my children's world view, enriched their understanding of living in the Northern Territory and Australia. It has given them pride and curiosity in their own culture and created an environment in which they can share who they are without fear or the need to assimilate.

Milkwood's Indigenous Knowledge, Music, Outdoor Classroom programs are exemplary.

My child has grown in stature due to what Milkwood has to offer. Their knowledge of the Larrakia people is amazing as well as everything else they are involved in.

I appreciate the critical lens taken to the 'old texts' that have been used as part of Steiner curriculum.

Music in particular is inspiring my children at the moment.

My children love the specialist programs.

We would not consider putting our child into a mainstream school after our experience with Milkwood.

We love everything about Milkwood

It's fantastic to be at a school who's values are so alive.

Milkwood's Mission places us in the here and now, a clear and tangible intention which instils a sense of belonging and investigation. Milkwood's Values give purpose and room for reflection.

I love that Milkwood cares about context, our place in time and the space we've been given, as environment they say is the number one predictor of success. I respect their mission and culture and hope this bleeds into our family culture at home.

I'm relieved that Milkwood prioritises protection and nurturing of my child's spirit which is something I believe no other school is really concerned with.

This is the type of school needed for children struggling. Reminds me of when I went to school and how much fun it was.

Milkwood grows a strong community.

We will be challenged by the move to a new site but we can grow stronger. We want a beautiful and meaningful place for our children to thrive.

I am most grateful for the Indigenous knowledge, nature and music components.

Steiner Philosophy and Community.

My child has never said I don't want to go to school. My child loves their class and teacher and everything about the school.

We love how Milkwood looks at each child differently and adapts as required unlike mainstream schools.

Gentle approach to self-lead learning.

Small community focused school using a whole child approach to teaching.

First Nations knowledges are front and centre of all aspects of the school community life.

Leadership is courageous, approachable, open, caring, skilful and progressive.

Milkwood has similar philosophies and values as we do as a family and teaches in a way that we want our children to learn and has no/limited technology and a love of embracing the outdoor lifestyle.

As per Milkwoods values; Courage, Imagination, Dignity, Spirit. I see these values run through the whole of the school, it beams through their staff, you can feel it in the walls and as the children grow with the school you can see these values beaming out of them. Milkwood is a grounding school it has life, meaning and intention.

My daughters' individual characteristics are acknowledged, and their learning stage and needs are recognised and addressed in a way that celebrates and supports their successes and individualism.

We wanted a school that aligns with our values and nurtures our children.

I always knew I wanted to choose Milkwood. The determination, love support and generosity from the staff was beautiful, placing our child in milkwood reassured us that our child would have 1 on 1 support. Also not having our child expected to meet a certain level of reading and writing by a certain time frame was a relief as we believe all children develop at their own pace.

To know our child isn't just another statistics on a school performance but seen as his own individual self and supported in his growth and development.

We gave the choice to our child to pick a school after 3 interview milkwood was where he chose and I'm so grateful.

My children's holistic development is nurtured.

My children are inspired by exceptional leaders. The community strives to be the best they can be in support and love for the children and others in the community. There is always thinking, there is always creativity and there are always love and kindness.

Best school in Darwin! Integrity of Principal, outstanding programs, dedicated teachers  
Intelligent, caring educators.

Student to teacher ratios. Cultural fit - home and school values harmonious/symbiotic. Staff are respectful, caring, approachable for parents too, not officious and intimidating.

The values were more in line with our family then mainstream school.

A calm school that allows my children to grow at their pace instead of being forced to move forward.

The connection to Larrakia, the child's development first, philosophy and values align.

Because the values and philosophy fit with our family and I believe will set our children up for the changing world.

Philosophy and intentional curriculum.

I want my child to love learning.

It provides rich, responsive education to all children. Students are valued as individuals. It fosters a deep love of learning and encourages students to build resilience. Every day it helps my child to become active, learners, and kinder, more engaged human beings.

Milkwood is our people doing brave and creative things.

The community, the culture. We are grateful for the lack of screens. We can see the difference in our children from being at Milkwood.

Smaller classes. Reduced reliance on technology. Happy and relaxed students and teachers. The greater Milkwood community is appealing. Steiner philosophy of educating the whole child.

Thank you, you are a happy little miracle and we feel so lucky to be a part of the Milkwood community. It's been such an important thing to me as a mother to be able to leave my child somewhere and be 100% confident he's being cared for intelligently and afforded respect and love for the person he is finding himself to be. Life is mysterious and Milkwood educators seem to have the unique gift of knowing how to work with the natural ebb and flow of kids. That's a special kind of magic of immeasurable value. Thank you for being an eye in the storm of this world for our children.

It's the only Steiner school in Darwin.

Felt the school was better suited to our families philosophy and values than other schools.

Holistic development of the 'whole child' is my focus for the primary years.

Curriculum.

Overall we love Milkwood.

Learning structure that helps regulate my child emotions and learning in a safe way

My child is happy, and learning deeply and wholistically.

I love the intended mission and I am being patient and proactive to contribute to co-creating the environment for our children to thrive

Thanks for being an amazing school. It's stressful having a child with different views of life however everyone at the school accepts and assists.

I love all the Festivals and activities, but I think dates should be notified at the start of the year for families to plan ahead.

I am glad our principal stays strong, ensuring no technology in classrooms. I also appreciate her excellent writing for the newsletter and letters home.

Keep doing what you are doing Milkwood staff, Darwin is lucky to have this school not only for our children but for their adults and the community.

I am indebted to the exceptional staff who work in this school. Teachers, school leaders and classroom assistants are more than exceptional.

# 2024 IMPROVEMENT GOALS

1. Curriculum Development in the Australian Steiner Curriculum Framework's Physical Education/Movement curriculum for Primary-Middle School students in 2024.
2. Incorporation of Library and Learning Enrichment comments in Student Profiles (reports) from 2024.
3. Continued focus on improved employment conditions for all staff to support staff retention.
4. Furthering PD in Restorative Justice and Behaviour Management for Parents and Educators.
5. Introducing the theories of Anti-Oppressive Practice to our parent community via Adult Education and school publications. Incorporating into this a forum for hearing more from parents about their experiences of cultural harm and empowerment through curriculum and school experiences, and applying this to Milkwood's 2024-25 curriculum review.

