

A recent combined screening program at Bunbury, WA's Djidi Djidi Aboriginal School revealed one third of its students had some form of hearing loss due to fluid in the middle ear canal.

A range of health and well-being programs have been initiated at the school, but it's the introduction of new [classroom sound systems](#) and technology that is having an immediate, positive and ongoing impact in the Djidi Djidi classrooms.

Hear and Learn's RedCAT system, comprising a flat panel, wall-mounted speaker and two clip microphones, is designed to have minimal physical or visual interruption in a classroom but deliver clear, direct audio to each student.

According to Learning Support Coordinator, Bronwyn Mumme, Djidi Djidi is acutely aware of the school's role within its community and the lives of its families.

"We place a lot of emphasis on the social and emotional development of our students, as well as their overall well-being," says Mrs Mumme. "Some of our students have experienced trauma so, as well as providing them with optimal learning conditions, calm and peaceful classrooms de-escalate stress and provide them with comfort and a safe place to learn."

"We're helping to take away the stress," says Mrs Mumme. "Without emotional stress a child is able to learn. The school is a safe place for our students, so the consistency of tone becomes a comfort."

Utilising the RedCAT technology, Djidi Djidi Aboriginal School students, and teachers, experience a consistent and moderated audio tone. Without the need for raised voices to be heard over normal classroom enthusiasm, students are calm, more collaborative, and become increasingly independent learners.

Following the loss of Djidi Djidi's school library in a 2015 fire, Djidi Djidi Principal Ms Tegan Davis recognised the opportunity to introduce new technology with the rebuild. Audio systems have been trialled previously at the school, but Hear and Learn's RedCAT system has now been rolled out throughout all the classrooms.

Djidi Djidi Aboriginal School is linked to the WA Earbus Foundation of WA, a mobile ear health clinic providing screening, surveillance and treatment programs that include GP and specialist support for Aboriginal children. Breathe, Blow, Cough, Wash and Chew (BBCWC) is another program Djidi Djidi students participate in daily that supports their good ear health. The program has children recognise the importance of keeping ears clear of infected fluid and use a process to help clear this fluid through daily exercises. The students learn that the purpose is to improve hearing and, therefore, their learning.

Djidi Djidi's Year 1 and 2 Teacher Gemma Callaigaro highlights an additional benefit of calm classroom environments with the RedCAT technology.

"In Lower Primary school the pronunciation of words is so important," says Ms Callaigaro. "Children need to clearly hear whole words pronounced so that they can form the words themselves, break them down into sounds and syllables, repeat them and, later, learn to spell them. It's a crucial part of language learning."

Ms Callaigaro, who includes a lot of group work with her class, says her students are so familiar with the RedCAT system in their classroom, they remind her if she's forgotten to turn it on.

"They love hearing the sound of their own voices through the RedCAT. For our shy kids, the system physically supports them and helps them deal with the unknown and unfamiliar," says Ms Callaigaro.

"Even with the level of noise that's natural for a busy classroom," says Year 5 Teacher Emma Fitzgerald, "I know they can clearly hear my voice and instruction. There's no need for raised voices in order to be heard over the regular classroom buzz."

"It's much easier knowing everyone in the class is able to hear clearly," says Ms Fitzgerald, "and, using the RedCAT system, I can speak with them using the same moderated tone as a regular speaking voice."

Ms Fitzgerald says the RedCAT [classroom sound systems](#) enable her Year 5 students to formalise the process of sharing their work.

"When they get used to it, the children really enjoy using the microphone and sharing their written work with their peers," says Ms Fitzgerald.