



Education and Training

Performance in Indigenous Education

Report to the Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory

Annual Report 2007



Thank you to the Aboriginal children of Jervis Bay Primary School whose photographs illustrate this report, and to Murray Watson, an Aboriginal student at Campbell High School, for the use of his artwork on page 15.

CONTENTS

Overview.....	3
Preschool enrolments	3
K-12 student enrolments	4
Early childhood education	4
School and community educational partnerships	4
ACT Indigenous Education Consultative Body	6
Whole of School Intervention Program	6
Significant Events	7
School leadership	8
Dare to Lead	8
Quality teaching	10
2007 ACT Assessment Program Results (Public schools)	12
Every Chance to Learn	13
Pathways to training, employment and higher education.....	14
Indigenous Traineeships	15
Conclusion.....	15

Overview

In 2000, the ACT Legislative Assembly requested that a report on Indigenous education be tabled in the Assembly every six months. In 2006, the ACT Legislative Assembly agreed to amend the reporting timeframe to allow for the preparation of a progress report covering January to June and an annual report for the January to December period. This report to the ACT Legislative Assembly on Indigenous education covers the period January to December 2007 inclusive.

In 2006 the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) endorsed the report *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005-2008*. This report is available from the publication section of the MCEETYA website at: <http://www.mceetya.edu.au/mceetya/>. The recommendations provided in the report seek to accelerate the pace of change by engaging Indigenous children and young people in learning.

Implementation of the MCEETYA report's recommendations will allow jurisdictions to meet proposed education and training outcomes of the national reform agenda (human capital stream) agreed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and address key indicators of Indigenous disadvantage endorsed by COAG in 2003. The report's recommendations align with five domains in which engagement is critical: early childhood education; school and community educational partnerships; school leadership; quality leadership; and pathways to training, employment and higher education. This annual report is structured to address each of these domains.

This report also demonstrates achievements against the strategic goals of the *ACT Department of Education and Training 2006-09 Strategic Plan*, which are to:

- Goal 1: Provide high quality education and training that meets the needs of the 21st century
- Goal 2: Shape and lead education and training
- Goal 3: Build communication, collaboration and partnerships
- Goal 4: Strengthen organisational capacity

The achievements of Indigenous students in education and training are reported as well as particular actions being undertaken by the ACT Department of Education and Training (the Department) to continue to support enhanced learning outcomes for Indigenous students. The report covers literacy and numeracy outcomes and strategies in the areas of professional learning, community engagement and curriculum initiatives that have been implemented to bring about positive change. The report also provides an opportunity to celebrate dates of significance in Indigenous Australia.

Preschool enrolments

In 2007 the ACT Government provided preschool education in 79 public preschools and five Koori preschool programs. In the 2007 half-yearly report on Indigenous education, the Department reported that 79 children out of the total of 3,499 students attending preschool identified as Indigenous. This represents 2.3% of the total enrolment of public preschools.

The 2007 August Preschool Census indicated that the number of Indigenous students had increased by 23 students to 102. This represents 2.8% of all public preschool children.

K-12 student enrolments

The February 2007 school census reported a total of 34 927 students enrolled in public schools in the ACT, including Jervis Bay. Of this number, 843 identified as Indigenous.

The August 2007 school census reported 902 students who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander attending ACT public schools. Of these, 561 were enrolled in Kindergarten-year 6, 259 in years 7-10, and 82 in years 11-12.

Early childhood education

Parents and caregivers of Indigenous students have been encouraged to participate in the education of their children in a number of ways. To increase parent involvement in assisting the learning and development of their children, families and friends from all five Koori preschool program sites were invited to bring their younger children to formal and informal gatherings where information was provided about learning opportunities available in the preschool program. Parents and caregivers of Indigenous children were also invited to accompany the staff and children on a range of educationally focused excursions conducted throughout the year.

During the year staff from Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service visited mainstream and Koori preschool programs to perform audiology examinations of Indigenous students. Preschool teachers are working with the specialist teacher for hearing impaired, to assist them to better address the educational needs of students identified with conductive hearing loss. The Koori programs were also visited by oral hygiene therapists. Preschool teachers and staff promoted these occasions and encouraged parents and caregivers to access available services for children who need follow-up visits.

School and community educational partnerships

Due to the dispersal of Indigenous students across ACT public schools, establishment of a cluster based model was the preferred option for developing stronger school and community educational partnerships. This model involves the high school and local primary schools agreeing to work with each other and their Indigenous students and parents and caregivers. A template that was made available on the MCEETYA website from the end of 2007 provides a set of sample statements that can be adapted to meet local needs.



Student from Jervis Bay Primary School

At the beginning of the 2007 school year, Indigenous Home School Liaison Officers (IHSLOs) were relocated from a central location and based in high schools. From the base school, IHSLOs worked to support staff and Indigenous students in these schools and in local primary schools. Most IHSLOs supported more than one cluster of schools.

IHSLOs played a significant role in assisting schools to involve parents and caregivers of Indigenous students. Examples of this included work with staff and parents to develop funding proposals for homework centres and other initiatives supported by the Whole of School Intervention program.

All 33 Indigenous students who attended schools that closed at the end of 2006 attended a public school in 2007. IHSLOs supported staff at schools due to close at the end of 2007 (Kambah High School, Cook Primary School and Village Creek Primary School) to assist Indigenous students in this transition to new schools in 2008. Of the 23 Indigenous students that attended schools that closed in 2007, all but four students were attending a public school in 2008.

At Lanyon High School, the IHSLO conducted an information day for senior Indigenous students. Representatives from employer groups presented information about their industry and spoke about the options available to students including post school employment or school based apprenticeships. Parents and caregivers were invited to attend and had opportunities to learn about options for their child.

By adjusting the focus of their work in 2007 to improve attendance rates of Indigenous students and assist schools to engage Indigenous parents in stronger partnerships, the IHSLOs became more strategic in their approach to service delivery. While overall attendance rates (based on all absence types) in primary school and high school in 2007 were similar to those in 2006, attendance rates (based on all attendance types) in college were slightly higher in 2007 compared to 2006.

In previous reports to the Legislative Assembly, student attendance data for high school and college has only used unexplained absences ('truant' and 'absent without parental approval') in the analysis. However, the data on absences that is reported to MCEETYA in the *National Report on Schooling* comprises both explained and unexplained categories. Therefore, this report and future annual reports will provide information on both categories.

There is no distinction drawn between explained and unexplained absences in the aggregated data collected for primary school students. The rate of Indigenous student attendance in years K-6 in 2007 was 87.5%, similar to that in 2006 (88.2%).

The rate of Indigenous student attendance in years 7-10 in 2007 was 77.7%. If unexplained absences alone were used in the calculation, the attendance rate rises to 85.5% in 2007. The rate of Indigenous student attendance in years 11-12 in 2007 was 84.8% (83% in 2006). If unexplained absences alone were used in the years 11-12 calculation, the attendance rate rises to 92.3% in 2007 (88.1% in 2006).

ACT Indigenous Education Consultative Body

The ACT Department of Education and Training continued to work with the Indigenous Education Consultative Body (IECB) throughout 2007 to ensure the views of Indigenous people were reflected in school programs and policy directions.

The IECB experienced difficulties recruiting members throughout 2007. Several advertisements for vacant membership positions did not attract applications. By the end of the reporting period, active membership was nine out of a total of 17. Despite many attempts both from Canberra and the Wreck Bay Community Council, the IECB did not have a representative of the Jervis Bay/Wreck Bay Aboriginal community.

Work commitments of parent and community members on the IECB hindered the continuation of the formalized cross-sectoral meetings. Sharing of ideas and information about programs and strategies was generally done through IECB meetings by members who were representatives on a range of committees chaired by other ACT Government departments and agencies.

In a meeting with the Minister for Education and Training in July 2007, the IECB proposed involving representatives from the higher education and non-government schools sectors in Canberra to expand the strong collaborative base already established. The review and redrafting of the IECB Terms of Reference was approved for action at the same meeting.

Ways of providing more focused support to current and future Indigenous students and their parents and caregivers was a major topic discussed regularly.

Whole of School Intervention Program

Strengthening the partnership between schools, parents and caregivers of Indigenous students is a goal that schools are continually working towards. The then Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), now Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), provided funds under its Whole of School Intervention (WoSI) programme. The programme has two elements

- Parent School Partnership Initiative; and
- Homework Centres.

Involvement of Indigenous parents in the development of funding submissions prepared by schools was essential.

ACT proposals that were successfully funded in 2007 included:

- the Melba High School cluster homework centre
- the Koori Preschool programs at Calwell and Wanniasa
- the cultural program operating at Black Mountain School.

“I feel that the student from my class who attends has benefited from the programme. She has her homework done and also talks very positively about the centre.”

Year 3 teacher

The submission from the Koori preschool focused on involving students in healthy

lifestyle choices while the Black Mountain School initiative was to provide a program that exposed their students to aspects of Indigenous cultures.

Significant Events

Reconciliation Week and National Aborigines' and Torres Strait Islanders' Week (NAIDOC Week)

Given the significance of these events, there was greater interest in Reconciliation Week in 2007 and in activities associated with NAIDOC Week. Some schools made a decision to combine both events into an exciting curriculum plan. These were supported by materials obtained from the Reconciliation Australia website.



The Hon Kim Beasley MP addressing an assembly at Ainslie School

Indigenous and non-Indigenous speakers were invited to schools to share information from their life journey with students. Ainslie School had the pleasure of listening to the Hon Kim Beasley MP, former Leader of the Australian Labor Party, while other schools were provided opportunities to hear stories from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

These two weeks in the Indigenous calendar also provide all students in ACT public schools with opportunities to participate in visual and performing arts activities either at the local school level or attending exhibitions and performances by nationally and internationally renowned artists and performers.

"I am so pleased that the schools are putting things on. Now we can all come up to our kids' school and celebrate with them and their friends."

Aboriginal parent

School leadership

Dare to Lead

The Dare to Lead program is one of several coordinated under the auspices of the Australian Principal's Association Professional Development Council (APAPDC).



Indigenous studies at Jervis Bay Primary School

At the end of the 2007 school year there were 103 ACT schools participating in the Dare to Lead program. Seventy of those are public schools, which represents 70% of the total number of ACT schools.

The Dare to Lead coordinators organize a number of events each year to provide opportunities for principals and educational leaders to enhance their knowledge about issues affecting Indigenous students and their community. The most significant of those events in 2007 was the Norman Laing lecture delivered during Reconciliation Week.

The Dare to Lead program plays a key role in distributing resources to schools to assist them implement strategies to improve educational outcomes of Indigenous students. One resource that is printed in a postcard format contains an explanation and wording for *Acknowledgement of Country*. Examples of other resources that were made available in 2007 include:

Acknowledgement of Country
I/We would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and pay my/our respects to the Elders both past, present and future for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Indigenous Australia.

Dare to Lead

Same Kids, Same Goals

A joint project between Dare to Lead and the Dusseldorp Skills Forum aimed at addressing the importance of an effective working relationship between school Principals and Indigenous Education Workers.

Koori Mail

The Koori Mail is the fortnightly national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander newspaper, which prints news, images and views of particular interest to

Aborigines and Torres Strait Island people, and non-Indigenous people interested in Indigenous Affairs.

Moorditj

The Moorditj CD-ROM and associated materials is an impressive and inexpensive resource for teachers wishing to integrate aspects of Indigenous Australian culture with current classroom activities. Participants in the *Dare to Lead* project receive a complimentary single-user licence copy of the Moorditj CD-ROM.

The Bridge

The Bridge - Towards Reconciliation is an interactive board game - a learning tool that promotes reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It aims to increase knowledge and understanding of Australian Indigenous peoples and to celebrate the many contributions made by Australian Indigenous peoples to Australian society.

Indig Readers

"For Little Fullas, for Big Fullas" is a series of books featuring contemporary Aboriginal stories with illustrations by Aboriginal artists. The aim of the series is to help students – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous – to learn to read. The stories deal in a relaxed and often amusing way with issues that affect the lives of all children: family, self-esteem, pride, setting goals, good health, tolerance and school attendance. A teachers' guide accompanies the books and includes lesson notes and activity sheets.

Some of the schools that made use of these resources in 2007 included: Aranda, Giralang, Kaleen, Majura, Narrabundah, Richardson and Wanniasa Hills Primary Schools; Lyneham, Melrose and Stromlo High Schools; and Erindale and Lake Ginninderra Colleges. Whenever possible, the APAPDC subsidized the costs of resources purchased by schools.

In 2007 the Department introduced two new awards recognizing contributions made by staff to implement strategies to improve outcomes for Indigenous people in ACT public schools. There were two categories for the award, recognizing teaching staff and employees other than teachers. In its inaugural year only one award was presented.

Ms Vivien Palmer, Principal, Richardson Primary School was recognized for her outstanding efforts to lead her school in responding to the needs of all students in their quest for knowledge about Indigenous Australia and for implementing strategies to engage Indigenous students and their families in education.

Throughout the year, Ms Palmer led other principals in discussions about the Dare to Lead program and noted options for enhancing the program in ACT schools, such as involving classroom teachers in school-based Dare to Lead activities and then using these teachers as contact people in their schools.

Quality teaching

Literacy and Numeracy Kindergarten outcomes

All kindergarten students were assessed in aspects of English literacy and numeracy using the Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) assessment instrument on entry to kindergarten in 2007, and again at the end of the year to ascertain progress.

Kindergarten students scoring above the benchmark in baseline February PIPS assessment are considered to have commenced schooling with adequate preparation.



Numeracy learning at Jervis Bay Primary

The proportion of kindergarten students whose baseline PIPS assessment was above the cut scores in reading and mathematics in 2007 is highlighted in *Figure A*. The cut score is the minimum standard in reading and mathematics expected at the commencement of kindergarten.

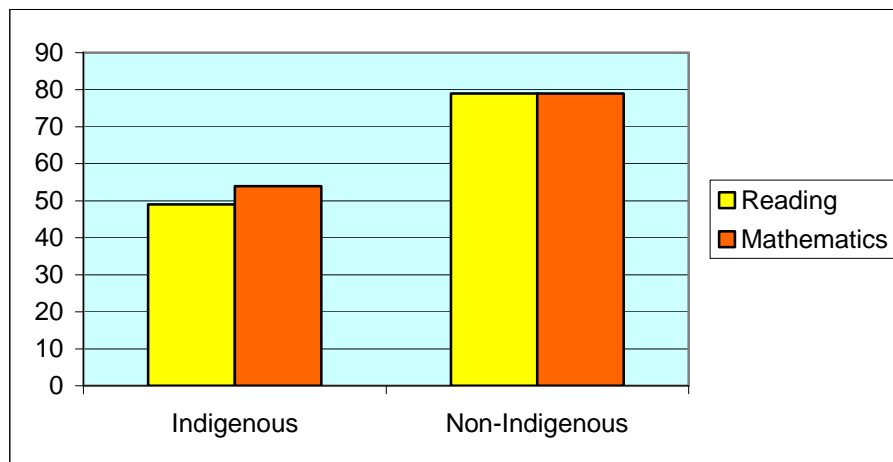


Figure A – PIPS proportion above minimum standard in February 2007

Figure B shows the comparison between the progress of kindergarten Indigenous and non-Indigenous students during 2007. In mathematics, 76% of Indigenous students made expected and better than expected progress while in reading, 57% made expected and better than expected progress between assessments.

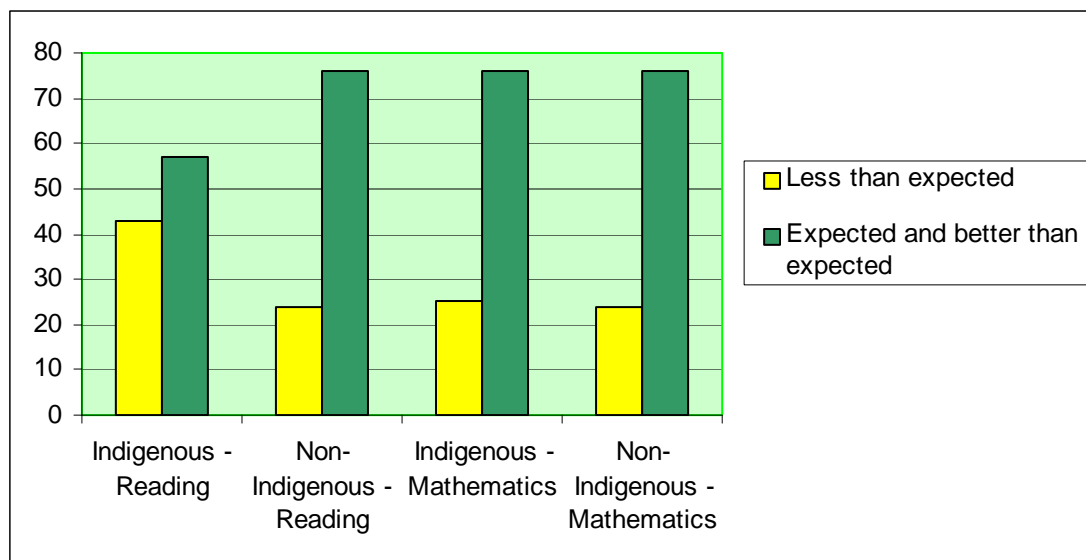


Figure B – Progress of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in 2007

Those Indigenous students who made less than expected progress in mathematics and reading will be among the target group for early intervention programs in 2008.

Literacy and Numeracy

In 2007 Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Consultants (ILNCs) were working with 49 students in 32 primary schools across the ACT. Their focus was on year 4 students who scored in the lowest 20% of year 3 ACTAP results in at least one area of reading, writing and/or numeracy.

Intensive support was provided over eight weeks for schools with more than one student with the identified level of need. ILNCs attended the designated school every day, working with the identified students and their teacher(s). They supported students through targeted teaching programs and teachers through professional discussion and team planning.



Students from Jervis Bay Primary School

Schools with a single identified student were supported through occasional classroom support as requested and targeted professional development in areas of cultural perspectives, English literacy and numeracy.

2007 ACT Assessment Program Results (Public schools)

The nationally agreed minimum standards for reading, writing and numeracy at years 3, 5 and 7 are referred to as the national benchmarks. The ACT performs very favourably in comparison to the other jurisdictions against these benchmarks. However, while some Indigenous students in public schools achieved high results in the ACT Assessment Program (ACTAP) in 2007, the general performance of Indigenous students continues to be below that of non-Indigenous students.

In year 3, 84% (± 8) of Indigenous students in public schools were above the benchmark in reading and 80% (± 9) were above the benchmark in writing and numeracy, similar results to those achieved in 2006. In year 5, 80% (± 8) of Indigenous students in public schools were above the benchmark in reading, 80% (± 11) in writing, and 81% (± 10) in numeracy. The proportions of year 5 Indigenous students above the benchmark did not change to a statistically significant degree from the 2006 figures.

In reading, writing and numeracy, approximately 33% of Indigenous students achieved in the upper 50% of results of non-Indigenous students.

In year 7, 82% (± 12) of Indigenous students in public schools were above the benchmark in reading, 71% (± 14) in writing and 53% (± 13) in numeracy. These results were not significantly different to those achieved in 2006.

In year 7, (Figure E) approximately 20% of Indigenous students in each of reading, writing and numeracy achieved in the upper 50% of results of non-Indigenous students. In year 9, 26% of Indigenous students in reading and writing and 18% in numeracy achieved in the upper 50% of results of non-Indigenous students.

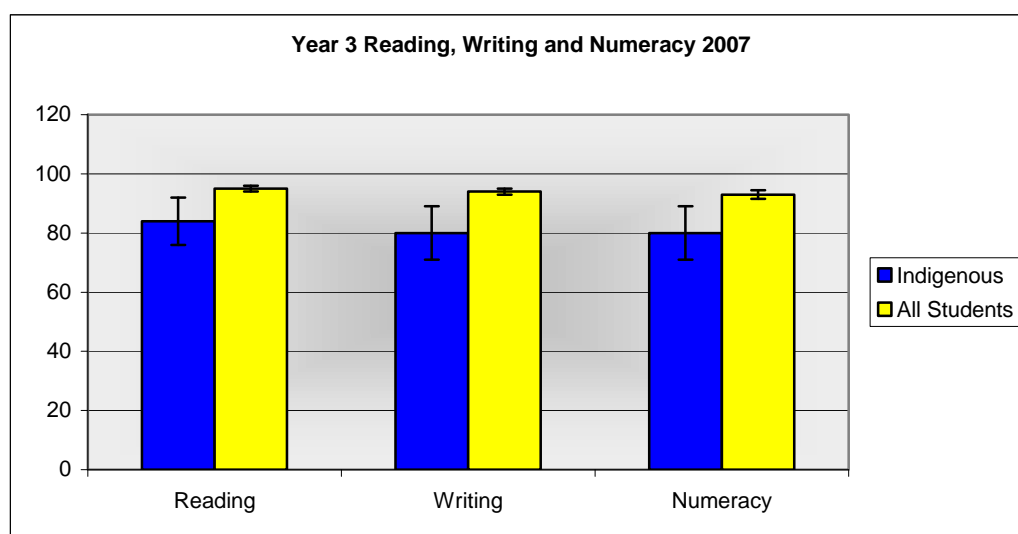


Figure C – Year 3 Reading, Writing and Numeracy outcomes 2007

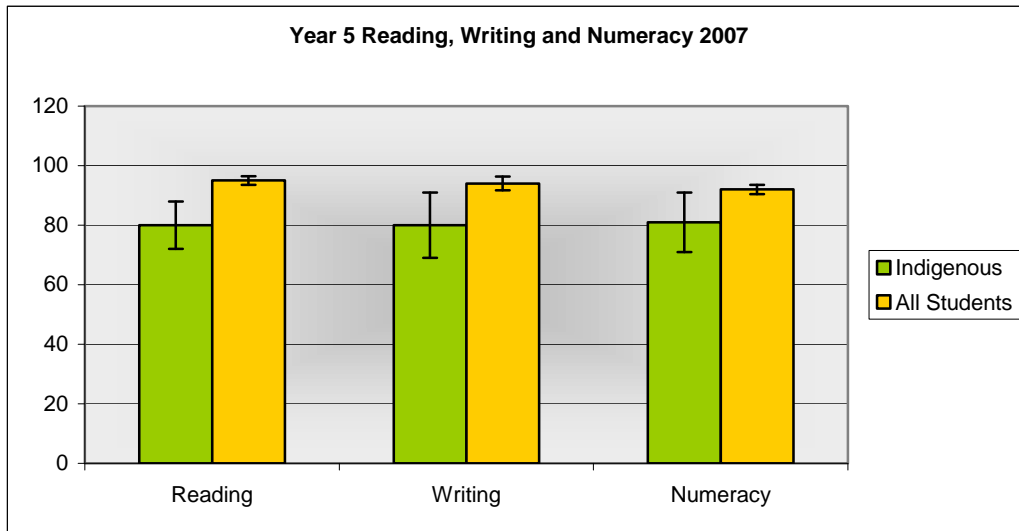


Figure D – Year 5 Reading, Writing and Numeracy outcomes 2007

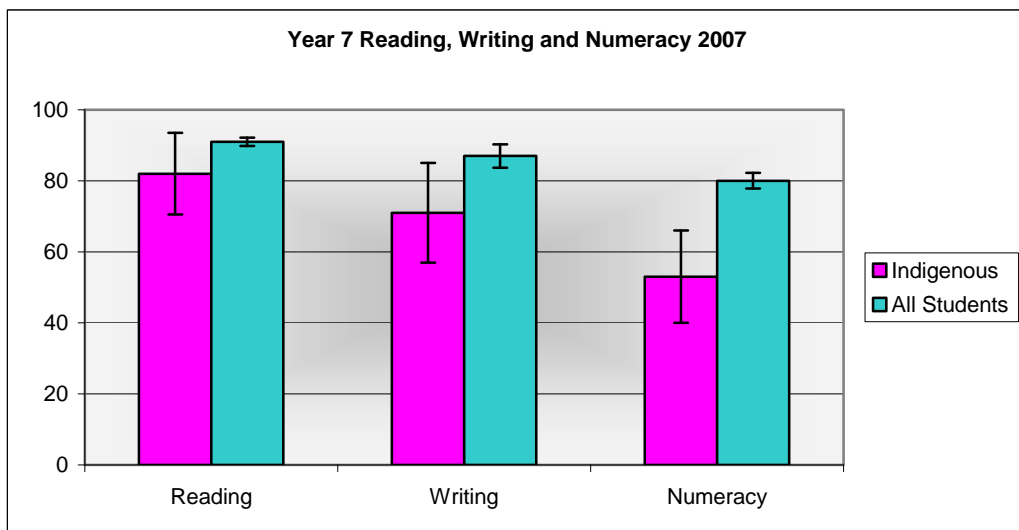


Figure E – Year 7 Reading, Writing and Numeracy outcomes 2007

Every Chance to Learn

In 2007 ACT public schools encouraged their Indigenous community members to contribute to the development of Indigenous perspectives that could contribute to the new ACT Curriculum Framework P-10. Throughout 2008, information about curriculum initiatives that are inclusive of Indigenous perspectives will be distributed to schools. Schools will also be supported by Indigenous Home School Liaison Officers to achieve this.

The artwork on the next page is an example of how Indigenous perspectives can be incorporated into the curriculum. Visual arts provide opportunities for individual interpretation, and Indigenous students have the chance to demonstrate how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art forms evolve.

Indigenous education will be further supported in 2008 by the inclusion of a goal in the appraisal documents of every principal that is specific to learning outcomes for Indigenous students. This strategy supports the recommendation in the MCEETYA *Report Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005-2008*. The Department will support principals to develop their statements.

Pathways to training, employment and higher education

Table 1 below highlights the achievements of the 49 Indigenous students who were enrolled in year 12 in 2007. Ten of the 34 students who achieved a year 12 certificate also completed a VET certificate. Ten students gained a Tertiary Entrance Score (TES). Five of these achieved a University Admissions Index (UAI) score above 65. Of the 15 students who did not achieve a year 12 certificate, 7 partially completed a VET Certificate.



Artwork by Murray Watson, Year 10, Campbell High School, 2007

Qualification	Number of Indigenous Students
Year 12 Certificate only	24
Year 12 Certificate and VET Certificate	10
VET Certificate (partially completed) but no Year 12	7
Neither VET Certificate nor Year 12	8

Table 1 – Year 12 results 2007

Two Indigenous students who completed their year 12 program at Canberra College were recognised for their academic achievement during the College Awards Ceremony.

A year 12 student from Dickson College who completed 2007 with a year 12 certificate was successful in her application for entry to the Australian National University (ANU).

To assist future cohorts of Indigenous students complete their year 12 studies with either a year 12 certificate or a VET certificate, the Department will be implementing support through the Indigenous Student Aspirations program to ensure all years 11 and 12 students are linked with a mentor.

Indigenous support staff based at the high schools will also play a role in 2008 to support the transition of students from year 10 to year 11. These officers have discussed the success of an initiative in the Lanyon High School cluster with a view to introducing similar initiatives in other high schools across the ACT.

A total of 237 Indigenous people were reported as being enrolled in Certificate III, Certificate IV and Diploma courses. The Diploma courses ranged from Children's Services, Business Management and Community Services Management. The Certificate courses included hospitality, carpentry, government, hairdressing and automotive.

Indigenous Traineeships

In 2007, the ACT Government introduced the Indigenous Traineeship initiative with a request for government departments and agencies to accept responsibility for a trainee and to identify vacant positions at Administrative Services Officer Level 1 or Level 2. The Department of Education and Training identified two such vacancies.

The trainees were appointed to Richardson and Giralang Primary Schools where they work in the Administration Office of the school as well as provide support to Indigenous students in those schools. Both trainees have participated in training that is coordinated by the Information Technology Management Solutions (ITMS) Group.

Conclusion

As reported in the Progress Report for the period January to June 2007, the Department commenced the year by introducing the *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005-2008* report to all principals. Some of the strategies for achieving the recommendations contained in the report were presented to principals in second semester. The Department has developed templates for a Personalised Learning Plan (PLP) and school and community partnership agreements. These are being distributed to schools in semester one 2008.

Late in 2007 new initiatives were funded by the ACT Government, under the Second Appropriation Bill, to further support outcomes for Indigenous students. Three new programs will be implemented in 2008 and will be reported on in future reports to the Assembly. The programs focus on:

- Literacy and Numeracy support for students in Kindergarten to year 4;
- School Leadership; and
- Indigenous Student Aspirations, a program to mentor and support high achieving students through the high school and college years.