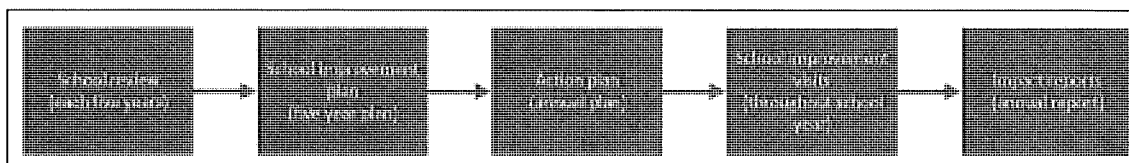


Figure 3-1 Education Directorate integrated school improvement cycle



Source: *Education Directorate Evidence and Data Plan (2019)*

- 3.25 The implementation of these activities was reviewed by the Audit Office in the six schools considered as part of the audit.

School review



School review design

- 3.26 The school review is the primary evaluation tool for examining the effectiveness of the planning and management of individual school resources for the purpose of improving student outcomes. Each review is conducted by a panel of experienced educators and is led by a school improvement consultant from the Australian Council for Educational Research. Undertaken in the fifth year of a school's improvement cycle, school reviews use the *National School Improvement Tool* as the framework for assessing a school's progress towards directorate and school priorities, including an assessment of the quality of teaching practices displayed. A school is reviewed every five years, and school reviews are broadly programmed to cover a fifth of ACT public schools each year.
- 3.27 As part of a school review, cumulative data that is collected over the duration of a school's five-year improvement plan is submitted to the panel. The data provides information on students' learning, school processes, demographics and perceptions. Consultation with staff, students, parents and community members also informs the review. The information is analysed and used to determine a school's progress towards the targets of their school improvement plan. The *National School Improvement Tool* performance levels are used as a basis for assessing the school's performance for each domain. The assessment of performance does not provide an overall performance rating of a school. Rather, there are multiple descriptors within each level of performance and the review panel notes the statements that best describe a school's improvement activities. A summary report is given that captures findings, performance levels and recommendations for future school improvement. The report then forms the foundation of the next five-year school improvement plan.

Use of school review in ACT public schools

- 3.28 Of the six schools considered as part of the audit, five schools had undertaken a school review under the current integrated school improvement processes. These reviews recognised school improvement activities that had been completed and those that were underway against the nine domains of the *National School Improvement Tool*. All reviews included specific and actionable recommendations for schools to implement as part of their next five-yearly school improvement plan, and were made available on the school's website.
- 3.29 The school review reports for the five schools included recommendations that focused on better use of data, prioritisation of curriculum planning and delivery and the implementation of strategies to develop teaching staff to inform quality teaching practices to meet the learning needs of all school students. There is evidence that the schools considered the recommendations when designing their next school improvement plan and sought to address the issues in a small number of high-level priorities for the following five years. The priorities focused on improving student educational outcomes, such as improved literacy and mathematics results in standardised testing. There is also evidence that the school review recommendations were then also specifically addressed in subsequent annual action plans. A review of the annual action plans for 2019 and 2020 in the five schools showed that activities had been identified and articulated to specifically address issues arising from the prior school review (further discussed at 3.50).
- 3.30 The remaining school had its last external review under a legacy validation process, and is due for its next school review in 2021. The legacy validation process had a focus on documentary evidence to support the achievement of a school's strategic priorities. The strategic priorities were developed at the school level, but did not provide a common evaluation tool to assess school improvement across the system. The use of the *National School Improvement Tool* in school external reviews provides a common measurement framework to assess school improvement, which can assist evaluation.

Use of ACT public school reviews in Education Support Office

- 3.31 Once the school reviews are completed each year, the Australian Council for Educational Research provides the Education Directorate with a *System School Review Report*. This report informs overall system performance against the *National School Improvement Tool*.
- 3.32 The *System School Review Report* summarises the strengths and areas for improvement for the ACT public schools that had undergone the school review process that year. The report also makes recommendations that are aimed at supporting whole-of-system improvement. As the Education Directorate has used the *National School Improvement Tool* since 2013, it is building comparable data to show system-wide performance over time.
- 3.33 The accumulation of system-wide performance data is facilitating insights into determining areas of ongoing strength and challenge for ACT public schools across the nine *National School Improvement Tool* domains. For example, the 2020 *System School Review Report*

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- 3.53 Of these five action plans published for 2019 and 2020, all identified key activities that demonstrated a logical alignment with school reviews, school improvement plans and Education Directorate strategic priorities. Table 3-3 provides an example of this alignment within one school's action plan and its activities to improve teaching quality.

Table 3-2 School action plan alignment with system level strategic priorities

Education Directorate Strategic Plan indicator	Example School Improvement Plan priorities	Action Plan Strategies	Action Plan activities to improve Teaching quality
To facilitate high quality teaching in ACT public schools and strengthen educational outcomes	Improve student performance in reading and writing across all year levels	Build capacity of staff in literacy development.	Provide targeted literacy-based professional learning to staff across the school
	Increase growth in student performance in numeracy across all year levels	Using Data to inform teaching and practice.	Provision of a numeracy/literacy coordinator.

Source: ACT Audit Office using documentation submitted by ACT public schools

- 3.54 In preparing annual action plans, it is apparent that school leadership teams are largely identifying activities to address their school's improvement priorities without considering the supports offered by the Education Support Office. Supports available from the Education Support Office such as Instructional Mentors, coaching and leadership support for implementing professional learning communities, and universally available professional learning programs (discussed further in chapter four) are not consistently identified in annual action plans to achieve school improvement plan priorities in ACT public schools.
- 3.55 Three of the five action plans from 2019 and 2020 analysed for this audit did not consider Education Support Office supports available to schools for this purpose. Despite improved oversight of the development and implementation of annual action plans by Directors of School Improvement, school leaders' knowledge of supports available to them from the Education Support Office is lacking.
- 3.56 An examination of available action plans and consultation with teachers and school leaders at the six schools considered as part of the audit also showed that there was variability in schools' intentions to use prioritised Education Support Office programs or supports to meet school improvement priorities. School leader awareness of the prioritised system-level programs or supports was inconsistent across the schools; a correlation was identifiable between individual school action plans that identified Education Directorate supports and school leaders' knowledge of the programs or supports available.
- 3.57 Education Support Office executives advised that school action plans are an important input to planning and delivery of supports to schools. However, the analysis completed of school action plans is not formally reported when planning and reviewing the design of supports to improving teaching quality in schools.

3.58 School improvement plans seek to document the direction and priorities for a school in the form of improvement goals over a five-year period. They are developed initially after the completion of a school review and are informed by the performance information obtained from the school’s assessment against the *National School Improvement Tool* as well as other school performance and demographics data. Four of the six schools considered as part of the audit had developed, and were implementing, school improvement plans (the remaining schools had school strategic plans due to the timing of previous external reviews). School improvement plans had a common structure and, as expected, had a sharper focus on a small number of improvement priorities. All plans included measures to track the achievement of school improvement priorities.

3.59 A school’s action plan is the delivery mechanism for achieving the priorities identified in the school improvement plan. They should be developed annually and seek to document the resources, time and processes that are to be used to achieve improvement goals. Only two of the six schools considered as part of audit published action plans in 2019 and only three of these six schools published action plans for 2020. By not publishing annual action plans as required by the school improvement process, schools lack transparency and accountability for actions designed to progress school improvement plan priorities. For those annual action plans that were completed in the three schools, it is apparent that school leadership teams are largely identifying activities to address their school’s improvement priorities in isolation of the Education Support Office supports available to ACT public schools. Supports available from the Education Support Office such as Instructional Mentors, coaching and leadership support for implementing professional learning communities, and universally available professional learning programs are not consistently identified in annual action plans to achieve school improvement plan priorities in ACT public schools. Guidance provided to all schools in completing their action plans does not prompt them to consider the appropriateness of these supports in achieving their improvement priorities.

School improvement visits



Design of school improvement visits

3.60 School improvement visits are a monitoring mechanism that are intended to provide differentiated support and feedback to schools on their progress towards priorities identified in their school improvement plan. This approach is designed to balance the autonomy of individual schools with oversight and support from the Directors of School Improvement to maintain consistency of effort towards school improvement. These visits involve a variety of stakeholders including Directors of School Improvement, instructional mentors, principals and deputy principals from other schools, as well as the school’s leadership team. This broad representation seeks to encourage learning and sharing of

practice across the ACT public school system. The Education Directorate advised that while many of these activities have been in place for some time, they have been prioritised and formalised as a key responsibility of the Directors of School Improvement since 2019 when the *Evidence and Data Plan (2019)* was released.

3.61 Education Directorate guidelines specify that all ACT public schools should participate in at least one visit annually and this may include:

- a school review;
- a post-review visit, to confirm the implementation status of a recently designed school improvement plan and check the validity of its accompanying action plan to ensure it is focused on addressing the school community's needs. A post-review visit may result in the identification of school improvement priorities that require additional supports to ensure their successful implementation;
- a focused visit, also referred to as a 'Learning Walk and Talk', which is designed to target and support specific areas of a school's improvement agenda. The initiative available to schools who require extra intervention and support can be used to:
 - a) progress the implementation of a school's current action plan;
 - b) check-in on the implementation of agreed directorate practices such as the Early Years Literacy Initiative, Secondary Writing Project, or Positive Behaviors for Learning Program;
 - c) build the capacity of staff;
 - d) identify the level of variance in teaching across a team or school;
 - e) share quality teaching practices across ACT public school classrooms through observation and feedback; and
 - f) engage and evaluate Education Support Office led improvement initiatives.
- immersion visits, which are more extensive visits that focus on the school's improvement efforts. The purpose of the process, which may incorporate the Learning Walk and Talk model, is to gather information pertaining to improvement actions which may include evidence of school processes and culture, or artefacts of student learning and school programs. Feedback is provided that focuses on next steps for improvement activities.

Use of school improvement visits in ACT public schools

3.62 For the six schools considered as part of the audit, there was evidence of six school improvement visits conducted between 2018 and 2020 in five of the six schools including:

- one post-review visit;
- one 'Learning Walk and Talk' focused on a school's implementation of the Early Years Literacy Initiative; and
- four immersion visits.

- 3.63 Of these six visits, four of the school improvement visits occurred in two schools that have early career principals. While this is compatible with the intent of Education Directorate's school improvement supports to build the capability of new principals, the remaining schools did not receive the minimum of one school improvement visit per year. Two schools received one visit over this three-year period and there was no evidence to demonstrate a school improvement visit had occurred in the remaining school.

Design of school principal performance and development plans

- 3.64 A feature of the Education Directorate's school improvement process is incorporating the development of the school principal's performance and development plan, and the associated review processes, as part of the improvement monitoring activities for the school. This recognises the important contribution that principals make in developing and sustaining a school culture that supports teaching quality. The principal's performance and development plan, which is developed in conjunction with a school's annual improvement documentation, is another means by which Directors of School Improvement and principals consider the school's progress in achieving its improvement targets.

- 3.65 The *Principal Performance and Development Guidelines* outline a three phased process that is to occur annually, including:

- 1) Performance Planning: through this process a principal articulates key priorities and outcomes of their school improvement plan against the five professional practices articulated in the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals*. In doing so they identify areas of professional development to assist them in meeting predetermined goals. Key enablers, risk mitigation actions and activities are identified to assist the principal for the purpose of career development and meeting the deliverables set out in school improvement plans.
- 2) Mid-cycle review of professional practice and learning: through this process the principal and the Director of School Improvement examine evidence of progress towards the goals identified in the principal's performance and development plan. Development goals and support activities including professional learning are evaluated and revised accordingly.
- 3) End-cycle review and feedback: through this process evidence of performance and achievement towards development goals identified in the plan are reviewed collaboratively by the principal and the Director of School Improvement. Additionally, the Director of School Improvement provides verbal and written feedback on the overall performance of the principal.

Use of school principal performance and development plans

- 3.66 The priorities and activities contained in the performance and development plans for the principals of the six schools considered as part of the audit aligned with their school's improvement plan and the Education Directorate 2018-2021 Strategic Plan.

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- 3.67 Principals' adherence to the requirements of the *Principal Performance and Development Guidelines* was largely consistent in the documentation reviewed. Mid-cycle and end-cycle reviews demonstrated principals' efforts to deliver on their plan's targets through tangible, measurable and evidence-based activities.
- 3.68 Compliance by Directors of School Improvement with their obligations within the process documented in the *Principal Performance and Development Guidelines* was inconsistent. Of the 11 performance and development plans submitted by the six principals participating in the audit, 27 percent were signed off by Directors of School Improvement. Further analysis of the documentation demonstrated that the Directors of School Improvement provided the required written or verbal supervisor feedback during principal performance development processes in 36 percent of instances. Without this necessary input by the Director of School Improvement, it is difficult to ascertain whether the principal's assessment of their own performance (refer to 3.67) is well informed, fair or reasonable.
- 3.69 School improvement visits are a monitoring mechanism that are intended to provide differentiated support and feedback to schools on their progress towards priorities identified in their school improvement plan. Education Directorate guidelines specify that all ACT public schools should participate in at least one visit annually. For the six schools considered as part of the audit, there was evidence of six school improvement visits conducted between 2018 and 2020 in five of the six schools.
- 3.70 A feature of the Education Directorate's school improvement process is incorporating the development of the school principal's performance and development plan, and the associated review processes, as part of the improvement monitoring activities for the school. This recognises the important contribution that principals make in developing and sustaining a school culture that supports teaching quality. The principal's performance and development plan, which is developed in conjunction with a school's annual improvement documentation, is another means by which Directors of School Improvement and principals consider the school's progress in achieving its improvement targets. The priorities and activities contained in the performance and development plans for the principals of the six schools considered as part of the audit aligned with their school's improvement plan and the Education Directorate 2018-2021 Strategic Plan. Principals' adherence to the requirements of the *Principal Performance and Development Guidelines* was largely consistent in the documentation reviewed. Mid-cycle and end-cycle reviews demonstrated principals' efforts to deliver on their plan's targets through tangible, measurable and evidence-based activities.

Impact report



Design of impact reports

- 3.71 Impact reports are developed at the end of the school year and are intended to demonstrate a school's progress against its annual action plan. They are designed to monitor and evaluate how the school has contributed to the strategic priorities of the directorate, delivered on its improvement agenda through progress towards its school improvement plan priorities and determined the impact of these actions on student outcomes.
- 3.72 Impact reports follow a common format and are informed by system-level data such as standardised testing results and workforce survey data provided by the directorate, as well as school-level longitudinal performance information detailing student learning, perception and school program and process information. The system-level data is used to establish a baseline and school-level performance information is analysed and reported against in the impact report to measure progress towards targets identified in a school improvement plan. This information is then used as evidence of school progress or to support the school adjusting its improvement goals in the next annual action plan cycle. Impact reports, which are published publicly on school websites, promote transparency and accountability across ACT public schools.

Impact reports in ACT public schools

- 3.73 The impact reports of the six schools considered as part of audit showed there was a focus in these reports on improving student performance through improved quality teaching practices. Each school had designed and implemented various actions to achieve this goal ranging from the establishment of staff coaching and mentoring programs, to the introduction of student feedback tools, as well as the use of evidence-based professional learning communities to perform active research projects to identify effective pedagogical practices.
- 3.74 Despite *Domain Two - Analysis and discussion of data of the National School Improvement Tool* being an area the requires improvement in ACT public schools, there was evidence in the impact reports considered as part of this audit that school leadership teams were developing a deeper understanding of its purpose. The Education Directorate impact report template requires school leaders to detail student performance data and using this information determined what activities were effective, and any challenges that must be addressed in the school's next action plan.

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- 3.75 The impact reports of the six schools considered as part of audit did not consistently review or assess the quality of universally available supports implemented by the Education Support Office. The guidance for schools in completing their impact reports also does not provide a clear instruction to provide feedback on the quality and appropriateness of Education Support Office supports. Education Support Office representatives advised that school impact reports are examined across the system for themes and areas that could be prioritised for system-wide support, but this analysis is not formalised.
- 3.76 Impact reports are developed at the end of the school year and are intended to demonstrate a school's progress against its annual action plan. They are designed to monitor and evaluate how the school has contributed to the strategic priorities of the directorate, delivered on its improvement agenda through progress towards its school improvement plan priorities and determined the impact of these actions on student outcomes. The impact reports of the six schools considered as part of the audit showed there was a focus in these reports on improving student performance through improved quality teaching practices. Each school had designed and implemented various actions to achieve this goal ranging from the establishment of staff coaching and mentoring programs, to the introduction of student feedback tools, as well as the use of evidence-based professional learning communities to perform active research projects to identify effective pedagogical practices. However, impact reports do not provide consistent feedback on system-wide supports for school improvement that can be turned into actionable information to assess impact and areas for improvement. The current process for schools to complete impact reports does not provide a clear prompt to schools to give feedback on the appropriateness and quality of system-wide supports. While the Education Support Office examines impact reports for this purpose, this process is not formalised.

RECOMMENDATION 4 EVALUATION OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT DOCUMENTATION

As part of Recommendation 3, the Education Support Office should review and revise the *People, Practice and Performance* framework to require the formal evaluation of school improvement documentation on an annual basis. The evaluation should involve consideration of school improvement plans, action plans, school visits feedback and impact reports as a method of gaining specific, actionable and timely information about ACT public schools' progress in improving student educational outcomes. The evaluation should then be used to assess and review Education Support Office supports for teaching quality to determine any refinements or additional assistance required to support schools achieve this outcome.

School improvement supports

Education Support Office school improvement support

Directors of School Improvement and School Operations Unit

- 3.77 In 2017 the Education Directorate retitled the positions of school network leaders to Directors of School Improvement. Through their supervisory responsibility over principals, Directors of School Improvement are the link between ACT public schools and the Education Support Office. The four Directors are each responsible for a geographically-based school network.²¹ They directly supervise principals and provide support to school leaders through the different stages of the school improvement process. This model provides a network of approximately 20 schools that are mostly within a small distance of each other. The model is intended to facilitate networking, communication and sharing of practice.
- 3.78 The intent of the change in the title was to prioritise school improvement activities as recommended by a series of reviews. The Education Directorate identified that school improvement activities should be the predominant focus of the relationship between Directors of School Improvement and school principals. The Directors of School Improvement were expected to be experts in school improvement and have a deeper understanding of the assistance offered by the Education Support Office to help principals and schools to improve student educational outcomes.
- 3.79 However, not all of the operational structures were in place to support the focus on school improvement when the change in title to Directors of School Improvements was implemented. Discussions with principals and Directors of School Improvement identified that, at the time, there was still a significant effort from Directors of School Improvement dealing with more operational issues such as complaints and critical incidents at the school level. The Education Directorate recognised this and established the School Operations Team as a 'first responder' in supporting principals to help deal with these issues and release Directors of School Improvement to focus on their core activities of school improvement.
- 3.80 Principals and Directors of School Improvement have identified that the establishment of the School Operations Team has helped to prioritise the focus of their activity on school improvement. Principals advised that they valued the high-quality support that they received from their Director of School Improvement. However, the frequency with which the Directors of School Improvement attended the six schools considered as part of the audit was variable (discussed further in paragraphs 3.60 to 3.70 and 3.77). While the Education Directorate acknowledged there could be valid reasons for such discrepancies, principals did not consistently understand these reasons. On this matter, a principal stated:

[My] DSI [provides] good support ... I know [they are] under the pump and I don't think [they] can devote a heap of time to me. [It] would be of value to have a few more DSIs. [The DSI's]

²¹ The four ACT public school networks are: North/Gungahlin, South/Weston, Belconnen and Tuggeranong

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role is more like director of school issues and is taken up largely by supporting people with issues.

- 3.81 A further issue is that the rationale for having Directors of School Improvement responsible for a geographically clustered set of schools has not been revisited. In the supports for school improvement and teaching quality considered as part of the audit, there is an emphasis on targeting supports that are appropriate for the various school types (colleges, high schools, primary and early childhood settings). Despite being close in distance, schools within a school network can vary widely in the nature of their school communities (from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds) and educational setting (colleges to preschools). Each Director of School Improvement also has many principals, school leaders, teachers and students within their area of responsibility. There is a risk that the complexity of this role could limit the effectiveness of Directors of School Improvement in targeting supports that are relevant to the needs of individual school communities.
- 3.82 Principals and school leaders valued the network structure for collaboration with nearby schools, but the value of the structure for accountability and central support purposes is questionable. In this model, Directors of School Improvement have to demonstrate expertise across a large number of varied educational settings, and an understanding of how Education Directorate supports can be selected, targeted and applied in these settings. There may be more value in tasking Directors of School Improvement to specialise in areas of particular types of school settings or pedagogical practice, and assessing whether they have adequate resources to fulfil this mandate to achieve the desired result in upskilling and leading principals to improve student educational outcomes.

School Planning and Review Unit

- 3.83 Another initiative from the Education Support Office has been the establishment of the School Planning and Review Unit. This team provides differentiated support to school leadership teams undertaking school planning and review processes. The unit assists school leaders to analyse, prioritise and evaluate short and long-term strategies for improvement whilst ensuring alignment with the directorate's strategic plan and *Future of Education* strategy through a consistent reporting approach. In recent years, the School Planning and Review Unit has assisted schools in focusing on more specific and achievable improvement goals; this was evident in the school improvement plans considered as part of the audit.

Instructional Mentors

- 3.84 Another initiative from the Education Support Office was the establishment of a team of four Instructional Mentors in the Education Support Office in 2018. An Instructional Mentor's responsibility is to:
- collaborate and liaise with Directors of School Improvement to build relationships, capacity, culture, conditions, and structures within school leadership teams;
 - work alongside school leaders in their school to build leadership capabilities; and
 - aim to deliver targeted and differentiated support to ACT public schools.

- 3.85 A school's engagement with an Instructional Mentor is initiated through a referral from a Director of School Improvement who has identified a need based on evidence found during the school improvement cycle. Once appropriate differentiated supports have been identified, an instructional mentor and the school leadership team develop a partnership agreement that details the expectations of the engagement in alignment with the school improvement plan.
- 3.86 Instructional Mentors have assisted with engagement with school leaders to strengthen the adoption of professional learning communities under the 'Spiral of Inquiry' model across the ACT public school system. Additionally, Instructional Mentors have been tasked with developing school leader expertise in coaching and mentoring as part of the Education Directorate's initiative aimed at enhancing leadership capabilities across all levels.
- 3.87 However, there are still challenges in making use of the Instructional Mentors. The Education Directorate has advised that some unintended consequences have resulted from the introduction of Instructional Mentors including:
- their role being misinterpreted as performance managers; and
 - an incorrect assumption being made regarding school's readiness to undertake leadership coaching.
- 3.88 A key challenge in the use of the Instructional Mentors has been high turnover in the roles. The Education Directorate advised that due to the skill sets of these staff, they have moved into school leadership roles. Three years into the program, school leaders across ACT public schools also remain largely unaware of the role of Instructional Mentors or confused regarding the support role they provide. A school leader interviewed for the purpose of the audit summarised their experience with Instructional Mentors stating 'schools were reaching out for support from Instructional Mentors but the lens of focus was on primary schools as this was [the] expertise of [the] people who were attracted to the role and wasn't so relevant to the challenges experienced by other sectors. [Instructional Mentor] support needs to be developed in-depth with schools and not done to the schools'.
- 3.89 The Education Support Office has implemented a range of supports that are designed to assist in the implementation of school improvement activities. These include: Directors of School Improvement, the School Planning and Review Unit and Instructional Mentors. Through their supervisory responsibility over principals, Directors of School Improvement are the link between ACT public schools and the Education Support Office. The four Directors are each responsible for a geographically-based school network and they directly supervise principals and provide support to school leaders through the different stages of the school improvement process. This model, which is intended to facilitate networking, communication and sharing of practice, provides a network of approximately 20 schools that are mostly within a small distance of each other. Principals valued the support and collaboration of peers provided by this structure. The effectiveness of the Directors of School Improvement has been improved with the establishment of the School Operations Unit to handle critical incidents at schools which historically were the responsibility of

Directors of School Improvement. However, there are risks in the complexity of this role that may challenge its effectiveness. There may also be opportunities to focus each Director of School Improvement on particular educational settings, rather than on a geographically clustered set of schools to expand on the intent of meeting individual school needs to better align supports with the intent of the *Future of Education*.

- 3.90 The School Planning and Review Unit has also assisted with focusing school improvement activities on measurable and achievable priorities at schools. In recent years, the School Planning and Review Unit has assisted schools in focusing on more specific and achievable improvement goals; this was evident in the school improvement plans considered as part of the audit. Instructional Mentors have also assisted with engaging with school leaders to strengthen the adoption of professional learning communities under the 'Spiral of Inquiry' model across the ACT public school system and developing school leader expertise in coaching and mentoring as part of the Education Directorate's initiative aimed at enhancing leadership capabilities across all levels. A key challenge in the use of the Instructional Mentors has been high turnover in the roles. Three years into the program, school leaders across ACT public schools also remain largely unaware of the role of Instructional Mentors or confused regarding the support role they provide.

RECOMMENDATION 5 DIRECTORS OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The Education Directorate should review the role of Directors of School Improvement and in doing so:

- a) consider whether individual directors should specialise in sector-specific oversight and support (such as roles focusing on colleges, high schools, primary schools) to better target the implementation of supports for improving teaching quality; and
- b) determine if the directors' span of control allows them to fulfil the requirements of the *People, Practice and Performance* framework.

Leadership Development Strategy

- 3.91 High quality school leadership is important for supporting teaching quality and delivering improved student performance. Research demonstrates that effective school leaders use their educational expertise and management skill to develop a school culture in which teachers can focus on improving their practice and understanding its impact, thus resulting in improved outcomes for children and young people.²²
- 3.92 In 2018 the Education Directorate committed \$5.4 million to a three-year Leadership Development Strategy; the *Empowered Learning Professionals Leadership Program*. The program's content was designed with the intention of improving teaching quality through

²² Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2017). Leading for Impact [online] Available at: <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/lead-develop/build-leadership-in-Australian-schools/leading-for-impact-online> [Accessed 3 February 2021].

enhanced instructional leadership. This was expected to be delivered in a cascading structure model in which professional learning seminars and conferences are led by Education Support Office staff and principals. Principals, deputy principals and school executives (School Leader C staff) attend and participate in the sessions and are expected to use the learnings in their school settings with classroom teaching staff.

3.93 The program consists of five key improvement strategies. Strategies of relevance to teaching quality include:

- strengthening the capability of School Leaders to create the culture, structures, and conditions for everyone to understand their impact on student outcomes;
- deepening the pedagogical and curriculum expertise of leaders at all levels; and
- developing the instructional capabilities of leaders in the Education Support Office and creating a suite of school improvement resources.

3.94 The *Empowered Learning Professionals Leadership Program* strategy document confirms these key improvement strategies were designed with the intention of shifting five leadership practices in ACT public schools to systematically improve the quality of teaching practices. Table 3-2 shows the expected outcomes as a result of the Leadership Development Strategy; the *Empowered Learning Professionals Leadership Program*.

Table 3-3 Leadership Development Strategy outcomes

Outcome	Leadership Development Strategy outcome description
1	Leadership team's capability in implementing effective professional learning communities
2	Ongoing development of school leadership as instructional leaders
3	Development of school leader knowledge and understanding of leading with an inquiry approach
4	Development in the connection between colleagues with school leadership roles
5	School Leaders knowledge and understanding of the Multiple Sources of Evidence approach

Source: ACT Audit Office, based on Education Directorate's Empowered Learning Professionals Leadership Plan (2018-2021)

3.95 A series of professional learning supports have been designed to support principals and school leaders through the Empowered Learning Professionals Leadership Plan. This includes professional learning for all principals (with a focus on new principals), developing finance, human resources and business skills, an annual leadership symposium and a biennial leadership conference. This is being supported with a principal and deputy principal coaching and mentoring program that involves experienced and retired principals providing support to upskill principals and deputy principals in leadership practice.

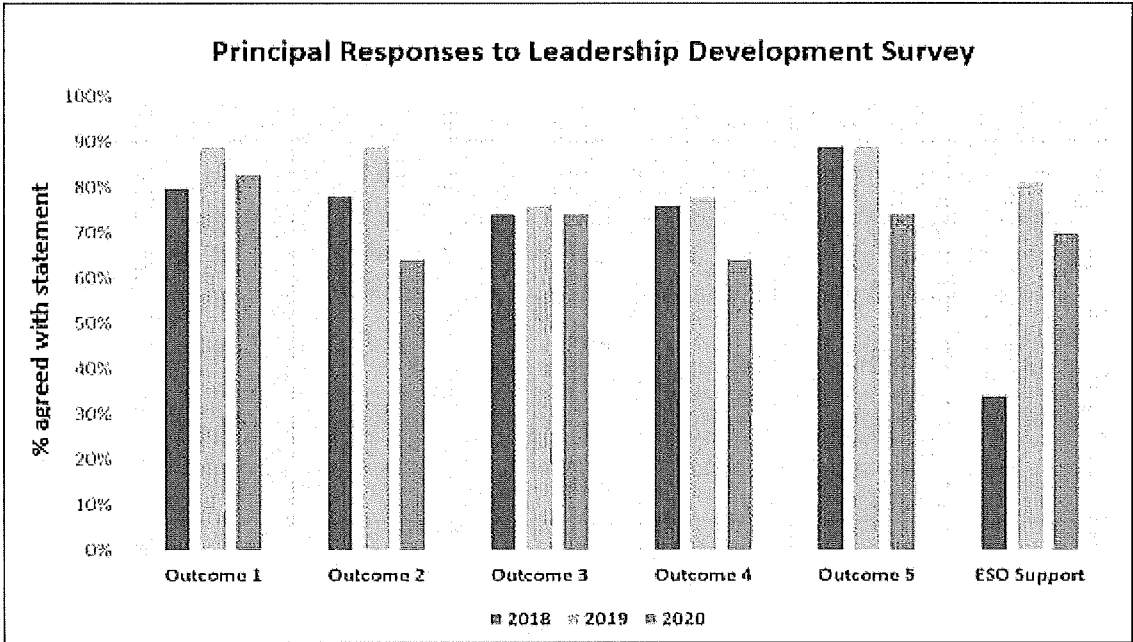
3.96 Following the completion of these activities, principals and deputy principals are surveyed to gauge whether they felt more confident in displaying the expected outcomes of the

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Leadership Development Strategy, and with the levels of support they are receiving from the Education Support Office.

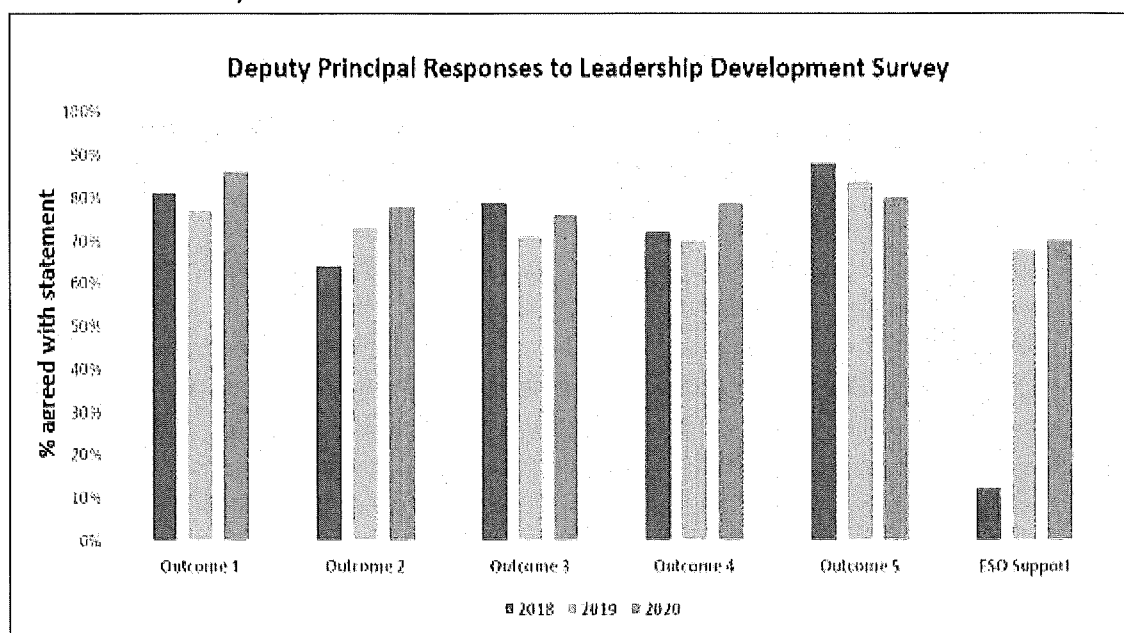
3.97 Figures 3-2 and 3-3 summarise the feedback data that has been captured in a series of surveys of principals and deputy principals between 2018 and 2020, against each of the Leadership Development Strategy outcomes. The information demonstrates that the Leadership Development Strategy has contributed to some shifts in leadership practice that facilitate improved quality teaching practices in ACT public schools. Notably, there is a significant increase in the perceptions of the quality of support from Education Support Office through these activities.

Figure 3-2 Leadership Development Series principal survey responses (2018-2020)



Source: Education Directorate survey data

Figure 3-3 Leadership Development Series deputy principal survey responses (2018-2020)



Source: Education Directorate survey data

- 3.98 Through this initiative the implementation of development activities for school executives (School Leader C) has been commenced but not yet been fully actioned. Through focus group discussions with School Leader C staff it was apparent that most were not aware of the supports under the Leadership Development Strategy with two of six groups of School Leaders referencing the professional learning supports within the strategy. Education Support Office representatives advised that some scheduled activities were cancelled in 2020 due to the COVID pandemic but were intended to be recommenced in 2021.
- 3.99 Unlike for principals, there is no development program for new school executives (School Leader C staff). This is a significant cohort of over 400 staff, that are expected to have a significant impact on improving student outcomes through leading classroom teachers. There was also a recognition from school executives that offsite training for all school leaders was sometimes impractical due to their required onsite presence to support teachers with everyday classroom issues such as student behavioural management or back-filling of teaching staff in lieu of available relief teachers. The Education Support Office has sought feedback via survey to determine the best mix of face-to-face and remote activities for the development program.
- 3.100 In 2018 the Education Directorate committed \$5.4 million to a three-year Leadership Development Strategy; the *Empowered Learning Professionals Leadership Program*. A series of professional learning supports have been designed to support principals and school leaders through the Empowered Learning Professionals Leadership Plan, including professional learning for all principals (which has an aspect that focuses on new principals), developing finance, human resources and business skills, an annual leadership symposium and a biennial leadership conference. This is being supported with a principal and deputy

principal coaching and mentoring program that involves experienced and retired principals providing support to upskill principals and deputy principals in leadership practice. Feedback data from attendees shows that the Leadership Development Strategy has contributed to some shifts in leadership practice that facilitate improved quality teaching practices in ACT public schools. Notably, there is a significant increase in the perceptions of the quality of support from Education Support Office through these activities.

- 3.101 Through focus group discussions with school executives (School Leader C staff) it was apparent that most executives were not aware of the supports under the Leadership Development Strategy, with only two of six groups of School Leaders referencing the professional learning supports within the strategy. While the Empowered Learning Professionals Leadership Plan has an aspect that specifically focuses on new principals there is no similar approach for new school executives (School Leader C staff). While there are supports available to all school leaders, and some of the key activities under the Strategy that were planned for commencement in 2020 were interrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this is a significant cohort of over 400 staff. This cohort of school executives is expected to have a significant impact on improving student outcomes through leading classroom teachers.

RECOMMENDATION 6 SCHOOL EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The Education Directorate should establish a development program for new school executives (School Leader C staff) that upskills these staff on the instructional leadership practices of the *Empowered Learning Professional Leadership Plan* during the initial years of their appointment.

Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers

- 3.102 National certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers was established by the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership in 2012 as a method of formally recognising exemplary teachers who demonstrate quality teaching practices and leadership in schools.²³ The initiative aims to provide a reliable indication of quality pedagogical practice as framed by the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*²⁴ and promote the systematic improvement of teaching quality in Australian schooling. Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers are expected to lead this work from the classroom by displaying high quality teaching practice to other teachers, school leaders and the community. Such

²³ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2012). Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia [online] Available at: <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/certification-of-highly-accomplished-and-lead-teachers-in-australia> (Accessed 12 February 2021).

²⁴ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2011). Australian Professional Standards for Teachers [online] Available at: <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/standards> (Accessed 30 April 2020)

practice also aligns with Domain 5 of the *National School Improvement Tool* in developing an expert teaching team.

- 3.103 The Education Directorate has emphasised the importance of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in ACT public schools. The *Future of Education* states:

Teachers and School Leaders, certified at the Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher standard play a vital role in ensuring that every teacher in every school experiences high-quality professional support.

- 3.104 The *Future of Education* committed to 'work towards ensuring a highly accomplished and lead teacher is in every school' by the end of its first phase in 2020. At this time, 32.9 percent of ACT public schools had at least one school leader or teacher on staff with the Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher certification.

- 3.105 ACT public school teachers can apply for the Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher certification through the ACT Teacher Quality Institute for a paid fee totaling \$1300. Applicants are required to undertake an extensive three-phased modular process that requires them to reflect on their teaching practice and provide evidence demonstrating excellence in the quality of their teaching that is assessed as satisfying professional practice criteria at either of the two higher career stages (Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher) described in the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. Successful progression through each stage of the certification is assessed by two trained external assessors appointed by the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. Once certification is granted, a teacher will maintain accreditation for a fixed five-year period. Renewal of the certification requires re-assessment against the Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher Standards through written statements and referees with knowledge of the applicant's recent teaching practice. As a reward for obtaining the Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher certification, ACT public school teachers are remunerated with an additional salary increment, or a fixed payment of \$6,499 in 2021 for teachers at the top of their salary progression structure.

- 3.106 Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in ACT public school settings interviewed for the purpose of this audit have been formally recognised by the ACT Teacher Quality Institute as a 'teacher who provide[d] evidence from multiple sources that [has been] assessed as satisfying professional practice criteria at either of the two higher-level career stages described in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers'.²⁵ It is also recognised that the process of becoming a Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher represented a valuable professional development activity as it encouraged participants to be intentional in developing their practice across all of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*.

- 3.107 Despite this advanced knowledge and additional remuneration, Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in ACT public schools do not have defined roles or responsibilities beyond

²⁵ ACT Teacher Quality Institute. (2017). *National Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers policy*. [online] Available at: https://www.tqi.act.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1088913/National-Certification-of-Highly-Accomplished-and-Lead-Teachers-Policy-Approved-20-June-2017.pdf Accessed 16 March 2021.

that of their classroom teacher band. The *2018-2021 Education and Training Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement* states 'teachers who achieve certification at the higher career stages of the Standards will be encouraged to take up leadership roles in modelling exemplary teaching practice and in building capacity for excellent teaching within schools and across the system'. This is the extent to which the Education Directorate has articulated its expectation for this role. No further guidance is provided as to what these leadership roles are expected to achieve, and no resourcing is identified (including classroom release time) to achieve these expectations.

- 3.108 School leaders, including qualified ACT Teacher Quality Institute assessors, as well as Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers advised during focus group discussions that higher-level certified individuals are used variably in ACT public schools and their impact was limited by a lack of resources and time. Teachers with the certification advised that they are not used as a Highly Accomplished or Lead Teachers in their school, with any work pertaining to their certification occurring as self-directed initiatives. This is in contrast with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership's guidance that states Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers should be used to 'support other teachers, lead initiatives and improvement and champion expertise' by school leaders who 'create roles, allocate time and resources and initiate inter-school collaboration'.²⁶ A Highly Accomplished Teacher advised their role was limited, stating:

We become the 'go to' experts on the teaching standards and teaching staff will often informally request advice regarding their [ACT Teacher Quality Institute mandatory professional learning] reflections or methods in which they can implement the standards into their teaching practices.

- 3.109 A principal interviewed for the purpose of the audit advised that Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers often are employed as school leaders or have multiple high-level, time intensive and administrative roles in schools unrelated to their higher certification level. Feedback from one principal indicated that a lack of defined and resourced leadership and learning responsibilities led to these teachers having the same classroom hours as their classroom teacher colleagues, which limits their ability to complete their assigned leadership tasks including coaching and mentoring teachers to drive improvements in practice.
- 3.110 There was a lack of interest from teachers and school leaders interviewed as part of this audit in obtaining the Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher certification. Teachers and school leaders repeatedly identified the cost of obtaining the certification, the workload associated with obtaining the certification and the lack of perceived benefits from having the certification as the major disincentives in pursuing the accreditation. Furthermore, the teachers and school leaders interviewed as part of the audit questioned the purpose and effectiveness of the certification, advising that it does not necessarily lead to promotional

²⁶ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). (2018). *Getting the best from your teachers- A principals' guide to national teacher certification*. [online] available at: [https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/school-leadership/school-leader-guide-\(online\).pdf?sfvrsn=d113f63c_14](https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/school-leadership/school-leader-guide-(online).pdf?sfvrsn=d113f63c_14) Accessed 16 March 2021.

or enhanced career opportunities. A principal interviewed for the audit identified that they have a number of teachers who could obtain Lead Teacher certification if they undertook the process, but that there is resistance from the teachers because of the time involved. The principal advised:

'We have offered [to support teachers] through the process – it's up to them and I am not pressuring them – in the current state of teaching, which is exhausting, I see nothing that would make this more attractive for teachers'.

- 3.111 The intent of the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher certifications is highly compatible with school improvement activities, particularly as a support to developing an expert teaching team as recommended under Domain 5 of the National School Improvement Tool. As there are a limited number of Directors of School Improvement and instructional mentors from the Education Support Office, Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers could be a useful support to assist school principals in pursuing their school improvement priorities. The role of these teachers in promoting teaching quality could include working with Directors of School Improvement, Instructional Mentors and principals to better understand the school's improvement needs, mentor and coach teachers to improve practice that leads to improved student outcomes, and network with other professionals to source better practice for use in their school settings.
- 3.112 National certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers was established by the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership in 2012 as a method of formally recognising exemplary teachers who demonstrate quality teaching practices and leadership in schools. The *Future of Education* sought to 'work towards ensuring a highly accomplished and lead teacher is in every school' by the end of its first phase in 2020. At this time, 32.9 percent of ACT public schools had at least one school leader or teacher on staff with the Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher certification. The Education Directorate established a professional learning community to create a networking and sharing space for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers, but its implementation was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3.113 Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in ACT public schools do not have defined roles or responsibilities beyond that of their classroom teacher band. The *2018-2021 Education and Training Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement* states 'teachers who achieve certification at the higher career stages of the Standards will be encouraged to take up leadership roles in modelling exemplary teaching practice and in building capacity for excellent teaching within schools and across the system'. No further guidance is provided as to what these leadership roles are expected to achieve, and no resourcing is identified (including classroom release time) to achieve these expectations.
- 3.114 School leaders, including qualified ACT Teacher Quality Institute assessors, as well as Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers advised during focus group discussions that they are used variably in ACT public schools and their impact was limited by a lack of resources and time. There was a lack of interest from teachers and school leaders interviewed as part of this audit in obtaining the Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher certification. Teachers and school leaders perceived the cost of obtaining the certification, the workload associated

with obtaining the certification and the lack of perceived benefits from having the certification as the major disincentives in pursuing the accreditation. Furthermore, the teachers and school leaders interviewed as part of the audit questioned Education Directorate's use of teachers with this certification, advising that it does not necessarily lead to promotional or enhanced career opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION 7 HIGHLY ACCOMPLISHED AND LEAD TEACHERS

The Education Directorate should clearly identify and articulate its expectations for the role and responsibilities of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in ACT public schools. The role could include working with principals and Education Support Office to support school improvement activities, and better using the school network model to connect with other professionals to promote better teaching practice in their school settings.

4 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 Professional learning and development is an important function in improving the quality of teaching practices in schools. This chapter considers the Education Directorate's activities to improve teaching quality in ACT public schools through a centralised suite of professional learning programs delivered by the Education Support Office, as well as the professional learning and development activities facilitated within schools.

Summary

Conclusion

The Education Support Office has developed professional learning programs, supports and resources for ACT public school teachers and leaders to improve teaching practices. The Education Support Office organises and manages professional learning programs that are intended for use across all ACT public schools, but there is variability in teachers' and school leaders' awareness of the programs. This reduces the effectiveness of the programs to improve teaching quality. Where programs are accredited with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute and teachers make use of them, there is evidence that the programs help improve teaching practice at the school level. However, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the programs are still maturing and there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate the programs are having a system-level impact on teaching quality in ACT public schools.

Professional learning communities are a mandated professional development practice in ACT public schools. They involve school leaders and teachers collaborating to address the immediate educational needs of their students. The Education Directorate has implemented the 'Spiral of Inquiry' and 'Multiple Sources of Evidence' research-based better practice approaches to guide ACT public school teachers and leaders' engagement in professional learning communities. However, schools considered as part of the audit did not consistently use these supports. There is a need for more support for all schools to implement these approaches in their professional learning communities. Annual professional learning programs required by the *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022* were not consistently implemented in the schools considered as part of the audit or used to focus professional learning communities on improving student educational outcomes through improved teaching quality. Consistent and reliable implementation of professional learning communities could help to establish their role as the primary accountability mechanism for improving student outcomes at the school level.

The ACT Teacher Quality Institute receives rich data on ACT public school teachers and leader professional learning activities. However, the Education Directorate has not sought advice from the ACT Teacher Quality Institute or requested data for the purpose of holistically monitoring or evaluating the impact of teacher professional learning programs on improving the quality of teaching practices. This impairs the Education Support Office's efforts to plan and deliver professional learning to improve teaching quality.

The New Educator Support Program is a recognised support under the *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022* for developing new teachers in the first three years of their career. Provisions include a five-day central induction, reduced face-to-face teaching hours and six days of classroom release to facilitate professional learning activities. However, these supports are not implemented in a way that is accessible for all New Educators. The *New Educator Support Guidelines* and the *New Educator Support Plan* provide a framework for implementation, but there is a lack of clarity associated with common expectations for New Educators' development throughout the three years of the New Educator Support Program. Furthermore, the Education Directorate does not have sufficient data or mechanisms to evaluate the efficiency or effectiveness of the New Educator Support Program, or whether New Educators are reliably accessing their enterprise agreement entitlements.

Key findings

	Paragraph
<p>Since 2018 the Education Support Office has been taking an increasing role in the development and implementation of professional learning programs and resources that are made available across all ACT public schools. The programs aim to address system-wide needs that have been identified in previous reviews or through school improvement activities. The key programs that have been established since this time are: the Cultural Integrity Program; the Academy of Future Skills; the Affiliated Schools Program; the Early Years Literacy Initiative; the Digital Solutions Program; Positive Behaviours for Learning; and Enabling Pedagogies. These programs have established some useful practices to improve teaching quality in schools. Three of the seven programs are fully accredited with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute and two are partially accredited.</p>	4.35
<p>The most consistently valued programs by teachers were programs that included resources that could be used in classes and used coaches or mentors to support teachers to improve their practice. While programs such as Positive Behaviours for Learning and Cultural Integrity had a high level of teacher awareness and satisfaction, teachers were less aware of newer programs such as the Affiliated Schools Program, the Academy of Future Skills and Enabling Pedagogies. Professional learning resources are being increasingly made available through the Education Directorate's Service Portal, but there is a low level of awareness of this resource.</p>	4.36
<p>The <i>ACT Public Sector Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022</i> requires principals to develop an annual professional learning program for their school leaders and teaching staff. The annual program is required to integrate professional learning community programs and school-led professional learning activities. None of the six schools who participated in the audit could provide evidence demonstrating they had consistently implemented annual professional learning programs for each year between 2014 and 2020 as required by the two most recent enterprise agreements.</p>	4.44

A review of the schools' professional learning programs showed there was variability in the quality and comprehensiveness of the programs and their implementation. Two of the five schools' programs did not reference the school's professional learning community and three schools could not demonstrate that the activities in their program had been completed as planned. The enterprise agreement requirement of principals to develop an annual professional learning program is not integrated into the school improvement process. As a result, schools are not effectively using their mandatory annual professional learning programs under the enterprise agreement to demonstrate how professional learning is contributing to progress towards school improvement priorities.

4.45

Professional learning communities are a method of school improvement where groups of teachers meet regularly to work in a structured and collaborative process to improve student outcomes. ACT public school teachers and school leaders' participation in professional learning communities is a requirement of the *ACT Public Sector Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022*. All six ACT public schools considered as part of the audit had implemented professional learning communities, which focused on improving student outcomes. Documents from schools showed that themes explored in professional learning communities are derived from each school's improvement priorities outlined in its school improvement plan. However, a review of planning documentation for professional learning communities and their presentations reflecting the findings or impact the process has had on student outcomes, as well as discussions with school focus groups showed there was wide variability in the quality and rigour of professional learning communities across ACT public schools.

4.57

Experienced teaching staff who participated in the audit commonly voiced a frustration that the professional learning community model is not facilitated by the Education Directorate to take place across networks of schools. This was particularly noticeable in high schools and colleges where one teacher in the whole school may be responsible for a school subject, and was not able to easily collaborate with other like teachers. Evaluation mechanisms of professional learning community impact were highly variable across all settings as no formal requirement or guidance is provided by the Education Support Office. Two schools had designed their own evaluation mechanisms to guide improvement in professional learning community processes and ensure staff feedback informed future processes. Directors of School Improvement had designed a simple assessment tool based on their observations of effective professional learning communities in ACT public schools. This tool gave sound examples of what effective professional learning communities looked like. However, schools were not aware of this tool or other resources to identify how they could improve the effectiveness of their professional learning communities.

4.58

All teachers in public schools must be registered with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute and complete 20 hours of professional development annually. Teachers are also required to record their professional development with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute through a dedicated online learning portal. Data associated with ACT public school teachers' professional development has been captured for over ten years since the establishment of the ACT Teacher Quality Institute, but the Education Directorate does not have access to a consolidated view of this data to:

4.67

- identify trends in teacher professional learning; or
- help inform how professional learning impacts on student outcomes.

The Education Directorate does receive data on ACT Teacher Quality Institute accredited programs it runs on an activity-by-activity basis and this can help inform the development of individual programs and give feedback on the quality of each accredited professional learning activity. However, there is no consolidated view of data for all programs that allows the Education Directorate to more broadly monitor the quality of its professional learning programs across ACT public schools, or their impact on student educational outcomes. 4.68

Some schools have attempted to receive recognition for their teachers in completing school-led professional development; two of the six school leadership teams advised that they sought to have activities during the two days prior to the commencement of the school year recognised as accredited learning, but reflected this was an onerous process. Furthermore, not all professional learning programs implemented by the Education Support Office were recognised accredited learning with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. For example, mentoring activities under the Affiliated Schools Program were not recognised as accredited professional learning. Similarly, three of eight of the professional learning programs associated with the Positive Behaviours for Learning Program are not accredited for registration purposes with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. While this does not mean that the programs are of lesser value and teachers can record their participation as teacher-identified professional learning for registration purposes, there is a missed opportunity for the Education Directorate to receive specific and targeted feedback from teachers through professional learning evaluations, which would be the case if the program was registered with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. 4.69

Analysis of school expenditure data for the six schools participating in this audit showed that there was substantial variation in the amount spent by schools on fee for service professional learning. The amount spent on fee for service professional learning varied between \$733 and \$1,409 per full-time equivalent teacher or school leader. A number of school principals consulted as part of the audit, as well as some industry peak bodies advised that the funds provided to schools to support fee for service professional learning was insufficient to meet the needs of teachers. Principals advised that they used more than their notional allocation to allow staff to pursue professional learning opportunities. The Education Support Office has recognised these issues and has sought to provide the new universally offered programs across all ACT public schools in order to provide scale, with the expectation that school professional learning activities could focus on professional learning communities, and meeting specific needs of individual teachers that could not be fully addressed through these programs. An evaluation of the first phase of the *Future of Education* reported teachers' perception of the Education Directorate's commitment to professional learning. It noted 79 percent of teachers reporting strong and consistent support for professional learning in 2018, which declined slightly to 76 percent in 2020. 4.78

Graduate teachers are considered 'New Educators' for their first three years in ACT public schools. The Education Directorate has demonstrated its commitment to the development of New Educators in the *ACT Public Sector Education Directorate* 4.86

(Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022 through the New Educator Support Program, which comprises a range of supports such as: a five-day centralised induction prior to the commencement of the school year; reduced face-to-face teaching hours to facilitate support and mentoring; six New Educator Support Days to be used to facilitate professional learning and development; and the provision of coaching and mentorship from experienced teaching colleagues. These supports and high level suggestions for New Educator development activities for schools to provide are documented in the *New Educator Support Guidelines* (March 2020). A template plan is also provided for schools to agree development activities with their New Educators. Schools also have an accountability to apply these entitlements through the annual completion of a *School Annual EA Implementation Plan* checklist which is co-signed by an Australian Education Union delegate.

Despite this policy and compliance framework, there is no visibility as to whether New Educators are receiving these entitlements and whether they are being used effectively across the Education Directorate. This presents a risk that New Educators will receive inconsistent access to professional development across their first three years as an ACT public school teacher. In this respect there is no:

- analysis or confirmation of how New Educators use reduced teaching hours and New Educator Support Days to improve their teaching practice; and
- examination of the effectiveness of coaching and mentoring activities for New Educators.

A mandatory five-day centralised induction is held for all first-year New Educators prior to the commencement of the school year. According to the Education Directorate's *New Educator Guidelines*, the purpose of the induction is to ensure all New Educators are 'effectively supported, prepared and informed of their responsibilities and entitlements as they begin in their roles'. The centralised induction for New Educators is not accredited with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute and therefore cannot be counted towards the accredited training requirement under their annual registration requirements. In focus groups conducted for the purpose of this audit, there was persistent negative feedback regarding the delivery of the centralised induction from all levels of school leaders and teaching staff, including New Educators. This feedback centred on the timing of this training before New Educators start teaching, and this should instead predominantly occur after they have an opportunity to teach and understand what they need to learn to improve the quality of their teaching practice.

New Educators are expected to have reduced face-to-face teaching hours to facilitate enhanced support and mentoring. This allowance is calculated as a reduced number of minutes per week of classroom time that reduces as the New Educator progresses through the development program. It is designed to provide schools with a provision of time for coaching and mentoring support programs designed to meet the development needs of each New Educator. The specific organisational details are decided by individual school management to allow program flexibility to meet the needs of each New Educator over time. School leaders and New Educators who participated in focus groups for the purpose of this audit advised that the provision of additional classroom release hours for New Educators were largely used to catch

up on administrative tasks rather than for coaching and mentoring purposes. New Educators and school leaders also advised that the reduction in face-to-face teaching hours was largely provided on an adhoc basis. School leaders advised that making time for New Educators to collaborate with their experienced teacher mentor within school hours is difficult and considered impractical within school settings. New Educators reflected that the additional time allowance was not allocated in a consistent or structured way that would assist them to improve the quality of their teaching practice. The allowance of reduced face-to-face teaching hours for new educators is not effectively implemented in all ACT public schools. Not all new educators can access this time, and it is not consistently used to improve teaching quality.

The *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018 – 2022* provides for six additional classroom release days for each New Educator. These can be taken as two leave days for each year of the three year program. While New Educators and school leaders in all schools were aware of the provision of New Educator Support Days, focus groups involving both cohorts showed a lack of understanding of the exact allocation of days and the circumstances in which to use them. School leaders and New Educators reflected that accessing the provision in full was impractical due to staffing pressures including the difficulty in obtaining relief teaching staff. 4.101

The combination of supports provided under the New Educator Support Program are not evaluated to determine whether they are effective in developing a series of expected pedagogical competencies in New Educators. Documenting expected pedagogical competencies that New Educators should display at the program's completion, and regularly evaluating the effectiveness of the program could allow the Education Directorate to determine whether there are barriers for to accessing these supports. 4.102

Professional learning in ACT public schools

- 4.2 The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership has developed a *Charter for Professional Learning* that identifies the importance of professional learning to improve teaching practice and student outcomes.²⁷ Teacher and school leader professional learning is made up of formal and informal activities that aim to improve professional knowledge, practice and engagement.
- 4.3 A world-wide survey of teachers conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2011 reported that individual or collaborative research,

²⁷ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2018). *Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders*. [online] Available at: https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/national-policy-framework/australian-charter-for-the-professional-learning-of-teachers-and-school-leaders.pdf?sfvrsn=6f7eff3c_6 Accessed 9 February 2021 (p.6)

higher-qualification courses and informal dialogue have the greatest impact on improving pedagogical practices.²⁸

ACT Teacher Quality Institute

- 4.4 To practice as a teacher and school leader in the ACT, teachers must be registered with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute (TQI). Part of the requirement to maintain teaching registration is to complete 20 hours of professional learning annually. Teachers must then record their reflection of how the professional learning can improve their practice.
- 4.5 ACT public school teachers and school leaders who participated in focus groups for the purpose of this audit advised professional learning is most effective and has the highest value when:
- it is an area the teacher has self-identified for development;
 - it is delivered by facilitators who demonstrate recent and relevant expertise in teaching; and
 - the content is directly applicable to their classroom setting or helps meet the individual needs of their students.
- 4.6 ACT public school teachers access professional learning through two key sources:
- Education Support Office programs - the Education Support Office provides a suite of centralised programs available for the consumption of ACT public school teachers and school leaders; and
 - School led activities - school leaders may design or externally source programs that meet the individual development needs of their teachers, including through Professional Learning Communities and school-based coaching and mentoring activities.

Education Support Office programs

- 4.7 Since 2018 the Education Support Office has been taking an increasing role in the development and implementation of professional learning programs and resources that are made available across all ACT public schools. This has been in response to a series of reviews which highlighted the need for more support from the Education Support Office for schools to lead system-wide improvements, rather than placing an emphasis on the autonomy of schools to individually pursue efforts to improve student educational outcomes. These reviews included evaluations of school reviews by the Australian Council of Educational Research, a 2015 review of school improvement activities by Professor Brian Caldwell and

²⁸ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2011). *Building a High-Quality Teaching Profession: Lessons from around the world, background report for the International Summit on the Teaching Profession*. Paris: OECD publishing. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED518775.pdf>

the ACT Auditor-General's *Report No.4/2017: Performance Information in ACT Public Schools*.

- 4.8 The Education Support Office programs aim to address system-wide needs that have been identified in previous reviews or through school improvement activities discussed in Chapter 3. The key programs that have been established since this time are:
- the Cultural Integrity Program;
 - the Academy of Future Skills;
 - the Affiliated Schools Program;
 - the Early Years Literacy Initiative;
 - the Digital Solutions Program;
 - Positive Behaviours for Learning Program; and
 - Enabling Pedagogies.

Cultural Integrity

- 4.9 The Cultural Integrity Program aims to improve inclusion in ACT public schools, with a focus on supporting the learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. The program includes professional learning support to improve teaching quality through a number of activities such as online courses, face-to-face workshops, and the establishment of an online community for ACT public school teachers.
- 4.10 Between 2018-19 and 2019-20 193 staff completed an online cultural competence course with supplementary face-to-face workshops. Professional learning is also targeted at principals, school leaders and new educators through specific events and symposiums. A significant achievement of the program has been to establish an online community of approximately a quarter of all ACT public school teachers to share teaching and professional learning resources, including demonstrational videos and other content which can be re-used in classrooms.
- 4.11 To measure the impact of this program, in 2018 a cultural integrity domain was added to the School Review process in order to measure how each school has progressed in establishing culturally safe learning environments and practices. Through a four-point rating scale schools are asked to self-assess their cultural integrity practices (from 'enquiring' at the lowest to 'leading' at the highest), including specific consideration of how the school is teaching with cultural integrity. This has been used for three School Review cycles, and schools have consistently rated themselves at the two lowest levels of the self-assessment tool as 'enquiring' to 'developing'.
- 4.12 Despite these low self-assessments across the public school system, teaching staff involved in focus groups in all six schools involved in the audit were aware and reflected positively on the Cultural Integrity Program, and the ability to use shared resources from other schools through a digital platform to use in their own lessons.

Academy of Future Skills

- 4.13 The Academy of Future Skills is a \$5.26 million program over four years between 2018-19 and 2021-22 that seeks to improve teaching quality in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) across ACT public schools. Its aim is to build the skills of teachers to confidently teach STEM curriculum through professional learning events. It also seeks to partner specialist STEM teachers with teachers in schools. This partnership involvement can include providing resources and instruments to teach lessons, as well as working with teachers in delivering lessons in schools.
- 4.14 The Academy commenced in 2019 with a focus on facilitated mentoring activities for 89 teachers in 17 schools. This expanded during 2020 to working with 143 teachers across 30 schools. Engagements with teachers can be relatively short and contained, with a focus on particular needs such as loaning scientific equipment, through to term-long engagements to build science inquiry skills that are planned with teachers to determine curriculum areas to be covered and resources required. This work also includes consideration of how student learning will be evidenced and assessed.
- 4.15 A survey of teachers was conducted in 2019 in relation to the Academy's mentoring activities. The survey considered teacher attitudes to teaching STEM subjects both before and after engaging with the academy. Although the surveys only involved a small number of teachers, the evaluation identified that, after engaging with the Academy:
- 83 percent of respondents were more confident to plan and teach STEM subjects;
 - 75 percent of teachers reported being more confident with STEM content knowledge and teaching scientific inquiry; and
 - benefits to teacher assessment practices and use of digital technology were also noted in teacher comments in response to the survey.
- 4.16 To build teaching quality further, the Academy has developed professional learning programs that are to be delivered at its two learning centres as well as online. Four programs on different areas of science inquiry were held between October 2019 and October 2020 and involved 141 attendees in total. All sessions were accredited programs with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. The programs were targeted to help teachers understand the services of the Academy as well as demonstrate practical ways to build science inquiry into units of work.
- 4.17 Surveys were conducted of participants across the four professional learning programs. Ninety-one survey responses were received, all of which identified that the participants gained useful knowledge and understanding from the programs. Survey respondents also reported that the programs addressed the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, and were appropriate and valuable, as well as enhancing or affirming for their professional practice. At this stage of the academy's implementation, no data is available on whether this teacher confidence in STEM content has translated to improved learning outcomes for students. Focus groups with ACT public school teachers in the six schools involved in the

audit indicated there was a low level of awareness for the Academy with staff at only one school being aware of the Academy.

Affiliated Schools Program

- 4.18 The Affiliated Schools Program commenced in 2018. It is managed by the Education Directorate in conjunction with the University of Canberra. The Program is supported by a memorandum of understanding between the Education Directorate and the University of Canberra.
- 4.19 The Affiliated Schools Program has two key streams of activity:
- building the skills of pre-service teachers to prepare them for teaching in ACT public schools; and
 - building the skills of experienced teachers through masterclass, postgraduate and teacher-as-researcher programs.
- 4.20 As at 2020, ten ACT public schools are ‘full program’ schools that take up all elements of the Affiliated Schools Program including through:
- full participation in pre-service and in-service teacher development activities;
 - receipt of funding of \$50,000 for a school coordinator for administering the program;
 - release of teachers for research and professional learning; or
 - purchase of research expertise.
- 4.21 A further 15 schools are affiliated schools that participate in some of the elements of the program. These schools are expected to transition to become full program schools by 2023 through a phased implementation.
- 4.22 There was evidence that the program was effective in introducing pre-service teachers to the supports to improve teaching quality in ACT public schools. The Affiliated Schools Program provided training on behaviour management to University of Canberra students studying their Bachelor of Education degree in Term 3, 2020. The content of this program was developed in the Positive Behaviours for Learning Program (discussed at paragraph 4.28) and delivered by Education Directorate staff. Providing professional learning on Education Directorate supports at this early stage may help future teachers be more familiar with these supports and increase the speed at which they become highly effective teachers. Programs to assist with mentoring and supervision of pre-service teachers were also in place through professional learning for experienced teachers.
- 4.23 While the program is early in its implementation phase, performance measures have been designed for each component of the program as part of a strategic plan. Short term and medium-term measures are identified. Short term measures are mostly activity-based, although two measures of student and teacher satisfaction are also included. Medium term measures are more outcome-focused but focus on teacher outcomes. Two measures for

student outcomes are identified in the strategic plan, with the supporting evaluation methodology based on students' NAPLAN results and school satisfaction surveys to measure impact. This may expose the Education Directorate to the risk of being unable to measure and demonstrate the impact of the Affiliated Schools Program. There is also a relatively low level of awareness of the program in ACT public schools at this time, with only three of six schools involved in the audit aware of the program, particularly in regard to the teacher-as-researcher and professional learning supports through this program. Only two of the six schools considered as part of the audit had direct involvement with the program as affiliated schools.

Early Years Literacy Initiative

- 4.24 The Early Years Literacy Initiative involves engaging an education researcher to partner with Education Directorate instructional mentors to design student literacy assessment and monitoring tools based on an evidence-based series of literacy practices. These resources are then rolled out to schools with accompanying mentoring for school leaders and teaching staff to improve literacy education practice.
- 4.25 An initial pilot of the initiative involving two phases totalling 14 schools was conducted in 2017 and 2018. The results of student assessments following the pilot demonstrated growth in 12 schools of the number of students who showed expected or better learning progress in literacy in the following school year. For eight schools in the first phase of the initiative, the number of students meeting or exceeding literacy benchmarks increased by 15 percentage points on average across these schools. For the remaining six schools in the second phase, there was an improvement in the number of students meeting or exceeding these benchmarks of three percentage points on average across these schools. The program has since been rolled out to all 50 ACT public primary schools, and related development included as part of new educator professional learning.

Digital Solutions Program

- 4.26 The Education Directorate developed the Digital Solutions Program as part of its assistance to schools, students, and families to transition to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic from 24 March 2020. Part of this assistance included tools, guides, resources, and professional learning for teachers to develop their teaching practice in this environment. An online teacher resources centre was established as well as a digital professional learning community for teachers to use and collaborate with 2,500 other teachers across the ACT. Professional learning was also accredited through the ACT Teacher Quality Institute.
- 4.27 During the pupil free period of Term 1 2020, a total of 50 professional learning sessions were run; this involved over 6,000 participants, which comprised of over 1,000 teachers who attended multiple sessions on different aspects of remote learning. These sessions were accredited with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. Of the 358 teachers who had submitted satisfaction surveys for the programs, at least 98 percent found the course addressed the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, and that the program provided useful knowledge, appropriate and valuable content, and enhanced or affirmed teacher

professional practice. No further analysis of the effect on student outcomes from this professional learning is currently available.

Positive Behaviours for Learning Program

- 4.28 The Positive Behaviours for Learning Program is available in all schools. The intent of the program is to develop a framework in schools to support wellbeing and positive behaviour. Part of the program involves professional learning and coaches working with schools and teachers to implement the Positive Behaviours for Learning framework in their school. The coach works with the school leadership and a school-appointed coach, who then works within the school to implement the program's recommended teaching and learning practices. This professional learning supports teachers who are expected to have a leading role in setting high expectations for behaviour in their school. Five of eight of the program's professional learning supports are accredited with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute.
- 4.29 An evaluation of the Positive Behaviours for Learning Program was conducted to determine whether it had an impact on student outcomes. The evaluation found that the program improved student mental health and learning engagement. It was also found to improve perceptions of school climate and school identification which are shown to also improve student educational outcomes.
- 4.30 Comments from focus groups of teaching staff in five of the six schools considered as part of the audit reflected positively on the Positive Behaviour for Schools Program, and teaching staff positively reflected on the availability of coaches in combination with a 'train the trainer' approach to upskill a teacher in the school to assist with implementing the program for the school community.

Enabling Pedagogies and the Service Portal

- 4.31 Enabling Pedagogies is a program of work by the Education Directorate that was informed by the *Great Teachers by Design* strategy. It sought to establish a pedagogical framework for ACT public schools. A pedagogical framework sets the expectations for teaching and learning in school settings and seeks to capture the teaching quality expectations for the school's teaching staff.
- 4.32 As an outcome of the Enabling Pedagogies program of work, the Education Directorate has designed the ACT Public Schools Pedagogical Framework Guide. The guide places an expectation on schools to design a framework that is compatible with the system-wide pedagogical framework and that aligns with the *National School Improvement Tool*. The Framework Guide aligns well with the *National School Improvement Tool*, and comprehensive supporting resources are given to schools to help them develop their own pedagogical frameworks.
- 4.33 To assist schools and teachers to develop high quality teaching practices, the Education Directorate has also established an online resource of curriculum material that is aligned with the *National School Improvement Tool* on a dedicated Service Portal available to all ACT

public school teachers. Coaches are also available to assist schools and teachers to improve teaching quality in each of the six domains of the program, such as assessment and use of evidence. The Service Portal which contains the content for the Enabling Pedagogies program was recently launched at the time of the audit and only one school was aware of the service at that time.

- 4.34 Professional learning has been planned to support the Enabling Pedagogies program of work, but has not yet commenced. The Education Directorate has conducted initial user testing of the Service Portal with school leaders and teaching staff, and this has generated some positive feedback on the quality of this service.
- 4.35 Since 2018 the Education Support Office has been taking an increasing role in the development and implementation of professional learning programs and resources that are made available across all ACT public schools. The programs aim to address system-wide needs that have been identified in previous reviews or through school improvement activities. The key programs that have been established since this time are: the Cultural Integrity Program; the Academy of Future Skills; the Affiliated Schools Program; the Early Years Literacy Initiative; the Digital Solutions Program; Positive Behaviours for Learning; and Enabling Pedagogies. These programs have established some useful practices to improve teaching quality in schools. Three of the seven programs are fully accredited with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute and two are partially accredited.
- 4.36 The most consistently valued programs by teachers were programs that included resources that could be used in classes and used coaches or mentors to support teachers to improve their practice. While programs such as Positive Behaviours for Learning and Cultural Integrity had a high level of teacher awareness and satisfaction, teachers were less aware of newer programs such as the Affiliated Schools Program, the Academy of Future Skills and Enabling Pedagogies. Professional learning resources are being increasingly made available through the Education Directorate's Service Portal, but there is a low level of awareness of this resource.

School-based professional learning

Annual professional learning program

- 4.37 The *ACT Public Sector Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022* requires principals to develop an annual professional learning program for their school leaders and teaching staff. (This requirement was also in the *ACT Public Sector Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2014-2018*). The annual program is required to integrate professional learning community programs (refer to paragraph 4.46) and school-led professional learning activities.
- 4.38 Principals must allow for two days of professional learning to be conducted before the commencement of each school year. One day of this professional learning should be

dedicated to system or sector priorities, while the second day should be reserved for school-based professional learning activities.

- 4.39 The audit considered whether the six schools considered as part of the audit had developed annual learning programs between 2014 and 2020 as required by the enterprise agreements. Of the six ACT public schools that participated in this audit:
- one school had not developed an annual professional learning program at any time between 2014 and 2020 as required;
 - one school had developed annual professional learning programs for the period between 2015 and 2019;
 - one school had developed annual professional learning programs for the period between 2017 and 2019;
 - one school had developed an annual professional learning program for 2018 only; and
 - two schools had developed annual professional learning programs for 2020 only.
- 4.40 None of the six schools who participated in the audit could provide evidence demonstrating they had consistently implemented annual professional learning programs for each year between 2014 and 2020 as required by the two most recent enterprise agreements.
- 4.41 A review of the schools' professional learning programs showed there was variability in the quality and comprehensiveness of the programs and their implementation. Two of the five schools' programs did not reference the school's professional learning community, despite it accounting for the largest share of time and activity of professional learning in these schools. Three schools could not demonstrate that the activities in their program had been completed as planned. The Education Support Office does not provide any guidance or support to schools with respect to the development of their professional learning programs outside of the requirements contained in the enterprise agreement.
- 4.42 The requirement of principals to develop an annual professional learning program is not integrated into the school improvement process (refer to paragraph 3.24 to 3.76). As a result, schools are not effectively using annual professional learning programs to demonstrate how professional learning is contributing to progress towards school improvement priorities. For example, schools that identify a need to improve literacy outcomes for students in their school improvement and annual action plans (refer to paragraphs 3.45 to 3.58) may not have an accompanying annual professional learning program to address teachers' learning needs required to improve literacy teaching practices. The development and implementation of the annual professional learning programs is not overseen by the Directors of School Improvement or the Education Support Office.
- 4.43 The inclusion of the annual professional learning program in the school improvement process would strengthen its value as an external accountability mechanism for schools. Directors of School Improvement could assess the validity of each school's program in addressing the priorities of school improvement plans and annual action plans. Additionally,

an integrated approach would promote internal accountability in schools. In this approach school leaders would be required to develop annual professional learning programs in response to their school's improvement plan and annual action plan. This would include school leaders developing and implementing an agenda for their professional learning communities (refer to paragraph 4.46), scheduling timely teacher professional learning opportunities and identifying Education Support Office programs or external professional learning and development facilitators that address school improvement priorities.

- 4.44 The *ACT Public Sector Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022* requires principals to develop an annual professional learning program for their school leaders and teaching staff. The annual program is required to integrate professional learning community programs and school-led professional learning activities. None of the six schools who participated in the audit could provide evidence demonstrating they had consistently implemented annual professional learning programs for each year between 2014 and 2020 as required by the two most recent enterprise agreements.
- 4.45 A review of the schools' professional learning programs showed there was variability in the quality and comprehensiveness of the programs and their implementation. Two of the five schools' programs did not reference the school's professional learning community and three schools could not demonstrate that the activities in their program had been completed as planned. The enterprise agreement requirement of principals to develop an annual professional learning program is not integrated into the school improvement process. As a result, schools are not effectively using their mandatory annual professional learning programs under the enterprise agreement to demonstrate how professional learning is contributing to progress towards school improvement priorities.

RECOMMENDATION 8 ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMS

The Education Directorate should develop a practice for the Education Support Office to oversee:

- a) the completion of each school's annual professional learning program; and
- b) the development of a school's annual professional learning program as part of the school improvement process. The program should identify the development needs of teaching staff in connection with school improvement goals, and the expected impacts on student outcomes.

Professional Learning Communities

- 4.46 Professional learning communities are a method of school improvement where groups of teachers meet regularly to work in a structured and collaborative process to improve student outcomes. ACT public school teachers and school leaders' participation in professional learning communities is a requirement of the *ACT Public Sector Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022*, which requires schools to use professional learning communities to build 'quality teaching practice'.

Spiral of Inquiry and Multiple Sources of Evidence

- 4.47 Teachers are expected to use professional learning communities to conduct investigations in partnership with colleagues to address educational issues directly relevant to the way in which their own pedagogical practices meet the learning needs of their students. The Education Directorate has introduced a best practice model entitled the 'Spiral of Inquiry' to facilitate a consistent approach in professional learning communities in ACT public schools. This model is designed to focus on student outcomes with short time horizons to plan activities and review their effectiveness, while maintaining enough flexibility in the design to meet the individual needs of school communities.
- 4.48 The Spiral of Inquiry model encourages professional learning communities in ACT public schools to work through iterative five-week long investigations known as 'inquiry spirals' aimed at improving the quality of teaching practices and therefore raising student performance. These investigations centre on asking inquiry-based questions to understand how students are learning, what evidence there is to support this understanding, and what practices have been important to improving student learning.
- 4.49 The Spiral of Inquiry model incorporates the Multiple Sources of Evidence²⁹ approach, which identifies and uses data sets from four main sources to provide a basis for professional learning communities throughout inquiry spirals. Schools are encouraged through this model to gather data from each of these sources to provide a comprehensive picture of the factors which can affect student outcomes. The four data sources include:
- student learning;
 - demographics;
 - school programs and processes; and
 - perceptions.
- 4.50 The usefulness of using the Multiple Sources of Evidence approach in professional learning communities was confirmed in a focus group with teaching staff. A teacher commented on their utilisation of student achievement data to inform their professional learning community and implement school improvement priorities:

We have evidence which gets linked back to the annual action plan which has whole of school goals, targets and strategies. We all use the same document, then we decide what the strategies will be for those goals. We are very aware of what goes on, and why we are doing it. We all get the chance to be involved and contribute to bigger things and own it.

Developing teachers by using professional learning communities

- 4.51 Training to guide ACT teachers' participation in professional learning communities occurs via a cascading professional learning model employed in the Education Directorate's Empowered Learning Professionals Leadership Plan (refer to paragraph 3.92). Principals and

²⁹ Bernhardt, V. (1998). Multiple Measures. [online] Available at: https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/curriculum/pdf/multiple_measures.pdf Accessed 24 February 2021

deputy principals attended leadership forums on implementing professional learning communities and how to facilitate them through the Spiral of Inquiry model. This knowledge was designed to be passed on to teachers through leadership in professional learning communities in their school setting. Instructional Mentors were also available to provide coaching and mentoring to school leaders identified as requiring targeted support in implementing the Spiral of Inquiry model.

4.52 All six ACT public schools considered as part of the audit had implemented professional learning communities, which focused on improving student outcomes. Documents from schools showed that themes explored in professional learning communities are derived from each school's improvement priorities outlined in its school improvement plan, and all schools had considered the Multiple Sources of Evidence approach at least as early as 2018. However, a review of planning documentation for professional learning communities and their presentations reflecting the findings or impact the process has had on student outcomes, as well as discussions with school focus groups showed there was wide variability in the quality and rigour of professional learning communities across ACT public schools. For example:

- direction given to teachers on the expectation of work to be performed in professional learning communities did not consistently outline an agreed upon structure such as that provided by the Spiral of Inquiry model;
- teachers did not consistently understand the purpose of the work performed in their professional learning community; and
- evaluations were not consistently performed to gather evidence of the impact of professional learning communities on improving teaching practices and student educational outcomes.

4.53 Documentation from the six schools revealed none adhered to the five-week timeframe for professional learning community investigations recommended under the Spiral of Inquiry approach used by the Education Directorate. Instead, topics were generally explored over the course of one year.

4.54 There was variability in the extent to which the Education Support Office-supported Spiral of Inquiry approach was implemented across the schools; three of the six schools were using the model to guide their practices. Notably all three of these schools had taken part in a limited coaching program with an educational researcher to work with 11 ACT public schools to implement the Spiral of Inquiry model. The remaining three schools did not use the Spiral of Inquiry approach or an alternative better practice structure to make sure professional learning communities focussed on student outcomes, seeking evidence of impact, and having an inquiry-based approach to knowing why teaching practices have an impact on student learning. All schools reflected positively on the use of 'critical friends' such as educational consultants and instructional mentors to help improve the implementation of professional learning communities in ACT public schools.

- 4.55 Experienced teaching staff who participated in the audit commonly voiced a frustration that the professional learning community model is not facilitated by the Education Directorate to take place across networks of schools. This was particularly noticeable in high schools and colleges where one teacher in the whole school may be responsible for a school subject, and were not able to easily collaborate with other like teachers. A teacher stated:

We are expected to make connections but where is mechanism to collaborate and create a network? I don't know any other teachers for my subject area in [my local area]. The directorate could set up structures to make networking more organic, opening up gateways and they could set up an agenda that we could all [contribute to].

- 4.56 Evaluation mechanisms of professional learning community impact were highly variable across all settings as no formal requirement or guidance is provided by the Education Support Office. Two schools had designed their own evaluation mechanisms to guide improvement in professional learning community processes and ensure staff feedback informed future processes. Directors of School Improvement had designed a simple assessment tool based on their observations of effective professional learning communities in ACT public schools. This tool gave sound examples of what effective professional learning communities looked like. However, schools were not aware of this tool or other resources to identify how they could improve the effectiveness of their professional learning communities.
- 4.57 Professional learning communities are a method of school improvement where groups of teachers meet regularly to work in a structured and collaborative process to improve student outcomes. ACT public school teachers and school leaders' participation in professional learning communities is a requirement of the *ACT Public Sector Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022*. All six ACT public schools considered as part of the audit had implemented professional learning communities, which focused on improving student outcomes. Documents from schools showed that themes explored in professional learning communities are derived from each school's improvement priorities outlined in its school improvement plan. However, a review of planning documentation for professional learning communities and their presentations reflecting the findings or impact the process has had on student outcomes, as well as discussions with school focus groups showed there was wide variability in the quality and rigour of professional learning communities across ACT public schools.
- 4.58 Experienced teaching staff who participated in the audit commonly voiced a frustration that the professional learning community model is not facilitated by the Education Directorate to take place across networks of schools. This was particularly noticeable in high schools and colleges where one teacher in the whole school may be responsible for a school subject, and was not able to easily collaborate with other like teachers. Evaluation mechanisms of professional learning community impact were highly variable across all settings as no formal requirement or guidance is provided by the Education Support Office. Two schools had designed their own evaluation mechanisms to guide improvement in professional learning community processes and ensure staff feedback informed future processes. Directors of School Improvement had designed a simple assessment tool based on their observations of effective professional learning communities in ACT public schools. This tool gave sound

examples of what effective professional learning communities looked like. However, schools were not aware of this tool or other resources to identify how they could improve the effectiveness of their professional learning communities.

RECOMMENDATION 9 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

The Education Directorate should establish universal professional learning for all school leaders and teachers on the Spiral of Inquiry Model and Multiple Sources of Evidence approach in order to support school leaders to facilitate these activities. This support should focus on increasing understanding and consistency in the quality and impact of professional learning communities for the purpose of improving the quality of teaching practices in all ACT public schools.

ACT Teacher Quality Institute data

- 4.59 All teachers in public schools must be registered with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute and complete 20 hours of professional development annually. Teachers are also required to record their professional development with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute through a dedicated online learning portal and in doing so they must reflect on:
- how the activity reinforced their practice;
 - how it aligns with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*;
 - what new knowledge and skills they learnt;
 - how the activity will improve outcomes for students; and
 - how knowledge sharing from the activity can contribute to school improvement.
- 4.60 Principals are then required to verify on an annual basis that the teachers they are responsible for have completed their reflections and the required number of hours of professional learning.
- 4.61 This data has been captured for over ten years since the establishment of the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. However, the Education Directorate does not have access to a consolidated view of this data to:
- identify trends in teacher professional learning; or
 - help inform how professional learning impacts on student outcomes.
- 4.62 The Education Directorate does receive data on all ACT Teacher Quality Institute accredited programs it runs on an activity-by-activity basis. This can help inform the development of individual programs and give feedback on the quality of each accredited professional learning activity. Each accredited program has a nominated contact officer who is responsible for the activity. This contact officer receives the feedback from teachers who participated in the activity and can use it to evaluate the effectiveness of their particular program. However, there is no consolidated view of data for all programs that allows the

Education Directorate to more broadly monitor the quality of its professional learning programs across ACT public schools. The Education Directorate does not seek advice from, or have effective and regular communication with, the ACT Teacher Quality Institute to determine whether there are opportunities to better use the teacher registration and professional learning process to monitor the quality of teaching in ACT public schools. The ACT Teacher Quality Institute is not invited as a participant to key planning and governance activities to help the Education Directorate plan, deliver and evaluate initiatives to improve teaching quality in public schools.

- 4.63 Principals and teachers who were consulted as part of the audit viewed the professional learning aspects of the ACT Teacher Quality Institute predominantly as a regulatory process, and not as a knowledge source to improve teaching practice. Under phase one of the *Future of Education*, a commitment was made between the Education Directorate and the ACT Teacher Quality Institute to establish a clearing house of excellent practice. The clearing house was envisaged to be a platform through which the ACT Teacher Quality Institute would share examples of excellent practice in ACT schools and contemporary research with school leaders and teachers. As at August 2020 this had only progressed as far as initial discussions between the two organisations. In response to the draft proposed report the ACT Teacher Quality Institute advised that progression of this initiative in 2020 was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The ACT Teacher Quality Institute also advised that research activities under the Affiliated Schools Program (discussed at paragraph 4.18), and through networks of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers led by the institute, may also assist in progressing this initiative.
- 4.64 Teachers and school leaders involved in focus groups as part of the audit were unaware that their participation in professional learning communities could be recognised as teacher-identified professional learning for registration purposes. Despite professional learning communities (discussed at paragraph 4.46) being the single common activity for improving the professional knowledge of teachers and lifting teaching quality in all primary schools, high schools and colleges, teachers and school leaders did not understand there were processes to recognise this work as recognised professional learning. All schools had implemented regularly scheduled activities, considered the professional needs of teachers, and included reflective practices as part of professional learning communities. Despite the time and resources invested in these activities, and that they should feature as an important component of a school's annual professional learning plan, schools and teachers reflected in focus groups that they need to find other sources of professional learning outside of these communities to meet their annual requirement for teacher registration purposes. The ACT Teacher Quality Institute has also implemented a process that is intended to facilitate more efficient recognition and reflection of school-based professional learning communities and their contribution to teachers' professional development. Teachers participating in school-based professional learning communities can recognise and reflect how the development in the professional learning community aligns with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* as a group through a single group reflection.

- 4.65 Where schools seek to have their professional learning activities recognised as accredited learning with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute, this could be an onerous and time-consuming process. It was noted that some schools attempt to receive recognition for their teachers in completing school-led professional development. Two of the six school leadership teams advised that they sought to have activities during the two days prior to the commencement of the school year recognized as accredited learning, but reflected this was an onerous process.
- 4.66 Not all professional learning programs implemented by the Education Support Office were recognised accredited learning with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. For example, mentoring activities under the Affiliated Schools Program were not recognised as accredited professional learning. Similarly, three of eight of the professional learning programs associated with the Positive Behaviours for Learning Program (refer to paragraph 4.28) are not accredited for registration purposes with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. This does not mean that the programs are of lesser value and teachers can record their participation as teacher-identified professional learning for registration purposes. However, there is a missed opportunity for the Education Directorate to receive specific and targeted feedback from teachers through professional learning evaluations, which would be the case if the program was registered with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. Programs that are accredited with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute must provide satisfaction surveys to teachers that participate in the program and this can provide useful feedback to the Education Directorate to improve the quality of its professional learning programs.
- 4.67 All teachers in public schools must be registered with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute and complete 20 hours of professional development annually. Teachers are also required to record their professional development with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute through a dedicated online learning portal. Data associated with ACT public school teachers' professional development has been captured for over ten years since the establishment of the ACT Teacher Quality Institute, but the Education Directorate does not have access to a consolidated view of this data to:
- identify trends in teacher professional learning; or
 - help inform how professional learning impacts on student outcomes.
- 4.68 The Education Directorate does receive data on ACT Teacher Quality Institute accredited programs it runs on an activity-by-activity basis and this can help inform the development of individual programs and give feedback on the quality of each accredited professional learning activity. However, there is no consolidated view of data for all programs that allows the Education Directorate to more broadly monitor the quality of its professional learning programs across ACT public schools, or their impact on student educational outcomes.
- 4.69 Some schools have attempted to receive recognition for their teachers in completing school-led professional development; two of the six school leadership teams advised that they sought to have activities during the two days prior to the commencement of the school year recognised as accredited learning, but reflected this was an onerous process. Furthermore,

not all professional learning programs implemented by the Education Support Office were recognised accredited learning with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. For example, mentoring activities under the Affiliated Schools Program were not recognised as accredited professional learning. Similarly, three of eight of the professional learning programs associated with the Positive Behaviours for Learning Program are not accredited for registration purposes with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. While this does not mean that the programs are of lesser value and teachers can record their participation as teacher-identified professional learning for registration purposes, there is a missed opportunity for the Education Directorate to receive specific and targeted feedback from teachers through professional learning evaluations, which would be the case if the program was registered with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute.

RECOMMENDATION 10 ACT TEACHER QUALITY INSTITUTE LEARNING

The Education Directorate should work with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute to:

- a) receive and analyse data to use for evaluating the quality of Education Directorate professional learning activities, and identifying trends and insights from its teachers' professional learning to help determine the impact this has on improving student outcomes; and
- b) design methods and practices to recognise key professional learning supports, including professional learning communities, as accredited learning that meets the requirements of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*.

Teacher and School Leader Professional Development Fund

4.70 Funding for fee for service professional learning activities is distributed to schools through a formula based on full-time equivalent teaching staff and student enrolments. Table 4-1 shows professional learning funding available to schools per full-time equivalent teaching staff member (excluding principals) for the years 2014-15 to 2019-20.

Table 4-1 Education Directorate Teacher and School Leader Professional Development Funding

Financial Year Expenditure	Teacher and School Leader Professional Development Fund	Allocation Per FTE Teacher or School Leader
2014-2015	\$910 848	\$289
2015-2016	\$973 321	\$299
2016-2017	\$829 752	\$250
2017-2018	\$1 967 957	\$576
2018-2019	\$1 305 893	\$371
2019-2020	\$737 471	\$201

Source: ACT Audit Office, based on Education Directorate funding and headcount (FTE) data

- 4.71 A review of the allocation of professional learning funding between 2014-15 and 2019-20 shows:
- in 2014-15 and 2015-16 funding was relatively stable at approximately \$289 to \$299 per full-time equivalent teaching staff member, before decreasing slightly to \$250 in 2016-2017;
 - in 2017-18 funding increased significantly to \$576 per full-time equivalent teacher. The 57 percent increase on the previous year represents Education Support Office expenditure on an additional four staff hired to the Positive Behaviours for Learning Program team between 2017-18 and 2018-19 (refer to paragraph 4.28). The core role of these staff was to improve teachers' practice in using the Positive Behaviours for Learning Program to support curriculum delivery within classrooms. The increase in funding was not allocated to schools to address teacher professional learning needs; and
 - there has been a steady decline in funding from the high of 2017-18. Funding was reduced by \$205 in 2018-19 (36 percent) and \$170 in 2019-20 (46 percent) on a per full-time equivalent teacher basis.
- 4.72 A number of school principals consulted as part of the audit, as well as some industry peak bodies advised that the funds provided to schools to support professional learning was insufficient to meet the needs of teachers. Principals advised that they used more than their notional allocation to allow staff to pursue professional learning opportunities.
- 4.73 Analysis of school expenditure data for the six schools participating in this audit showed that there was substantial variation in the amount spent on professional learning. Table 4-2 shows the average amount spent at each of the ACT public schools per full-time equivalent teaching staff member (excluding principals) for each year between 2017 and 2019.

Table 4-2 Professional learning funding across the six schools (2017 to 2019)

	2017 funding per FTE teacher or school leader	2018 Funding per FTE teacher or school leader	2019 Funding per FTE teacher or school leader
School 1	\$302	\$355	\$733
School 2	\$538	\$615	\$508
School 3	\$601	\$460	\$413
School 4	\$303	\$184	\$296
School 5	\$857	\$604	\$770
School 6	\$41	\$997	\$1,409

Source: ACT Audit Office, based on Individual school funding records and headcount (FTE) data

- 4.74 A potential additional and often unrecognised cost of professional development is the additional cost to schools of replacing teachers who are absent for professional learning purposes with a relief teacher. In 2020, this cost amounted to an average rate of \$548 per day. One principal advised that the cost of professional release to their school's budget is in

the tens of thousands of dollars per year. The cost of this across all schools cannot be ascertained due to a lack of accessible data.

- 4.75 Teachers and school leaders also advised of their concerns regarding their ability to access relief teaching staff. Some schools had significant difficulty in attracting relief staff, which impacted the ability of teachers and school leaders at that school to attend professional learning programs. A principal interviewed for the purpose of this audit stated

There are times I can't send staff to professional learning [courses] because I can't get relief teachers. Getting relief teachers to travel here is hard... This is an ongoing issue for a number of the experienced teachers I have.

- 4.76 The Education Support Office advised that it was intended that new universally offered programs were intended to provide scale, while school professional learning activities could focus on professional learning communities, and meeting specific needs of individual teachers that could not be fully addressed through these programs. Some decisions have been taken to reduce the funding from the Teacher and School Leader Professional Learning Fund to prioritise system-wide needs such as principal mentoring and coaching programs, and central curriculum development, support and coaching for teachers. This includes some of the programs discussed earlier in this chapter, such as the Positive Behaviours for Learning Program. These decisions have been based on providing programs aimed at addressing the needs of the ACT public school system, and funding them in part through using some funds from the Teacher Professional Development Fund which funds school-level professional development, as well as being funded through budget initiatives.

- 4.77 In its response to the draft proposed report, the Education Directorate noted that this analysis does not take account of other professional learning that takes place in a school setting, including through coaching in a classroom situation. Professional learning such as this is not reflected in the financial analysis. The Education Directorate advised 'while fee for service professional learning can be valuable, teachers report higher levels of satisfaction with professional learning that is provided via coaching in the classroom situation and/or support from the [Education Support Office]'. In this respect it is noted that ACT public school teachers reflect positively on the Education Directorate's commitment to professional learning, as noted in the evaluation report of the first phase of the *Future of Education*. The evaluation report noted 79 percent of teachers perceived strong and consistent support for professional learning in 2018, while in 2020 this declined slightly to 76 percent. Nevertheless, consideration of funding distributed to schools for fee for service professional learning activities, and schools' expenditure on these activities, provides useful information on school-specific professional learning priorities and activities.

- 4.78 Analysis of school expenditure data for the six schools participating in this audit showed that there was substantial variation in the amount spent by schools on fee for service professional learning. The amount spent on fee for service professional learning varied between \$733 and \$1,409 per full-time equivalent teacher or school leader. A number of school principals consulted as part of the audit, as well as some industry peak bodies advised that the funds provided to schools to support fee for service professional learning was insufficient to meet the needs of teachers. Principals advised that they used more than their

notional allocation to allow staff to pursue professional learning opportunities. The Education Support Office has recognised these issues and has sought to provide the new universally offered programs across all ACT public schools in order to provide scale, with the expectation that school professional learning activities could focus on professional learning communities, and meeting specific needs of individual teachers that could not be fully addressed through these programs. An evaluation of the first phase of the *Future of Education* reported teachers' perception of the Education Directorate's commitment to professional learning. It noted 79 percent of teachers reporting strong and consistent support for professional learning in 2018, which declined slightly to 76 percent in 2020.

New Educators Support Program

- 4.79 Enrolments in ACT public schools are growing at a rate of 2.5 percent per year. The expansion of the ACT public school system and the annual 4 percent turnover of teaching staff requires approximately 250 additional teachers in ACT public schools each year. To meet these needs a steady supply of classroom ready graduate teachers is required, along with support for graduate teachers to build the quality of their teaching practices in order to improve student outcomes.
- 4.80 Graduate teachers are considered 'New Educators' for their first three years in ACT public schools. The Education Directorate has demonstrated its commitment to the development of New Educators in the *ACT Public Sector Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022*. The enterprise agreement requires New Educators receive:
- a five-day centralised induction prior to the commencement of the school year;
 - reduced face-to-face teaching hours to facilitate support and mentoring;
 - six New Educator Support Days to be used to facilitate professional learning and development; and
 - the provision of coaching and mentorship from experience teaching colleagues.
- 4.81 Policy guidance to administer these entitlements is given to schools through the *New Educator Support Guidelines* (March 2020). In addition to confirming enterprise agreement entitlements, the guidelines provide a brief explanation of how these entitlements should be used and suggested professional development activities for New Educators. Schools are also provided a template *New Educator Support Plan* to record agreed supports for the New Educator over their first three years of service.
- 4.82 Across the Education Directorate there is no visibility as to whether New Educators are receiving these entitlements and whether they are being used effectively. In this respect there is no:
- analysis or confirmation of how New Educators use reduced teaching hours and 'New Educator Support Days' to improve their teaching practice; and
 - examination of the effectiveness of coaching and mentoring activities for New Educators.

- 4.83 Accountability for compliance with these obligations is met by principals, who complete a *School Annual EA Implementation Plan* checklist which is co-signed by an Australian Education Union delegate. This is an assurance statement that attests that all enterprise agreement obligations in a school setting, including New Educator provisions, have been met. However, while individual schools may have their own data on how their New Educators have been supported to access these provisions, this data is not able to be analysed in an efficient manner through a single data source. This is because these entitlements may not have a record attached to them in the ACT Government's human resources management system such as a leave record, or may be attached to a separate event which does not directly confirm that support was provided to a new educator; such as a school hiring a relief teacher to cover face-to-face teaching time. This means that it is not possible to easily identify how many New Educators actually received their entitled supports, and in what form this support was provided.
- 4.84 The lack of accessible data also limits the Education Directorate's ability to evaluate the effectiveness of the New Educator Support Program to improve the quality of new educators' teaching practices. Principals and school leaders who contributed to this audit through focus groups unanimously agreed that the New Educator Support Program is not effective in its current form and does not accurately reflect the level of support graduate teachers require in ACT public schools. They reflected that the directorate needs to provide more support to schools if the program is to be effective in improving New Educators' teaching practices. A school leader advised:
- With new educators what is important is consistency. I think [the schools] do a good job guiding new educators but that comes through our own efforts rather than having direction [from Education Directorate]. With New Educators comes lots of compliance; the allocated days and mentors [provisions specified in the Enterprise Agreement] but there is not much guidance [for school leaders] on how to utilise this to develop the new educators, so it left up to interpretation. We might need to coordinate a bit [more].
- 4.85 While schools are provided guidelines to confirm the appropriate types of New Educator development activities at a high level, there is no document or policy which confirms for New Educators and schools what the core expected development needs and pedagogical competencies are throughout the three years of the New Educator Support Program. While the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* show the expected standard for a proficient teacher which newly registered teachers have five years to meet, there is no learning program which captures the key capabilities that New Educators are expected to demonstrate as ACT public school teachers at the end of their three-year program. This means schools have to determine their own priorities for New Educator development, resulting in the potential for New Educators to receive inconsistent professional development across schools during this time. It also means that schools may be unaware of Education Support Office programs that could be available to help develop new educators.
- 4.86 Graduate teachers are considered 'New Educators' for their first three years in ACT public schools. The Education Directorate has demonstrated its commitment to the development of New Educators in the *ACT Public Sector Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022* through the New Educator Support Program, which comprises a

range of supports such as: a five-day centralised induction prior to the commencement of the school year; reduced face-to-face teaching hours to facilitate support and mentoring; six New Educator Support Days to be used to facilitate professional learning and development; and the provision of coaching and mentorship from experienced teaching colleagues. These supports and high level suggestions for New Educator development activities for schools to provide are documented in the *New Educator Support Guidelines* (March 2020). A template plan is also provided for schools to agree development activities with their New Educators. Schools also have an accountability to apply these entitlements through the annual completion of a *School Annual EA Implementation Plan* checklist which is co-signed by an Australian Education Union delegate.

- 4.87 Despite this policy and compliance framework, there is no visibility as to whether New Educators are receiving these entitlements and whether they are being used effectively across the Education Directorate. This presents a risk that New Educators will receive inconsistent access to professional development across their first three years as an ACT public school teacher. In this respect there is no:
- analysis or confirmation of how New Educators use reduced teaching hours and New Educator Support Days to improve their teaching practice; and
 - examination of the effectiveness of coaching and mentoring activities for New Educators.

New Educator Induction

- 4.88 A mandatory five-day centralised induction is held for all first-year New Educators prior to the commencement of the school year. According to the Education Directorate's *New Educator Guidelines*, the purpose of the induction is to ensure all New Educators are 'effectively supported, prepared and informed of their responsibilities and entitlements as they begin in their roles'. Although not accredited for the purpose of ACT Teacher Quality Institute registration, the induction aims to provide New Educators with key information, knowledge and skills to assist in their first year of teaching in ACT public schools, as well as providing information regarding the supports available to them. An example of the content derived from the 2021 centralised induction is below:
- Day 1: New Educators receive information regarding the Education Directorate's vision for education in ACT public schools.
 - Day 2-4: New Educators attend a selection of interactive workshops that include content regarding professional responsibilities, safety and wellbeing, and the Education Directorate's Enabling Pedagogies program (refer to paragraph 4.31).
 - Day 5: New Educators attend their school placement and complete online learning modules.
- 4.89 In focus groups conducted for the purpose of this audit, there was persistent negative feedback regarding the delivery of the centralised induction from all levels of school leaders and teaching staff, including New Educators. School leaders spoke of the disconnect

between the Education Directorate's understanding of what New Educators need and their facilitation of the centralised induction. They reflected that the five-day induction program is misplaced, taking New Educators away from school-based targeted professional learning. Separately a New Educator commented:

The central Induction in 2019 was waste of time, not useful, they just read out policies. It didn't tell me anything I didn't know or couldn't find myself and the whole day I just sat there, and people were talking at us the whole time. It felt like box ticking and I have not spoken to single teacher who said it was useful.

4.90 A New Educator in another setting concurred, stating:

Induction felt like it was put together at last minute with a lot of busy stuff – didn't get much out of it – met some people but didn't see them again – would have been better off here, even if we just went over policies and procedures and I got to see my classroom.

4.91 Teachers and school leaders participating in focus groups for the audit reflected that five days of centralised induction was not effective in supporting new educators to start their careers as a teacher. Rather, an approach of one or two days of the key compliance messages before teachers start at schools was accepted as necessary. Content beyond this could be delivered after New Educators have had an opportunity to teach and understand what they need to learn to improve the quality of their teaching practice.

4.92 A mandatory five-day centralised induction is held for all first-year New Educators prior to the commencement of the school year. According to the Education Directorate's *New Educator Guidelines*, the purpose of the induction is to ensure all New Educators are 'effectively supported, prepared and informed of their responsibilities and entitlements as they begin in their roles'. The centralised induction for New Educators is not accredited with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute and therefore cannot be counted towards the accredited training requirement under their annual registration requirements. In focus groups conducted for the purpose of this audit, there was persistent negative feedback regarding the delivery of the centralised induction from all levels of school leaders and teaching staff, including New Educators. This feedback centred on the timing of this training before New Educators start teaching, and this should instead predominantly occur after they have an opportunity to teach and understand what they need to learn to improve the quality of their teaching practice.

Reduced face-to-face teaching hours to facilitate support and mentoring

4.93 New Educators have reduced face-to-face teaching hours to facilitate enhanced support and mentoring. The amount of reduced teaching hours reduces over the three years of the New Educator Support Program:

- Year 1: 60 hours in preschool or primary schools' settings and 80 hours in secondary schools per year of reduced teaching hours; and
- Year 2 and 3: 20 hours in preschool or primary schools' settings and 60 hours in secondary schools per year of reduced teaching hours.

- 4.94 This allowance is designed to provide schools with a provision of time for coaching and mentoring support programs designed to meet the development needs of each New Educator. The specific organisational details are decided by individual school management to allow program flexibility to meet the needs of each New Educator over time. Examples of ways in which schools use the reduced teaching hours for New Educators may include:
- releasing the New Educator and/or the mentoring teacher from classroom duties for coaching support;
 - allocating the time weekly, fortnightly or monthly for planned purposes such as professional learning; or
 - concentrating the time allocation and support program within an appropriate period, e.g., within the first semester to support the New Educator in undertaking their duties as a classroom teacher.
- 4.95 School leaders and New Educators who participated in focus groups for the purpose of this audit advised that the provision of additional classroom release hours for New Educators were largely used to catch up on administrative tasks rather than for coaching and mentoring purposes. New Educators and school leaders also advised that the reduction in face-to-face teaching hours was largely provided on an adhoc basis. The reason for this was that the amount of reduced teaching time did not equate to an amount of teaching time that could be easily planned for relief purposes. The reduction in face-to-face teaching time usually amounted to between 30 minutes and an hour each week which is a fraction of a timetabled lesson in most school settings. School leaders advised that making time for New Educators to collaborate with their experienced teacher mentor within school hours is difficult and considered impractical within school settings. New Educators reflected that the additional time allowance was not allocated in a consistent or structured way that would assist them to improve the quality of their teaching practice.
- 4.96 One school was noted as an exception to these issues of being unable to allocate reduced teaching hours to New Educators. The school had produced a structured New Educator training program which programmed all New Educators to be released at the same time each week to participate in planned development activities facilitated by a dedicated school-based new educator co-ordinator. To facilitate the program, the school has invested in providing its New Educators with a greater reduction in face-to-face teaching time than specified in the enterprise agreement. The weekly program is designed to respond to the development needs of New Educators in response to their upcoming work-related responsibilities. Training included sessions focused on use of assessment systems, report writing in preparation of mid or end of year reporting, or portfolio guidance in preparation for new educators to advance their teaching registration. Notably, the school had a high proportion of experienced staff available and the principal advised that the program was a significant self-funded investment which the school community could afford. In the absence of more central support for New Educators, allocation of resourcing for these purposes may not be possible for all ACT public schools.

- 4.97 New Educators are expected to have reduced face-to-face teaching hours to facilitate enhanced support and mentoring. This allowance is calculated as a reduced number of minutes per week of classroom time that reduces as the New Educator progresses through the development program. It is designed to provide schools with a provision of time for coaching and mentoring support programs designed to meet the development needs of each New Educator. The specific organisational details are decided by individual school management to allow program flexibility to meet the needs of each New Educator over time. School leaders and New Educators who participated in focus groups for the purpose of this audit advised that the provision of additional classroom release hours for New Educators were largely used to catch up on administrative tasks rather than for coaching and mentoring purposes. New Educators and school leaders also advised that the reduction in face-to-face teaching hours was largely provided on an adhoc basis. School leaders advised that making time for New Educators to collaborate with their experienced teacher mentor within school hours is difficult and considered impractical within school settings. New Educators reflected that the additional time allowance was not allocated in a consistent or structured way that would assist them to improve the quality of their teaching practice. The allowance of reduced face-to-face teaching hours for new educators is not effectively implemented in all ACT public schools. Not all new educators can access this time, and it is not consistently used to improve teaching quality.

New Educator Support Days

- 4.98 The *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018 – 2022* provides for six additional classroom release days for each New Educator. New Educators typically negotiate with their supervisor during the first term of each year on the use of these support days and this should then be documented in their individual New Educator Support Plan.
- 4.99 While New Educators and school leaders in all schools were aware of the provision of New Educator Support Days, focus groups involving both cohorts showed a lack of understanding of the exact allocation of days and the circumstances in which to use them. School leaders and New Educators reflected that accessing the provision in full was impractical due to staffing pressures including the difficulty in obtaining relief teaching staff.
- 4.100 School leaders advised that, in its current unstructured form, accessing the entitlement of New Educator Support Days can be more detrimental to a New Educator's learning as they are seen as unstructured. New Educators agreed, and advised that taking a support day increased their workload as they are required to plan learning materials for their students ahead of their absence for a relief teacher to deliver and would often need to redeliver content to their students to ensure they understood the subject matter. New Educators also advised that accessing support days places added pressures on New Educators' teaching colleagues and this was perceived as a disincentive. Of all New Educators interviewed, none had used their full allocation of New Educator Support Days. A school leader participating in the audit summarised a common opinion of school-based staff:

New educator days only have value as far as they are actually organised. Rather than the adhoc current arrangements the [Education] Directorate need to organise the support days and have purpose behind them.

- 4.101 The *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018 – 2022* provides for six additional classroom release days for each New Educator. These can be taken as two leave days for each year of the three year program. While New Educators and school leaders in all schools were aware of the provision of New Educator Support Days, focus groups involving both cohorts showed a lack of understanding of the exact allocation of days and the circumstances in which to use them. School leaders and New Educators reflected that accessing the provision in full was impractical due to staffing pressures including the difficulty in obtaining relief teaching staff.
- 4.102 The combination of supports provided under the New Educator Support Program are not evaluated to determine whether they are effective in developing a series of expected pedagogical competencies in New Educators. Documenting expected pedagogical competencies that New Educators should display at the program's completion, and regularly evaluating the effectiveness of the program could allow the Education Directorate to determine whether there are barriers for to accessing these supports.

RECOMMENDATION 11 NEW EDUCATOR SUPPORT PROGRAM

The New Education Support Program should be reviewed and redesigned. The program should:

- a) be facilitated by the Education Support Office to provide centralise oversight of all Enterprise Agreement provisions, centralised support and resourcing to New Educators in ACT public schools;
- b) document a core set of highly-effective pedagogical competencies that New Educators are expected to acquire within the first three years of their teaching careers;
- c) include a series of centralised, scaffolded professional development activities to build New Educators' capabilities over the course of the three years of the program;
- d) provide schools with clear guidelines and expectations to facilitate experienced teacher coaching and mentoring for New Educators; and
- e) establish an annual monitoring and evaluation process for the program, which incorporates feedback from New Educators, experienced teacher mentors and school leaders.

5 TEACHING WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 Recruiting, developing and retaining highly effective teachers is an important part of achieving improved educational outcomes for students. This chapter discusses the Education Directorate's strategies and initiatives to achieve this, particularly through the implementation of the *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022* and *People, Practice and Performance Framework for Performance and Accountability* (2016) framework.

Summary

Conclusion

The management of the teaching workforce is an important determinant in achieving teaching quality across all ACT public schools. The *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022* includes a structure that recognises the importance of teacher experience. The Education Directorate has assigned roles and responsibilities to classroom teachers at the top of this structure at the 'Experienced Teacher 2' level to mentor New Educators and contribute to improving student educational outcomes. Principals are also assigned responsibilities to manage the school teaching workforce to improve student outcomes. However, the Education Directorate does not centrally plan or monitor the distribution of experienced teachers to determine if New Educators and schools have equitable access to them. Principals can exclude highly experienced teachers from the annual teacher transfer round, and teachers are not transferred to schools which they have not expressed a preference to teach at through this process. These practices limit the ability of schools to access highly experienced teachers to improve teaching quality.

The teacher performance development process is not effective in supporting teaching quality. While it refers to the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, it does allow teachers to demonstrate their compliance with mandatory professional learning processes under the *ACT Teacher Quality Institute Act (2010)*. The Education Directorate also cannot use the process to plan, deliver or evaluate the effectiveness of supports to improve teaching quality across all ACT public schools as it is a manual process managed at the school level. The performance development process does not effectively support teacher appraisals which was regularly reflected as a highly valued support to improve practice by teachers who contributed to the audit. Schools develop their own ways to encourage these activities which are variable in quality and effectiveness.

The performance management process under the *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022* is not implemented effectively in ACT public schools. The Education Directorate advised that one teacher had been managed through these processes in the 2019-20 financial year. However, this is not likely to reflect the true level of

underperformance in ACT public schools. The Education Directorate does not have an informed understanding of the true level of teacher underperformance.

Key findings

	Paragraph
<p>Research shows that there is a relationship between years of teaching experience and the quality of practice demonstrated by an individual teacher: the quality of a teacher's practices most steeply increases in their initial years in the classroom; and the effectiveness of their teaching practices continues to improve significantly until their seventh year of service. Sixty one percent of ACT teachers are classified as Experienced Teacher 2 teachers, with at least eight years' experience, which the research suggests is the point at which they are expected to have an ongoing positive impact on student outcomes through high quality teaching. Twenty two percent are classified as Experienced Teacher 1 (four to seven years' experience) and 17 percent are identified as New Teachers (less than three years' experience). There is variability between the deployment of Experienced Teacher 2 classroom teachers across ACT public schools, for example 26 schools have a workforce made up of more than 70 percent of Experienced Teacher 2 staff and 22 schools have a workforce of less than 50 percent of Experienced Teacher 2 staff. The school with the lowest proportion of Experienced Teacher 2 staff has only 26 percent at this level.</p>	5.23
<p>The proportion of Experienced Teacher 2 classroom teachers in a school may have a direct impact on student educational outcomes and the ability of New Educators to access their industrial rights. When a school's workforce is made up of 50 percent or less Experienced Teacher 2 classroom teachers, the additional duties designed to contribute towards improved teaching quality assigned to these teachers are at risk of not being performed or being performed to a subpar standard. The proportion of experienced teachers at a school can also have a persisting impact on student outcomes, as the effects of high-quality teaching are cumulative. If the classroom teaching workforce remains stable over three years, students at the ACT public school with the lowest proportion of experienced teachers currently have a 1.8 percent chance of being taught by a series of Experienced Teacher 2 teachers over this time. This compares with the students at the school with the highest proportion of experienced teachers, which have a 77.1 percent chance of this occurring.</p>	5.24
<p>Under the <i>Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022</i>, teachers permanently employed by the Education Directorate are placed at a particular school for an initial five-year term. At the end of this period, teachers are expected to apply for transfer to another ACT public school through an annual process known as the 'transfer round'. The annual teacher transfer round is an important process for developing and deploying highly experienced teachers across the ACT public school system. However, there are confounding factors that interfere with the effective operation of the transfer round and its effect on teaching quality across the school system. This includes the opportunity for school principals to hold on to their experienced teachers and exclude them from the transfer round by simply extending a teacher's placement for up to five years. There has also been limited</p>	5.38

central oversight of when teachers are due for transfer. Until a recent update in December 2020 of teacher placement end date records by the People and Performance Branch the Education Directorate did not have complete and accessible data on when teachers were due to complete their five-year school placements. Placement end dates were not centrally recorded for 621 teachers and school leaders (approximately 18.4 percent of the total number of 3,382 teachers as at February 2020). Extensions to teaching placements increases the risk of highly experienced teachers being clustered in a smaller number of schools, thereby reducing the impact they could otherwise have if deployed where the ACT public school system as a whole may need them for the purposes of equity and lifting student outcomes and may also interfere with New Educators' rights to access experienced mentors to improve their teaching quality.

To maintain teaching quality in ACT public schools, the Education Directorate must recruit sufficient teachers to account for growth in student numbers and staff turnover. Presently, this rate is approximately 6.5 percent. Resignations have accounted for 67 percent of teacher separations between 2014 and 2020, and the majority of these teachers have left in the first seven years of service, which is before research suggests they become highly effective teachers. The Education Directorate has recently established a *2021-2023 Workforce Strategy* which outlines high level goals to manage the risk of being unable to secure sufficient high-quality teachers, along with potential programs and projects identified to address this risk over the next three years. While retention measures are identified in this strategy, the Education Directorate does not monitor the reasons teachers resign from ACT public schools through exit surveys to determine if such activities are appropriately targeted.

Teacher and school leader performance and development plans are intended to be the process by which principals and teachers identify, plan, action and evaluate targeted professional learning and development to improve teaching quality. To set the performance expectations of school leaders, the Education Directorate has established an *ACT School Leadership Capability Framework* that specifies the competencies expected of: principals (School Leader A); deputy principals (School Leader B); and school executives (School Leader C). The Education Directorate has not designed a similar capability framework for classroom teachers.

A consistent approach to the performance development process was observed in the six schools considered as part of the audit. However, of the 54 performance development plans considered for the purpose of the audit, 79 per cent were incomplete in terms of content, supervisor endorsement or evidence of feedback to teaching staff. Teaching workforce data cannot be easily used to monitor whether performance and development plans are completed, or timely and complete feedback is given. While it is accepted best practice that teachers and school leaders link their performance and development plan goals with school improvement priorities, the generic approach observed in the six schools resulted in a lack of evidence of teachers reflecting on how they individually needed to improve their teaching practice in support of school improvement priorities. Focus groups within the six schools considered as part of the audit indicated that the professional development plans were not used to support teaching quality within the workforce.

Teachers and school leaders alike viewed the performance and development process as a mandatory compliance exercise.

The Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership recommends the use of classroom observations to provide teachers with clear feedback and direction in the form of evidence-based strategies for developing the quality of their teaching practice. Despite this, the Education Directorate does not maintain a policy or guidelines for regular teacher appraisals or classroom observations for permanent teaching staff in ACT public schools. Rather, they are a widely understood and suggested practice that each school should pursue, but it is not mandated. Only two of six schools conducted regular effective teaching appraisals and the leaders of these schools actively supported and encouraged this practice. In the absence of central tools and supports for teaching appraisals, these school leaders developed their own resources to support this activity. Opportunities to encourage and model classroom observations could have a meaningful impact on systemic teaching quality in ACT public schools. 5.72

Effective performance management of teaching staff is important to maintain the quality of teaching practices in ACT public schools. The Education Directorate has established policies, protocols and mechanisms to support performance management. This includes the human resources business partners who are available to school leaders to help manage underperformance in their setting. However, only one teacher was reported as underperforming in 2019-20. This is low for a workforce of over 4,000 teachers and school leaders. This is supported by discussions with Education Support Office executives and school leaders who suggest the number of teachers and school leaders who are not demonstrating quality teaching is underreported. The Education Directorate has no informed understanding as to whether performance management of ACT public school teachers is underreported, or the supports required to help school leaders to improve teaching quality through these processes. 5.85

System level management of the teaching workforce

Classroom teacher experience

5.2 The deployment and management of ACT public school teaching staff is informed by two key documents:

- the *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022*; and
- the *People, Practice and Performance Framework for Performance and Accountability (2016)*.

5.3 The *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022* specifies the processes by which teachers are employed and deployed to ACT public schools. Clause R3.8 of the Agreement states:

Successful experience in a range of settings is valued for its contribution to quality teaching, quality student outcomes, professional development, career advancement and promotion.

5.4 The *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022* rewards teachers as they become more experienced through a process of annual progression through an incremental salary structure. The salary structure is classified into three broad bands:

- New Educators; and
- two levels of Experienced Teachers.

5.5 Each of these bands has multiple salary increments and most teachers progress one increment each school year. Table 5-1 shows ACT public school teachers' classification based on years of teaching experience and the corresponding salary band.

Table 5-1 ACT public school teacher service bands

Classification	Years of teaching experience	Salary band
New Educator	0-3 years	\$73 246 - \$81 046
Experienced Teacher 1	4-7 years	\$84 945 - \$96 644
Experienced Teacher 2	8 years and beyond	\$103 144 - \$109 641

Source: *The Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022, Annex A, Classifications and rates of pay*

5.6 The structure of these bands of service aligns with a significant body of research that shows there is a relationship between years of teaching experience and the quality of practice demonstrated by an individual teacher.³⁰ A summary of longitudinal research that analysed the relationship between teacher experience and effectiveness demonstrated that:

- the quality of a teacher's practices most steeply increases in their initial years in the classroom; and
- the effectiveness of their teaching practices continues to improve significantly until their seventh year of service.

5.7 The research also found that teachers with more than seven years of classroom experience had a positive effect on student outcomes in 95 percent of the studies analysed.³¹

5.8 The Education Directorate's own research shows that increasing the proportion of teachers with less than three years' experience across the ACT public school system can have a negative effect on the standardised test scores of students.

³⁰ Sinclair, C., McInerney, D. M., & Liem, G. A. (2008). Attracting, training, and retaining high quality teachers : the effect of initial teacher education in enhancing student teacher motivation, achievement, and retention. In *Teaching and Learning : International Best Practice*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

³¹ Kini, T. & Podolsky, A. (2016). Does Teaching Experience Increase Teacher Effectiveness? A Review of Research. [online] Available at: https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Teaching_Experience_Report_June_2016.pdf Accessed 19 January 2021.

Roles and responsibilities for managing the teaching workforce

- 5.9 Roles and responsibilities for the management of the teaching workforce are documented in the *People, Practice and Performance* framework. The framework acknowledges that school leaders are responsible for ‘effectively [managing] the human and financial resources of the school’. The framework positions principals as having an obligation to assemble an expert teaching team that develops a culture of continuous professional improvement.
- 5.10 The *People, Practice and Performance* framework does not explicitly assign a role to the Education Support Office for managing and monitoring the teacher workforce at a system level. However, the framework notes that the Education Support Office is responsible for, amongst other things, ‘[setting] system strategies for improvement’, ‘[providing] support and accountability mechanisms to achieve system goals’ and ‘[building] skills and leadership capacity at all system levels’.
- 5.11 Although the People and Performance Branch in the Education Support Office facilitates teacher deployment through annual recruitment and teacher transfers (refer to paragraphs 5.25 to 5.28), the *People, Practice and Performance* framework does not assign any role or responsibility to the branch or the Education Support Office more generally for the oversight of the ACT public schools’ teaching workforce and its distribution.
- 5.12 Placing the primary responsibility for the management of the school teaching workforce on principals through the *People, Practice and Performance* framework without a balancing responsibility in the Education Support Office to oversight the distribution of teachers and help relieve pressures for individual schools carries risks. It creates a tension between:
- an individual principal’s responsibility to manage their workforce in a manner that results in the best composition of classroom teachers for their school community; and
 - the needs of the ACT public school system as a whole in ensuring all schools have an equitable opportunity to access highly effective teachers.

ACT public school teaching workforce distribution

- 5.13 At the commencement of Term 2 2020, the ACT public school classroom teaching workforce consisted of a total of 3,382 teachers in 88 schools. The breakdown of this workforce against the classroom teacher salary structure in the *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022* is shown in Table 5-2.

Table 5-2 Composition of ACT public school classroom teaching workforce by experience level

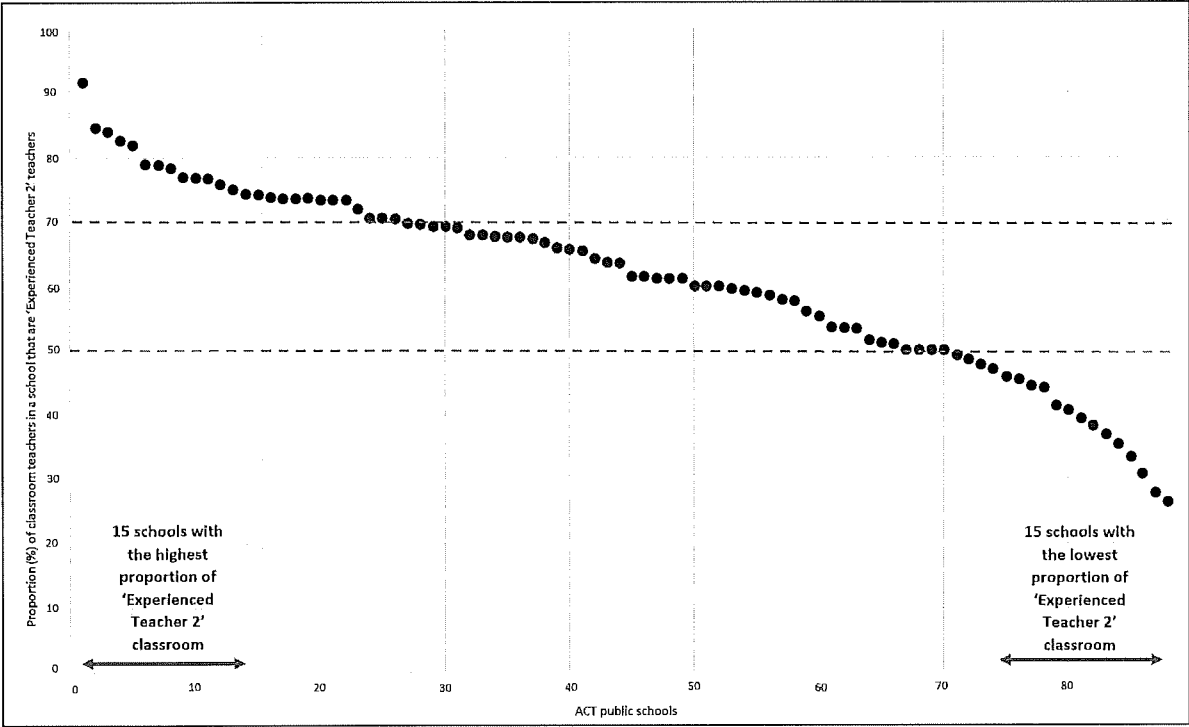
Level	Number	% of total classroom teaching workforce
New Educators (0-3 years’ experience)	580	17
Experienced Teachers 1 (4-7 years’ experience)	739	22
Experienced Teachers 2 (8+ years’ experience)	2,063	61

Level	Number	% of total classroom teaching workforce
Total	3,382	100

Source: Education Directorate workforce data (as at Term 2, 2020)

- 5.14 Table 5-2 shows that of the total classroom teacher cohort, 61 per cent have reached the highest band of Experienced Teacher 2, which the research suggests is the point at which they are expected to have an ongoing positive impact on student outcomes through high quality teaching.
- 5.15 The Education Directorate recognises the importance of Experienced Teacher 2 teachers in modelling teaching quality by assigning them with professional responsibilities to develop New Educators. Under the Education Directorate's *Expectations of Performance and Professional Responsibilities* policy, the Experienced Teacher 2 cohort is identified as having a responsibility for coaching and mentoring New Educators. This includes co-planning curriculum and content, observing and team teaching with the New Educator, as well as engaging them in professional dialogue and feedback and providing them with opportunities to shadow their experienced colleague in observing quality teaching practices. Accessing these supports is an industrial right of the New Educator under clause N5 of the *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022*, which states:
- The Directorate and the Australian Education Union are committed to the development of new educators through the delivery of effective induction programs to ensure that they are effectively supported, prepared and informed of their responsibilities and entitlements as they begin in their roles, and provision of high-quality coaching and mentoring programs designed to meet their individual professional development.
- 5.16 The *Expectations of Performance and Professional Responsibilities* policy document also explicitly identifies the responsibilities of staff at the Experienced Teacher 2 level for contributing to student learning outcomes by contributing to the development of school curriculum, teaching and assessment practices within their school or more broadly across their school network.
- 5.17 As 61 per cent of classroom teachers are in the Experienced Teacher 2 band, and if this proportion remains steady over time, then ACT public school students can be expected to have a 22.7 percent chance of accessing a succession of highly-experienced teachers over three years across the system. However, Education Directorate workforce data shows there is variability between the deployment of Experienced Teacher 2 classroom teachers at individual schools. This is because some schools have a higher proportion of less experienced classroom teachers, while others have a more experienced teaching cohort.
- 5.18 Figure 5-1 shows the proportion of Experienced Teacher 2 teachers across the 88 ACT public schools in 2020.

Figure 5-1 Proportion of ‘Experienced Teacher 2’ classroom teachers in ACT public schools (2020)



Source: ACT Audit Office based on Education Directorate workforce data

5.19 Despite Experienced Teacher 2 teachers comprising 61 percent of the classroom teaching workforce there is variability in their allocation across schools. While some level of variation from the 61 percent system-wide proportion can be expected, there are a significant number of schools that have a materially different level of experience in their classroom teaching workforce. Figure 5-1 shows:

- 26 ACT public schools have a workforce made up of more than 70 percent of Experienced Teacher 2 classroom teachers; and
- 22 schools have a workforce made up of less than 50 percent of ‘Experienced Teacher 2’ classroom teachers.

5.20 The proportion of Experienced Teacher 2 classroom teachers in a school may have a direct impact on student educational outcomes and the ability of New Educators to access their industrial rights. When a school’s workforce is made up of 50 percent or less Experienced Teacher 2 classroom teachers, the additional duties designed to contribute towards improved teaching quality assigned to these teachers (refer to paragraph 5.15 and 5.16) are at risk of not being performed or being performed to a subpar standard. For example, in a school with less Experienced Teacher 2 classroom teachers it is more likely that each experienced teacher will be required to take on more than one New Educator to mentor (refer to paragraph 5.15). In turn, this increased workload reduces the time the Experienced Teacher 2 classroom teacher has available to mentor each New Educator to foster quality teaching practices. Equally, with fewer Experienced Teacher 2 classroom teachers to

contribute to the development of school curriculum, quality teaching and assessment practices there is a risk to the improvement of student outcomes that could be achieved with equal workforce distribution.

- 5.21 The proportion of experienced teachers at a school can also have a persisting impact on student outcomes, as the effects of high-quality teaching are cumulative. If the classroom teaching workforce remains stable over three years, students at the ACT public school with the lowest proportion of experienced teachers currently have a 1.8 percent chance of being taught by a series of Experienced Teacher 2 teachers over this time. This compares with the students at the school with the highest proportion of experienced teachers, which have a 77.1 percent chance of this occurring.
- 5.22 The unequal distribution of teachers at the Experienced Teacher 2 level could be justified on the basis of equity, which is an aim of the *Future of Education*. That is, schools that have students with a lower level of socioeconomic advantage could be allocated a higher proportion of highly experienced teachers to potentially correct for other factors which can negatively impact on student outcomes. However, analysis of the distribution of Experienced Teacher 2 staff against schools' Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA)³² rating shows that there is no relationship between these two factors across the spectrum of ACT public schools. In this respect there were examples of schools with comparatively high ICSEA values that had lower proportions of Experienced Teacher 2 staff. Similarly, there were examples of schools with comparatively low ICSEA values that had high proportions of Experienced Teacher 2 staff. It was noted, however, that eight of the schools with the lowest ICSEA ratings in the ACT also were among the schools with the lowest proportion of Experienced Teacher 2 staff.
- 5.23 Research shows that there is a relationship between years of teaching experience and the quality of practice demonstrated by an individual teacher: the quality of a teacher's practices most steeply increases in their initial years in the classroom; and the effectiveness of their teaching practices continues to improve significantly until their seventh year of service. Sixty one percent of ACT teachers are classified as Experienced Teacher 2 teachers, with at least eight years' experience, which the research suggests is the point at which they are expected to have an ongoing positive impact on student outcomes through high quality teaching. Twenty two percent are classified as Experienced Teacher 1 (four to seven years' experience) and 17 percent are identified as New Teachers (less than three years' experience). There is variability between the deployment of Experienced Teacher 2 classroom teachers across ACT public schools, for example 26 schools have a workforce made up of more than 70 percent of Experienced Teacher 2 staff and 22 schools have a workforce of less than 50 percent of Experienced Teacher 2 staff. The school with the lowest proportion of Experienced Teacher 2 staff has only 26 percent at this level.

³² The *Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage* provides an indication of the socio-educational backgrounds of students.

- 5.24 The proportion of Experienced Teacher 2 classroom teachers in a school may have a direct impact on student educational outcomes and the ability of New Educators to access their industrial rights. When a school's workforce is made up of 50 percent or less Experienced Teacher 2 classroom teachers, the additional duties designed to contribute towards improved teaching quality assigned to these teachers are at risk of not being performed or being performed to a subpar standard. The proportion of experienced teachers at a school can also have a persisting impact on student outcomes, as the effects of high-quality teaching are cumulative. If the classroom teaching workforce remains stable over three years, students at the ACT public school with the lowest proportion of experienced teachers currently have a 1.8 percent chance of being taught by a series of Experienced Teacher 2 teachers over this time. This compares with the students at the school with the highest proportion of experienced teachers, which have a 77.1 percent chance of this occurring.

Teacher deployment through the annual transfer round

Design of the annual teacher transfer round

- 5.25 Under the *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022*, teachers permanently employed by the Education Directorate are placed at a particular school for an initial five-year term. At the end of this period, teachers are expected to apply for transfer to another ACT public school through an annual process known as the 'transfer round'. Alternatively, due to compassionate or professional circumstances, teachers may elect to be considered in the transfer round before their placement period expires or seek an extension to the term of their placement by approval of their school principal.
- 5.26 Teachers are expected to have an annual career development discussion with their school principal. For teachers in their final year of placement, this should include consideration of whether the teacher's placement will be extended for up to a further five years or whether they will be placed in the annual transfer round. A list of expected vacant teaching positions is compiled based on this process and the transfer round is commenced in Term 3 of each school year. Processes for the allocation of teachers to ACT public schools are fully documented in the *Procedures for Filling Classroom Teacher Vacancies*. The annual transfer round is managed by the People and Performance Branch.
- 5.27 Permanent teachers are advised of expected vacancies and are asked to express their ranked preferences for a minimum of five schools that they are interested to teach in. They must also submit a curriculum vitae and a two-page statement of claims based on the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. Teachers' preferences are collated by the People and Performance Branch and distributed to school principals, who then review the applicants that have expressed a preference for teaching at their school. School principals subsequently make ranked preferences for the teachers they wish to offer a five-year placement.
- 5.28 A panel of principals is then convened to allocate teacher placements based upon the preferences information. Priority schools are identified where there is a risk of staff shortages for the following school year, which the panel checks to manage any identified

schools with a lack of teachers. Upon completion, the People and Performance Branch advises schools and teachers of their teaching placements for the following school year.

Annual teacher transfer round and risks to teaching quality

- 5.29 The processes associated with the annual transfer round are designed to support teaching quality by providing teachers with a diversity of teaching opportunities and give opportunities for schools and students to access experienced teachers. Despite this, there are confounding factors that interfere with the effective operation of the transfer round and its effect on teaching quality across the school system.
- 5.30 First, an established practice of the transfer round is that teachers will not be offered a placement that they have not expressed a preference for. If a teacher cannot be placed at one of their preference schools, they have typically been allocated an extension to their current placement. This can result in a narrower pool of experienced teachers that are available through the process, despite there being schools that could benefit from their experience.
- 5.31 Second, school principals also have the authority to hold on to their experienced teachers and exclude them from the transfer round by simply extending a teacher's placement for up to five years. Multiple examples of placement extensions were observed in the six schools examined in this audit, including one Experienced Teacher 2 that had been granted an extension after being placed in a school for 20 years. Extensions to teaching placements increases the risk of highly experienced teachers being clustered in a smaller number of schools, thereby reducing the impact they could otherwise have if deployed where the ACT public school system as a whole may need them for the purposes of equity and lifting student outcomes. It may also interfere with New Educators' rights to access experienced mentors to improve their teaching quality. Some schools may also have to rely more heavily on recruiting New Educators, which could have adverse impacts on student outcomes.
- 5.32 The most recent teacher deployment data identified that this clustering issue is evident in the secondary sector. In Term Two 2020:
- ACT public high schools had a workforce comprising 60.8 percent of Experienced Teacher 2 staff; and
 - ACT public colleges had a workforce comprising 76.1 percent of Experienced Teacher 2 staff.
- 5.33 Data to confirm whether clustering of experienced staff was affecting the primary school years was not readily available due to the staffing profile of early childhood and P-10 schools.
- 5.34 This workforce distribution process, and the lack of central oversight by the Education Support Office, does not help all principals meet their obligations under the *People, Practice and Performance* framework to manage their school workforce in a way that maximises student educational outcomes. This impact occurs in two ways. Firstly, as some principals are unable to access sufficient highly experienced teachers, they cannot provide their

students with the associated teaching quality benefits. Secondly, where highly experienced teachers are deployed later in a student's education, such as at college, there are fewer early intervention opportunities, and the benefits of high-quality teaching cannot be used to reduce the chance of lower-achieving pupils falling further behind their peers.³³

- 5.35 The transfer round has been largely performed by manual processes and there has been limited central oversight of when teachers are due for transfer. Until a recent update in December 2020 of teacher placement end date records by the People and Performance Branch, the Education Directorate did not have complete and accessible data on when teachers were due to complete their five-year school placements. As part of this update, the People and Performance Branch identified that placement end dates were not centrally recorded for 621 teachers and school leaders (approximately 18.4 percent of the total number of 3,382 teachers as at February 2020). These have since been updated, but there remains a need for the People and Performance Branch to ensure this data is kept up-to-date to support the equitable distribution of experienced teachers in ACT public schools.
- 5.36 During the teacher transfer round in 2020, the People and Performance Branch requested more in-depth workforce data from school principals to allow better oversight of the school teaching workforce and facilitate teacher placements. This information is intended to be used to anticipate positions which are expected to become vacant within the next 12 months, as well as prepare for teachers returning from long term leave who require placement.
- 5.37 The process of matching teachers to placements in the annual teacher transfer round is still done by largely manual means and there is a reliance on paper files and manual matching processes to fill school teaching positions.
- 5.38 Under the *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022*, teachers permanently employed by the Education Directorate are placed at a particular school for an initial five-year term. At the end of this period, teachers are expected to apply for transfer to another ACT public school through an annual process known as the 'transfer round'. The annual teacher transfer round is an important process for developing and deploying highly experienced teachers across the ACT public school system. However, there are confounding factors that interfere with the effective operation of the transfer round and its effect on teaching quality across the school system. This includes the opportunity for school principals to hold on to their experienced teachers and exclude them from the transfer round by simply extending a teacher's placement for up to five years. There has also been limited central oversight of when teachers are due for transfer. Until a recent update in December 2020 of teacher placement end date records by the People and Performance Branch the Education Directorate did not have complete and accessible data on when teachers were due to complete their five-year school placements. Placement end dates were not centrally recorded for 621 teachers and school leaders (approximately 18.4

³³ UNESCO. (2021). *Teacher Recruitment and Deployment*. [online] Available at: <https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/issue-briefs/improve-learning/teachers-and-pedagogy/teacher-recruitment-and-deployment> Accessed 19 February 2021.

percent of the total number of 3,382 teachers as at February 2020). Extensions to teaching placements increases the risk of highly experienced teachers being clustered in a smaller number of schools, thereby reducing the impact they could otherwise have if deployed where the ACT public school system as a whole may need them for the purposes of equity and lifting student outcomes and may also interfere with New Educators' rights to access experienced mentors to improve their teaching quality.

RECOMMENDATION 12 CLASSROOM TEACHING WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

The Education Directorate should review and revise the mechanisms that support the distribution and monitoring of the teaching workforce across ACT public schools by:

- a) monitoring the distribution of experienced teachers across ACT public schools to ensure it aligns with Education Directorate priorities under the *Future of Education*; and
- b) developing processes to monitor and review principal decisions to extend teacher placements to ensure schools have appropriate and equitable access to experienced teachers.

Teacher recruitment and separations

5.39 The ability of the Education Directorate to maintain teaching quality across ACT public schools relies on accessing high quality candidates to fill vacant teaching positions as they arise. Where there are schools that have been unable to address their expected vacancies through the annual transfer round, there are number of processes used to fill vacant positions on an ongoing or non-ongoing basis. This includes:

- accessing an established pool of suitable candidates from directorate-led recruitment activities. This can include recent graduates and experienced teachers from the independent or Catholic education systems within the ACT, or from interstate school systems;
- offering a position to a pre-service teacher in the final year of their university education; or
- directly advertising the position in an open recruitment round.

5.40 Education Directorate data shows that there has been 2.5 percent annual growth in the number of students attending ACT public schools as well as a four percent teaching workforce turnover rate. This means approximately 264 additional teachers³⁴ are needed to fill vacancies in ACT public school classrooms each year. The *Education Directorate Workforce Strategy 2021* identifies national teacher shortages as a key risk to the achievement of the Directorate's strategic plan. Broad priority actions to address the risks of teacher shortages in the *Education Directorate Workforce Strategy 2021* include:

³⁴ As at term 2, 2020, there were a total of 4,074 classroom teachers and school leaders across 88 ACT public schools.

5: Teaching Workforce Management

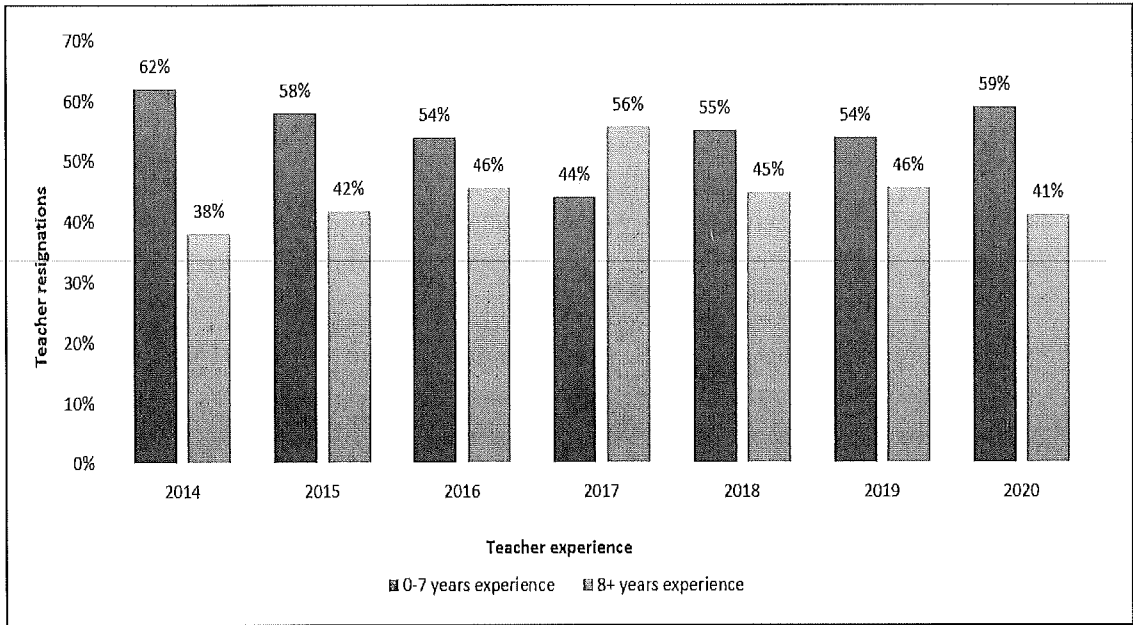
- continuing a partnership with the University of Canberra through the Affiliated Schools Program (see paragraph 4.18) to develop a pipeline of graduate teachers; and
- the recruitment and retention of classroom teachers with qualifications and specialisations that are identified as priority areas of need for the ACT community.

5.41 Managing the risk of a lack of teachers can also be addressed through staff retention initiatives more broadly. Analysis of Education Directorate workforce data shows that of the 2,403 teacher separations from ACT public schools between 2014 and 2020:

- 1,184 teachers resigned; and
- 580 teachers retired.

5.42 Resignation accounted for 67.1 percent of teacher separations between 2014 and 2020. Analysis of Education Directorate workforce data shows that most teachers that resign do so in the first seven years of service, as shown in Figure 5-2.

Figure 5-2 Teacher resignations by years of service (2014 to 2020)



Source: Audit Office, based on Education Directorate data

5.43 While the Education Directorate may be able to replace some of these teachers with experienced teachers from other systems and jurisdictions, the remainder are likely to be New Educators who can take up to eight years to become highly effective teachers.

5.44 The Education Directorate does not undertake surveys of teachers who leave ACT public schools. As a result, the Education Directorate does not have an understanding of the reasons why teachers leave or where they intend to go afterwards. This means that the Education Directorate is not able to use data and insights from staff to inform its practices and potentially reduce teaching staff turnover.

- 5.45 To maintain teaching quality in ACT public schools, the Education Directorate must recruit sufficient teachers to account for growth in student numbers and staff turnover. Presently, this rate is approximately 6.5 percent. Resignations have accounted for 67 percent of teacher separations between 2014 and 2020, and the majority of these teachers have left in the first seven years of service, which is before research suggests they become highly effective teachers. The Education Directorate has recently established a *2021-2023 Workforce Strategy* which outlines high level goals to manage the risk of being unable to secure sufficient high-quality teachers, along with potential programs and projects identified to address this risk over the next three years. While retention measures are identified in this strategy, the Education Directorate does not monitor the reasons teachers resign from ACT public schools through exit surveys to determine if such activities are appropriately targeted.

RECOMMENDATION 13 TEACHER WORKFORCE SEPARATION

The Education Directorate should develop and analyse data associated with teaching workforce separations by implementing exit surveys and conducting analysis on the reasons teachers resign from ACT public schools.

School level management of the teaching workforce

Responsibilities for Teacher and School Leader Performance Development

- 5.46 The performance of individual teachers and their teaching quality is managed by school leaders and principals at the school level. Teacher performance development and evaluation, as mandated by the *2018-2022 Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement*, places this responsibility predominantly on school principals.
- 5.47 Nevertheless, central oversight of this and other workforce practices is monitored for compliance by the Education Directorate through an annual *Enterprise Agreement Implementation Plan*. This document comprises a checklist to be completed by the school principal and endorsed by a sub-branch president of the Australian Education Union to provide assurance with respect to compliance with employment conditions outlined in the Enterprise Agreement.
- 5.48 The Education Directorate's *People, Practice and Performance* framework attributes responsibility for ongoing teacher development to every level of the organisation. It details the responsibilities for teacher performance development at the school level and attributes roles to classroom teachers and school leaders, and outlines the Education Support Office's responsibility. Echoing the responsibilities outlined in the Enterprise Agreement, the framework emphasises the need for high-calibre school-based instructional leadership teams to develop teaching practices.

Performance development plans

- 5.49 Teacher and school leader performance and development plans are intended to be the process by which principals and teachers identify, plan, action and evaluate targeted professional learning and development to improve teaching quality.
- 5.50 The process to design, agree and review these documents each year is supported by the Education Directorate's *Performance and Development Guidelines*. The guidelines, and an accompanying template, are provided to schools by the People and Performance Branch to guide teachers and school leaders through formal discussions sequenced over the course of the school year. There are three stages to this process: Performance Planning, Mid-Cycle Review and End Cycle Review. The timing of these stages is aligned with individual school improvement and annual Action Plan activities. The design of these documents also aligns with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* and the *ACT Public Service Performance Framework*.
- 5.51 To set the performance expectations of school leaders, the Education Directorate has established an *ACT School Leadership Capability Framework* that aligns with the competencies associated with the five professional practice domains of the *Australian Professional Standards for Principals*. The framework specifies the competencies expected of:
- principals (School Leader A);
 - deputy principals (School Leader B); and
 - school executives (School Leader C).
- 5.52 The Education Directorate has not designed a similar capability framework for classroom teachers. The *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022* identifies in broad terms the expected duties of classroom teachers and the *Expectations of Performance and Professional Responsibilities* document further identifies the additional expectations determined by the classroom teacher bands. However, this document does not describe the capabilities needed to improve teaching quality across ACT public schools, and improve student educational outcomes as desired by Education Directorate's strategic goals identified in the *Strategic Plan 2018-2021* and the *Future of Education* strategy.

Professional development plans in schools

- 5.53 Teachers' and school leaders' professional development plans were reviewed in the six schools considered as part of the audit. Fifty-four plans were reviewed for the period 2016 to 2020.
- 5.54 Of the 54 performance development plans considered for the purpose of the audit, 79 per cent were incomplete in terms of content, supervisor endorsement or evidence of feedback to teaching staff. Nevertheless, the substance of the plans was reviewed to identify how the schools more generally, and teaching staff more specifically, approached the development and implementation of the plans.

- 5.55 A consistent approach to the performance development process was observed in the six schools considered as part of the audit. Commonly, a document was created by school leaders for all teaching staff in the school, which included two goals and accompanying planned performance actions. These were predetermined and derived directly from the school's strategic planning documentation.
- 5.56 With respect to the third and final goal in the performance and development plans, it was observed as common practice within the six schools for individual teachers or school leaders to self-identify this goal. The individual goals in the performance and development plans considered as part of the audit primarily focused on developing leadership and student wellbeing supports, but not on improving teaching quality.
- 5.57 While it is accepted best practice that teachers and school leaders link their performance and development plan goals with school improvement priorities, the generic approach observed in the six schools resulted in a lack of evidence of teachers reflecting on how they individually needed to improve their teaching practice in support of school improvement priorities. Similarly, school leaders and teachers with near identical performance and development plans to that of their school colleagues did not specifically identify development opportunities that catered to their individual need, nor was there evidence of tailored feedback in the performance development plans on how individuals contributed to achieving their goals or the identification actions to further staff development to be implemented in future performance cycles.
- 5.58 Focus groups within the six schools considered as part of the audit indicated that the professional development plans were not used to support teaching quality within the workforce. Teachers and school leaders alike viewed the performance and development process as a mandatory compliance exercise.
- 5.59 Teachers interviewed in focus groups advised that they received the most support from classroom observations, mentoring, coaching and teacher-identified professional learning. However, the professional development plans considered as part of the audit typically did not identify or recognise these activities. Rather, the plans identified the increased use of particular software tools to communicate with families, supervision of university students undertaking practicum placements and collection of student wellbeing data to be used to inform school pastoral care programs.
- 5.60 Feedback to teachers on the progress made against the goals was not recorded in these documents or was not sufficiently specific to action improvements in practice.
- 5.61 The performance and development process has no connection with annual registration requirements legislated under the *ACT Teacher Quality Institute Act 2010*.³⁵ This requires teachers and school leaders to register as professionally trained teachers and complete and reflect on 20 hours of professional learning annually. Teachers and school leaders regularly

³⁵ ACT Parliamentary Council. (2010). ACT Teacher Quality Institute Act 2010. [online] Available at: www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/2010-55/current/pdf/2010-55.pdf Accessed 02 February 2021.

expressed their frustration with the duplication of workload required to complete the administration for both processes, rather than a single integrated process to meet both purposes.

Use of systems to support performance management

- 5.62 The classroom teacher and school leader workforce comprises of over 4,000 staff in 89 schools across the ACT. Despite this size, processes to manage the performance and development of staff through performance development plans rely on Microsoft Office documents stored on individual school or teaching staff's hard drives or in paper copies within school-based employment files.
- 5.63 Central oversight of the performance development plan process is limited to principals declaring that *'all teachers will have a performance development plan focusing on individual professional and capability development'* on an annual School Enterprise Agreement Implementation plan checklist. Monitoring of the performance development plan process in ACT public schools, review and collation of identified training needs or oversight of the completion of the annual cycle is not monitored by the Education Support Office.
- 5.64 Teaching workforce data cannot be easily used to monitor teaching quality at the system level. It is not possible to determine if performance processes are completed for all staff, and whether timely and complete feedback as part of these processes is given. It is also not possible to use this data to obtain insights into the professional learning activities and needs of the teaching workforce, or use this data to evidence the impact of school improvement activities or supports to improve teaching quality.
- 5.65 Teacher and school leader performance and development plans are intended to be the process by which principals and teachers identify, plan, action and evaluate targeted professional learning and development to improve teaching quality. To set the performance expectations of school leaders, the Education Directorate has established an *ACT School Leadership Capability Framework* that specifies the competencies expected of: principals (School Leader A); deputy principals (School Leader B); and school executives (School Leader C). The Education Directorate has not designed a similar capability framework for classroom teachers.
- 5.66 A consistent approach to the performance development process was observed in the six schools considered as part of the audit. However, of the 54 performance development plans considered for the purpose of the audit, 79 per cent were incomplete in terms of content, supervisor endorsement or evidence of feedback to teaching staff. Teaching workforce data cannot be easily used to monitor whether performance and development plans are completed, or timely and complete feedback is given. While it is accepted best practice that teachers and school leaders link their performance and development plan goals with school improvement priorities, the generic approach observed in the six schools resulted in a lack of evidence of teachers reflecting on how they individually needed to improve their teaching practice in support of school improvement priorities. Focus groups within the six schools considered as part of the audit indicated that the professional development plans

were not used to support teaching quality within the workforce. Teachers and school leaders alike viewed the performance and development process as a mandatory compliance exercise.

Teacher appraisals

- 5.67 Student outcomes significantly depend on teachers' professional knowledge, practices and engagement.³⁶ In order to develop quality teaching practices, it is important to regularly evaluate teacher classroom practices to identify how they impact on student learning. In 2012, the Australian Productivity Commission published an analysis of teacher performance in Australian schools that found teachers were not receiving the feedback and support they needed in developing their practice. The Productivity Commission recommended that schools be required to maintain an effective appraisal system and be given the necessary resources, training and guidance to do so.³⁷
- 5.68 The Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership recommends the use of classroom observations to provide teachers with clear feedback and direction in the form of evidence-based strategies for developing the quality of their teaching practice. The Institute provides resources to support schools to implement effective classroom observations, including a 'Classroom Practice Continuum' document that can be used during classroom observations to assess a teacher's practice against the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*.³⁸
- 5.69 The ACT Education Directorate does not require regular performance observations of teaching practice (known more commonly as 'classroom observations'). The Education Support Office advised that it is a widely understood and suggested practice that each school should pursue, but it is not a mandatory requirement. In the focus group discussions conducted for the audit, classroom teachers in all schools advised that engaging in classroom observations significantly assisted them to improve the quality of their teaching practices. However, schools did not place the same priority on this practice. Documentation provided by schools and information received from school leaders and teachers participating in focus groups showed that classroom observations were conducted irregularly and inconsistently across ACT public schools.
- 5.70 A review of teacher appraisals in the six schools considered as part of the audit showed that evaluation of practices through observation was widely inconsistent. Of the six schools considered as part of the audit, two schools conducted regular teaching appraisals. This process was implemented by the school's leadership who recognised the value of this process as evidenced in principal and school leader focus groups. Policies, procedures and

³⁶ Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). (2011). *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. AITSL, Melbourne.

³⁷ Productivity Commission (2012), *Schools Workforce*, Research Report, Canberra.

³⁸ Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). (2014). *Classroom Practice Continuum*. [online] available at: https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/classroom_practice_continuum.pdf?sfvrsn=21a0ec3c_0 Accessed 30 March 2021

documents to support the activity were designed and used within the school by these leaders. These resources varied in quality from an appropriate level of documentation to encourage discussion and reflection to those which were largely informal and unrecorded.

- 5.71 Challenges for ACT public schools in conducting effective teacher appraisals include staff shortages and lack of availability due to face-to-face classroom teaching requirements. Teacher appraisals require a time commitment from both the teacher and the observer to complete the observation, provide feedback and participate in any further discussions or observations. Additionally, accessing teachers who could offer expertise in particular speciality areas of teaching (e.g. language or disability inclusion) was important for teachers in getting value from classroom observations, potentially adding additional demand for observations from a smaller group of teachers with specific expertise. Encouraging and modelling teacher appraisals through school leaders aligns with the mentoring and leadership activities of the Empowered Learning Professionals Leadership Plan discussed in Chapter 3 (refer to paragraph 3.92).
- 5.72 The Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership recommends the use of classroom observations to provide teachers with clear feedback and direction in the form of evidence-based strategies for developing the quality of their teaching practice. Despite this, the Education Directorate does not maintain a policy or guidelines for regular teacher appraisals or classroom observations for permanent teaching staff in ACT public schools. Rather, they are a widely understood and suggested practice that each school should pursue, but it is not mandated. Only two of six schools conducted regular effective teaching appraisals and the leaders of these schools actively supported and encouraged this practice. In the absence of central tools and supports for teaching appraisals, these school leaders developed their own resources to support this activity. Opportunities to encourage and model classroom observations could have a meaningful impact on systemic teaching quality in ACT public schools.

Performance management

- 5.73 The *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022* sought to increase clarity around managing underperformance in ACT public schools by removing the previous 'Pathways to Improvement Process' and replacing it with a formalised 'Underperformance Process'.
- 5.74 Schools had provided feedback to the People and Performance Branch prior to 2018 that the 'Pathways to Improvement Process' was not explicit or helpful in dealing with teaching staff's underperformance and closely resembled the annual teacher performance and development cycle. Therefore, the aim of the policy change as part of the latest Enterprise Agreement was to clearly distinguish between underperformance and professional development processes.
- 5.75 The People and Performance Branch has established 'Business Partners' to be available at the request of a school principal to support formal underperformance proceedings. In this model, the People and Performance Branch, in cooperation with the school principal,

develop the communications to be delivered to an underperforming staff member while following an established four-step performance management action plan outlined in the *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022*. The action plan must:

- identify expected standards of work;
- progress learning and development strategies;
- specify the period in which the staff member is under review; and
- specify the assessment criteria against which they will be measured.

5.76 The action plan is also required to identify the potential consequences that may be undertaken if the teacher does not meet the expected standard.

5.77 The *Teacher and School Leader Performance and Development Guidelines* states that when there are concerns a teacher is not meeting performance expectations, and there is sufficient evidence supporting concerns of underperformance, school leadership can start underperformance processes detailed in section H4.7 of the *Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022*.

5.78 Practical guidance for school leaders and teaching staff on ways to address performance issues is lacking within Education Directorate frameworks and policies, with procedural guidance limited to the *Underperformance Process* outlined in the Enterprise Agreement. Practical guidance and documentation to guide school leaders' engagement with underperforming teachers prior to formal proceedings is also missing. Guidance and documentation that is missing includes:

- the need to raise concerns regarding underperformance with a teacher early;
- the establishment of clear improvement expectations with predetermined timeframes;
- strategies to assist the teacher in achieving the identified expectation such as professional learning; and
- the supports available to both the teacher and school leader undertaking informal underperformance procedures.

5.79 Despite the redesign of performance management protocols, the number of teachers formally identified as underperforming in ACT public schools is very low. Only one teacher was performance managed through these processes in 2019-20. The People and Performance branch of the Education Directorate suggested this number indicates there may be an issue with identifying and reporting teacher underperformance in ACT public schools.

5.80 Contributions received by five principals and three teams of school leaders who participated in the audit also suggest a lack of identifying and reporting underperforming teachers with

ACT public schools. A principal speaking to teacher underperformance in ACT public schools stated:

By far, underperformance is managed in an informal and in house manner. By pursuing formal underperformance, this sometimes [leads to principals being] pursued for harassment or bullying....[I have] tried to use the formal underperformance process and it's been a struggle.

- 5.81 In the absence of reliable and accurate identification of teacher underperformance at the school level, the Education Directorate is not able to demonstrate what level of underperformance may exist due to issues of poor teaching quality in ACT public schools, and the supports required to address them.
- 5.82 In the six schools considered as part of the audit, two principals indicated they were not confident in formalising underperformance processes and a further two principals indicated that although they were willing to formalise the process if required, they found the processes difficult, cumbersome and time consuming. Five principals reflected that they tended to manage performance concerns informally within the school setting and not escalate beyond this stage due to the complexity and time-consuming nature of formal proceedings. These principals also reflected this was perceived as a method of avoiding allegations of bullying or harassment from the underperforming employee.
- 5.83 In contrast, deputy principals and school executives (School Leader C staff) who are responsible for the daily management of teachers advised that they felt that escalating underperformance concerns beyond school-based management to the People and Performance Branch for matters of teaching quality was more effort than it was worth. A school leader consulted as part of the audit stated
- We do anything to do to skirt around the edges. We will wait five years and move them on [in the transfer round]. This happens. There are [underperforming] people in the system we all know about because they are constantly moved on.
- 5.84 School leadership staff also identified that formalising performance management proceedings not only prevented the transfer of the underperforming staff member to another school but made their everyday working environment untenable. A principal summarised a widely agreed upon sentiment in the audit focus groups stating:
- There are a number of teachers and school leaders who are not up to the job [of managing underperformance] and this has a huge impact on education of young people ... a teacher can only get sacked for reportable conduct rather than poor performance. There has to be a cut-off point. We need to be able to tell people early in their career they're not suitable for teaching and not wait until they approach retirement.
- 5.85 Effective performance management of teaching staff is important to maintain the quality of teaching practices in ACT public schools. The Education Directorate has established policies, protocols and mechanisms to support performance management. This includes the human resources business partners who are available to school leaders to help manage underperformance in their setting. However, only one teacher was reported as underperforming in 2019-20. This is low for a workforce of over 4,000 teachers and school leaders. This is supported by discussions with Education Support Office executives and school leaders who suggest the number of teachers and school leaders who are not

demonstrating quality teaching is underreported. The Education Directorate has no informed understanding as to whether performance management of ACT public school teachers is underreported, or the supports required to help school leaders to improve teaching quality through these processes.

RECOMMENDATION 14 PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

The Education Directorate should:

- a) develop policies and guidelines and support for school leaders that enable regular, development-focussed teacher appraisals aligned with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. These should be modelled and encouraged through the Empowered Learning Professionals Leadership Plan and aligned with the professional learning requirements of the *ACT Teacher Quality Institute Act 2010* to gain additional benefit from these activities;
- b) systematise the performance development process to improve efficiency and make teacher professional development data available for central oversight and management to improve teaching quality; and
- c) develop supports for school leaders to manage underperformance for poor teaching practices. These supports should emphasise the need to quickly address performance issues, identify ways to successfully improve performance, and connect underperforming teachers with practical supports to improve their practice.

Audit reports

Reports Published in 2020-21

Report No. 05 – 2021	Management of Closed-Circuit Television Systems
Report No. 04 – 2021	ACT Government's vehicle emissions reduction activities
Report No. 03 – 2021	Court Transport Unit vehicle – Romeo 5
Report No. 02 – 2021	Total Facilities Management Contract Implementation
Report No. 01 – 2021	Land Management Agreements
Report No. 10 – 2020	2019-20 Financial Audit – Financial Results and Audit Findings
Report No. 09 – 2020	2019-20 Financial Audits Overview
Report No. 08 – 2020	Annual Report 2019-20
Report No. 07 – 2020	Management of care of people living with serious and continuing illness

Reports Published in 2019-20

Report No. 06 – 2020	Transfer of workers' compensation arrangements from Comcare
Report No. 05 – 2020	Management of household waste services
Report No. 04 – 2020	Residential Land Supply and Release
Report No. 03 – 2020	Data Security
Report No. 02 – 2020	2018-19- Financial Audits – Computer Information Systems
Report No. 01 – 2020	Shared Services Delivery of HR and Finance Services
Report No. 11 – 2019	Maintenance of ACT Government School Infrastructure
Report No. 10 – 2019	2018-19 Financial Audits – Financial Results and Audit Findings
Report No. 09 – 2019	2018-19 Financial Audits – Overview
Report No. 08 – 2019	Annual Report 2018-19

Reports Published in 2018-19

Report No. 07 – 2019	Referral Processes for the Support of Vulnerable Children
Report No. 06 – 2019	ICT Strategic Planning
Report No. 05 – 2019	Management of the System-Wide Data Review implementation program
Report No. 04 – 2019	2017-18 Financial Audits Computer Information Systems
Report No. 03 – 2019	Access Canberra Business Planning and Monitoring
Report No. 02 – 2019	Recognition and implementation of obligations under the <i>Human Rights Act 2004</i>
Report No. 01 – 2019	Total Facilities Management Procurement
Report No. 12 – 2018	2017-18 Financial Audits – Financial Results and Audit Findings
Report No. 11 – 2018	2017-18 Financial Audits – Overview
Report No. 10 – 2018	Annual Report 2017-18
Report No. 09 – 2018	ACT Health's management of allegations of misconduct and complaints about inappropriate workplace behaviour

These and earlier reports can be obtained from the ACT Audit Office's website at <http://www.audit.act.gov.au>.

**Government Response to the ACT Auditor General's
Report *Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools*
Report No.6 2021**

Yvette Berry MLA
Minister for Education and Youth Affairs
November 2021

SENSITIVE: CABINET

Introduction

The ACT Audit Office undertook a performance audit during 2020 to provide an independent opinion to the Legislative Assembly about the effectiveness of the Education Directorate's strategies and activities to improve the quality of teaching practices in ACT public schools. The audit focused on the Education Directorate's actions to:

- identify and articulate key strategies and supports to improve the quality of teaching practices;
- support its teachers to improve the quality of teaching practices in ACT public schools; and
- monitor, review and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and supports to improve the quality of teaching practice.

The ACT Government established its ten-year commitment to improving education for ACT students through the *Future of Education Strategy*. Of particular significance to this audit is the pillar that provides how the government will empower teachers, school leaders and other professionals to meet the learning needs of all students.

All teachers in the ACT must be registered with the Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) which regulates compliance with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers or the Australian Professional Standard for Principals. To maintain registration, teachers must complete a minimum 20 hours annually of professional learning and reflect on how to improve their teaching practice.

The ACT Government is committed to strengthening the opportunities for teachers to improve their professional practice because they are critical for quality educational outcomes for students. ACT public school teachers continue to perform their roles incredibly well and have shown great dedication and resilience throughout the challenges brought by COVID-19. The ACT community asks much of teachers and they continue to deliver with enthusiasm, commitment and compassion.

The ACT Government welcomes the recommendations of the ACT Audit Office in relation to teaching quality in ACT public schools. The government thanks the auditors for the work that has gone into the preparation of Audit Office report. The recommendations assist the ACT Government with continuing to support ACT public school teachers to deliver a high standard of education that assists students with achieving their best learning outcomes.

The report acknowledges the significant work of the ACT Government to prioritise and improve the quality of teaching practices across ACT public schools. In particular, the report notes: "The Education Directorate recognises the importance of improving teaching quality for the purpose of enhancing student performance. Since 2014, strategic planning and government-led initiatives have identified priorities to improve the quality of teaching practices across ACT public schools." It also notes the Directorate has established "a comprehensive school improvement process which provides effective support to schools to plan, deliver and evaluate activities that are intended to improve student educational outcomes, including activities to improve teaching quality."

The Report has made 14 recommendations on the four focus areas, all of which the Government agrees or agrees in principle. This work forms part of the ACT Government's existing program to enhance the use of data, performance information, community perspectives and student voice to continually improve teaching practice in ACT public schools through supporting teachers in their professional learning and engagement.

Government response

Recommendation	Response	Notes
<p>1. The Education Directorate should, as a priority develop and publish the implementation plan for the second phase of the <i>Future of Education</i>.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The <i>Future of Education Strategy</i> outlines the ACT Government's commitment to education in ACT schools. Information about Phase Two of the <i>Future of Education</i> will be published on the Education Directorate's website following the announcement of the 2021-22 Budget.</p>
<p>2. The Education Directorate should improve its strategic planning and reporting framework by consistently and specifically reporting on progress towards its planned actions in its six-monthly review reports. Reported progress should include quantitative and qualitative analysis for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. All priority actions identified in its Strategic Plan. b. All indicators for success for each Strategic Plan goal The completion of activities committed to in annual divisional plans. c. The completion of activities committed to in annual divisional plans. 	<p>Agree in principle</p>	<p>The Education Directorate is developing a new Strategic Plan, which will include reporting that is appropriate to the priority actions. The Education Directorate already provides extensive reporting of its performance through the Annual Reporting cycle, as well as providing a range of data, progress updates and information on the Education Directorate website. The Education Directorate monitors performance through existing corporate governance mechanisms.</p>
<p>3. The Education Directorate should review and update the People, Practice and Performance Framework to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Reflect the revised structure of the Education Support Office, including the roles of Directors of School Improvement and Instructional Mentors and their role to support and maintain accountability of principals. b. Reflect the requirements of the <i>Evidence and Data Plan for School Improvement (2019)</i> c. Require all schools to participate in school improvement activities as well as complete and publish all required school improvement documentation on their website. 	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The Education Directorate is reviewing the People, Practice and Performance Framework which will be reflective of the existing Education Support Office structure, school-based requirements and data informed practice. ACT public schools participate in school improvement processes and report on the outcome of those processes. The Education Directorate continues to support schools to publish School Improvement documentation on their school website, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual Action Plan/Impact Report, - External School Reviews - School Improvement Plans

Recommendation	Response	Notes
<p>4. As part of Recommendation 3, the Education Support Office should review and revise the People Practice and Performance framework to require the formal evaluation of school improvement documentation on an annual basis. The evaluation should involve consideration of school improvement plans, action plans, school visits feedback and impact reports as a method of gaining specific actionable and timely information about ACT public schools' progress in improving student educational outcomes. The evaluation should then be used to assess and review Education Support Office supports for teaching quality to determine any refinements or additional assistance required to support schools achieve this outcome.</p>	<p>Agree in principle</p>	<p>The Education Directorate is reviewing the People Practice and Performance Framework. The revised framework will incorporate a range of enhancements to the school improvement process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - additional sources of evidence to inform revises - implementation of Annual Action Plans and Impact Report to complement the five yearly school plans - clarification of the role of a Director of School Improvement in the school improvement cycle - Clarification of the expectations of school leaders in the continuous improvement process
<p>5. The Education Directorate should review the role of Directors of School Improvement and in doing so:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Consider whether individual directors should specialise in sector-specific oversight and support (such as roles focusing on colleges, high schools, primary schools) to better target the implementation of supports for improving teaching quality b) Determine if the directors' span of control allows them to fulfil the requirements of the People, Practice and Performance framework. 	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The Education Directorate is reviewing the People Practice and Performance Framework. As part of this review, the role of Directors of School Improvement will be considered.</p>
<p>6. The Education Directorate should establish a development program for new school executive (SLC) that upskills these staff on the instructional leadership practices of the Empowered Learning Professional Leadership Plan during the initial years of their appointment.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The Education Directorate has commenced work to establish a development program for new school executives, however this work was delayed throughout 2020 due to COVID-19. This work has now recommenced, with learning sessions for School Leader Cs conducted in Term 3 2021.</p>
<p>7. The Education Directorate should clearly identify and articulate its expectations for the role and responsibilities of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in ACT public schools. The role could include working with principals and Education Support Office to support school improvement activities, and better using the school network model to connect with other professional to promote better teaching practice in their school settings.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The Education Directorate will continue to work with TQI to better utilise and promote engagement with Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) initiatives. The use of HALTs is beneficial but further work needs to be undertaken to explore how schools can use these highly capable teachers to support improvement of professional practice for individual teachers and across whole of school practice, through system wide approaches or pedagogical best practice methods. There will be a particular focus on how HALTs may be used to support beginning teachers through their first three years, including through mentoring, planning and demonstrating best practice.</p> <p>Consideration is being given to the role of HALTs in whole of system improvement and how greater access to the experience of teachers who demonstrate excellence may be incorporated more broadly.</p>

Recommendation	Response	Notes
<p>8. The Education Directorate should develop a practice for the Education Support Office to oversee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The completion of each school's annual professional learning program. b. The development of a school's annual professional learning program as part of the school improvement process. The program should identify the development needs of teaching staff in connection with school improvement goals, and the expected impacts on student outcomes. 	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The Education Directorate will strengthen central oversight of the implementation of the Annual Professional Learning Program (as specified in the Enterprise Agreement) following the delivery of the ACTPS Human Resources Information Management System (HRIMS) Module 2, specifically the Learning Management System platform. The Education Directorate will continue implement responses to system school review recommendations and identify areas for professional development to support the ongoing school improvement processes.</p>
<p>9. The Education Directorate should establish universal professional learning for all school leaders and teaching on the Spiral of Inquiry Model and Multiple Sources of Evidence approach to support school leaders to facilitate these activities. This support should focus on increasing understanding and consistency in the quality and impact of professional learning communities for the purpose of improving the quality of teaching practices in all ACT public schools.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The Education Directorate will continue to provide professional learning to all school leaders through the Spirals of Inquiry Model and Multiple Sources of Evidence approaches.</p> <p>The Education Directorate will continue to provide professional learning including continuing the new staff and leaders' induction and refresher sessions as part of universal professional learning offering. This will be captured through the new HRIMS and the Learning Management Platform.</p>
<p>10. The Education Directorate should work with the ACT TQI to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Receive and analyse data to use for evaluation the quality of Education Directorate professional learning activities and identify trends and insights from its teachers' professional learning to help determine the impacts this has on improving student outcomes. b. Design methods and practices to recognise key profession learning supports, including professional learning communities as accredited learning that meets the requirements of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. 	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The Education Directorate and Teacher Quality Institute will continue to work together to strengthen data to inform the knowledge and application of professional learning, ensuring the system makes informed judgements about the quality of professional learning offered to teachers. Holistic monitoring and evaluation of the impact of teacher professional learning through the design of measures of system-led impact will ensure consistency in approach across all schools and increased confidence in the high quality of teaching practices within ACT Public Schools.</p>

Recommendation	Response	Notes
<p>11. The New Educator Support Program should be reviewed and redesigned. The program should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Be facilitated by the Education Support Office to provide centralised oversight of all Enterprise Agreement provisions, centralised support and resourcing to New Educators in ACT public schools. b. Document a core set of highly effective pedagogical competencies that New Educators are expected to acquire within the first three years of their teaching careers. c. Include a series of centralised, scaffolded professional development activities to build New Educators' capabilities over the course of the three years of the program. d. Provide schools with clear guidance and expectations to facilitated experienced teacher coaching and mentoring of New Educators e. Establish an annual monitoring and evaluation process for the program, which incorporates feedback from New Educators, experienced teacher mentors and school leaders. 	<p>Agree in principle</p>	<p>The Education Directorate will strengthen central oversight of the implementation of New Educator supports outlined in the Enterprise Agreement following the delivery of the ACTPS Human Resources Information Management System (HRIMS) Module 2, specifically the Learning Management System platform. This module will ensure that all beginning teachers have a New Educator Support Plan in place and that the Education Support Office continue to monitor and support implementation across schools.</p> <p>The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers outline the professional requirements at a graduate level. The Education Directorate uses this standard to inform the new educator induction and continuing supports along their teaching journey.</p> <p>Specific training is available for educators during the annual induction week, which targets the needs of new educators and educators new to the ACT system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Education Directorate New Educator Support Guidelines are used to inform the assistance provided to beginning teachers. The supports include: Reduction of face to face teaching hours to allow for transition and preparation - An allocated two professional learning days - Five days induction - The opportunity to work with an experienced teacher to support their learning. <p>The Education Directorate will strengthen central oversight of the implementation of New Educator supports outlined in the Enterprise Agreement following the delivery of the ACTPS Human Resources Information Management System (HRIMS) Module 2, specifically the Learning Management System. The Education Directorate continues identify, monitor and evaluate professional learning opportunities for early career educators. The new Learning Management System will facilitate enhancements to this capability.</p>
<p>12. The Education Directorate should review and revise the mechanisms that support the distribution and monitoring of the teaching workforce across ACT public schools by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Monitoring the distribution of experienced teachers across ACT public schools to ensure it aligns with Education Directorate priorities under the Future of Education. Developing processes to monitor and review principal decisions to extend teacher placements to ensure schools have appropriate and equitable access to experienced teachers. 	<p>Agree in principle</p>	<p>In March 2021, the Education Directorate launched and implemented its inaugural Workforce Strategy with a three-year horizon. One of the key priority actions identified in the <i>EDU Workforce Strategy 2021-23</i> is the review of the classroom teacher and school leader transfer processes to enable mobility to support professional development.</p> <p>It is noted that the transfer processes are embedded in the <i>ACTPS Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022 (Agreement)</i> and changes will need to be agreed with the Australian Education Union in parallel with the current Agreement and/or through the next round of bargaining.</p>

Recommendation	Response	Notes
<p>13. The Education Directorate should develop and analyse data associated with teaching workforce separations by implementing exit surveys and conducting analysis on the reasons teachers resign from ACT public schools.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The Education Directorate recognises the importance of developing a baseline data on the attrition rate (separation) across the system, specifically for our teaching staff, to inform our attraction and retention framework.</p> <p>The Education Directorate is currently developing a Staff Exit Survey/Interview process to support the implementation of the Workforce Strategy 2021-23.</p>
<p>14. The Education Directorate should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop guidelines and support for school leaders that enable regular, development - focussed teacher appraisals with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. These should be modelled and encouraged through the Empowered Learning Professionals Leadership Plan and aligned with the professional learning requirements of the ACT teacher Quality Institute ACT 2010 to gain additional benefit from these activities. b. Systematise the performance and development process to improve efficiency and make teacher professional development data available for central oversight and management to improve teaching quality. c. Develop supports for school leaders to manage underperformance for poor teaching practices. These supports should emphasise the need to quickly address performance issues, identify ways to successfully improve performance, and connect underperforming teachers with practical supports to improve their practice. 	<p>Agree in principle</p>	<p>The Education Directorate Classroom Teacher, School Leader and Principal Performance and Development Framework underpins the value and need for meaningful and targeted dialogues on performance and development for our teaching staff.</p> <p>The Education Directorate will further develop supports for school leaders to manage underperformance relating to poor teaching practices. These supports will be developed in accordance with requirements of the <i>ACTPS Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022</i> (or its replacement). The ACTPS HRIMS Module 2 will deliver a Performance Management and Learning Management System to support automation and reporting on performance and development discussions and professional learning requirements.</p> <p>The introduction of this module will support school leaders in engaging in performance and development discussions and also provides a clear structure/workflow for managing underperformance.</p>



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QON No. AR - 12

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
MICHAEL PETTERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Elizabeth Kikkert MLA:

In relation to:

The decision to stop teaching French and Indonesian at Belconnen High School (Annual Report, Public School Education, output class 1)

1. I have been told that the decision to discontinue teaching French and Indonesian at Belconnen High School occurred during the 2017 school year 'after significant effort to maintain and sustain the languages program were unsuccessful'. Can the minister please explain specifically what caused the languages program to be unsuccessful?
2. What were the significant efforts to make the program successful that preceded the decision to discontinue teaching French and Indonesian?
3. In the case of staff vacancies (for French and/or Indonesian teachers), what steps were taken to fill these vacancies, including efforts to recruit from other jurisdictions? How many applicants applied to fill such staff vacancies?

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1. ACT public schools provide a wide range of language education options and language support programs. The selection of languages programs is made by the School Principal, in consultation with the School Board. Prior to 2017, Belconnen High School delivered French and Indonesian language programs but, due to staff attrition and the unavailability of replacement language teachers these programs were unable to continue.
2. Across Australia there is a shortage of specialist language teachers. Where shortages of teaching staff occur, the ACT Education Directorate connects Principals with language network leaders to assist with identifying suitable staff



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QON No. 15 ECI

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
MICHAEL PETERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Hanson MLA:

In relation to:

Childcare

1. At a median cost of \$595 per week (ABS, 2021), childcare in the ACT is \$70 pw above the national average. Why is ACT childcare the most expensive in Australia?
2. Canberra parents have paid \$70-\$100 per week more for childcare for at least 5 years. Is this of concern to the Government?
3. What is being done to lower the costs of Canberra childcare?

Three-year old preschool (Education AR Page 43)

4. Are there any staffing issues with regard to this service?
5. What are the qualifications of early childhood staff?
6. How many priority places have been made available?
7. What is the current focus of the Koori pre-schools?

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1. The factors informing the cost of long day care in the ACT are set out in a report published in 2017, following a review of affordability of the ACT's Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector.

The cost of property, rent, staffing and the ratios of staff to children according to age are all factors.

ECEC providers determine the fees they charge. States and Territories have responsibility for regulating the safety and quality of providers and services, but do not engage in price regulation. The Australian Government provides a national Child Care Subsidy system under the Family Assistance Law.

A copy of the 2017 report is at:

https://www.education.act.gov.au/data/assets/word_doc/0003/1226046/Early-Childhood-Education-and-Care-in-the-ACT-Report-2017.docx

2. The ACT Government is committed to making quality early childhood education and care more accessible to ACT families in need.
3. The ACT Government provides 15 hours a week of preschool for all four year-olds, this



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QON No. 15 ECI

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
MICHAEL PETERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Directorate is engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through a co-design process, to ensure Koori Preschool continues to meet the community's needs regarding cultural safety and integrity.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Community Inclusion

Signature:

Date: 12/04/21

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QON No. AR - 16

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
MICHAEL PETERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Hanson MLA:

In relation to:

Future of Education Strategy (2018) (Education AR Page 10-11)

1. The central policy document for Education in the ACT is the Future of Education Strategy for the Next Ten Years (2018) ("FES"). The Education AR suggests that progress towards laying these foundations is not going well to date (e.g. they have not met 6 of the 7 strategic indicators) Why not?

Set up for Success (Education AR Page 15)

2. "The Directorate has implemented the first phase of the Set up for Success Strategy". But at p. 43, the program is "intended to be launched in second half of 2020". Where is it up to?

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1. Progress towards the Future of Education is going well across all four foundations (Students at the Centre, Empowered Learning Professionals, Strong Communities for Learning and Systems supporting Learning). Like any significant change process, it is crucial that it is grounded in a strong base and rolled out through a systematic change-management process that ensures the changes are embedded into the culture and daily practice of the whole Education Directorate. Importantly, the Future of Education Strategy is not a static or comprehensive list of disjointed actions. It is a roadmap for continued focus, a 10 year reform program that will take time to demonstrate significant improvements in outcomes at the system level.

During phase one, the ACT Government has delivered education through a more flexible and student-centred approach, with education staff building stronger relationships with students and families. The ACT Government has focused on placing students, their wellbeing and future focused capabilities, at the centre of their learning experiences. The ACT Government has demonstrated how well technology supports students' learning and wellbeing and provides student agency over what, when and where they learn, and we have focused on growing a quality educational workforce to ensure students are engaged and motivated learners.

In relation to the strategic indicators, detail on the progress against these indicators has been addressed in response to a separate question on notice.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QON No. 17 ECI

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
MICHAEL PETTERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Hanson MLA:

In relation to:

Chrome books (Education AR Page 18, 321)

1. What is the breakdown (units, software, support) of the cost \$1,415,000 of the 2,000 Chromebooks provided to students for COVID response cost?

Early Years Literacy Initiative (Education AR Page 43)

2. What evaluation has been made of this initiative?

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1. Chromebook unit costs are commercial in confidence and release of this information would prejudice future tender processes.

The value of the hardware, software and services that is covered by this contract has been thoroughly market tested over the past three years, with three separate open tender processes governed by ACT Procurement Board. The ACT Government has agreed to the pricing schedule to be redacted under the confidential text arrangement (refer Schedule 4 of the contract).

The total value of the contract includes the supply of Chromebooks as well as hardware, software and service, including:

- Acer Spin 511 Chromebook
- White gloving (imaging and enrolment of the device to the ACT Education domain)
- Google Chrome License
- Test and Tag service
- Upgraded 3-year warranty
- Onsite support services
- Delivery



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QON No. 18 ECI

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION

MICHAEL PETERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Hanson MLA:

In relation to:

Teacher numbers

1. Where a teacher is counted in reports as an FTE how many hours a week does that teacher spend on
2. Face to face classroom time for
 - a. Primary teachers,
 - b. Secondary teachers
 - c. College teachers
3. Other administrative tasks for
 - d. Primary teachers
 - e. Secondary teachers
 - f. College teachers
4. As at June 30 2019-20 what was the average teacher/student ratios for ACT public
 - g. Primary schools
 - h. High schools
 - i. Colleges
5. As at June 30 2019-20 how many
 - j. FTE registered teachers were working in ACT Public Schools in total
 - k. FTE registered teachers were working in ACT Public Schools in Colleges
 - l. FTE registered teachers were working in ACT Public Schools in High Schools
 - m. FTE registered teachers were working in ACT Public Schools in Primary Schools

Relief Teachers

6. What is the policy concerning employment of relief teachers?
7. How are they budgeted?
 - n. Across the Directorate
 - o. Across School Regions
 - p. Within individual schools?
8. How much is spent on relief teachers?
9. What proportion of classes over all schools and levels would be taught by a relief teacher on a given day?
10. What is the practise of combined classes due to the absence of a teacher called?
11. How often does this happen?
12. Is it increasing?



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QON No. 18 ECI

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9. The information necessary to respond to this question is not collected and/or held by the Directorate as engagement of casual staff are managed by each school differently based on their individual operational requirements.
10. The practice of combining classes due to the absence of a teacher is known as split classes.
11. The information necessary to respond to this question is not collected and/or held by the Directorate as engagement of casual staff are managed by each school differently based on their individual operational requirements.
12. The information necessary to respond to this question is not collected and/or held by the Directorate as engagement of casual staff are managed by each school differently based on their individual operational requirements.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Community Inclusion

Signature:

Date: 01/04/21

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA



STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION

MICHAEL PETTERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Hanson MLA:

In relation to:

Strategic Objectives (Education AR Page 25)

1. The Strategic Objective 1: Equity in learning outcomes was met for Reading, but not for Numeracy. Why was this Strategic Objective only partially met?
2. The Strategic Objective 2: Literacy and Numeracy Gains was not met. Why was this Strategic Objective not met?
3. The Strategic Objective 3: Centre Teaching and Learning around Students as Individuals was not met. Why was this Strategic Objective not met?

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. Strategic objectives are designed to measure progress over strategic timeframes, where slight year-on-year variations are not as significant as the long-term trends. Slight year-on-year variation in apparent outcomes are caused by the national scaling processes used in the NAPLAN tests, which create small, non-significant, measurement uncertainty in both national and in jurisdiction means over time.

Allowing for this measurement uncertainty the Numeracy Equity target can be considered to be met as there is no statistically significant difference between the result and the target as the confidence intervals for the Numeracy Equity result (40-48 points) contain the 2019 numeracy target (42 points);

2. Similarly, the literacy and numeracy gain strategic objectives are designed to measure progress over strategic timeframes, where slight year-on-year variations are not as significant as the long-term trends. The variation in gain over time in the ACT reflects the national pattern. Each NAPLAN cycle, student scores are equated to a common scale. The scaling processes used in the NAPLAN tests create small, non-significant, measurement uncertainty (variation) in national means and in jurisdiction means over time, causing insignificant variation in the gain results. In 2018 and 2019, NAPLAN scaling has needed to take account of the differences between paper NAPLAN testing and online NAPLAN testing. As the ACT has been a leading jurisdiction in the implementation of online NAPLAN testing, the scaling process has had a larger impact on ACT scores than on those in most other jurisdictions. Allowing for measurement uncertainty the Literacy and Numeracy gain targets were met.

Year 3-5 reading gain: Between 2016 & 2017, the ACT year 3 reading means increased from 440 to 446 points, while the year 5 reading means between the same years decreased from 526 to 520 points. This had the effect of reducing the apparent ACT



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For Parents and Carers, the apparent decline in the strategic indicator was the result of a change in the measurement of School Identification for this group. In 2019 an extra Item was added to the measure, meaning that the 2018 and 2019 figures are not directly comparable.

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Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Yvette Berry", written over a faint circular stamp.

Date: 01/04/21

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QON No. 20 ECI

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION

MICHAEL PETTERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Hanson MLA:

In relation to:

Enabling Pedagogies (Education AR Page 32)

1. Australian Council for Education Research (ACER) review over last three years found that schools need to articulate their pedagogical practices more clearly. Why in a supposedly mature education system has this been necessary?
2. When and how will the success of the ACT Public Schools Pedagogical Framework Guide be evaluated?

Safe and Supportive Schools (Education AR Page 33)

3. Do we know if this policy is having any effect on bullying at schools?
4. What is the trend in number and type of bullying incidents over the last five years in
 - a. Primary schools,
 - b. High Schools and
 - c. Colleges

Positive Behaviour for Learning (Education AR Page 34)

5. What evaluation has been undertaken of the implementation of the Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) framework across ACT public schools?
6. How many schools are involved?

Learning Culture Empowered Learning Professionals Plan 2018-21 (Education AR Page 36)

7. What evaluation has been undertaken of this plan?
8. What impact is the program having on literacy and numeracy outcomes?

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1. ACT Public Schools strive for continuous improvement to ensure that they are consistently providing up to date high quality education. The implementation and refinement of school improvement processes highlighted that development of a statement outlining the pedagogical practices expected in schools would be beneficial to the ongoing improvement of schools. The ACT Public Schools Pedagogical Framework Guide, released late in 2019, supports schools to develop clear statements for their individual contexts and circumstances. The development and implementation of the ACT Public Schools Pedagogical Framework Guide is in line with similar improvement agendas in other jurisdictions.



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QON No. 21 ECI

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Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Hanson MLA:

In relation to:

Affiliated Schools Program (Education AR Page 38)

1. Given that at the last Hearing on 14 Nov 2019 an ACT Education Directorate officer advised that evaluation criteria for the program were "in the process" of being devised, what evaluation of the program has now been made?

Health Promotion (Education AR Page 39)

"Fresh Tastes" is a healthy eating program for primary schools. It is stated that "most" of the 65 schools who have completed three years of participation have reported a "positive shift" in their school community's food and drink choices.

2. What does "most" mean?
3. What is the strength of this "positive shift"?
4. Where's the reference to a report on results?
5. What types of food and drink do canteens sell?

Use of Data to Inform Performance (Education AR Page 41)

6. What is the "inquiry approach" to developing the priorities and performance targets for student improvement?

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1. The Affiliated Schools Program has been in place for two and a half years. Evaluation and feedback is ongoing through surveys, participation, and completion rates. A full evaluation is yet to be completed.
2. Schools are ranked on a continuum of culture change in terms of food and drink from 'beginning', 'developing', 'established' to 'embedded'.

65 schools had completed their involvement in Fresh Tastes at the time the Education Annual Report was published. Preliminary data recorded at the time of publishing indicated that, 56 of the 65 schools (86%) had made a positive shift on the culture change continuum.

3. Schools are ranked on a continuum of culture change in terms of food and drink from 'beginning', 'developing', 'established' to 'embedded'. 56 Schools had moved by at least one level on the continuum.
4. The Fresh Tastes Interim Monitoring Report will be published on ACT Health's website shortly at <https://www.health.act.gov.au/freshtastes>. This report covers the first cohort of 39 schools



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QON No. 22 ECI

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Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Hanson MLA:

In relation to:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Education AR Page 49, 51, 53)

1. Although the total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is small the actual number of students progressing to year 11/12 was lower than expected. What is the reason for the lower than expected result?

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1. The small number of students in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cohort results in large percentage variances from a change in circumstances for a very small number of students and therefore must be interpreted with caution.

Students choose to complete year 12, commence a VET course, commence work or may move away from the jurisdiction.

Despite the lower than expected number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students proceeding to college, the ACT has exceeded the targets for the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students receiving a Tertiary Entrance Statement in 2016, 2018 and 2019.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Community Inclusion

Signature:

Date: 24/03/21

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA



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QON No. 23 ECI

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
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Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Hanson MLA:

In relation to:

Curriculum (Education AR Page 47)

1. Each school "organises its curriculum to maximise opportunities". How different are ACT public high school curriculums?
2. If schools are different, how is it fair to lock parents into a particular school with a particular unique curriculum if doesn't suit their child?

Careers and Transitions (Education AR Page 47)

3. Beyond the "Pathways" website, is there an explicit career information and guidance element in classrooms for year 7 and 8 students?
4. To what extent is information provided by educators to students and parents informed, for example with regard to varied careers in key industries for the future such as Information Technology?

Vocational Learning Options (Education AR Page 47)

5. What is an example of a vocational learning option?
6. Does it provide training or a certification of some kind?

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1. The ACT implements the *Australian Curriculum* as provided by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). The *Australian Curriculum* defines what students should achieve and the expected depth and breadth of learning that should typically be demonstrated by age or developmental stage through their schooling. Schools have flexibility in how they implement and deliver teaching and learning programs and design whole school curriculum.
2. No ACT public school has a unique curriculum. All ACT public schools implement the Australian Curriculum.



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QON No. 24 ECI

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Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Hanson MLA:

In relation to:

New College on Canberra's northside

1. What research was undertaken to determine the need for a new Northside college?
2. What demographic study has been done to determine the need for a new Northside college?
3. In those considerations what discussions been held with the non-government sector as to their future requirements or plans?

North Gungahlin High School and North Gungahlin Primary School (Budget Outlook, p. 84)

The North Gungahlin High School and North Gungahlin Primary School both also shows the capital provision as (Not For Publication) NFP (Budget Outlook, p. 84), but this was costed in the ACT election with Treasury endorsing Labor's estimate of \$85 million and \$35 million respectively.

4. Can you confirm that these initiatives are to be delivered in accordance with the election commitment?
5. If so, what is the purpose of not showing the financial commitment in the published initiative?

School capacity

6. The Directorate uses a "Cohort Transition Model" to predict capacity school needs. Is this done with the ANU School of Demography?
7. What is the relationship with the ANU on this work?
8. Is the model public?
9. How far into the future does the model predict demand?
10. How robust is the model?
11. What are the confidence measures of these predictions?
12. What role do Non-Government schools (37% of students) have in inputting to these predictions?



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7. The Education Directorate has an existing contract (contract number 2017/00987) with the Australian National University (ANU) School of Demography and a strategic partnership to develop the enrolment projection model and support enrolment forecasting, as well as undertake demography and forecasting related research.
8. No. The Directorate uses the model to support internal planning and inform future investment decisions.
9. The model predicts future demand for the next ten years.
10. The model is accurate over the short to medium term as it is based on highly accurate Education Census data. The enrolment forecasting model extrapolates existing trends into the future.
11. Over the medium to long term, enrolment trends have the potential to change due to factors such as changes in enrolments policy or affiliation changes between government and non-government schools. For this reason, for long term schools planning the Directorate uses the model as part of a broader range of considerations.
12. The non-government sector does not input into the Directorate's enrolment forecasting.
13. Both. Transportables are a normal part of planning for growth and they provide flexibility both for schools that are experiencing temporary growth in enrolments as well as to provide time to plan for and deliver permanent investment in capacity where it is needed for the long term.
14. There are a total of 89 ACT public schools, of which 37 have temporary school classrooms.
 - a. See Attachment A for list of schools with temporary classrooms.
 - b. The capacity of temporary classrooms is determined by each school depending on which year levels are utilising the space.
15. It is likely investment in transportables will continue to be required to respond to strong growth in public school demand, as well as planning for investment in permanent capacity.
16. Transportable structures installed at schools today are built to the same standards (National Construction Code) as permanent structures. The ability to relocate the structures means that they are installed above ground rather than fixed to permanent footings and use lighter but strong steel frames instead of concrete and brick. The expected lifespan is a minimum of 20 years.
17. There are no current temporary buildings off-grid, but the two units installed at North Ainslie School have the capability to operate in an off-grid mode.
18. Yes.

A

School	Install date
Amaroo	2008
Amaroo	2008
Amaroo	2008
Amaroo	2014
Amaroo	2014
Amaroo	2014
Amaroo	2014
Aranda	2018
Aranda	2018
Black Mountain	2002
Black Mountain	2002
Black Mountain	2008
Black Mountain	2021
Black Mountain	2021
Bonython PS	2002
Bonython PS	2002
Calwell PS	1990
Campbell PS	2018
Campbell PS	2018
Campbell PS	2018
Campbell PS	2018
Campbell PS	2018
Campbell PS	2018
Campbell PS	2018
Caroline Chisholm Snr	1990
Caroline Chisholm Snr	1990
Charles Conder	1996
Charles Conder	1996
Charles Conder	2007
Cranleigh	2004
Cranleigh	2004
Cranleigh	2007
Cranleigh	2007
Fadden	1986
Farrer	2002
Florey	2000
Florey	2000
Forrest	2019
Forrest	2019
Forrest	2021
Franklin	2013
Franklin	2019
Franklin	2019
Franklin	2019
Franklin	2019
Franklin	2019
Fraser	2005
Fraser	2008



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QON No. 25 ECI

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
MICHAEL PETERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Hanson MLA:

In relation to:

Disability Education

1. How many schools currently offer LSU classes?
 - i. In what schools
 - ii. For what years
 - iii. Number on each class
2. How many schools offer a discrete Learning Support Unit for autism (LSUA)?
 - iv. What schools
 - v. For what years
 - vi. Number in each class
3. How many Learning Support Assistants (LSA's) are employed by the Education Directorate to work in learning support units?
 - vii. How many are employed in LSUA's
4. What are the minimum qualifications for LSA's?
5. Is it a prerequisite for staff in LSUA classes have appropriate training in autism awareness?
6. It was a recommendation of the Schools for All Report (Shaddock) that all schools that have LSU's have appropriate and purpose-built quiet spaces for students needing time out. How many do not have such spaces?
 - viii. When will they?
7. Are all staff – teachers and LSA's employed in special education classes - required to have additional appropriate training in disability or special needs education?
8. Are all teachers employed in the ACT's 4 special schools all required to have appropriate disability education training?

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1. Small group programs, including numbers of each type are publicly available on the ACT Education Directorate website at:

https://www.education.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/1702333/Disability-programs-2021.pdf.

These programs are available for eligible students in any school year. The number in each class depends on the type of program, the delivery model used by the school and the needs of the students within the program. Typically, however, a Learning Support



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Unit (LSU) has up to 8 students and a Learning Support Unit Autism (LSUA) has up to 6 students. A school can have more than one unit.

2. As above.
3. Staffing in each unit is based on the needs of individual students and this information is not centrally held.
4. There is no minimum qualification for Learning Support Assistants.
5. All teaching staff are required to hold relevant teaching qualifications and Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) registration. All teaching staff registered by the TQI are qualified to support students with complex learning needs, including students with autism. All public school staff are required to complete the Disability Standards for Education online training.
6. Recommendation 8.1 from the Report of the Expert Panel on Students with Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviours recommends *“that ETD, CE and each Independent School, ensure that all existing schools have safe, calming/sensory spaces that are appropriate to meet the needs of students with complex needs and challenging behaviour”*.

All public schools have a sensory space that can be utilised for this purpose. The characteristics of these spaces differ across schools and classrooms and can change on a regular basis as they are highly dependent on the needs of students at any given time. Schools work with the directorate and families to ensure the space is appropriate and students are often invited to personalise these spaces with their own items, decorations and activities that may assist them to feel calm.

7. All public school staff are required to undertake training in the Disability Standards for Education 2005 to clarify obligations of education and training providers, and support staff to ensure all students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as other students.
8. See response to question 5 and question 7.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Community Inclusion

Signature

Date: 24/03/21

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA



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QON No. 26 ECI

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION

MICHAEL PETERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Hanson MLA:

In relation to:

Alternative school settings

1. The Schools for All Report (Shaddock) recommended alternative school settings for students who are disengaged from mainstream schooling and who may not necessarily fit into current learning support units within mainstream schools? What alternative school settings are currently available?
2. How does a student enrol in such a school?
3. Who determines whether they are suitable?

Priority Enrolment Area PEA

4. For PEA purposes what checks are made to ensure that the residential address of students are correct at the time of enrolment?
5. How often has it been revealed that parents been found to have provided incorrect residential information?
6. What happens in those circumstances?
7. Given that different schools can have different curricula what flexibility exists around PEA's to accommodate different education preferences of parents?
8. Does the Directorate level ensure schools offer the required mix of courses for students in their PEA?

Suspension Policy

9. How has the new suspension policy been advised and promoted to schools and to parents?
10. What changes has it brought?
11. Why do we have the highest rate of suspension in four years

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1. The ACT Government has established the Flexible Education (FE) program to provide personalised education programs to students who, at a particular point in time, cannot access education at their enrolled school. Flexible Education service offering includes:
 - i. The Hospital School,
 - ii. The Cottage program,
 - iii. Muliyan,
 - iv. Murrumbidgee School (previously known as Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre) located at Bimberi Juvenile Justice Centre, and
 - v. Distance Education.



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2. Entry to the Flexible Education offerings vary.

The Hospital School

The Hospital School is for patients and their siblings from preschool to year 12 currently accessed at the Women and Children's Hospital Canberra. Students may be enrolled in public, independent or catholic schools and may also be residents outside the ACT.

The Cottage

The Cottage is open to young people aged 12 to 17 years as part of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Recovery Plan. Young people who access this program must be a CAMHS client first and are referred to the program by CAMHS.

Muliyan

Muliyan provides alternative education to public school students between year 7-10. The Network Student Engagement Team (NSET) works with public schools to identify students who meet the criteria who are then considered by an Intake Panel. The panel has representatives from agencies that support young people with complex needs, such as Police Citizen Youth Club Canberra, ACT Policing Youth Liaison Officers, Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT), Canberra Adolescent Mental Health Service, Child & Youth Protective Services (CYPS) as well as Education Directorate teams such as Disability Education, School Psychologists and NSET. The Intake Panel assesses student referrals and a range of flexible education options and wellbeing supports are determined. This may include entrance into the Muliyan program.

Murrumbidgee School

The Murrumbidgee School is located within the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre which accommodates children and young people (10 – 21) who have been refused bail or are sentenced to a period of detention.

Distance Education

Access and enrolment are through an assessment process against a set of criteria for the Finigan School of Distance Education (FSDE), NSW Education Department. ACT public school students are required to provide support documentation to establish eligibility. The information is gathered in partnership with the school and families and is collated by Flexible Education staff who then negotiate with FSDE on behalf of the student for access into Distance Education.

3. As per question 2.
4. To ensure that the residential address of students is correct at the time of enrolment, applicants are required to provide a current rates notice or a current residential lease, together with a current electricity or gas notice to the school at which they are enrolling. Additional or alternative documents may be requested in instances where a rates notice, residential lease and/or gas or electricity notice cannot be provided.
5. Data is not centrally collated on the number of applicants who have provided incorrect residential information. The Directorate does undertake some system-level analysis of residential data anomalies, and this analysis informs enrolment policy development. Schools have been provided with resources (including guidelines and template for sighting



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documentation) to support the consistent assessment of documentation across the system.

6. If a public school has concerns that the proof of residence documentation does not provide the required proof that the applicant lives in PEA, they can request that the applicant provide additional proof of residence documentation. Schools are encouraged to be sensitive to people's life circumstances (such as homelessness or no fixed address) when seeking clarifications. If a family is unable to provide adequate proof of residence, or give a reasonable explanation as to why not, the school has the option to decline the application and refer it to the student's last known PEA school (if known), or the applicant's second or third preference school. Applicants have access to the review and appeals processes if they are not satisfied with the outcome. These decisions are made on a case by case basis with the guidance of the Education Support Office.
7. Different schools can teach different electives, but all schools deliver the Australian Curriculum. Options to accommodate curriculum preferences exist through Category B public High Schools which may – subject to capacity - enrol out of area students seeking to access a curriculum choice(s) not available at their PEA school.
8. Yes. All schools are required to deliver the Australian Curriculum, which ensures all key learning areas are delivered in ACT public schools.
9. The revised suspension policy and procedures were published in December 2019 through the Directorate's website and intranet.
10. The revised policy included changes to the policy and procedures to focus on positive behaviour support and exploring alternatives to suspension. The main changes in the policy and procedures include in-school alternative education programs, the use of a process called mutually agreed leave as well as the support that will be provided to schools when students are suspended for 15 or more days.
11. Suspension data for public schools is publicly available on the Directorate's website [www.education.act.gov.au/ data/assets/.../Suspension-Data-and-Reducing-Suspension.docx](http://www.education.act.gov.au/data/assets/.../Suspension-Data-and-Reducing-Suspension.docx) As noted on the website, suspension data from 2018 is sourced from the new Schools Administration System and is not directly comparable to data in previous years. 2019 data indicates a slight increase in suspensions from across each sector from 2018. The new Schools Administration Systems is now able to capture suspension data with greater levels of both consistency and ease from schools and has resulted in an improved reporting culture.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Community Inclusion

Signature:

Date: 24/03/21

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA



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QON No. 27 ECI

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
MICHAEL PETTERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Hanson MLA:

In relation to:

Complaints (Education AR Page 223)

1. The Directorate received 398 complaints (out of 960?) about policies. Were there any themes identified in these policy complaints?
2. In what way is feedback that is received via the Directorate's website, through schools or any other means, collated and considered?
3. Is there de-identified aggregated data available as to general themes of feedback? If so, where?
4. If not, why not?

Year 12 outcomes 2019 Education (AR Page 298-302)

5. The trends are down in % of students awarded ACT Senior Secondary Certificate; Tertiary Entrance Statement; and VET outcomes. Why?
6. There has been a downward trend in ACT students receiving a Tertiary Entrance Statement (ATAR) since 2013. In 2019 public college males had the largest decrease from 2018 (50.8% to 46.6%). Why is this the case?
7. 9.9% of student who received a Senior Secondary Certificate completed a course in IT in 2019. What is the subject matter of IT courses?
8. What is the breakdown of the 44.2% of SSC students who studied Sciences?
9. What categories of Science?

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1. During this reporting period, key themes in the 'policy' category related to: the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the proposed Hawker Primary School extension and the National School Chaplaincy Program.
2. Feedback is received through a range of sources and is shared with schools and business areas to inform service and system improvement.
3. Feedback and complaints received by the central complaints team in the Education Directorate are recorded and reported on in the annual report.
4. See the response to question 3.
5. The Office of the BSSS does not have data on causal factors for these outcomes.

The percentage of public college students receiving an ACT Senior Secondary



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STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION

MICHAEL PETERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Certificate (SSC) in 2019 was 90.2%. The average over the preceding five-year period 2014-2018 was 87.9%.

The percentage of public college student ACT SSC receivers with a Tertiary Entrance Statement (TES) in 2019 was 51.8%. The average over the preceding five-year period 2014-2018 was 54.1%. 2020 outcomes indicate this single year result did not represent a trend.

Some jurisdictions require that students receive a TES regardless of student interest, career plans or readiness to enter University. The ACT SSC accommodates a wide variety of pathways for individual students where courses are designed according to need. Students can choose to pursue a range of pathways, two of which are a TES or VET competencies.

6. The Office of the BSSS does not have data on causal factors for this outcome.

There is natural fluctuation year to year. These percentages are a result of student choice in course selection and pathways. In 2019 a higher percentage of male students chose to engage with learning options that did not include a TES.

7. The 2019 course focussed on the study of information and intelligent systems, software development and application, hardware implementation, human computer interface/interaction and social, ethical, and environmental issues through the Digital Media, Programming and Networking streams.
8. Chemistry - 20.7%, Biology - 17.7%, Physics - 12.7%, Human Biology - 7.3%, Earth and Environmental Science - 1.8%, Senior Science - 1.2%, Interdisciplinary Science - 0.9%, Electronics and Mechatronics - 0.8%, Oceanography - 0.7%, Flight - 0.6%, Agriculture - 0.4%, Forestry - 0.2%.

A proportion of students study more than one science.

9. Chemistry, Biology, Physics, Human Biology, Earth and Environmental Science, Senior Science, Interdisciplinary Science, Electronics and Mechatronics, Oceanography, Flight, Agriculture, Forestry.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Community Inclusion

Signature:

Date: 12/04/21

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QON No. 28 ECI

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION

MICHAEL PETERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Hanson MLA:

In relation to:

Standardised Testing (Education AR Page 66)

1. Which of the recommendations of the NAPLAN Review Final Report (August 2020) will be adopted?

Community Engagement and Support (Education AR Page 81-82)

2. What consultation was conducted with community members and other stakeholders with regard to the design for the future learning spaces at Franklin Early Childhood School in the expansion to full preschool-year 6?
3. What were the details of the Girls in STEM grants for 5 ACT public schools?
4. What are the aims and intended outcomes, timelines and evaluation?

Teachers (Education AR Page 92 - 93)

5. The PwC report commissioned by the Directorate on workforce future requirements was delivered in early 2020. What were its recommendations?
6. Women make up 77% of the teaching workforce in the ACT. Are any recruitment strategies in train to encourage more men into teaching,

Curriculum Education (AR Page 297)

7. Year 11-12 students are required to study a course in English as part of their senior secondary certificate.
8. Do they need to study Maths? If not, why not?

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1. In December 2020, ACARA was asked by Education Ministers to prepare advice on the NAPLAN writing assessment and on any potential improvements to national standardised assessments. The recommendations of the NAPLAN Review Final Report (August 2020) will be considered by Education Ministers alongside ACARA's advice.



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2. Existing and future Franklin Early Childhood School community members, including students, staff, parents, Anglicare (the early childhood education and care provider), and neighbours were asked for their input into shaping the future learning and community spaces at the school.

Information was shared using the school website, newsletter and a mailbox drop to 250 homes in the neighbourhood. Community and staff (including Anglicare) face to face sessions were held at the school on 30 October 2019, where the community learnt more about the project and their comments were captured.

Students were asked what they like about their school and a short video *Student Voices* was developed to capture their ideas.

Feedback from the student voice, community sessions, and online feedback was used to inform the architect /builder to develop the detailed designs for the new learning and community spaces.

3. Girls in STEM Grant recipients can be found at:
https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open_government/inform/act_government_media_releases/yvette-berry-mla-media-releases/2020/supporting-girls-in-stem-through-public-school-grants
4. The aim of the Girls in STEM Grants program is to provide equitable access to programs so that girls can develop skills and capabilities in STEM with access to expert mentors and industry networks. Individual grants have evaluations that will form part of their final reporting requirements. All Girls in STEM projects are anticipated to be completed by October 2021.
5. The Directorate launched its inaugural EDU Workforce Strategy 2021-23 (Strategy) in March 2021 which was informed by the PWC Report. The Strategy will deliver improved planning of workforce requirements, participation, and student learning outcomes.
6. The Directorate is actively working to encourage a diversity of people into the profession, so our workforce reflects the communities we serve.
7. Correct.
8. Year 11 and 12 students are not required to study a course in Mathematics as part of their senior secondary certificate, however it is strongly recommended by ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies that all students complete a course from the Mathematics Course Area as part of their ACT Senior Secondary Certificate package.



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Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Community Inclusion

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Yvette Berry", written over a circular stamp.

Date: 24/03/21

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QON No. AR - 29

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
MICHAEL PETERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Hanson MLA:

In relation to:

Vocational Education (Education AR Page 52)

1. Student choice to undertake vocational qualifications seems to be below expected since 2015. In 2019 it was 700 fewer students. How should we view this trend?

Tertiary Entrance Statement (Education AR Page 50)

2. Of the students who received a Tertiary Entrance Statement, how many studied English and Maths at Tertiary level?
3. What are the trends in Colleges with regard to subjects studied?
4. Are there any upward trends for example in students taking Science and IT courses?

Non-government schools (Education AR Page 55)

5. How many schools are due for re-accreditation this financial year?
6. What consultation is being done for future Non-Government schools?
7. Are sites currently set aside?

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1. The reduced take-up of vocational qualifications by ACT public school students follows a downward trend in most jurisdictions nationally, from 2015 to 2019.
The ACT Education Directorate actively promotes and encourages students to follow pathways appropriate for their personal choice and learning needs.
2. The number of ACT public college students with English/ESL/and Mathematics T level courses on their Tertiary Entrance Statement (TES) in 2019 were:
 - English/English as a Second Language (ESL) - 1,484 or 99.6%
 - Mathematics – 1,402 or 94.1%



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3. There can be both upward and downward trends in courses studied in ACT public colleges.

There were no major trends across the five-year period to 2019. Student choice determined the number studying each course.

4. For the period of 2015-2019, increased take-up can be observed in Specialist Mathematics 11.6%-14%, Mathematical Methods 21.8%-27%, Biology and Earth Sciences 20%-23.2%, Commerce 17.2%-22.3%, and Art and Photography 19.9%-22.7%.

All Sciences in 2015 were 39.6% and 39.8% in 2019.

Information Technology in 2015 was 9.3% and 9.0% in 2019.

5. Five independent and four Catholic systemic schools were scheduled for registration renewal in the 2020-2021 financial year. These registrations were renewed prior to when registration expired on 31 December 2020. Seven independent and five Catholic systemic schools have sought registration renewal in 2021 as their registration expires on 31 December 2021.
6. The establishment of future non-government schools is a matter for the proprietors of existing and proposed non-government schools. When requested, the Education Directorate provides information to prospective applicants of new or expanding non-government schools regarding the in-principle approval and registration processes and the conditions of registration.
7. The ACT Government made an election commitment to release three blocks of land for non-government schools over the next four years. An expression of interest process is currently underway for the site in Wright that has been set aside for a non-government school.

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Signature:

Date: 24/03/21

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QON No. 30 ECI

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
MICHAEL PETERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Hanson MLA:

In relation to:

Funding

Is there a funded commitment to build a new primary school in Strathnairn?

Is there a funded commitment for:

1. A Library upgrade at Lake Ginninderra College
2. Cranleigh Playground Equipment
3. Better bike shelter for Canberra High
4. Improved staffroom at Mount Rogers Primary School
5. Cooling and double glazing in the hall at Evatt Primary School

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

The Government made a commitment for all these projects during the election. Election commitments need to be considered for funding by government as part of the budget process each year in the same way as new budget proposals.

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Signature:

Date: 24/03/21

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QON No. 31 ECI

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
MICHAEL PETTERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Hanson MLA:

In relation to:

Brindabella Christian College (BCC)

1. Have you had any representations concerning the BCC?
2. What actions are you taking concerning those representations?

Home education (Education AR Page 55-56)

3. How many homes are currently registered for home schooling?
4. How many students are registered for home schooling?
5. How often does the Directorate meet with advocacy groups representing Home schooling families?

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1. As Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, I have met with parents of Brindabella Christian College and received correspondence in relation to Brindabella Christian College.
2. I have sought advice from the Education Directorate on the school's compliance with the conditions of registration under the *Education Act 2004*, and the compliance of the early learning centre under the National Law. I have written to the Commonwealth Minister for Education and Youth to ask that the Commonwealth Government continues to exercise its oversight of the school's compliance under the *Australian Education Act 2013*. I continue to respond to correspondence regarding Brindabella Christian College.
3. As at 16 March 2021, there are 253 ACT families who have registered their children for home education with the Education Directorate.
4. As at 16 March 2021, there are 385 children and young people registered for home education with the Education Directorate.
5. During 2019 the Education Directorate met with representatives of Home Education Association (HEA), Home Education Network ACT and Southern Tablelands (HENCAST), Christian Home Education Canberra (CHEC) and families to discuss proposed changes to legislation.

During 2020 members of the Education Directorate's senior executive met with the



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president and representatives of the HEA to discuss home education in the ACT.

In early 2020 the Education Directorate commenced the process to form a Home Education Advisory Group consisting of representatives of HEA, HENCAST and CHEC and self-nominated members of the ACT home education community.

The COVID-19 health emergency prevented the advisory group from meeting in 2020. The Education Directorate is re-engaging with stakeholders to enable a meeting this year.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Community Inclusion

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Yvette Berry', written over a large, faint circular watermark or stamp.

Date: 12/04/21

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QON No. 32 ECI

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
MICHAEL PETERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Hanson MLA:

In relation to:

Computer information systems (Education AR Pages 57,61,62)

1. What is the status of the proposed implementation of the new School Administration System, "expected to be operational in late 2021"?

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1. The Schools Administration System (SAS) has been incrementally rolled out since April 2018. The Directorate has adopted a phased implementation and comprehensive change management approach to support all schools to progressively implement and embed modules of the new system. Modules have been released in a staged approach that is compatible with the busy and fast paced nature of the work in our schools.

SAS modules that are actively being used across ACT schools include: Attendance, Wellbeing, Academic Reporting, Timetabling, School Level Analytics, Notifications and Enrolments. The Finance module has been adopted by two thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) of our schools, with the remaining schools to be managing their finances on the new system by June 2021.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

Signature:

Date: 24/03/21

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QON No. 35 ECI

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
MICHAEL PETTERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Davis MLA:

In relation to:

Capital Works

Regarding capital development in ACT Public Schools found on budget page 22,

- a. Can you inform the committee of the steps taken to consider climate adaptation in our schools?
- b. What adaptations have been made to ACT schools since the 19/20 summer bushfires to prevent bushfire smoke from being in classrooms?
- c. What involvement do school communities have in any significant development at ACT public schools such as the works planned at Narrabundah College?

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

- a. New and expanded schools are designed to respond to the changing climate and extreme temperatures. This is achieved through infrastructure design including: solar passive orientation, high levels of insulation, double glazing, and external shading.

Programs to improve the resilience of existing school buildings to extreme temperatures include:

- Roof Replacement Program – two successive programs totalling \$24.2 million over six years to replace aged, uninsulated roofs with new roof systems incorporating high levels of insulation.
- Energy Efficient Heating Systems Renewal Program - in addition to renewal of aged heating systems the program includes improvements to draughtproofing, insulation window upgrades and modernisation of ventilation systems. Where cost effective, the modernisation of heating systems includes cooling capacity.
- Tree Planting Program – from 2018-19 to 2019-20, \$0.1 million invested annually to provide future shade to buildings, reduce the impact of heat banking surfaces and provide cool shade to students and playgrounds.
- Draughtproofing Program – annual program to prevent the ingress of external air and air pollutants into classrooms and reduce heating and cooling costs.



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- Heat Mitigation Program – 2017-18 to 2019-20, included initiatives to reduce the impact of summer heat on classroom comfort. The program focused on spaces identified by schools as experiencing extreme temperatures and included mechanical cooling via the air conditioning systems, energy efficient ceiling fans and heat rejecting glazing treatments.
 - Building Tuning Program – annual program to target emission reductions with benefits for student and staff comfort. Initiatives include airlocks, double glazing projects, installation of dampers in evaporative coolers to prevent air flow from and into classrooms, minor upgrades to mechanical plant and insulation to ceilings
- b. The Education Directorate has implemented a number of existing infrastructure programs that impact indoor air quality. These include:
- Draught Proofing Program
 - Building Tuning Program
 - Installation of airlocks
 - Installation of CO2 sensors across 65 schools to enable monitoring of air quality – these are connected to control systems and can be manipulated to manage the ingress of outdoor air.
 - Our newest schools, including Evelyn Scott and Throsby (currently under construction) also have an air-tight membrane to exclude external temperatures and air pollutants including smoke.
- c. The Directorate engages with school communities, neighbours, partners and other stakeholders to inform the design and delivery of ACT Government policy and programs. Engagement strategies are developed for specific school infrastructure projects. This can include a range of face-to-face and online activities, including workshops, meetings, pop-up kiosks, one-on-one conversations, and online scrapbooks. For example, there were 29 consultation activities undertaken as part of the Narrabundah College modernisation, with over 1,000 pieces of feedback considered.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Community Inclusion

Signature:

Date: 24/03/21

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QON No. 36 ECI

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
MICHAEL PETTERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Mr Davis MLA:

In relation to:

Restrictive Practices

I note the section in the annual report on the Positive Behaviour for Learning framework, particularly the directorates work with the Senior Practitioner on minimising restrictive practices.

1. How many instances of restrictive practice were used on ACT students in 19/20?
2. What is being done by the directorate to minimise and ideally eliminate restrictive practice?

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1. In 2019 there were 654 instances of Restrictive Practices (RP) reported. In 2020, 379 instances of RP were reported.
2. In ACT Public schools, restrictive practice is used as a last resort only when there is imminent risk to safety, for the student or others. It is not permitted to be used for compliance or to respond to verbal threats, or to prevent property damage. Creating positive school climates and high-quality support networks is central to our approach to reducing all behaviours of concern. This includes supporting our children and young people with communication, self-regulation, and coping strategies.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Community Inclusion

Signature:

Date:

01/04/21

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QON No. AR - 76

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
MICHAEL PETERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Asked by Ms Kikkert MLA:

In relation to:

Closing the Gap: reading and numeracy targets (CSD Annual Report 2019–20 p. 56)

Output Class 2.3 now includes 'equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities' (Annual Report, p. 56). The 2019 Closing the Gap Report showed that 'in 2017, the Australian Capital Territory was the only jurisdiction on track across all eight areas' of reading and numeracy (p. 49). The 2020 Closing the Gap Report shows that the ACT had reached only three of these eight targets in 2018. What happened to create such different outcomes, and what has the government done to rectify this failure?

Minister Yvette Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

Given the relatively small Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student population in ACT schools, caution needs to be exercised in the interpretation of data which can fluctuate greatly year to year. Changes for a small number of students in a cohort can have a large effect for some indicators. Ensuring equitable educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is a priority and focus for all ACT schools.

All public schools have Professional Learning Communities (PLC) that look at student data, including literacy and numeracy. With this data, PLCs use a spiral of inquiry methodology to formulate an improvement plan and monitor its success.

Teachers also differentiate their teaching and learning program to meet the individual learning needs of their students.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Community Inclusion

Signature:

Date: 12/04/21

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QTON No. 4

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
MICHAEL PETTERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHON DAVIS MLA, PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports and Budget Estimates 2020-21
ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
1 March 2021

Asked by Mr Davis MLA:

In relation to:

What is the average case load for a school psychologist, and do we have a psychologist to student ratio?

Minister Berry MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

ACT public school psychologists work flexibly to meet the individual needs of their community. We cannot provide an average case load for school psychologists, as each case is different with supports often varying in time and intensity.

We do not have a psychologist to student ratio. ACT Public Schools access a range of allied health expertise who work with school psychologists to ensure holistic services are in place.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

Signature:

Date: 18/03/21

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA

Bullying and Violence - Budget Estimates – Executive Summary

- The Directorate has invested heavily in prevention and early intervention for bullying and violence, including supporting, managing and responding to students who experience or may be involved in these behaviours.
- The Safe and Supportive Schools Policy and related procedures provides guidance for Canberra public schools on promoting safe, respectful and supportive school communities.
- The 2019 Minister’s Student Congress on the topic of ‘Bullying’ found students had a good understanding of the definition of bullying, valued development of social emotional skills, a whole school approach, respectful relationships and have a repertoire of strategies including help seeking behaviours.
- In 2019, there were two inquiries into bullying and violence in the ACT:
 - Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs (SCEEYA); and
 - Schools Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs (SCEEYA)

- 23 Recommendations
- The Directorate has made substantial progress, having completed 17 of the 21 actionable recommendations made by the Standing Committee. The remaining four actions are well underway.

Government position	12 Agreed	9 Agreed in Principle	2 Noted
Status at October 2021	10 Completed 2 In progress	7 Completed 2 In progress	-

Rec #	Standing Committee Recommendation	Government Response	2021 October Update
1	The Committee recommends that the ACT Government partner with community agencies to provide independent support and guidance to students and their families when preparing for a formal restorative conference following incidents of bullying or violence.	Agreed The ACT Government will continue to strengthen the use of restorative practices in ACT schools as a means of supporting positive school culture based on positive relationships, safety and wellbeing. The Education Directorate will work with other agencies to support schools, students and families in effectively employing restorative practices such as restorative conferences following incidents of bullying and violence.	In Progress - Timeframe for Completion: 2022 The PBL draft project plan light includes: 1. Provide a guide for schools to access external agencies that can provide conferencing - expected completion 2022 2. Develop a training package to inform a restorative practices approach within ACT schools
3	The Committee recommends that the ACT Government	Agreed The ACT Government supports evidence-informed practice and will	In Progress - Timeframe for Completion: 2022

	<p>endorse a small range of Social Emotional Learning programs to operate in conjunction with Positive Behaviour Learning that support schools respond to childhood trauma, behaviour management and violence in schools. Following this endorsement activity, all ACT public schools are required to implement Directorate nominated programs.</p>	<p>build on the suite of evidence-based Social Emotional Learning programs that already exist.</p> <p>The Future of Education Strategy includes an initiative to enhance the role of the Teacher Quality Institute to share excellent practice and contemporary research evidence across the ACT; and explore the creation of an ACT teaching evidence clearing house, possibly as an extension of the Teacher Quality Institute.</p>	<p>Identification of Social Emotional Learning programs is well underway.</p> <p>PBL systems, professional learning and ongoing work with schools incorporates a trauma informed approach.</p> <p>The Directorate's <i>Safe and Supportive Schools Policy</i> requires every ACT public school to explicitly teach social emotional skills and to use the Australian Curriculum to plan for and guide students' development of the general capabilities, including personal and social capability and intercultural and ethical understanding, in school and classroom learning. This is undertaken as one of the seven essential features of the PBL framework.</p> <p>The Directorate also endorses <i>Be You</i>, an initiative that builds on the success and learnings from the 5 existing programs that are now integrated into one single, national initiative delivered through early learning services, primary and secondary schools. Since the launch of <i>Be You</i> in November 2018, the Directorate has been supporting its uptake and as of February 2020, 92 per cent of ACT schools (123 schools) have registered for <i>Be You</i>.</p>
18	<p>The Committee recommends that the ACT Government introduce a parent self-reporting portal for incidents relating to bullying, violence and occupational violence.</p>	<p>Agreed in principle</p> <p>Schools and the Education Directorate encourage parents to raise incidents of bullying, school-based violence and occupational violence with their school. However, there are processes in place that give parents the opportunity to raise complaints or concerns regardless of their nature with the Education Directorate. This is currently through the Families, Students, Complaints and Feedback team.</p> <p>The ACT Government understands that this process needs to be enhanced. The Education Directorate</p>	<p>In Progress - Timeframe for Completion: to be confirmed</p> <p>Work has commenced.</p> <p>Feedback and Complaints is currently working with Digital Strategy, Services and Transformation (DSST) to include a link for Parents on the SAS parent portal.</p>

		is currently redesigning its complaints management and case coordination process. It is intended that this will include an online solution that would seek to provide not only an online lodgement mechanism, but the ability to keep families up to date on actions being undertaken	
19	The Committee recommends that the ACT Government introduce a student self-reporting portal for incidents relating to bullying, violence and occupational violence.	<p>Agreed in principle Schools and the Education Directorate encourage students to raise incidents of bullying, school-based violence and occupational violence with their school, which may include reporting to their teacher, a school counsellor or a school psychologist. However, there are processes in place that give students the opportunity to raise complaints or concerns regardless of their nature with the Education Directorate. This is currently through the Families, Students, Complaints and Feedback team.</p> <p>The ACT Government understands that this process needs to be enhanced. The Education Directorate is currently redesigning its complaints management and case coordination process. It is intended that this will include an online solution that would seek to provide not only an online lodgement mechanism, but the ability to keep families up to date on actions being undertaken.</p>	<p>In Progress - Timeframe for Completion: To be confirmed</p> <p>Work has commenced.</p> <p>Feedback and Complaints is currently working with Digital Strategy, Services and Transformation (DSST) to include a link for students on Backpack.</p>

School Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

- SEAC is the Schools Education Advisory Committee. The members of the SEAC were appointed by the Minister (see table below).
- SEAC was asked to advise on opportunities to strengthen practices in schools and the Education Directorate, with a focus on Positive Behaviours for Learning (PBL).
- SEAC noted PBL is a sound framework upon which to build a safe, supportive and inclusive school culture.
- 75% of ACT public schools are in the process of PBL implementation, with all schools ensuring that they are creating positive learning environments appropriate to school context and student need.
- SEAC's report made 38 observations, many of which are directly related to PBL.

SEAC Members

Role	Member	Relevant background
Chair	Sue Chapman	Former Deputy-Director-General in the Community Services Directorate and First Assistant Secretary, Portfolio People Services in the Department of Human Services.
Deputy Chair	Chris Redmond	Former Chief Executive Officer of Woden Community Service.
Member	Dr Sue Packer	2019 Australian Senior Citizen of the Year, a Paediatrician and a Community Paediatrician with a special interest in child abuse and abuse prevention and a member of the Expert Panel into Students with Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviours.
Member	Dennis Yarrington	Former principal with extensive experience in public and Catholic education, including the positions of teacher, executive teacher, consultant and principal.
Member	Nick Maniatis	Current high school teacher and AEU sub-branch president.
Member	Kirsty McGovern-Hooley	Current president of the ACT Council of Parents and Citizen's Association.
Member	Barbara Causon	Wiradjuri woman with extensive experience in the Australian Public Service including Centrelink's Area Manager for North Australia and current Chairperson of <i>Our Booris, Our Way Review</i> of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection system.
Member	Philippa Godwin	Consultant with particular interest in leadership, organisational design, and public sector management and member of the Schools for All Oversight Group.