



SCHOOLS FOR ALL

3rd Quarter Executive Summary

September 2016 (Actions reported to 31 August 2016)

Introduction

This executive summary provides an overview of key progress made across the sectors to implement the recommendations of the *Schools for All Children and Young People – Report of the Expert Panel on Students with Complex Needs* (Expert Panel Report). The summary should be read in conjunction with the individual 3rd quarter reports of the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT, Catholic Education Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn and the Education Directorate.

The Schools for All Program is a three-year program of system reform which aims to ensure that every ACT school is a safe, inclusive learning environment for every student. It is much more than the implementation of 50 recommendations.

Implementation

Despite the differences across the education system, there is clear evidence that momentum is building and significant progress has been made towards the student-centred and inclusive vision of the Expert Panel Report, which aims for each ACT school to be able to cater to the diverse and individual needs of each student within their local community, particularly those with complex needs and challenging behaviours.

It is worth noting that each of the three education sectors is taking a slightly different approach to the implementation of the Program, acknowledging the differences in operational environments and governance structures. The Association of Independent Schools of the ACT (AISACT), as an independent governing body representing 18 independent schools that are separate and autonomous entities, noted the recommendations of the Expert Panel. Catholic Education has articulated the parameters it will use to ratify the closure of each recommendations from the Schools For All Report as:

- Catholic Education has clearly established processes to support the recommendation
- Evidence exists that each recommendation has been adopted and is sustainable at a school level
- Professional learning has been delivered where required.

Catholic Education will therefore see a marked increase in the ratification of recommendations in the second and third year of the process. Catholic Education is committed to the sustainability of all actions taken and need sufficient time to implement and ensure change is taking place before sign-off.

Due dates and closure of recommendations

The 3rd quarter reports show that significant progress has been made over the last quarter. As at September 2016, the Education Directorate (EDU) had closed 15 recommendations and Catholic Education (CE) has closed 7 recommendations. A rigorous process for closing recommendations has been developed.

Several of the recommendations in the Expert Panel report are longer-term recommendations, requiring significant consultation and collaboration across the education system, government and with the community sector. For example, Recommendation 12.3 requires *“that EDU, CE, AIS, the Community Services Directorate, and ACT Health, collaboratively develop mechanisms to ensure that service provision with respect to children and young people with complex needs and challenging behaviour, and their families*

is offered in a strategic and client focused manner and demonstrates effective communication among all parties". This is a cornerstone recommendation that when achieved will be a key measure of success.

In EDU's 3rd quarter report, due dates against recommendations have been revised where the impact of dependencies and additional work requirements have been identified. The Directorate is confident that these revised dates better reflect the degree of work required to meet the specific recommendation.

Table 1: Recommendations closed this quarter
Recommendation 6.1: That ETD, CE, and each Independent School, encourage all school leaders to implement KidsMatter (for primary schools) and MindMatters (for high schools) as part of their overall strategy to support positive school culture, student wellbeing, and behaviour.
Recommendation 10.1: That ETD increases the number of psychologists/school counsellors (or other professionals with complementary expertise) within schools to meet the ratio of 1:500 students recommended by the Australian Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools Association.
Recommendation 10.3: That ETD ensure that the NSETs are sufficiently resourced and supported to allow them to (a) provide ongoing coaching to teachers within the classroom setting to assist with the support of students with very challenging behaviours; (b) respond proactively and in a timely way to meet identified needs; and (c) develop a high level of expertise in relation to the support and management of students with very challenging behaviours, and obtain specialist consultant advice where required.
Recommendation 11.4: That ETD (a) amend the Exemption Certificate policy and procedures to require all Exemption Certificates to be subject to regular review (for example, every six months) to ensure that the exemption remains necessary; and (b) monitor the basis for the exemption of students, and the proportion of students subject to exemption who have a disability.
Recommendation 13.2: That ETD, CE, and each Independent School, ensure that the program of induction for all permanent and temporary teachers includes components on the teaching of students with complex needs and challenging behaviour.
Recommendation 13.4: That ETD, CE, and AIS, cooperate to (a) make available to all member schools existing online learning modules in: autism spectrum disorder; dyslexia and significant reading difficulties; motor coordination difficulties; speech; language and communication needs; understanding and managing behaviour; understanding hearing loss; and/or other courses as identified by member schools; and (b) ensure that these learning modules are complemented by follow-up support including face to face assistance, workshops and coaching components.
Recommendation 13.5: That ETD, CE and AIS, (a) develop, and liaise with the teacher Quality Institute to accredit, a suite of professional learning options relevant to teaching students with complex needs and challenging behaviour. This would include, but not be limited to, modules on: de-escalation and safe use of restraint; trauma; autism spectrum disorder; mental health; attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; and/or learning difficulties; and (b) establish mechanisms to monitor staff and school participation in these programs.

Sustainability

As noted in the Government response to the Expert panel report in November 2015, all Government and non-Government education providers acknowledged a strong desire to build on existing reforms, improvements and initiatives, as far as practical and possible.

Catholic Education continues to utilise the Expert Panel Report, along with the CE Principles of Pedagogy and Wellbeing and Diversity Framework to address the needs of all students including those with complex needs and challenging behaviours. While there has been a clear focus on addressing foundational principles at the heart of a genuine student-centred vision, CE has also linked its response to the Expert Panel Report to the broader work of the Religious Education and Curriculum Team. Through its work with school leaders, CE is acknowledging the role of the Instructional Leader, in creating school cultures where beliefs, relationships and attitudes are supportive and reflective of the needs of all within the community.

The Education Directorate has also demonstrated a focus on sustainable change by linking work under the Schools for All Program to existing Directorate frameworks including: *Great Teachers By Design*, *Great Teaching By Design*, *People, Performance and Practice* and the *Engaging Schools Framework*. As noted in the Government's response to the Expert Panel report, 'the integration of the recommendations and findings of the Expert Panel into ACT schools' program of reform will improve outcomes for all students'.

The goal of safe and inclusive Canberra schools is central to the Directorate’s current and future strategic agenda.

The AISACT is building on existing reform and practices, and responding to recommendations, through the agenda of both AISACT Board and Executive Committee meetings. Further, the Executive Committee has established a *Schools for All* Subcommittee to provide advice on strategies and opportunities in direct reference to the *Schools for All* Report, and the responses to the recommendations from the Association. This has bought about a genuine interest of member schools in the Expert Panel report and how existing practice, and future strategic planning, can support the intent of the Expert Panel report. As is evident in AISACTs 3rd quarter report, there is increasing engagement from member schools to share their practices and incorporate the intent of the Expert Panel report into their strategic planning.

Highlights of Progress

The 3rd quarter reports for each sector detail the breadth of work undertaken in the last quarter. It is evident that each sector has placed an emphasis on: student wellbeing, professional learning and capacity building for staff; parental engagement and school culture change through a focus on strengthening student voice. The following table presents several highlights under these themes.

Table 2: Key Highlights this quarter
Wellbeing
<p><i>ALL:</i> Independent, Catholic and public schools across Canberra have embraced KidsMatter and MindMatters as a program to support student wellbeing. These evidence-based mental health initiatives support students in primary and secondary schools. ACT has the highest uptake of KidsMatter and MindMatters in Australia.</p> <p><i>EDU:</i> <i>Strengthened Network Student Engagement Teams (NSETs).</i> Four additional senior psychologists and four additional social workers with case management capabilities have been recruited to strengthen the response to families and students through the Network Student Engagement Teams. In addition, speech pathologists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists have been empowered to support students with learning difficulties and delays, respond to the needs within specialist schools and support teachers in delivering the curriculum to all students. NSET Teams support schools in five ways: professional learning, building school capacity, targeted student support, review of funding received by a student through NSET and linking schools with community supports.</p> <p><i>AISACT:</i> <i>Example of a wellbeing initiative in practice:</i> An independent school in the ACT has adopted a policy of Relationship Management that views inappropriate behaviour as an opportunity for educators and students to discuss, problem-solve and negotiate alternative solutions for challenging situations.</p> <p><i>CE:</i> Schools have continued to roll out Wellbeing projects and evidence indicates that these projects are having a positive influence on wellbeing of staff and students. In responding to student-centred learning CE acknowledges the links between belonging, engagement and achievement and note that when these are addressed through effective pedagogies, student wellbeing is enhanced The Wellbeing and Diversity Framework is providing a platform to help schools build on current approaches to wellbeing and diversity.</p>
Professional Learning and Capacity Building
<p><i>ALL:</i> EDU, CE and AISACT are collaborating with TQI, UC and ACU in a cross sectoral professional learning working group to progress recommendations 13.1 – reviewing and improving theoretical and practical relevance of teacher education units with respect to teaching students with complex needs and challenging behaviours (including disability). Also recommendation 13.5 - Develop and liaise with TQI to accredit a suite of PL options relevant to teaching students with CNCB and establishing mechanisms with TQI to monitor staff and school participation in these programs.</p> <p><i>EDU:</i> The Directorate is also working with Disability ACT to develop a cross sectoral Train the Trainer Model to</p>

implement the *Everyone Everyday* professional learning package across the system. Teachers from all three sectors will be trained as facilitators, to provide greater access to teachers and learning support staff across all sectors.

AISACT:

AISACT has an established Students with Disability network who meet once a term at a different Independent School. At the beginning of each meeting the host school provides an overview of the types of programs they have in place for students with disability and students with complex needs and challenging behaviour.

CE:

Professional learning opportunities have continued to be offered to classroom teachers, learning support teachers and Learning Support Assistants. External consultants have worked with teachers, learning support assistants and school leaders to build capacity in identify and implementing pedagogies that are appropriate to students' specific needs.

Parental Engagement

EDU:

The Schools for All Program team continue to host quarterly parent forums and provides information to schools via the Schools Bulletin, every fortnight.

AISACT:

The AISACT hosted a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) information night for Independent School parents in Term 3 to inform them about the NDIS and how to connect their child's NDIS plans with their educational program.

CE:

CE has continued to ensure that the development of effective relationships both within the classroom and between families and schools remains a priority. A key priority of this quarter has been to support improved relationships in the home.

Student Voice

ALL:

A cross sectoral youth forum, *Ask Us... Student Voice forum*, was held on Thursday 28th July 2016.

Coordinated/facilitated by Youth Coalition and a cross sector working group. The focus was on Student Voice and ensuring that all ACT schools have a raised awareness of the importance of student voice to school engagement, educational objectives and student outcomes.

The deliverables were to engage with students and provide an opportunity for them to give advice to schools on engagement. The day started with an address by the Education Minister, followed by keynote speakers and workshops to explore the following questions:

- *What are schools currently doing to encourage student voice in the running of the school?*
- *What would students like to see schools do to encourage student voice in the running of their school?*

The discussion identified examples from across the ACT of good practices that enable student voice; the principles that are common to these diverse practices; strategies, mechanisms and tools that can be used by schools to improve student voice.

109 students attended and 55 Canberra schools were represented. The findings from the Youth Forum will be combined with an audit of tools and resources and a literature review of best practice to develop a resource document for schools to facilitate student voice.

Safe, Sensory Learning Environments

EDU:

There has been a strong focus on the Capital Upgrades Program for safe sensory spaces. Schools have been supported by the Network Student Engagement Teams to develop proposals for upgrade with input from occupational therapists. To support the broader intent of the Expert Panel report, EDU will be providing professional learning for schools regarding modifying environments. Catholic Education has shared their resources to support this work including a two hour workshop about classroom design including calm spaces. This workshop will be modified for use by EDU and accredited with TQI.

AISACT:

AISACT continues to work with Member Schools to review current provision for calming/sensory spaces. Students in Independent Schools access a variety of safe calming/sensory spaces. Example of a safe,

sensory space in practice: This independent school has a Safe School room, the students had a naming competition for the room. There are mindfulness colouring book activities, positive psychology posters, resources of strengthen cards and resilience games to stimulate calm, welcoming and a safe, supportive environment for students.

CE:

There has been extensive collaboration with schools in the creation of positive environments that are required to sustain student wellbeing. Key work in this area has involved working directly with schools around the creation of such environments. CE developed and delivered professional learning on effective use of calming spaces to enhance the positive educational environments.

Focus over the next quarter

The focus areas for the next quarter include:

- strengthening education system connections with the community sector and ACT government directorates;
- finalising the evaluation framework and change management strategy for the Schools for All Program;
- expanding and upgrading safe, sensory spaces in Canberra schools; and
- continuing to build capacity through professional learning.

Program Director sign off (EDU) Oct 2016

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