



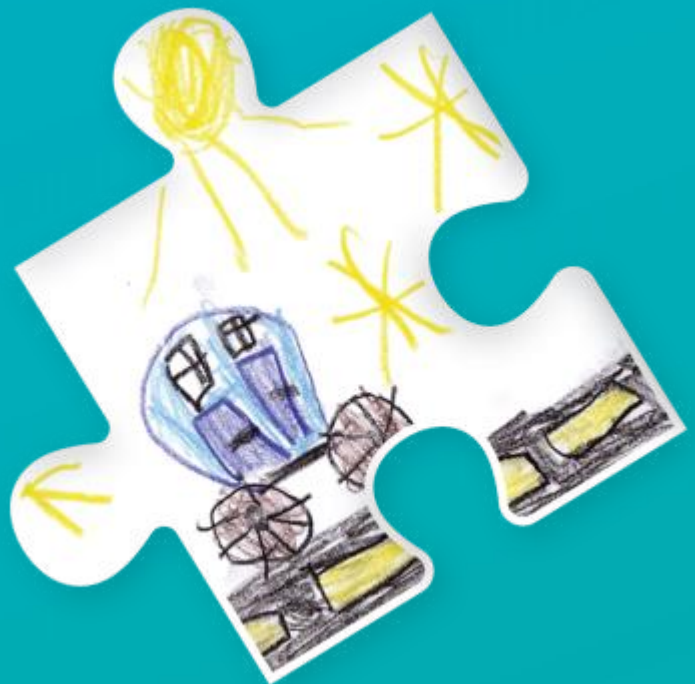
ACT
Government
Education



The future of **EDUCATION**

An ACT community conversation

**Discussion Paper -
Workforce**



Minister's Introduction

Dear teachers, school leaders, allied learning professionals and school support staff

In relatively wealthy communities like Canberra it's easy to forget the incredible power of a good education. Its power is in how it helps people irrespective of their background and circumstances.

Teachers change lives. Your work breaks down disadvantage and opens up life chances for children and young people who wouldn't otherwise get them. I have always admired how teachers take children as they are, knowing that they start at very different levels of education and development, and with lots of things going on in their lives. Just like doctors working with patients, I know that teachers are expert professionals highly skilled at working with their students to lead them through their learning journey.

Feedback received so far through the Future of Education community conversation has been overwhelmingly positive about the ACT's teaching and school support workforce. Students believe that 'what makes us succeed is being surrounded by people who encourage you, but also push you to be the best you can be.' School communities have also identified that 'teachers are the single most important resource to a child's learning.'

The following discussion paper is founded in these important principles.

Being confident that there is great respect for you, I am asking that through this discussion paper, you take a moment to reflect on your work and how you do it. I am challenging you to think a little bit about your profession, about the things that are currently supporting great teaching and areas where maybe it is falling short of the mark. I want to hear about what you think needs to change to make sure that every child has access to a great education consistently throughout their schooling.

So while of course it is vital that you have the resources you need, and I am committed to making sure that these are available to you, it is important that the ACT takes a look at issues like how teachers are initially trained and subsequently supported through professional learning. The school system also needs

appropriate instructional leadership and to make sure that there is a systemic focus on ensuring quality teaching, consistently in every classroom. The right measures of school performance should also be in place so that so the government is accountable for the right things, and teachers and individual schools are only accountable in ways that fairly reflect their level of control over their work.

I am also very conscious that there are a lot of demands placed on schools. It is clear that schools are centres of community and are increasingly being asked to facilitate a range of services for children and young people. So this discussion paper and the survey accompanying it, also gives you an opportunity to reflect on the roles and responsibilities of the various committed people working in schools. Because alongside teachers, supporting their life-changing work, are teams of equally dedicated support staff.

Thank you for being a part of this conversation. I look forward to your contribution.

Yvette Berry MLA
Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development

Introduction: the teaching profession

Research by Hattie (2003)¹ identified that teachers account for 30% of variance in a student's achievement. This is the biggest effect after non-school factors related to the student themselves. In Hattie's 2017 list, the source of four of the top ten factors influencing student achievement were teachers or teaching strategies. Great influence sits in the hands of teachers, we need to ensure it is utilised to ensure positive effects upon the learner.²

Feedback from the Future of Education community conversation overwhelmingly indicates the ACT community values our education workforce, with comments noting the presence of 'excellent committed teachers' and 'quality staff' within the education systems.

ACT teachers are highly qualified. Almost 40% of ACT teachers have higher level tertiary qualifications, above the minimum required Bachelors degree. Master level qualifications are becoming the benchmark qualification for secondary teaching graduates and primary teaching will likely follow this trend over the coming years.

The ACT teacher workforce is also very experienced. More than 60% of ACT teachers have been teaching for more than ten years, while around 20% are in their first five years of teaching. Approximately 45% of teachers are aged less than 40 years and the average age of a teacher is 43 years. The teacher workforce has a healthy age distribution with an annual turnover rate of about 7%, providing employment opportunities for new teachers.

A significant body of evidence shows that students taught by a succession of highly skilled, high performing teachers will progress three times as fast as those placed with less-effective teachers. Highly skilled principals and school leaders are equally essential in creating the culture, environment, structures and systems to develop high performing, expert teaching teams. Every ACT student deserves to have great teachers and it is the quality of our teaching workforce which is the critical factor in achieving equitable outcomes for these students.

The critical factor in achieving equitable outcomes for all students in the ACT is to entrench a strong, expert and respected teaching profession.

¹ Hattie, J (2003:2) *Teachers Make a Difference, What is the research evidence?* Australian Council for Educational Research.

² Hattie, J (2003:3) Ibid.

Attracting and preparing the teachers of tomorrow

Teachers are one of the most important resources to a child's learning and to achieve results for students, schools need to have the best possible teaching workforce working within every learning environment across the ACT.

McKinsey (2007) reports the highest performing systems across the world employ a number of consistent strategies to attract and select the right people into teaching and to develop and grow their educators in order to achieve a high-quality educator workforce.³ These include:

- strong selection processes
- competitive graduate salaries for teachers
- raising the status of the teaching profession
- deliberate and iterative approaches to teacher professional learning and development
- selection and development of educational leaders who have the capacity to develop high performing, expert teaching teams.

Some commentators have raised concerns that 'following recent demand-driven reforms, some universities [in Australia] are admitting larger numbers of teacher education students with increasingly low Year 12 performances.'⁴ This is in contrast to other high performing systems such as South Korea (teachers are drawn from the top 5% of graduates), Finland (top 10%) and Singapore and Hong Kong (top 30%).⁵ Australia draws its teachers largely from the middle third of school leavers.

It is also essential that new graduates entering the classroom are 'ready to teach' and capable of meeting the individual needs of all students in the classroom. Jensen and Toon (2017) report 'OECD data shows that new Australian teachers feel far less prepared to teach specific subjects than many of their international counterparts.'⁶ This was confirmed by Future of Education feedback from beginning teachers who commented on the lack of induction provided prior to the first week,

the basic resources available and feeling unsure on what they actually needed in the classroom.

Jensen and Toon (2017) also note 'trainees often learn the theory behind teaching, without learning to teach well. Many lecturers haven't been inside a classroom for 20 years and are incentivised to prioritise publication of research over training.'⁷ Future of Education feedback even noted 'it often takes research based pedagogies 50 years to go from university to classroom practice. This is not good enough. It doesn't fit in with society and its progression'. Pedagogy is the method by which we strengthen and deepen learning, known as the practice of teaching.

Additionally, teaching students need high quality placements in schools, alongside high quality mentors. The ACT is well placed to research and trial innovative approaches to preparing future teachers through the collaborative relationships that exist between its two universities that provide teacher preparation programs, links with the teacher employers and the ACT Teacher Quality Institute.

For example, practicum placement models like those used in the health profession that involve more intensive time in schools integrated with academic programs such as teaching or affiliate schools have proved successful internationally.

It is, therefore appropriate to question if the course structure and content of our tertiary education degrees is still current and appropriate for the changing educational landscape. Is greater emphasis on practical experience required? Should the final term of an education university degree be connected to the upcoming workplace of a new teacher, to enable a clearer understanding of their school environment?

Future of Education feedback suggested the notion of 'clinical supervision for teachers,' and perhaps a model of teacher 'residency', in which a beginning teacher is under the direct or indirect

³ McKinsey & Company (2007:16-23) *How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top.* http://mckinseysociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/Worlds_School_Systems_Final.pdf

⁴ Masters, G (2017:1) 'Big five' challenges in school education. Teacher, Australian Council for Educational Research.

⁵ McKinsey & Company (2007:16) Ibid.

⁶ Jensen, B and Toon, D (2017) *Teaching our teachers: why universities and schools need to go back to class.* The Australian Higher Education Supplement.

⁷ Jensen, B and Toon, D (2017) Ibid.

supervision of a more experienced teacher for a longer period of time.

Future of Education feedback has also suggested that there should be 'higher education requirements for teachers (e.g. [5 years study leading to] Masters),' with the belief that the requirement for a Masters degree could assist with raising the status of the teaching profession. Should a higher qualification level be required for teacher preparation programs? Gradually establishing a Master level qualification as the minimum standard can be achieved with little disruption to the supply of new teachers. Many qualifications, especially in the secondary area, have already started to move to this level of qualification.

Enabling and growing current teaching professionals

Over the last decade significant progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching and professionalising the teaching profession. National education reform led to the development of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* and the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* and established nationally consistent teacher registration.

The strong focus of the ACT Teacher Quality Institute on professional learning to grow the local profession has also driven improvement. In line with Finland, the ACT Government requires completion of at least 20 hours of professional learning (PL) annually to maintain registration.⁸ This professional learning must reference the teaching standards and requires teachers to critically reflect on their learning and how it will lead to improvement in their teaching. However, some high performing school systems have gone further – other countries expect up to four times more accredited professional learning each year.⁹ Could the ACT adopt a similar approach?

⁸ ACT Teacher Quality Institute.
<https://www.tqi.act.edu.au/>

⁹ McKinsey & Company (2007:23) *How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top*.

¹⁰ McKinsey & Company (2010:44) *Ibid*.

¹¹ Sahlberg, P (2011:35) *The Professional Educator: Lessons from Finland*. American Educator.

A hallmark in the journey that educational systems take to become great is that teacher practice is 'evidence-informed, school-based instructional practice whereby teachers collaborate and set standards to which they hold each other accountable'.¹⁰

Rather than participating in a 'traditional classroom-setting' style of professional learning, teachers are currently empowered through an emphasis on exploring new ways of professional learning and development that more closely reflects current learning needs and contemporary classroom practice. Research into effective teaching and learning approaches, new tools and technologies for learning and the demands of the twenty-first century should inform how teachers organise and deliver student learning experiences, and should therefore inform professional learning and development.

High performing systems have a strong commitment to research based teacher education, where 'educational theories, research methodologies and practice all play an important part in preparation programs'.¹¹ EduResearch Matters notes 'by the nature of their role, teachers are informal researchers. Every day a teacher enters their classroom with a new lesson to try, a new strategy to test'.¹² Teachers, who have research skills and who look outside of the own experiences, will find and evaluate possible solutions to teaching and classroom issues more quickly and efficiently. This makes them more effective.¹³ There is a real opportunity presenting itself at the moment to further strengthen relationships with local tertiary institutions to deliver research-based teacher education combined with modern, relevant professional learning in the ACT.

A research based approach to teacher development needs to include formal mechanisms for sharing learning and good practice across all schools. Highly effective approaches to building the skills of teachers also involve a collaborative approach where teachers work together to grow their profession. There is

¹² Pezaro, C (2015) Teachers as researchers: what they do, where to find them and how academic researchers can engage them.
<https://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=980>

¹³ Pezaro, C (2015) *Ibid*.

an opportunity to further develop communities of practice in the ACT, based in schools or clusters of schools and across all sectors, as part of an approach to improving the teaching workforce. Additionally, improving the way teachers work with their peers through coaching and mentoring relationships, particularly as expert instructional leaders emerge, will assist in developing the profession.

Building Instructional Leaders

Schools need expert teachers across all areas of learning and need to have strategies in place to ensure there are high-performing and expert teachers in every classroom every day. This requires a focus on workforce planning, professional learning and appropriately defined school leadership roles.

A common challenge that the ACT shares with other jurisdictions is a need for expert teachers in particular discipline areas who can provide leadership for their peers. According to a Australian Council for Educational Research report,¹⁴ there are a large number of teachers across the nation that are teaching subjects ‘out-of-field’, without specific training in that subject.

One of the keys to building leadership capacity in ACT schools is creating opportunities to keep the best teachers in the classroom. Leading teaching and learning improvements through highly skilled teachers with formal training in mentoring and coaching has the capacity to provide a more consistent and high quality learning environment across all ACT schools.

Certification of exemplary teachers at the Highly Accomplished and Lead levels of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* is a nationally agreed process for recognising the best teachers. The ACT, while it has less than 2% of the national teacher workforce, has almost 15% of the teachers who have been recognised as Highly Accomplished or Lead. However, this is still less than half of a teacher per ACT school.

Opportunities exist for ACT systems, schools and the Teacher Quality Institute to encourage and incentivise teachers to seek certification and to

develop a wider range of meaningful classroom based roles that both recognise and reward outstanding teachers.

Additionally, building strong leadership teams is an important part of ensuring the best possible outcomes for students. Those with leadership roles make a vital contribution. Highly successful educators in identified school leadership positions must shape, mentor and guide their less experienced counterparts to grow in competence and confidence. School leaders play an important role as professional educational mentors for other teachers, and themselves need support through professional learning and sufficient time among the other demands of their job.

A systemic focus on quality teaching

Educators often enter into the profession because they have a passion and desire to make a real difference to the lives of children and young people through the classroom. Future of Education feedback explicitly requested ‘reviewing procedures with a view to reducing the administrative burden on teachers, leaving them free to focus on good teaching.’ It is therefore, critical to explore whether current systems support or hinder teachers to make a difference.

In recent years, within ACT public schools, the focus on ‘creating time’ for teachers to concentrate on their core role has been sharpened. The core role of teachers is to improve student learning. Within this core role, the professional responsibilities and regular pattern of work of a teacher includes:

- instruction and supervision of students
- curriculum planning
- assessment and reporting of student learning
- professional learning
- parent/teacher interviews;
- facilitating activities to enrich the educational experiences of students.

Teachers need time to focus on things that matter for their core role, individually and in partnership with colleagues. ‘When teachers achieve a higher level of skill, as is the case in good to great and great to excellent improvement

¹⁴Weldon, P (2015:9) *Policy Insights: The Teacher Workforce in Australia: Supply, Demand and Data Issues*. Australian Council for Educational Research.

journey stages... tight central control becomes counter-productive in system improvement'.¹⁵ So school environments need systematised teacher-led innovation and collaboration as the drivers for improvement.

Systemic arrangements also need to empower teachers to focus on quality teaching. A range of factors are relevant including class sizes; the number of face-to-face hours teachers have with students; the level of autonomy provided to teachers by schools; time for collaboratively planning and assessing; and the level of induction, support and mentoring provided to teachers.

Successful education systems understand the link between teacher preparation, workplace environment and ongoing professional growth. Systems are not made stronger by strengthening one of these elements at the expense of another, rather resources should be directed towards improvements in all elements, knowing they work together as important parts of a whole.

It is therefore important to ask how the coordination of policies and activities at a systemic level might better focus the workforce on quality teaching.

Recognising results

When assessing the results of teaching effort, what is measured and how measurement and reporting occurs, can have significant impacts, good and bad, on student outcomes. School assessment and reporting needs to be useful for students, teachers and parents, and needs to be conducive to improvement in student outcomes.

It is of course important that children are achieving a satisfactory minimum standard in essential skills like literacy and numeracy. These are the foundations of the rest of education, work and life. But achievement levels in these areas are a poor indicator of school and teacher performance. They ignore where students and schools start and the learning growth that has been achieved. Teachers and individual schools should only be accountable in ways that fairly reflect their level of control over their work and the resources they have to do it.

The ACT Government has recently initiated a review of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) through the national ministerial council, with a particular focus on how this data is reported and used. Governments need other, more appropriate ways of measuring school performance. Future of Education feedback from some parents and schools has provided support for the government's direction this area.

'Schools are consistently sending the message to staff and students that achievement is valued but not improvement. Staff who day in and day out work with low-performing students, never see their students gains publicly valued or celebrated...in the end they give up....students give up.'

Parents have also identified '[there is a risk of us] being left behind globally not just in terms of literacy and numeracy but as a functional, equitable society where innovation, problem-solving, communication, team work and cultural understanding are the dominant currencies.'

Recent concerns have been raised about how NAPLAN, as a point in time test with a narrow focus, puts unfair stress on students, families and teachers. The current approach to NAPLAN is also considered to get in the way of schools and teachers, preventing them from focusing on their job of educating students.

Future of Education feedback has called for more of a focus on the General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum such as *Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability Ethical Understanding and Intercultural Understanding*. However, standardised testing such as NAPLAN does not measure the whole student and therefore it is not particularly useful for teachers and students in informing learning.

Some experts regard value-added scores as providing a more accurate measures of school performance because 'they are better able to isolate the performance of schools from other factors that affect student performance'.¹⁶ Changing the focus to value-added scores enables a student with their teacher and parents

¹⁵ McKinsey & Company (2019:44) *How the world's most improved systems keep getting better*.

¹⁶ Jensen, B. (2010:4) *Measuring What Matters: Student Progress*. Grattan Institute.

to look at the improvement made between each assessment, aiming for a year's growth from a year's learning. This kind of measure better reflects the contribution a school makes to that progress, controlling for a student's individual circumstances.

Would the community as a whole embrace an alternative approach to measurement and reporting of student outcomes and school performance? Is standardised testing the right model to measure the 21st century skills that employers will require in the future? What should teachers be expected to achieve and how should their achievements be recognised?

As Pasi Sahlberg, former Director-General at Finland's Ministry of Education, states:

*'When you ask who is a successful student in school or which are the successful schools, it's almost always those who do well in English and maths, and it doesn't matter how good you are at music or social sciences or sports or something else.'*¹⁷

Literacy and numeracy are key to a child's development, however, students will need a variety of different skills to engage in a wide range of post-school opportunities. Success across all subjects and in all forms should be celebrated. There are multiple pathways for students into later work and life, all of which have value and a place in society. A standardised testing approach is measuring for only some of these paths.

It time to consider measures that are meaningful to every child, encourage growth in learning and recognises the many options available to students when they leave school. These measures need to be useful for teachers and fairly constructed. What are these measures? How should ACT schools recognise results and hold every part of the education system fairly accountable for their contribution?

Roles and responsibilities: teachers, allied learning professionals and support staff

Research indicates a number of people believe the primary (or perhaps sole) purpose of schools is to provide an academic education. Others think it is to develop well-rounded, well-socialised individuals.¹⁸ There is ambiguity about the boundary between parental and school responsibility for a child's education, with increased expectations placed on teachers by students, parents and the community.

Professional skills expected of teachers include building relationships and student engagement, as well as working with the whole child by differentiating learning, catering for diversity, pastoral care and privileging student voice. Teachers and schools are also shouldering an increasing administrative workload. Society has changed and families do look different today than in the past. Schools have a role, albeit fundamental, in a student's life, but it is not the only influence.

Ultimately, there is cause to question whether the role of teachers and school leaders is appropriately defined and understood by the community. Consideration needs to be given to the way in which teaching is delivered and what the role of an educator is. Teachers note that to successfully deliver future-focused learning 'a whole system change needs to happen' away from the model we've been using in the past. Principals recognise 'we do have to change the paradigm because what worked for me when I was in school, I know as a principal, won't build the best prospects for the kids in the future.'

The deployment of high quality education support is an important element which enables young people to succeed in our schools and early childhood education settings. Education support roles include allied health professionals, school psychologists, business managers and administration staff. Figure 1 provides a breakdown of the ACT Education Directorate (Public Schools) workforce profile.

¹⁷ News Article: SMH: Finnish education expert critical of NAPLAN ahead of his move to Australia. 22 January 2018.

¹⁸ March 1998. *A Class Act: Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession*. Commonwealth of Australia.

Classification	Number of staff
Administrative Officers	1763
Executive Officers	16
General Service Officers and Equivalent	120
Health Assistants	5
Health Professional Officers	24
Information Technology Officers	25
Professional Officers	98
School Leaders	750
Senior Officers	149
Teachers	3625
Trainees and Apprentices	2
Not Disclosed*	1
TOTAL	6578

* Breakdown by classification group not for publication due to privacy reasons.

Figure 1 – Workforce Profile – ACT Education Directorate 2016-17 Annual Report

Education systems in the ACT are committed to having a structure for support staff that best meets the needs of students and school operations. Additionally, teachers need to be relieved of administrative work outside their core focus of facilitating learning, and the important work of support staff needs to be better acknowledged. For example, in public schools, the recent *ACTPS Administrative and Related Classifications Enterprise Agreement 2014-2017* provided for a *School Assistant Classification Review*. The key objective of the review was to support a move from a rigid to a more flexible classification structure to enable schools to recruit and deploy support staff to better meet changing student needs, thereby better support teachers to focus on their core role of improving student outcomes.

Schools also employ specialist teachers to target areas of specialist learning that a community values. Schools engage in a range of specialist programs including library, physical education, music and languages. This ability for schools, in partnership with their governing body and community, to identify and staff particular programs is a feature of individual school-based management in the ACT.

However, this autonomous model across ACT schools poses the question if the mix of specialist teachers in our schools is enabling every student to reach their full potential? Instead would support staff be better assigned to a network or cluster of schools, or across systems, rather than just one? As an example, data from the *2017 ACT Primary School Library Survey* in Figure 2 indicates the variance in staffing ratios of Teacher Librarians across sectors.

Sector	Average number, per schools, of qualified Teacher Librarians	Median (most common) staffing level of Teacher Librarians	Average number of library support staff per school
Independent	1	1	1
Catholic	0.5	0	0.5
Government	0.3	0	0.6

Figure 2: 2017 ACT Primary School Library Survey

Community feedback to Future of Education conversation suggests if education support staff, such as Learning Support Assistants (LSA) could be provided more training, they would be better able to support teachers in the classroom. Education support staff in ACT schools are highly regarded by the community,

with a feeling there should be ‘increased pay and training for LSAs in recognition of the fact that they are involved with face-to-face interactions for every lesson’.

Would placing more emphasis on recruitment of staff with particular specialist qualifications assist to address equitable outcomes for all students in the ACT? What is the best combination of support staff to support teachers with task development, inquiry based learning and digital literacy skills? More broadly, what type of support role working in partnership with the teacher, provides success for those students who need assistance to achieve expected standards?

Conclusion

The best ‘learning environments are established where all students are challenged and can contribute, and school environments are established where school staff and the school community co-create solutions.’¹⁹ ACT schools need to be places where teachers and school leaders work together with parents, students, community organisations and the wider community to deliver the best possible outcomes for students.

Educators and researchers ‘...argue that the knowledge, skills and capabilities needed by students... has become far broader and richer than the framework for Australian schooling currently allows’²⁰ and the teaching profession needs to have the capability and authority to deliver what children and young people need to be successful in their futures.

Feedback from the Future of Education conversation so far has noted that ‘currently what is working is the team of passionate teachers that are willing to invest time to see change. Without them the change is not possible.’ Ultimately as Claxton when visiting the ACT in 2017 suggested, the *Future of Education Strategy* will live or die in the minute details of the classroom²¹ because ‘seemingly more can be done to improve education by improving the effectiveness of teachers than by any other single factor.’²²

GETTING INVOLVED

The Future of Education community conversation invites comment about how the ACT can build in its strengths in school education to tackle some emerging challenges. The goal is to achieve an education system that sets all children up for a good life.

Share your views through a short survey <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/K8D97BB>

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¹⁹ Stronger Smarter Institute Limited (2014) *High-Expectations Relationships: A Foundation for Quality Learning Environments in all Australian Schools*. Stronger Smarter Institute Limited Position Paper.

²⁰ Bentley, T and Savage, G (Eds.) (2017: 11) *Introduction in Educating Australia: Challenges for the Decades Ahead*. MUP Academic.

²¹ Claxton, G (2017) *Masterclass with Professor Guy Claxton*. ACT Education Directorate.

²² Tucker, P and Stronge, J (2005:Ch1) *Ibid*.