

Portfolio: Early Childhood Development
Education and Youth Affairs

BACKPOCKET: Children's Education and Care Assurance: COVID – 19

Directed Closures

- Between 12 August and 15 October 2021 a **total of 23 education and care services have been closed** by CECA via an Emergency Action Notice.
 - 16 ECEC services
 - 5 OSHC services
 - 2 Family Day Care (FDC) educators
- As of 15 October 2021, **only 1 education and care service remains closed**, with all 21 other EAN being lifted.
- 14 sites were determined as close contact sites and 9 sites were determined to be casual contact sites.
- These closures were made on the advice from ACT Health that they posed a risk of COVID-19 transmission on the basis of children and adults mixing with an identified infectious person.

Closures by Provider Discretion

- A further **44 education and care services closed** for part or all of the lockdown period due to **provider discretion**. For many of these services, providers consolidated attending children to one site.
 - 17 ECEC services
 - 14 OSHC services
 - 5 FDC educators
 - 8 Playschools
- As of the 15 October 2021, **17 education and care services remain closed** with all but 1 ECEC service intending to re-open the week commencing 25 October 2021.

Sector Support

- On 1 September 2021, Minister Berry held a forum with ECEC stakeholders regarding the impacts of COVID-19 in the sector. Key concerns included educator safety and wellbeing, issues about viability of services, and the impact current restrictions were having on children experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage.
- On 3 September 2021, the ACT announced the prioritising of ECEC sector in the vaccine rollout. This recognises the significant contribution educators make to children, their families and the wide community, and given them assurance that their health and safety is of great importance.
- On 12 October 2021, the ACT Government announced a mandatory requirement of that anyone working directly with children in ECEC, Primary Schools or OSHC would need to be vaccinated. First dose required by 1 November 2021 and second dose by 29 November 2021.
- CECA has undertaken two key stakeholder meetings (1 October and 14 October 2021) to discuss the impact of lockdown restrictions in ECEC and OSHC. Discussions have raised issues of viability, vaccination of educators, COVID closures and close contacts, and what recovery might look like.

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Support for vulnerable children and families forum

On the afternoon of 6 October 2021, CECA hosted a forum of three experts to discuss supporting vulnerable children and families.

116 educators from the sector attended the forum, which was recorded as a resource for ongoing access by the sector.

The panel members were:

- Marina Dickson, the Australian Childhood Foundation's lead development of content and curriculum and a practitioner and teacher of trauma informed practice.
 - Ally Sullings, Executive Manager of Education and Care, Capital Region Community Services; and,
 - Amanda Tobler, CEO of Community Services #1 and former leader of Lifeline ACT's telephone counselling service.

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Cleared for public release by: Deputy Director-General Ext:
Contact Officer name: Sean Moysey Ext: 72143
Lead Directorate: Education
TRIM Ref: FILE2021/436

Communication with the sector

- Comprehensive communications tailored to the sector’s needs during this time will be ongoing to keep providers, service leaders and educators well informed.
- A snapshot of CECA’s communications and engagements reach to providers, services, and educators from 12 August and 15 October 2021 is below:

Communication Channel	Reach	Target Audience
Targeted emails, alerts, updates, and notifications	27 emails in total distributed to targeted and sector wide email contacts. Reach ranges between 155 - 1,000 per each distribution.	Education and care providers, service leaders and educators
Tailored phone calls	36 calls to services directed to close on ACT Health advice or voluntarily closed due to health concerns	Education and care services leaders and providers
Support calls	All non-government services will receive a wellbeing call to provide target support. Approximately 226 calls to services and providers have been made so far.	Education and care services leaders and providers
Education and care COVID-19 webpage	Page views 2713	Education and care providers, services leaders, educators, families, and wider Canberra community.
Facebook posts	Approximately 177 posts distributed. Overall post reach since 12 August 2021 32,692 Overall page engagement 3,821 since 12 August 2021	Existing audience of 1,178 individual education and care providers, service leaders and educators.

Sector viability and support payments

- Australian Government ECEC Viability Support Package was announced on 23 August 2021, for services in lockdown in Commonwealth-declared COVID-19 Hotspots.
 - For Centre Based Day Care, Family Day Care and In Home Care services this will mean a fortnightly payment of 25% of their pre-lockdown revenue calculated up to the hourly cap.
 - For Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) and vacation care services this will mean a 40% fortnightly payment of their pre-locked down revenue calculated up to the hourly cap.
 - Business continuity payments are contingent on services:
 - having reasonable expectations attendance will drop below 50%
 - not accessing other Commonwealth Government-funded business supports
 - waiving gap fees for all families whose children are not attending
 - maintaining staffing levels, and
 - agreeing to a fee freeze for the duration of business continuity payments.
- The ECEC Viability Support Package will continue to be in place while the ACT is considered a 'COVID-19 Hotspot' by the Commonwealth Government.
- The ACT Government has been receiving feedback from ECEC services through sector wide surveys. The responses show that viability remains a concern, despite the Australian Government's Viability Support Package. The ACT Government is continuing to monitor this issue and is working collaboratively with the Australian Government to ensure the needs of the ACT sector are met.
- The ECEC sector surveys also highlighted concern for educator wellbeing, and for families experiencing vulnerability at this time. The ACT Government is providing support to services to help address these issues.
- Eligible providers (ACT Property Group tenants) have the option to have access rent relief through the extension of the Rental Relief Initiative.

This initiative provides a waiver of rents for 1 September 2021 to 30 September 2021 (inclusive).

BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

Portfolio: Education and Youth Affairs

BACKPOCKET: Non-Government Education: Facts and Figures

Non-Government Schooling

- Non-government schools (NGS) are responsible for educating approximately **37.5% of all students attending ACT schools**. They must be registered and must meet the conditions of registration outlined in the *Education Act 2004*, as well as Commonwealth requirements pertaining to funding and governance of the school, and other Territory and Commonwealth legislative and regulatory requirements.
- There are **47 registered Non-Government Schools** comprising **18 independent** schools and **29 Catholic systemic schools** in the ACT.
- During 2021 the registration of seven independent schools and six Catholic systemic schools are scheduled for renewal.

Independent Schools	Blue Gum Community School	Daramalan College
	Brindabella Christian College	Emmanuel Christian School Canberra
	Burgmann Anglican School	Islamic School of Canberra
	Canberra Christian School	Marist College Canberra
	Canberra Girls Grammar School	Orana Steiner School
	Canberra Grammar School	Radford College
	Canberra Montessori School	St Edmunds College
	Communities@Work Galilee School	Taqwa School
	Covenant Christian School	Trinity Christian School
Catholic Systemic	Good Shepherd Primary School	St John Paul II College
	Holy Family Parish Primary	St John the Apostle Primary
	Holy Spirit Primary	St John Vianney's Primary
	Holy Trinity Primary	St Joseph's Primary School

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	Merici College	St Jude's Primary School
	Mother Teresa School	St Mary MacKillop College
	Rosary Primary	St Matthew's Primary
	Sacred Heart Primary	St Michael's Primary
	St Anthony's Primary	St Monica's Primary
	St Bede's Primary	St Peter & Paul
	St Benedict's Primary	St Thomas Aquinas Primary
	St Clare of Assisi Primary	St Thomas More's Primary
	St Clare's College	St Thomas the Apostle Primary
	St Francis of Assisi Primary	St Vincent's Primary School
	St Francis Xavier Primary	

Home Education

- During the past three years we have seen **significant growth** in the number of children registered for home education in the ACT:
 - **2019** February census — **305** children and young people were registered
 - **2020** February census — **322** children and young people were registered
 - **2021** February census — **396 children and young people were registered.**
- From 2020 to 2021, home education registrations increased sharply by 23%
- While the census data clearly demonstrates that home education has grown in the ACT, census data does not fully represent the number of students who are home educated at some point in the year. For example:
 - **503 different students were registered** for home education at **some point during** the **2020** calendar year; and
 - **133 children and young people left home education during the same period** for a range of reasons – but mostly to return to

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school, move interstate, or because they had turned 17 and were no longer required to participate in compulsory education.

- As at **30 September 2021, 427 children and young people are registered** for home education in the ACT. This is an **8% [31] increase** in registrations **since the February 2021 census**.
- During September 2021 (when the ACT was under the health emergency lockdown and school aged children were either on school holidays or learning from home) applications for home education registration were significantly lower than during other months in 2021. It is anticipated that home education registrations will continue to grow into the future.

1. 2021-22 BUDGET INITIATIVES

Investing in Public Education		
1.1.	Digital Access and Equity	Kate McMahon
1.2.	Disability Education Review	Deb Efthymiades
1.3.	Equitable Enrolment Adjustment	Deb Efthymiades
1.4.	Essential ICT Systems Upgrades and Modifications	Thao Le
1.5.	Future of Education Equity Fund	Kate McMahon
1.6.	Gender Equality in our Schools	Kate McMahon
1.7.	Headstart Pilot Program	Kate McMahon
1.8.	More Social and Youth Workers in Schools	Kate McMahon
1.9.	More Teacher Librarians	Kate McMahon
1.10.	Muliyar Off-Campus Flexible Learning Program	Kate McMahon
1.11.	Reducing Violence in Schools	Kate McMahon
1.12.	Schools Legal Liaison	Kate McMahon
1.13.	Set Up for Success - Early Childhood Program	Deb Efthymiades
New and Expanded Schools		
1.14.	Expansion of Margaret Hendry Primary School and a New Taylor High School	Andrew Parkinson
1.15.	Future Planning	Deb Efthymiades
1.16.	Garran Primary School Redevelopment	Andrew Parkinson
1.17.	Increasing School Capacity	Deb Efthymiades
1.18.	Narrabundah College Modernisation	Andrew Parkinson
1.19.	New and Expanded Schools - School Maintenance and Infrastructure Upgrades	Andrew Parkinson
1.20.	Strathnairn Primary School	Andrew Parkinson
1.21.	Removing Hazardous Materials from Schools	Andrew Parkinson
WHOG Initiatives with EDU Funding Impact		
1.22.	Commonwealth Redress Scheme	Meghan Oldfield
1.23.	COVID Safe Cleaning	Meghan Oldfield
1.24.	Extension of Temporary Contract Positions	Meghan Oldfield
1.25.	Maintaining Accountability and Transparency of Government	Meghan Oldfield
Expenses on Behalf of the Territory		
1.26.	Infrastructure Upgrades for Non-Government Schools and Parent Engagement Grants	Thao Le

2. STRATEGIC OPERATIONS

2.1.	ACT Education Statistics Summary (July 2021)	A&E
2.2.	Future of Education	Deb Efthymiades
2.3.	Set Up for Success - An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT	Deb Efthymiades
2.4.	System Performance	Robert Gotts
2.5.	NAPLAN	Robert Gotts
2.6.	Complaints Management	Meghan Oldfield
2.7.	Strategic Indicator 1 – Equity	Robert Gotts
2.8.	Strategic Indicator 2 – NAPLAN gain	Robert Gotts
2.9.	Strategic Indicator 3 – Centre teaching and learning around students as individuals	Robert Gotts

3. COVID-19 RESPONSE

3.1.	EDU COVID-19 Response to date – including chronology	Jane Simmons
3.2.	Remote Learning	Kate McMahon
3.3.	Pathway out of Lockdown (incl. Parent/Student survey)	Deb Efthymiades
3.4.	Staff Wellbeing	Megan Oldfield
3.5.	ECEC and OSHC Supports	Deb Efthymiades
3.6.	Staff vaccination rates in schools / vaccination rates of students	Deb Efthymiades/ Kate McMahon
3.7.	COVID Complaints Data	Meghan Oldfield
3.8.	Health advice and safety measures in schools	Jane Simmons
3.9.	Ventilation in Schools in response to COVID-19	Andrew Parkinson

4. SCHOOL FUNDING

4.1.	School Funding	Thao Le
4.2.	Student Resource Allocation (SRA)	Thao Le
4.3.	Commonwealth Schooling Resource Standard	Thao Le
4.4.	Voluntary Contributions	Thao Le
4.5.	Community Hire of Public Schools	Thao Le

5. ENROLMENTS AND PLANNING

5.1.	Population Growth in the ACT	Deb Efthymiades
5.2.	Public School Enrolment Growth	Deb Efthymiades
5.3.	Forecast Enrolment Demand	Deb Efthymiades
5.4.	Enrolment Policy Demand Management	Deb Efthymiades
5.5.	Planning Responses to Meet Growth	Deb Efthymiades
5.6.	Enrolments and appeals	Deb Efthymiades
5.7.	New and Expanded Schools	Andrew Parkinson

6. INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPITAL WORKS

6.1.	Major Education Projects	Andrew Parkinson
6.2.	East Gungahlin (Kenny) High School	Andrew Parkinson
6.3.	Management of Hazardous Materials in Schools	Andrew Parkinson

Budget Estimate Hearings

19 October 2022

6.4.	School fences	Andrew Parkinson
6.5.	Transportable Classrooms	Andrew Parkinson
6.6.	Sustainability in Schools	Andrew Parkinson
7. STUDENT WELLBEING		
7.1.	Flexible Education	Kate McMahon
7.2.	Restrictive Practice	Kate McMahon
7.3.	School Psychologists	Kate McMahon
7.4.	Bullying and Violence including Safe & Supportive Schools	Kate McMahon
7.5.	Occupational Violence and Complex Case Management	Kate McMahon
7.6.	Suspension Policy	Kate McMahon
7.7.	eSafety Programs	Kate McMahon
7.8.	Mental Health Programs	Kate McMahon
8. CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY		
8.1.	Margaret Hendry School	Mark Huxley ✓
8.2.	Inquiry Based Learning	Kate McMahon
8.3.	Languages in schools	Kate McMahon
8.4.	Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL)	Kate McMahon
8.5.	Use of Technology in Schools	Kate McMahon
8.6.	Teacher Librarians	Kate McMahon
8.7.	Accessibility and Inclusion	Kate McMahon
8.8.	Financial literacy	Kate McMahon
9. PEOPLE AND PERFORMANCE		
9.1.	Principal Health and Wellbeing	Mark Huxley
9.2.	AEU Survey and Teacher Shortage Taskforce	Meghan Oldfield
9.3.	Education Directorate Workforce Strategy	Meghan Oldfield
9.4.	Auditor-General Report Teacher Quality	Kate McMahon
10. Early Childhood Education and Care		
10.1.	Children's Education and Care Assurance (CECA) Investigations	Sean Moysey
10.2.	Education and Care Place - Affordability and Availability	Sean Moysey
11. NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS		
11.1.	Non-Government Schools	Sean Moysey
11.2.	Home Education	Sean Moysey

Handwritten notes:
 Done ✓
 Done + Kate

12.BACKGROUND INFORMATION

12.1.	Witness List 2021 Hearings
12.2.	Privilege Statement
12.3.	QON Summary 2020 ECI Annual and Financial Report Hearings (March 2021)
12.4.	ECI Report 1 Annual and Financial Reports 2019-2020 and Appropriation Bill 2020-2021
12.5.	Government Response to ECI Report 1 Annual and Financial Reports 2019-2020 and Appropriation Bill 2020-2021 (tabled 20 April 2021)
12.6.	Transcript of Hearings – 1 March 2021 including correction of record letter

WhOG Initiatives with EDU Funding Impact – National Redress Scheme – Executive Summary

- A whole of government business case coordinated by Justice and Community Safety (JACS) Directorate was submitted for the 2021-22 Budget to secure continued funding for resources to support the National Redress Scheme. The bid was successful in obtaining funding for a SOGC position in Education for four years to 2025-26. At the conclusion of this period, the Scheme will still have two years left to run.
- The business case also sought additional funding to support the delivery of counselling and Direct Personal Responses (DPR) to survivors. However, this was not approved.
- The approval of funding for the SOGC position has provided certainty to the resourcing of this very important activity that Education is committed to completing to a high standard for the benefit of survivors seeking redress.

Background

- The National Redress Scheme was established in response to recommendations by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.
- The Scheme
 - acknowledges that many children were sexually abused in Australian institutions
 - recognises the suffering they endured because of this abuse
 - holds institutions accountable for this abuse, and
 - helps people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse gain access to counselling, a direct personal response, and a Redress payment (up to \$150,000).
- The Scheme is open for 10 years and commenced on 1 July 2018.
- Access to the Scheme depends on:
 - The type of abuse – it must include sexual abuse and an institution must be responsible for the abuse. The Scheme does not cover non-institutional abuse, such as by a family member.
 - Where and when it happened – The abuse must have happened when the person was aged under 18, it must have happened before 1 July 2018, and the institution responsible must have joined the Scheme.
 - The person's life now – they must be an Australian citizen or permanent resident.
- The Commonwealth Department of Social Services is the Scheme Operator and is responsible for receiving and processing applications, requesting information from institutions, liaising with the survivor (applicant), determining whether to approve the application and administering the Scheme.
- Within ACT Government, the Scheme is managed centrally within JACS, and Directorates respond to requests for information from the Scheme Operator.
- The 2018-19 budget provided funding for two years to JACS, Community Services Directorate (CSD), Education and Health, for 9 FTE in 2018-19, reducing to 6.75FTE in 2019-20. Education's funding allocation was 1 FTE.

- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic impact on Budget processes in 2020-21, the 2019-20 level of funding was extended to the 2020-21 financial year.

Education Directorate's National Redress Scheme Experience

- As at 14 October 2021,
 - Education has received 28 requests for information, responded to 27, with 1 currently being processed
 - [redacted] requests relate to [redacted] survivors
 - in [redacted] cases the survivors allege that abuse occurred at two different (and unrelated) schools
 - for 1 case the Scheme Operator had closed the matter (finding of ineligible) and reopened upon appeal. This was processed as 2 separate RFIs with additional information provided by the survivor for the second RFI.
 - For another case, 2 RFIs were received from the Scheme Operator - the first seeking information about responsibilities for provision of [redacted] and the second related to the survivor's application.
 - The period in which the alleged abuse occurred has ranged from 1945 to 2007, providing a mixture of pre self-government (16), meaning that liability is assigned to the Commonwealth, and post self-government (12), for which ACT Government is responsible.
- In some cases, Education has not been identified as the responsible institution but was recognised as possibly holding records that may be of assistance to the Scheme Operator's assessment and determination of an application.
- Searching for records to enable response to a request for information is a resource intensive process requiring consideration of formal (student and personnel files, payroll information) and informal sources (school newsletters, magazines, photos and yearbooks; Board papers; boxes of mixed, loose records; class rolls; etc). It is very often a search for a needle in a haystack, in a field of haystacks.
- In March 2020, Education delivered the first Direct Personal Response on behalf of the ACT Government to a survivor of child sexual abuse. This was a very protracted and resource intensive process, [redacted]
[redacted] The outcome was very successful and valued by the survivor.

1.23: Covid Safe Cleaning – Executive Summary

- Existing Chief Health Officer (CHO) direction requires regular cleaning of high frequency touch points in ACT Government schools. The employment of day cleaning staff allows the Education Directorate to meet the CHO instructions.
- Day cleaning is also seen as essential to the safe return of students and staff to on campus learning by schools.
- For government schools, day cleaning support is currently funded to 17 December 2021. The budget submission seeks additional funding for the extension of school day cleaning into Terms 1 and 2 2022.
- The estimated cost is \$3.7 million for the period 18 December 2021 to 30 June 2022, including cost of maintaining staff over the end of year stand down period, which will be offset by \$1.9 million from the COVID National Partnership up to 30 June 2022.
- The extension of day cleaning for Semester 1 in 2022 would ensure:
 - resourcing at a level required for ongoing support of ACT Health initiatives in ACT government schools (testing centres, vaccination hubs etc.).
 - the Service can rapidly respond in the event of a COVID-19 case in a school.
 - resourcing required to support a return to community use of school facilities exists.
- The School Cleaning Service has been significantly impacted by staff being required to quarantine (since the beginning of the lockdown on 12 August 4410 hours of COVID related leave has been provided). The funding of day cleaning ensures continuity of service to schools as the day cleaning workforce provides the flexibility to manage these absences through back fill arrangements.

WhOG Initiatives with EDU Funding Impact – FOI Resourcing – Executive Summary

- A whole of government business case coordinated by Justice and Community Safety (JACS) Directorate was submitted for the 2021-22 Budget to secure continued funding for resources to support compliance with the *Freedom of Information Act 2016* (FOI Act) and promote the objective of increased transparency and accountability. The bid was successful in obtaining funding for a SOGC position in Education for two years to 30 June 2023.
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- The approval of funding for the SOGC position has provided certainty over the short to medium term to the resourcing of the FOI function and has enabled retention of a trained and competent staff member.
- The business case identified that a further business case may be required in the future.

Background

- The FOI Act came into effect on 1 January 2018.
- The FOI Act's objectives were to promote the principles of open and transparent government through the establishment of a pro-disclosure information access regime. To achieve these objectives, the Act introduced:
 - new requirements to routinely publish government information under the Open Access Information Scheme.
 - shorter processing timeframes for FOI requests, along with increased third-party consultation requirements
 - new public interest tests to determine whether or not disclosure of information is in the public interest
 - stricter reporting requirements (Ombudsman, Legislative Assembly, Annual Report)
 - increased external scrutiny of decisions (Ombudsman)
 - criminal penalties for certain acts of non-compliance.
- The intent of the open access scheme is to reduce public reliance on FOI applications by making government information freely available, this has not been realised. In Education, a significant number of requests seek personal information which cannot be satisfied through open access.
- Since 2018-19, temporary budget funding has been provided across Government for 12 FTE in response to increased demand and greater complexity in processing requirements.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic impact on Budget processes in 2020-21, the 2019-20 level of funding was extended to the 2020-21 financial year.
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Education Directorate's FOI Experience

- Education processes FOI requests under both ACT and Commonwealth FOI legislation. Requests relating to Children's Education and Care Assurance, which performs the role of Regulatory Authority for the ACT under the *Education and Care Services National Law* are processed under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth). This involves an additional set of annual reporting requirements and another Ombudsman for reviews of decisions.
- Education also processes requests for TQI and BSSS

- The number of requests received by Education since 1 Jan 2018 are as follows:

	From 1/1/2018	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22 (to 14/10)
ACT FOI Act	13	64	44	47	19
Cth FOI Act	3	3	3	5	2
Total	16	67	48	52	21
Ombudsman Reviews	0	2	0	4	1

Infrastructure Upgrades for Non-Government Schools and Parent Engagement Grants – Executive Summary

<i>Infrastructure Upgrades for Non-Government Schools and Parent Engagement Grants</i>	Education and life-long learning				
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Expenses on Behalf of the Territory	280	4,030	3,750	3,750	11,810
Offset - Savings	-	-3,750	-3,750	-3,750	-11,250
Net cost of services	280	280	-	-	560

Initiative Description

The Government will progress the second phase of the Future of Education Strategy by providing capital grant funding for infrastructure upgrades in non-government schools. The Government will also provide capital grant funding to non-government parent associations to enhance parental engagement within school communities. The initiative will be partially funded from existing resources.

This initiative contributes to the wellbeing domain of Education and life-long learning.

Election Commitment / Parliamentary Agreement

Yes – this initiative fulfils EC LAB 026 to provide grants to parent associations and continue providing \$15 million for further school infrastructure grants at non-government schools.

Key deliverables and timetable

The current funding provided for the non-government school infrastructure program continues into the 2021-22 financial year. Therefore the extension of funding for this program (\$3.750 million per year) is not included in the table above until 2022-23.

The first round of parent engagement grants (\$280,000 per year for 2 years) will be provided in the 2021-22 financial year.

It is expected that both grants will be administered by the ACT Block Grant Authority in line with the existing infrastructure grants program and similar commonwealth programs. This arrangement provides for an independent assessment of grants by an existing body with experience in providing grants to non-government schools.

Previous Funding Provided / Initiative Development Detail

This initiative continues the existing *Non-Government School Infrastructure Upgrades program* which was originally funded through the 2017-18 Budget and operates until the 2021-22 financial year.



BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

Portfolio/s: Education and Youth Affairs

Early Childhood Development

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR BUDGET ESTIMATES

1. 2020-21 BUDGET INITIATIVES

Question 1

- What is the ACT Government funding to public and non-government schools over the budget estimates?

Answer

Public Schools

- The ACT Government funds public schools through recurrent and capital funding.

ACT Government Funding to Public Schools	2020-21 \$'000	2021-22 \$'000	2022-23 \$'000	2023-24 \$'000	2023-24 \$'001
Recurrent Funding	829,826	872,426	906,576	935,425	970,120
Capital Funding	126,653	178,631	202,761	88,452	37,204
TOTAL	956,479	1,051,057	1,109,337	1,023,877	1,007,324

Note – the recurrent funding above includes Controlled Recurrent Payments appropriation only.

Non-Government Schools

- The ACT Government funds non-government schools through Expenses on Behalf of the Territory (EBT) appropriation.

ACT Government Funding to Non-Government Schools	2020-21 \$'000	2021-22 \$'000	2022-23 \$'000	2023-24 \$'000	2023-24 \$'001
ACT EBT Funding	67,594	68,392	69,034	70,432	71,642
TOTAL	67,594	68,392	69,034	70,432	71,642

Question 2

- What is the Commonwealth funding to public and non-government schools over the budget estimates?

Answer

- The Commonwealth provides Specific Purpose Payments (SPPs) and National Partnership Payments (NPPs) to ACT Public Schools.
 - SPPs are recurrent Schooling Resource Standard funding provided through the Students First funding grant for government and non-government schools.
 - NPPs are comprised of various Commonwealth grants targeted at achieving certain purposes including National School Chaplaincy, Money Smart Teaching and Universal Access to Early Childhood Education.

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Contact Officer name: Thao Le

Ext: 53145

Lead Directorate: Education

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BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

Public Schools – funded through Controlled Recurrent Payments appropriation.

Commonwealth Funding to Public Schools	2020-21 \$'000	2021-22 \$'000	2022-23 \$'000	2023-24 \$'000	2023-24 \$'001
SPPs (Students First)	130,825	142,917	155,983	166,965	175,256
NPPs	10,610	9,185	977	977	977
TOTAL	141,435	152,102	156,960	167,942	176,233

Non-Government Schools – funded through Expenses on Behalf of the Territory appropriation.

Commonwealth Funding to Non-Government Schools	2020-21 \$'000	2021-22 \$'000	2022-23 \$'000	2023-24 \$'000	2023-24 \$'001
SPPs (Students First)	251,822	260,020	269,324	277,964	285,393
NPPs	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	251,822	260,020	269,324	277,964	285,393

Question 3

- What do specific line items in the 'Changes to Appropriation' tables (Table 21 – 23 in the 2021-22 Budget Statements) relate to?

Answer

- Attachment A – '2021-22 Budget Appropriation Table Movement Explanations' provide an explanation for each line item in the Controlled Recurrent Payments (Table 21), Expenses on Behalf of the Territory (Table 22) and Capital Injections (Table 23) appropriation tables.

Question 4

- Has the Minister fulfilled all the election commitments for Education outlined during the 2020 election?

Answer

- Through the 2021-22 Budget, the Minister has progressed or fulfilled almost all of the 2020 election commitments relating to Education. This is a significant achievement and investment in the first year of an election cycle. Further information on what commitments have been progressed and/or fulfilled and what will come forward in future budgets is provided in the table on the following page.

Question 5

- What Education Directorate 2021-22 Budget initiatives relate to election commitments? Do these initiatives fully fulfil the commitment or will future budget initiatives be required?

Answer

- The table below shows what Education Directorate 2021-22 Budget initiatives relate to election commitments and whether these initiatives fulfil the commitment or make progress towards fulfilling the commitment.

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 Cleared for public release by: Director-General Ext: 59158
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 Lead Directorate: Education
 TRIM Ref:



BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

2021-22 Budget Initiatives (Recurrent)	Election Commitment	Election Commitment Fulfilled
Investing in Public Education - Disability Education Review	EC LAB 039 (Future of Education Disability Inclusion) EC LAB 039a (Future of Education Disability Education Review Community Consultation)	Both components fulfilled
Investing in Public Education - Future of Education Equity Fund	EC LAB 022 (Future of Education Equity Fund) and EC LAB 032 (Free Breakfast Trial)	Both components fulfilled
Investing in Public Education - Gender Equality in our Schools	EC LAB 036 (Gender Equality in Schools)	Yes
Investing in Public Education - Headstart Pilot Program	EC LAB 040 (Pilot of Headstart Program).	Yes
Investing in Public Education - More Social and Youth Workers in Schools	EC LAB 033 (Recruiting Youth and Social Workers)	Yes
Investing in Public Education - More Teacher Librarians	EC LAB 024 (Teacher Librarians).	Yes
Investing in Public Education - Set Up for Success - Early Childhood Program	EC LAB 023 (Three Year Old Free Education)	Partial. Future budget initiatives will come forward in order to progress the election commitment.
2021-22 Budget Initiatives (EBT)		
Infrastructure Upgrades for Non-Government Schools and Parent Engagement Grants	EC LAB 026 (Non-Government School Grants)	Yes
2021-22 Budget Initiatives (Capital)		
Investing in Public Education - Digital Access and Equity	EC LAB 069 (Digital Education), EC LAB 069a (Education Plan – Access to Free Internet) and EC LAB 069b (eSafety Supports)	All 3 components are fulfilled
New and Expanded Schools - Expansion of Margaret Hendry Primary School and a New Taylor High School	EC LAB 030 (New Schools in Canberra's North - Taylor) and EC LAB 030a (New Schools in Canberra's North – Primary School in North Gungahlin)	Both components fulfilled
New and Expanded Schools - Garran Primary School Redevelopment	EC LAB 029a (New and Expanded Schools in Canberra's South-Woden and Molonglo)	Partial. A future budget initiative will come forward for construction funding to fulfil the election commitment.
New and Expanded Schools - Narrabundah College Modernisation	EC LAB 029 (New and Expanded Schools in Canberra's South – Upgrade and Expansion of Narrabundah College)	Partial. A future budget initiative will come forward for construction funding to fulfil the election commitment.
New and Expanded Schools - School Maintenance and Infrastructure Upgrades	EC LAB 027 (School Infrastructure Renewal Program)	Yes
New and Expanded Schools - Strathnairn Primary School	EC LAB 044 (Public Primary School in Strathnairn)	Partial. A future budget initiative will come forward for construction funding to fulfil the election commitment.
Removing Hazardous Materials from Schools	EC LAB 020 (Public Schools – Removal of Hazardous Material)	Yes
Election Commitments not progressed in 2021-22 Budget		
Create More Space for College Students in Canberra's North	EC LAB 031	N/A
Aboriginal Language and Culture in the Public School System	EC LAB 038	N/A

Cleared as complete and accurate: 13/10/2021
 Cleared for public release by: Director-General
 Contact Officer name: Thao Le
 Lead Directorate: Education
 TRIM Ref:

Ext: 59158
 Ext: 53145

*Acknowledged
teachers*

BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

Portfolio/s: Education and Youth Affairs

TEACHER-LED REMOTE LEARNING

Talking points:

During lockdown

- The ACT lockdown commenced at 5pm on Thursday 12 August.
- ACT public school students began remote learning on Friday 20 August, following 5 pupil-free days to allow schools to transition. The vast majority undertook remote learning from home.
- All **ACT public schools** remained open for vulnerable children, children of parents who cannot work from home, and children of parents who are required to work from home but cannot reasonably provide care at the same time. Those students have attend their usual public school and accessed the same remote learning program as their classmates, delivered by their usual classroom teacher/s.
- All **specialist schools** have remained open for their usual students.
- **Out of school hours care** and **early childhood education and care services** remained open during the lockdown for vulnerable children, children of parents who cannot work from home, and children of parents who are required to work from home but cannot reasonably provide care at the same time.
- Teachers are continuing with their usual learning program and adapting this to help students have the best possible experience learning online, ensuring that remote learning is as normal as possible for students.
- The Education Directorate continues to provide information for schools, students and families through our dedicated webpage, which is regularly updated.
- Home learning resources by year level are available on the Education Directorate's website for students and families who wished to undertake self-directed learning during the lockdown.

Engagement Data

(Note: the most current engagement data will be provided for the hearing)

- As at Tuesday 12 October 2021, approximately 2521 students are registered to attend their school onsite, with approximately **326 of those being students** with support programs. This number changes on a daily basis.
- The attendance at schools for Monday of Week 1 Term 4 was **2067 students (4.06%)**, not including college students; with **733 teaching staff** on-site. A small number of

BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

teaching staff continue to work on-site to support student learning face-to-face as well as online.¹

- For week 9 Term 3 there were **4 775 303** student interactions with the Education Directorate's online learning platforms, occurring between **9am and 3pm**.
- There is no expectation on students to be logging-on to complete work outside of ordinary school hours.
- Our **Year 6 cohort** had the highest daily interactions for primary years; our **Year 7 cohort** had the highest daily interactions for high school years; and our **Year 11 cohort** had the highest daily interactions for senior secondary.

Return to campus

- It will be important for students to return to campus with their peers. Teachers can't teach remote and onsite learning to the same class at the same time and children and young people learn best in the classroom.
- Schools will continue to support students with medical vulnerabilities to learn from home as required.
- For those who choose not to return on campus, students in Year 3 and above will be able to continue accessing their usual work via Google Classroom. Students in Preschool to Year 2 will receive additional support through Education Directorate lessons in English, Mathematics, and one other learning area for each day of the week.

Key Information

Supporting Schools

- During lockdown, the Education Directorate has supported teachers to provide online learning through a range of activities including by provision of Professional Learning Webinars and support.
- **1967 educators** participated in Teacher Professional Learning webinars during lockdown.
- The online resources for our Educators in the **Teacher Resource Centre have had over 19, 800 hits** since the start of the lockdown, the materials include guidance and best practice examples for teaching practices, learning materials, wellbeing supports, adjusting for differentiation and assessment and reporting guidance.
- Wellbeing resources have been made available for schools to provide to their school communities including family activities, wellbeing booklets, gratitude journals, videos and factsheets.

• ¹ This data is from the daily staff attendance form complete daily at each school site. Student attendance data is from the School Administration System and is reliant on accurate roll marking.

BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

- Since the lockdown commenced on 12 August 2021, ACT public schools have been provided additional devices and internet access to support remote learning.

Telehealth

- Our school psychologists have continued to provide support for students and their families. During the current lockdown, this support has taken the form of an Education Directorate's Telehealth Service (free online counselling sessions).
- As at ^{16 Oct} 28 September, there were ¹⁶¹ ~~137~~ cases students or families contacting the telehealth line, ~~89 of these consultations were closed~~ and ~~48 were still active~~.
- School psychologists are also able to help link families with other services, including community organisations, that are still operating during lockdown. Other external supports available include ReachOut, Headspace, Lifeline. Information and links for these supports is available on the Directorate's website

76% Primary + Pre
55% Parents
Child

Students with a Disability

- Students with disability and/or additional learning needs receive individualised supports during remote learning. Teachers and Learning Support Assistants know their students and work with families and students to ensure they have support to engage in remote learning.
- Every school has a Disability Education Coordinator (DECO) to support teachers to respond to inclusive practice. They have a range of different resources and families can contact them by email or phoning the school.
- Teachers develop learning based on the individual learning plan of each student. Many of these individual goals that are specially designed for a school context and may need to be placed on hold or rewritten to have a more practical application during the remote learning period..
- Families are encouraged check in with your child's teacher for some advice and support – as they may have advice and strategies to share.
- Learning Support Assistants are still working with our schools, and each school may be utilising them differently – supporting students directly with their tasks or producing additional resources for the classroom teacher.

Background Information

- All ACT public schools commenced teacher-led remote learning on 20 August 2021.
- Remote learning applies to all students who are in lockdown at home from preschool through to college.

Chromebooks for High School and College students

BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

- **22,000 Chromebooks** have been distributed to ACT public school secondary students, of which over 3,300 were distributed in February 2021 to new year 7 secondary students and new students who have joined years 8, 9,10, 11 or 12.
- The secondary student device refresh began on 19 April 2021 and was completed by the end of June 2021, refreshing **8,295** secondary student devices which were provided as part of the first rollout in 2018.
- Feedback from students and schools regarding the rollout, support and new devices has been positive.

Chromebooks for primary school students

- **13,500 Chromebooks** were distributed to ACT public primary school students. The ACT Government provides primary schools with shared Chromebooks at **one device per three students ratio**.
- In August 2021, 2,332 Chromebooks were distributed to refresh primary school devices to maintain the ratio.

COVID-19 lockdown responses

- During ACT's COVID-19 lockdown that commenced on 12 August 2021, ACT public schools were able to shift quickly to support remote learning during Term 3, 2021.
 - Secondary students were well positioned for this as they already had access to a Chromebook device through the Technology Enabled Learning (TEL) Program. Over 300 secondary students continued to utilise free internet support since the 2020 lockdown response to enable their learning.
 - Primary schools were also well positioned due to the recent refresh of 2,332 in August of Chromebook devices with 13,500 devices already available to primary students.
 - During home learning and the remote learning period in August 2021, the ACT Government has **loaned a further 2,110 devices to schools for year 4 to year 6 students to support their learning over this period**. These devices will be returned to the school, following the return to on campus learning.
 - ACT Education also provided an additional **989 internet support** to students and teachers as required.
- Teachers are continuing with their learning program and adapting these to help students have the best possible experience learning online.
- Primary and high school teachers check in with their students every day, to guide learning and to monitor wellbeing.
- Wellbeing supports provided to schools including a school psychologist lead telehealth service.
- The Directorate continues planning to safely return students to return to face-to-face in term 4 as the health directions permit.

BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

- On Monday 27 September the ACT Government released a plan outlining the timeframes for students to return to on-campus learning. Particular cohorts of students will return according to the following schedule:
 - Year 12 students can return from Tuesday 5 October, with a focus on practical classes, essential exams and assessments (week 1, term 4).
 - Year 11 students can return from Tuesday 5 October for essential exams and assessment *only* when they can not be deferred until week 3 (week 1, term 4).
 - Year 11 and 12 on-campus classes resume from Monday 18 October (week 3, term 4)
 - Preschool, Kindergarten, Years 1, 2, 6, 9 and 10 can return to on campus learning on Monday 25 October (week 4, term 4)
 - Years 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 can return to on-campus learning on Monday 1 November (week 5, term 4).

Home learning site

129,030 hits

37,143 unique users

LRT

COVID19 Positive Case identification

High level overview of Scenario 2 process

Health Emergency Control Centre

Day 1

1. ACT Health formal notification to EDU via HECC ED LO
2. HECC ED LO notifies EGM School Improvement, DDG, EDU Media Comms, and CECA if preschool or OHSC if impacted.
3. EGM School Improvement notifies School Operations Lead
4. School Operations Scenario 2 Lead notifies School Principal and is assigned to support for the duration of site impact e.g. quarantine.
5. School Principal to provide responses to information sought by ACT Health.

Day 2/Day 3 – Day 14/15

6. School Operations Lead coordinates activation of
 - a. student wellbeing support (telehealth service)
 - b. community town hall (video conference led by ACT Health – only occurs when whole of school is impacted)
 - c. staff wellbeing supports (staff video conference briefing with ACT Health and EDU People & Performance)
 - d. campus deep cleaning (EDU Cleaning)
 - e. communication letters to school community (EDU Media & Comms)
 - f. notifies School Operations who notify ACECQA if preschool is impacted.
7. School Operations Lead S2 Lead updates daily EDU sitrep.

St Mary McKillop S2 Update

(as at 2:30pm 18 Oct 21)

- The St Peter's Campus (Isabella Plains) was deep cleaned on Friday 15 October 2021.
- The school has been closed to support the health response. Return for all students will be facilitated in line with the ACT health directions and availability of staff and campuses being able to open
- The St Peter's Campus will re-open on Wednesday when Year 11s return in accordance with the staggered return of students
- The school is not aware of any positive cases connected to this matter.

Ventilation during inclement weather

What will schools do in the case of bush fires or cold/rain if windows open are part of the ventilation plan?

Ventilation is one of a range of health measures and the benefits of external air must be considered against the risk of other impacts such as thunderstorm asthma and environmental hazards.

We are taking short term actions for the return to on campus learning and will then start to review/make longer term adjustments such as improvements to building control and co2 monitoring. In addition to installing supplemental ventilation systems, the Directorate will trial the use UV air treatment as this can be readily added to split system units in many rooms.

Priority vaccination – Key Dates

Date	Milestone
19 October (tbc)	CHO to issue Health Direction mandating vaccination for all workers at ECECs and schools that cater for children under 12 years.
13 October	CHO announced intention to mandate vaccination for all workers at ECECs and schools that cater for children under 12 years.
5-8 October	Specialist school in-reach vaccination program (2 nd dose).
20 September	12-15 year olds became eligible for Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination at an ACT Government clinic. Moderna COVID-19 vaccinations also became available at selected pharmacies.
13-17 September	Specialist school in-reach vaccination program (1 st dose).
13 September	12-15 year olds became eligible for Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination at general practitioners and pharmacies.
3 September	Commencement of priority vaccination access for all ACT Year 12 students, AST supervisors, teachers, educators and staff that have direct contact with children in their daily work at schools and early childhood centres.
1 September	16 to 29 year olds became eligible for Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination at an ACT Government clinic.
23 August	16 to 29 year olds able to register for Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination.
wc 29 March	Some school staff (approx. 1000) advised of eligibility for COVID-19 Pfizer vaccination under 'phase 1b' of national rollout plan, including critical and high risk workers

*** More details in 3.6 Vaccination Rates and Mandatory Vaccination*



BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

Portfolio/s: Education and Youth Affairs
Early Childhood Development

3.2 Remote Learning

Question

- How do you know that students have not fallen behind in the remote learning period?

Answer

- ACT teachers have worked extremely hard over the remote learning period to continue learning for our students. They have produced an extraordinary number of learning resources that are engaging, linked to the Australian Curriculum and aligned to their normal learning programs.
- Teachers connected with their students live at least once a day and followed up with students who were not engaging in their learning through calls and emails to families.

As much as possible, teachers carried on with their usual schedule of learning, introducing new concepts and providing feedback to students as they would in the classroom. They collected evidence of learning and provided assessment opportunities. Teachers will use this knowledge, in conjunction with assessment information gained during the semester, to make on-balance assessment judgments for school reporting at the end of the term.

- Teachers will always meet their students at their point of need whether in the classroom or remotely.
- Remote learning has been difficult for some students but many students have also flourished learning from home.
- On return to school, teachers will focus on settling students back into their school routines and modifying routines as required to meet the health requirements. They will acknowledge work completed during remote learning and provide opportunities for students to continue their learning from their point of need. This may require revision of content for some students and providing extra support or providing extension opportunities for others.

Question

- How will students who don't return to school continue learning from home?

Answer

- If families choose not to send their children to school in term 4, learning will continue using existing on-line platforms.

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 Cleared for public release by: Deputy Director-General Ext:51099
 Contact Officer name: Kate McMahon Ext:59205
 Lead Directorate: Education
 TRIM Ref:



BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

- For students from Year 3 upwards, teachers will continue to post student work on the Google Classroom. This work will be as similar as possible to the learning being undertaken in the classroom. Students will be contacted, at a minimum, once a week by their school as a wellbeing check-in.
- Students in years P-2 who do not return to school may have their learning material provided on the digital learning platform Seesaw or there will be learning resources made available to parents. The Education Support Office will assist with the development of resources for P-2 students as required to assist teachers. Students in P-2 will also receive a weekly check-in from their school.
- Flexibility will be key in term 4 but schools are doing everything they can to make schools as safe as possible, so that as many students as possible can return to the classroom in weeks 4 and 5.

Background Information

- The Education Support Office has provided a range of supports for teachers during the remote learning period. This includes:
 - A series of **15** professional learning webinars attended by **1967** teachers and school support staff. The webinars covered a range of topics on how to deliver quality learning and assessment on-line.
 - A Home Learning site to support families who are looking for extra learning for their children and ideas to support learning at home. There have been **129 030** hits on this site during this lockdown period.
 - A Teacher Resource Centre that provides a range of resources for teachers to use during remote learning and in the face-to-face classroom. There have been **19 800** hits on this site during this lockdown period.
- Schools are working closely with the Education Support Office to develop strategies to re-engage students in face-to-face learning that is targeted, relevant and promotes deep learning.

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 Lead Directorate: Education
 TRIM Ref:



BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

4 – SCHOOL FUNDING

Question 6

- What funding has been allocated to assist schools with the return of staff and students following the lockdown?

Answer

- As announced by the Minister for Education of 8 October 2021 the ACT Government has committed an additional \$5.7 million in support for schools and early childhood education and care services to support the safe return of students. Details are provided below:
 - \$2.9 million to improve ventilation in ACT public schools. This includes building works, CO2 monitoring, increased maintenance for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, and an anticipated increase in electricity bills.
 - \$1.5 million for additional relief teaching hours to support public schools to implement these COVID-safe measures, including covering staff absences and enabling staggered breaks.
 - \$688,000 to buy additional masks and hand sanitiser for public schools, early childhood education and care services and for low fee paying non-government schools.
 - \$500,000 for additional shade structures in ACT public schools. This will support schools to maximise use of outdoor learning spaces.
 - \$100,000 for two additional senior psychologists to provide online counselling and support for ACT public school students.

OTHER – GENERAL

Question 7

- In the table on page 3 of the Education Directorate's Budget Statements, estimated employment levels for 2021-22 at 6,365 FTEs are 188 FTEs less than the 2020-21 Interim Outcome at 6,553 FTEs. Is the Directorate cutting teaching staff?

Answer

- The 2020-21 Interim Outcome figure for Full Time Equivalent Staff (FTEs) in the Education Directorate's Budget Statements reflects the full year impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on staffing, and includes significant resources associated with the Jobs for Canberrans initiative and continuation of temporary casual contracts. The 2021-22 Budget has been prepared on the basis of the finalisation of these initiatives as the ACT moves out of lockdown. The budget therefore reflects reduced FTEs.

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 Contact Officer name: Thao Le Ext: 53145
 Lead Directorate: Education
 TRIM Ref:



BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

- With regard to any impact on frontline teaching staff as a result of decreased FTEs in the 2021-22 Budget Statements, classroom teaching staff are funded through the Schooling Resource Allocation model and the finalisation of these initiatives will not impact those resources.

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Lead Directorate: Education
TRIM Ref:

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BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

Portfolio/s: Education and Youth Affairs

2021 AND 2022 ENROLMENTS AND APPEALS

Talking points:

- The 21 February 2021 Census recorded **81,872 students** enrolled in ACT public schools.
- 2022 Enrolments opened at **6am on 27 April 2021**.
 - As at 11 July 2021, ACT public school enrolment applications for all major intake years (preschool, kindergarten, year 7 and year 11), have increased from the previous year except for preschool.
- **Preschool applications were at 175 (4%) fewer** than at the same time last year.
- Assessment of 2022 applications is ongoing with offers continuing to be made for all 2022 applications as they are received by schools.
- Due to the impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic and in line with current ACT Health advice families can supply enrolment documentation digitally.
- Families can seek a Review of an enrolment decision directly through the school where they are not satisfied with an enrolment decision.
- Where they are not satisfied with a Review outcome, families can also ask for an Enrolment Appeal through the Education Directorate's Education Support Office.

Key Information

2022 Preschool enrolment allocations

- **3945** 2022 Preschool enrolment applications received between 27 April 2021 and 20 September 2021 have been centrally allocated to schools by ESO according to the preschool allocation criteria.
- From 2022 some preschools have been designated as 'high demand', these schools will not be able to accept enrolments from applicants for whom it will not also be their PEA school.
- Preschool applications received after 4 June 2021 are being processed by schools.

Enrolment Reviews of 2021 applications (as at 30 September 2021)

- Total Reviews = **242**
- Affirmed (do not offer a place) = **178**
- Overturned (Offer a place if capacity) = **46**
- NSW (see below) = **18**
- *Criteria (top 3)*
- The applicant has claimed exceptional circumstances, based on student wellbeing, that mean that the child cannot attend their local school and must attend the school they have applied for (all schools) = **135**
- The applicant is seeking to access a curriculum choice(s) not available at their PEA school. = **44**
- The applicant is seeking to continue on to Year 7 or Year 11 with the majority cohort from their current ACT public school (Cat B schools only) = **33**

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Contact Officer name: Vanessa Attridge Ext: 53502
Lead Directorate: Education
TRIM Ref:



BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

- Due to a change of enrolment application assessment systems, it is not yet possible to extract data on 2022 enrolment Reviews .

Enrolment Appeals

- As of Tuesday **5 October 2021** the Directorate has received **115 enrolment appeals** for the 2021 school year. This includes 19 NSW enrolment appeals. **One (1)** appeal is **ongoing** with **20 overturned, 82 upheld and 11 withdrawn**.
- As of Tuesday 5 October 2021 the Directorate has received **22 Inclusive Education Program Placement enrolment appeals** for the 2022 school year.
 - [REDACTED] withdrew,
 - **Fourteen (14)** are completed and [REDACTED] are ongoing pending further information from schools.
- As of Tuesday 5 October 2021 the Directorate has received **32 enrolment appeals** for the 2022 school year. All appeals are ongoing.

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Contact Officer name: Vanessa Attridge Ext: 53502
Lead Directorate: Education
TRIM Ref:

BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

Portfolio: Education and Youth Affairs

FLEXIBLE EDUCATION

Note: Refer to Estimates **Brief 1.10 Muliyan Off Campus Flexible Learning Program**

Talking points:

- At the core of the Future of Education Strategy is an acknowledgement of diversity among students and a determination to strive towards equity by responding to the individual needs of each student.
- The Education Directorate has established the Flexible Education team to provide personalised education programs to students who, at a particular point in time, cannot access education at their enrolled school.
- The Flexible Education team has a strong focus on transitions, ensuring students are supported to move between settings, return to their local school or move into further education, training, or employment opportunities.
- The Flexible Education model promotes inclusivity and individualised learning by connecting students to a multidisciplinary team.
- Students co-construct personalised learning plans, which include both academic and wellbeing goals utilising trauma-informed practices.
- Flexible Education includes:
 - The Hospital School,
 - The educational program at The Cottage,
 - Muliyan,
 - Murrumbidgee School (previously known as Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre) located at Bimberi Juvenile Justice Centre,
 - Distance Education oversight through Finigan School of Distance Education (FSDE),
 - Vocational Learning Options (VLOs), and
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Engagement Program (yet to be named).

Key Information

Muliyan

- Muliyan has been operational since **Term 4, 2018** and is working through a continual cycle of improvement to adapt to the changing cohort and service needs of individual students.
- An Intake Panel, comprising government and non-government membership, considers referrals. The panel reviews each referral on a case-by-case basis with consideration given to the current class composition, gender balance and level of Continuum of Education Support intervention implemented at the students enrolled school.

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Lead Directorate: Education
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BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

- To respond to increased demand for student placements, the ACT Government approved an increase in student placements from 10 to 20 students in 2019 and from 20 to 30 students mid 2020. These increases included resources for additional classroom teachers and allied health professionals to provide essential supports for students. By the end of Term 3 2021, 22 students were enrolled and seven students were being orientated into the program; a total of 29 students.
- Whilst enrolled at Muliyan, students have demonstrated significant improvements in their attendance and engagement in learning. **Eleven year 10 students graduated from the program at the end of 2020** with transitions being successfully supported to either College or work placements.
- In alignment with the Future of Education Strategy, a formal evaluation of the Muliyan program occurred during 2020 by Griffith University. The final report was delivered in early Term 1, 2021.
 - It is noted the success of Muliyan is about the success of young people who require significantly different approaches to pedagogy, curriculum and wellbeing.
 - The research team found evidence of highly effective, student-centred curricular, and pedagogical approaches at Muliyan, presenting comprehensive evidence of student disengagement before attending Muliyan in contrast to detailed evidence of re-engagement after enrolment at Muliyan.
 - The research has found that student outcomes from the Muliyan program strongly indicate that it is achieving its goals and fulfilling its deeper purpose.
- The Directorate will continue to consider recommendations within the Report and provide future advice on pursuing these actions.

Worksafe Issues

- On 8 July 2021, the ACT Education Directorate was issued an Improvement Notice (Notice) in relation to the Muliyan Off-Campus Flexible Learning Program.
- The Directorate is working together with the Muliyan Off-Campus Flexible Learning Program to address and resolve the concerns raised in the notice.

Murrumbidgee School

- Murrumbidgee School provides a range of educational programs to young people within Bimberi Youth Justice Centre, including recognised certificate courses, tutoring and transitional support back into the community.
- At Murrumbidgee School, staff have worked to build productive relationships with Community Service Directorate staff and robust governance of the school with the appointment of a new board in 2020.

Hospital School

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 Lead Directorate: Education
 TRIM Ref:

Flexible Education – Executive Summary

Muliyam Staffing:

Core team established in 2018 to support 10 students including:

- 1 x SLA
- 1 x SLC
- 1 x HPO 4
- 1 x HPO 3
- 1 x ASO 6 (YW coordinator)
- 1 x PCYC team leader

10 – 20 students uplift team monies first received as part of **mid-year budget review from 1 January 2020 in 2019-20** and continued in 2020-21 only via CAB2020/39, including:

- 2 x CT
- 1 x HPO3
- 1 x Youth worker

20 – 30 students uplift team monies **first received on 1 July 2020 for 2020-21** only via CAB 2020/39, including:

- 1 x SLB (Deputy Principal)
- 2 x CT
- 1 x HPO 3
- 1 x Youth worker
- 1 x ASO4 (Business operations support)

Total uplift received through CAB2020/39 in 2020-21 only is \$1.836 million.

Muliyam Enrolments:

Year	Muliyam Capacity	Muliyam average student enrolments
FY 2018- 2019 Term 4 (October) 2018	10 students	8.5 students
FY 2019 -2020 Term 1 (January) 2020	10 – 20 students	20 students
FY 2020-2021 Term 3 (July) 2020	20 – 30 students	29 students

Flexible Education FTE:

Program	FTE
Murrumbidgee Education & Training Centre	1 x SLC 4 x CT 1 x ASO 6
Muliyani	1 x SLA 1 x SLB 2 x SLC 1 x HPO4 3 x HPO3 5 x CT 1 x ASO 6 2 x ASO 4 1 x PCYC Youth Worker Team Leader 2 x PCYC Youth Workers
Hospital School	2 x CT 1 x ASO 4
Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Enrichment Centre	1 x SLC 1 x ASO 4
Distance Education	1 x CT 1 x HPO 3

Summary Flexible Education Staffing:

SLA	1
SLB	1
SLC	4
CT	12
HPO4	1
HPO3	4

ASO 6	2
ASO 4	4
YSW	3 (through PCYC)



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QUESTION No. 4

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
MICHAEL PETERSSON 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



OFFICIAL

MINISTERIAL BRIEF



Education Directorate

To: Minister for Education and Youth Affairs

Date: 25/05/2021

CC: Director-General

From: Executive Group Manager, School Improvement

Subject: Margaret Hendry School – Update – May 2021

Critical Date: As soon as possible

Critical Reason:

Tracking No.: FILE2021/2456

Recommendations

That you:

- 1. Note the information contained in this brief.

Noted / Please Discuss

Yvette Berrv MLA

07/06/21

Minister's Office Feedback
Very comprehensive, thank you.

Background

- 1. The Margaret Hendry School Differentiated Support Plan was developed in September 2020 (Attachment A) in response to observed rates of increasing occupational violence reporting, a series of parent complaints around student behaviour management, as well as concerns raised about the physical space.

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2. An external School Review by ACER was also conducted in mid Term 1, 2021 that reconfirmed areas of strength, but also areas of focus that were already being supported through the existing Support Plan.

School Demographics and School Establishment

3. Enrolment growth at Margaret Hendry School has exceeded initial estimated growth since it opened in Term 1 2019. School Census data shows enrolments in the foundation year of the school were 246 students, increasing to 486 students in 2020 and 602 students in 2021.
4. The high rate of enrolment growth has presented a challenge to the sense of belonging and community at the school. School climate data indicates school identification dropped from 77 percent in 2019 to 60 percent in 2020 which is well below the ACT public school average of 79 percent. In addition, the proportion of students with a strong average score in Shared Values and Approach domain dropped from 83 percent in 2019 to 76 percent in 2020 which is well below the ACT average of 88 percent.
5. The school has high levels of diversity both culturally and socio economically.
6. For the beginning of the 2021 school year the school identified 48 languages listed, not including English. The languages with the largest number of mentions are Punjabi (35) Hindi (29), Arabic (23), Urdu (17), Telegu (15), Bengali (15), Gujarati (14), Spanish (11), and Tamil (11).
7. Through the first years of enrolment, the school was drawing largely from the suburb of Moncrief. The school observed relatively high levels of vulnerability evident in enrolment interviews and data obtained upon enrolment regarding family socio economic status and employment. Many children presented with complex needs and volatile behaviour.

Complex Needs and Occupational Violence

8. Margaret Hendry has high reported incidents of occupational violence. So far in 2021 staff have completed 171 Riskman reports for 144 distinct incidents at a rate of 31.8% per hundred students. At a system comparison this is the highest reporting P to 6 setting and 5th highest reporting school across all settings.
9. The physical space and open layout present challenges in managing and de-escalation of some student behaviour.
10. In 2021 the Riskman reporting has related to 34 distinct students and 10 parents. 14 of these students have individualised plans in place resulting from Occupational Violence Risk Assessments. A senior school psychologist was deployed under the Support Plan during 2020 to work on student assessments and supports, strengthening of plans and teacher capability to respond.

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11. There are distinct peaks in reporting at the end of term 1 and in May this year. High levels of staff absences can be attributed to increased occupational violence risk and the impact of COVID 19 health requirements to stay home if at all ill.
12. In Term 1 2021 the school had 249 teacher and LSA absences with only 115 of those absences able to be replaced. This has been exacerbated during term 2 as we head into the cold and flu season. The inability to employ relief teachers requires executive staff who would normally be a point of escalation for behaviour management responses, having to cover classes.

Staffing Profile

13. The impact of the growth has been amplified by the high number of early career teachers employed at the school. In 2020 due to the rapid growth in enrolments, 51 percent of staff were new to the school. The staff profile is also younger, with shorter length of service in education than other network schools. The median length of education service was identified in late 2020 as 1.6 years at Margaret Hendry compared to 7.5 years at other schools.

Parent and Community Engagement and Complaints Responsiveness

14. The school has a comprehensive approach to communications with families. Attachment B details the schools communications and engagement with family and community.
15. Education Directorate complaint data since the schools opening is as follows:
 1. 2019 – (9 September first recorded complaint came in): total of [REDACTED] complaints
 - i. [REDACTED] - policy related
 - ii. [REDACTED] staff behaviour
 - iii. [REDACTED] - student behaviour management
 2. 2020 – total of 20 complaints:
 - i. [REDACTED] - enrolment
 - ii. [REDACTED] - facilities
 - iii. [REDACTED] - inclusion and engagement
 - iv. [REDACTED] - policy
 - v. [REDACTED] communication
 - vi. [REDACTED] - staff behaviour
 - vii. [REDACTED] - student behaviour management

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16. 2021 – total of [redacted] complaints so far:

1. [redacted] – staff behaviour
2. [redacted] – inclusion and engagement

17. The School Operations team have been working proactively to case manage parents who have come in via the Directorate complaints line, as well as identified parents who have been posting previously on Facebook, to work through their concerns. All complaints received have to date been actively managed and responded to, and the Directorate will continue to engage with any issues that students and parents raise.

Performance and Climate Data

18. The analysis of performance and climate data should be caveated with the context of the school opening in 2019, the significant growth it has experienced, the lack of availability of longitudinal data, including no NAPLAN in 2020. The impact of the second year of the school's operations included dealing with the impact of events of 2020 in a very new setting with an emergent school culture and lacking the established relationships between staff and community to leverage through this time is a further consideration.

19. Within these caveats, several key data indicators have declined in the climate data for the school:

1. The belief that the school has an Academic Emphasis by students went from a score of 94% of students with a strongly positive view of academic emphasis in 2019, (a little above the ACT primary school average of 90%), to only 81% in 2020
2. Parent perceptions of the school's academic emphasis also fell from a level equivalent to other primary schools in the ACT to significantly below.
3. Student perceptions of the strength of shared values at the school also shows a decline, although not as extreme, that resulted in a 6 percentage point difference between Margaret Hendry and other primary schools in the ACT.
4. More significantly, staff perceptions of shared values show a fall in perceptions at twice the rate of other primary schools across the system, from 96% in 2019 to 70% in 2020. The ACT average for primary schools moved from 96% to 88% over the same period.
5. Family School relations indicates a measure of the relationships between the school and families, shows a sharp decline between 2019 and 2020. It is likely that this is related to high expectations of a new school, followed by an adjustment. This adjustment period is also likely to have been exacerbated by the experience of COVID-19.
6. Perceptions by students of General Levels of Aggression, classroom disruption and general victimisation all increased between 2019 and 2020.

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20. Further analysis of this is being undertaken and will inform the strengthening of supports for the school. You will be briefed on this as part of the implementation of the Margaret Hendry School Review.

School Review Outcomes From 2021

21. The independent ACER School Review was conducted in March 2021 at Margaret Hendry School. You will be briefed on the implementation of the Review in the near future.
22. Relevant observations from the Review include:
 1. Acknowledgement of the successful establishment of the school which has provided a strong foundation to create a School Board and P&C; develop a preschool Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), and approach to personalise student learning.
 2. Acknowledgement of the high quality nature of partnerships with community, community organisations evidenced through the establishment of the Community Hub and the range of programs available to support student needs. This includes several partnerships with the purpose of building a culture of respect with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
 3. Acknowledgment that there were a range of levels of satisfaction from the parent community – from those highly engaged and happy, through to families who were concerned about the levels of communication and student management issues. Parents expressed they would like more information about how their children are progressing. This is reported as being variable between teachers.
 4. Parents who were interviewed identified a need for increased focus on improved academic rigour and opportunities to cater for more able learners
 5. It was evident that some learners were disengaged and those learners with challenging behaviours took up considerable time of the Learning Support Assistants (LSAs), teachers and leaders. Stakeholders expressed that students this year were more settled than in 2020. Some students reported that they felt unsafe by the behaviour of other students and this often disrupted their learning when they could be working and thinking harder.
 6. A recommendation that as the school develops its five year strategic plan (currently underway) it has a deep and narrow focus on strengthening approaches to student wellbeing, including behaviour management, and deepening its academic focus on literacy, particularly reading across the school.

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Issues

23. A range of actions have been identified over the short to medium term to address parent concerns and support the identified needs at the school. This includes:

Engage with the Community

24. Some parents/carers have raised concern around communication between school and home. The school engages with parents/carers in multiple formats and mediums including both face to face and online meetings, regular emails, updates on social media, a parent survey, a dedicated community hub and Coffee Cart Chats before school.

25. In response to the interest and concerns raised through the article in the Canberra Times, as well as via the recent posts in the Canberra Notice Board Group, the following actions are planned this week:

1. Parents who have posted concerns or issues on social media will be individually contacted and supports and assistance offered. This will include follow up with parents who attend other school sites by ESO staff.
2. The school has developed a program for the week that utilises a range of engagement strategies including:
 - i. Coffee carts at the start of each day attended by executive at the school
 - ii. Executive at after school program pickups to be available for community three days this week.
 - iii. School drop in sessions each morning this week with Directorate case management staff in attendance and school leadership, for parents who would like to discuss issues or concerns and ^{to} view the school in operation.
 - iv. A meeting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community through the Monday afternoon Indigi-connect meeting.
 - v. The centrepiece for the week will be a community forum on Thursday night, available both online and face to face for people to engage and discuss current issues. Director of School Improvement will be in attendance for this event alongside the Principal and staff at the school.
 - vi. An email and social media will go out to community highlighting these opportunities.
 - vii. ESO staff will be in attendance and available to support parents and the school through these interactions.

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Strengthen the Differentiated Support Plan

26. The Differentiated Support Plan was developed to address identified risks. A copy of the Support Plan can be found at [Attachment B](#). This will be reviewed considering recent events and further analysis of 2020 climate data and strengthened accordingly. Strategies progressed during Term 1 2021 included:

1. Improved process for occupational violence reporting and response
2. Redesign of two physical spaces within the school to facilitate greater community engagement.
3. Enhanced communication plan for parent/carer community, specifically incorporating social media
4. Strengthened leadership team and staff with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

A Focussed School Improvement Plan

27. Margaret Hendry School completed an external School Review in March 2021.
28. As previously highlighted, the Review also provided clarity around two major adjustments to refocus the school on strong foundational practices of Literacy, particularly reading, and behaviour management and wellbeing. This will present a further opportunity to engage with the community on the implementation of these focuses across the school.
29. This will include a strengthening of the Positive Behaviour for Learning implementation across the school, as well as further strengthening the implementation of the ten essential literacy practices from the Early Years Literacy program. Both the Directorates Positive Behaviour for Learning Team and Instructional Mentors will be further utilised to assist in the strengthening of these programs at the school.
30. Learnings from School Review will inform ongoing work and supports provided to the school. The increased focus on literacy, including specifically on reading is a good opportunity to engage all stakeholders in a specific focus on the academic rigour of the education offering at the school.
31. School climate data will be used to underpin measurements of success for the implementation of plans at the school.

Supports for Students and Families

32. The engagement of allied health professionals with expertise in trauma informed practices has been a feature of the supports provided to the school throughout 2020. Access to senior psychologists, social workers and student behaviour experts in working directly with students and families has had a positive impact, however the growth of the school and the high instances of students presenting with complex

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behaviours and subsequent rates of Occupational Violence point to a need for expanding this element of the support plan.

Workforce

33. The workforce profile and availability of staff to fill unplanned leave for Margaret Hendry School remains an ongoing focus of support for the school. Ensuring the school is actively managed through the recruitment, retention and transfer of staff to achieve a more balanced profile and alleviate some of the current pressures will be an ongoing challenge and focus for the school and Directorate.

Financial Implications

34. The school is currently projected to be over budget with the current resource and support profile required to respond to current need.
35. Redirection of school support and priorities are funded within the existing budget of the Directorate wherever possible.
36. Where additional supports or actions are required, the first avenues for support are the funds within Education Support Office business units and personnel providing specific expertise as needed.
37. The updated support plan and support needs of the school will be assessed in partnership with Strategic Finance.

Next steps

38. In line with the information in this brief, you will be provided with regular updates on the Directorate's support for Margaret Hendry School over the coming period within four broad focus areas:
1. Visible implementation of the School Improvement Plan, based on the outcomes of external School Review.
 2. Continued work on individual complaints or concerns reported by students or families.
 3. Recalibrated parent communications and school branding.
 4. Refreshed Education Support Office supports including staffing, behavioural management and occupational violence, instructional mentors, and finances in line Differentiated Support Plan.

Media Issues

39. There has been recent coverage of Margaret Hendry School in The Canberra Times and on social media.

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40. You will receive a full update on the answers to the media enquiries made by the Canberra Times by way of caveat brief in the coming days.

Signatory Name: Mark Huxley


Phone: 53313

Attachments

Attachment	Title
Attachment A	Margaret Hendry Differentiated School Support Plan
Attachment B	Summary/themes of communication

Margaret Hendry School - Communications

Communication	Details of engagement	Evidence
Gatherings and events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2020 the school established a community lunch and gathering each Wednesday however due to COVID-19 these ceased. Families were invited to attend each week. • Whole school gathering at end of 2019 and 2020 for graduation. • Community event (welcome) in week 2-3 of term 1. • Learning showcase in term 4 of each year • Book Week event • National Simultaneous Storytime 	
Planned Sporting Carnivals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2019: Whole school athletics carnival Whole school cross country carnival Sporting excursions were held. Children participated in the Limelight competition (dancing). • 2019: Due to small establishment numbers meant there was no swimming carnival - school had only opened, not possible in the first 2 weeks of the school's existence. 48 children in years 3-6. No community established for community experience. • Children's swimming times were welcomed to be recorded and provided so the school could forward eligible children to regionals • 2020: Covid. No athletics carnival and sporting events held on school grounds. Children were still engaged in weekly/daily physical activity and education. • 2021: Term 2: Whole school cross country. 	

<p>Home learning guidelines and access to Library resources</p>	<p>At MIHS we have a focus on nurturing a love of reading and providing children with quality literature and accessible texts to support reading development. Texts that motivate children to read and spark joy are the best tools for families to use to support their children’s reading development in the home. PM Benchmark levelled readers are instructional texts for teacher use. We have a highly skilled teacher librarian who matches the skill level of the reader with good fit books for them to read at home with families to ensure that reading remains joyous and does not begin to present anxiety.</p> <p>Home learning is in the form of reading for pleasure and engaging with families around whole school inquiries</p> <p>Children have access to the library through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly visits as a group • Before and after school with families • Daily Break times (2 x 30 min sessions) • Yr 2-6 have access to library passes to borrow and return when needed <p>Specific Home reading books are provided for K-2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on quality literature • Fun and engaging books • Repetition and rhyme • Familiar texts <p>All children have access to borrowing from the library</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Student loan limit up to 8 books <p>Data on 18 May 2021 indicates there are 5,454 current loans with a loan history of over 36,000 items borrowed. 139 families are</p>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;">  <p style="text-align: center;">HOME READING</p> <p>Your child has selected this text to read at home for HOME READING. Please support your child to read this book aloud then return it to school to swap for another book. Try to change the book 2-3 times a week.</p> <p>HANDY HINTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get comfy! Choose a safe, inviting place to read (bed, your lap, couch). • Choose a relaxing positive time to read (before bed etc). Straight after school your child might be exhausted. Make nightly reading a special family time that becomes a habit. • Provide choice and variety- the home reading book is just one option. Library books and books from home can be used too. • Familiar texts are INVALUABLE! -Revisit well-loved books from home, now they might be able to read it themselves. • Give positive feedback, encourage expression, model enthusiasm and have fun! <p>SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD WITH READING ALOUD</p> <p>Before reading aloud, let the child look at the book and have a discussion. This helps the child to feel more confident and connect to the text.</p> <p>WAYS TO READ TOGETHER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take turns reading a different sentence, paragraph, or page • Echo Read -You read and the child repeats after you • Read along together <p><small>If you want the most information about supporting your child with reading at home (particularly reading unknown words), please see your child's learning coach or Bridgette in the library.</small></p> </div> <p style="text-align: right;">Attachment also emailed.</p>	

	<p>registered for family borrowing and have active accounts. Families may borrow up to 20 books at a time.</p>	
<p>Provision of work in 2020 for learning from home</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Online learning classrooms for every roll group in the school. Including preschool. Including face to face sessions with learning coaches, family friendly options included in the online platform ● School provided access to devices for all children to complete learning at home ● School staff visited each house over the easter break to drop off wellbeing message to reinforce and maintain connection to families ● Learning resource packs dropped to families who were unable to get to school ● Staff at Amaroo daily, safe and supervised site, to support children with online learning for essential worker families ● School open throughout this time - if children came to school they were supported to engage in the online learning platform 	<p>Google classroom which included daily sign in sheet for students - attendance was marked daily through SAS? http://www.margarethendryschool.act.edu.au/our_learners/learning_at_home</p> <p>Principal presentation on innovation in remote learning https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1v0D4XXAuUQ</p>
<p>Communication Guidelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communication guidelines and poster shared with every family at the start of the year - through 1:1 conversations between family and child's teacher. 15 minute meeting for every child. ● School uses digital letters, emails, the school website and facebook to communicate. All emails are reinforced through the website and then event reminders through facebook in addition. ● For more specific groups of parent volunteers, messenger groups and WhatsApp groups are used. For example, Playgroup, EID event organisation, Christmas group. Families are approached via surveys, in person, and via facebook and email to join activities and added to these 	<p>Connecting at MHS https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TBgQ5T4yKyA170UO2TAEKJ0bf8Wm7czY/view?usp=sharing</p>

	<p>groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School has multiple lines of communication. ● Seeks input and feedback through P&C, Facebook and email, as well as other smaller groups (eg WhatsApp playgroup) ● Online forums held to support families who cannot make it onsite ● Opportunities to meet with Exec staff at weekly “Coffee Cart Chats”. ● Personalised strategies to meet specific and individual needs of family or child ● Strong communication over all - reinforced by directorates approach to communicate with schools and educators (Progressing Parental Engagement in the ACT) ● Directorate-wide reporting process is implemented - Semester 2 and 4 reports. 1:1 family conversations in term 1. Collaborative interviews (child, family and teacher) in term 3 to discuss learning. Therefore, academic reporting events are scheduled every term. ● SMS reminders sent to families for relevant events, eg Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander gatherings and events. ● Families have a daily opportunity to meet and connect with the schools Director of Family and Community Engagement at the community hub. The hub provides a casual, relaxed space for families to settle, connect and talk about any concerns. They can also speak with the school P&C members. 	<p>Coffee Cart Chats Term 2 Schedule https://drive.google.com/file/d/178jeLm6LerW4P05QL978JMFNp-IG_Q6V/view?usp=sharing</p>
<p>Cultural Integrity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2021 cultural and communication priority: Development of Personal Empowerment Plans upon request from families and in conjunction with our Cultural Integrity Coordinator ● Buri Connect weekly yarning sessions for children to come 	<p>Connecting at MHS - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families</p>

	<p>together in a culturally safe manner, children create the focus for the session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Indigi Connect, a means for families, children and the school to come together twice per term. ● Culturally safe yarning space created within our Community Hub for children, families and community to come together ● Authentic Inquiries across the school (We, Me, Nation and World) aim to explore and share culture. Ways of being and doing are fostered through windows and mirrors into culture - and connection to community is sought to provide authentic learning experiences wherever possible. ● Excursions for Indigenous children to spend time on Country with Adam Shipp ● Whole school excursions to Birrigai in 2020 to undertake the Indigenous Perspectives program ● Families have come to the school to support through the offering of workshops specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and in class experiences for larger groups of children ● Cross curriculum priorities including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures ● 	<p>https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Vm0wRd9ndAZIo1ZEQPaylphRRAFe84/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>Buri Connect Weekly Focus</p> <p>https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ESKMdDZmk-ihk1B8DB_yoENjaslevPbf/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/19i_gHG7Ub5_yhuwWqMBtkJn-3ENe0bh7JFFO6UwsgA8/edit?usp=sharing</p> <p>Cultural Events Calendar</p> <p>https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TW6fg8ATvtluBnzzbKNeLwPG1rZMZz3x/view?usp=sharing</p>
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BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

Portfolio/s: Education and Youth Affairs
Early Childhood Development

8.2 Inquiry Based Learning

Question

- How does inquiry based learning ensure that students are still getting rigorous and explicit literacy and numeracy instruction?

Answer

- Inquiry based learning is one of many teaching approaches and strategies used in ACT public schools.
- Literacy and numeracy skills remain a high priority for all ACT public schools.
- Literacy and numeracy continue to be taught in schools via explicit instruction, differentiated learning and structured lessons. Literacy and numeracy are also essential to inquiry based learning, which gives student the opportunity to develop and apply literacy and numeracy skills through problem solving and critical thinking.

Question

- Are all ACT public schools expected to deliver learning programs based primarily on inquiry based learning?

Answer

- Teachers use a combination of different pedagogical approaches so that students gain both the knowledge and skills they need to think, create and succeed in an increasingly digital future. This includes literacy and numeracy skills.
- Some approaches are targeted and give more structure for learning (such as explicit instruction and structured lessons), while other approaches are student-centred and focus on learning experiences (such as inquiry based and collaborative learning).

Not all students best learn by some way. + consistent with the Australian Curriculum.

Question

- If students are being given greater control of their own learning through inquiry based learning, how can teachers be sure that students are meeting the requirements of the Australian Curriculum?

Answer

- While inquiry based learning is student-centred, the teacher's role in the inquiry process is vital to ensure students' success in learning. This includes explicitly teaching the inquiry process and the skills to engage in inquiry, and ensuring that inquiry topics align with the achievement standards of the Australian Curriculum.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 13/10/2021
 Cleared for public release by: Deputy Director-General Ext:51099
 Contact Officer name: Kate McMahon Ext:59205
 Lead Directorate: Education
 TRIM Ref:



BUDGET ESTIMATES BRIEF

- As with all pedagogical approaches, the inquiry process involves ongoing assessment of student achievement against the standards of the Australian Curriculum. Teachers use this assessment data to meet individual student needs.

Background Information

- As a student-centred approach, inquiry-based learning requires students to learn through asking questions and finding answers, while developing problem solving and thinking skills.
- Inquiry-based learning is used in conjunction with other approaches to ensure all students can learn and succeed at school, based on individual strengths and learning preferences.
- Some approaches are targeted and provide greater structure for learning. Some examples include:
 - Differentiated learning (targeted) – teaching is adjusted for a student’s learning needs
 - Explicit instruction (targeted) – planned, teacher-directed learning on specific knowledge.
 - Structured lessons (targeted) – planned teaching and learning that reinforces routines and connects lesson and unit learning.
- Some approaches are student-centred and focus on learning experiences. Some examples include:
 - Inquiry based learning - students learn through asking questions and finding answers. Students may do project work or work on strategies to develop problem solving and thinking skills.
 - Collaborative learning (student-centred) – students working together to get a task done.
 - Personalised learning (student-centred)– adjusting learning to a student’s individual needs.
- The Education Directorate’s Enabling Pedagogies resource provides teachers with evidence-based, high impact strategies which support schools to improve student learning outcomes and deliver the school’s strategic priorities.
- Enabling Pedagogies promotes and supports targeted, explicit and scaffolded instruction for all students through differentiation, explicit instruction, response to individual need and carefully planned lesson structures. An inquiry-based learning approach does not replace these strategies but ensures that instruction is student-centred with opportunities for collaborative and personalised learning.
- Various learning areas of the Australian Curriculum, implemented by all ACT public schools, require students to develop inquiry skills in order to engage with curriculum content and meet achievement standards.

Cleared as complete and accurate: 13/10/2021
 Cleared for public release by: Deputy Director-General Ext:51099
 Contact Officer name: Kate McMahon Ext:59205
 Lead Directorate: Education
 TRIM Ref:



MINISTERIAL BRIEF

Education Directorate

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To: Minister for Education and Youth Affairs Tracking No.: FILE2021/2996

Date: 15/09/2021

From: Executive Group Manager, Service Design and Delivery

Subject: Language education in ACT schools Position Paper and Draft Languages Education Action Plan consultation

Critical Date: 14 October 2021

Critical Reason: To get approval for consultation on the Draft Languages Education Action Plan to commence

- DG .../.../...
- DDG .../.../...

Recommendations

That you:

Note the attached Position Paper: Language Education in ACT Schools ([Attachment A](#)) which outlines potential key significant changes to the delivery of language education.

Noted / Please Discuss

1. Agree that the Position Paper (Attachment A) and DRAFT *Languages Education Action Plan* (Draft Action Plan) ([Attachment C](#)) can be circulated with stakeholders for consultation.

Agreed / Not Agreed / Please Discuss

2. Agree to the proposed communication strategy at [Attachment D](#).

Agreed / Not Agreed / Please Discuss

Yvette Berry MLA /...../.....

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Minister's Office Feedback

Background

1. On 28 November 2018, the ACT Legislative Assembly passed a resolution, in relation to language education in ACT schools. A copy of the resolution is at [Attachment C](#).
2. The resolution called on the ACT Government to amongst others:
 - a. develop an action plan to encourage, improve and support language education in Canberra schools as part of implementing the *Future of Education Strategy*;
 - b. consult with the Community Language Schools Association as part of developing this action plan; and
 - c. include development of the action plan as part of the *Future of Education Implementation Plan* that will be presented to the Legislative Assembly during 2021.
3. The *Future of Education Implementation Plan* (FoE Implementation Plan) includes references to the future of language education in ACT public schools, with a commitment to review language programs to strengthen pathways and offerings for students, and to review language programs in ACT public schools during 2021.
4. The ACT Government Multicultural Framework 2015-2020 Second Action Plan, which has been extended to the end of 2021 due to the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic, identifies Priority Action 18 by which the ACT Government commits to develop an action plan to encourage, improve and support language education in Canberra schools as part of implementing the Future of Education.
5. In 2020, the Community Services Directorate (CSD) undertook an Independent Review on ACT Government Investment into Community Language Schools. There are a number of recommendations that relate to Education that focus on the provision of space to Community Language Schools in ACT public schools. The review did not directly address language provision in ACT public schools. The findings from the review have not yet been released and are set to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly in late October 2021.
6. The Directorate has a strong and established relationship with the ACT Community Language Schools Association. It is anticipated that discussions surrounding the CSD Review will emerge in multiple forums as a part of our ongoing stakeholder relations. The ACT Community Language Schools Association will be a key stakeholder in the consultation process.

Commented [HK1]: This brief needs to note and comment on linkages to the CSD review of CLS. See also comments in position paper and action plan on this matter.

Commented [PK2R1]: Addressed at point #5.

Commented [MM3]: However, the review did go to the viability of CLSs and our action plan contains some overlap with CLSs in public schools

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Issues

7. As part of this commitment and in response to the language education in ACT schools resolution, the Directorate has prepared a *Position Paper: Language Education in ACT Schools* ([Attachment A](#)). The Position Paper provides an overview of the provision of language education and identifies areas for improvement. It also includes observations to improve language education in ACT public schools.
8. The Position Paper formed the basis for development of the DRAFT Languages Education Action Plan ([Attachment B](#)). Consultation on the Draft Action Plan will commence following your agreement to undertake consultation. It is intended that the Position Paper be shared with stakeholders during consultation as it provides the context around the current language provision in ACT public schools.
9. There are varied views within the broader language community in relation to the challenges faced in languages education. Areas that have been identified as benefitting from consultation include:
 - a. Explore expansion from the current eight languages to the 16 languages adopted under the Australian Curriculum,
 - b. Removal of mandated teaching minutes for years 3-8, and
 - c. Retaining languages for years 3-8.

Commented [HK4]: What is the status of the position paper? Is it intended for external distribution? If not, should be clear it's an internal working document to inform the Action Plan

Commented [PK5R4]: Addressed in point 8.

Expansion to 16 languages

10. There are currently eight priority languages taught in ACT schools: Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish. These languages represent the eight original languages released by Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).
11. There are currently known challenges associated with providing these languages in terms of securing appropriately qualified and skilled teaching staff.
12. Opening the priority languages to encompass the 16 languages now delivered under the Australian Curriculum would allow greater scope to identify suitable teaching staff and to better align with community expectations around language education provision.
13. If an expansion of languages were to occur this would require pathways to be reconsidered and carefully assigned through a language continuity plan supported centrally.

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14. The eight languages that could be added for the ACT are:

Arabic	Vietnamese
Auslan	Turkish
Frameworks for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages	Hindi
Framework for Classical Languages	Modern Greek

Removal of mandated teaching minutes for years 3-8

- 15. Currently mandated teaching minutes for the teaching of languages are prescribed for students in Years 3-8.
- 16. Removing the mandated minutes requirement will provide further flexibility for schools in the delivery of language curriculum.

Retaining languages for years 3-8

- 17. Languages is one of the eight key learning areas to be delivered under the Australian Curriculum. In the current Curriculum Requirements Policy and associated Procedures, languages are a required subject area from years 3-8.
- 18. The requirement of minutes and year groups for languages are ACT specific provisions rather than national regulations. Whilst the mandated minutes may be removed, it is expected that these subjects will still be delivered as subject areas for students in these year groups.

Additional challenges for longer term consideration

- 19. Workforce planning for language specialists is difficult as there are multiple professional and registration requirements impacting on the Directorate’s ability to employ suitable teaching staff, particularly international teachers.
- 20. Further liaison with the Teaching Quality Institute (TQI) to explore opportunities for alternative or complementary approaches to the requirements for English language proficiency for teachers could assist in securing additional languages teachers.
- 21. As part of a system workforce strategy, establishing a capability map would assist to identify language specialists currently in the system and how to best deploy them to support the provision of language programs in all public schools in the ACT.
- 22. The Directorate has close ties to ACT universities, particularly the University of Canberra (UC) through the Affiliated Schools Program. Whilst the Australian National University (ANU) does not have an education faculty, opportunities could be sought to reinstate collaboration between the universities, allowing education students at UC to access their language development through the ANU.
- 23. UC, ANU, and TQI are key stakeholders of the consultation process.

Commented [MM6]: Are non-govs and ACU also key stakeholders in this? Changes to TQI requirements will become a cross-sectoral matter as they are applied to all sectors.

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24. There are also opportunities in the ACT to capitalise on the language expertise of our international community. This includes supporting upskilling Community Language School teachers to qualify for teacher registration, and the potential for further language teaching assistant roles to be created.

Early Learning Languages Australia (ELLA)

25. Early Learning Languages Australia (ELLA) is a Commonwealth funded preschool, play-based language-learning application. There is no requirement for the teacher to be language proficient and the application is Australian Curriculum aligned. A trial was commenced in 2019 for Kindergarten to Year 2 students with some initial success. The trial will conclude in 2022. The Commonwealth is yet to determine whether it will formally adopt the program but there has been wide uptake, popularity and success of the program since it commenced.
26. In the ACT, languages are only mandated from years 3-8 under the Curriculum Requirements Policy. As Languages are one of the eight learning areas delivered under the Australian Curriculum, ELLA would provide consistency in language provision across all years from K-8 and provide an introduction and exposure to languages in the early years.
27. If it is determined as feasible, ELLA may be considered as a delivery solution for Kindergarten to Year 2 students across the ACT to meet the current delivery gaps at these levels.
28. In terms of workforce planning and language teacher shortages, a regular classroom teacher can run the ELLA program as the teacher does not need to be language proficient. This would provide a low cost, outcome-based solution to language teaching in early primary years and start students on a language pathway. As outlined in the Action Plan it is recommended ELLA be monitored with a view to mandating ELLA for Kindergarten to Year 2 students in all ACT public primary schools following endorsement.

Commented [MM7]: Are we talking about an app that runs on student devices?

When we say there's no requirements for the teacher to be language proficient, do we mean that teacher use the app in the classroom but most of the language content/resources come from the app?

Future activities

29. Following consultation activity outlined in Attachment D, the Directorate will collate feedback received and finalise the *Languages Education Action Plan* and a Languages Framework which would then be submitted for your endorsement.

Financial Implications

30. Project activities in 2020/21 will be funded from within USS existing budget.
31. Additional budget may need to be sought in future to fund implementation plan activities.

Commented [MM8]: This section needs to be clearer about the cost of project activity to be funded within USS and the activity that may lead to requests for additional funding.

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Consultation

32. A range of internal and external stakeholders will be consulted on the Draft Action Plan. A Communications Strategy is at Attachment D.

Internal

33. People & Performance, Strategic Finance, and schools.

Cross Directorate

34. CSD will be consulted prior to finalisation of the Draft Action Plan. The Multicultural Framework Action Plan was extended until the end of 2021 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and will be re-addressed in 2022.

35. Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD), specifically the Office for International Engagement will also be consulted, given the nature of relationships between the Directorate and the international community in Canberra.

External

36. Australian Education Union

37. ACT Principals Association

Commented [MM9]: We have or we will consult with them?

Work Health and Safety

38. Nil.

Benefits/Sensitivities

39. Some of these recommendations are likely to generate feedback from community members, as well as the broader international community.

40. Key attention is expected to come from the suggestion to remove mandated minutes, and the expansion of languages offered.

Commented [MM10]: I think the upskilling of CLS teachers and adjustments to teacher registration requirements are likely to be contentious.

Communications, media and engagement implications

41. Language education provision can attract both positive and negative media attention, as it is at times an emotive topic within the community. Several known community advocates are highly vocal and engaged on these topics.

42. Multiple opportunities for positive media engagement exist in line with the various actions contained within the Draft Action Plan. Opportunities for positive media engagement may arise where shorter term improvements are socialised and once consultation on longer term variation to the ACT language education approach commences.

Signatory Name: Kate McMahon Phone: 6205 7719

Action Officer: Jason Borton Phone: 6205 9205

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Attachments

Attachment	Record ID	Title
Attachment A	REC21/15699	Position paper: Languages education in ACT schools (2021)
Attachment B	REC21/15791	DRAFT ACT Language Education Action Plan (2021)
Attachment C	DOC2019/35448	ACT Legislative Assembly Resolution – Language Education
Attachment D	REC21/52476	Communications Strategy and Consultation Plan

Commented [PK11]: Added as requested by DG office

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BUDGET ESTIMATES – BACKPOCKET BRIEF

Meeting Date	
Agenda Item Title	Australian Education Union (AEU) Survey, Teacher Shortage Taskforce and EDU Strategic Workforce Projects
Clearance:	EGM, Business Services

AEU SURVEY KEY INFORMATION

- On 27 August 2021, the AEU published the AEU ACT Branch 2021 Educator Survey report to outline the findings of the survey that they have undertaken for their members in July 2021. The report outlines that there are over 1800 respondents which includes:
 - 1,081 classroom teachers,
 - 48 principals,
 - 56 deputy principals,
 - 212 executive teachers, and
 - 149 learning support assistants.
- The survey outlined the following concerns from their members:
 - Respondents overwhelmingly reported that their school is negatively impacted by a shortage of staff (91%), and that these negative impacts are serious (95%). Staffing shortages are frequently dealt with by 'splitting' or 'collapsing' classes, where students are distributed to other classrooms.
 - Almost all (98%) of our school leaders who responded to the survey believe staff absences are undermining teachers' capacity to consistently deliver high quality education. The staffing shortage also has direct consequences for work safety in schools. Almost one in five respondents have experienced violence in the classroom as a direct consequence of split or cancelled classes.
 - The survey data shows that ACT public school teachers are subsidising the ACT Government's spending on education to the tune of at least \$75 million every year on unpaid over-time work. In addition to this, teachers are spending around \$5 million a year out of their own pockets on classroom resources.
 - The survey reports that more than half of classroom teachers say that they would not recommend teaching as a career to family members or friends and that one in three teachers in their first three years of teaching are considering leaving.

WORKFORCE INFORMATION AND ACTIONS

- In August 2021, the Education Directorate has agreed with the proposal from the AEU to establish a joint Teacher Shortage Taskforce recognising the need for ongoing dialogue on workforce issues during the current lockdown and period of remote learning and to build on ongoing productive engagement with the AEU.
- The Directorate has committed to work with the AEU on addressing the below issues that they have identified:
 - Covering staff absences,
 - Continuity of education, including the practice of splitting and cancelling classes,
 - Teacher and school leader recruitment processes,
 - Attraction and retention, including:
 - Teacher and school leader workload reduction,
 - Effect of work safety on retention of staff,
 - New educator entitlements, including early career salaries,
 - Permit-to-teach staff entitlements, including salaries and supervision requirements,
 - Hard-to-staff positions and settings, including identifying the factors that make positions and harder to fill, and
 - System initiatives to attract and retain staff.

TASKFORCE INFORMATION AND ACTIONS

- The Taskforce will investigate and gather information about the teacher shortage, including existing or ongoing measures to address teacher shortages and provide advice to government based on the information gathered.
- On 2 September 2021, the joint EDU and Australian Education Union (AEU) Teacher Shortage Taskforce (Taskforce) kicked off meeting to discuss how the Taskforce and identify shared priorities for the workforce for this committee. It has been agreed that the Taskforce will meet fortnightly and that it will be in place until end of Term 1, 2022 in anticipation of Teaching Staff Enterprise Agreement bargaining commencing next year.
- The Teacher Shortage Taskforce Workplan has been developed and agreed that provides the framework for the immediate and medium-term work program ongoing. As at 14 October 2021, the Taskforce progressed the following actions:
 - EDU Staff Exit Survey
 - Advice on LSA and Student Supervision
 - Weekly Leave/Record Report (split/cancelled classes)
 - Casual Teacher Onsite Induction Checklist
 - Advice on Teacher Core Role, Workload and Working Hours
 - Casual Utilisation Data and Analysis

STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PROJECTS

- As at 14 October 2021, the Workforce Strategy Project Team (Project Team) have completed 10 school visits (onsite and virtual). Given lockdown arrangements, the rate of school visits have been impacted. However, during this time the Project Team completed workforce reports for schools in advance of school visits to facilitate more target discussion. From Week 2, Term 4, the Project team have resumed school visits virtually.
- The Project Team continues to develop sector report for Specialist Schools and the Position Establishment Dashboard. Further, work continues to be undertaken to improve Workforce Profile Dashboard, including:
 - Workplace incident data, and
 - Mandatory training completion data.
- The Project Team with Strategic Finance will develop a refreshed workforce planning template that supports better cross-ESO collaboration and planning with an identified school with moderate complexities/challenges to demonstrate a completed planning template as a proof of concept.
- The Project Team have undertaken consultation and engagement with key stakeholders, including:
 - Analytics & Evaluation regarding School Satisfaction and Climate Survey data, and
 - Student Engagement on the Workforce Profile Dashboard.

ACT AUDITOR–GENERAL’S REPORT

**TEACHING QUALITY IN
ACT PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

REPORT NO. 6 / 2021

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AUDITOR-GENERAL AN OFFICER
OF THE ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY 

PA 20/08

The Speaker
ACT Legislative Assembly
Civic Square, London Circuit
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Madam Speaker

I am pleased to forward to you a Performance Audit Report titled 'Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools' for tabling in the Legislative Assembly pursuant to Subsection 17(4) of the *Auditor-General Act 1996*.

The audit has been conducted in accordance with the requirements of the *Auditor-General Act 1996* and relevant professional standards including *ASAE 3500 – Performance Engagements*.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. L. Harris', with a horizontal line underneath.

Michael Harris
Auditor-General
22 June 2021

The ACT Audit Office acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and pays respect to the elders; past, present and future. The Office acknowledges and respects their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

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SUMMARY

The impact teaching practices have on a student's learning outcomes outweighs the effect of every other factor outside the student's socio-economic and family background.¹ As such, teaching quality is acknowledged as the single most important factor influencing student performance within the control of education systems. The quality of teaching practices has cumulative and residual impacts on student outcomes. Contemporary research demonstrates that students taught by highly-effective teachers learn at twice the rate of their peers.² Moreover, studies showed that students who are taught by a succession of three high-performing teachers scored 49 percent higher on school assessments compared to students assigned to teachers with ineffective practices over a three-year period.³ This performance audit examines the effectiveness of the ACT Education Directorate's strategies and activities to improve the quality of teaching practices in ACT public schools.

Conclusions

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING QUALITY

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.

To improve its strategic planning framework, the Education Directorate has intentionally aligned its 2018-21 Strategic Plan, along with supporting implementation plans and initiatives for improving teaching quality, to the *Future of Education* strategy. Responsibility for key actions and expected timeframes within the strategic plan is assigned in Education Support Office divisional business plans.

There is a clear structure of performance measures and six-monthly internal reports to demonstrate progress against the 2018-21 Strategic Plan. However, baseline data has not been consistently captured and used in six-monthly progress reports to determine the impact of initiatives to improve teaching quality. These reports do not track progress against the full range of priority actions documented in divisional business plans, or provide a balance of quantitative and qualitative analysis of the impact of strategies and activities to improve the quality of teaching practices at a system level.

¹ Jensen, B. (2010). *Investing in our teachers, investing in our economy*. Melbourne: Grattan Institute. Page 10.

² William, D. (2009). *Teacher Quality: why it matters, and how to get more of it*. London: University of London. Page 3.

³ Jordan, H., Mendro, R., & Weerasinghe, D. (1997). *Teacher effects on longitudinal student achievement*. Indianapolis IN: National Evaluation Institute.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The Education 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 school improvement process is evidence-based, uses international educational research, and has been designed to focus school leadership on achieving a small number of achievable and relevant priorities. This is supported by a consistently implemented approach of using multiple sources of evidence to inform the effectiveness of school teaching and learning activities. There is also an effective structure of external reviews to assess the performance of individual schools and the ACT public school system against the *National School Improvement Tool*. ACT public schools perform at a 'High' level when measured against the *National School Improvement Tool*, but there are challenges to maintain and improve this performance.

Since 2018, the Education Support Office has updated their roles and responsibilities to support schools through the school improvement process. However, the policies that support the school improvement process do not fully reflect current roles and responsibilities for the process and are not well understood across all ACT public schools. There is scope to better design the roles of Directors of School Improvement and Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers to support teaching quality across all public schools. Directors of School Improvement could be better focused to specialise in school sectors and Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers currently lack a role, responsibility and resources for school improvement. Addressing these issues may help improve the perceived benefits of these certifications and their effectiveness in improving teaching quality.

While school improvement documentation and a series of school visits are used to oversight school performance, these activities were not consistently undertaken across the ACT public schools considered as part of the audit. The Education Support Office does not formally analyse school improvement documentation to better target and improve teaching quality supports and this reduces the effectiveness of the school improvement process to improve teaching quality.

The Education Support Office has established a range of activities to oversight and support school leadership to improve teaching quality. Directors of School Improvement have an active role to support principals in improving teaching quality through school improvement, and are supported by Instructional Mentors. The Leadership Development Strategy has also been implemented with a view to school leaders leading and mentoring teachers to improve teaching practices. While these supports have assisted principals and deputy principals, school executives (School Leader C staff) spoken to as part of the audit were consistently unaware of this support. While school executives' awareness may have been affected by the interruption of the Strategy's planned activities in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this reduces the effectiveness of school leaders to lift the quality of teaching in ACT public schools.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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

 Summary

of the New Educator Support Program, or whether New Educators are reliably accessing their enterprise agreement entitlements.

TEACHING WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

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

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING QUALITY

Paragraph

In April 2016, the Education Directorate released key documents that were intended to support improved educational practices: *Great Teachers by Design* and *Great Teaching by Design*. Executives and school leaders involved in the audit advised that the frameworks were primarily 'guiding documents' and, as such, lacked clearly identifiable objectives, outcomes and measurable indicators of success. The *Great*

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Teachers by Design and *Great Teaching by Design* frameworks were not supported by implementation plan(s), nor was there centralised support for their implementation from the Education Support Office. Nevertheless, many of the initiatives and key actions detailed in the *Great Teachers by Design* and *Great Teaching by Design* frameworks have been a foundation for, and contributed to, the development of the *Future of Education* strategy and subsequent initiatives.

The Education Directorate's 2014-17 Strategic Plan, *Education Capital: Leading the Nation* identified an 'ambitious agenda' to: increase the number of high performing students; reduce the number of students who are not achieving; increase the number of children who benefit from early childhood education and care; and increase qualification levels of the ACT community. Despite the 2014-17 Strategic Plan being implemented prior to the release of the *Great Teachers by Design* and *Great Teaching by Design* frameworks in May 2016, no effort was made to draw the linkages and alignment between the 2014-17 Strategic Plan and the activities identified within the two strategies. The 2014-17 Strategic Plan set out five priorities for the Education Directorate, each of which was accompanied by three or four key strategies. The key strategies that were identified to achieve the outcomes of the 2014-17 Strategic Plan were not specific or measurable. A 2017 strategic planning taskforce convened by the Education Directorate concluded that the plan was developed with little consultation, included unclear measures and failed to prioritise the actions that mattered most to improving student outcomes. The taskforce also found that the Education Directorate did not adequately monitor or report against the 2014-17 Strategic Plan priorities to ascertain their impact on student performance.

The *Future of Education; An ACT education strategy for the next ten years* was released in 2018. The strategy 'outlines the plan for education in the ACT for the next decade'. The first phase of the *Future of Education* strategy was supported by an implementation plan that identified six priorities for improving the ACT public education system and 68 commitments for the Education Directorate to implement. The planned activities detailed in the first phase implementation plan are comprised of tangible programs, supports or strategic planning tasks. Priority 3 of the first phase of the *Future of Education* has a focus on supporting teaching quality, and includes a range of supports focused on developing early career teachers, improving teaching quality through school and system-level support, and developing school leaders. Priority 2 and Priority 6 also include initiatives intended to improve teaching quality. The Education Directorate published an evaluation of Phase One of the *Future of Education* in June 2021, and reported 63 of its 68 commitments had been established or completed. The Education Directorate reported that five commitments had been delayed due to the redirection of resources to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the completion of the first phase of the *Future of Education* in 2020, the second phase implementation plan is yet to be published by the Education Directorate.

To support the implementation of the commitments in the *Future of Education*, the Education Directorate has developed a series of cascading strategic planning documents. These include the *Education Directorate 2018-21 Strategic Plan* and divisional and branch business plans. The 2018-21 Strategic Plan identifies five strategic goals, each of which is supported by priority actions and between five to

Summary

seven indicators of success. The indicators are typically specific and measurable as they focus on increasing an observable performance measure of the ACT public school system, but they are not supported by identifiable or quantifiable targets. The priority actions identified in the 2018-21 Strategic Plan are assigned to the Education Directorate's divisions and branches through annual business planning processes. There is a clear structure of allocating priority actions to divisions with timeframes identified for each activity.

Progress in implementing the 2018-21 Strategic Plan actions is reported through a biannual reporting framework of six-monthly review reports. At the time of audit reporting, three of these reports had been produced; April 2019, November 2019 and August 2020. The structure of identifying priority actions, specific indicators of success and a framework for reporting progress represents a positive improvement on the structure of reporting under the 2014-2017 strategic planning activities for the directorate. The reporting framework identifies a clear alignment between the *Future of Education* and the 2018-21 Strategic Plan. However, the six-monthly reporting process is hampered by a lack of baseline data through which progress against the indicators should be measured. The reports provide progress updates in narrative form against the priority actions along with case study examples for particular areas of success. While this gives some qualitative evidence of progress, the reports produced to date have had a predominant focus on 'success stories'. They do not consistently and explicitly explore: challenges in implementing priority actions; potential improvements to the indicators of success; and what needs to be done or modified to improve performance. The progress reports have also been inconsistent in their consideration of priority actions and indicators of success. These have not been consistently considered and addressed in each report in a way that provides a clear indication of the Education Directorate's progress and performance over time.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Paragraph

The *National School Improvement Tool* was designed by the Australian Council of Educational Research in 2012; its purpose is to support Australian schools' improvement activities by documenting the practices displayed by highly performing schools in the form of benchmarks. The *National School Improvement Tool* and its associated performance domains form the basis of the Education Directorate's integrated school improvement process, which includes a series of cyclical activities: school reviews; school improvement plans; actional plans; school improvement visits; and impact reports. Guidance on the use and application of the *National School Improvement Tool* is outlined in the *People, Practice and Performance* framework (2016) and the *Evidence and Data Plan for School Improvement* (2019).

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The *People, Practice and Performance* framework was re-endorsed by the Education Directorate in 2018 as the cornerstone for school improvement activities and it has continued to positively influence the school improvement process. However, the framework was not reviewed or updated before its re-endorsement. While the core features of the school improvement process remain relevant in the framework, some of the principles and assumptions behind the framework have since been superseded by newer developments. This includes new school improvement roles of Directors of School Improvement and Instructional Mentors, as well as school

3.23

improvement priorities outlined in the *Future of Education*. The *Evidence and Data Plan* does not refer to, or otherwise acknowledge, the roles and responsibilities of Instructional Mentors or Education Support Office teams that assist schools in improving teaching quality. Similarly, the plan does not satisfactorily explain the purpose and intended outcomes of school improvement visits in the school improvement process. The exclusion of this information in the *Evidence and Data Plan* combined with the outdated information in the *People, Practice and Performance* framework presents a risk that Education Directorate policies designed to enhance school improvement in ACT public schools may lead to confusion and misunderstanding with respect to the Education Directorate's school improvement processes.

Under the *National School Improvement Tool*, 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. 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. Five of the six schools considered as part of the audit had undertaken a school review under the current integrated school improvement processes. 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. 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. There is also evidence that the school review recommendations were then also specifically addressed in subsequent annual action plans.

3.43

On the basis of the school reviews that are conducted each year, the Australian Council for Educational Research provides the Education Directorate with a *System School Review Report*. 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. There is evidence of the Education Directorate responding to *System Review Reports* since 2016 with actions targeted at improving teaching quality against ACT public schools across some recommendations in these reports. Since 2019, the Education Directorate's responses to *System School Review Reports* have improved in how they address the Australian Council for Education Research's recommendations for system-level improvement. Actions have been attributed to Education Support Office branches to progress and monitor throughout their implementation. However, the Education Directorate's responses to the *System School Review Reports* have not included reference to how prior year recommendations have been implemented. The Directorate's response to the 2020 report includes similar or identical actions to those identified in its response to the 2019 report; the details of any progress made or any challenges or delays to the implementation of the actions is not explicitly addressed or acknowledged in the documentation. While the reports are necessarily focused on historical performance in improving student educational outcomes and improvements across the system might take some years to be observed, there is an opportunity to better reflect and recognise progress that may be being made.

3.44

Summary

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. 3.58

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. 3.59

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. 3.69

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 3.70

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 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.

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*.

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

Summary

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.

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.

3.100

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.

3.101

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.

3.112

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.

3.113

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.

3.114

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Paragraph

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.

4.35

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.

4.36

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

4.44

Summary

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.

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 4.67

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.

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 4.78

Summary

strong and consistent support for professional learning in 2018, which declined slightly to 76 percent in 2020.

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. 4.86

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: 4.87

- 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. 4.92

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 4.97

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

TEACHING WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

Paragraph

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 5.23

Summary

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.

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.

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 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. 5.65

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. 5.66

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. 5.85

Summary

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.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1 FUTURE OF EDUCATION

The Education Directorate should, as a matter of priority develop and publish the implementation plan for the second phase of the *Future of Education*.

RECOMMENDATION 2 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND REPORTING

The Education Directorate should improve its strategic planning 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:

- a) all priority actions identified in its Strategic Plan;
- b) all indicators of success for each Strategic Plan goal; and
- c) the completion of activities committed to in annual divisional business plans.

RECOMMENDATION 3 PEOPLE, PRACTICE AND PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

The Education Directorate should review and update the *People, Practice and Performance* framework to:

- 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 for school principals;
- b) reflect the requirements of the *Evidence and Data Plan for School Improvement (2019)*; and
- c) require all schools to participate in school improvement activities as well as complete and publish all required school improvement documentation on their website.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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*.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Response from entities

In accordance with subsection 18(2) of the *Auditor-General Act 1996*, the Education Directorate was provided with:

- a draft proposed report for comment. All comments were considered and required changes were reflected in the final proposed report; and
- a final proposed report for further comment.

In accordance with subsection 18(3) of the *Auditor-General Act 1996* other entities considered to have a direct interest in the report were also provided with extracts of the draft proposed and final proposed reports for comment. All comments on the extracts of the draft proposed report were considered and required changes made in the final proposed report.

Education Directorate response

The Education Directorate welcomes the Auditor-General's performance audit on teaching quality and looks forward to responding to its recommendations. The audit findings support the Directorate's mandate to enable schools where students love to learn, and our work programs reflect this key objective.

We appreciate that the audit recognised the Directorate's work to deliver quality teaching practices in ACT Public Schools. We also remain committed to support our school teachers and leaders in their professional learning and to continually improve systems to sustain optimal learning outcomes for all our students.

1 INTRODUCTION

Teaching quality

- 1.1 Teaching quality is demonstrated when the effectiveness of a teacher's pedagogical practices (the methods and practices they use to teach) facilitates students' learning and positively impacts student outcomes.
- 1.2 Teaching quality is recognised as a defining factor in the success of each child or young person's education. The impact quality teaching has on student performance outweighs the effect of every other factor outside of a student's socio-economic background, including educational programs and policies.⁴The additive and cumulative impact of teaching quality results in vastly improved student academic outcomes. While expectations and understanding of teaching quality can be subjective, research of over 10,000 Australian teachers and 90,000 students has found above-average teachers can achieve in three-quarters of a year of learning what below-average teachers achieve in a full year of learning for their students. A study from the United Kingdom estimated this impact to be even stronger for the highest performing teachers, with students taught by a teacher who exhibits the highest quality teaching found to learn in six months what their peers with a less effective teacher would take a year to learn. Of concern is that students taught by the lowest-performing teachers will take up to two years to achieve the same standard.
- 1.4 Research has demonstrated that students who are taught by a succession of three high-performing teachers scored on average 49 percent higher on school-based assessments when compared to peers assigned to less effective teachers over the same period.

Systematic approaches to improving teaching quality

- 1.5 To maximise students' educational outcomes, including academic performance and engagement in learning, collective systems comprising of individual schools, such as ACT

⁴ Jenson, B. (2010). *Investing in Our Teachers, Investing in Our Economy*. Melbourne: Grattan Institute (p.10)

⁵ Leigh, A. (2010). *Estimating teacher effectiveness from two-year changes in students' test scores*, Economics of Education Review 29 (2010), p.484.

⁶ William, D. (2011). *Assessment for Learning: why, what and how*. London: Institute of Education, University of London

⁷ Sanders, W. and Rivers, J. (1996). *Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future student academic achievement*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee

public schools, must demonstrate a systematic approach to improving teaching quality in classrooms.

1.6 The central national policy on education reform, *The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, calls for equity and excellence in Australian schooling so that all children and young people can become ‘successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens’.⁹ To achieve these objectives, research shows that improving the quality of teaching in Australian schools is important to improving student outcomes.¹⁰ The 2009 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), a study comparing student academic performance internationally, demonstrated that approximately 40 percent of Australian students were below the proficient standard for OECD countries in reading, mathematical and scientific literacies.¹¹ At the time, Australia ranked ninth in the world in comparison to 65 countries for these performance measures.¹² With concerns that Australian students would not be as well equipped to meet the future workforce demands of a knowledge-based economy, there was a national focus on improving student outcomes. Responding to a body of research that confirmed that the quality of teaching practice was the lead contributor to improved student outcomes outside socioeconomic background, the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*¹³ and the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals*¹⁴ were established by the teaching profession through the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. The *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* define teaching quality through seven standards of practice:

1. Know students and how they learn;
2. Know the content and how to teach it;
3. Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning;
4. Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments;

⁸ Deloitte Access Economics (2017). *School quality in Australia: Exploring the drivers of student outcomes and the links to practice and school quality*. Canberra: Australian Government Department of Education and Training

⁹ Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. (2008). *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*. [online] Available at: http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf Accessed April 7 2020 (p.8)

¹⁰ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2012). *Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders*. Melbourne: Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

¹¹ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. (2011). *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2009*. Sydney: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority

¹² OECD. (2010). *PISA 2009 Results: Executive Summary*. [online] Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/46619703.pdf> Accessed 2 February 2021

¹³ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2011). *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. Melbourne: AITSL

¹⁴ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2014). *Australian Professional Standard for Principals and the Leadership Profiles*. Melbourne: AITSL.

5. Access, provide feedback and report on student learning;
6. Engage in professional learning; and
7. Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community.

Roles and responsibilities

Education Directorate

- 1.9 The ACT Education Directorate provides education services to children and young people through 89 public schools in the ACT. As at February 2020, 50,272 students were enrolled in ACT public schools, which have a workforce of 4,074 teachers and school leaders.¹⁵
- 1.10 The directorate comprises the Education Support Office and public schools.

Education Support Office

- 1.11 The Education Support Office, the administrative function of the Education Directorate, sets the strategic direction for ACT public schools and mandates the responsibilities and performance of its teachers and school leaders. The Education Support Office also provides universal, selected and targeted support to ACT schools in the form of strategic planning assistance, resourcing and professional learning in the pursuit of improved teaching quality.
- 1.12 The Education Support Office comprises four divisions that facilitate and support ACT public schools to deliver educational programs:
- Service Design and Delivery;
 - School Improvement;
 - System Policy and Reform; and
 - Business Services.
- 1.13 The School Improvement, Service Design and Delivery and Business Services divisions have a direct role in facilitating quality teaching practices in ACT public schools. The System Policy and Reform division has an indirect role in enabling teaching quality in schools through its work overseeing, informing, monitoring and evaluating the work of the other divisions and ACT public schools.

ACT public schools

- 1.14 ACT public schools are organised into four geographic networks: Belconnen, North/Gungahlin, South/Weston and Tuggeranong. Table 1-1 shows the school type and number of students enrolled in the ACT as at February 2020.

¹⁵ Census of ACT Schools February 2020. As at this census, there were 88 ACT public schools, with Evelyn Scott Primary opening to students at the start of the 2021 school year.

Table 1-1 ACT public schools and students (February 2020)

School type	Students enrolled
Preschool	4,560
Primary school, Kindergarten to Year 6	27,212
High School, Years 7-10	11,844
College, Years 11-12	6,656
Total	50,272

Source: ACT Audit Office, Based on Census of ACT public schools February 2020¹⁶

- 1.15 Education in ACT public schools is governed by the *Education Act 2004* which requires that every child has a right to receive a high-quality education.
- 1.16 Subsection 7(2) of the *Education Act 2004* describes a high-quality education as based on the following principles:
- (a) school education and home education provide a foundation for a democratic society;
 - (b) school education and home education should—
 - (i) aim to develop every child’s potential and maximise educational achievements; and
 - (ii) promote children’s enthusiasm for lifelong learning and optimism for the future; and
 - (iii) encourage parents to take part in the education of their children, and recognise their right to choose a suitable educational environment; and
 - (iv) promote respect for and tolerance of others; and
 - (v) recognise the social, religious, physical, intellectual and emotional needs of all students; and
 - (vi) aim over time to improve the learning outcomes of students so that the outcomes are free from disadvantage because of economic, social, cultural or other causes; and
 - (vii) encourage all students to complete their senior secondary education; and
 - (viii) provide access to a broad education; and
 - (ix) recognise the needs of Indigenous students;
 - (c) innovation, diversity and opportunity within and among schools should be encouraged;
 - (d) effective quality assurance mechanisms should be applied to school education;
 - (e) government funding should be directed to students through their schools or school system;
 - (f) the partnership between the home, community and educational providers should be recognised;
 - (g) school communities should be given information about the operation of their schools.
- 1.17 Section 21 of the *Education Act 2004* provides each school principal with autonomy and responsibility for the management of the school and the achievement of educational

¹⁶ ACT Government Education. (2020). *Census of ACT public schools February 2020*. Available at: https://www.education.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1562682/February-2020-Census-.pdf Accessed 02 March 2021

outcomes for the students. In this respect, subsection 21(5) of the *Education Act 2004* provides that:

The principal of a government school is responsible for:

- (a) educational leadership and management of the school; and
- (b) educational outcomes for students at the school; and
- (c) providing support to the school board in the carrying out of its functions; and
- (d) contributing to the development and implementation of educational policies and strategies.

ACT Teacher Quality Institute (TQI)

- 1.18 Compliance with the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* or the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* is regulated by the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. Established under the *ACT Teacher Quality Institute Act 2010*, the Institute is an independent statutory authority that is responsible for the oversight of teacher registration, initial teacher education programs and teacher professional learning.
- 1.19 All teachers in the ACT must be professionally registered with the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. An important part of maintaining this registration is that all teachers complete a minimum 20 hours annually of professional learning and reflect on how this development aligns with the standards and can be used to improve their teaching practice.

Audit objective and scope

Audit objective

- 1.20 The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of the Education Directorate's strategies and activities to improve the quality of teaching practices in ACT public schools.

Audit scope

- 1.21 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 practices.

Identification and articulation of key strategies and supports

- 1.22 In considering the Education Directorate's activities to identify and articulate key strategies to improve the quality of teaching practices, the audit considered whether:

1: Introduction

- whole-of-system and, where applicable, sector specific strategies and supports are clearly documented and identified;
- the strategies and supports in place have clearly identified outcomes and objectives, including measurable indicators of success; and
- the strategies and supports have clearly identified implementation plans, including timeframes for implementation and expected outcomes for improving teaching quality.

1.23 This included consideration of key documents such as:

- *People, Practice and Performance, School Improvement in Canberra Public Schools, A Framework for Performance and Accountability* (2016);
- Education Directorate strategic plans (*Strategic Plan 2014-17, Education Capital: Leading the Nation* and *Strategic Plan 2018-21, A Leading Learning Organisation*);
- *Future of Education; An ACT Strategy for the Next Ten Years* (2018);
- *Empowered Learning Professionals Leadership Plan 2018-2021*; and
- *ACT Public Sector Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022*.

Support for teachers

1.24 In considering the Education Directorate's activities to support its teachers to improve the quality of teaching practices in ACT public schools, the audit considered whether whole-of-system and, where applicable, sector specific:

- strategies and supports are in place and are effective in supporting teachers' professional learning and development; and
- policies and procedures are in place and are effective for the performance management of teachers.

1.25 The audit also considered whether the Education Directorate's support for its teachers, specifically professional learning and development and performance management, effectively facilitates teachers' maintenance of their registration according to the requirements of the ACT Teacher Quality Institute.

Monitoring, review and evaluation

1.26 In considering the Education Directorate's activities to monitor, review and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and supports to improve the quality of teaching practices, the audit considered whether the directorate has strategies and systems in place to:

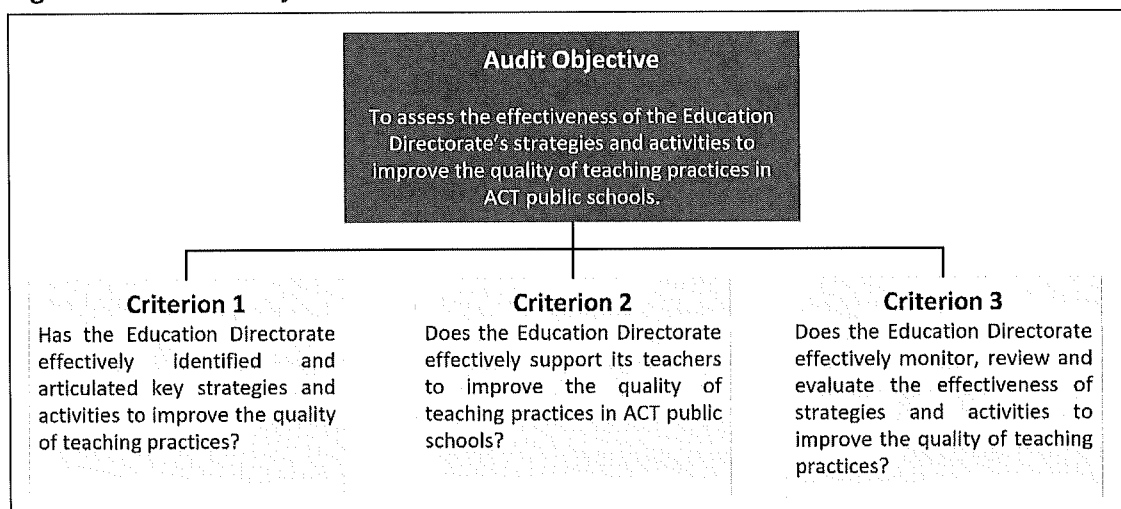
- collect and analyse data on teaching quality and performance;
- evaluate the effectiveness of key strategies and supports to improve the quality of teaching practices; and
- collect and analyse data on teachers' professional learning and development.

Audit criteria, approach and method

Audit criteria

1.27 To form a conclusion against the objective, there are three audit criteria, as shown in Figure 1-1.

Figure 1-1 Audit objective and criteria



Source: ACT Audit Office

1.28 The audit was performed in accordance with *ASAE 3500 – Performance Engagements*. The audit adopted the policy and practice statements outlined in the Audit Office's *Performance Audit Methods and Practices (PAMPr)* which is designed to comply with the requirements of the *Auditor-General Act 1996* and *ASAE 3500 – Performance Engagements*.

1.29 In the conduct of this performance audit the ACT Audit Office complied with the independence and other relevant ethical requirements related to assurance engagements.

Audit approach and method

1.30 The audit method and approach consisted of:

- identifying and reviewing the relevant documentation associated with Education Directorate strategies and activities to improve teaching quality;
- interviews and discussions with key staff at the Education Directorate's Education Support Office;
- interviews and discussions with representatives from a selection of ACT public schools;
- interviews and discussions with peak bodies, including the ACT Teacher Quality Institute, University of Canberra, the Australian Education Union (AEU) ACT Branch, the ACT Principals' Association, and the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Association;
- identifying and reviewing relevant information and documentation associated with the implementation of activities and strategies to improve teaching quality;
- identifying and reviewing relevant controls and procedures to improve teaching quality practices in ACT public schools; and
- reviewing data, documentation or reports evaluating the effectiveness of strategies and activities to improve teaching quality in ACT public schools.

ACT public schools

1.31 For the purpose of the audit, fieldwork was conducted in a selection of six schools. Fieldwork within the schools consisted of:

- schools providing a suite of documentation demonstrating the quality of teaching practices or the programs and processes conducted to improve teaching quality within the setting;
- an interview with the school principal;
- a focus group of school leaders;
- a focus group of experienced teachers; and
- a focus group of New Educators or Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers.

1.32 The selected schools represented a cross-section of primary schools, high schools and colleges across the four school networks.

1.33 Table 1-2 shows the schools that were selected and their characteristics.

Table 1-2 Schools selected for audit fieldwork

School	Type	School network	Number of students (FTE)	Number of teaching staff (FTE)
Canberra College	College	South/Weston	1,142.6	74.8
Gungahlin College	College	North/Gungahlin	1,185.9	83.2
Campbell High	High	North/Gungahlin	702.5	60.4
Lanyon High	High	Tuggeranong	372.0	35.0
Aranda Primary	Primary	Belconnen	567.0	34.1
Taylor Primary	Primary	Tuggeranong	312.0	24.6

Source: Education Directorate, Census of ACT Schools February 2020. Student and teaching staff exclude preschool staff and enrolments.

1.34 This performance audit report considers the Education Directorate's most significant investments and efforts to improve the quality of teaching practices in ACT public schools. As such, each chapter of the report focusses on a key feature of Education Directorate's efforts to enhance teaching quality. These include:

- Chapter 2: Planning, monitoring and evaluation of system-level strategies and initiatives;
- Chapter 3: School improvement activities;
- Chapter 4: Professional learning; and
- Chapter 5: Workforce Management.

2 STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING QUALITY

- 2.1 This chapter considers the Education Directorate's identification and articulation of strategies and activities to improve teaching quality practices. This includes consideration of whether the strategies and activities to improve teaching quality practices have clearly identified outcomes and objectives, including measurable indicators of success, and have been supported by clearly identified implementation plans.

Summary

Conclusions

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.

To improve its strategic planning framework, the Education Directorate has intentionally aligned its 2018-21 Strategic Plan, along with supporting implementation plans and initiatives for improving teaching quality, to the *Future of Education* strategy. Responsibility for key actions and expected timeframes within the strategic plan is assigned in Education Support Office divisional business plans.

There is a clear structure of performance measures and six-monthly internal reports to demonstrate progress against the 2018-21 Strategic Plan. However, baseline data has not been consistently captured and used in six-monthly progress reports to determine the impact of initiatives to improve teaching quality. These reports do not track progress against the full range of priority actions documented in divisional business plans, or provide a balance of quantitative and qualitative analysis of the impact of strategies and activities to improve the quality of teaching practices at a system level.

Key findings

In April 2016, the Education Directorate released key documents that were intended to support improved educational practices: *Great Teachers by Design* and *Great Teaching by Design*. Executives and school leaders involved in the audit advised that the frameworks were primarily 'guiding documents' and, as such, lacked clearly identifiable objectives, outcomes and measurable indicators of success. The *Great Teachers by Design* and *Great Teaching by Design* frameworks were not supported by implementation plan(s), nor was there centralised support for their implementation from the Education Support Office. Nevertheless, many of the

Paragraph

2.22

initiatives and key actions detailed in the *Great Teachers by Design* and *Great Teaching by Design* frameworks have been a foundation for, and contributed to, the development of the *Future of Education* strategy and subsequent initiatives.

The Education Directorate's 2014-17 Strategic Plan, *Education Capital: Leading the Nation* identified an 'ambitious agenda' to: increase the number of high performing students; reduce the number of students who are not achieving; increase the number of children who benefit from early childhood education and care; and increase qualification levels of the ACT community. Despite the 2014-17 Strategic Plan being implemented prior to the release of the *Great Teachers by Design* and *Great Teaching by Design* frameworks in May 2016, no effort was made to draw the linkages and alignment between the 2014-17 Strategic Plan and the activities identified within the two strategies. The 2014-17 Strategic Plan set out five priorities for the Education Directorate, each of which was accompanied by three or four key strategies. The key strategies that were identified to achieve the outcomes of the 2014-17 Strategic Plan were not specific or measurable. A 2017 strategic planning taskforce convened by the Education Directorate concluded that the plan was developed with little consultation, included unclear measures and failed to prioritise the actions that mattered most to improving student outcomes. The taskforce also found that the Education Directorate did not adequately monitor or report against the 2014-17 Strategic Plan priorities to ascertain their impact on student performance.

The *Future of Education; An ACT education strategy for the next ten years* was released in 2018. The strategy 'outlines the plan for education in the ACT for the next decade'. The first phase of the *Future of Education* strategy was supported by an implementation plan that identified six priorities for improving the ACT public education system and 68 commitments for the Education Directorate to implement. The planned activities detailed in the first phase implementation plan are comprised of tangible programs, supports or strategic planning tasks. Priority 3 of the first phase of the *Future of Education* has a focus on supporting teaching quality, and includes a range of supports focused on developing early career teachers, improving teaching quality through school and system-level support, and developing school leaders. Priority 2 and Priority 6 also include initiatives intended to improve teaching quality. The Education Directorate published an evaluation of Phase One of the *Future of Education* in June 2021, and reported 63 of its 68 commitments had been established or completed. The Education Directorate reported that five commitments had been delayed due to the redirection of resources to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the completion of the first phase of the *Future of Education* in 2020, the second phase implementation plan is yet to be published by the Education Directorate.

To support the implementation of the commitments in the *Future of Education*, the Education Directorate has developed a series of cascading strategic planning documents. These include the *Education Directorate 2018-21 Strategic Plan* and divisional and branch business plans. The 2018-21 Strategic Plan identifies five strategic goals, each of which is supported by priority actions and between five to seven indicators of success. The indicators are typically specific and measurable as they focus on increasing an observable performance measure of the ACT public school system, but they are not supported by identifiable or quantifiable targets. The

priority actions identified in the 2018-21 Strategic Plan are assigned to the Education Directorate's divisions and branches through annual business planning processes. There is a clear structure of allocating priority actions to divisions with timeframes identified for each activity.

Progress in implementing the 2018-21 Strategic Plan actions is reported through a biannual reporting framework of six-monthly review reports. At the time of audit reporting, three of these reports had been produced; April 2019, November 2019 and August 2020. The structure of identifying priority actions, specific indicators of success and a framework for reporting progress represents a positive improvement on the structure of reporting under the 2014-2017 strategic planning activities for the directorate. The reporting framework identifies a clear alignment between the *Future of Education* and the 2018-21 Strategic Plan. However, the six-monthly reporting process is hampered by a lack of baseline data through which progress against the indicators should be measured. The reports provide progress updates in narrative form against the priority actions along with case study examples for particular areas of success. While this gives some qualitative evidence of progress, the reports produced to date have had a predominant focus on 'success stories'. They do not consistently and explicitly explore: challenges in implementing priority actions; potential improvements to the indicators of success; and what needs to be done or modified to improve performance. The progress reports have also been inconsistent in their consideration of priority actions and indicators of success. These have not been consistently considered and addressed in each report in a way that provides a clear indication of the Education Directorate's progress and performance over time.

- 2.2 In considering the extent to which activities to improve teaching quality practices have been identified and articulated in strategic planning documents, the audit focused on:
- whole-of-directorate strategies and initiatives to improve teaching practices; and
 - the directorate's strategic planning activities.
- 2.3 The audit considered the directorate's activities from the start of the 2014 school year. In doing so, the audit has considered planning activities from 2014 to 2017 and planning activities from 2018 to 2021.

Strategic planning (2014 to 2017)

Great Teachers by Design and Great Teaching by Design

- 2.4 In April 2016, the Education Directorate released three documents that together were intended to form a framework for performance and accountability in ACT public schools. These documents were:
- *People, Practice and Performance: School Improvement in Canberra Public Schools- A Framework for Performance and Accountability;*
 - *Great Teachers by Design;* and

- *Great Teaching by Design*.

2.5 The *People, Practice and Performance: School Improvement in Canberra Public Schools* document (the *People, Practice and Performance* framework) is discussed further in Chapter 3 in relation to performance improvement and accountability arrangements for ACT public schools.

Great Teachers by Design

2.6 The *Great Teachers by Design* framework sought to '[provide] school leaders with a range of evidence-based strategies and key actions to support and develop great teachers and improve educational outcomes for all students'. The framework acknowledged 'greater understanding about the central role of great teachers in improving student outcomes has generated an evidence base of the most effective strategies for building teacher capacity'.

2.7 The *Great Teachers by Design* framework identified that its intention was to inform school plans, programs and practices:

Teachers and school leaders are encouraged to use this design framework to inform school improvement plans, programs and practices. The elements of the design framework are not mutually exclusive; teachers and school leaders should look for opportunities to integrate and align the strategies and key actions outlined below to develop a coherent approach that suits their context.

2.8 The *Great Teachers by Design* framework further noted:

The evidence base within this publication supports the development of great teachers to improve student outcomes in Canberra public schools. Each section contains key actions that will drive improvement in teaching and learning in Canberra public schools. School leaders are encouraged to use the alignment with the AITSL Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and the Questions for reflection and discussion at the end of each section to engage with teachers about their professional practice.

2.9 The *Great Teachers by Design* framework identified a series of principles and characteristics of highly effective teachers:

- great teachers collaborate;
- great teachers use data and evidence;
- great teachers engage in professional learning;
- great teachers engage in and with research;
- great teachers use the Quality Teaching model;
- great teachers actively seek and respond to feedback; and
- great teachers engage parents.

2.10 The *Great Teachers by Design* framework described the Quality Teaching model as 'a powerful framework for enacting a research-based, clinical approach to teacher development, and a mechanism for teachers to initiate professional conversations and

provide powerful feedback, ensuring consistency in productive practices and strong collegial support for teachers at all stages of their careers'. There are three dimensions to the Quality Teaching model: *intellectual quality*, *a quality learning environment* and *significance*. The Quality Teaching model was intended to be used as a reflective tool, which was intended to initiate conversations and feedback.

2.11 The *Great Teachers by Design* framework discussed each of the seven principles in turn and, in doing so:

- identified 'key actions to support improvement in teacher effectiveness';
- identified relevant Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Standards; and
- posed 'a series of discussion questions to assist school leaders and teachers to reflect on and improve practice'.

Great Teaching by Design

2.12 The *Great Teaching by Design* framework was implemented as a companion document to the *Great Teachers by Design* framework. The *Great Teaching by Design* framework sought to '[outline] research-based strategies to enhance the quality and impact of teaching in our schools'. In doing so it:

... provide[d] an evidence base for school level decision making and implementation of classroom practices that have the most impact on positive student outcomes.

2.13 The *Great Teaching by Design* framework articulated a series of principles that were to inform activities to enhance the quality and impact of teaching in schools:

- respond to individual need;
- build effective relationships;
- use explicit teaching practices;
- embed formative assessment;
- provide students with quality feedback;
- set high expectations for student achievement; and
- engage students.

2.14 Each principle was linked to the relevant AITSL Standard and, within the document itself, a series of questions for reflection and discussion were posed. These were intended to be considered by school principals and executive teachers as part of school planning processes.

Implementation and support

2.15 The Audit Office was advised that the design of the *Great Teachers by Design* and *Great Teaching by Design* frameworks involved limited consultation with principals and union and peak body stakeholders.

- 2.16 Executives and school leaders involved in the audit advised that the frameworks were primarily ‘guiding documents’ and, as such, lacked clearly identifiable objectives, outcomes and measurable indicators of success. The *Great Teachers by Design* and *Great Teaching by Design* frameworks were not supported by implementation plan(s), nor was their implementation in the schools supported by:
- professional learning to develop expertise in the evidence-based teaching practices endorsed in the frameworks;
 - resources made available to schools to guide their use of teaching practices or development strategies; or
 - Education Support Office contacts, that could support the frameworks’ implementation in the schools.
- 2.17 Promulgation of the frameworks upon publication was limited to distributing copies of the documents to ACT public schools; there was no mechanism for subsequent feedback, discussion, consultation or ongoing review. At the time of their publication there was a strong reliance on school leaders to recognise and adopt the principles and strategies identified in the frameworks.
- 2.18 Efforts to implement the commitments across all public schools was variable as there was no accompanying centralised support for the frameworks’ implementation from the Education Support Office.
- 2.19 The six schools that participated in the audit had little evidence to demonstrate that they had implemented the initiatives within the frameworks, with the exception of two of the six schools who were still actively using the Quality Teaching model. Due to the nature of the initiatives detailed within the frameworks and the time that has lapsed since their publication in 2016 it is acknowledged, however, that it is difficult for schools to provide sufficient evidence of actions taken in response to the frameworks.
- 2.20 An ACT public school principal interviewed during the audit commented that the frameworks were:
- ... lovely glossy [paperback resources] but were not implemented nor achieved any impact.
- 2.21 Nevertheless, many of the initiatives and key actions detailed in the *Great Teachers by Design* and *Great Teaching by Design* frameworks have been a foundation for, and contributed to, the development of the *Future of Education* strategy (refer to paragraph 2.34) and subsequent initiatives.
- 2.22 In April 2016, the Education Directorate released key documents that were intended to support improved educational practices: *Great Teachers by Design* and *Great Teaching by Design*. Executives and school leaders involved in the audit advised that the frameworks were primarily ‘guiding documents’ and, as such, lacked clearly identifiable objectives, outcomes and measurable indicators of success. The *Great Teachers by Design* and *Great Teaching by Design* frameworks were not supported by implementation plan(s), nor was

there centralised support for their implementation from the Education Support Office. Nevertheless, many of the initiatives and key actions detailed in the *Great Teachers by Design* and *Great Teaching by Design* frameworks have been a foundation for, and contributed to, the development of the *Future of Education* strategy and subsequent initiatives.

Education Directorate Strategic Plan 2014-2017

2.23 At the time the *Great Teachers by Design* and *Great Teaching by Design* frameworks were developed and released the Education Directorate's 2014-17 Strategic Plan, *Education Capital: Leading the Nation* identified four overarching objectives with a stated 'ambitious agenda' to:

- increase the number of high performing students;
- reduce the number of students who are not achieving;
- increase the number of children who benefit from early childhood education and care; and
- increase qualification levels of the ACT community.

2.24 In support of these overarching objectives, the 2014-17 Strategic Plan set out five priorities for the Education Directorate, with three or four key strategies identified for each priority. For the purpose of this audit, the following strategies are identified as specifically relevant (listed against the relevant priority):

- inspirational teaching and leadership
 - increase teaching expertise and effectiveness
 - build leadership capacity of current and future leaders
 - support teaching and learning
 - close the achievement gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- business innovation and improvement
 - increase accountability and transparency for school performance
 - ensure high quality data is available to monitor and drive improvement

2.25 In support of the four overarching objectives, the 2014-17 Strategic Plan also identified a total of 13 performance indicators. The *Audit Office's Performance information in ACT public schools* report (Report No. 4 of 2017) observed at the time that 'there [was] no guidance on how the indicators are to be measured nor are there quantitative targets associated with the indicators'.¹⁷

2.26 The key strategies that were identified to achieve the outcomes of the 2014-17 Strategic Plan were not specific or measurable. An example of this was the key strategy to 'increase

¹⁷ ACT Audit Office. (2017). *Performance Information in ACT Public Schools*. [online] Available at: https://www.audit.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/1180007/Report-No-4-of-2017-Performance-information-in-ACT-public-schools.pdf Accessed 30 April 2020 (p.6).

teaching expertise and effectiveness' under the *inspirational teaching and leadership* priority. The Strategic Plan did not identify specific actions and timeframes to meet the priorities in the plan.

- 2.27 Education Directorate executives consulted as part of the audit advised that, despite the 2014-17 Strategic Plan being implemented prior to the release of the *Great Teachers by Design* and *Great Teaching by Design* strategies in May 2016, no effort was made to draw the linkages and alignment between the 2014-17 Strategic Plan and the activities identified within the two strategies.
- 2.28 Activities to improve teaching quality were largely left to schools to implement through their own five-year Strategic Plans.

School Strategic and Action Plans

- 2.29 The *People, Practice and Performance* framework identified a number of key planning and reporting mechanisms that were relevant to schools. Through these mechanisms schools' performance, including their strategies for improving teaching quality, were expected to be planned for, reviewed and evaluated. At the time of the 2014-17 Strategic Plan key planning and reporting mechanisms for schools included:
- a five-year Strategic Plan to establish the strategic direction and priorities for the school; and
 - an annual Action Plan consistent with the 2014-17 Strategic Plan.
- 2.30 Through its 2016 review of school improvement activities against the *National School Improvement Tool* (refer to paragraph 3.2), the Australian Centre for Educational Research (ACER) noted that schools included a broad range of commitments in their five-year Strategic Plans relating to areas such as:
- innovative and inspirational teaching and learning;
 - building teacher capacity and collaboration;
 - improving student learning outcomes; and
 - enhancing teaching and learning.
- 2.31 The ACER review found that 'there were extensive whole school strategic planning and reporting documentation with measures and targets reflecting the priorities set down by the directorate'. However, the ACER review identified that there was a disconnect between the school Strategic Plans and their corresponding annual Action Plans. The annual Action Plans were expected to document the specific activities that the schools intended to pursue in the coming school year. The ACER report recommended clearer alignment between the two planning documents by developing more sharply focussed priorities expressed in terms of improvements in measurable outcomes.

Review of the Education Directorate's Strategic Plan 2014-2017

- 2.32 In 2017 the Education Directorate established a strategic planning taskforce to review the impact of its 2014-17 Strategic Plan. The taskforce concluded that the plan was developed with little consultation, included unclear measures and failed to prioritise the actions that mattered most to improving student outcomes. Furthermore, the taskforce asserted that the Education Directorate did not adequately monitor or report against the 2014-17 Strategic Plan priorities to ascertain their impact on student performance. This assessment, along with associated recommendations, then informed the design of the 2018-2021 strategic plan.
- 2.33 The Education Directorate's 2014-17 Strategic Plan, *Education Capital: Leading the Nation* identified an 'ambitious agenda' to: increase the number of high performing students; reduce the number of students who are not achieving; increase the number of children who benefit from early childhood education and care; and increase qualification levels of the ACT community. Despite the 2014-17 Strategic Plan being implemented prior to the release of the *Great Teachers by Design* and *Great Teaching by Design* frameworks in May 2016, no effort was made to draw the linkages and alignment between the 2014-17 Strategic Plan and the activities identified within the two strategies. The 2014-17 Strategic Plan set out five priorities for the Education Directorate, each of which was accompanied by three or four key strategies. The key strategies that were identified to achieve the outcomes of the 2014-17 Strategic Plan were not specific or measurable. A 2017 strategic planning taskforce convened by the Education Directorate concluded that the plan was developed with little consultation, included unclear measures and failed to prioritise the actions that mattered most to improving student outcomes. The taskforce also found that the Education Directorate did not adequately monitor or report against the 2014-17 Strategic Plan priorities to ascertain their impact on student performance.

Strategic planning (2018 to 2021)

The Future of Education

- 2.34 The *Future of Education; An ACT education strategy for the next ten years* was released in 2018. The strategy 'outlines the plan for education in the ACT for the next decade'; it is focused on improving ACT public school students' participation and outcomes from their education. To provide a policy direction for implementation, the *Future of Education* strategy includes a high-level design of policy principles, an implementation roadmap, and aspiration goals.
- 2.35 The *Future of Education* is designed to be implemented in three phases over ten years. The first phase of the *Future of Education* strategy (to be completed by 2020) was supported by an implementation plan that highlighted six priorities for improving the ACT public education system. These six priorities included:
- Priority 1: Strengthening inclusive education

- Priority 2: Giving students more of a say
 - Priority 3: Supporting a workforce for the future
 - Priority 4: Community schools
 - Priority 5: Giving young people the best start
 - Priority 6: Focus the system on what matters most
- 2.36 Across these six priorities, the Education Directorate identified 68 commitments to be established in the first phase of the *Future of Education*. The Education Directorate reported on the completion of these commitments as part of an evaluation of the first phase of the *Future of Education*. The evaluation report, which is publicly available on Education Directorate's website,¹⁸ identified that 63 of these commitments had been established or completed and five commitments had been delayed. The Education Directorate reported that the five commitments were delayed due to the redirection of resources to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2.37 Priority 3 of the first phase of the *Future of Education* has a focus on supporting teaching quality, which includes a range of supports focused on developing early career teachers, improving teaching quality through school and system-level support, and developing school leaders. Priority 2 and Priority 6 also include initiatives intended to improve teaching quality. Supports under these priorities which have been considered in this audit include:
- Priority 2: Giving students more of a say;
 - the Academy of Future Skills program (refer to paragraph 4.13)
 - Priority 3: Supporting a workforce for the future;
 - the Empowered Learning Professionals Leadership Plan (refer to paragraph 3.92)
 - Affiliated Schools Program (refer to paragraph 4.18)
 - the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher program (refer to paragraph 3.102)
 - a System Workforce Strategy (refer to paragraph 5.40)
 - Priority 6: Focus the system on what matters most;
 - a clearing house of excellent practice (discussed from paragraph 4.59)
 - school performance and system improvement (discussed from paragraph 3.24)
- 2.38 As of June 2021, six months into the second phase of the *Future of Education*, a Phase Two Implementation Plan is yet to be published by the Education Directorate.
- 2.39 The *Future of Education; An ACT education strategy for the next ten years* was released in 2018. The strategy 'outlines the plan for education in the ACT for the next decade'. The first phase of the *Future of Education* strategy was supported by an implementation plan that identified six priorities for improving the ACT public education system and 68 commitments for the Education Directorate to implement. The planned activities detailed in the first phase implementation plan are comprised of tangible programs, supports or strategic

¹⁸ <https://www.education.act.gov.au/our-priorities/future-of-education/implementation>

planning tasks. Priority 3 of the first phase of the *Future of Education* has a focus on supporting teaching quality, and includes a range of supports focused on developing early career teachers, improving teaching quality through school and system-level support, and developing school leaders. Priority 2 and Priority 6 also include initiatives intended to improve teaching quality. The Education Directorate published an evaluation of Phase One of the *Future of Education* in June 2021, and reported 63 of its 68 commitments had been established or completed. The Education Directorate reported that five commitments had been delayed due to the redirection of resources to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the completion of the first phase of the *Future of Education* in 2020, the second phase implementation plan is yet to be published by the Education Directorate.

RECOMMENDATION 1 FUTURE OF EDUCATION

The Education Directorate should, as a matter of priority develop and publish the implementation plan for the second phase of the *Future of Education*.

2018-2021 Education Directorate Strategic Plan

- 2.40 To support the implementation of the commitments in the *Future of Education*, the Education Directorate has developed a series of cascading strategic planning documents. These include the *Education Directorate 2018-21 Strategic Plan* and divisional and branch business plans. The divisional and branch business plans seek to acknowledge specific responsibility for activities identified under the *Future of Education* and the strategic plan.
- 2.41 The 2018-21 Strategic Plan identifies five strategic goals:
- Schools where students love to learn;
 - Investing in early childhood;
 - Evidence-informed decisions;
 - Learning culture; and
 - United leadership.
- 2.42 Against each strategic goal, priority actions are identified. There are many priority actions across the strategic goals that relate to teaching quality, including for example:
- implementing a whole of system approach to school improvement;
 - embedding high quality professional learning communities in all schools;
 - building the capability of all teaching staff in utilising contemporary, evidence-based pedagogical practices;
 - establishing coaching and mentoring programs available for new teachers, aspiring leaders and new principals; and

- implementing a system level leadership development strategy to build instructional leadership capability.
- 2.43 Between five to seven indicators of success are identified for each strategic goal.
- 2.44 The indicators are typically specific and measurable as they focus on increasing an observable performance measure of the ACT public school system. For example, indicators of success for the *Learning culture* strategic goal are:
- increased retention of beginning teachers and new staff;
 - increase in mentors and mentees who report high levels of confidence and satisfaction with mentoring supports;
 - increase in staff reporting strong leadership in schools;
 - increase in staff reporting that their leaders are able to build capability in others;
 - increase in staff who understand and work towards future focused skills; and
 - increase in staff reporting support for professional development.
- 2.45 While the indicators are specific and measurable, they do not include identifiable or quantifiable targets.
- 2.46 In addition to the indicators of success against each strategic goal, the 2018-21 Strategic Plan identifies three overarching strategic indicators:
- to promote greater equity in learning outcomes in and across ACT public schools;
 - to facilitate high quality teaching in ACT public schools and strengthen educational outcomes; and
 - to centre teaching and learning around students as individuals.
- 2.47 The second strategic indicator emphasises the importance of high-quality teaching practice across ACT public schools and its contribution to improving educational outcomes for students.
- 2.48 These strategic indicators are identified in the Education Directorate's budget papers and annual reports as part of Education Directorate's performance framework. Sub-measures are identified against each strategic indicator, with historical performance and targets identified for each strategic indicator.

Division and branch business plans

- 2.49 The priority actions identified in the 2018-21 Strategic Plan are assigned to the Education Directorate's divisions and branches through annual business planning processes.
- 2.50 A review of the relevant divisional business plans shows there is a clear structure of allocating priority actions to divisions with timeframes identified for each activity. The three

divisions in the Education Directorate with primary accountability for improving teaching quality are the School Improvement, Service Design and Delivery and Business Services (with the focus for this audit being People and Performance Branch in the Business Services Division). Their 2020 plans identify a series of actions as well as risks and associated mitigations to achieve these actions.

Reporting progress against the 2018-21 Strategic Plan

2.51 Progress in implementing the 2018-21 Strategic Plan actions is reported through a biannual reporting framework of six-monthly review reports. At the time of audit reporting, three of these reports had been produced; April 2019, November 2019 and August 2020. Each of the reports followed a consistent structure in reviewing progress and implementation of the strategic plan's priority actions. Each report included four reflective questions to review progress:

1. Are we doing what we said we would?
2. Have we maintained fidelity of our intent?
3. Are we making a difference?
4. What needs to change?

2.52 The six-monthly reports are intended to be the key internal reporting mechanism to the Education Directorate's executive leadership, and they are published on its intranet to communicate progress in implementing the 2018-21 Strategic Plan. The indicators of success are expected to be reported against to demonstrate the Directorate's progress and performance. The structure of identifying priority actions, specific indicators of success and a framework for reporting progress represents a positive improvement on the structure of reporting under the 2014-2017 strategic planning activities for the directorate. The reporting framework confirms a clear alignment between the *Future of Education* and the 2018-21 Strategic Plan.

Lack of baseline data

2.53 The reporting framework was intended to support the Education Directorate's monitoring of its progress in achieving the indicators of success against each strategic goal. However, the 2018-21 Strategic Plan did not identify or record baseline data against which progress against the indicators was to be measured.

2.54 The second six monthly review report (November 2019) captured baseline data against many of the indicators of success in the strategic plan, some 22 months after the commencement of the strategic plan. Data sources included standardised testing data from NAPLAN and the results of school climate and all staff surveys. However, this data was not acknowledged or reported against in the following six-monthly report in August 2020, to provide an indication of progress.

Qualitative reporting

- 2.55 The six-monthly reports provide progress updates in narrative form against the priority actions along with case study examples for particular areas of success. This data was obtained from workshops of key stakeholders and used reflective questions to discuss progress towards the strategic plan's priority actions (refer to paragraph 2.42). While this gives some qualitative evidence of progress, the reports produced to date have had a predominant focus on 'success stories'. They do not consistently and explicitly explore:
- challenges in implementing priority actions;
 - potential improvements to the indicators of success; and
 - what needs to be done or modified to improve performance.
- 2.56 The progress reports have also been inconsistent in their consideration of priority actions and indicators of success. These have not been consistently considered and addressed in each report in a way that provides a clear indication of the Education Directorate's progress and performance over time. Of the 14 indicators of success relevant to teaching quality in the 2018-21 Strategic Plan only two of these were reported against through qualitative statements in the three six-monthly reports produced to date.

Reporting clarity

- 2.57 The lack of consistent consideration and reporting against the priority actions and indicators of success in the six-monthly reports means that it is not clear if the actions have been delayed or discontinued. While it is acknowledged that, in 2020 the national bushfire crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in some actions being postponed, the revised timeframes for implementation are not clear for all of the priority actions.

System-wide impacts

- 2.58 When actions are reported against in the six-monthly reports, measures of system-level impact on the quality of teaching practices are not discernible. The reports frequently acknowledge that evidence of impact was observable on an individual student or school level, but typically state that it is too soon to determine system-level impact.
- 2.59 To support the implementation of the commitments in the *Future of Education*, the Education Directorate has developed a series of cascading strategic planning documents. These include the *Education Directorate 2018-21 Strategic Plan* and divisional and branch business plans. The 2018-21 Strategic Plan identifies five strategic goals, each of which is supported by priority actions and between five to seven indicators of success. The indicators are typically specific and measurable as they focus on increasing an observable performance measure of the ACT public school system, but they are not supported by identifiable or quantifiable targets. The priority actions identified in the 2018-21 Strategic Plan are assigned to the Education Directorate's divisions and branches through annual business planning processes. There is a clear structure of allocating priority actions to divisions with timeframes identified for each activity.

- 2.60 Progress in implementing the 2018-21 Strategic Plan actions is reported through a biannual reporting framework of six-monthly review reports. At the time of audit reporting, three of these reports had been produced; April 2019, November 2019 and August 2020. The structure of identifying priority actions, specific indicators of success and a framework for reporting progress represents a positive improvement on the structure of reporting under the 2014-2017 strategic planning activities for the directorate. The reporting framework identifies a clear alignment between the *Future of Education* and the 2018-21 Strategic Plan. However, the six-monthly reporting process is hampered by a lack of baseline data through which progress against the indicators should be measured. The reports provide progress updates in narrative form against the priority actions along with case study examples for particular areas of success. While this gives some qualitative evidence of progress, the reports produced to date have had a predominant focus on 'success stories'. They do not consistently and explicitly explore: challenges in implementing priority actions; potential improvements to the indicators of success; and what needs to be done or modified to improve performance. The progress reports have also been inconsistent in their consideration of priority actions and indicators of success. These have not been consistently considered and addressed in each report in a way that provides a clear indication of the Education Directorate's progress and performance over time.

RECOMMENDATION 2 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND REPORTING

The Education Directorate should improve its strategic planning 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:

- a) all priority actions identified in its Strategic Plan;
- b) all indicators of success for each Strategic Plan goal; and
- c) the completion of activities committed to in annual divisional business plans.

3 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

- 3.1 School improvement is the function of an explicit improvement agenda in which schools plan, deliver and evaluate activities aimed at lifting student educational outcomes. This chapter considers the Education Directorate's school improvement activities, including its implementation of policies, procedures and processes to support teachers to continuously improve the quality of their teaching practice.

Summary

Conclusion

The Education 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 school improvement process is evidence-based, uses international educational research, and has been designed to focus school leadership on achieving a small number of achievable and relevant priorities. This is supported by a consistently implemented approach of using multiple sources of evidence to inform the effectiveness of school teaching and learning activities. There is also an effective structure of external reviews to assess the performance of individual schools and the ACT public school system against the *National School Improvement Tool*. ACT public schools perform at a 'High' level when measured against the *National School Improvement Tool*, but there are challenges to maintain and improve this performance.

Since 2018, the Education Support Office has updated their roles and responsibilities to support schools through the school improvement process. However, the policies that support the school improvement process do not fully reflect current roles and responsibilities for the process and are not well understood across all ACT public schools. There is scope to better design the roles of Directors of School Improvement and Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers to support teaching quality across all public schools. Directors of School Improvement could be better focused to specialise in school sectors and Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers currently lack a role, responsibility and resources for school improvement. Addressing these issues may help improve the perceived benefits of these certifications and their effectiveness in improving teaching quality.

While school improvement documentation and a series of school visits are used to oversight school performance, these activities were not consistently undertaken across the ACT public schools considered as part of the audit. The Education Support Office does not formally analyse school improvement documentation to better target and improve teaching quality supports and this reduces the effectiveness of the school improvement process to improve teaching quality.

The Education Support Office has established a range of activities to oversight and support school leadership to improve teaching quality. Directors of School Improvement have an active role to support principals in improving teaching quality through school improvement, and are supported

by Instructional Mentors. The Leadership Development Strategy has also been implemented with a view to school leaders leading and mentoring teachers to improve teaching practices. While these supports have assisted principals and deputy principals, school executives (School Leader C staff) spoken to as part of the audit were consistently unaware of this support. While school executives' awareness may have been affected by the interruption of the Strategy's planned activities in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this reduces the effectiveness of school leaders to lift the quality of teaching in ACT public schools.

Key findings

	Paragraph
<p>The <i>National School Improvement Tool</i> was designed by the Australian Council of Educational Research in 2012; its purpose is to support Australian schools' improvement activities by documenting the practices displayed by highly performing schools in the form of benchmarks. The <i>National School Improvement Tool</i> and its associated performance domains form the basis of the Education Directorate's integrated school improvement process, which includes a series of cyclical activities: school reviews; school improvement plans; actional plans; school improvement visits; and impact reports. Guidance on the use and application of the <i>National School Improvement Tool</i> is outlined in the <i>People, Practice and Performance</i> framework (2016) and the <i>Evidence and Data Plan for School Improvement</i> (2019).</p>	3.22
<p>The <i>People, Practice and Performance</i> framework was re-endorsed by the Education Directorate in 2018 as the cornerstone for school improvement activities and it has continued to positively influence the school improvement process. However, the framework was not reviewed or updated before its re-endorsement. While the core features of the school improvement process remain relevant in the framework, some of the principles and assumptions behind the framework have since been superseded by newer developments. This includes new school improvement roles of Directors of School Improvement and Instructional Mentors, as well as school improvement priorities outlined in the <i>Future of Education</i>. The <i>Evidence and Data Plan</i> does not refer to, or otherwise acknowledge, the roles and responsibilities of Instructional Mentors or Education Support Office teams that assist schools in improving teaching quality. Similarly, the plan does not satisfactorily explain the purpose and intended outcomes of school improvement visits in the school improvement process. The exclusion of this information in the <i>Evidence and Data Plan</i> combined with the outdated information in the <i>People, Practice and Performance</i> framework presents a risk that Education Directorate policies designed to enhance school improvement in ACT public schools may lead to confusion and misunderstanding with respect to the Education Directorate's school improvement processes.</p>	3.23
<p>Under the <i>National School Improvement Tool</i>, 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. Undertaken in the fifth year of a school's improvement cycle, school reviews use the <i>National School Improvement Tool</i> as the framework for assessing a school's</p>	3.43

progress towards directorate and school priorities, including an assessment of the quality of teaching practices displayed. Five of the six schools considered as part of the audit had undertaken a school review under the current integrated school improvement processes. 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. 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. There is also evidence that the school review recommendations were then also specifically addressed in subsequent annual action plans.

On the basis of the school reviews that are conducted each year, the Australian Council for Educational Research provides the Education Directorate with a *System School Review Report*. 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. There is evidence of the Education Directorate responding to *System Review Reports* since 2016 with actions targeted at improving teaching quality against ACT public schools across some recommendations in these reports. Since 2019, the Education Directorate's responses to *System School Review Reports* have improved in how they address the Australian Council for Education Research's recommendations for system-level improvement. Actions have been attributed to Education Support Office branches to progress and monitor throughout their implementation. However, the Education Directorate's responses to the *System School Review Reports* have not included reference to how prior year recommendations have been implemented. The Directorate's response to the 2020 report includes similar or identical actions to those identified in its response to the 2019 report; the details of any progress made or any challenges or delays to the implementation of the actions is not explicitly addressed or acknowledged in the documentation. While the reports are necessarily focused on historical performance in improving student educational outcomes and improvements across the system might take some years to be observed, there is an opportunity to better reflect and recognise progress that may be being made.

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.

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

3: School Improvement

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 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. 3.69

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. 3.70

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 3.76

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.

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*. 3.89

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. 3.90

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 3.100

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

The National School Improvement Tool

- 3.2 The *National School Improvement Tool* (NSIT) was designed by the Australian Council of Educational Research in 2012.¹⁹ The purpose of the *National School Improvement Tool* is to support Australian schools' improvement activities by documenting the practices displayed by highly performing schools in the form of benchmarks. The tool is used to help schools identify areas for improvement and provides a better practice model to target initiatives.²⁰ The *National School Improvement Tool* has been used as the key evaluation instrument for ACT public schools since 2013.
- 3.3 The *National School Improvement Tool* consists of nine domains which are drawn from the practices demonstrated by highly effective schools. The nine domains and a brief explanation of each is shown in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1 National School Improvement Tool (NSIT) domains

NSIT Domain	Summary
1. An explicit improvement agenda	School leaders identify and communicate to the school community evidence-based targets for improved student outcomes.
2. Analysis and discussion of data	Student outcomes data is systematically collected and analysed to monitor and evidence student performance.
3. A culture that promotes learning	Staff, students and families contribute to positive relationships and a culture supportive of improving student learning and wellbeing.
4. Targeted use of school resources	School policies, programs and resources are used to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of every student.
5. An expert teaching team	A highly-capable teaching team are accountable for student achievement and lead a culture of continual professional learning.
6. Systematic curriculum delivery	Curriculum is planned, documented, and delivered consistently. Teaching is evidence-based and uses assessment and reporting practices that are aligned with the Australian Curriculum.
7. Differentiated teaching and learning	Classroom teachers identify and address the individual learning needs of students.
8. Effective pedagogical practices	School leadership supports teachers to use highly effective, research-based teaching practices in all classrooms.

¹⁹ NSIT was originally endorsed by the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) in 2012. In 2014, the SCSEEC became the Education Council.

²⁰ Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). (2012). *National School Improvement Tool*. Melbourne: ACER, Page 1

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NSIT Domain	Summary
9. School-community partnerships	The school actively uses community partnerships to enhance student learning.

Source: Australian Council for Educational Research's National School Improvement Tool (2016)

- 3.4 Performance levels are described for each domain: Outstanding, High, Medium and Low. Descriptors are provided for each of the performance levels, and these provide guidance on the features and practices of school improvement activities at each level.
- 3.5 Describing the domains and the associated performance levels allows schools and education systems to use evidence and judgement to assess performance and inform the design of school improvement activities.

Education Directorate's integrated school improvement process

- 3.6 Schools and education systems that demonstrate high-quality teaching practices could expect to perform well across many of the domains of the *National School Improvement Tool*, and this is expected to lead to improved student educational outcomes.
- 3.7 Following an initial pilot of the *National School Improvement Tool* in ACT public schools in 2013, the Education Directorate identified the tool as the key component of an integrated school improvement process. The Education Directorate's integrated school improvement process includes a series of cyclical activities:
- School reviews: Each school goes through a review process every five years. They are used to evaluate a school's planning and management of resources to improve student outcomes.
 - School improvement plans: These are produced as an outcome of the school review. They seek to align and support the Education Directorate's strategic plan by setting a school's performance improvement targets over the next five-year period.
 - Action plans: These are prepared on an annual basis to guide a school's processes and resources to achieve the priorities set out in the school improvement plan.
 - School improvement visits: These are focused visits from a Director of School Improvement (refer to paragraph 3.60) and could include a member of the Education Support Office's school improvement team and another school principal. School Improvement visits are conducted at least once throughout the school year in each setting to give differentiated support and feedback to a school in implementing its school improvement plan.
 - Impact reports: These are annual reports on the school's progress towards its school improvement plan targets and the strategic priorities in the Education Directorate's Strategic Plan.

Key roles in Education Directorate school improvement process

- 3.8 A number of school-based and Directorate staff have a role to plan, deliver, monitor and evaluate a school's activities to improve student outcomes through the integrated school improvement process:
- School principals: oversee school operations and lead their school with a strategic direction that meets individual school community needs and aligns system priorities.
 - Directors of School Improvement: supervise and mentor school principals to plan, deliver and evaluate school improvement activities. They are supported by instructional mentors who work with schools on specific school improvement activities.
 - School teaching staff: classroom teachers and school leaders who maintain face-to-face teaching responsibilities to plan, deliver, and assess student performance against the standards of the *Australian Curriculum*, and provide pastoral care support to students and their families.
 - Education Support Office: designs, delivers, monitors, and evaluates system-level strategies and supports to enhance student performance and wellbeing.

School improvement policies

- 3.9 The integrated school improvement process and the roles and responsibilities for the stakeholders involved is documented in two key Education Directorate documents:
- *People, Practice and Performance: School Improvement in Canberra Public Schools- A Framework for Performance and Accountability (2016)* (the *People, Practice and Performance* framework); and
 - *Evidence and Data Plan for School Improvement (2019)* (the *Evidence and Data Plan*).

People, Practice and Performance: School Improvement in Canberra Public Schools- A Framework for Performance and Accountability (2016)

- 3.10 Released in March 2016, the *People, Practice and Performance* framework articulated the performance improvement and accountability arrangements for ACT public schools. The framework established a planning and review process for school improvement. The framework allocates roles and responsibilities and endorses the *National School Improvement Tool* as the core feature of ACT public schools' improvement processes. It also establishes processes for otherwise disconnected existing internal and external accountability activities for school improvement purposes. These include staff performance and development agreements, student reports, annual school board reports and an annual assurance statement.
- 3.11 At the time of its release, the *People, Practice and Performance* framework identified a line of accountability from principals to school network leaders (now Directors of School Improvement) and ultimately to the Director-General.

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- 3.12 The intent of the framework was to establish processes to:
- monitor school performance;
 - identify targeted interventions and;
 - ensure quality assurance of all ACT public schools.
- 3.13 While representative bodies were consulted in designing the framework, it is apparent there was a lack of support for principals in its implementation.
- 3.14 The *People, Practice and Performance* framework was provided to schools who were expected to autonomously implement the framework in their setting, with little direct leadership and support from the Education Support Office at the time. This resulted in schools variably using the processes outlined in the framework to improve student outcomes. Primarily, this issue was most evident in the discrepancies between school strategic plans in which some schools identified up to 15 strategic priorities to achieve within a five-year period, while other schools identified two or three broad goals.
- 3.15 The *People, Practice and Performance* framework was re-endorsed by the Education Directorate in 2018 as the cornerstone for school improvement activities, with the development and implementation of the *Evidence and Data Plan for School Improvement* (2019). However, the framework was not reviewed or updated before its re-endorsement. Some of the principles and assumptions behind the framework have since been superseded by newer developments, such as the new school improvement roles of Directors of School Improvement and instructional mentors, as well as school improvement priorities outlined in the *Future of Education*. The major implication of this is that the supporting cyclical school improvement activities do not reflect the current arrangements, and this may lead to confusion about the policy intent of these supports (discussed further in paragraph 3.24).

Evidence and Data Plan for School Improvement (2019)

- 3.16 In April 2019 the *Evidence and Data Plan for School Improvement* was released. The *Evidence and Data Plan* states that it:
- ... represents an actioning of the People, Practice and Performance framework with a focus on the use of data to guide decision making about pedagogy, curriculum delivery and school planning for improvement.
- 3.17 The *Evidence and Data Plan* provides guidance to schools on how they can access, prioritise, collect and analyse data sets to monitor and evaluate the impact of school improvement activities. The Education Directorate endorses two approaches to facilitate ACT public schools' continuous scrutiny of data, including:
- **Spiral of Inquiry:** encourages the use of a series of enabling questions that seek to support a culture of inquiry in professional learning communities (refer to paragraph 4.46). These questions focus teachers and leaders on assessing: the needs of students; teacher knowledge, skills and development; and the impact of changes of activities to improve student outcomes. This is intended to be a cyclical process where

schools are encouraged to continue asking these questions to continually improve student outcomes; and

- **Multiple Sources of Evidence:** encourages schools to seek data about student learning; school programs and processes; school community demographics; and school community perceptions. Through these domains it is intended that schools use data to predict the required interventions to sustain school improvement.

- 3.18 The *Evidence and Data Plan* provides suggested data sources through a data glossary that is available on the Education Directorate's intranet. The data glossary connects a comprehensive set of data sources across each of the four domains recommended under the Multiple Sources of Evidence and identifies the school communities that each data set is relevant for (from preschools to colleges and specialist schools). It is intended that schools use these tools in the context of school professional learning communities, which are discussed further in paragraphs 4.46 to 4.58.
- 3.19 The *Evidence and Data Plan* acknowledges the replacement of school network leaders with Directors of School Improvement as a means of support for school leadership and improvement, rather than management of operational and incident responses.
- 3.20 The *Evidence and Data Plan* does not refer to, or otherwise acknowledge, the roles and responsibilities of Instructional Mentors or Education Support Office teams that assist schools in improving teaching quality. Similarly, the plan does not satisfactorily explain the purpose and intended outcomes of school improvement visits in the school improvement process. The exclusion of this information in the *Evidence and Data Plan* combined with the outdated information in the *People, Practice and Performance* framework presents a risk that Education Directorate policies designed to enhance school improvement in ACT public schools are not relevant or comprehensive and may lead to confusion and misunderstanding with respect to the Education Directorate's school improvement processes.
- 3.21 While there was no discrete communications strategy to support the launch of the *Evidence and Data Plan*, all divisions of the Education Support Office and all six principals involved in the audit were aware of, and understood, the plan's processes and activities. However, school leaders and classroom teaching staff in five of the six schools were not aware of the plan and its activities.
- 3.22 The *National School Improvement Tool* was designed by the Australian Council of Educational Research in 2012; its purpose is to support Australian schools' improvement activities by documenting the practices displayed by highly performing schools in the form of benchmarks. The *National School Improvement Tool* and its associated performance domains form the basis of the Education Directorate's integrated school improvement process, which includes a series of cyclical activities: school reviews; school improvement plans; actional plans; school improvement visits; and impact reports. Guidance on the use and application of the *National School Improvement Tool* is outlined in the *People, Practice*

and Performance framework (2016) and the *Evidence and Data Plan for School Improvement* (2019).

- 3.23 The *People, Practice and Performance* framework was re-endorsed by the Education Directorate in 2018 as the cornerstone for school improvement activities and it has continued to positively influence the school improvement process. However, the framework was not reviewed or updated before its re-endorsement. While the core features of the school improvement process remain relevant in the framework, some of the principles and assumptions behind the framework have since been superseded by newer developments. This includes new school improvement roles of Directors of School Improvement and Instructional Mentors, as well as school improvement priorities outlined in the *Future of Education*. The *Evidence and Data Plan* does not refer to, or otherwise acknowledge, the roles and responsibilities of Instructional Mentors or Education Support Office teams that assist schools in improving teaching quality. Similarly, the plan does not satisfactorily explain the purpose and intended outcomes of school improvement visits in the school improvement process. The exclusion of this information in the *Evidence and Data Plan* combined with the outdated information in the *People, Practice and Performance* framework presents a risk that Education Directorate policies designed to enhance school improvement in ACT public schools may lead to confusion and misunderstanding with respect to the Education Directorate's school improvement processes.

RECOMMENDATION 3 PEOPLE, PRACTICE AND PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

The Education Directorate should review and update the *People, Practice and Performance* framework to:

- 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 for school principals;
- b) reflect the requirements of the *Evidence and Data Plan for School Improvement* (2019); and
- c) require all schools to participate in school improvement activities as well as complete and publish all required school improvement documentation on their website.

Implementation of the integrated school improvement process

- 3.24 The Education Directorate's integrated school improvement process, as documented in the *People, Practice and Performance* framework and the *Evidence and Data Plan for School Improvement* (2019), is used across ACT public schools to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate school improvement activities, including initiatives to improve teaching quality. The five key cyclical activities in the school improvement process are shown in Figure 3-1.