Black Mountain School
Board Report
2014
This report supports the work being done in the ACT Education and Training Directorate, as outlined in the Strategic Plan 2014-2017 “Educational capital: Leading the Nation”. It complies with reporting requirements detailed within the Education ACT 2004 and the National Education Agreement.

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About our school

School Board
It was with great honor that I accepted the position of board chair at Black Mountain School from the beginning of the 2014 year. I wish to extend thanks to Peter Brown on his departure from the position, after many years of great stewardship.

Our son has been a student of Black Mountain since 2009 and has loved every minute of school life from day one. Through those years I have witnessed teaching staff and an executive team that demonstrates a level of passion and enthusiasm for their career that is simply inspiring. Their continued effort to deliver a functional curriculum that addresses the challenging needs of our children was demonstrated again in 2014 with absolute professionalism.

As always, the year presented its fair share of challenges, however the overall feeling of 2014 was one of great leaps forward and successful outcomes for both students and the school. Some key highlights included:

- Introduction of the new COMPASS program
- Appointment of a transition coordinator to assist students on developing pathways for post-school life
- Continued development of engagement programs with other schools such as Merici and Radford Colleges
- A visit from the Royal Family
- Lift-off for the Six Degrees Café Gallery Garden project
- Not to mention numerous Camps, BBQs, Dance Fest and other fun activities.

I would like to acknowledge Frank Fogliati’s exemplary leadership of the school, backed by his dedicated staff. Thank you also to the P&C and school board members for their contributions and commitment to helping the school continue to grow and improve.

Lastly, I would like to extend my condolences to the families for whom this year was not so kind. Our thoughts are with you.

Gavin Richardson
Board Chair

Introduction to School
Black Mountain School (BMS) fulfils an important role within the ACT public education system, providing students and their families with a unique and specialised placement. BMS is a secondary specialist school located in O’Connor. The school specifically caters for year 7 to year 12 students with learning needs, requiring a special education program and facilities. Throughout a student’s placement at BMS the focus remains steadfastly on successful transition to post-school life. Over the past few years the school has been operating at capacity with 16 full-time classes in operation. Parent choice has a great deal to do with this. The school believes that the quality of its staff, programs, and facilities are key features that attract potential and future enrolments.
As a secondary school which graduates students directly into their post-school life, BMS is focussed on ‘capacity-building for independence, maximum participation and quality of life’. The general capabilities of the Australian Curriculum provide the standards for this personalised academic and social learning which is both challenging and enriching. Educational priorities are established which assist students to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century. It is essential for young people with a disability to have a strong sense of identity and wellbeing, to feel connected with and contribute to their world, and be confident and involved learners and effective communicators.

Building social capital was a significant undertaking in 2014. We focused on the strength of formal and informal partnerships and all individuals, agencies, organisations, and institutions that have the potential to support and be supported by the school. The crowdfunding from late last year that gave birth to Café Gallery Garden evolved into a social enterprise called Six Degrees, scheduled to open mid-2015. Six Degrees has received key sponsorship support from The Snow Foundation, Bendigo Community Bank, Deloitte, The Peppermint Room, and Small Quinton Coleman Architects. A small, dedicated committee has been hard at work throughout the year to make it a reality, ably supported by our school board and P&C. Establishing Canberra’s newest social enterprise on-site at Black Mountain School is we feel a bold and courageous move. When completed, it will deliver lasting solutions for ongoing training and employment for young people with a disability. It will also connect the wider Canberra community to people with a disability and showcase the skills our young people have in the areas of art, hospitality, horticulture, hydroponics and sustainability.

In 2014 there was continued growth of Compass as it entered its second year. Compass is a new placement program that increases options for families with children with mild intellectual impairment living in northern Canberra.

We undertook the next step in diversifying our workforce. To achieve this we looked into creating additional paraprofessional roles, recognising that sustaining dynamic change requires both an acknowledgement of ‘local’ factors and thinking outside the box. In 2014 we welcomed a transition coordinator and a community programs trainee. Both officers have significantly added to the profile of Black Mountain School students and graduates in the ACT community.

Being founded in 1955, next year (2015) will see Black Mountain School celebrate 60 years. By Canberra’s relatively youthful standards that practically makes us an historic landmark. We will be hosting a range of community events, including a gala dinner, designed to reunite the many generations of students, staff, and families.

It was a relatively quiet year in terms of capital works. Classroom 22 is currently receiving a stunning makeover and will definitely be a showcase of how to build a contemporary facility for students requiring high levels of personal care and support. The new tenants will move in for term 2 of the 2015 school year.

There was quite a changing of the guard for both our School Board and P&C. Our sincere thanks go to the outgoing board chair, Peter Brown, and P&C president Moira Byrne-Garton. Both gave generously of their precious time to build that preferred future for all students of
Black Mountain School. This year we greatly enjoyed working alongside Gavin Richardson and Dawn Bowra in their respective new roles.

**Student Information**

**Student enrolment**

In 2014 there was a total of 98 students enrolled at this school.

*Table: 2014 Student Enrolment Breakdown*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBOTE</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Planning and Performance, August 2014

Students are enrolled from across the ACT and surrounding NSW.

**Student attendance**

The following table identifies the attendance rate of students by year level during 2014. Student attendance rate is the percentage of school days attended by students in each year level at the school. Student attendance is measured over two school terms; that is from the first day of the school year for students in term one to the last day of term two.

*Table: 2014 Semester 1 attendance rates*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Level</th>
<th>Attendance Rate %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>89.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>89.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>89.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>83.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Planning and Performance, July 2014

The school experiences very high levels of student engagement in their learning. Non-attendance issues are with few exceptions, a result of illness, both chronic and acute. The school manages student non-attendance through regular contact with parents and a unified approach to pastoral care and health. This occurs formally at the Personal Future Planning Process (PFPP) and In-school Review (ISR) meetings and informally, via phone calls and communication books. A designated school-based pastoral care team, as well as staff from ACT Health, is always available to discuss non-attendance issues.
Staff Information

Teacher qualifications
All teachers meet the professional requirements for teaching in an ACT public school.

The proportion of teaching staff with certificates/degrees/diplomas and a postgraduate qualification is shown below.

Table: 2014 Qualification of Teaching Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>Teaching staff (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificate/Diploma/Degree</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: School Data, December 2014

Workforce Composition

In 2014 the workforce composition of the school is highlighted in the following table. The data is taken from the school’s verified August pay report. For reporting purposes it includes all school staff including preschools if applicable, staff absent for a period of less than four consecutive weeks, staff replacing staff absent for more than four consecutive weeks. It does not include all casuals and staff who were not paid in this period and staff absent for a period of four consecutive weeks or longer nor unfilled vacancies.

Table: 2014 Workforce Composition Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Service Officers</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Service Officers &amp; Equivalent</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Leader A</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Leader B</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Leader C</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>58</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Workforce Management, August census 2014

There is one indigenous staff at this school.

Volunteers

Volunteers worked 735 hours in the school during 2014.
School Review and Development

In 2014, the ACT Education and Training Directorates Strategic Plan 2014-2017 provided the framework and strategic direction for the school’s plan. This is supported by the School Improvement in ACT Public Schools Directions 2010-2014 and the School Improvement Framework which are the overarching documents providing support to achieve high standards in student learning, innovation and best practice in ACT public schools.

All ACT public schools participate in a four year cycle of school review and development. Schools take part in a continuous cycle of review comprising annual self assessments against their school plans. In the fourth year schools undergo an external validation process. This process provides an independent and unbiased assessment of the school’s progress towards achieving system and school priorities.

Black Mountain School will be validated in 2016. A copy of their most recent validation report can be found on the school website.

School Satisfaction

Schools continually use a range of data collection tools to gain an understanding of the satisfaction levels of their parents and carers, staff and students. In August/September 2014 the school undertook a survey to gain an understanding of school satisfaction at that time. Staff, parents and students from year 5, and above, with the exception of students in special schools, who were invited to take part in an online survey.

Overall Satisfaction

In 2014, 18 parents and 42 staff responded to the survey. Where less than five responses were received the results were not reported due to concerns about participant privacy. In 2014, 94% of parents and carers and 90% of staff at this school indicated they were satisfied with the education provided by the school.

As well in 2014, 14 national parent survey items and 12 national student survey items were included in the surveys. These items were approved by the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) for use from 2014. The following tables show the percentage of parents and carers and students who agreed with each of the national items at this school.

*Table: Proportion of parents and carers in agreement with each national opinion item*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers at this school expect my child to do his or her best.</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers at this school provide my child with useful feedback about his or her school work.</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers at this school treat students fairly.</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school is well maintained.</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My child feels safe at this school. 94
I can talk to my child’s teachers about my concerns. 94
Student behaviour is well managed at this school. 78
My child likes being at this school. 89
This school looks for ways to improve. 88
This school takes parents’ opinions seriously. 83
Teachers at this school motivate my child to learn. 88
My child is making good progress at this school. 88
My child's learning needs are being met at this school. 78
This school works with me to support my child's learning. 94

Source: 2014 School Satisfaction Surveys, September 2014

This information can be considered alongside information available on the My School website (http://www.myschool.edu.au).

In 2014 BMS undertook ongoing collection of data and analysis at a school level. Longitudinal data from 2010-2014 indicated further improvement:

- BMS students’ ILP goal achievement increased from 66% (2013) to 71% (2014)
- Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) ILP goal achievement increased from the 2013 End of Year Report to the 2014 End of Year Report for the following groups:
  - 62% (2013) up to 69% (2014) All AAC users
  - 58% (2013) up to 71% (2014) Continuing AAC users
  - 75% (2013) up to 80% (2014) Target AAC users

These results as well as the continual review of school performance contributed to the evaluation of our school plan and the development of annual operating plans. The school plan is available on the school website.

**Professional Learning**

During the 2014 school year, BMS committed to a contextually specific professional learning (PL) program. PL was delivered in the initial start-up period of late January and early February, followed up with essential training and development as the year progressed. Additionally 2014 saw a significant shift at our weekly teacher meetings where Professional Practice Seminars, delivered by the Executive Teacher Professional Practice (ETPP), occurred each fortnight. This was complemented by Opportunities of Practice (OoP) in alternate weeks. Throughout the year teachers would take it in turn to deliver an OoP.
PL focussed on:

- **Professional Learning Communities (PLC)** - further evolution of the PLC culture at BMS. 2014 was a continuation of the PLC as a collaborative structure. Key aspects of the PL included: a commitment to student learning, a focus on results, strong relationships, collaborative enquiry, supportive, transformational leadership, and alignment of belief and effective practices.

- **Positive Behaviour Support (PBS)** - PBS is the universally accepted and understood practice for successful student behaviour support and pastoral care.

- **Systematic Instruction** - this is the pedagogical tool of choice for instruction of students with special needs. It is the teaching cycle of Assess-Plan-Teach, with a focus on implementing specific evidence-based practices, supported by ongoing data collection.

- **Team-Teach** - This is specifically designed for implementation in secondary specialist schools. It is accredited training for children and adult services in positive handling strategies through a whole setting holistic approach, working with leadership and management, actively committed to reducing restraint and risk.

- **Behaviour Support Protocols** - BSP is the revised system of student support as created by the ACT Directorate in late 2010.

- **RED (Respect, Equity, and Diversity)** - The ACT Public Service (ACTPS) framework for ensuring a workplace culture that is respectful, courteous, and fair and that values individual differences as a core aspect of building a positive workplace culture.

- **Providing Safe Schools P-12** - An ACT Directorate policy ensuring ACT public schools and colleges will promote and seek to provide a supportive learning environment in which all students can expect to feel safe.

- **Mediating conflict and conflict resolution** - As per ACT Directorate and ACTPS guidelines.

- **Emergency Management** - The protection of ACT public schools, staff and students is a priority. The Emergency Response Guide is aimed to assist the school community to improve emergency responses.

## Learning and Assessment

### NAPLAN Assessment

Students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in all ACT schools participated in the National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). This program assesses skills in reading, writing, spelling and grammar and punctuation and numeracy.

In 2014, 100.00 % of year 7 students and 100.00 % of year 9 students were exempt from testing based on nationally agreed criteria.

## Performance in other areas of the curriculum

Within the guidelines of the school’s curriculum, and specifically addressing the areas of academic learning, social skills, independent living skills, and leisure and recreation options, the school seeks to maximise the successful transition to post-school life for every student.
Additionally many of our students are engaged in authentic work education programs both on-site and out in the community, targeting genuine long-term employment opportunities.

As a secondary school which graduates students directly into their post-school life, BMS is focussed on ‘capacity-building for independence, maximum participation and quality of life’.

As part of its drive for continual school improvement, BMS is focussed on building effective community, corporate, and academic partnerships. One example of this is the development of ‘social capital’ focussing on social relations that have productive benefits and the value of social networks, bonding similar people and bridging between diverse people. The school, assisted by the parent body, takes on many worthwhile enterprises, such as producing commissioned artwork for organisations such as Tandem, running school canteens at other ACTDET schools, and contributing to the productivity of the territory through our weekly horticulture crew at the Yarralumla Nursery. BMS believes this provides tangible and public evidence of the importance of schools and community in partnership.

The Black Mountain School curriculum aims to build student capacity for participation in society with independence and quality of life. Students need an ongoing, highly prioritised and coordinated program to deliver the goals to be achieved by graduation as set by parents/carers and staff during the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) process. These goals are envisioned in the student’s Personal Futures Action Plan (PFAP) which is developed with parents/carers on enrolment and modified as required at successive annual ILP meetings.

Within the overarching framework of the general capabilities of the Australian Curriculum, BMS integrates all the school’s processes from the creation of the PFAP to the development of each student’s personalised curriculum. The PFAP provides the rationale for selecting ‘capacities’ from the BMS curriculum as the basis of long-term and short-term ILP goals.

The framework for the PFAP includes the domains: Vocational Training; Community, Leisure and Recreation Options; Residential; Transport and Mobility; Finance; and Advocacy, Legal and Citizenship.

Our curriculum also incorporates programs such as week-long interstate camps, appropriate work placements, two-way peer support with local high schools and colleges, and engagement in sporting clinics.

**Progress against School Priorities in 2014**

**Priority 1**
 Supporting successful transitions for all students

**Targets**
- 100 percent of all new students have a mutually agreed upon Transition Action Plan prior to transition into BMS.
• Increase completion of the BMS year-to-year transition checklist by five percentage points for students continuing within the school.
• 100 percent of all graduating students receive a digital portfolio completed to an agreed upon standard.
• Increase achievement of targeted students’ Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) Individual Learning Plan (ILP) goals by five percentage points.

**Directorate Priority areas covered with this priority**
• High expectations, High performance, Connecting with Families and the Community

**Progress**

For students at BMS to continue to achieve to their maximum potential, it is imperative that consistency and best practices are maintained throughout each transition point in their lives. For some students, this can include the transitions encountered on a daily basis, such as between home and school or even between activities. Consistent use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) helps to empower the students and facilitates understanding as they move through these transition points. Other major transition points are: their arrival at BMS, year to year (as students change classes and teachers), and graduation from school into the post-school life. Effective recording of information and then the sharing of this key information with new staff working with each young person is essential for a smooth transition and engaged learning.

The following strategies were actioned within this priority:

• Implement agreed and consistent systematic transition processes for sharing and recording student information at each key transition point: from feeder schools to BMS; year to year at BMS; and from BMS to post-school providers
• Establish systematic practices throughout BMS that enhance identified students’ use of Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) systems.

Whilst working on implementing agreed and systematic transition processes for sharing and recording student information from feeder school to BMS, the following actions took place:

• BMS was endorsed and promoted as a specialist secondary school for students with mild to severe intellectual impairment through a range of ways including: information sessions about Compass (our new program for students with mild intellectual impairment) as publicised through the DECO network; streamed transition visits for potential new families in term 2; rebranding of existing Professional Learning Team (PLT) structures into focused, named PLTs (Engage, Link, Explore, Connect and Compass) supporting the notion of shared vision and collaboration; strengthening partnerships with local schools and community providers; and involvement in key public events such as the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge’s visit to the National Arboretum, and an Australian Citizenship Affirmation Ceremony
• Collaborative review and refinement of the transition processes between BMS and feeder schools
• Use of the Transition Action Plan (TAP) as a planning tool to identify the needs of each new student and existing required documentation

• A more comprehensive approach to transitions with greater individualised consultation with parents and carers: all parents and carers had an individualised transition meeting with BMS executive staff; identified students and families had additional transition meetings with staff from both schools and additional service providers as needed e.g. Therapy ACT; additional transition visits to BMS were provided as needed for the students (one student had a gradual transition to full time at BMS over the duration of one term)

• All new students had a minimum of one transition visit to BMS prior to starting, and where local, had an observation conducted by BMS staff in their feeder schools, consultation with teachers and executive staff at the feeders schools, and the aforementioned meetings with parents and carers

• Review and amendment to the student profile template used for gathering key information during transition visits of new students.

Of the 18 students who transitioned into BMS during 2014, all parents met with BMS executive and agreed upon a TAP for their student. Two students were identified as needing individualised transitions, with substantial preparation, planning and support. All remaining students were able to transition with the regular transition processes that BMS had in place with the feeder schools.

After seeking feedback in 2013 and revising the process of transition visits, the Transition Morning Teas were not run with parents this year. New processes resulted in individualised parent visits being held with each parent. Feedback indicates these were successful. There were 100 percent of new families in 2014 who participated in the BMS module of the Parent Satisfaction Survey that indicated they felt their child had had a successful transition to BMS.

During the transitions from feeder schools, it was identified that whilst the processes for gaining the required information had been streamlined, the BMS processes for sharing the information with our staff needed improvement. This will become an area for focus in 2015.

Our second strategy, *implementing consistent systematic transition processes for sharing and recording student information from year to year at BMS*, resulted in the following actions:

• Strengthening shared understanding of teacher requirements through the inclusion of a professional pathways’ goal for all permanent teachers outlining the required completion of each students’ documentation as listed in the BMS Year to Year Transition Checklist (part of the Transition Action Plan – TAP)

• Completion of key student documentation to an agreed upon standard was supported through style and content guides for each document, professional practice seminars, and the implemented coaching model between Executive teachers and all classroom teachers
• A revised, and successfully implemented, timeline for planning of 2015 classes allowing for more thorough handover of student information between staff, and observations of students prior to the end of 2014

• 81 percent of families of students who were continuing at BMS in 2015, and who participated in the 2014 BMS module of the Parent Satisfaction Survey, indicated that they felt their child had had a successful transition into their new class

Whilst an ILP goal achievement database has been established for the purposes of tracking total goal achievement, the intended individualised student database listing all ILP goals undertaken throughout a student’s schooling at BMS has not yet been successfully trialed. Capturing the detailed information in a simplistic manner has presented us with challenges. Investigation into the progress of the standardised program being developed by the Directorate (after multiple schools completed work under the DECO project) could occur in 2015.

Moderation between executive staff ensured all student documentation (ILPs, PFAP, MYR and EYR) was completed to an agreed standard. It is noted that the standard of these documents continues to be raised by teachers as they engage in the multitude of collaborative practices aimed to improve their pedagogy.

It is recommended that this target for the use of the Year to Year Transition Checklist is reevaluated in 2015 as the checklist was not completed for each student. Instead, it served as a useful tool for teachers to identify required documents for students. It was also successful in its use as it increased compliance with completion of required student documentation, and subsequent electronic storage of these files onto the shared ‘G Drive’. This in turn allowed for greater sharing of information, earlier preparation of classes and planning for students (where staffing allowed), and therefore smoother transitions in early 2015.

Introduction of the Healthcare Access at School (HAAS) program in 2014, highlighted the need for BMS to improve the processes for recording and sharing health-related student information (non-HAAS) between year-to-year transitions at BMS. This may be a focus in 2015 to assist in improving the practices for recording and sharing student information.

The focus on the transition processes between BMS and post-school providers, as detailed in our third strategy, enabled a number of key outcomes:

• A review of the digital portfolios enabled 100 percent of graduating students to transition to their post-school lives with an individualised short movie showcasing their talents, skills, interests, and most effective strategies for learning

• The appointment of both a Transition Coordinator and Community Engagement Trainee into the Pastoral Care team strengthened existing partnerships and created new partnerships between BMS and post-school providers

• Other roles of the Transition Coordinator included educating parents and carers on service providers; 16 work experience (WEX) placements for students throughout the year; running of ACTION bus training programs for students; new partnerships for WEX and social placements established; providing ongoing positive behavior support to WEX and post-school providers

•
• Of twelve graduating students, ten students have ongoing volunteer work or social placements that were successfully trialed and established during their final year at school (including Sharing Places; Hospitality at Merici College; volunteer work at Greening Australia, Bunnings, St Vincent De Paul, Big W, National Convention Centre, and Palmerston Primary School library)

• 2014 saw the conception and development of Six Degrees Café Gallery Garden. Our Transition Coordinator has been instrumental in sourcing numerous donations of coffee machines, furniture, skilled professionals and trades people, and sponsors for this project

• All parents and carers of graduating students received regular information and updates about the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and post-school options from the Transition Coordinator. Regular emails, phone calls, direct meetings, support at NDIS meetings, evening information sessions, parent bus trips to post-school providers, and partnerships for student employment all assisted in establishing this network. There were 80 percent of families of graduating students who participated in the 2014 BMS module of the Parent Satisfaction Survey and indicated they were well supported by the Transition Coordinator

• Qualitative feedback from numerous sources highlights the success of the new Transition Coordinator at BMS. One parent stated: “The Transition Coordinator at BMS has been an invaluable resource for us. I have found Shannah a very helpful person and is great to bounce ideas off and to get new ideas from. As she is directly involved with each student she has a personal knowledge of what they like and what they are capable of, and she is good at putting the right ideas into the thought process for the family.”

• 82 percent of families completing the BMS module of the Parent Satisfaction Survey indicated their awareness of the role of Transition Coordinator at BMS.

The final strategy in this priority aimed to establish systematic practices throughout BMS that enhance identified students’ use of Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) systems. Much of this work was completed under the larger DECO project funded by More Support for Students with Disabilities (MSSWD). The complete project and findings can be found in the DECO e-book to be published on the Backpack website.

• Throughout the year, a range of professional learning was delivered to build the capacity of all our staff to be effective communication partners. Most was of a collaborative nature including whole-school workshops during stand-down and staff meetings, coaching and mentoring, team teaching, expert user support, modelling and feedback, team teaching; and team building and networking at conferences. These collaborative practices aim to foster social capital through a shared mindset, understanding of, and enthusiasm for, AAC, and help to shift the culture of the school. Attendance at the Scope conference in Melbourne and at an AGOSCI webinar allowed a cross section of teachers time to focus solely on new and sympathetic ideas about AAC. Knowledge about communication profiling tools allowed for the trial assessment of students.

• A successful trial of one chat group in 2013 led to the extension of type and number of chat groups throughout the school. Chat groups aim to: teach students
communication through highly motivating activities; and be a training ground for staff learning skills to become effective communication partners. Chat groups in 2014 included teachers collaborating with other teachers and classes; teachers collaborating with service providers such as Circus Warehouse; and chat groups run with peer support partners from Merici College.

- This work led to the expansion of the staff communication team from three staff to over twenty staff at BMS who had worked within the chat group environment and built their own skills in using and modelling with AAC.

- Staff worked with parents and carers to build their capacity about communication strategies for their own children. These meetings were arranged in an informal manner. Due to the priority on chat groups, parents and carers were not engaged in a more formal manner to begin work as communication partners throughout the school. This could be a focus in 2015.

- The systematic whole-school approach to modelling and AAC continued to be developed as a range of core vocabulary resources were developed, trialed in chat groups, and distributed throughout the school. Resources (such as Proloquo2Go, chat board, sensory stories, vocabulary comprehension stories, and matching games) aim to reach the range of student ability within the school and target all functions of communication.

- The ongoing role of a communication support teacher within the school continued to assist with building the capacity of staff with AAC. This is reflected by 90 percent of staff feeling supported in using inclusive technology to meet the needs of students within their class (BMS module Staff Satisfaction Survey).

All of these collaborative actions aimed to build a shared mindset, understanding, and use of AAC at BMS, and overall progress measured by students’ achievement of their AAC-focused Individual Learning Plan (ILP) goals.

As a result of all actions under the key improvement strategies for Priority 1, by the end of 2014 the targets are as follows:

- 100 percent of all new students had a mutually agreed upon Transition Action Plan prior to transition into BMS. The target of increasing the completion of the BMS year-to-year transition checklist by five percentage points for students continuing within the school was not met in 2014. Whilst the use of the checklist was successful to the overall aim of completing and storing of required student documents, checklists were not completed for each individual student, as written in the target.

The consultative process between BMS executive staff, parents and carers of new students, and staff from the feeder schools resulted in all parties creating and implementing an agreed upon TAP for the transition of the each new student. Two students required more individualised planning and transitions, whilst the existing processes were sufficient for a successful transition for the remaining students.

- 100 percent of all graduating students receive a digital portfolio completed to an agreed upon standard; and
There was an increase in the achievement of targeted students’ Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) Individual Learning Plan (ILP) goals by five percentage points.

The multitude of AAC supports and approaches throughout the year resulted in this target being met by one grouping and exceeded by up to 13 percent with another cohort of students (see table below).

The first grouping compares AAC-focussed ILP goal achievement for all AAC users in either 2013 or 2014 (this included graduating students in 2013, and new students in 2014), and requiring a minimum of one AAC-focussed ILP goal throughout the two years. The rate of AAC ILP goal achievement increased from 62 percent to 69 percent. The second group compares AAC-focussed ILP goal achievement only for students who remained at BMS from 2013 to 2014. For these continuing students, the rate of achievement increased significantly from 58 percent to 71 percent.

In 2013, a target class of six students was involved in the pilot chat group, with additional AAC support provided to the class teacher. Whilst this class disbanded in the new class grouping in 2014, it was of interest to observe the rate of AAC-focussed ILP goal achievement by the target students. This was seen to continue increasing from 62 percent in 2013 to 69 percent in 2014. In all instances students may have new goals at any reporting point, depending on their rate of goal achievement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT COHORT</th>
<th>MYR 2013</th>
<th>EYR 2013</th>
<th>MYR 2014</th>
<th>EYR 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All student AAC users in 2013 or 2014 (average of 56.6% of total students). Students must have a minimum of 1 AAC ILP goal on 1 report.</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAC users continuing from 2013 to 2014. Students must have a minimum of 1 AAC ILP goal each report (excludes students who graduated in 2013).</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students in target AAC class in 2013 (involved in chat groups and increased teacher support; n = 6 students)</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BMS ILP data taken from Mid Year and End of Year Reports

**Priority 2**

Improving social capital through increasing all staff’s engagement in whole school collaborative systems and structures

**Targets**

- 100 percent of permanent and/or full-time contract staff engaged in the specified indicators of an effective professional learning community
• Increase the proportion of staff who agree or strongly agree there is effective communication amongst all levels of staff from 74% in 2013 to 78% in 2014. (Staff Satisfaction Survey)

• Increase the proportion of staff who agree or strongly agree they are appreciated for the work they do from 80% in 2013 to 84% in 2014

**Directorate Priority areas covered with this priority**

• Inspirational teaching and leadership

**Progress**

Black Mountain School was successful in gaining an Executive Teacher Professional Practice (ETPP) from 2014. In this role, the ETPP, and the executive team, aimed to strengthen and extend the work undertaken in 2013. The two key improvement strategies identified were:

• Strengthen coaching and mentoring practices for all staff through building collaborative systems

• Restructure the school environment to strengthen opportunities for staff collaborative practices

**Actions under this priority included:**

• Development and establishment of the ETPP role as a key resource for building the pedagogical capacity of staff, including establishing her classroom as an exemplar class, designed to welcome observations by other teachers

• A culture of open classrooms and open dialogue was created through the ETPP through observing teachers in their classrooms, and peer observations.

• Fortnightly Professional Practice seminars presented by the ETPP allowed all teachers to continue to develop their skills and knowledge in systematic instruction, and evidence-based best practice strategies for teaching the student cohort at BMS

• Six hours of these Professional Practice seminars were TQI accredited, allowing teachers to add to their registration requirements

• Support for the ETPP role has been measured across the school by 79 percent of staff indicating the ETPP role is important to them (BMS Module Staff Satisfaction Survey). This is significant considering the role had only been in place for six months at the time of the survey.

• Opportunities of Practice were added to teacher meetings to provide opportunities for teachers to show leadership, engage in professional dialogue with each other, and share practices on a regular basis. Topics were identified either by teachers themselves based on strengths or interests, or were nominated topics related to timely events (e.g. report writing)

• The indicators of an effective Professional Learning Community (PLC) created in 2013 were reviewed, broadened and further embedded throughout the school. A detailed matrix was not created.
• All permanent and long-term contract Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) embedded relevant indicators into their Performance Management Plans as strategies to support them meet the whole-school goal to engage with colleagues to improve practice.

• As mentioned in Priority 1, PLTs were rebranded with names and shared visions to assist in the collaboration of staff, and to incorporate the inclusion of the new Compass class. Compass was the first of a team teach model, slightly larger in student numbers, but staffed by two teachers, rather than one teacher and LSA support. This class was moved to one of our larger buildings to accommodate the predicted growth throughout the year in numbers (from seven to nine students). The restructure enabled greater collaboration between teachers as they piloted this flexible learning space.

As a result of these actions: 100 percent of teachers engaged in one lesson observed by the ETPP, and one lesson observing a peer. A number of teachers also observed the ETPP teaching. The key to the success of these observations was the professional dialogue that occurred pre- and post- the observation. There were 100 percent of permanent and contract LSAs involved in regular classroom team meetings, strengthening the culture of collaboration.

All targets against Strategic Priority 2 were met by the end of 2014.

• 100 percent of permanent and/or full-time contract staff engaged in the specified indicators of an effective professional learning community

All teachers and LSAs engaged in regular classroom team meetings. Teachers engaged in observations and professional dialogue with the ETPP and peers. Teachers also engaged in regular coaching, at an agreed upon interval, with their Executive Teacher. All staff engaged in fortnightly Professional Learning Team meetings and full staff meetings.

• 79 percent of staff agreed or strongly agreed there is effective communication amongst all levels of staff (exceeding the target of 78 percent, see table below)(Staff Satisfaction Survey)

• 90 percent of staff agree or strongly agree they are appreciated for the work they do (exceeding the target of 84 percent) (Staff Satisfaction Survey)

Table: Proportion of staff that agree or strongly agree with satisfaction survey items, compared to all specialist school in the ACT.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction Survey items</th>
<th>2013 BMS</th>
<th>2014 BMS</th>
<th>2014 All specialist schools</th>
<th>2014 All schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is effective communication amongst all staff.</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel appreciated for the work that I do.</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My colleagues value my opinion.</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Source: System satisfaction surveys 2013 and 2014

It must be acknowledged that all of these measures are higher than the mean for all the specialist schools and all schools. It is pleasing to see the whole-school focus on strengthening the Professional Learning Community at BMS which is reflected in the Satisfaction Survey results.

Priority 3
Strengthening staff professional practices to improve quality outcomes for all students.

Targets
- Increase the proportion of staff who agree or strongly agree they receive effective, continuous and constructive feedback about their work from 80% in 2013 to 84% in 2014 (Staff Satisfaction Survey)
- 100% of identified students have positive behaviour support plans implemented
- Increase the percentage of short term ILP goals achieved by students from 66 percent (2013) to 70 percent (2014, BMS ILP tracking data)

School improvement domain/s covered with this priority
- Quality learning, Inspirational teaching and leadership

Progress
Three key improvement strategies were highlighted in the 2014 annual operating plan:
- Build processes and practices that ensure a commitment to effective, continuous and constructive feedback to be given to all staff
- Implement whole school approaches to student wellbeing and positive school cultures
- Ensure a curriculum linked to the Australian Curriculum is implemented across the school

Actions which led to a commitment to effective, continuous and constructive feedback to all staff included:
- The alignment of teachers’ Professional Pathway goals, and LSAs’ performance management goals with whole school goals pertaining to the strengthening of BMS as a Professional Learning Community, and within that, collaboration, and feedback provided within the processes.
- The teachers’ goal was to engage in peer observation and subsequent professional dialogue. Each semester, teachers were observed once by the ETPP, and observed for three lessons in total (two lessons by peers and one lesson by the ETPP).
- Support strategies were provided to achieve staff pathways goals. This included lesson observations that were aligned with the Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) standards, and professional dialogue and feedback following any lesson observation. Release time was allocated to drive some of the observations and feedback
sessions, and coaching with their Executive teacher, and additional observations for new teachers were provided.

- LSAs could choose between either improving their skills in implementation of ILP goal programs and data collection; or a more direct goal around engaging in ongoing effective communication within the classroom team. Both goals relied upon engagement in regular class team meetings, with clearly defined and agreed upon roles and responsibilities, and clear communication and feedback provided.

- All beginning teachers were allocated a mentor for additional support at the beginning of the year. The role of mentor and mentee will be established further in 2015.

Resulting from the above actions, 100 percent of permanent and full time contract teachers had professional pathway goals to improve practice through coaching, mentoring and ETPP support; and 100 percent of teachers are engaged in weekly or fortnightly coaching with their Executive teachers.

The actions implemented in 2014 to improve whole school approaches to student wellbeing and positive school cultures varied from those listed in the 2014 AOP. Due to a new staff member in the position of Pastoral Care Coordinator (PCC), and the creation of two additional roles within the team, Transition Coordinator and Community Engagement Trainee, the primary focus was directed towards establishing the team, developing roles, and strengthening community connections. The school also endured the loss of three students. Throughout the year, actions included:

- Review and extension of existing roles for the Pastoral Care team (Pastoral Care Coordinator (PCC), Transition Coordinator, Youth Support Worker, Chaplain, School Psychologist, and Community Engagement Officer)

- Embedding the use of the Social-Emotional Toolbox visual support system throughout the school and the broader community as an effective tool for teaching management and self-control of emotions and behaviours

- Informal, but regular, support and upskilling of all post-school providers about specific positive behaviour support strategies, Social-Emotional Toolbox skills, and/or SoSAFE! relating directly to our students undertaking WEX at these placements

- During professional learning and coaching, Executive staff and PCC continue to work with staff to embed positive behaviour support strategies

- Preparation for post-school girls’ groups aimed to increase awareness of expectations post-school and to prepare for the transition

- Continued involvement from peer support partners at Radford and Merici Colleges

- Consultation with staff around school culture and feelings of support and appreciation

- Implementation of both staff and community events to strengthen elements of mental and physical wellbeing including staff social events, a regular morning staff walk, Family Fun Day (Bowling) and a Family Movie Night, Welcome BBQ; and a
secret staff buddy system to regularly acknowledge the positive attributes of your buddy

- Establishment of processes to manage grief and death at school for both staff and students including: creation of a social story for students; debriefing with Merici and Radford students; school-based memorial services; the counsellor working closely with families and students to provide support; organisation of counsellors from the Employee Assistance Program to attend regularly providing opportunities for staff to confidentially debrief; and incorporation of passed graduating students and their families into the Year 12 graduation ceremony.

- 94 percent of families completing the BMS module of the Parent Satisfaction Survey indicated that the Pastoral Care Team made a positive contribution to their child’s life at school during 2014

- 78 percent of staff feel they are well supported by the Pastoral Care team (BMS module of the Staff Satisfaction Survey)

The action against Key Improvement Strategy 3 to align the BMS capacities with the General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum was not completed. Initial grounding work was done in the preparation for Board of Senior School Studies (BSSS) modules at BMS for 2015.

In relation to the targets set against this priority, the following progress was made:

- 86 percent of staff agree or strongly agree they receive effective, continuous and constructive feedback about their work (exceeded the target of 84 percent, see table below)

  Related to this target is the result of 95 percent of staff agreeing there are systems in place to support their practice. This would suggest that the whole school changes made to coaching, mentoring, observations, embedding of PLC indicators, and more are highly valued and recognised by staff throughout the school.

  **Table: Proportion of staff that agree or strongly agree with satisfaction survey items, compared to all specialist schools in the ACT.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction Survey items</th>
<th>2013 BMS</th>
<th>2014 BMS</th>
<th>2014 All specialist schools</th>
<th>2014 All schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I get constructive feedback about my practice.</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are processes in place that support my practice.</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: System satisfaction surveys 2013 and 2014

- 100% of identified students have positive behaviour support plans (PBS) implemented. All students identified to receive a positive behaviour support plan, had one created and implemented by Executive teachers, PCC, teachers and LSAs.

- 70.7 percent of students’ short-term ILP goals were achieved, meeting the criteria for this target which was to achieve 70 percent in 2014. (2014, BMS ILP tracking data)
The ongoing focus of BMS to establish a Professional Learning Community as a means to improving student outcomes is to be commended. By comparing students’ End of Year ILP goal achievement, it is evident that the systems that have been established have been successful (see table below). In 2010, ILP goal achievement was at a low 53.7 percent. In more recent years, as new systems have been put in place, the percentage of ILP goal achievement rose slightly before plateauing. This is to be expected and is known as an ‘innovation dip’. This year, results show that students’ ILP goal achievement has risen again to a high of 70.71 percent. It is evident that the whole-school changes that have been made to support staff capacity and pedagogical knowledge, and to support social capacity and well-being, are positive. The new systems support the staff and students throughout ongoing fluctuations in staff turnover, and whole-school stressors (such as the introduction of HAAS and the deaths of multiple students) throughout the year, and through all this students continue to thrive.

Table: Proportion of ILP goals achieved by students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
<td>66.18%</td>
<td>70.71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BMS ILP data taken from End of Year Reports

As a result of the ongoing overlap of targets and actions between Strategic Priority 2 and 3, it is strongly recommended that the BMS Strategic Plan 2013 – 2016 is rewritten to combine the work of both priorities. The focus would remain on establishing a professional learning community through whole school systems and increased staff engagement. The plans however would be streamlined, allowing for greater ease in reporting. The 2015 Annual Operating Plan would then also reflect these changes.
Financial Summary
The school has provided the Directorate with an end of year financial statement that was approved by the school board. Further details concerning the statement can be obtained by contacting the school.

The following summary covers use of funds for operating costs and does not include expenditure in areas such as permanent salaries, buildings and major maintenance.

Professional learning
The average expenditure at the school level per fulltime equivalent teacher on professional learning was $812

Voluntary contributions
This school received $nil in voluntary contributions in 2014. These funds were used to support the general operations of the school. The spending of voluntary contributions is in line with the approved budget for 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Summary</th>
<th>31-Dec-14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INCOME</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self management funds</td>
<td>554148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary contributions</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions &amp; donations</td>
<td>9103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject contributions</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External income (including community use)</td>
<td>34643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proceeds from sale of assets</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Interest</td>
<td>11805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL INCOME</strong></td>
<td>609699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXPENDITURE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities and general overheads</td>
<td>92410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning</td>
<td>99436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>42126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandatory Maintenance</td>
<td>16932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>74493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>13256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
<td>83494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leases</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General office expenditure</td>
<td>56166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>36911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject consumables</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</strong></td>
<td>515224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OPERATING RESULT</strong></td>
<td>94475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actual Accumulated Funds</strong></td>
<td>50974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outstanding commitments (minus)</td>
<td>4217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BALANCE</strong></td>
<td>141232</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Reserves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and purpose</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Expected Completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Therapy Equipment</td>
<td>$34,427.47</td>
<td>12/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school upholds the critical need for essential therapeutic equipment to be available at all times for ensuring dignified quality of life for all students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>$53,376.42</td>
<td>12/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school continues to implement creative and cutting-edge ICT solutions, especially alternative and augmentative communication (AAC). Proposed upgrades include improved wireless connectivity, student iPad renewal, and staff desktop renewal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounds/Playgrounds</td>
<td>$23,963.00</td>
<td>12/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school aims to promote healthy lifestyle choices around fitness, exercise, and engagement in appropriate therapeutic and leisure activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Endorsement Page

I declare that the Black Mountain School Board has operated in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 2004 including the following sections.

39 (4) The school board must give effect to the chief executive's directions.

44 (2) The chief executive must end the appointment of a member of the school board of a public school, other than the principal of the school if-
   a) The member is absent from 3 consecutive meetings of the board without reasonable excuse or leave given by the board or
   b) Contravenes section 49 (disclosure of interests by members of school boards) without reasonable excuse.

46 The members of the school board of a public school must, whenever is necessary, nominate a member of the board as a member of any selection panel established by the chief executive to make recommendations to the chief executive about the appointment of the principal to the school.

47 (2) However, the school board must meet at least four times a year.

48 (10) The school board must keep minutes of its meeting.

49 Disclosure of interests by members of school boards.

49 (3) The disclosure must be reported in the school board's minutes and, unless the board otherwise decides, the member (The first member) must not-
   a) be present when the board considers the issue or
   b) take part in any decision of the board on the issue.

49 (5) Within 14 days after the end of each financial year, the chairperson of the school board must give the chief executive a statement of any disclosure of interest under this section in relation to the school board during the financial year.

MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL BOARD

Parent Representative: Gavin Richardson,  Greg Mahony,  Dawn Bowra
Community Representative: Samantha Salvaneschii,  Shannah Louise
Teacher Representative: Bernie Driscoll,  Renate Millett
Student Representative: n/a
Board Chair: Gavin Richardson
Principal: Frank Fogliati

I certify that to the best of my knowledge and belief the data and information reported in this Annual School Board Report represents an accurate record of the school's operations in 2014.

Principal Signature: ________________________ Date: 26-3-2015

I approve the report, prepared in accordance with the provision of the ACT Education Act, section 52.

Board Chair Signature: ________________________ Date: 23-03-2015