



ACT
Government
Education and Training

EXTERNAL VALIDATION REPORT 2015

for

CANBERRA COLLEGE



Introduction: Overview of the Validation process

As part of the Territory's school improvement approach, public schools and colleges in the Australian Capital Territory are required to participate in an External Validation process every four years. This document captures the findings of the panel during this cycle of validation.

In broad terms, the panel sought to determine, through evaluation and validation, the extent to which the school is meeting its agreements, achieving its priorities, and addressing its challenges: in the context of a continuously improving educational environment.

External Validation was conducted over three days and involved a wide variety of data gathering approaches including observations, interviews and documentation. This approach provided evidence for the panel to consider against the nine inter-related domains in the National School Improvement Tool that informed our commendations and recommendations.

Section A: School context

Canberra College student body is characterised by diversity in academic interests and cultural backgrounds. All students study towards an ACT Senior Secondary Certificate while some undertake, in addition, the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma, nationally recognised training packages, Australian School Based Apprenticeships (ASBA's), CCCares, the Big Picture program or the Futures program. The student population is over 1,000 with a total of 100 staff. Canberra College maintains an inclusive approach to support all students to strive to achieve their personal and academic goals. Since 2011 student enrolment has increased by almost 100. Amongst this is an increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) students (39 in 2012 to 56 in 2015) and in English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) students (76 in 2012 to 87 in 2015). Canberra College caters for the full academic range of students and seeks to set them on the pathway to achieving their goals. The profile of student numbers across the school, and within tailored programs, remained consistent through the life of the School Plan. Positive outcomes for all students have been made possible by a concerted effort to consolidate and develop the diverse range of programs offered within the college community throughout 2012 to 2015.

The panel noted significant infrastructure and capital works programs which supported this inclusive approach. This included the completion of two major developments which provide world-leading facilities to engage and support students. These are the Canberra College Performing Arts Centre (CCPAC) and the CCCares facility, both on the Woden campus. CCCares supports 173 students – primarily pregnant and parenting students. The young parents engaged with the program, bring their children to school with them. The students have access to industry specific courses and the provision of appropriate pathways and qualifications to allow them to develop the necessary skills and personal strengths they need to become marketable and employable and move towards financial independence in the future. The movement of CCCares to the Woden Campus highlights the work undertaken during the four year cycle to transition from a twin campus school to a single campus. The handing over of the Weston site to the ACT Education and Training Directorate (ETD) was completed at the end of 2014.

The college Parent and Community association (P&C) was formally closed down during this time with responsibility for canteen management on the Woden campus outsourced.

During the period 2012-2015 there was a significant change in the composition of the executive team. The college experienced significant change with a new Principal, three acting deputy principals, seven acting Executives staff and an acting Business Manager for the majority of

2014. The amalgamation of the two campuses (relocation of CCCares) resulted in 3 deputy principal positions all being located on the one campus. A new deputy principal was appointed and commenced at the beginning of 2015. One substantive deputy principal returned to their role at Canberra College following significant leave in 2014 and the other returned after secondment to the Directorate for most of 2014. This resulted in the movement of staff in and out of higher duties positions with subsequent backfilling. A new Business Manager commenced in July 2015. The college has been proactive in transferring administrative roles from teachers to ACT Public Service (APS) staff. These roles included a 40 percent APS officer to undertake day to day staffing, a 40 percent APS officer to facilitate community usage and technical support for the CCPAC facility, a full time ASBA/Work Experience/Careers APS officer to compliment the careers and Transition and Careers officer (TACO), additional admin support in Student Services and the transfer of the Workplace Health and Safety Officer role to an admin person.

The college continues to maintain a healthy financial balance as evidenced in the annual school board reports. A significant contribution to this position was the NAB School Impact award of \$750 000. Funds were allocated to substantial upgrades and improvements, such as the library, a new synthetic sports field, and general landscaping.

Section B: School performance

Canberra College in catering for the full academic range of students seeks to enhance the provision of multiple pathways for students to achieve their goals. The panel acknowledges the excellence in diversity of the varied programs offered at the college, but also sees the financial implications of these programs.

Student attendance levels have been maintained throughout the four year period and it is clear from the result of student and parent satisfaction surveys that Canberra College is seen as a caring environment and a safe place.

There has been a decline in the proportion of Indigenous students achieving a Year 12 Certificate from 100 percent to 88 percent in 2014. The panel suggests closer evaluation of data to determine if CCCares enrolments are skewing data available on this group.

On average 50 percent of graduates progress to tertiary study and a further eight percent link up with an alternate training program. Approximately ten percent of students do not progress to further study or employment which is slightly higher than average for public colleges.

A significant matter to be reviewed is the gradual decline in students receiving an ATAR. This has dropped from 57.8 percent in 2011 to 52.3 percent in 2014. The median ATAR has remained stable, despite this. Again, there is need for closer evaluation of the data to determine if enrolments in specialist programs skew this statistic or if there is a genuine decline in ATAR candidates.

The achievements of students completing an ATAR varied throughout the four year cycle. The Median ATAR has ranged from 74 – 79. Canberra College has the second largest cohort of ATAR recipients. Canberra College encourages all students to complete an ATAR if that is their desire. A specific ACT Scaling Test (AST) training program was refined to support students to maximise their outcomes.

The panel recognised specific progress for students within the diversity of programs.

- Big Picture maintained stable numbers and high certification rates for a small cohort.

- CCCares saw a significant increase in enrolments and engagement with vocational programs. It maintained strong engagement for students with community agencies.
- International Private Students (IPS) numbers remained strong and increased in terms of the percentage of students completing ATARs. An IPS student from 2014 gained the highest ATAR in the ACT of 99.95.
- VET Vocational training certification numbers have remained consistent during the time period. Eighty-three percent of respondents said the course prepared them well for work. Ninety-one percent of respondents said the training helped them identify ways to build skills.
- Participation in ASBAs has been steady. There has been a trebling of students engaging in work experience due largely to the efforts of the APS staff member involved.
- Anecdotal evidence indicates The Futures program is shifting from a purely academic focus to one balanced with pathways into VET and employment. This is a result of parental feedback where parents felt the need to better prepare their child for a future beyond college.
- The International Baccalaureate program maintained enrolments but still has low numbers overall. The panel concurs with the college regarding the considerable staffing costs associated with low enrolments in the IB program.

The Stakeholder satisfaction survey data reflects strong satisfaction in most domains across the student and staff responses compared to other ACT colleges. There was a significant dip across all three surveys in 2014, particularly noted in the staff survey. 2014 was a very challenging year for the college with four principals, up to ten acting executive staff which included all three deputy positions and the business manager. Compounding this were four teachers on long term illnesses creating a very fluid staffing profile.

The panel recognised positives such as a significant improvement in positive relationships with staff and students, and students feeling safe at their college. Additionally there was a reported increase by 10 percentage points from 2013 to 2014 of students being able to talk to teachers about their concerns. Students identified a need to improve library facilities. In response the college directed significant resources and re-designed the library space in 2014-2015. There has been a steady decline with the students stating the college celebrates the success of students, with 63 percent in 2014.

Parent satisfaction data identified concerns regarding relevance of learning to an individual student's need, a perception that the use of technology is not an integral part of learning, the college's responses to parent enquiries and communication are below expectation, and that student achievements are not celebrated. The panel noted that whilst staff reported relationships between staff, student and parents were high and higher than other ACT colleges, this was inconsistent with parent satisfaction results and conversations with a sample of current parents.

Canberra College has processes to collect and report on student learning outcomes for all students including specific student populations for Big Picture, IPS, Futures, VET , and CCCares . There are significant processes in place to ensure timely intervention in each area.

There have been fewer than five suspensions per year. Attendance has remained at about 90 percent throughout the time period and approximately 90 percent of students on average complete a Year 12 Certificate.

The school also provides feedback to students on their performance in AST trials and their likely ATAR. Regular AST training sessions provide feedback to students on their progress and to provide learning on how to improve their achievement. ATAR indicator letters are sent home at the end of year 11 and parents and students are invited to talk with student advisors to clarify their expectations and suitable strategies to maximise their outcomes.

Review of data relating to attendance and achievement at AST trials has had a major impact on the approaches taken to AST training during the four year cycle. This has also informed the literacy committee about data that could and should be gathered to help identify low levels of achievement and inform further support mechanisms.

Canberra College has maintained its position within the ACT as a significant source of graduates who gain entry into tertiary and vocational pathways.

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

Priority Areas

The three priorities in the College Plan (2012-15) were:

- Priority 1 Embed Quality Teaching Processes across Canberra College
- Priority 2 Enhance the provision of multiple pathways for Canberra College students
- Priority 3 Articulate and embed school management processes and programs.

The panel found that there was some variation from the recommendations of the 2011 external validation report to the current priorities (2012-15). Similarities were noted in 'consolidate and embed its outstanding programs' and 'develop a whole site literacy approach and support staff to deliver systematic and explicit literacy teaching practices'.

Achievements

Priority 1 Embed Quality Teaching Processes across Canberra College

Priority 1 changed during the four year cycle due to the trialling of the new Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum (AC). This is evident in the 2015 Annual Operating Plan (AOP). Key improvement strategy 1 was to maintain quality academic programs. Canberra College staff liaised with representatives from other ACT International Baccalaureate Diploma schools and the Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) to focus on alignment of the BSSS courses to the AC and IB. The panel gained anecdotal evidence of the implementation of senior secondary units in readiness for full implementation of the AC in 2016.

Key improvement strategy 2 revealed that whilst all staff were aware of a literacy plan, the staff had not yet established a common dialogue nor a process-driven commitment to literacy across all faculty areas. The panel saw evidence of Learner Guides published and movement towards a whole school literacy focus through the implementation of a literacy plan.

Key improvement strategy 3 was to build capacity of teachers to improve teaching and assessment practices. The panel noted through discussion with all stakeholders that a systematic approach is evident, with varying degrees of uptake by staff. In Pathways plans, there was evidence of teacher mentoring, classroom observations and some direction for evidence

based teaching development. Nine new teachers completed the new mentoring program focussed on Quality Teaching. The 20 percent increase of Quality Teaching facilitators was achieved.

Priority 2 Enhance the provision of multiple pathways for Canberra College students

Components of Priority 2 changed during the four year cycle due to not gaining funding as a Trade Training Centre and the ever changing certification requirements of maintaining Registered Training Organisation (RTO) registration. A significant shift occurred towards increasing the focus on establish partnerships to facilitate broader access to training packages.

A key improvement strategy was to develop Work Integrated Learning (WIL) experiences which reflect the diversity of the student population. The panel noted evidence of multiple pathways through Big Picture, and VET programmes, a focus on work placements in the Futures program, and through infrastructure expanding VET opportunities in CCCares. Over the life of the plan the number of students involved in vocational training has increased steadily, with 114 out of the total population of 170 for 2014.

Priority 3 Articulate and embed school management processes and programs

The school leadership team reported that components of Priority 3 changed slightly as the implementation of an ACT Education and Training Directorate Student Resource Allocation model was delayed. The panel noted evidence was best summarised by the integration of the new infrastructure buildings of CCPAC and CCCares and the amalgamation of two campus sites into one at the Woden campus. The percentage of Big Picture Year 12 students receiving certificates was not commensurate with other mainstream students. Enrolment numbers in the CCCares programme did not show the targeted growth of five percent. In 2014 percentages of staff trialling Communities of Practice did achieve the target of 25 percent. In 2015 the school leadership team committed to 100 percent engagement of teaching staff. The panel noted that this is a work still in progress. In the 2013 the AOP - target was embedding new technologies across the college. This was partly achieved in 2013 but did not appear in the AOP for 2014 and 2015.

Reflections

Collectively these priorities would generate a high profile of achievement with excellent outcomes for those students enrolled within these diverse programs. Explicit strategies and support to maximise achievement of the silent mainstream majority is masked by this success, but the panel recognises efforts made to work on support for the 'silent mainstream majority.'

Focus on ensuring the success of every student every day apparently was the key driver for the whole college community. This includes more than just delivery of the BSSS curriculum but reinforces literacy and numeracy skill development. The college stated the importance of every teacher using data regularly to improve their own and individual student performance. The panel agreed with the college that this should form the basis of further school improvement for the next four years.

The planning for school improvement attempts to engage all staff in an evidence based approach and builds on accountability but there is not sufficient evidence to show that this has resulted in widespread uptake by staff.

Leading and managing school improvement has required clearly defined mechanisms and scaffolds to enable reflection. The college reflects the importance of explicit expectations of quality, data collection and review with effective mechanisms to communicate with all

stakeholders to ensure success for all. The panel encourages the leadership team to continue this communication and ensure that all teachers are part of this commitment and that there is clear evidence that this is being addressed in all classrooms.

Section D: National tools self-evaluation results

The panel commends Canberra College on undertaking a comprehensive use of the National School Improvement Tool (NSIT). This included input from key stakeholders: staff, leadership team, the Student Leadership Group (SLG), and School Board.

Senior executive staff attended the NSIT professional learning in term 1 2015. The Principal undertook a process of collecting summative reflections from four key groups- executive staff, representatives from the Student Leadership Group, the School Board and classroom teachers- to determine self-evaluative mapping to each standard.

For the teaching groups, time was allocated at separate meetings, and subgroups were formed to conduct analysis against each element. Summative views were recorded and agreed to through consensus. Evidence was collated at the same time to support the alignment and comments about future direction. The Student Leadership Group (SLG) and Board groups were provided with the charts and informed of the tool before allocating time to record their findings. The School Board completed three of the nine domains.

The panel recognises that there were significant differences in self-assessment among the different stakeholders. For example there was a variance of two performance levels in domain 2 (Analysis and discussion of data) and domain 7 (Differentiated teaching and learning). Domain 3 (A culture that promotes learning) revealed a tighter alignment among stakeholders. The panel specifically noted the frequency of variation of one performance level between staff and the leadership team. This was evident in domain 1, domain 5, and domain 8.

In validating the college's journey against the National School Improvement Tool the panel noted the following in relation to the **Explicit improvement agenda** domain.

- *The principal and other school leaders articulate a shared commitment to improvement, but limited attention has been given to specifying detail or to developing a school-wide approach (eg, plans for improvement may lack coherence, be short term or without a whole-school focus).*
- *Plans for improvement do not appear to have been clearly communicated, widely implemented or to have impacted significantly on teachers' day-to-day work. Targets for improvement are not specific (e.g., not accompanied by timelines).*
- *The school's focus on data is driven more by external requirements*
- *Although there is an expressed commitment to improvement, this is not reflected in a high level of enthusiasm for personal change on the part of staff.*

The panel recognises there has been some good collection and analysis of data leading to proposed literacy and numeracy strategies, but this is yet to be reflected in all class rooms across the college. It was clearly evident in some faculties that the use of data to inform improvement agendas was actively promoted and delivered. In discussion with a range of parents, including members of the College Board, the panel could not find evidence of a cohesive understanding of the college's current improvement agenda. Whilst most could describe generic priorities, none could articulate specific targets.

There is a strong and optimistic commitment by all staff to the improvement strategy and a clear belief that further improvement is possible. Teachers take responsibility for changes in practice required to achieve school targets and are using data on a regular basis to monitor the effectiveness of their own efforts to meet those targets.

Within the **Analysis of and discussion of data** domain, the panel verified the following.

- *School leaders pay close attention to data provided to them about the performance of the school (e.g. Year 12 results) and identify areas in which the school is performing relatively poorly or well.*
- *One or more members of staff have been assigned responsibility for implementing the annual plan, analysing the full range of school data, and summarising, displaying and communicating student outcome data for the school.*
- *Tests (eg, commercially available reading tests) may be used by some teachers, but generally are not used as part of a whole-school assessment strategy.*
- *Time is set aside (eg, on pupil free days and in staff meetings) for the discussion of data.*
- *School data are presented to staff in meetings, but presentations tend to be 'for information' rather than a trigger for in-depth discussions of teaching practices and school processes. Information about the school's performance is communicated to the school community, but may lack explanation or analysis. There is limited engagement with parents and families around school data.*

The panel noted that some executive are unsure of how data is used specifically by all teachers to inform their practice. There is a need recognised by the college executive to develop a simple but explicit strategy to enable staff to fully utilise the data to improve student outcomes. Ensuring sustainable effort against this domain will require support in the form of ongoing professional learning, a view expressed by many teachers. The panel support the senior executive ideas for further exploration such as developing an accountability process and a long term plan for the generation and use of data.

With respect to the domain **A culture that promotes learning**:

- *The 'tone' of the school reflects a school-wide commitment to purposeful, successful learning. There are very few obvious behavioural, attendance or engagement problems and behaviour management takes up very little, if any, time of school leaders and classroom teachers.*
- *There is a strong focus on quality learning and on the creation of a culture in which all students are expected to learn successfully, in their own ways and at their own pace. Individual talents are valued.*
- *Most parents take an obvious interest in their children's learning. Engagement is primarily through regularly scheduled parent-teacher interviews.*
- *Staff morale is satisfactory.*
- *There is a strong sense of belonging and pride in the school.*

Representatives from each stakeholder group revealed that there were professional conversations routinely occurring in faculty areas as well as classroom observations. However there is an imperative to make the process more visible, formal and inter-faculty. This should establish a strong collegial culture. To achieve this, teachers will need to have an overt and

shared commitment to the improvement of teaching and an increasing openness to critique by colleagues. This should be clearly evident when teachers regularly invite leaders and colleagues to visit their classrooms to observe their teaching.

In examining the **Targeted use of school resources** domain, the panel noted the following.

- *The school uses its human and physical resources to address the needs of students, although this may not be preceded by a systematic analysis of those needs.*
- *The school has developed processes (eg, systematic testing and assessment) for identifying student learning needs, although there may not always be good school records of student achievement and progress.*
- *Programs to meet individual learning needs (eg, programs for gifted students, students with learning difficulties, students for whom English is a second language, Indigenous students, and refugees) are prioritised, where possible, in the school budget.*
- *School learning spaces tend to be used traditionally*

Not all staff are aware of the decision process, and mechanism of prioritisation and allocation, for the systematic use of resources, including physical learning spaces, technology and human resources. There is a perception by some teaching and non-teaching staff there are insufficient school learning spaces with limited flexibility. In some instances the college's learning spaces tend to be used traditionally particularly for the mainstream Accredited (A) and Tertiary (T) students.

In regard to the domain **An expert teaching team**, the panel noted the following.

- *There is evidence that the principal and other school leaders see the development of staff into an expert and coherent school-wide teaching team as central to improving outcomes for all students.*
- *There is a documented professional learning plan*
- *Teachers visit each other's classrooms*
- *The school is implementing a formal process for conducting professional discussions with staff.*
- *The school's professional learning agenda is made explicit to staff at induction, and in staff handbooks. Where it is necessary to manage unsatisfactory staff performance, this is done professionally and effectively, and in accordance with agreed guidelines.*

Whilst the panel acknowledged deep subject knowledge in faculties, the panel also agreed with the findings of the executive that not all teachers are ready to accept constructive feedback. In clear evidence was a range of preparedness and uptake, with some teachers already engaged in high level pedagogical skills whilst others are not yet implementing contemporary evidence-based teaching strategies. The panel noted highly promising pedagogical examples such as 'flipped' learning and the use of Google Apps for Education (GAPE). Some executive staff reported to the panel a desire to ensure formalised leadership opportunities support a school-wide approach to improvement in this domain.

In reflecting on the **Systematic curriculum delivery** domain, the panel validated the following.

- *The school's curriculum delivery plan identifies curriculum, teaching and learning priorities and requirements. The curriculum delivery plan reflects a shared vision (by the*

school's governing body, principal, school leadership team, and teachers) for the school, and provides a context for delivering the curriculum as detailed in the Australian or other approved curriculum and, where relevant, system curriculum documents.

- *School leaders talk about embedding fundamental cross-curricular skills such as literacy, numeracy and higher order thinking within all subjects, but there is little evidence that school- wide strategies are in place to drive a consistent approach.*
- *The school leadership team ensures that the enacted curriculum remains a focus for discussion among, and collaboration between, teachers. Assessment tasks are developed and student learning is reported. Curriculum delivery is designed to meet the needs of the range of students within each year level as well as those with disabilities and other particular needs.*

An almost universal energy and passion for delivering curriculum was evident in discussion with teaching staff, through observation of lessons, and consultation with student representatives. The panel found that the 'enacted curriculum' (BSSS) demonstrated solid alignment between curriculum priorities, the leadership of the college, the expertise of teaching staff, and the engagement of students. The college complies with BSSS course accreditation processes, calculation of unit and course scores, and processes regarding unit assessment and awarding of unit grades. With the increasingly greater presence of the Australian Curriculum (AC) in senior secondary studies, the panel found discrepancies between faculties in the preparedness of their teachers to engage with and implement the relevant subject specific content and achievement standards.

The Draft Canberra College Literacy Plan (2015-2019) was regarded by the panel as a key immediate priority. Senior executive have devised a comprehensive approach for whole-school literacy, but the plan will require effective deployment as there is currently a disconnect between design and activity. Whilst many staff believe it could make a difference, they feel undirected in how this should look in a subject specific classroom. Further investigation and consultation revealed the need to embed literacy and numeracy in all college subject areas. Currently responsibility for literacy is not universally accepted by all teachers, with some stating literacy is a task for 'specialists'.

The panel validated the following in consideration of the domain **Differentiated teaching and learning**.

- *School leaders are committed to success for all, but do not drive a strong classroom agenda to assess and identify individual learning needs or to differentiate teaching according to students' needs. Some use is made of assessment instruments to identify individual strengths and weaknesses and starting points for teaching, but this appears to be at the initiative of individual teachers rather than a school- wide expectation.*
- *Some use is made of differentiated teaching but in most classes teachers teach the same curriculum to all students with similar levels of individual support.*
- *Reports to parents generally do not show progress or provide guidance to parents on actions they might take.*

This evidence presented to the panel was highly contradictory. The school leadership team straddled disparate performance ratings. In detailed discussion with the principal it was evidenced that the highest performance levels applied only to some specialised programs. Interestingly staff rated all areas of this domain less positively.

Differentiation is not universally seen throughout the school. Reports specific to highly specialised programmes, eg, Futures include suggestion for ways in which parents can support their child's learning. The panel found an absence of systematic and embedded differentiated teaching and learning amidst BSSS schedules for assessment, reporting, and curriculum. It is the panel's view that to ensure differentiation becomes a school-wide goal and a feature of every teacher's priority, professional learning based on student engagement must follow.

For the students in the specialised programs of CCCares and Futures, regular data on their achievements, progress, strengths and weaknesses are used to identify appropriate starting points for teaching and to personalise teaching and learning activities

The panel noted the following regarding the domain **Effective pedagogical practices**.

- *School leaders are explicit about their desire to see effective teaching occurring throughout the school, but are less clear about what this might look like. School leaders take a close interest in the school's literacy and numeracy results, but generally do not engage in discussions with staff about effective teaching strategies.*
- *Professional learning activities are focused on building teacher's understandings of highly effective teaching strategies*
- *Clarity about what students are expected to learn and be able to do, explicit teaching of skills and content, individualised attention as required, and feedback to guide student action are elements of the school's push for improved teaching and learning.*

The panel found a common teacher dialogue across the college detailing the relationship between effective teaching and improving student learning. The college's review of this domain via the NSIT revealed a disparity in performance rating, with executive consistently rating pedagogy higher than teachers did. The panel discussed this with senior executive, with the subsequent belief expressed that faculty heads viewed pedagogical practice as a strength of the college. In further discussion and investigation, many teachers believe they are not yet achieving school-wide pedagogical excellence, but are ready for the challenge. Some teachers revealed that discussion surrounding teaching practice is rare. Some see it as a compliance activity only, and are yet to see formal evidence as an attribute of highly effective teaching. Additionally several teachers reported they do not feel supported by professional learning to develop their pedagogical strategies. The panel spoke to a range of students, and whilst many were generally positive about the quality of teachers, felt methods and presentations are sometimes traditional and could embrace more a contemporary approach.

In the final domain, **School-community partnerships** the panel acknowledges the diversity of student enrolment and the success of specialised programs e.g. CCCares and Futures, and found the following.

- *The school has established one or more partnerships with families, local businesses and/or community organisations with the express purpose of improving outcomes for students. Partnerships have generally been initiated by the senior leadership team and have their support.*
- *Each partnership brings staff and students of the school together with external partners such as families, other education or training institutions, local businesses and/or community organisations. All partners have a high level of understanding of, and commitment to, the purposes of the partnership and clear objectives have been set, expressed in terms of improved outcomes for students.*

- *Attention has been given to communication and to the sharing of experiences within the partnership*
- *There is evidence that the school's partnerships are being implemented as intended. However, there may be limited evidence of improved student outcomes as a result of partnership activities – possibly because there has been insufficient time for them to demonstrate an effect.*

The panel found Canberra College had a richness of partnerships, with the majority embedded and integral to the college's culture and identity. Additional partnerships were newer and considered to be evolving, with the 'test' of relevancy and outcome to be subsequently reviewed. The college executive noted there was a need to synthesise data as a collective to demonstrate an alignment between identified student needs, strategic effort, and improving learning outcomes. This systematic review also needs to involve, and be communicated to, all stakeholders as some staff and parents expressed ignorance of a 'plan for partnerships' and questioned factors such as dependency and sustainability. Furthermore some of the newer partnerships were described as *ad hoc* and driven by a small number of individuals.

Overall the panel commends the college for actively seeking contemporary ways to enhance student learning and wellbeing, as evidenced by partnering with training institutions (e.g. CIT) and community organisations (e.g. ACT Health). These partnerships demonstrate strategic establishment to address identified student needs primarily in the specialist programs. Discussion with parents and students confirmed the efficacy of various partnerships, which continue to be key attractants for prospective student enrolment, making Canberra College the college of choice for certain student cohorts.

National Safe Schools Audit Tool

Members of the senior executive and the Student Services team conducted a self-evaluation in 2013 and in 2015. Data from Satisfaction surveys was considered in this evaluation process.

The college determined it has generally established and maintained a safe and supportive learning environment. The panel's observations and interviews with staff, students and parents, supported this view. There is acknowledgement that whilst the college undertakes significant processes to support students through Student Services and individual programs, more can be done to promote the positive wellbeing of all students. The panel noted the inherent challenge within a senior secondary context for ensuring an ongoing personal development curriculum. In response the college has begun to identify ways to build the life skills of all students.

The college has initiated the preliminary steps to register and comply as a Mind Matters School, and the panel notes the recent accreditation of Canberra College as a member of the Safe School Coalition. The panel is entirely satisfied that the college understands the issues that have been highlighted through satisfaction surveys and the National Safe Schools Framework Audit Tool (NSSFAT), and are now focused on engaging all students with holistic life skill development opportunities and the imperative to build every student in every way possible. The panel commends this goal of establishing a systematic comprehensive format in student wellbeing.

Section E: Commendations and recommendations

Commendations

Canberra College is commended for the following.

1. **Providing for a diverse range of learning pathways.** The college has clearly recognised that some students require significant adjustments to their learning programs. They have responded to this challenge by establishing specialty programs supported by specialised, committed and passionate teachers, which have ensured a vast range of students needs are valued and catered for. The college has applied its resources in a targeted manner through significant improvement to functional and contemporary learning infrastructure and spaces, evidenced by the major capital upgrades which have occurred over the life of the plan. These include new facilities such as the Performing Arts Centre, CCCares, outdoor all weather sporting field and courts, Library Resource Centre, landscaping and VET facilities. All these support learning pathways in high quality contemporary learning environments.
2. **Developing strong community, business and training partnerships within the Futures and VET program.** Within these programs the college has actively sought ways to enhance student learning and wellbeing. Each partnership has been established in response to an identified learning need, resulting in a holistic approach to delivery of a personalised educational program. The panel found compelling evidence that these partnerships are achieving their intended impact.
3. **Establishing CCCares as a functional, well-appointed program of delivery.** CCCares is both nationally and internationally recognised as a teaching and learning space delivering best practice in VET, parenting practice, and post-compulsory schooling for pregnant and parenting young people
4. **Prioritising the tracking of data related to student achievement, subject selection and results and progress of students.** The panel commends the leadership team on its conviction that reliable data on student outcomes is the foundation for the colleges' improvement agenda. The college is establishing a systematic plan for the collection, analysis and use of student achievement data, with an initial focus on literacy needs. Positive early steps include the appointment of a literacy coordinator and development of a literacy team which has resulted in the development of a whole school literacy plan.

Recommendations

The panel recommends **Canberra College** pays attention to the following opportunities for improvement during the next planning cycle.

1. **A focus on systematic, inclusive and quality learning and teaching practices.** The panel sees the need for the college to comprehensively enact research-based practices in all classrooms to ensure every student is engaged, challenged, and learning successfully. While the panel acknowledges effort from both school leaders and teachers to accomplish this, with a great start in 2012, there is a compelling need to make all aspects of this delivery universal. The college recognises an immediate focus is to embed existing whole-school scaffolds and support structures to enable teachers to be the best reflective practitioners they can be. This will ultimately ensure consistency in professional learning and collaborative approaches across the college.

2. **Targeted use of school resources.** The panel recommends closer analysis of the college's financial sustainability over the next planning cycle. In successfully identifying and meeting a diversity of specific student learning needs, the college must prioritise future implementation within budgetary constraints. Discussion with senior school leaders confirmed that sustainable resourcing, and capital work upgrades, will allow for continued improvements to ICT and a contemporary classroom learning and teaching environment across the college. Given the complexity and diversity of the college's programs, facilities, and student cohorts, an ICT plan, with an explicit implementation timeline, will enable a more targeted and transparent approach to the future allocation of hardware, software, infrastructure, connectivity, and accompanying PL.
3. **Strengthening the college focus on the 'silent mainstream majority' of students.** Whilst the college has now successfully met a diverse range of learning needs, there is an impetus to refocus strong conversations, around explicit teaching strategies, upon successful learning for students within 'mainstream' or regular programs. Focusing on how these students learn, and their level of connection with the whole school community, will ensure the success of every student every day.
4. **Implementation of a targeted whole-school literacy program.** The panel acknowledges the work already undertaken in developing the *Draft Canberra College Literacy Plan 2015-2019*. The panel recommends this plan become a key driver of the college's direction for the next four years, with full implementation and a defining realisation that every teacher is a teacher of literacy, and every student is capable of successful learning.
5. **School-wide analysis and discussion of systematically collected data on student outcomes.** The panel recommends the college develop a systematic data policy and plan for the defining of and collection of appropriate data:
 - a. to reflect on effectiveness of learning outcomes achieved
 - b. to make easily accessible data sets for every teacher in every class to monitor key performance criteria of each student
 - c. to ensure data is easily accessible from year to year and senior executive are clear about what is happening in classrooms, which will guide rigorous deployment by teachers in classrooms.
6. **Develop a parent communication and engagement strategy.** Parental responses indicated that more communication and knowledge about college policies, practices and support mechanisms would assist smoother partnerships between parents and school. The panel recommends the college actively seek ways to enhance student learning and wellbeing through further building and supporting productive relationships and pathways with key stakeholders especially parents.

Record of Validation Process

The following people were members of the external validation panel for Canberra College conducted on 23rd, 24th and 27th August 2015.

Name: Frank Fogliati

School: Black Mountain School

Name: Robin Morell

School: Lyneham High School

Name: Bernadette Mearns

School: Trinity Christian College

As chair of the panel I endorse that this is a true and accurate record of the findings from the external validation process.


Name: Frank Fogliati

Signature: 

Date: 23-9-2015

As principal of **Canberra College** I accept the Validation Report on behalf of the school community.


Name: George Palavestra

Signature: 

Date: 23-9-2015

As co-director of Quality Learning Australasia, external lead validators for the conduct of validation process in ACT public schools, I concur that the panel acted within the guidelines set by the ACT Education and Training Directorate.

Name: Michael King

Signature: 

Date: 24.9.15.

JANE KORBES EXTERNAL LEAD
VALIDATOR
FOR MICHAEL KING.