



ACT
Government
Education and Training

EXTERNAL VALIDATION REPORT 2015

for

LAKE TUGGERANONG 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

Lake Tuggeranong College (LTC) is positioned between Lake Tuggeranong to the east and Tuggeranong town centre to the west. The college caters for year 11 and 12 students. It also hosts a small system-sponsored unit (originally called Connect 10) for disengaged south side students in years 9 and 10. In 2015, the Education and Training Directorate established a Learning Support Unit (LSU) (Autism), which enabled families of students with special needs to remain in their local area for senior secondary education. The LSU (known as The Hub) has a maximum of eight students.

The current school population is 810 students. The school's administration database, MAZE, suggests a significant proportion of students move back to their Priority Enrolment Area (PEA) public college, having undertaken years 7-10 at schools beyond the Tuggeranong Valley; the student enrolment profile points to community support for the college and its programs. The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (n=26), and funded special needs students (n=23), is relatively small. The proportion of students from language backgrounds other than English is moderate; and over the life of this School Plan, the International Private Students (IPS) program has grown steadily from 28 to 50 students.

A new school principal was appointed six months into this School Plan. Since then, the leadership team has remained relatively stable, with one deputy principal changing at the end of 2014, and two of the eight executive teachers changing - one at the start of 2013 and a second mid-2015. With a growth in student numbers (from 752 in 2011 to 810 in 2015) and an increased number of part-time teachers, the number of teachers at the college has grown from 49 teaching staff in 2012 to 62 in 2015. Retirements and the recruitment of younger staff have created a balanced staffing profile. The college administration team has increased in number from 13 in 2012 to 20 in 2015. This reflects a growth in the number of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) employed to support students with special learning needs.

In 2013, work began on the Tuggeranong Sustainable Living Trade Training Centre. This was a Commonwealth-funded initiative driven by the nearby Erindale College on behalf of six secondary schools in the Tuggeranong Valley. Lake Tuggeranong College gained a new building and the extensive refurbishment of existing technology workshops. This initiative has provided industry-standard teaching and learning spaces for Construction Pathways, Metal Technology and Automotive Studies. With these facilities, the college initiated night-time classes in Automotive and Construction Pathways to interested year 10 students from southern Canberra.

In 2014 the college Connect 10 program was changed into a Big Picture Academy. Big Picture provides a structured and personalised curriculum for students, formulated through negotiation with the student, the family, the college and the Internship Mentor. Opening the Academy up to nominated year 11 and 12 students in the college has added a new pathway for students.

The college library is a shared facility with Libraries ACT.

Evidence cited and its validation

LTC staffing profile (2012- 2015)

LTC school demographic data (2011 -2015).

Section B: School performance

From 2011 to 2012 the college saw a significant lift of more than 13 per cent in the proportion of students receiving a year 12 Certificate, rising from 76.8 per cent to 90 per cent. The college has since maintained this level with 92.9 per cent in 2013 and 90 per cent in 2014. During this time the college has reviewed curriculum and expanded offerings. The review of the tertiary (T course) curriculum in 2013 saw the introduction of courses such as Theory of Knowledge, Global Studies, Engineering and CISCO. At the same time the college looked at the courses available to non-tertiary students – the accredited (A course) curriculum. The review led to the introduction of more accredited courses in science (for example, Earth Sciences, Cosmetic Science) and in the humanities (for example, Tourism). The college has continued to grow its languages curriculum: Spanish and Korean have been added to the already existing Chinese and Japanese course offerings.

The Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) data (2011 - 2014) reported that about one-third of all students attained an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR). The data also showed the proportion of students achieving in two key bands, ATAR in excess of 80, and students in the top five per cent, has remained relatively stable, with a notable increase in the proportion of students gaining an ATAR in excess of 65. In 2013 the college reviewed and modified the ACT Scaling Test (AST) preparation program, introducing a two-year teaching sequence of flipped classroom experiences and face-to-face workshops. Students reported to the panel their increased satisfaction in the new AST preparation program.

The median ATAR for International Private Students (IPS) is consistently higher than that of the rest of the cohort; and the outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are consistently lower than those of the rest of the cohort.

Vocational education programs provide a pathway for many students at the college. Vocational Education Training (VET) learning data indicated that the college issued almost 200 Statements of Attainment each year over the life of the plan. However, the number of vocational certificates issued has declined over time. The 2012-2014 data showed the number of students completing an Australian School Based Apprenticeships (ASBA) lies between 40 -50 each year.

The number of students on Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) has almost trebled over the life of this School Plan, rising from eight in 2012 to 22 in 2015. The 2015 figures include five students in the newly created LSU. Although the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is relatively small the college recognises it is challenged in finding effective strategies to increase retention and achievement rates for this student group.

Some key themes emerged from the school stakeholder satisfaction data; these included the need to work harder with families in partnering for education, and at celebrating the success of

students and staff. There is evidence of growth in these areas during the latter stages of the School Plan. The college also participated in the 2014 Australian School Climate and School Identification Measurement Tool. These also supported the increased college focus on partnerships with parents and students to increase a sense of connectedness with the college. Through conversations with teachers the panel noted they were experiencing high levels of satisfaction from their teaching at the college. Of particular note is the significant increase of staff feeling well supported at the college and staff achievements being celebrated.

Attendance rates at the college have remained slightly below those of all colleges in the ACT. They also fall short of the BSSS expectation of 90 percent attendance in courses. In addition to engagement strategies, the college is about to embark on a trial of a live roll-marking process whereby parents and students receive an instant alert if marked absent from a class. The web-based facility will also allow parents to submit notes instantly and electronically.

The college suspension rates have been steadily declining over the life of the current School Plan. With a refocusing on the importance of productive partnerships between staff and students, there has been an explicit shift in the language and approach taken by the college in relation to perceived poor student behaviour.

Lake Tuggeranong College uses a range of process measures to collect and report on student outcomes, teacher pedagogical practices and community engagement. The LTC Unit evaluation database highlighted a number of areas for improvement. Formative feedback was noted and although students reported to the panel that some faculties encouraged the submission of drafts it was not school wide. Professional Engagement Teams (PETs) were instigated in 2013. One PET investigated student subject changes to see if there was any negative impact on student academic performance. Using student records and interviews with students that had made significant numbers of changes, the team concluded the college needed to provide better course guidance to students in year 10, an area for improvement that was also mentioned to the panel by some parents.

Annually, the college teaching staff reflect on their pedagogical practices. The data collected, together with anecdotal evidence collected by the panel through teacher conversation supports the college's need to use data to improve teacher pedagogy and ultimately improve student learning outcomes. In 2015 all year 11 students undertook the Otis Lennon School Aptitude Test (OSLAT) and pre and post testing has been introduced in mathematics and English. Although work has been begun in this area there is still an over reliance on the use of BSSS data and the panel noted that the college needs to establish and implement a systematic plan for the collection, analysis and use of student achievement data. Another area for improvement identified through the LTC pedagogical reflection database was the involvement in classroom observations. The panel noted that although there were a number of observational protocols available to staff, including the Quality Teaching model (QTm) and Marzano's Art and Science of Teaching (ASoT), there wasn't a whole school approach to providing feedback on classroom teaching.

School satisfaction data from parents and students strongly suggested the college needed to find more effective ways of celebrating student achievement and success. At the start of 2014, a college promotions position was established. Feedback from parents to the panel confirmed the success of the college website, blog and electronic newsletter.

Evidence cited and its validation

LTC pedagogical reflections database (teachers)

LTC Unit evaluation database 2012-2015

LTC enrolment, retention and completion rates 2011-2015 (MAZE and BSSS)

LTC attendance rates 2011-2014 (performance and planning)

Lake Tuggeranong College Australian School Climate and School Identification Tool 2014

School Satisfaction Surveys, August/September 2012, 2013, 2014

LTC Vocational Education trend data (BSSS)

LTC ATAR outcomes 2011 – 2014 (BSSS)

LTC Student Attainment data 2011-2014 (BSSS).

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

Priorities

In its School Plan Lake Tuggeranong College identified three priorities for improvement:

Strategic Priority 1: Enhance the professional practice of all teachers at Lake Tuggeranong College.

Strategic Priority 2: Improve outcomes for all students.

Strategic Priority 3: Enhance community engagement at LTC.

The improvement priorities centered on teaching, student growth and engagement with the community. They were a result of reflections on the previous School Plan, discussions with the community, and recommendations in the previous validation report (2011).

Although the priorities have not changed significantly over the life of the plan it was noted that in 2014, strategies used to achieve long-term goals were modified. The Annual Operating Plan (AOP) had a different set of key improvement strategies. This occurred following a close look at the achievements of 2012 and 2013. The college leadership group consulted with staff, students and community and assessed that a tighter and more prescriptive set of strategies was required. At the end of 2014, the leadership group felt the college was sufficiently on its pathway of improvement (against School Plan targets) to move the 2015 AOP back to be more closely aligned to the original strategies. The panel commends the college executive in responding to these known challenges, and its awareness of addressing immediate contextual factors, before re-enacting its more universal approach.

Achievements

Strategic Priority 1: Enhance the professional practice of all teachers at Lake Tuggeranong College.

Evidence supports the premise that teacher quality is central to improving school performance. A culture of observation and feedback to improve student learning outcomes has been established in the college. A range of observation protocols, including the Quality Teaching model (QTm) and Marzano's Art and Science of Teaching (ASoT) have been adopted by the college. A group of teachers are also exploring 21st Fluencies as a lens through which curriculum design and delivery can occur. The work resulted in the drafting of a college pedagogical statement, which provides guidance and a reflection point for staff. This pedagogical statement has also proven to be an effective engagement and induction process for new staff as they learn

the culture of the college. A new educator remarked “everyone has something to contribute at this college.”

The establishment of Professional Engagement Teams (PETs) in 2013 was to allow individual staff members to identify an area of professional interest and have them come together with colleagues to work towards an improvement on behalf of all staff. The college recognises that PET accountability is still a work in progress, and there has been an uneven implementation each year. The panel has seen evidence of some highly effective PETs and this has allowed professional growth. Another offshoot from staff involvement in PETs was a professional reading library and blog, which is accessed by a third of the staff.

The purpose and use of meeting times has been re-imagined to facilitate opportunities for learning, sharing practice and collaboration. The panel noted that in some faculties there has been a shift from administrative leadership to instructional leadership, which aims to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Staff have reported much improved satisfaction with meeting and professional learning events within the college.

Strategic Priority 2: Improve outcomes for all students.

One of the Lake Tuggeranong College’s improvement priorities was to improve outcomes for all students by a range of strategies aimed at maximizing student achievement.

Impacts of this priority have been the move toward collecting data to inform teaching and learning, the ongoing review and development of support mechanisms for students and curriculum renewal more responsive to student needs.

The panel confirmed that pre and post testing was now being employed in mathematics and English and all year 11 students undertook the OLSAT in 2015. This has provided teachers with more detailed knowledge of incoming student learner profiles and their learning needs.

The panel acknowledges the diversity of the student population and the importance of providing a range of programs to meet the needs of students. The breadth of offerings and student pathways has been enhanced through the Big Picture Academy and Trade Training Centre. The ACT Scaling Test (AST) program was redesigned and students confirmed that the program had given them greater confidence in approaching the AST.

Students conveyed to the panel that the teacher connection with the students has been a deciding factor to come to the college and it also has made the students feel valued by their teachers in class.

Strategic Priority 3: Enhance Community Engagement at LTC.

The college reported increased rates of student involvement in community service, with approximately 50 percent of year 11 students involved in volunteering, work experience and/or an Australian School-Based Apprenticeship (ASBA). Lake Tuggeranong College occupies a unique place in the broader Tuggeranong community and the panel recommends it seek ways to maximise its strengths of location, facilities and expertise.

The college communications strategy is building confidence in and awareness of day-to-day college activities and achievements. Parents communicated to the panel their satisfaction with Advisory Group (AG) notices being emailed to them and the student achievements recognised through the college blog. The principal also communicates a lot to the parents via text whereby she acknowledges the efforts and achievements of the students.

Reflections

The principal expressed the challenge to build momentum with three very broad priorities. She said at times it has felt like an annual exploration of issues facing the college, rather than a Plan-Do-Study-Act improvement cycle. The panel can confirm that there has been a cultural shift towards reflective practice amongst staff. While not uniform across the entire college, there are many pockets of innovation and exemplars of best practice.

The establishment of PETs saw the introduction of many and varied focus groups. The panel noted that whilst these were enthusiastically received by the college, a narrower and a stronger focus on what makes a difference to student learning may be more productive in setting S.M.A.R.T (specific, measurable, achievable, results-focused, and time- bound) goals for the next strategic plan.

Adopting a data-driven approach to teaching and learning is critical for achieving improved student learning outcomes in the college. The panel recognises the college has started this journey and recommends they continue to pursue ways to draw upon sound qualitative and quantitative evidence, and not just quantitative BSSS year 12 data, in support of their impact on student learning.

Evidence cited and its validation

LTC School Improvement Overview 2012 – 2015
2011 School External Validation Report
Leadership conference program and notes
Staff meeting minutes
PET strategic plans
Faculty action plans
Individual pathways plans
College Board meeting minutes
Satisfaction Surveys – staff, student and parent
Australian National University Climate Survey
Student feedback on teaching and learning (unit evaluations)
Internal staff surveys.

Section D: National tools self-evaluation results

National School Improvement Tool

The panel commends Lake Tuggeranong College on working comprehensively with the National School Improvement Tool (NSIT). Both the college leadership group and the teaching staff engaged in a process of self-evaluation. Administrative staff conducted a self-evaluation. Student and parent focus groups explored specific aspects of the NSIT during the first half of 2015.

Within the executive team, specific domains were initially allocated to pairs or small groups. This was followed by an open discussion forum where consensus was reached. The team supported their rating with a list of possible sources of evidence.

Teaching staff were provided with an initial introduction to the NSIT tool and process. Two sessions followed where they discussed each domain before shading which descriptions they felt accurately reflected the school's performance.

From these data sets a list of strengths and opportunities of improvement was compiled. This was shared with the whole staff. The outcomes were also workshopped with the College Board.

A Google form was created for both parents and students, by the college Stakeholder Engagement PET. Thirty students were randomly selected to participate in two focus group sessions at the end of Term 1. Focus group discussion allowed clarification of what each domain and rating might look like from a student perspective. Portable devices were used (to ensure 100 percent response rate), and the results collated.

A random sample of 30 families (15 from each year level) was selected at the start of Term 2 and telephoned, outlining the process. The Google form was then shared. Twenty-two responses were received, and data analysed, including comparisons with staff and student responses.

The college leadership group noted significant variation within each stakeholder group, as well as differences between the aggregate of each stakeholder group. Whilst the college leadership group understood the need for a consensus rating for the purpose of validation, they felt the 'finer-grain analysis' would provide sharper focus on individual aspects of the NSIT.

The panel noted several domains (1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9) were ultimately moderated to a single lower performance rating than the initial aggregation of data. Discussion with the college principal indicated that contributors may have initially over-estimated responses.

While acknowledging there was evidence of some exemplary practice in the college the following provides the panel's consensus views of what was seen as consistent practice throughout the college in relation to the nine domains of the National School Improvement Tool.

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 school has developed an agenda for improvement in partnership with parents and the community and school leaders can describe the improvements they wish to see in student behaviours and outcomes. This agenda is communicated in staff meetings, school newsletters, parent-teacher meetings and on the school website using a variety of formats to suit local needs.*
- *There is evidence of a school- wide commitment to every student's success and staff of the school tells stories of significant student improvement.*
- *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 panel found compelling evidence of the efforts of some members of the leadership team to analyse school performance data over a number of years, including trends in student achievement levels. This was affirmed by an eagerness of teachers to learn from research evidence and from other educational settings. These staff are clearly committed to finding ways to improve on current student outcomes. The panel noted in discussion with staff and students there is an increasingly effective focus and sharpening attention on core learning priorities. Exemplary practice was evident in some areas, for example in the use of OLSAT. Whilst the college principal expresses clear vision for an improvement agenda, and is seen as a key driver, a more explicit timeline for implementation, backed with rigour can ensure success. It is important

to note that the panel could not substantiate an unequivocal commitment from the entire leadership team for current improvement targets.

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

- *The school makes little or no use of tests beyond those that the school is required to use.*
- *Teachers do not systematically analyse test and other data for their classes and teachers make little use of data to reflect on their teaching.*
- *The school is unable to demonstrate how data have been used in meetings or with parents to analyse and discuss current achievement levels and strategies for improvement.*
- *School leaders pay close attention to data provided to them about the performance of the school and identify areas in which the school is performing relatively poorly or well.*
- *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.*
- *Teachers do not systematically analyse test and other data for their classes and teachers make little use of data to reflect on their teaching.*
- *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.*

There was compelling evidence that the principal and some executive staff view reliable and timely student data as essential to effective leadership of the college.

The college has ensured that appropriate software is available and assigned staff have been trained to undertake data analysis. A current direction at LTC is the implementation of the OLSAT measuring cognitive abilities that relate to a student's academic success in school. The panel saw compelling evidence that the OLSAT is already identifying gaps in student learning, allowing teachers to fine-tune instruction for successful teaching. Some faculties have already established professional learning meetings (Solutions Sessions) for the regular and formal discussion of data, and the implications of that data for student outcomes.

The panel was exposed to a range of assessment practice, from both faculty heads and teachers. Formative assessment, used as a tool to assist in teacher understanding of student progress, was clearly in operation in some classes visited by the panel. There was however an ongoing reliance upon more traditional approaches, particularly favouring summative assessment. The panel noted examples of exemplary practice where teachers routinely use objective data on student achievement as evidence of successful teaching. In conversation with these staff they revealed a sophisticated and articulate understanding of data, using a dialogue framed upon improvement, both for their own pedagogical practice and the learning milestones for their students. However evidence that improvement targets are set for all students could not be universally affirmed. There was evidence of faculty meeting minutes and project plans detailing how data had been used to identify priorities, take action, and monitor progress, though this was not evident as a school wide approach.

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

- *Classrooms are generally orderly, although some are more so than others. Non-attendance is an issue for a small minority of students. However, many other students appear to be minimally engaged in productive learning activities.*
- *The school has clear expectations for how students should behave and interact with one another, and in the main, relationships are caring and respectful. Some staff time is taken up dealing with behaviour problems.*
- *Respectful and caring relationships are reflected in the ways in which staff, students and parents interact and in the language they use in both formal and informal settings. Parents and families are encouraged to take a genuine and close interest in the work of the school and are welcomed as partners in their children's learning. There are agreed guidelines on such matters as greeting visitors, taking messages, and responding to queries promptly and respectfully.*
- *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 sense of belonging and pride in the school*

Staff morale remains a significant priority of LTC. Conversation with a wide cross-section of teachers and administration staff revealed a dialogue focussed on consolidating recent gains, and continuing improvement in establishing an effective school culture. Evidence that the college is still on a journey of culture change was noted in a range of staff responses with the majority focussed on making positive change, though this was not universal. The panel found a minor element of negativity expressed by some staff regarding a lack of commitment to current educational direction. Overwhelmingly staff described the college as 'a great place to work'. The wider community too praised the college as an 'educational environment of choice' for children. In meeting with a cross-section of parents the panel noted affirmative comments such as 'great reputation' and 'high performing' in response to reasons for enrolling at LTC. With few exceptions parents described the teachers as focussed on student progression, relationship building, and willing to listen, advise, and help. The panel also met with a student leadership group who listed the best features of LTC as supportive teachers (though not universal), the range of available courses, new approaches to learning and assessment (used by some teachers), and the visionary leadership of the principal.

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.*
- *Specialist diagnostic testing is organised for a small number of students with special needs, but teachers do not routinely administer tests to better understand specific learning difficulties (eg, problems in learning to read) or individual learning needs (eg, LBOTE, gifted).*
- *Physical spaces and technology are used effectively to maximise student learning. Learning spaces are organised for whole group work, small group work and individual work.*

- *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.*

The panel found in general the LTC applied its resources in a targeted manner to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of all students. The college demonstrated responsiveness to 'exceptional' learning needs as evidenced through the establishment of programs such as Big Picture Academy. Students with cognitive impairment were also catered for through targeted recruitment of qualified staff and the introduction of appropriate curricula material.

The panel noted there is a large proportion of students who are relatively compliant and readily accepting of the teaching and learning programs on offer. However the panel found evidence of significant variation in how the college was then meeting the needs of this student cohort. Some students could clearly describe the impact individual teachers made via differences in their teaching practice. These students listed: use of technology, configuration of learning spaces, expertise in subject matter, and knowledge of a student's ability. The panel was impressed by the recent uptake of the OLSAT as a diagnostic tool to identify and address student need. When this is adopted across the college it may assist in identifying the needs of all students and how their learning outcomes can be improved. Some parents and students identified timetable issues that prevented access to their required learning needs, for example the simultaneous scheduling of Chinese (Tertiary) and specialist mathematics.

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 and the school has arrangements in place for mentoring and coaching.*
- *Teachers visit each other's classrooms and welcome opportunities to have principals and other school leaders observe and discuss their work with them.*
- *Attention is paid to strengths and weaknesses in the school-wide team, with strategies in place to recruit staff with particular expertise, to train staff to address particular needs*
- *The school is implementing a formal process for conducting professional discussions with staff.*
- *The school provides opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles outside the classroom.*
- *Where it is necessary to manage unsatisfactory staff performance, this is done professionally and effectively, and in accordance with agreed guidelines.*

The panel corroborated direct evidence that coaching and mentoring was routinely occurring in some faculties at LTC, but this was not universal. For those faculties that engaged in this pivotal aspect of professional improvement, panel members noted explicit action against strategic priority 1 (*Enhance the professional practice of all teachers*) and strategic priority 2 (*Improve outcomes for all students*). Examples of key actions included staff spending time at a workplace linked to their subject, creating content and assessment realistic to 'real world' skills for students, and seeking student feedback. The panel saw evidence of teachers visiting other teachers and, in some faculties, teachers collaboratively planning, delivering and reviewing the

effectiveness of lessons. Consistent dialogue across the college stated that the principal recognised there was still 'work to do' and was ensuring further success through a balanced staffing profile.

Members of the senior executive briefed the panel about the current range of teacher practice, from just a few teachers working in relative isolation to the majority valuing working and learning together. The panel acknowledged consistently deep subject knowledge within faculties, though some teachers still operated with a silo mentality. Those exemplars present at LTC reported improved satisfaction level with professional learning and that they were increasingly ready for regular and purposeful feedback.

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

- *The school has a clearly documented whole- school plan for curriculum delivery.*
- *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.*
- *A strong alignment has been achieved between the overall curriculum delivery plan, term and unit plans, classroom teaching and the regular assessment of student progress in relation to curriculum expectations.*
- *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.*

The panel spoke widely with all stakeholders - staff, parents, and students - regarding the implementation of a clearly documented whole-school plan for curriculum delivery at LTC. It was noted the college was fully compliant with BSSS course accreditation processes, calculation of unit and course scores, and processes regarding unit assessment and awarding of unit grades. For some teachers there is an over reliance on the BSSS for content clarity. Some students, and those teachers engaged in more contemporary approaches, stated that adherence to this approach may result in a teacher not having high expectations of every student, a lack of explicit teaching of skills and content, and an absence of individualised attention and timely feedback.

Many teachers clearly expressed the belief that the curriculum offered at LTC is a major engagement point with the community. Panel conversations with students and parents revealed that subject choice and covered units was a significant factor in their subsequent enrolment at LTC. The college leadership has been active both within the college itself and feeder high schools to ascertain, understand, and value learning requirements for potential and current students. Data, and its subsequent analysis and discussion, has resulted in the establishment of curriculum innovations in the Big Picture Academy, learning support pathways, non-technical accredited courses, and trade-based vocational courses.

The panel noted many faculties, though not all, demonstrated enthusiasm to engage with and implement the Australian Curriculum (AC) within the sphere of senior secondary studies in 2016 and beyond.

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.*
- *Planning shows how the different needs of students are addressed, and how multiple opportunities to learn are provided;*
- *Some use is made of differentiated teaching (eg, differentiated reading groups in the early primary years), but in most classes teachers teach the same curriculum to all students with similar levels of individual support.*
- *Regular assessments of student learning are undertaken, but these often are summative*
- *Reports to parents generally do not show progress or provide guidance to parents on actions they might take.*

The panel met with a diverse student representative group, as well as numerous individual conversations with students in class, and was able to ascertain that differentiated teaching is not universal at LTC. It was apparent not all teachers 'know' their students and therefore could not optimally engage and challenge every learner in their class. Several students reported that they will drop subjects because of a lack of relationship with teachers. Regardless of the cause, this resulted in a lack of motivation on the part of the student who will 'just sit through classes for two years.' Students believed it was an equal partnership with the teacher to be encouraged to learn the content. However differentiation was evident as a priority of the practice of many teachers. The panel heard several first-hand accounts of the effect of 'amazing teachers' at LTC who 'can turn around a subject like maths because they are focused on skills, not just content.' These teachers are focussed on strategies for engagement such as adjustments to learning programs, a culture of draft submission, and encouraging students to be 'proactive in chasing feedback.' The panel noted that some faculties already have a solution focus to their faculty meetings where they look at data to cater for individual differences by offering multiple means of representation, engagement and expression.

Whilst many faculties could show how they appropriately differentiate tertiary (T) subjects from accredited (A) subjects, it was noted that sometimes only the assessment items varied with content unchanged. Conversely in other subjects (e.g. mathematics) students noted that the levels of learning were 'immense' between T and A, and did not deliver content relative to their learning potential.

The panel recognised throughout the college that several signature learning activities, programs, and facilities continue to be highly successful in providing learning that is personalised, engaging and challenging. This was clearly in evidence in the Big Picture Academy, Trade Training Centre, on-line teaching modules, tutorials, ACT Scaling Test (AST) preparation, and the innovative deployment of the teacher-librarians.

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. They do not appear to be driving a strong agenda to improve and/ or enhance teaching practices across the school, except perhaps indirectly through a focus on school results and targets.*
- *There is some clarity about what students are expected to learn, but a lack of balance in teaching methods (eg, over- reliance on whole-group teaching or very little explicit teaching).*
- *Discussions of specific teaching practices are rare and generally occur only in the context of concerns about a teacher's performance.*
- *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 reviewed a comprehensive suite of college documentation including the School Plan, Annual Operating Plans, Annual College Board reports, and faculty plans. All described a strong commitment to pedagogical improvement via a research-based approach to pedagogy and the use of instructional leadership to embed practice. In discussion with staff across the college the panel verified effective pedagogy is talked about in some faculties, with a focus on professional exploration of improved teaching methods. Specific professional learning activities, such as explicit teaching of skills and instruction, and action research, were in clear evidence. Whilst variance of uptake was noted across the school, the panel found a consistent and strong dialogue that 'more could be done' in developing a teacher professional learning culture that maximises student learning.

Those staff who are leading the way describe LTC as a great learning environment. They stated the main imperatives given by senior school leaders are around openness, encouragement, and collaboration. Put simply, the message is take action, evaluate, reflect, and start the cycle again. The principal, in particular, is widely commended for an approach to teaching practice that is visionary, constructive, positive, and personalised..

In the final domain, **School-community partnerships** the panel acknowledges the diversity of student enrolment and the success of specialised programs and facilities (e.g. Trade Training Centre and Big Picture Academy), and found:

- *The school has external 'partnerships', but rather than being built around a coherent, jointly planned program of activities to improve outcomes for students, these 'partnerships' tend to be mutually convenient arrangements (e.g., exchanges of expertise or the sharing of facilities between institutions or organisations). Such 'partnerships' often are established by individual members of staff and have limited whole-school support or engagement.*
- *Contacts with families, other education and training institutions, local businesses and community organisations, when they occur, are limited to isolated events.*
- *No plans exist to systematically review the effectiveness of partnerships, which typically are very dependent on the efforts of a small number of individuals and so have limited sustainability.*

- *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; however, there may be no formal plan for reviewing the partnership's outcomes and effectiveness.*
- *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 was presented with disparate ratings between stakeholders- staff, students, and parents - in this domain. A representative parent group (including College Board members) commented that they 'knew what a student was doing at the college'. Without exception they praised the academic and socio-emotional standard of the college as high-performing. They also spoke about the majority of teaching staff being high-quality, responsive to family need, and always willing to volunteer time to ensure the success of extra-curricular events and activities. Feedback from conversations with students closely aligned with the parent group, detailing a profound sense of belonging to the LTC community. Students articulated with few exceptions that their needs were acknowledged, identified and responded to through the establishment of specific programs, facilities, and partnerships. Students expressed strong preferences for the mode of communication, stating that school assembly and advisory group frequently failed to deliver what was intended. The panel noted there were opportunities to use the LTC Portal to celebrate student success in addition to its current use for general communications.

In conversations with the panel, some staff expressed an imperative to both broaden and deepen community engagement. The executive in particular stated that the college relied too heavily on stand-alone or signature events, often lacking deep alignment with strategic priorities. To that end the college has co-opted a staff member into a promotions role, including the development of the LTC Communication Plan. This emerging work is expected to take community engagement to a more sophisticated level, with new strategies focussed on establishing partnerships less reliant on a few key personnel.

National Safe Schools Audit Framework Tool

During Term 2, 2015 the National Safe Schools Framework Audit Tool (NSSFAT) was used by staff and students at LTC. Parents were provided with information on the NSSFAT via links to the college website.

Staff were provided with information about the NSSFAT and asked to individually respond. Through a process of testing opinion versus the evidence, the collated individual responses were ultimately brought to a consensus rating for each of the nine domains.

In eight of the domains the college self-evaluated that it was 'doing well', most noticeably in leadership commitment and policies and procedures. However follow-up discussion amongst the staff suggested more work could still be done around policies and procedures. The panel noted specific action was recommended in the domain of 'Engagement, skill development and safe school curriculum', focussing on the teaching of social and emotional skills in all subjects across the curriculum. This recommendation is currently being considered by the school leadership group and it should be noted this is consistent with the anticipated adoption of positive psychology across the college.

Thirty-eight year 11 students and fifty-three year 12 students were sampled during Term 2, 2015, via four focus group sessions. Focus groups were a mix of the two year levels.

Year 11 students reported positively regarding the prevalence and management of bullying at the college, supporting satisfaction survey results relating to student safety. There was a slightly reduced but still positive response to school connectedness, with five percent reporting that they did not feel they belong or are accepted here. Students reported very high levels of satisfaction regarding their relationships with their teachers.

Notably, more than 40 per cent of year 11 students stated it was not true that they had learnt a lot about staying safe online.

The year 12 responses tracked consistently more positively than those of the year 11 group, with clearly higher agreeance on items such as opportunities for leadership and feeling safe during breaks in the college day. Like the year 11 group, the responses relating to opportunities to support younger children were very low. This may be a reflection of the context – that is, the NSSFAT may not be as effective descriptor in a senior secondary setting. Again, as with year 11, the responses suggest the college could do more in supporting cyber safety.

Section E: Commendations and recommendations

Commendations

The panel commends Lake Tuggeranong College for the following :

- 1. Cultural change.** During the life of the current School Plan the college has seen a significant lift in morale, widely seen by staff as the single greatest improvement. Cultural change has been, and continues to be, seen by the leadership group as a prerequisite for continued school improvement. This dialogue of innovation and improvement that began with the impressive vision and commitment of the principal is consolidating across the college.
- 2. Adopting a data-driven approach to teaching and learning.** The college is clearly on a quest to implement a systematic plan for the collection, analysis, and use of student achievement data. They acknowledge that data is far more than quantitative BSSS compliance. Many staff are already seeking richer data - and implementing plans in response - to provide learning that is personalised, engaging and challenging. Moving beyond summative assessment and test results, student's social and emotional wellbeing is now being discussed by teachers. There is an increasing presence of this sophisticated understanding of data concepts, demonstrated in the use of action research, innovative test data, and the genesis of PETs.
- 3. Creation of Professional Engagement Teams (PETs) as a collaborative learning construct.** The panel found strong evidence of an emerging collegial culture,

characterised by enthusiasm and support among teachers and school leaders. The PET is valued as a non-threatening and accessible addition to the life of the college. Evidence of some highly effective processes, both formal and informal, is further affirmation of an ostensible increasing level of staff trust and morale. Compelling conversations are changing the nature of discussion at staff meetings and in faculty rooms and, more formally, with teachers committing to the improvement of teaching through a cycle of observation, feedback, and solution.

- 4. Moving to coaching and mentoring as professional development.** Though not universal, the panel found evidence that highly effective coaching and mentoring is routinely occurring for many staff at LTC. This is a journey where staff feel their skills are recognised and shared, and is critical to active mastery and fulfillment in the teaching profession. Teachers with exemplary practice at LTC reported they had taken personal responsibility for improving student learning and wellbeing, successfully participated in professional learning, and that they were increasingly ready for regular and purposeful feedback. Consistent dialogue across the college affirmed that the principal had recognised there was still 'work to do' and was enacting a culture of review, responsibility, and shared accountability.
- 5. Curriculum depth and breadth.** The LTC curriculum is considered by all key stakeholders as a major engagement point with the wider community, particularly feeder schools. Subject choice and covered units continue to be a significant factor in attracting enrolment at LTC. The college leadership has been active both within the college itself and feeder high schools to ascertain, understand, and value learning requirements for potential and current students. Data, and its subsequent analysis and discussion, has resulted in the establishment of curriculum innovations in the Big Picture Academy, learning support pathways, non-technical accredited courses, and trade-based vocational courses. The panel noted many teachers actively discussing their high expectations for every student, a need for explicit teaching of skills and content, and the importance of individualised attention and timely feedback. The panel noted many faculties, though not all, demonstrated enthusiasm to engage with and implement the Australian Curriculum (AC) within the sphere of senior secondary studies in 2016 and beyond.
- 6. Celebrating college successes.** Parents and students praised the academic and socio-emotional standard of the college as high-performing, speaking about the majority of teaching staff as high-quality, responsive to family need, and always willing to volunteer time to ensure the success of extra-curricular events and activities. This is acknowledged as a turnaround imperative from the first half of the current school planning cycle. College staff remain committed to an approach that will broaden and deepen community engagement. The executive in particular stated that the college relied too heavily on stand-alone or signature events, often lacking deep alignment with strategic priorities. To that end the college has co-opted a staff member into a promotions role, including the development of the LTC Communication Plan. This emerging work is expected to take community engagement to a more sophisticated level, with new strategies focussed on establishing partnerships less reliant on a few key personnel.

Recommendations

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

1. Redefining the college's vision of excellence. In discussion with all members of the LTC community, it was evident that there is an expectation to live up to their role as a large senior secondary school in Tuggeranong, providing excellence via multiple educational pathways. The panel believes this community will be well served by having the college confirm a new vision, which elevates the conversation from one of quality to that of excellence. Attending to the associated shift in language and expectation in their policies, procedures and practices, will form part of how this is reinforced over the life of the next School Plan. There is a clear imperative for this to commence.

2. Further develop the systematic use of data to monitor and inform student learning. The panel found a need for the ongoing monitoring of student learning to ensure that learning outcomes are improved across the college and not just for those students who have been identified as having exceptional needs. Moreover, given that some teachers are overly reliant upon the BSSS for acquittal of student learning, it is important that the college explore a systematic use of data. I

There is compelling evidence that the principal and a majority of staff view reliable and timely student data, obtained from a range of assessment practice, as pivotal to improvement. Many teachers now routinely use objective data on student achievement as evidence of successful teaching. Whilst these staff demonstrate a sophisticated and articulate understanding of data, using a dialogue framed upon improvement, both for their own pedagogical practice and the learning milestones for their students, evidence that targets are set for all students could not be universally affirmed.

3. Strengthen the college culture of learning and student connectedness. Whilst the college clearly places a high priority on building and maintaining positive and caring relationships between staff, students and parents, reconfiguring the Student Services program will ensure tighter alignment with current strategic direction regarding systematic data collection. Maximising two years of successful senior secondary education will require greater appreciation of all facets of student learning and wellbeing. The college has commenced this exploratory work through a focus on positive psychology, but closer monitoring and case managing of individuals at risk of under-performance will ensure students stay connected for the full benefit of college life.

4. Formalise college-wide coaching and mentoring processes to support professional growth and the development of an expert teaching team. The panel noted that coaching and mentoring was routinely occurring in some faculties at LTC, but this was only at early adoption stage and by no means universal. For the next school planning cycle a shift to formal coaching and mentoring will ensure transition from the existing incidental personal responsibility to school-wide collective responsibility, and professional growth for all.

5. Communities of practice. If it is to advance professional growth to the next level LTC will require all teaching staff to be knowledgeable instructional leaders. In the spirit of what constitutes an authentic learning community, there is an imperative to now embed

purpose and practice within a collaborative inquiry-based system. Every staff member can support this through the potential, capacity, and willingness to be a mentor for another. The panel noted within a range of existing practice that there are already many LTC exemplars succeeding with school improvement goals. Evident was the analysis and discussion of data, the preparedness to build a school-wide shared responsibility for student success, and differentiation that optimally engages and challenges. These staff report improved satisfaction level with professional learning and that they were increasingly ready for regular and purposeful feedback. The attributes for sustained professional growth at LTC will be: understanding the brief, commitment to the cause, passion and endurance, and a diversity of talent and pedagogical expertise. It is now time to capitalise on this emerging shift and ensure universal adoption.

- 6. Consolidate and explore new community partnerships to maximise the positive impact on student learning outcomes.** The college understands that its vital work of supporting a student through their educational journey requires high levels of participation from families. The college can drive this improvement through consolidating existing strengths (communication pathways, facilities, location) whilst exploring new community partnerships which will ensure even greater success in both academic and socio-emotional outcomes. A focus on S.M.A.R.T (specific, measurable, achievable, results-focused, and time-bound) goals, with a high probability of meaningful outcomes, is the priority. Given the status of SMART as a best practice framework for setting goals, the panel recommends its use for all performance reviews undertaken at LTC. This will assist the leadership team tasked with setting goals to clarify exactly what will be required for achieving success and to be able to share that clarification with others.

Record of Validation Process

The following people were members of the external validation panel for Lake Tuggeranong College conducted on Wednesday 29th to Friday 31st July 2015.

Name: Frank Fogliati

School: Black Mountain School

Name: Robin Morrell

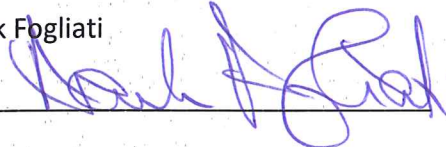
School: Lyneham High School

Name: Sharyn Quirk

School: St Clare's 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 **Lake Tuggeranong College** I accept the Validation Report on behalf of the school community.

Name: Julie Murkins

Signature: 

Date: 23.9.15

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: Jane Kovacs

Signature: 

Date: 23.9.15