



ACT
Government
Education and Training

EXTERNAL VALIDATION REPORT 2013

for

MELROSE HIGH SCHOOL



Record of Validation Process

The following people were members of the external validation panel for **Melrose High School** conducted on 8 and 9 August 2013.

Name Dr Michael Kindler

School: Stromlo High School

Name Julie Collins

School: Lanyon High School

Name Trazel Scott

School: Merici 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: Dr Michael Kindler

Signature:  Date: 28/8/13

As principal of Melrose High School I accept the Validation Report on behalf of the school community.

Name: George Palavestra

Signature:  Date: 30-8-2013

As co-director of Quality Learning Australia, external 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: 30 Aug. 13.

Section A: School context

Melrose High School (MHS) is a year 7 to 10 high school, centrally located in Pearce with student representation from 52 nationalities. The school has a strong sense of community that acknowledges, nurtures and celebrates diversity. As an older school founded in 1970 and located centrally in Canberra, the school enjoys the benefit of excellent public transport connections, and accordingly draws a majority of its students from across 52 suburbs and 35 primary settings. The majority are from the south of Canberra.

Current enrolments are declining due to shifting demographic, which has implications for staffing and programs. Reducing leadership structures and minimizing the reduction of classroom teachers has enabled the school to maintain its diversity of programs. For example, the last of the 200 plus student cohort will complete Year 10 in 2013, resulting in an anticipated school population of approximately 650 by the start of 2014. The closure of Kambah High School in 2007 and the opening of Namadgi School in 2010 had a clear impact on enrolment trends across this area, as availability of student places rose or fell. Similarly, the presence of Marist College adjacent to Melrose has represented a clear and visible alternative choice for parents of boys.

In the eyes of many parents Melrose is a school of preferred choice. The principal is an experienced school leader who has strong leadership attributes and has led Melrose High School through a period of significant change. Under this leadership, the panel found evidence the school culture strengthened for all members of the school community, as evidenced by the RESPECT framework of values.

Currently there are 78 members of staff at Melrose High School: 49 teachers, 18 administrative officers and 11 school leaders including the Principal and Deputy Principal. In recent years the staffing structure changed with the loss of the second Deputy Principal and a reduction of two Executive Teacher positions, the transfer of the Deputy Principal who was at Melrose these four year years of the validation cycle as well as the loss of the pastoral care coordinator.

The school staff has begun to embrace and implement the Australian Curriculum, as shown in being a lead school in 2012 in English. One notable initiative the school is particularly proud of is accreditation as a Mind Matters School. Equally, the Academic Curriculum Extension (ACE) program is clearly meeting the needs of many students who like to be extended in the science learning area. The LSU and LSUA also are to be commended for the way in which the school differentiates the curriculum to meet diverse learning needs.

At Melrose High School every student must complete two years in the study of a language other than English. There have been steady enrolments of full fee paying international students and students from diplomatic families. A significant number of students at Melrose High School speak two or more languages. This attracts students from linguistically diverse backgrounds to the school community. Languages taught include three Asian languages and one European, namely Japanese, German, Indonesian and Chinese. The student exchange program with sister schools in Taiwan and Japan have achieved strong intercultural understanding and provided students from Melrose High School with an opportunity to host students and travel to Taiwan and Japan. There is also a memorandum of understanding with three schools in Bali with whom regular electronic communication links are maintained.

The fiscal control at Melrose High School has also gone from a negative balance to being positively managed over the period of the validation cycle. A strategic approach to resource management was supplemented by a \$2 million dollar Federal Government Capital Improvement Grant that added value to the front of the school and improved interior furnishings.

The MHS Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) rating of 1046 is close to the average for ACT schools.

Section B: School performance

Over the validation cycle the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data presented showed extensive tracking. Notable growths were evidenced in year 9 Numeracy, particularly between 2011 and 2012. This means that the Year 9 cohort in 2012 performed better than the Year 9 cohort in 2011, allowing for the interpretation that literacy intervention was stronger in recent years.

Whole school strategies have been progressively adopted to improve student writing, including analysis of School Measurement, Assessment and Reporting Toolkit (SMART) data and paragraph power. As identified in the chronology of school improvement strategies, a literacy coordinator has been working across the whole school in all learning areas. An improvement in reading has also been noted as evidenced by NAPLAN growth data over the period.

Student NAPLAN data also indicates a 5.8 percent increase in reading from 2010-2012 which is a large improvement in year 9. Data supplied for reading levels between 2010 and 2011 also indicates a rise. The overall academic performance and the expected growth areas of the school show more than half of all students assessed in NAPLAN demonstrated growth equal to or better than what was statistically expected between years 7 and 9 each year as against the ACT averages across both literacy and numeracy. However, the overall NAPLAN figures for the four year validation period indicate there are no consistent trends evident in all areas tested.

There are several major achievements that characterize Melrose High over the four year period in terms of cultural change.

The Student Wellbeing area, in conjunction with Student Services is seen to strongly support students in inter-curricular, co-curricular and pastoral care domains. The Mind Matters program has had a significant impact in terms of holistic personal development for students. The emphasis of Mind Matters practices and the whole school focus on RESPECT has lifted school culture as demonstrated by the suspension and attendance data presented. For example the number of suspensions in 2012 was less than half of each of the preceding years. Similarly the number of total unexplained absences markedly decreased in the last three years, suggesting that students are more connected to their school community.

The relocation of the Indigenous Studies Centre along with increased resourcing has created a safe and inviting space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families. The year 9 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander overall NAPLAN mean improved significantly from 2010 to 2012. Establishing choices and support mechanisms for students of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background in this Centre has achieved an improved profile, culture of achievement and success for many of these students.

School satisfaction survey data show significant improvement in the perceptions of all stakeholders: students, staff and parents. In 2010, 10 of the 35 statements on the student

survey drew responses above the Territory averages, by 2012, responses to 28 of the statements were above Territory averages. For staff, these results demonstrated similar improvement increasing from 20 of 37 to 26 of 37 responses above average. For parents the increase was from 7 of 17 to 11 of 17 responses being above Territory average. These impressive results indicate the effectiveness of the school improvement process. Stakeholder perception data indicates that parent satisfaction has risen over the four years of the validation cycle in several areas. Student satisfaction increased significantly in the domain of feeling supported in respect of personal safety, bullying and their confidence to approach an adult to discuss a problem. Evidence of this is a 25% decrease in the recorded incidents of bullying in 2012. Staff satisfaction for the same period shows a growth of between 10 percentage points and 26 percentage points in five areas. In particular, teachers valued feedback on the quality of their teaching. This was implemented through the Professional Learning Community protocol and the Growth Coaching model.

Evidence cited and its validation

- MHS School Plan 2010 - 2013
- NAPLAN data 2009 – 2012
- MHS Annual Operating Plans 2010, 2011 and 2012
- MHS Annual School Board reports 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012
- Self-evaluation matrix 2010, 2011 and 2012
- Compiled attendance and suspension data 2009 – 2012
- Staff interviews.

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

PART 1: Improvement planning

The validation panel noted a new school leader began in 2009 which saw stronger financial control, leadership stability, clearer strategic direction and explicit support for professional development of school leaders and teachers. Following two years of acting principals, the management of the school became more cohesive and strategic at this time. This is comprehensively reflected in the strategic four year School Plan 2010 – 2013 which remained the focus for all school priorities over the validated period.

The four domain areas are identified with seven priorities aligned to these.

Teaching and Learning

Priority 1: Complete curriculum renewal documentation in line with ACT and National Framework.

Priority 2: Expand the range of pedagogy and renew processes used by teachers.

Leading and Managing

Priority 3: Expand the culture of strategic review to improve alignment of resources to ensure appropriate levels of support for learning and teaching.

Priority 4: Develop leadership and mentoring capacity of staff.

Student Environment

Priority 5: Expand and refine the values based processes of student services to strengthen and meet the needs of students.

Priority 6: Embed and expand the range of wellbeing programs to support connectedness to the school.

Community involvement

Priority 7: Expand the range of partnerships with community and other educational settings.

NAPLAN data was used alongside school based literacy and numeracy testing to provide baseline data for incoming year 7 students, from which benchmarks were established every year.

The executive conference held in term four of each year provided time for the executive team to analyse NAPLAN and system data, and use the self-evaluation matrix to develop targets for the following years Annual Operating Plan. The evidence provided by Melrose High School demonstrates a thorough and systemic process of ongoing improvement planning with clear directions that are closely aligned with the four year school plan.

Evidence cited and its validation

- MHS School Plan 2010 - 2013
- MHS Annual School Board reports 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
- MHS Annual Operating Plan 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013
- MHS Annual Operating Plan 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
- MHS Self-Assessment report 2008, 2009
- MHS School Evaluation Matrix 2010, 2011, 2012
- Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) Data 2009
- Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS) data 2011.

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

PART 2: Improvement actions

Teaching and Learning

Priority 1: Complete curriculum renewal documentation in line with ACT and National Framework.

Priority 2: Expand the range of pedagogy and renew processes used by teachers.

During the validated period, the Melrose High School executive team developed school wide systems to ensure compliance with ACT and national curriculum frameworks, as well as consistent implementation and monitoring practices throughout the school. Scope and sequence documentation for all subject areas was audited and adjusted, templates for curriculum renewal were implemented and priorities were introduced in each key learning area that supported priorities in the Annual Operating Plan. This work was overseen and monitored

by the Teaching and Learning team to ensure consistency and compliance. By 2012 Australian Curriculum documentation had been presented to the School Board in Science, History, Mathematics and English.

Whole school professional learning around the National Achievement Standards has been ongoing for the past two years in whole staff and faculty forums. Staff focused on moderation practices, criterion marking and consistent use of language that aligns with the National Achievement Standards. Assessment and moderation plans, and assessment and reporting scaffolds have been implemented to assist with school wide consistent practice. This process is still ongoing as the school aligns its achievements standards with those of the of the ACT generated format. Further development in this area will continue in the next validation cycle.

Improvement in literacy and numeracy across all curriculum areas was facilitated by generating positions to coach literacy and numeracy from 2009. Whole school focus in professional learning centered on embedding literacy and numeracy in all curriculum areas. Two examples of this were the introduction of the TEEC (Topic sentence, Explanation, Evidence, Elaboration, and Concluding) paragraph protocol and VIP (Verb, Information, Participant) scaffold, which have become part of literacy landscape at Melrose High School. Other strategies such as the DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) program were introduced, but were not seen as effective and consequently ceased.

Year 6 to year 7 screening of students in numeracy and close analysis of NAPLAN numeracy data informs practice in the teaching of numeracy at Melrose High School. Mental Computation programs were established, while school wide numeracy practice was shared at staff meetings. Tracking of junior students against specific numeracy targets in deficit areas such as fractions, decimals, percentage and ratios has yielded positive results over the past year.

NAPLAN data over the four year period suggests significant growth between year 7 and year 9 in most areas tested, particularly between 2011 and 2012. The growth in numeracy over this period was particularly noteworthy. It is pleasing to see that the number of students in the top 25th percentile in all literacy areas of NAPLAN increased between 2011 and 2012. This would suggest that the introduction of the Academic Curriculum Extension (ACE) extension program has improved outcomes for the most academically capable students. However the number of students in the lowest 25th percentile also increased between 2011 and 2012. This would suggest to the panel that further development of whole school strategies and targeted programs in literacy are required to lift the performance of lower achieving students.

Evidence cited and its validation

- NAPLAN data 2009 – 2012
- MHS Literacy results 2012
- MHS year 7 and year 9 numeracy data analysis
- Template for curriculum renewal
- Unit evaluation template
- Unit survey results 2012
- Literacy data analysis
- Yr. 8 TEEEC Myth Assignment

- Yr. TEEEC Alcohol Assignment
- VIP sentences
- Staff interviews

Leading and Managing

Priority 3: Expand the culture of strategic review to improve alignment of resources to ensure appropriate levels of support for learning and teaching.

Priority 4: Develop leadership and mentoring capacity of staff.

Through the leadership of the principal, Melrose High School moved from a period of financial uncertainty to one of financial security. This was achieved by reviewing structures within the school such as start and finish times, which maximized staff teaching hours and minimized the use of relief teachers. This review of staffing along with federal grant funding enabled funds to be reallocated to upgrade areas within the school.

Surveys were established as a regular review process in many areas of the school including unit evaluations and community / parent involvement surveys. SMART database training was provided to all Executive teachers to enable them to facilitate data analysis within their faculty to improve student outcomes.

Professional Pathways protocols were developed with a school specific template that aligned to the annual operating plan and from which annual professional discussions were based. Teachers were required to complete a portfolio of evidence of meeting their targets. Instructional Rounds were introduced where all teachers were observed and provided with feedback. This was facilitated at a faculty level, with time being made in faculty meetings to analyze data and have professional conversation around the observations. In 2012, the instructional rounds model was expanded with the principal undertaking observations of teachers and providing written feedback.

Capacity building of the executive staff was developed through training in Goals Reality Options Will Tactics Habits (GROWTH) Coaching and Fierce Conversations. The GROWTH coaching model was implemented as a scaffold for professional conversations based on instructional rounds and professional pathways, and to increase their capacity to address underperformance with staff.

The school executive developed the professional capacity of the staff at Melrose High School throughout the period of the four year plan. The Quality Teaching model (QTm) as implemented and underpins all pedagogical practices within the school. Staff valued this professional development and appreciated the feedback this mechanism enabled by way of the observation protocols and GROWTH Coaching model. Staff satisfaction surveys (2012) indicate that 69 percent of teachers feel that they are receiving constructive feedback on their teaching practice.

Evidence cited and its validation

- MHS Board reports 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012
- Professional Pathways Template 2011
- Executive roles 2010
- Satisfaction survey data 2010, 2011, 2012

- Staff interviews.

Student Environment

Priority 5: Expand and refine the values based processes of student services to strengthen and meet the needs of students.

Priority 6: Embed and expand the range of wellbeing programs to support connectedness to the school.

Student environment was strengthened significantly over the four year period. This started by clarifying school values and implementing a simple yet effective strategy to embed values throughout the school community: Resources, Effort, Self, Peers, Environment, Community, Teachers (RESPECT). RESPECT has resulted in common language and understanding about acceptance and inclusion for all students, staff and parents. There are abundant student developed visual stimuli around the school and the values relating to RESPECT are included in most school events including all assemblies. This initiative has clearly developed a strong sense of community at Melrose High School where students feel connected and proud of their school. This was reflected in higher than system average results in the satisfaction survey where students knew the values of their school. A reduction by 58% in the suspension rate from 2010 to 2012 along with a 32% reduction in unexplained absences for students, support the theory of improved student connection to their school.

Over the period being validated a year 10 Certificate points award and demerit system was implemented to provide clear and achievable goals linked to the awarding of the certificate at the end of year 10. Students have the opportunity to graduate from Melrose High School with Gold, Silver or Bronze recognition. The student satisfaction survey indicates that students feel their achievements are recognized by the school, with the results in this area above system averages. Over the four year period since implementation the number of students achieving at higher levels increased in 2012 to 17 percent of the cohort graduating.

The process of gaining accreditation as a Mind Matters School was intensive and clearly made a significant contribution to the understanding of mental health and de-stigmatization in the school community. All teachers and student leaders were trained in Mind Matters over the four year period, which the panel recognizes as a significant achievement. Data that supports an improved student environment and connection to the school is improved attendance and dramatically reduced suspension rates. Internal school data on student wellbeing further supports the effectiveness of this program and associated actions by the school. The challenge in the future for Melrose High School will be sustained training for new staff and ensuring that staff continue to embed values education in their curriculum and language with the students.

The Student Wellbeing Centre provides support for students and staff. There are many targeted programs for students with special needs, while Melrose High School has remained pro-active in addressing social issues within the school context such as racism and homophobia. Student and staff surveys reflect a reduction in the use of negative comments in the school. Student satisfaction for “I feel supported if I am bullied” improved by 11 percentage points and was 8 percent above system averages for 2012.

A strong Pastoral Care program, extra-curricular activities, lunch time activities and fitness focus, all contribute significantly to the holistic wellbeing of students at Melrose High School.

Clear student pathways and personalized learning programs have been established through language immersion opportunities in Taiwan, ACE programs for students requiring extension, Access 10 program, Australian School Based Apprenticeships and Vocational Education and Training opportunities.

Evidence cited and its validation

- System suspension and absence data
- Behaviour data analysis 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012
- Mind Matters school story 2011
- Year 10 Certificate of Graduation policy
- Racism Survey 2012
- MHS Safe Schools Policy 2011
- Health Survey 2012
- Summary of VET pathways
- List of Australian School-based Apprenticeships (ASBA) 2009 – 2012.

Community involvement

Priority 7: Expand the range of partnerships with community and other educational settings.

The Indigenous Study Centre at Melrose High School provides support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families in a supportive and inviting setting within the heart of the school. 100% of Indigenous students from cluster primary school attend this Centre, while Indigenous students are attracted from further afield. Academic and attendance data for Indigenous students at Melrose High School have improved with support through the Indigenous Study Centre. Attendance rates for these students, particularly in years 9 and 10 have been consistently above system averages.

Melrose High School has collaborated with cluster primary schools for professional learning around the Quality Teaching model, Indigenous education, differentiating the curriculum, literacy and numeracy workshops, to name a few. Although these links have been a valuable learning experience for staff, they have not demonstrated a change in enrolment patterns from the cluster primary schools.

Pathways exist for students to link with the community as exemplified by the Vocational Education opportunities, Australian School Based Apprenticeships and the series of academics in the field of Science who mentor students in the ACE Science program.

Australian Business Week has been a school program that provides year 10 students with the opportunity to be mentored by people in local business. Many local businesses are involved in this mentoring on a yearly basis and look forward to working with the Melrose students.

Melrose High School celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2010 and celebrated with a community event that was attended by more than 500 people.

In 2010 the canteen was outsourced to a private company, and in 2012 the Parents and Citizens association ceased functioning due to lack of parental involvement.

School based surveys indicate that feedback from parents who attend school functions has been very positive, and parents consider communication pathways to be effective. Evidence cited and its validation

- MHS Performance data 2011
- Woden Cluster Reconciliation Action Plan 2010 – 2013
- “The Journey”
- Indigenous Study Centre data 2009
- Year 7 Welcome Evening feedback
- 3 Way Interview Summary
- RED video and inter school cluster day.

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

PART 3: Reflection

The validation panel was impressed by the systemic approach to improvement planning and alignment of the School Plan, Annual Operating Plans, and individual Professional Pathways plans for teachers.

The executive planning conference has been strategically placed in term four of each year to enable data from that year to be analyzed, current practices to be reviewed and directions for the next year to be formulated. This process of review, evaluation and forward planning is a shared responsibility among executive staff, and one that is taken back to faculty areas to be embedded through the practice of teachers. Evidence of the systemic approach to planning, implementation and evaluation of priorities can be seen in the thorough documentation and alignment of all priorities in the Self Evaluation Matrix, Annual Operating Plans, Annual Operating Plan Reports and Annual Board Reports.

The systemic approach to developing capacity of the executive team to effectively implement the strategic priorities of the school impressed the panel. This was evident in all executive staff being trained in the GROWTH coaching model and Fierce Conversations. Through conversations with the Melrose High School executive team the validation panel could see the priorities of the school were clear and all of the executive team were highly committed to improving outcomes for students and developing capacity in their staff through these priorities. Evidence cited and its validation

- MHS 4 year plan
- NAPLAN data 2009 – 2012
- MHS Annual Operating Plans 2010, 2011 and 2012
- MHS Board reports 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012
- Self-evaluation matrix 2010, 2011 and 2012

- Staff interviews.

Section D: Commendations and recommendations

COMMENDATIONS:

Commendation 1:

The panel highly commends Melrose High School for the way in which the leadership team have reshaped and re-visioned the school over the period being validated. This was achieved through the school values of RESPECT and a focus on positive relationship building. The process of Mind Matters accreditation was instrumental in this journey.

Improvement processes over the four year period were systemic, reflective, inclusive of all staff and aligned to the school plan.

Commendation 2:

The leadership and professional support for teachers to improve practice is commended. This has been achieved through the QTm, professional rounds, and GROWTH coaching models which have strengthened pedagogy and embedded a culture among staff of open and shared reflection. This has prepared staff to engage with Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and expectations for teacher registration, portfolios of evidence and reflection.

Commendation 3:

Melrose High School has recognised that the teaching of literacy and numeracy remains an area where there is opportunity for improvement. Melrose High School has responded by implementing a range of school wide strategic initiatives that include the TEEEC, VIP sentence structures and identified roles in literacy and numeracy teaching and coaching. These programs have been sustainable and appear to be regularly applied. The school is to be commended for being persistent in implementing a multi-faceted approach.

Meeting changing needs of curriculum, Achievement Standards, reporting structure and teacher registration has positioned the school well for the future.

Commendation 4:

The panel commends Melrose High School for highly valuing and supporting the cultural diversity and needs of their community. This is exemplified by the Indigenous Studies Centre where support is provided for students and their families. Impressive co and extra-curricular opportunities exist for students at the school. Among these are annual trips to Japan and Taiwan, homestay opportunities, strong languages program, partnerships with local scientists, Australian Business Week and business links.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation 1:

The panel recommends that in the current climate of significant staff transitions and changing student cohorts at Melrose High School, the whole school priorities are refined to ensure manageable focus and sustainability of the existing programs in the school. This includes wellbeing programs and continued fostering of the student voice.

Recommendation 2:

It is the recommendation of the validation panel that Melrose High School implement additional data tracking systems to monitor student progress, inform teaching and learning directions, and monitor performance of school programs over time. This continual data will provide a more regular report of student achievement than is the case with intermittent NAPLAN data.

Recommendation 3:

To strengthen teaching and learning, the panel recommends whole school professional learning continue with the current foci: Teacher Professional Standards, lesson feedback, personalized learning for students, and consistency of assessment, moderation and reporting.

Recommendation 4:

The panel recommends that Melrose High School ensures programs for all students including those with special needs (both ACE students and LSU, LSA) be adapted to ensure that they meet the requirements of national agendas such as the National Partnership agreement for Students with Disabilities, the National Education Reform Agenda and National Consistent Collection of Data.

Recommendation 5:

With the amendment of the 'Earn or Learn' (Education Act 2004) the panel recommends widening and enhancing existing partnerships in the community, cluster primary schools and colleges to diversify the range of pathways for students.