EXTERNAL VALIDATION REPORT 2014

for

NORTH AINSLIE PRIMARY SCHOOL
Record of Validation Process

The following people were members of the external validation panel for North Ainslie Primary School conducted on Wednesday 13 August to Friday 15 August.

Name: Sue Mueller  
School: Torrens Primary School

Name: Sheila Brice  
School: Namadgi School

Name: Simon Wagg  
School: Trinity Christian School

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

Name: Sue Mueller  
Signature: [Signature]  
Date: 25 Sep '14

As principal of North Ainslie Primary School I accept the Validation Report on behalf of the school community.

Name: Louise Owens  
Signature: [Signature]  
Date: 25th September 2014

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: [Signature]  
Date: 25 Sep '14
Section A: School context

North Ainslie Primary School was built in 1958 and consists of two campuses. The main site in Ainslie has a preschool on site and is P-6, with another preschool situated in Hackett. North Ainslie also has an Introductory English Centre (IEC) and a Learning Support Unit (LSU) for students with autism. There are currently 560 students enrolled in the school with 65 students in the IEC. The Index of Community Socio-Economic Assessment (ICSEA) for North Ainslie is 1132, which is 132 points above the Australian average. The panel notes that the ICSEA value can have an effect on school resources and performance and indicates a level of educational advantage based on the educational and occupational indicators of parents. North Ainslie delivers the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IB PYP).

Demographics have changed over the school improvement cycle with mainstream enrolment growth of 25 percent in 2010. There was further growth of 17 percent between August 2012 and August 2013. Preschool enrolment of 41 percent has occurred since 2010. Over the life of the plan this has resulted in the need for six extra classes including one extra preschool session at the Hackett site. Two extra classes were required in the middle school over the last two years because of this growth. There are approximately 16 percent of students attending from out of the Priority Enrolment Area.

The school staffing profile consists of a principal, deputy principal, three School Leader Cs (SLC), 33 teachers and 11 administrative and general service officers. The current principal was appointed in December 2011 and the deputy principal was appointed in 2012. An Experienced Teacher of Professional Practice (ETPP) was appointed in 2014. With the rise in enrolments experienced through the school improvement cycle 10 new staff have joined the team including the appointment of the new principal and deputy principal.

Sixty different cultural groups are represented at North Ainslie with 25-35 percent of the school population with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) and four percent of the population identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Children with a range of disabilities attend the school, both in the LSU and mainstream classes. Five students are enrolled in the LSU, 10 students are resourced for inclusion support. There are 22 mainstream classes and five IEC classes (four preschool, four kindergarten six composite year 1/2, five composite year 3/4 and three composite year 5/6 classes. The physical environment is reaching the school capacity and adjustments to learning spaces have had to be made to accommodate extra classes and teacher planning areas.

Section B: School performance

North Ainslie has consistently received very high satisfaction data relating to parents, students and staff across the school improvement cycle. The parent satisfaction data has risen to noticeably above ACT P-6 school averages in 2013 for most items on the survey. Of particular note are the questions around ‘community partnerships are valued and maintained’ and ‘the school looks for ways to improve’, both statements generated responses that are ten percentage points stronger than ACT government P-6 schools. The panel noted the engagement of parents around the school with involvement in programs, activities and at special events.

Staff satisfaction in 2010 was at or below P-6 schools in response to ‘overall I am satisfied with my school’. In 2010, eighty-five percent of staff were satisfied compared to 98 percent in 2013. This is seven percentage points above the mean for ACT government P-6 schools. ‘There is effective communication amongst all staff’ rose from 75 percent in 2011 to 94 percent in 2013. ‘I
have opportunities to participate in decision making’ was eleven percentage points above the mean for ACT government P-6 schools. Teaching staff satisfaction linking to the leadership of the school increased over the life of the plan and was well above average for the ACT government P-6 schools. In all interactions with staff, the panel noted a sense of optimism and commitment to the work of the school.

In general, over the life of the School Plan, student satisfaction has been well above that of P-6 ACT government schools with a peak in the last 3 years. In 2013, 100 percent of students agreed ‘my teachers expect me to do my best’ and in relation to the item ‘my school takes students’ opinions seriously’ the response was 20 percentage points higher than all of ACT government P-6 schools.

Parents, students and staff agree that the school has high expectations with all three stakeholder groups reporting stronger perceptions than the average for ACT P-6 government schools.

Attendance rates for North Ainslie Primary School range from 92 percent in 2011 to 94 percent in 2013. The average for the ACT is 93 percent. Attendance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students also remain high with an average of 90 percent in 2011 to 96 percent in 2013.

The percentage of students achieving at or above expected progress in PIPS reading assessments has steadily increased over the school improvement cycle reaching 93 percent in 2013. PIPS mathematics results for 2013 showed 81 percent of kindergarten children achieving at or above expected growth which was higher than the previous two years.

National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results identify North Ainslie Primary School has achieved more than 50 percent of students in years 3 and 5 performing in the top 2 proficiency bands for reading for two consecutive years. The effectiveness of the schools programs is evident where 65 to 85 percent of students achieve equal to or better than expected growth in reading between years 3 and 5.

Growth results for spelling and grammar and punctuation have also been high ranging from 60 percent to 73 percent achieving equal to or better than expected growth between years 3 and 5.

The schools results for NAPLAN have been strong in reading. It is acknowledged that writing and numeracy remain areas for development in year 3. The panel also noted EALD students results are below ACT averages. This has been acknowledged by the school and remains an area of focus. Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) have been developed in consultation with parents and students to address learning needs for all students with special needs.

The panel was impressed with the extensive systematic data collected and utilised in the school.

The school tracks trends as well as the performance of individual students.

Evidence cited and its validation

The panel cited the following evidence that demonstrated school performance.

- School Board reports
- NAPLAN data
- ACT School Census August 2013
- School 2013 NAPLAN analysis
- PIPS data
• Satisfaction surveys.

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

PART 1: Improvement planning

The 2011-2014 North Ainslie Primary School Plan established the following priorities:

• to build a culture of consistent quality practice with high expectations for all students
• to strengthen a collaborative partnership between the community and the school in relation to student needs
• to align the Australian Curriculum, Primary Years Program, South Australian New Arrivals Program, Developmental Curriculum (Investigations Program), Early Years Learning Framework and Every Chance to Learn to improve student outcomes, and
• to establish effective educational preschool programs and community partnerships that enhance children’s learning and development.

The School Plan was developed in consultation with staff and relevant stakeholders. The school used a vast array of data collected at the school and the 2010 School Validation Report to inform their priorities. The priorities and strategies have remained consistent over the life of the plan. The targets for the third priority were rewritten in 2012 because the new leadership team believed the performance measures in the plan focused too little on evidence other than NAPLAN. The plan implementation was a shared responsibility between the executive and teachers. There was clear evidence of input by staff and understanding of their role in delivering outcomes.

The panel noted that executive regularly sought the views of staff, parents and students through system and school surveys, discussions at meetings and less formal forums such as Circle Time. These views informed the ongoing implementation of successive Annual Operating Plans, Annual School Board Reports and the Validation Reports.

Evidence cited and its validation

The panel cited the following evidence related to the goals of the school plan.

• NAPLAN data
• School Board reports
• 2010 School Validation Report
• Interviews with staff, parents and students
• Satisfaction surveys
• School data
• School information collected under each priority, and
• School resource room.

PART 2: Improvement actions

Priority 1 To build a culture of consistent quality practice with high expectations for all students

The targets set for this priority include:
• Achieve the predicted Education and Training Directorate NAPLAN targets in reading, writing and numeracy for students in years 3 and 5

• Achieve a two point improvement in the percentage of students achieving expected growth in all NAPLAN test results

• 100 percent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in years 3-5 achieve expected growth in NAPLAN.

• Maintain or improve the percentage of staff, parents and students who believe that ‘the school has high expectations in all that it does’

• Improve the percentage of teaching staff by 5 percentage points and other staff by 20 percentage points who believe that ‘I get constructive feedback about my practice’

• Improve the percentage of teaching staff by 2 percentage points who believe that ‘there are processes in place that support my practice’, and

• Maintain the percentage of teaching staff who believe that ‘staff at this school focus on improving the quality of the school’s teaching and learning practices’.

Four key improvement strategies were chosen because they were considered essential to building teacher capacity. These were:

• identify and clearly articulate standards and processes for best practice in all areas of the curriculum and school operation with particular emphasis on literacy and numeracy

• implementation of a systemic approach to school wide assessment and data collection

• strengthening the staff understanding of the coaching model to enhance quality teaching

• to embed an instructional leadership model and build upon the culture of reflective practice.

Standards and processes are clearly articulated to teachers through handbooks, essential agreements, communities of practice, resource room, workshop staff meetings, Teacher Talk, and See What Another Person is doing (SWAP). In discussion with the panel, staff spoke positively of their weekly planning meetings which are held in the resource room attached to the library. The school vision, International Baccalaureate principles and implementation inquiries, and Australian Curriculum information are all readily available for sharing with the whole school. This room is very well resourced with books, curriculum documents, planning tools, school planning documents and assessment information and is valued by staff. The access to quality resources ensures teachers are continuously using school documentation and are focused on the schools improvement agenda. Staff planning is valued as evidenced by the extra administrative time allocated to each teacher. These meetings rotate through literacy, numeracy and inquiry led by an expert in the area or an executive teacher.

School wide assessment and data collection processes are outstanding. The panel noted that clear connections are made between the data and classroom practice. For example, NAPLAN data has been collated for use with staff and community. It is also used to inform specialist resourcing in 2014 and to decide professional development priorities. The data is used in teacher planning sessions, rubrics, moderation, reports and workshops. The consistent use of a common assessment schedule and systems to record, monitor and discuss data in order to apply targeted interventions for literacy and numeracy have been used to inform programs.
Teachers are volunteering and applying for the opportunity to be involved in coaching in teacher identified areas for development with the expert of their choice. The coaching model is implemented in the following ways:

- **Break Out Sessions** where staff share with each other during scheduled staff meetings
- Collaborative curriculum planning
- Peer observations and feedback
- Instructional leadership ‘Walk Throughs’
- GROWTH Coaching
- Peer mentoring and coaching
- Professional pathways, and
- Executive mentor observations and feedback.

Instructional leadership has raised awareness of expertise within the school and continues to build professional capacity through the **Teacher Talk** model. **Teacher Talk** integrates the professional pathways process with a model of lesson observations, constructive feedback from peers and executives, coaching and the process of goal setting to improve teaching practice and raise learning outcomes for students.

The school has made significant achievements against set targets in raising stakeholder perception as measured by system satisfaction surveys over the life of the plan. Staff, students and parents responded higher than other ACT government P-6 schools and higher than the school’s previous results in 2013 when asked if ‘the school has high expectations in all that it does’. Results of staff response to questions such as ‘I get constructive feedback about my practice’, ‘there are processes in place to support my practice’ and ‘staff at this school focus on improving the quality of the school’s teaching practices’ have increased over the life of the plan and are consistently higher than other ACT government P-6 schools. The improvements in building a culture of quality practice have resulted in the school meeting the majority of ETD targets set in NAPLAN reading writing and numeracy for students in year 3 and 5.

**Priority 2**  
**To strengthen a collaborative partnership between the community and the school in relation to student needs**

The targets for this priority included:

- maintain or improve the percentage of parents who believe that:
  - community partnerships are valued and maintained, and
  - the individual needs of my child are catered for by the school.
- improve the percentage of teaching staff who agree or strongly agree that effective partnerships exist to support student needs (academic, social and emotional).
- maintain or improve the percentage of year 5/6 students who agree or strongly agree that their parents, teachers and the school community work together to help meet their needs (academic, social and emotional).

Key improvement strategies were to:

- develop professional competency of staff
• engage the community in positive organisational change
• create a community hub culture, and
• support learning pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

North Ainslie Primary School recognises the importance of addressing the mental health issues of students in order to effectively meet their learning needs. Staff professional learning addressing mental health issues of students is a priority to assist student case management and support. North Ainslie has been successful with their application for funding to introduce the Kids Matter Framework to the school. Bounce Back is a resilience program currently being used at the school along with social and emotional literacy and restorative practices to assist students.

North Ainslie Primary School teaching staff reached their target of improved ‘effective partnerships exist to support student needs’. In 2013, ninety percent of staff agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

The panel noted community partnerships have been successfully fostered through the establishment of a Healthy Eating Hub to improve well-being. North Ainslie was recognised with an ACT Health Promotion Award in 2013, which has led to the development of the Fresh Tastes program.

The community are working with executive to promote positive organisational change through communication practices, mentoring of students by volunteers such as the mecano, chess and gardening groups, class/parent representatives, and by involvement in negotiating personalised learning plans for every child at the school. A homework club has been established to assist students to achieve their goals when they are at risk, in particular the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Significant growth over the past two years has meant that the school has had to work hard to ensure the culture of the school is maintained. Class circles are used to strengthen collaborative partnerships with all parents and students in kindergarten to year 2.

In 2013, 94 percent of parents considered that ‘community partnerships are valued and maintained’. This is 11 percent above the ACT average for all government schools. Eighty-six percent of parents agree that ‘my child’s learning needs are being met at this school’. This is again above the ACT system average.

Student satisfaction survey data reflects significantly higher percentages than the ACT government schools percentage. Ninety-one percent of students agreed that ‘the parents, teachers and the school community work together to help meet their needs’.

Priority 3  To align the Australian Curriculum, Primary Years Program, South Australian New Arrivals Program, Developmental Curriculum (Investigation Program) and the Early Years Learning Framework to improve student outcomes

The targets for this priority included:
• Increase the percentage of students achieving a satisfactory standard or above in A-E assessments for all key learning areas by two percentage points from semester two of the previous year.
• Increase the percentage of kindergarten students making expected or better progress in PIPS assessments by two percentage points.

One of the key improvement strategies has been to strengthen the links and key planning processes in curriculum documents. Assessment rubrics and planning tools have been developed and align with the Australian Curriculum. They are used in every mainstream K-6 teaching team. Planning documents are on display throughout the school for teachers to facilitate focused curriculum design.

The second key improvement strategy was a focus on implementing collaboratively designed standards of differentiation in the curriculum. The school continues to design open-ended summative assessment tasks in units of inquiry. Streamed mathematics groups are organised but mathematics remains an area for further development especially for the EALD students.

A-E grades at North Ainslie have been moderated across year level teams using consistent rubrics and work samples generated by the school and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). In 2013 targets for improvement of two percentage points for satisfactory or above A-E assessments were not met in all areas, however the panel noted the overall positive results of students in the school. For example, 78 percent of year 5 received a 'C' grade or better for mathematics. Ninety percent of all students received a 'C' grade or better for health and physical education, languages, technology, science and the arts. Executive have noted this is an area for further investigation.

North Ainslie surpassed their target of kindergarten students making expected or better progress in PIPS assessments by two percentage points. The school experienced a seven percentage point improvement in mathematics and a 22 percentage point improvement in reading.

**Priority 4 to establish effective educational preschool programs and community partnerships that enhance children’s learning and development**

In 2013 progress was made in achieving the National Quality Standard (NQS) requirements in Educational Program and Practice, Relationships with Children, and Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities.

The improvement strategies prioritised by the school include:

• development of a preschool curriculum
• development of respectful and equitable relationships that support each child, and
• increase parent and community participation in learning partnerships.

The school considers the preschool educational team’s ongoing and regular collaboration to be a major achievement that has resulted in a cohesive, well aligned preschool program across four preschool sessions on two campuses. Curriculum documentation validated by the panel included inquiry planners, weekly teaching records, mapping tools and work samples. The curriculum aligns with the Early Years Learning Framework and IB PYP. Teachers design formative assessments to ensure each child’s individual development is taken into account.

Restorative practices are used to ensure respectful relationships are built between all students and to build an inclusive environment. Circle time is used in classrooms to embed restorative principles.
Parents are engaged in their children’s learning by being a part of units of inquiry. Learning Journeys are organised to bring parents to the preschool and celebrate their child’s work. Buddy programs and orientation programs are also successful partnerships run with the preschool.

Achievements towards the National Quality Standard for both preschools for 6.1, respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained, and 6.2, families are supported in their parenting role and their values and beliefs are respected, were met at both Hacket and North Ainslie sites.

**PART 3: Reflection**

The panel commends North Ainslie Primary School for its honest and indepth reflection of their journey for school improvement. There is a strong connection between professional learning, strategic planning and performance management goals. New school initiatives are implemented if they meet the requirements of the School Plan.

There is clear evidence that the school leadership have reflected on a variety of measures of school performance and used this data to inform planning for future improvement. Leadership and staff demonstrate a willingness to review data with a view to learning about and understanding how students are learning and the effectiveness of classroom practices in improving student outcomes. They have demonstrated a willingness to examine this information and rigorously engage with data regardless of whether it is pleasing or disappointing.

A focus on reflection has become embedded within the school culture incorporating the views of all stakeholders, including students, leadership, staff, the North Ainslie School Board and community members. This process has enabled the school improvement agenda to be informed by a variety of evidence.

The school leadership has been mindful of supporting staff through implementation of the improvement strategies by providing structures and executive support, which facilitate focused and productive collaboration amongst staff. The leadership are highly reflective of the importance of the need for this support and their role in providing it to staff through establishing supportive systems and structures.

**Evidence cited and its validation**

- Staff and student interviews
- Discussions with executive
- Walk throughs
- Resource room and classrooms
- Staff meeting documentation
- AOPs
- School Board Reports, and
- Curriculum planning documents.

**Section D: National tools self-evaluation results**

North Ainslie Primary School carried out the evaluation using the National School Improvement Tool. The school had an extensive consultation process with staff, executive and School Board.
The panel commends the strength in the domain of school and community partnerships. The panel concurs with the schools finding of strengths in these areas.

- There is a wide range of currently operating partnerships with each carefully planned to enhance student opportunities and outcomes in different areas.

- The school leadership team are driving a strong improvement agenda for the school that is grounded in evidence and is communicated clearly to all relevant stakeholders.

- The school has a coherent sequenced plan for curriculum delivery.

The school also undertook the National Safe Schools Audit Tool and the panel concurs with the strengths identified by the school. North Ainslie has policies and procedures in place to ensure student safety and well-being. Pastoral care and peer support structures play an important part, demonstrated in the enrichment, mediator and buddy programs and the school’s commitment to having a student welfare officer. The school demonstrates a commitment to a safe learning environment through the implementation of circle time, restorative practices, focus on the IB PYP learner profile attributes, attitudes and values, and the Kids Matter Framework.

The panel commends the school for the consultative process of their self evaluation. As an inquiry school the panel encourages North Ainslie to use the tools on an annual basis for self-reflection.

Section E: Commendations and recommendations

Commendations

North Ainslie Primary School is commended for the following.

- **There is a strong school commitment to learning for all staff and students.** Inquiry learning is embedded in practices across the school. The emphasis on Communities of Practice has facilitated a whole staff approach to evidenced based practice.

- **The strong and united executive leadership team promotes a clear vision.** As a result there is a positive learning culture and a strong and clear sense of direction for the school which is shared by all stakeholders in the school – staff, students and community.

- **There is a strong sense of community amongst all stakeholders at the school.** This is reflected in highly valued and strong community partnerships such as the Healthy Eating Hub and volunteer programs. This is also evident in the sense of community amongst staff from the various sectors and programs such as preschool, IEC and mainstream staff.

- **The significant achievements in alignment of curriculum mapping.** Staff have collaborated and put extensive effort into developing a curriculum and assessment process that is aligned with the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program with the Australian Curriculum, preschool Early Years Framework and the New Arrivals Program.

- **The outstanding leadership of the principal and her leadership team has developed and is driving an explicit and detailed local school improvement agenda.** There has been clear evidence to the panel that the principal leadership of a strong unified community has been the driver for the successful school improvement of North Ainslie. The creativity and passion, strategic thinking and positive vision displayed by the executive team, in particular the principal has been pivotal to the directions of the school.
Recommendations

The panel recommends North Ainslie Primary School takes action on the following opportunities for improvement in the coming planning cycle.

• **Sustain and fully embed evidence and inquiry based practice.** The panel recognises the great progress made in this area and concurs with the school's assessment that further development will build professional capacity and improve student outcomes for the 21st Century. This includes further strengthening staff capacity for the effective use of student data including formative and summative assessment to inform learning and teaching in the classroom.

• **Facilities planning will need to align with the school strategic vision in order to provide flexible structures and spaces to enable the school to respond appropriately to the needs of a growing student population.** North Ainslie is experiencing significant growth linked to their strong reputation within the community. The requirement for additional learning spaces provides the school with an opportunity to further achieve its vision through the strategic design and implementation of these facilities.

• **Ensure that new staff are inducted into the specific and unique programs of Ainslie Primary School.** The IB PYP, restorative practices and Communities of Practice are examples of programs and approaches that make the school unique and require specific induction and training to maintain their ongoing integrity.

• **Place a high priority on the differentiation of numeracy.** The school has a focus on inquiry in numeracy practice. The panel confirms the school's assessment that further strategic priorities include a focus on this area, in particular for EALD students.