EXTERNAL VALIDATION REPORT 2013

for

NAMADGI SCHOOL
Record of Validation Process

The following people were members of the external validation panel for Namadgi School conducted on 31 July and 1 August 2013.

Name: David McCarthy  School: Belconnen High School
Name: Robin Morrell  School: Lyneham High School
Name: Jason Sepetauc  School: St. Edmunds 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: David McCarthy
Signature: [Signature]
Date: 2/9/13

As co-principals of Namadgi School, we accept the Validation Report on behalf of the school community.

Name: Pam Rosser and Charlie Morrice
Signature: [Signature]  Date: 2/9/2013
Signature: [Signature]  Date: 2 Sept 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: [Signature]  Date: 2 Sep '13
Section A: School context

Namadgi School opened in 2011 as a new P-10 school in the ACT suburb of Kambah. The school was built on the site previously occupied by Kambah High School, which was closed along with Mt. Neighbour, Urambui and Village Creek Primary schools in line with the Towards 2020: Renewing our Schools initiative.

The school opened with a staff of thirty-eight Teachers, twenty support staff and 489 students enrolled from Preschool to Year seven. This has grown to a staff of fifty-eight Teachers, thirty support staff and 678 students from Preschool to Year nine in 2013. The diverse student population includes ten percent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, nine percent English as an Additional Language or Dialect and represents an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value that is below the ACT mean. The school will accommodate its complete cohort of students (P-10) in 2014, including: an Early Intervention Playgroup, Early Childhood Intervention Centre, two Preschools (one operating off-site), Learning Support Unit – Autism (LSUA) and junior and senior Learning support Units (LSU).

The school was established by two Co- Principals appointed in 2010. In Term three of 2012 one of the Co- Principals left the school and a new Co- Principal was substantively appointed for the start of 2013 school year. Other changes in leadership positions include seven different Deputy Principals in the two positions. The Co- Principals now lead a stable executive team comprising of two Deputy Principals and six Executive Teachers including a Literacy Field Officer and a Behaviour Support Partner.

The school’s first strategic plan was developed in 2010-11, This resulted in the formulation of three priority areas that was later revised to two in consultation with Education and Training Directorate.

In Term one of 2012, Taylor Primary School (over 200 students and staff), due to severe storm damage to the school, was unexpectedly relocated to the Namadgi site. Taylor Primary School currently operates as a separate school, occupying buildings and playground areas at Namadgi School. It is expected that the Taylor Primary School site will reopen for the 2014 school year. This has resulted in accommodations made by the communities of both schools and for the purpose of this report, has had significant bearing on the timeline for the establishment of Namadgi School. The panel commends the communities of both schools for the admirable way in which these accommodations have been made and in particular the efforts made by staff to ensure the learning of the students of both schools has not been adversely affected.

Section B: School performance

As a young school (opening 2011) Namadgi School has not yet had the opportunity to collect and respond to trend data in the areas of literacy and numeracy, which were together identified as a school strategic priority area. Several sources of data provide insight into literacy and numeracy baselines from P-8. There was limited data available for Year nine at the time this report was compiled.

Namadgi School’s second strategic priority area is the development of productive relationships between students, staff, parents and the wider community. Several data sources indicate the school is making progress towards the achievement of the performance targets related to this priority.
Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) results reveal an improvement in reading results since 2011 with eighty-five percent of kindergarten students achieving expected or above expected growth. The percentage of students not achieving growth was fourteen percent in 2011 and seven percent in 2012.

Analysis of the School’s Year three, Year five and Year seven National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data from 2011 and 2012 reveals the need for an ongoing commitment to the development of literacy and numeracy.

Emerging evidence in the form of professional pathway records is supplying data for subsequent literacy and numeracy decision-making. These will be augmented by further work with staff and the collation of surveys and Markbook data.

Staff, Student and Parent Satisfaction surveys highlight the following points. A context to these opportunities identified is provided in later sections.

- In general staff, students and parents support the school.
- Eighty-seven percent of parent respondents indicated their child was encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour with seventy six percent of parents also stating they knew the school values and goals. These are similar to system averages.
- Seventy-five percent of parent respondents indicated a growing level of satisfaction with the celebration their child’s achievements in the school. These are similar to system averages.
- Parents would like to see effective student behaviour management (fifty-one percent).
- Sixty-nine percent of students feel they are getting a good education with eighty-five percent feeling supported by teachers. These are similar to system averages.
- Ninety-four percent of students believe the facilities to be of high quality. This is significantly above the system average.
- The school can build its capacity to assist students who feel harassed (forty-eight percent).
- One hundred percent of staff understood the values of the school with ninety-seven percent of them having high expectations for students. These are marginally above system averages.
- The staff survey results suggest opportunities exist to clarify communication among staff (thirty-three percent) and with parents (forty-three percent).

**Evidence cited and its validation**

Namadgi School Enrolment Map
Pre School Retention Figures
System derived National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) Performance Targets
2011 and 2012 NAPLAN Summaries
Elaboration on 2012 NAPLAN Results
2009-2011, 2012 Parents, Teacher and Staff Satisfaction Survey Results
Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

PART 1: Improvement planning

With the appointment of Co- Principals in Term three, 2010 the goal-setting plan was developed using the four domains of Leadership and Management, Teaching and Learning, Student Environment and Community Involvement. A total of ten goals were created in order to guide the Co- Principals in the establishment of the school. In 2011 these goals were combined and refined into the School Plan 2011 – 2014 from which were drawn the Annual Operating Plans. The original School Plan had three priorities; however through consultation with the directorate two of these original priorities were merged to leave two key priority areas, which have formed the primary focus of school development efforts since 2011.

Priority area one: Improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students

Priority area two: Develop positive and productive relationships between students, staff, parents and the wider community.

The process used by the school to address these priority areas has been to set up working parties which addressed the priorities. The school also used Quality Learning Australia to work with the Co- Principals to engage parents, staff and students in the development of a shared vision, values and direction for the new school.

Evidence cited and its validation

Working Parties 2011-2012
QLA Proposal - Engaging staff, students and the community in developing shared values and direction for the new Kambah P-10 School.

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

PART 2: Improvement actions

Priority Area 1: Improving the literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students

The school established the following performance measures:

• NAPLAN mean scores in reading, writing and numeracy
• School-based reading benchmark data
• NAPLAN scaled score growth for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The school has invested time and resources in exploring a variety of specific pedagogies and approaches to be used school wide in the teaching of literacy and numeracy. The Co-Principals demonstrated a commitment to embedding the use of Understanding by Design (UbD) as a curriculum planning tool through whole school professional learning. Further professional learning opportunities are being investigated using UbD.

The following actions were undertaken:
• develop capacity of staff to deliver high quality teaching through instructional leadership
• develop a whole school approach to teaching of literacy and numeracy
• build curriculum knowledge.

The PIPS results reveal an improvement in reading results since 2011 with eighty-five percent of kindergarten students achieving expected or above expected growth. The percentage of students not achieving growth was fourteen percent in 2011 and seven percent in 2012. Analysis of the school’s Year three and Year five NAPLAN data from 2011 and 2012 reveals the need for an ongoing commitment to the development of literacy and numeracy.

The school has responded to results and growth figures below the ACT mean by implementing and supporting several ongoing programs. These programs include but are not limited to:

• Parent Partnerships
• Understanding by Design (UbD) curriculum writing methodology
• Words Their Way ACT Education and Training Directorate Literacy and Numeracy Learning Action Project
• Read A Partner Program (RAP), PACE Workshop for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, Indigenous Book Swap, First Steps Writing, InSinc, Tactical Teaching, Lexile Reading, Guided Reading, Cooperative Reading, Mathletics, Daily 5, Quicksmart, Count Me In Too, Capacity Matrices, speech therapy programs with Therapy ACT.

The school has delivered targeted professional learning for staff in a range of literacy and numeracy programs. The panel commends the school on providing the opportunity for staff and recommends that they prioritise, consolidate then embed a reduced number of programs to deliver the best learning outcomes for students. The Co-Principals indicated the need to have a consistent approach and results from action research would inform the appropriate programs to be implemented.

From the 2011 Annual Operating Plan report it was noted that the Year five NAPLAN results reached the target. For Year seven the results were below target but above that of the Tuggeranong region. The growth in reading and numeracy from Year five to Year seven was above the Territory and Network means. Growth in writing and spelling indicates possible development in these areas. The target eighty-five percent of Kindergarten students meeting in reading were not reached. In 2012 NAPLAN targets were not met for Year five Reading and Numeracy and Year seven Numeracy. The target of eighty-five percent of all students reach minimum Namadgi School benchmark in reading was not met for Kindergarten to Year four. The panel concurs with school’s assessment indicating that the targets were set before the school opened may have been unrealistic and this is a reflection of the absence of baseline data.
A Literacy and Numeracy Officer was appointed in 2013. The Literacy and Numeracy Officer has expanded the approaches to literacy and numeracy achievement. The Data Wall, tracking PM reading benchmarks for K – 5 students, provides an excellent visual tool for identification of students who require intervention and support.

The panel noted the use of the Quality Learning tool Capacity Matrices. A demonstration by two Year 5 students in the use of the matrix gave evidence of student directed learning and student engagement. Conversations with the Deputy Principals indicated the desire to extend this style of teaching into the middle school. The panel commends the school on the implementation of Understanding by Design (UbD) in the development of their teaching programs.

With the implementation of the Australian Curriculum, the recently appointed School Leader B (SLB) for the secondary school is identifying key personnel to be subject specialists in the phase one Australian Curriculum subjects (English, History, Mathematics and Science). These teachers attend network meetings and guide other teachers in the development of scope and sequence documents and the teaching program. The panel commends the SLB for her drive and enthusiasm and recommends the clear documentation and articulation of these key people to the whole school community and parents in particular, to assist with curriculum queries.

The school recognised a lack of effective use of data systems and that GradeExpert did not meet the needs of staff for tracking students. Therefore the Data Reference group purchased Markbook Accelerus in 2013.

Priority Area two: Develop positive and productive relationships between students, staff, parents and the wider community.

The school established the following performance measures:

- parent, staff and student satisfaction regarding communication as measured by system surveys
- student attendance.

The closure of four primary schools and the high school resulted in much anxiety from the local community. The Co-Principals recognised the importance of developing positive and productive relationships between students, staff and in particular parents and the wider community. The evidence indicated that the change from separate, traditional Pre-schools, primary schools and a high school was confronting for many parents. Of particular concern for parents was the interaction of the very young students with teenage students. The panel commends the school on the successful engagement of community in addressing these concerns through development of the school visions and values.

The following actions were undertaken:

- Develop a shared school mission and vision statement
- Develop effective decision-making structure at parent and student level
- Develop effective communications strategies, which allow the sharing of information in relation to child’s academic, social and emotional needs
- Provide opportunities for collaborative learning with all members of the school community

In 2012 the target set by the school was eighty-five percent of parents are satisfied in relation to: community partnerships are valued, communication between the school and parents is
effective, and they receive appropriate information about their child’s learning. Although these targets were not met, the panel commends the school on the involvement of the community in the development of the vision and the school values. The values were highly visible around the school; students and staff can articulate them.

A Parent Partnership program has been developed by one of the kindergarten teachers with the goal to engage parents in their child’s learning. All kindergarten parents were given training on how to help their child at home. Examples of weekly help sheets were shown to the panel. Individual targeted support is now offered to parents. To ensure good communications between the school and parents, particularly those of younger students the principals greet arriving students each morning and all kindergarten students are dismissed from the canteen so teachers can meet informally with parents.

A number of community programs have been established at the school, for example Namadgical, knitting and breakfast clubs, Celebration Week and the Graduation of Year 8 from Middle School.

**Evidence cited and its validation**

School Plan 2011-2014
Annual Operating Plan Reports 2011, 2012
Annual Operating Plans 2011 – 2013
2011, 2012 Namadgi Annual School Board Reports
Validation interviews conducted with Staff and Students.

**Section C: School improvement planning and implementation**

**PART 3: Reflection**

Evidence provided to the validation panel comprehensively demonstrated substantial reflection on the establishment and subsequent development of the school. In particular, the school has reflected upon its vision and the significant events and changes that have influenced the daily implementation of the vision. These include changes in key staff and the relocation of Taylor Primary School. The panel commends the leadership team for its reflection.

The reflections clearly articulate both the achievements made and the lessons learnt for the school’s continued development. In particular, the focus by the leadership team to establish a culture with the staff of continual review and improvement of the school’s direction, policies and procedures.

Through its reflection the school has identified a number of steps forward.

- The school will seek greater input for staff and students in relation to school improvement.
- The school executive was consolidated in Term 2 of 2013 and hence further opportunities exist to distil the school improvement goals and process with the new team.
- Responsibilities for roles related to school improvement are to be clearly articulated among the senior executive.
• There is a need to link school improvement through the Strategic Plan to professional pathways and professional learning.
• A map of current school programs will be created to look for gaps in meetings the needs of students.
• There is a need to streamline evidence collection and make it purposeful in meeting agreed priorities.

Evidence cited and its validation
School Strategic Plan 2011 – 2014
Annual School Board Reports 2011 – 2012
Operational plans 2011 – 2013
School Evaluation Matrix
Interviews with School staff and students.

Section D: Commendations and recommendations

COMMENDATIONS
The panel commends Namadgi School for:

1. The manner in which they have built a new school. Of note is a whole school commitment to collaboratively created school values and the establishment of an enriching culture. The School’s capacity to achieve substantial early success is even more commendable given changes to executive staffing and the unexpected tenure of Taylor Primary School on the campus

2. Embedding the use of the Understanding by Design (UbD) curriculum planning tool across the school and supporting its ongoing development among all staff through continued professional learning opportunities

3. Strategies employed to engage parents and community in the development of school, specifically student learning

4. Targeting improved literacy and numeracy outcomes through ongoing professional learning and the delivery of a variety of programs to students across multiple year levels

5. The use of data such as PIPS and PM Benchmark data to inform the learning programs in the years K-5.

RECOMMENDATIONS
The panel recommends that Namadgi School:

2. At the commencement of 2014, once Taylor Primary return to their original site and the full complement of secondary school cohorts occupies their facilities, the school is encouraged to:

   • Evaluate and rationalise the current development of school direction, policies and procedures, for example the number of literacy programs being used throughout the school
• clearly define the roles and responsibilities of executive staff
• continue development and documentation of the curriculum, particularly for the secondary school.

3. Prioritise the embedding of established goals and initiatives and that it continues the use of consultative processes to establish a clear agreed position, with all relevant stakeholders, before embarking on new directions.

4. Continue the use of the Understanding by Design (UbD) planning tool to develop the secondary school curriculum as it aligns with the Australian Curriculum.

5. Extend the successful use of data to inform learning outcomes currently being employed in the primary school into the secondary school.

6. Continue to build communication networks with parents and community to affirm the strong school values and culture and to improve student learning.