EXTERNAL VALIDATION REPORT 2013

for

HUGHES PRIMARY SCHOOL
Record of Validation Process

The following people were members of the external validation panel for Hughes Primary School conducted on 12 and 13 August 2013.

Name: Fran Dawning      School: Neville Bonner Primary School
Name: Melinda Hall-O’Brien  School: Rosary
Name: Niels Hider         School: Amaroo 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: Fran Dawning

Signature: [Signature] Date: 25-9-2013

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

Name: Kate Smith

Signature: [Signature] Date: 25-9-2013

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: Jane Kovacs

Signature: [Signature] Date: 11-10-2013
Section A: School context

Hughes Primary School is a preschool to year 6 school, established in 1964. It has a current enrolment of 354 students, comprising mainstream, four permanent Introductory English Units (IEUs) and a Learning Support Unit-Autism (LSUA).

The EIUs serve approximately sixty students at any one time, with most students exiting the program after twenty weeks. Most of the students transition back to their home area school, thus creating an on-going transient population at the school, in conjunction with the more stable mainstream cohort.

The LSUA provides a specialist program for seven students, and includes integration within the mainstream setting.

Both the EIU and LSUA are viewed by the school as opportunities within the inclusive culture, to celebrate and value diversity. Over fifty eight percent of the student population come from backgrounds where English is not the first language. Harmony Day is a highlight of the school year bringing together a broad range of cultures and beliefs in a day of great celebration. The school describes productive relationships with a number of Embassies, many of which have children attending the school.

The school environment and character is vibrant and busy, with a wide range of learning offerings for the students, including a strong drama program, Japanese language and environmental education. The school has a commitment to the arts in education, and its focus on student well-being is evident.

The preschool is located across the road and is linked to the main site via an ‘under road’ walkway. The percentage of preschool students continuing to kindergarten at the school is steadily increasing.

Over the last four years the school has undergone a considerable period of change, including transition to new leadership and enhancements to the staffing composition. This has provided opportunity for renewal and strategic change.

Change has also featured in the physical structures of the school buildings, which are currently undergoing an ‘older schools upgrade’. The school is looking forward to the opportunities provided by this upgrade to further their renewal of teaching and learning practices, for example architecture which lends itself to team and collegial practice.

The playground has been refreshed to include planting of one hundred trees to celebrate the Centenary of Canberra, and new imaginary play areas. Community engagement in these initiatives has been strong.

Indigenous Australian cultures are recognised through the school Mudi Mob, which has provided visual displays and programs, supported through family participation.

Since the establishment of the School Plan, four years ago, the Network model has developed across ACT public schools. Hughes Primary School has sought to develop partnerships with other Network schools, including Malkara Specialist School, to further enhance student outcomes.
Section B: School performance

Information about the students’ learning has been collected and collated through a range of sources including school, system and national based data sets.

School performance data evidenced by the National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) over time indicates strong performance across all key areas of testing (literacy and numeracy). The school undertakes analysis of the data to inform teaching practices and teacher development programs. Growth achieved for within school matched students has shown for three consecutive cohorts the school has achieved an increase in the percentage of students who achieved expected growth in reading. Improvement is also evident in spelling with the scaled score growth in spelling, rising from being below the ACT by 11 scaled score points to just 1.3.

The school is to be congratulated on its strong profile in regard to comparative results. The school is intending to build on its analysis of the data to further identify learning opportunities for a range of cohorts of students.

The Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) Kindergarten data demonstrates value added learning, particularly in the years between 2009 and 2011. A narrowing of the ‘value added’ outcomes occurred in 2012, as the school transitioned the programs and pedagogy in the early years learning. The ‘end of year’ data analysis is impacted upon by the change in student population throughout the year, due to its transient nature.

The school maintains school based student data to inform decisions about learning. This data set includes reading benchmarks, Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT), South Australian spelling assessments as well as pre and post mathematics tests, Count Me IN Too and First Steps Maps of Development. For example, the reading benchmark data from 2011 and 2012 indicates a steady growth, within each year, of students achieving at or above school benchmarks, when mid year and end of year data is compared. The data set has assisted the school in providing targeted enrichment programs and in guiding curriculum differentiation practices.

Students with additional needs have learning ‘smart’ goals that are enacted through their individual learning plans, in conjunction with parents/carers. The progress of students in the IEC is monitored against the English as a Second Language scales. The school is currently examining ways to enhance and develop the assessment strategies used to support learning for students in the LSUA.

Stakeholder perceptions are positive and show growth over the four year period against selected indicators, for example: students’ response to “I feel safe at this school” has increased form 87% to 94% of surveyed students (years 5 and 6) over the period. Informal collection of parent/carer indicated a very high satisfaction rate with the education provided by the school. There has also been significant improvement over time with teacher satisfaction data, for example, responses to “I get constructive feedback about my practice” has increased from 47% in 2010 to 95% in 2012.

The School has commenced engagement with other measures, such as the National School Improvement Tool, to gain deeper insights into school performance. A discussion amongst a small group of staff indicated agreement that the school “sits within either the Outstanding or High levels” across the tool. In particular the group’s self rating noted strengths in the areas of:

- An explicit improvement agenda
• Targetted use of school resources
• Effective pedagogical practices
• Systematic curriculum delivery
• School community partnerships
• A culture that promotes learning.

The school has demonstrated its commitment to continuing to develop systemic practices that measure and analyse the effectiveness of the processes and programs utilised in the school.

Evidence cited and its validation

2009 – 2012 PIPS Data
2010 – 2012 NAPLAN Data
2010 – 2012 School Satisfaction Surveys
2013 Informal evaluation of key satisfaction criteria (low sample size)
2010 – 2013 ETD Census and enrolment data.

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

PART 1: Improvement planning

Over the last four year period, a number of factors have influenced the development of the school priorities. These include Directorate imperatives, Federal Government initiatives and school and community changes.

The school has strategically streamlined the priorities over the last four years to enable it to focus on three key achievable areas. These are:

1. Improve outcomes for all students:
   • Strengthen pedagogy and assessment
   • Develop a collaborative and professional learning culture within the school and across networks.

2. Develop an inclusive, respectful and safe school environment that meets the wellbeing needs of all students:
   • Strengthen whole school to social and emotional development of students
   • Develop a collaborative and professional learning culture within the school and across networks.

3. Achieve improved transition pathways of HPS students:
   • Strengthen pedagogy and create familiarisation.

The school has documented its growth across these priority areas and in the Annual Operating Plans and Board Reports.

The school has provided evidence outlining how members across the school community (staff, parents/carers and student) were actively engaged in school improvement planning.
Over the life of the School Plan, necessary changes to measures and targets have occurred due to the school staffing and leadership changes. New targets have been set along with some new and/or streamlined priorities to match the changing needs of the school. Over the life of the School Plan, the number of priorities has been revised to reduce the original eight to a more manageable three.

The three revised priorities are:

- Improve outcomes for all students
- Develop an inclusive, respectful and safe environment that meets the wellbeing needs of students
- Achieve improved transition pathways of Hughes Primary School students.

**Evidence cited and its validation**

2009 – 2012 Annual Operating Plans

Folders containing:

- planning documents
- curriculum documents
- minutes of meetings
- records of decisions
- evidence of communication with families
- timetables outlining teaching and learning processes

Photographic evidence located around the school

GO Maths Test Results

2012 OLSAT Overview

2012 and 2013 PM Benchmarks

M100W data

2010 – 2013 SA Spelling data

List of Professional Learning activities.

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

**PART 2: Improvement actions**

**Priority 1: Improve outcomes for all students**

Hughes Primary School has taken specific actions to improve outcomes for all students through strengthening pedagogy and assessment, and developing a collaborative and professional learning culture within the school and across the networks.

The panel acknowledged the implementation of a number of strategies to establish a whole school approach in the key areas of literacy and numeracy. These included the employment of “Go Maths” as a key school wide resource, the development of agreed strategies in the
provision of student feedback, dedicated Literacy Learning Block and targeted reading strategies. All these initiatives were supported by staff professional learning community information.

This has resulted in the development of a shared understanding of what constitutes effective planning, teaching, assessing, moderating and monitoring of reading. There is focus on every teacher being accountable for improving individual student outcomes in reading. Team leaders more closely monitor individual and class data to inform practice. There is greater differentiation of learning, including challenge opportunities for students.

The school achieved the set attendance target of 30 percent of parents from each class attending information evenings. One hundred percent of staff reported that they include the use of authentic text elements to improve spelling outcomes in their pathways goals.

Twenty percent of year 3-6 students demonstrated improvement in their spelling scores using the South Australian spelling test.

The panel noted that the school through analysis of their assessment data has identified the spelling as an area for future growth. An external expert has been engaged to build staff capacity to strengthen curriculum and pedagogy in the teaching and learning of spelling.

The school has been made a lead school in History for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

**Priority 2: Develop an inclusive, respectful and safe school environment that meets the wellbeing needs of all students.**

The panel noted several whole school strategies were deployed for meeting the wellbeing needs of all students. These included a visual record of a wide range of students’ achievements, events and celebrations, enhancements to the school playground to encourage collaborative play, and a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities for students.

The panel recognised that the school’s approach to supporting the social and emotional development of students as an area of strength, with programs such as restorative practice, CARE program, buddies, ‘You Can Do It’ forming positive relationships between students.

The formation of the Mudi Mob is acknowledged by the panel as an excellent vehicle for celebrating and sharing the cultural identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The leadership team has built a strong collaborative and professional learning culture which is evidenced by staff engagement in a wide range of learning initiatives designed to build the capacity of teachers to provide challenging learning opportunities for students. Documentation shows that teaching plans are evaluated by executive and that feedback is given.

**Priority 3: Achieve improved transition pathways for HPS students.**

There are a number of transition points for students of Hughes Primary School. These include preschool to early childhood, Lyons Early Childhood School to Hughes Primary School, early childhood to primary, primary to high school, and IEC to Hughes Primary School or other schools.

A strategic orientation program has resulted in an increase from 70 percent of parents indicating that their children would transition to kindergarten form preschool at Hughes Primary, in 2010 to 84 percent in 2013. This orientation program operates across the year and involves reciprocal learning opportunities between Preschool and K-2 students.
The transition from year 2 to 3 involves a collaborative model to support successful transitions from year 2 to 3 at Hughes Primary. This also targets the transition of new students from Lyons Early Childhood School.

Evidence cited and its validation

2009 – 2012 Annual Operating Plans

Folders containing:

- Board reports
- planning documents
- curriculum documents
- minutes of meetings
- records of decisions
- evidence of communication with families
- timetables outlining teaching and learning processes

Photographic evidence located around the school

GO Maths Test Results

2012 OLSAT Overview

2012 and 2013 PM Benchmarks

M100W data

2010 – 2013 SA Spelling data

List of Professional Learning activities

Interviews with staff, leadership team members and Board Chair.

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

PART 3: Reflection

The documentation, visual and verbal evidence provided to the panel was reflective of the school’s growth as a place of learning, through a period of change and uncertainty. This period of uncertainty was associated with school leadership changes and changing system expectations.

The panel congratulates the school on its recent focus (2012-13) to further build relationships across the school community, resulting in an invigorated school ‘spirit’. The school embarked on many projects and initiatives, including playground improvements to support creative play, drama program, alliances with other schools, communication protocols, strengthened teaching and learning practices and improved transition processes. The school is currently undergoing an ‘older school upgrade’, making way for contemporary learning spaces and team teaching opportunities.

The panel concurs with the school’s reflection on the positive impact of reviewing the School Plan to develop a more manageable ‘thin’ set of priorities, providing the school the opportunity to better target areas for growth.
The panel commends the school on its development of an intentional pathway to the next stages of growth and improvement, building on the quality relationships and student centred focus. The panel congratulates the school on its developing professional learning culture and the way in which it highlights the commitment to this culture as key to its continued improvement of student outcomes.

**Evidence cited and its validation**

School Improvement Plans 2010 -2013
Operational Plans 2011 -2013
Interviews with staff, leadership team members and Board Chair.

**Section D: Commendations and recommendations**

The School Improvement Team is to be congratulated on its preparation of the validation documentation, particularly the clarity with which the school’s changing priorities over time, have been analysed and articulated. There was alignment across the provision of written evidence, discussions with Leadership team members, staff and Board Chair.

**COMMENDATIONS**

1. High quality and visible documentation of student participation and achievements is evident throughout the school, creating a strong sense of student centred practice. This is demonstrated by the representation of children’s work through photography, art work and displays of authentic learning samples throughout the school.

2. The development of the collaborative and professional learning culture within the school has assisted in the growth of school-wide agreed learning and teaching strategies targeted to improve learning outcomes of each child within the diverse context of the school.

3. The successful implementation of a broad range of initiatives to engage the community: This has provided opportunities for celebrations, partnerships and building of school identity.

4. The strategic implementation of a selection of new practices has provided a more effective and consistent whole school approach to the teaching of literacy and numeracy.

5. The development of an inclusive learning framework within a complex school setting, involving the Intensive English Centre, off site Preschool, LSU (Autism) as well as mainstream junior and senior schools, has resulted in a strong sense of belonging and connectedness across all entities.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Ensure that the culture of continuous improvement is fostered through school processes that support both the long term sustainability of programs and continued staff commitment.

2. Develop an enhanced approach for the analysis and use of student learning data to inform teaching practice, including a focus on the impact of teaching practices on particular groups of students, for example, students from culturally diverse backgrounds, high achieving students.
3. Further the development of the alignment between the planning of learning programs and current and future phases of the Australian Curriculum. It is suggested that greater emphasis be placed on school wide planning utilizing the Australian Curriculum.

4. Ensure the culture of continuous improvement is informed by, and strategically linked to measurable targets. The panel suggests that the next School Plan focuses on succinct targets that are readily measureable and able to be reported against, providing the school with a comprehensive picture of improvement.

5. Further develop the links between the Intensive English Centre and mainstream through a targeted English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) curriculum perspective which is implicit in all school wide planning and practice. The panel encourages the school to continue its work to develop the capacity of all staff (teachers and assistants Pre school to Year 6) to implement pedagogy that is inclusive of, and responsive to the learning needs and styles of EAL/D learners.