ACT
Government

Education and Training

EXTERNAL VALIDATION REPORT 2015

for

GUNGAHLIN COLLEGE

Introduction: Overview of the Validation process

As part of the Territory's school improvement approach, public schools and colleges in the Australian Capital Territory are required to participate in an External Validation process every four years. This document captures the findings of the panel during this cycle of validation.

In broad terms, the panel sought to determine, through evaluation and validation, the extent to which the school is meeting its agreements, achieving its priorities, and addressing its challenges: in the context of a continuously improving educational environment.

External Validation was conducted over three days and involved a wide variety of data gathering approaches including observations, interviews and documentation. This approach provided evidence for the panel to consider against the nine inter-related domains in the National School Improvement Tool that informed our commendations and recommendations.

Section A: School context

Gungahlin College was opened in 2011, with an initial year 11 cohort of 308 student and 40 staff members. In 2012, with the commencement of the first year 12 cohort the numbers of students and staff effectively doubled. Gungahlin College has continued to grow faster than anticipated, currently accommodating 990 students and 86 staff members. Enrolments are anticipated to continue to grow as Gungahlin and surrounding suburbs become more populous. Gungahlin is currently the fastest growing region in Australia. Gungahlin College's ICSEA has remained constant over the life of the plan and was 1075 in 2013.

Gungahlin College has been built in the Gungahlin town centre. It shares facilities with the town library, including heating and maintenance of grounds, and Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT). Due to its proximity to the town centre, and access by the general public to some of these areas, Gungahlin College students are expected to wear a uniform both as a way of establishing a strong sense of community within the college, and also to help differentiate students from the general public, who also are able to access sections of the Gungahlin College precinct.

The college was established with the express intent of being a school that innovates with the design of its facilities, use of technology and pedagogical practices. This intent coupled with the rapid growth of the college has combined to create an exciting and dynamic college. The rate of change in the size of the college has created many logistical challenges. Managing these challenges has resulted in a circumstance where many practices and procedures, which in established schools would be relatively stable, have been required to change annually.

Since the initial planning and opening of the college, the school based Empowerment model used to manage the staffing of the college has gone through a number of changes initiated at the Directorate level; this has added an extra layer of complexity to the management of the college during its establishment phase.

Within this context of continual change, the college has been guided by a strong and consistent student centred culture reflected through pastoral care programs and a collaborative work ethos which value the role and contribution of each member of the school community. While the processes in the college have consistently changed over the course of the plan the leadership vision, cultural imperatives and focus that has guided the changes has provided a solid foundation for the successful establishment of the college.

The college currently has three feeder schools, Gold Creek, Amaroo and Harrison schools. Each of these feeder schools are P-10 Super-Schools whose students are likely to have never

experienced a school-to-school transition process. The college attracts approximately 25 percent of their student population from other geographical areas in Canberra and the surrounding NSW districts. The student population comprises 30 percent from language backgrounds other than English with a small population of students identifying as being from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

Gungahlin College currently provides an extensive curriculum (76 courses) that has expanded over the past four years and currently features six languages and specialised courses such as Flight, Global Studies, Mechatronics and Theory of Knowledge. The building design incorporates an ICT-rich physical learning environment and includes flexible learning hubs for collaborative learning, a media centre with TV and photography studios, a performing arts theatre with dance and drama studios, specialist music and visual arts facilities, a full commercial kitchen, fitness centre and gymnasium. Typical teaching and learning within the college involves significant use of interactive whiteboards (IWBs), wireless devices and use of an online learning platform, *Schoology*. In 2015, the school initiated a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy.

The year 10 SMART program was introduced in 2012 as part of the ETD Excellence and Enterprise initiative. This selective program is aimed at year 10 students with keen interest and ability in Science, Mathematics and Related Technologies (SMART). Year 10 students study full-time at Gungahlin College, completing their Year 10 Certificate and have the opportunity to commence year 11 courses while in year 10.

Gungahlin College is also a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and has been scoped to deliver and accredit student qualifications in a range of vocational courses.

Section B: School performance

Gungahlin College is a young school with only three cohorts of year 12 students graduating thus far. The college has access to a limited set of student data from which it is only possible to identify emergent rather than clear trends in the data. All results need to be read in this context.

The academic performance of Gungahlin College has so far shown a positive emerging trend with the number of Year 12 Certificate Receivers increasing from 85 to 91 percent which has been maintained.

The percentage of Year 12 Certificate Receivers receiving a Tertiary Entrance Score (TES) has increased from 43 percent in 2012 to 49 percent in 2014. The panel commends the school for the improved percentages of students receiving a TES as a proportion of those who receive a Year 12 Certificate, but cautions that this is based on only three sets of results. During interviews, tours and discussions, evidence was gathered revealing a college that had analysed and adopted approaches to increase their initial number of students achieving a TES, with strategies thus far seeming to achieve improvement.

Gungahlin College is now one of the top five of thirty-one ACT and regional colleges to provide students to the Australian National University (ANU) which requires a published ATAR score of 80 or above to gain entry.

The number of Vocational Certificates issued for year 12 students has increased from 17 to 26 percent over the past three years, and the college is now ranked second in the ACT for the number of certificates issued as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). The number of students receiving year 12 vocational qualifications places the college as the leading vocational college in the ACT, for which it has been nominated for an award in 2015. This represents a

significant effort on behalf of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) teachers and Careers staff to ensure certificate completions.

For three of the four years Gungahlin College has retained more than 96 percent of students from year 11 to year 12, which is particularly commendable in Canberra's transient society. However, the panel notes that this retention rate data may be misleading, with the use of overall census numbers including new students in both years 11 and years 12. Mapping the retention of an exact cohort, entering in year 11 with the same students in year 12 will provide more reliable information.

The panel noted a wide range of anecdotal and point-in-time evidence of a positive college climate and student engagement, which makes for a positive narrative of school performance. Attendance rates for year 11 are 85 and 81 percent for year 12. Gungahlin College is encouraged consider ways to improve attendance such that these rates come closer to system expectations of 90 percent.

Satisfaction data indicates that Gungahlin College performs well with, on average, parent satisfaction slightly above and student satisfaction slightly below other colleges in the ACT.

Students consistently reported high level of satisfaction with access to equipment, feeling safe and high teacher expectations. Feeling safe particularly correlated with the information provided to the panel through interviews with students across both year levels and the *National Safe Schools Framework Audit Tool.*

Parents consistently reported high levels of satisfaction, especially in the celebration of student achievements, integration of computer technology and maintenance of the school. While highly satisfied with their child's learning, parents were less positive about community partnerships being valued and maintained, and the college working with and listening to parents in support of their child's learning.

Staff reported very high levels of satisfaction, enjoying teaching, relating well with students and being encouraged to use innovative practices. They were highly satisfied with working at the college; the education students were receiving, differentiating learning programs and involving students in negotiating their learning. This marries with the panel's perceptions of staff satisfaction following interviews with a wide range of staff members across different faculties.

Staff responses to knowing the values of the school - Connect, Learn and Achieve - and reflecting these values in teaching declined across 2013/2014. The panel suggests an emphasis on these values be incorporated into the next strategic plan.

The Staff Satisfaction Survey revealed communication as an area of need to which the leadership team have responded: G-Whiz has been introduced as a weekly update for staff regarding happenings at the college; an electronic whole school calendar is in place; social media is widely used in the college; and a Gungahlin College App has been developed.

The panel was impressed by the uses of NAPLAN year 9 data to inform student course selection advice before entering year 11. This data has been correlated over time with ACT Scaling Test (AST) and other diagnostic testing to provide clear guidance to Connect teachers and students in course selection. The panel was of the view that this data collection and database could become an exemplar tool for use across the ACT college system.

The panel noted the active tracking of V-grades and systems and process in place to identify interventions and the impact on student success. The Study Support Program, blended learning time and Programs ABCD are significant support and intervention programs that compliment

this work. The panel suggest having an increased sophistication around the analysis of student learning data in the next planning cycle to assist in determining the effectiveness of these support programs.

Evidence cited and its validation

School Timetables 2011 – 2015
Professional Learning Register 2014 – 2015
Spaces for Connection, Learning and Achievement – A User's guide
School Summative Evaluation report 2015 for Gungahlin College
Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) Feedback to Colleges 2012-2014
Summary of Certification: 2012, 2013, 2014
BSSS Study 2012 – 2014
Big Day In Programs 2012 – 2014
AST Preparation program 2015
ANU report on 2014 & 2015 cohort
Gungahlin College Satisfaction data 2011 - 2014
NAPLAN data correlated with ATAR score achievement (GC data analysis)
V Grade longitudinal data
Course Selection Database
V Grade Tracking
Student Performance Tracking Sample.

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

Following the School Review in its first year of operation, Gungahlin College developed a Strategic Plan that identified three priorities for improvement.

Priority Areas

Strategic Priority 1 - Build and further develop productive student relationships and engagement with learning.

Strategic Priority 2 - Foster further innovation in curriculum delivery and structure.

Strategic Priority 3 - Realise the potential of college resources.

The panel noted the challenge faced by the college in developing a four year strategic plan in an environment where change was an everyday facet of life. During the life of the plan, student enrolments far exceeded expectations that then had impacts on staffing, curriculum, resources and forward planning. Consequentially, the college has found it less relevant to sustain a focus upon the improvement priorities that were established at the commencement of the four-year improvement cycle.

The leadership team is very aware that the college is entering a period of stability and that they will need to re-enact a strong focus on identified strategic priorities over the coming four year cycle.

Achievements

Strategic Priority 1 - Build and further develop productive student relationships and engagement with learning.

The performance measures used by Gungahlin College for Priority 1 were perception data from system satisfaction surveys. Targets were established each year, at times both short and long

term targets. Improvements will be more meaningful if targets are revised and sustained in the longer term.

A real strength of the pastoral care program is the 'Connect' program, a Registered (R) Unit. All teachers have responsibility for a Connect group through which a targeted 'transition in' and a 'transition out' program is delivered that addresses learning behaviours and styles, AST preparation workshops and enrichment activities. Further, Connect groups are organised into Houses supported by four House Coordinators. The panel noted that as the Connect program has evolved it is increasingly meeting the needs of students, evidenced by improving attendance and information provided to the panel through interviews with students. The panel is of the view that the Connect program at Gungahlin College could well be a 'beacon' program for ACT schools and colleges.

The college has developed diverse community relationships and partnerships including

- with regional schools: year 9/10 Regional Maths and Science Challenge

- most tertiary institutions: 'Scientist in School Program'

- industry: students participating in structured workplace learning placements.

The panel noted the quality of work achieved by the college in building partnerships with industry such that Gungahlin College is the leading ACT college in the delivery of Vocational Education and Training (VET). Two hundred and five Vocational Certificates were awarded in 2014 and the college is a finalist in the 2015 ACT Excellence Training Awards (VET in Schools).

The task of establishing a new college that has grown exponentially in such a short space of time comes with its challenges in maintaining staff well-being and communication. The panel noted that the leadership team had played a significant role in maintaining staff well-being through a leadership style that remained optimistic, positive and responsive to change while at the same time focused on innovation and collaborative practice. Significant professional learning programs have occurred each year for staff, and for students, to ensure competency in Board of Secondary School Studies (BSSS) requirements. The panel encourages the college to continue its efforts to ensure good communication across the school is maintained; G-Whiz has been welcomed by staff in working towards this in 2015.

The panel applauds the close collaboration with the feeder schools to improve transition to the college. This work has included, but is not limited to, liaising on curriculum, soliciting student profile information, team teaching across campuses and visits to the college. The panel encourages the college and the feeder schools to further this collaboration, to articulate curriculum and establish learning expectations, to ensure smooth transition and higher academic achievement for more students.

Student engagement is critical to improving teaching and learning and the college has established extensive support programs for students, especially for students accessing Integration Support (A), Study Skills Support (B), 'At Risk' students (C) and Transition to Work (D). The ABCD program is a significant investment, over and above funding received by the college, in engaging those students moving past the age of compulsory education and for whom without such support, would not remain in education, training or find employment. The college is encouraged to monitor (with data) the success of such interventions over time.

Strategic Priority 2 - Foster further innovation in curriculum delivery and structure.

The performance measures used by Gungahlin College for Priority 2 were Commendations for Excellence for samples of student work or those samples chosen as Exemplars at BSSS Moderation days, and perception data from the Staff Satisfaction Survey.

The panel noted the significant work undertaken by the college to trial and implement the Australian Curriculum across Maths, History and English in 2014 and for Science in 2016. This has included developing new assessment items and rubrics. The panel encourages further work with feeder high schools to closely vertically align curriculum across the cluster.

The panel agrees with the school that the introduction of professional learning communities/teams (PLTs) has the potential to strengthen staff capacity in innovative teaching within collaborative learning environments. The panel notes that six Gungahlin College teachers now have their teaching methodology showcased as *Illustrations of Practice* on the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leaders (AITSL) website and a significant number of staff are implementing the *Flipped Teaching* model (online curriculum and flexible delivery of lessons). The recent appointments of an Executive Teacher for Professional Practice and Director of Learning Technologies, provides opportunities for significant building of common practice in pedagogy across the college learning environment. The panel suggest that aligning the PLTs focus with the drivers of the next Strategic Plan will significantly impact on building staff capacity and consequentially, student learning outcomes.

A key feature of the culture of Gungahlin College is their flexible and innovative response to problem solving over the four years of operation. Nothing illustrates this more than their approach to problem solving for exponential growth and limits on capacity. The panel notes the newly developed timetable (longer day, without timetabled breaks for recess or lunch) provides flexible options for both students and for staff. The significant collaboration and consultation with staff, students, parents, AEU, BSSS and ACT ETD cannot be underestimated and the panel suggest that the development of the Night College initiative be promoted as 'best practice' across the system, and that further work be undertaken to explore the opening of additional nights as student numbers grow.

The panel agrees that the year 10 *SMART* program is a significant educational initiative in the ACT providing extension for highly capable and gifted students in the Maths, Science and Engineering fields. Given the very positive student response to the program, and high retention rate of these students, the panel encourages the college to explore expanding this program to attract more students of academically high calibre to the college.

The panel noted further innovation in curriculum evidenced through the "AITSL Learning Frontiers" program and the college's leadership of a regional hub of seven schools. This action research project resulted in *Artprenuers*, a collaborative group that makes and sells creative works in the community. *Eduhack* was a close collaboration with Amaroo School. The panel noted the college's work with *Microsoft Partners in Learning* in 2012 and encourages the college to pursue ICT to enhance student learning, especially in the area of feedback to all students.

Strategic Priority 3 - Realise the potential of college resources.

In determining progress against this priority Gungahlin College used system survey results for staff, bookings per year on *BookIT* and analytics from *Schoology*.

The panel noted the ubiquitous use of ICT resources across the college, including iPads, Surface Pros, Kobos, IWBs and BYOD technology, supported by an efficient and capable wireless

network. The panel encourages the college to maintain a high level of access to ICT within the college for all students and consider replacing the Netbooks with Chromebooks or similar.

The high degree of reliance on the online learning platform *Schoology* by both students and staff was evident through the provision of *Flipped Learning* and analytic charts. The panel noted the considerable professional learning and personnel support available to ensure staff and students adopt this platform.

The panel also commends the college for the range of ICT supplementary support to assist in organisation and communication. The development of the Gungahlin College App, whole school calendar, student staffed *Tech Desk, G-Whiz*, social media apps and digital displays assist a very large community to stay in touch. The panel encourages the college to be mindful of a trend across ACT ETD of adopting the Google Classroom platform and consider in time moving to this platform to assist students transitioning into the college.

The panel also noted the increased use of the college and resources through the introduction of the Night School, community organisations and CIT/Library. This potentially provides a significant drain on the college financial resources through utility services, Building Service Officer and maintenance costs. The panel encourages the college to explore greater commitment by community organisations and other Directorates to contribute towards these costs.

Reflections

During the life of the plan the college has maintained a high level of consultation and collaboration with all stakeholders in a changing context, and there is a high level of overall satisfaction throughout the school community. The school is beginning to establish a high level of data collection processes and analysis, and this is being used responsively throughout the college to inform learning programs and innovate practice.

As the college is reaching greater stability and there is less fluctuation in enrolments it is important to carefully craft a strategic plan that is future focused and will provide direction in improving educational outcomes for all students over the life of the plan.

The panel recognises the college has commenced collecting high quality evidence more recently. The panel suggest that the school continue to systematically collect and interrogate available evidence to determine future improvement. Key initiatives and programs can be continually improved if regularly evaluated for their effectiveness in producing desired improvements in student learning and performance. There is significant capacity within the college now to undertake this exercise. The panel also considers the college now has in place agreed and documented policies and procedures such that to sustain programs and practice into the future.

Evidence cited and its validation

College Structure Committee paper 2012
Connect 2015 plan
CONNECT TERM 1 SURVEY EVALUATION 2015
Student Review of Connect 2011 (example)
G and T booklet
Scientists in schools
VETis award evidence
G whiz (sample)
Link to 9/10 homeroom resources

Harrison transition report
Catering for Diversity report
ABCD program one pager
Staff Handbook – "Role of the Connect Teacher"
V Grade longitudinal data
G Week Programs 2011 – 2015
School Summative Evaluation report 2015 for Gungahlin College
BSSS Feedback to Colleges 2012-2014
Summary of Certification 2012-2014
BSSS Study 2012 – 2014
NAPLAN data correlated with ATAR score achievement (GC data analysis)
V Grade longitudinal data
Course Selection Database
V Grade Tracking
Student Performance Tracking Sample
Table showing numbers of V grades
Staff PLT survey results 2014
Teachmeet & PL programs – Professional Learning Evidence
PP AITSL illustrations of practice
Student timetables 2011- 2015
School Satisfaction Surveys table over 4 years
Year 10 SMART booklet,
Microsoft Partners in Learning Project Feedback: The use of technology in providing quality feedback
Artpreneurs Video
iPad trial report
Time station QR codes
Gungahlin college digital resources
Facebook page
Twitter feed.

Section D: National tools self-evaluation results

National School Improvement Tool

In 2015 the college undertook a process of self-assessment against the NSIT Tool via a consensus approach. The school divided the domains by Faculty for staff discussion. Each Director presented their faculties responses at a Leadership Planning Day in March 2015.

The panel largely agreed with the findings of the college's self-assessment.

In relation to the **Explicit improvement agenda** domain the panel was able to verify:

- *The college leadership team have established a strong driving culture of continuous school improvement. College leaders, teachers, students and representatives of the college's Board referred to the productive culture in place.*
- *The principal and other school leaders articulate a shared commitment to school improvement.*
- *The leadership team has analysed school performance data over a number of years and is aware of trends in student achievement levels.*

- *The college leadership team is clearly committed to finding ways to improve on current student outcomes.*
- *The college has not regularly set explicit targets for improvement.*

Over the course of the current Strategic Plan the college has been in an establishment phase responding to rapid growth and change in enrolment, staffing levels, school based management models and most importantly student need. This context has placed challenges on the strategic planning processes of the college. The need for the college to be agile in responding to the changing context has made it difficult for the college to align with the traditional planning processes within the Directorate. Notwithstanding this context the college leadership has lead a successful and dynamic improvement agenda.

Within the **Analysis and discussion of data** domain, the panel was able to verify that:

- *There is evidence that the school leaders view reliable and timely data as essential to their effective leadership of the school as evidenced by the development of V-grade Tracking systems, NAPLAN to ATAR Tracking Systems.*
- *Members of the college leadership team are responsible for analysing the school data, summarising it and communicating it appropriately across the college.*
- *Time is set aside for the discussion of student data as it relates to and can inform student transition to the college and appropriate package selection advice to students.*

The analysis of data to identify trends is problematic in the college given its short history and its dynamic context. However there is evidence that the college is systematically implementing and analysing diagnostic testing instruments that combine with Year 9 NAPLAN data to create rich learning profiles of students on entry to the college. This data when combined with course grade outcomes, ATAR scores, and attendance and course completion data provides the college with a comprehensive set of baseline data from which the college will be able to monitor and compare performance over time.

Within the **Culture that promotes learning** *domain, through evidence* gathered via classroom observations, staff and student interviews, as well as the college's Satisfaction Survey results the panel was able to verify that:

- *The 'tone' of the college reflects a school wide commitment to purposeful, successful learning.*
- *There are high levels of trust that are apparent across the college community, with interactions focused on the learning and wellbeing of students and on continually improving the college's ability to meet the needs of all students.*
- *Respectful and caring relationships are reflected in the ways in which staff and students interact in both formal and informal settings.*
- *Parents are engaged in regularly scheduled parent-teacher interviews.*
- *Staff morale is generally high.*

While the college has a number of evolutions in many of its programs to support student needs the overwhelming evidence suggested that the driver of the evolution was a purposeful commitment and drive to continually meet the needs of all students at the college. The Connect program provides an excellent structure where positive relationships and the sense of community are fostered and student well-being can be proactively addressed.

In relation to the **Targeted use of school resources domain** the panel found that in many areas the performance of the college exceeded the level in their self-assessment. The panel was able to verify:

- *The principal and other school leaders have introduced programs and strategies to identify and address the needs of students in the college and are sourcing and applying available resources to meet those needs.*
- *The college has developed process through systematic testing and assessment for identifying student learning needs.*
- *Programs to meet individual learning needs for gifted students, students with learning difficulties, and at-risk students are prioritised in the college budget.*
- *Physical spaces and technology are used effectively to maximise student learning. Learning spaces are organised for whole group work, small group work and individual work.*

The innovative approach to the college timetable and the inclusion of the successful Night College has allowed the physical resources of the school to be maximised to cater for the expanding student population. It has also provided the college the ability to differentiate college programs more effectively making it easier for students to combine part-time work with study, as well as providing students greater access to support outside of scheduled class time.

The establishment of the A, B, C and D Programs is evidence of the college prioritising programs aimed to meet a diverse range of individual needs that could otherwise prevent them from successfully participating in student's senior secondary education.

Within the **Expert teaching team** domain, the panel was able to verify that:

- *There is evidence that the principal and other school leaders see the development of staff into an expert and coherent college-wide teaching team as central to improving outcomes for students.*
- *Teachers visit each other's classrooms and welcome the opportunities to have the principal and other school leaders observe and discuss their work with them.*
- *Attention is paid to strengths and weaknesses in the college-wide team, with strategies in place to recruit staff with particular expertise and to train staff to address particular needs.*
- *Teachers are open to constructive feedback and provide feedback to colleagues.*

Since the opening of the college there has been structured whole college professional learning to ensure a coherent approach to meeting the requirements of the Board of Senior Secondary Studies. The creation of the Executive Teacher Professional Practice role has provided additional structure and guidance across the school for teachers complying with and progressing along the Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) accreditation pathway. Across college PLT provide opportunities for the college to grow new professional practice to improve outcomes for all students.

Interviews with Curriculum Directors indicated the strategies used to develop the expert teaching team in this curriculum area; from staff selection process that balance the strengths and weakness of the team, to professional learning teams inquiring into the continual improvement of course. Feedback from students and colleagues via moderation continually informs this ongoing improvement process.

The panel was able to verify very a high level of **Systematic curriculum delivery** across the college. The panel reviewed evidence to indicate that:

- *The college's curriculum delivery plan identifies curriculum, teaching and learning priorities and requirements.*

- *Considerable attention has been given to ensuring 'vertical' alignment of the curriculum so that there is continuity and progression of learning across Years 11 and 12, with teaching in Year 12 building on and extending the learning from the previous year.*
- *The curriculum delivery plan is being implemented throughout the college and is shared with parents and the wider community through the course information guide and course handbooks.*
- *The curriculum plan is the reference against which flexible delivery is designed, assessment tasks are developed and student learning is reported.*

The curriculum programs at the college are clearly documented and aligned to the standards of the Australian Curriculum (Phase 1 subjects) and the requirements of the BSSS. Through the A Program there is a systematic approach to making reasonable adjustments to allow students with disabilities and other special needs to fully access and engage with the courses at the college.

In relation to the **Differentiated teaching and learning** domain the panel was able to verify:

- *Planning shows how the different needs of students are addressed, including multiple pathways for transition to external studies and work placements for students in Years 11 and 12.*
- *Some use is made of differentiated pedagogical strategies (flipped teaching approach), but in most classes teachers teach the same curriculum to all students with similar levels of individual support.*

The A, B, C and D programs within the college provide a structure to guide the provision of differentiated individual support to identified students. Through these programs students with special needs, or requiring further support, have their needs assessed and catered for so that they can access the curriculum or be guided toward appropriate post school employment options. The flipped classroom teaching approach being implemented in Science and some Maths courses allows teachers a far greater ability to provide individual support and instruction to students based on their strengths, skill gaps and misunderstandings. The SMART program is another highly planned and resourced initiative that caters for Gifted and Talented students in the community.

Within the **Effective pedagogical practices** domain, the panel was able to verify that:

- *College leaders are committed to continuous improvement in teaching practices throughout the school and facilitate opportunities for expect team leaders and teachers to identify ways of achieving this.*
- *Within the college there is clarity about what students are expected to learn and be able to do with high expectations of every student's learning.*
- *Within the college there are professional learning activities that are focused on building teachers' understandings of highly effective teaching strategies, particularly in mathematics, science, and English.*

The commitment of the college to the position of Executive Teacher Professional Practice and the inclusion on staff of an AITSL accredited Lead Teacher provides an infrastructure where early years educators are provided with professional learning to grow their repertoire of effective pedagogical practices. The college has implemented cross-faculty Professional Learning Teams, some of which have an explicit focus on building teachers understanding of highly effective teaching strategies.

Different faculties within the college implement different strategies to develop the pedagogical content knowledge of teachers. The work that has gone into the development of the flipped teaching practice across the majority of science courses is an example of best practice within faculty professional learning. The college *Artpreneur* Program is a very authentic example of how high expectations are set for student in the Arts.

The panel has been able to verify the high level of activity and achievement within the **School - community partnerships** domain:

- *The college has established a range of partnerships with local business and community organisations with the express purpose of improving outcomes for students.*
- *There is clear evidence that partnerships are having their intended impact, and that the partnerships are being implemented as intended.*
- *Some of the partnerships tend to be mutually convenient arrangements with the sharing of expertise and facilities between institutions and organisations.*

A strength of the college over the life of the plan has been the level of student achievement of Vocational Education and Training Qualifications. To facilitate this, the college has been very successful in developing a wide range of partnerships with the local business community to enable the necessary workplace learning placements.

Over the course of the plan the college has developed strong partnerships with organisations including ANU, ADFA, UC, INTEL and the CSIRO through the colleges Science and IT programs. The college leads the Gungahlin cluster of schools gifted and talented program, specifically as it relates to Maths and Science.

The shared facilities between the college, the Canberra Institute of Technology and the ACT Public Library Service all serve to provide access to additional high quality facilities for students of the college.

National Safe Schools Audit Tool

The college was introduced to the National Safe School Audit Tool in 2015 and collected data relating to the tool via a survey targeted at the 14 members of the college leadership team.

The college determined that the results of the tool strongly affirmed their commitment to student well-being and the establishment of a safe and supportive learning environment for students. The panel's observations and interviews with staff and students supported this finding.

One area for improvement identified by staff was in addressing and further refining communication strategies and processes across the college to ensure that all staff and students have access to information relating to student safety and well-being.

Section E: Commendations and recommendations

Commendations

Gungahlin College is commended for the following.

1. **Development of a positive learning culture**. The principal and the leadership team have displayed an inspirational and resilient leadership, establishing a strong and driving culture of innovation, flexibility and adaptability over four years.

2. **Flexible and innovative practices.** Gungahlin College has managed to establish itself as a fully functioning school, modelling best and innovative practice in many areas, in a context of rapid growth in student and teacher population.

3. **Outstanding commitment to student well-being.** The college commitment to student well-being through the exceptional resourcing of the Connect Program has enabled an unprecedented delivery of pastoral care in a public college setting.

4. **Exemplary use of school resources (both human and physical)**. The innovative approach to the college timetable and the inclusion of the successful Night College has allowed the physical resources of the school to be maximised to cater for the expanding student and staff population. It has also provided the college the ability to differentiate college programs more effectively making it easier for students to combine part-time work with study, as well as providing students greater access to support outside of scheduled class time.

5. **High Quality Differentiated Teaching and Learning programs**. The establishment of targeted and individualised programs such as AST Preparation, Transitions, Yr 10 SMART, Gungahlin College Selective and Student Support (Study Support and the A, B, C and D Programs) has led to the college's capacity to meet the needs of a diverse group of students.

6. **Exemplary practice in providing Vocational Education and Training.** The college's significant growth over time in the proportions of students achieving nationally recognised VET certificates is testament to a school with a profound commitment to enhancing the qualifications of its students.

7. **Data driven approach to providing appropriate course selection advice.** The development of the school-wide process that collects NAPLAN data for incoming students, and putting in place a range of diagnostic testing to create learner profiles that guide appropriate course selection counselling has resulted in improved course completion rates for students.

Recommendations

The panel recommends Gungahlin College pay attention to the following opportunities for improvement during the next planning cycle.

1. **Develop and drive enhanced strategic planning processes.** As the college moves from the initial establishment phase to a phase defined by consolidation and continued growth it is recommended that the college develop a more explicit school improvement agenda in partnership with the wider school community. This agenda should express in specific and measurable terms the improvements sought in student performance and include clear targets with accompanying time-lines. Efforts should be made to align professional learning activities with the priorities outlined by the strategic planning process.

2. **Develop a systematic approach in collecting, analysis and use of a range of student achievement and demographic data**. Establish a systematic plan for the collection, analysis and use of student achievement data from Year 9 to Year 12, as well as ongoing professional learning for teachers and school leaders to develop their data literacy skills. Data should be used throughout the school to construct student learner profiles and to identify gaps in student learning that can be used to visualise growth in student performance.

3. **Implement systems to further strengthen the culture and process for developing shared innovative pedagogical practices taking advantage of the college's leading ICT infrastructure**. Place a high priority on developing evidence based teaching practices that show through research and practice to be highly effective in improving student learning. Continue the positive school-wide, self-reflective culture focused on improving classroom teaching.

4. **Actively seek ways to enhance students' preparedness for and transition into the college through productive partnerships with cluster feeder schools**. Work with cluster feeder schools to ensure close vertical alignment of the curriculum so that there is a continuity and progression of rigorous learning across the transition to the college sector ensuring higher academic achievement for more students.

5. **Consolidate and further enhance community partnerships ensuring that they are purposeful and sustainable.** Work with community partners to create documented plans for monitoring, and reviewing the effectiveness of each partnership. Ensure that partnerships are being successfully implemented to enhance student outcomes so that they are adequately resourced and sustainable.

6. **Build upon the initial success of the innovative Night college program to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of students.** Provide an increased range of flexible options to students to engage successfully with the courses and support services offered by the college in a way that assists them create an appropriate school / life balance.

Record of Validation Process

The following people were members of the external validation panel for (delete text and add school name) conducted on (delete text and add dates).

Name: Belinda Bartlett   School: Alfred Deakin High School

Name: Peter Kent   School: Gordon Primary School

Name: Caroline Orr   School: Emmaus 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: Belinda Bartlett

Signature: _____ Date: ___14/10/2015_____

As principal of **Gungahlin College** I accept the Validation Report on behalf of the school community.

Name: Gai Beecher

Signature: _____ Date: ___14/10/15._____

As co-director of Quality Learning Australasia, external lead validators for the conduct of validation process in ACT public schools, I concur that the panel acted within the guidelines set by the ACT Education and Training Directorate.

Name: Jane Kovacs

Signature: _____ Date: ___14/10/15_____