



ACT
Government
Education

Canberra College

Report of Review, 2019

Date of School Review: 27, 28 and 29 August 2019
Principal of Review School: Michael Battenally

National School Improvement Tool Review Report prepared by:

- Lead Reviewer: Christina Rogers, *ACER Senior School Improvement Consultant*
- ACT Review Team members: 1. Angela Spence, *Principal of Gold Creek School*
2. Julie Murkins, *Principal of Lake Tuggeranong College*
3. Craig Edwards, *Principal of Dickson College*

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Report of Review, 2019 prepared by:

ACT Government Education Directorate
Education Services Division, School Improvement Branch

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Overview of the School Review process

Approximately a fifth of all ACT public schools are reviewed each year. Reviews provide quality, independent, feedback tailored to individual school contexts. Findings from Review are considered alongside system and school level student achievement, perception and demographic data as the evidence base for development of the school's next 5-year School Improvement Plan.

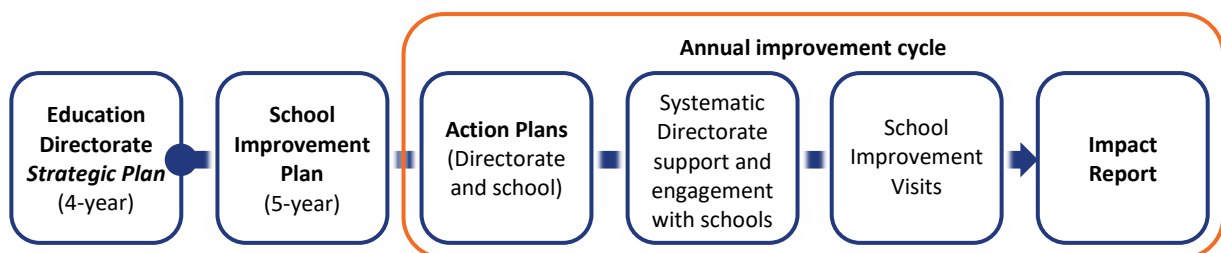
Reviews are undertaken by a team of experienced educators trained in the use of the *National School Improvement Tool (NSIT)* and are led by a Lead Reviewer from the Australian Council of Educational Research. Review Team size depends upon a range of factors, including the size and context of a school.

Through the lens of the NSIT, an internationally recognised framework for reviewing teaching and learning practices, reviewers gain an accurate picture of current school practices. During Review evidence provided by schools is considered alongside evidence gathered through consultation with staff, students, parents and community members.

Following Review, the school receives a planning report, which is used as an internal working document, outlining key findings and recommended strategies for continued school improvement. The Education Directorate uses this planning report as a basis for the final *Report of Review* provided to school communities.

The *Report of Review* includes detailed Review Team findings for each of the nine Domains of the National School Improvement Tool, and Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations for continued school improvement.

Where does School Review sit within the broader school improvement cycle?



ACT public schools utilise systematic integration of evidence and data collection, access and analysis to inform sharp and narrow 5-year School Improvement Plans. Annually, all schools utilise a suite of tools to expand, monitor and report on these priorities. School Improvement Visits (SIVs – which include School Review) provide differentiated support and feedback to schools through varying levels of in-school immersion. SIVs progress in relation to a school's needs and improvement cycle, with School Review typically occurring at the end of this cycle.

What are Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations?

Commendations

The commendations highlight positive actions the school has taken over its last improvement cycle. Typically these actions are either complete, or embedded in school practice.

Affirmations

The affirmations verify specific actions being undertaken by the school that are impacting positively on school improvement. These actions are typically either not yet complete and/or not yet embedded.

Recommendations

The recommendations provide the school with evidence-based advice regarding high-value areas for future school improvement efforts. Drawn from the NSIT, recommendations are key to the school developing a sharp and narrow improvement plan.

NSIT Domain 1: An explicit improvement agenda

Domain descriptor

The school leadership team and/or governing body have established and are driving a strong improvement agenda for the school, grounded in evidence from research and practice and expressed in terms of improvements in measurable student outcomes. Explicit and clear school-wide targets for improvement have been set and communicated to parents and families, teachers and students, with accompanying timelines.

Findings

- The *Canberra College Strategic Plan 2016-2019* is expressed in three priorities: enhance the quality of teaching and learning through systematic and evidence-based processes to improve the delivery of educational services and outcomes for all students; review and develop a sustainable school resources model which supports a diversity of learning pathways utilising contemporary learning environments; and, develop a college culture that values and reinforces wellbeing, and strengthens community connectedness to support student and staff performance.
- There is considerable evidence of the enacting of key improvement strategies across all three priorities.
- Annual Action Plans (AAPs) include targets expressed in terms of specific improvements sought in student academic performance, the staffing profile, and stakeholder opinion survey data.
- Staff and parents referenced the college priorities and strategies for improvement in their conversations with reviewers. The use of targets and the monitoring of progress towards targets was less clear.
- School leaders acknowledge that original targets set in the Strategic Plan did not enable them to have a narrow and sharp focus on the student learning and wellbeing outcomes to be improved.
- Annual Board and AAP reports are available on the college website. Improvement priorities have been shared with the wider community in newsletters.
- Senior school leaders have analysed learning data over time and are aware of trends across multiple data sets. These trends have been presented to the college Board, and members could generally describe progress made as well articulate areas requiring further development.
- Staff reflections on the 2018 AAP allowed for finetuning of strategies and assisted in the development of 2019 actions for improvement. Teachers looked at what worked, why it worked, and what they could do to make it even better.
- Visits to local high schools and reference to evidence-based practice has informed the college's improvement agenda.
- The organisational structure of the college has been revised to align more closely to the priorities of the strategic plan.
- Time has been set aside in leadership group meetings to allow for discussion around the improvement journey.

NSIT Domain 2: Analysis and discussion of data

Domain descriptor

A high priority is given to the school-wide analysis and discussion of systematically collected data on student outcomes, including academic, attendance and behavioural outcomes, and student wellbeing. Data analyses consider overall school performance as well as the performances of students from identified priority groups; evidence of improvement/regression over time; performances in comparison with similar schools; and, in the case of data from standardised tests, measures of growth across the years of school.

Findings

- The college has developed a systematic plan and process for collecting and analysing data. The plan includes a schedule for the collection of a broad range of student performance, wellbeing, stakeholder perception survey and attendance data.
- Documentation provided to the review team included evidence of the tracking of a range of data sets over time. Data are also collected about key programs and initiatives. Leaders are aware of trends over time, particularly for student academic performance.
- Academic data sets include Australian Tertiary Admissions Ranking (ATAR) and ACT Scaling Test (AST) scores, Vocational Education and Training (VET) competency and certificate of attainment, A-E and Void (V) grades and scaled scores in each ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) tertiary course.
- Systematic collections of wellbeing data are informing proactive intervention strategies.
- Summaries of data analyses are shared with staff both in whole-of-college and faculty-based meetings. Key members of staff are responsible for analyses and dissemination of information.
- Teachers and faculty leaders use student feedback from unit evaluations to refine courses and to reflect personally on individual practice.
- Student performance data, as captured in the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies Certification System (ACS) database, informs conversations about academic performance and the relative effectiveness of assessment instruments.
- Reviewers noted variability across faculties in relation to routines in analysing and discussing other data sets.
- The college conducts an AST preparation program and, in the past, has also administered the Queensland Core Skills test. These results are used in the monitoring of student performance.
- Data are also used to predict ATAR scores to support students in their decision-making about future pathways.
- A range of data sets are presented at board meetings and key performance indicators are reflected in annual reports which are available on the college website.

NSIT Domain 3: A culture that promotes learning

Domain descriptor

The school is driven by a deep belief that every student is capable of successful learning. A high priority is given to building and maintaining positive and caring relationships between staff, students and parents. There is a strong collegial culture of mutual trust and support among teachers and school leaders and parents are treated as partners in the promotion of student learning and wellbeing. The school works to maintain a learning environment that is safe, respectful, tolerant, inclusive and that promotes intellectual rigour.

Findings

- The college promotes the value and importance of learning: classrooms, corridors, and other learning spaces are characterised by high levels of student focus and attention to learning. Students speak of a culture of ‘getting on with their work’ and taking their learning seriously.
- Staff show their support for this culture in their daily interactions with students: they are setting high expectations in class as well as building respectful relationships with students.
- Many staff could describe the backgrounds of their students in relation to impacts on their learning, and their strengths and aspirations. This was also evident in dedicated support functions in the college, such as student services, careers and some iGroups.
- Programmatic responses to student need, such as Big Picture¹, the Futures program, and Canberra College Cares (CCCares), are helping students feel a sense of belonging. There are rich stories of individual success where young people have reengaged in education.
- The cultural diversity of the college is recognised and celebrated. There is an active Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student support team which has progressed a Reconciliation Action Plan, both locally and as part of a cluster of school communities. Team members are influencing the inclusion of culturally appropriate materials in teaching programs.
- The student support model is largely a self-referral process, although staff also refer students. Both academic and wellbeing advice is provided by student services and other specialised support staff.
- The college has created an attractive and stimulating learning environment. Students report their appreciation for the quality of their facilities.
- Parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the way the college invites them to participate in the learning of their young people. Parent workshops and information sessions are valued – as evidenced by the large proportion who participate. There are high levels of satisfaction with college communications and with the availability and responsiveness of staff.
- Staff expressed their enjoyment at being a member of the Canberra College community, citing the collegial tone of the workplace.

¹ A personalised approach to learning: <https://www.bigpicture.org.au/>

NSIT Domain 4: Targeted use of school resources

Domain descriptor

The school applies its resources (staff time, expertise, funds, facilities, materials) in a targeted manner to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of all students. It has school-wide policies, practices and programs in place to assist in identifying and addressing student needs. Flexible structures and processes enable the school to respond appropriately to the needs of individual learners.

Findings

- School leaders identified the development of a sustainable school resources model to support diversity of learning pathways in a contemporary learning environment as a key priority for the current strategic plan. There is considerable evidence of the enacting of key improvement strategies aligned to this priority.
- School leaders have strategically managed the financial position of the college and this is allowing for targeted investment in facilities and offerings to students.
- Significant resources have been allocated to improve the learning environment. Several classrooms, recreational, office and specialist areas have been refurbished. The campus presents as a well-maintained facility with contemporary learning spaces.
- Community use of college facilities is generating significant income. In addition, the college actively seeks to augment allocated funds through applications for federal funding, grants and donations.
- An information technology plan has been developed to ensure that infrastructure is aligned to need. All students have Chromebooks and students and teachers can access the Google Apps for Education (GAPE).
- Multiple pathways and programs to support student learning needs are evident. VET, the Futures program, Big Picture, and CCCares have been strategically resourced.
- A rich co-curricular program provides a range of extension and interest-based activities. This provides like-minded students with the opportunity to access experts as they pursue their pathways.
- Students with English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D) are identified and supported through the English as a second language course. Other supports include variations to assessment, iGroup allocation, and tutorials.
- Processes for identifying and supporting students who require Individual Support Plans have recently been reviewed. This has resulted in a more systematic approach to meeting their needs which includes improved communication, and centralised support and monitoring, accompanied by detailed record keeping.
- Leaders are currently exploring how processes, including diagnostic testing on enrolment, and ongoing monitoring can be enhanced to ensure systematic identification and response.
- Leaders have allocated resources to create additional key staffing positions and have worked to create a balanced staffing profile.

NSIT Domain 5: An expert teaching team

Domain descriptor

The school has found ways to build a school-wide, professional team of highly able teachers, including teachers who take an active leadership role beyond the classroom. Strong procedures are in place to encourage a school-wide, shared responsibility for student learning and success, and to encourage the development of a culture of continuous professional improvement that includes classroom-based learning, mentoring and coaching arrangements.

Findings

- A professional learning plan links the college improvement strategy with supported professional learning opportunities for staff. The plan references educational research and describes the college's key strategy in building a professional learning community.
- An active professional learning committee is supporting a culture of professional development, collaboration, and reflective practice.
- Professional learning teams are structured to provide opportunities for teachers to regularly meet, inquire about, and observe each other's teaching practices. Visits to colleagues' classrooms are evident in several faculties and teachers report the value of peer feedback on their practice. 'Teach Meet' and peer presentations to staff at meetings also provide opportunities for shared practice.
- School leaders have actively supported staff to continue their professional growth. Staff are encouraged to access professional learning beyond school-based activities. Supports are in place for teachers wishing to undertake Masters' studies and teacher certification.
- College staff participate in professional networks across the ACT's educational community. The college also provides support for staff who need to maintain currency of qualifications.
- A well delineated Professional Development Planning (PDP) process is in place - the recent focus of which has been the articulation of authentic professional goals referencing the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) standards. These goals are reflected upon during the year.
- Stakeholder satisfaction survey data reflect increasing levels of teacher satisfaction with the feedback they receive on their practice.
- School leaders have recently undertaken the 'Growth² Coaching' training.
- New educators and staff recently appointed to the college are provided with faculty-based mentors.

² The Growth Coaching way demonstrates how a coaching approach is not just for formal coaching and mentoring programs but can be applied throughout a school day to create a culture of growth for the whole community.

NSIT Domain 6: Systematic curriculum delivery

Domain descriptor

The school has a coherent, sequenced plan for curriculum delivery that ensures consistent teaching and learning expectations and a clear reference for monitoring learning across the year levels. The plan, within which evidence-based teaching practices are embedded, and to which assessment and reporting procedures are aligned, has been developed with reference to the Australian Curriculum or other approved curriculum and refined collaboratively to provide a shared vision for curriculum practice. This plan is shared with parents and families.

Findings

- The college is delivering a curriculum approved by the BSSS. This curriculum program includes a wide range of tertiary, accredited and VET courses. They are delivered in single-year cohorts, mixed, or simultaneously. Curriculum flexibility is maximising student choice in meeting their goals or interests.
- Beyond a standard curriculum offering, the college is providing modified delivery patterns. These are being accessed by a range of learners, including those beyond the usual age cohort in senior secondary. Students in these programs are achieving high completion rates.
- Dual certification is a feature of the study programs of many students. Considerable numbers of students attain partial and full certification in vocational education programs. The VET curriculum is being delivered under the auspice of the Canberra College Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and through numerous external RTOs.
- Students can apply their theatre industry studies in an authentic learning environment through community access to the Canberra College Performing Arts Centre (CCPAC).
- The college leverages work experience to provide a broad range of opportunities to students.
- Students participating in the Big Picture academy pursue individualised programs of study. They develop graduate portfolios which demonstrate their interdisciplinary learning. This is a recognised pathway to further studies.
- A broad co-curricular program affords students the opportunity to pursue academic, creative, cultural and sporting activities.
- The curriculum is described and promoted to the community in a suite of online publications, for example, Unit Enrolment Guides and The College Handbook. Coupled with scheduled workshops, these documents are well received by prospective students and their families. Unit outlines are published to the community.
- There is evidence of faculties engaging in collaborative curriculum planning and this informs the delivery of teaching.
- There has been a whole-of-college focus on literacy across the curriculum. Some teachers could describe discipline-specific strategies used within their course areas.

NSIT Domain 7: Differentiated teaching and learning

Domain descriptor

The school places a high priority on ensuring that, in their day-to-day teaching, classroom teachers identify and address the learning needs of individual students, including high-achieving students. Teachers are encouraged and supported to monitor closely the progress of individuals, identify learning difficulties and tailor classroom activities to levels of readiness and need.

Findings

- The college delivers a number of specialised programs designed to meet individual student needs.
- The Futures program provides two key models of support for students who have been identified as having additional learning needs. Students in the Inclusion Support Program are assigned a staff mentor who supports them to access the curriculum. These mentors liaise with classroom teachers in making reasonable adjustments to assessment and classroom learning. Students placed in the additional learning support program receive individualised education and training.
- Individual learning plans are readily available. Most teachers are aware of students who require some adjustments and could describe how they are supporting their individual needs.
- Students in the Big Picture program participate in a negotiated and individualised curriculum supported by an internship program and project-based learning. Community mentors support students in pursuing their goals and interests.
- Students can access higher education programs in partnership with the Australian National University (ANU). For example, students can participate in the pre-medicine course offered by ANU.
- A college-wide approach to differentiated teaching driven by leaders is not yet evident. However, across the college, reviewers observed some sophisticated responsive teaching in a number of classrooms. Teachers could describe how they cater for difference by using multiple means of representation and engagement.
- Reviewers observed a predominance of summative assessment. Some teachers could describe how they check for understanding using formative assessment, Google Classrooms, and other strategies to monitor individual student progress.
- Semester report cards to students include detailed written feedback about progress including explicit advice about how students can improve.
- The CCCares program supports young parents from the ACT and surrounding districts to continue their education. It offers a highly individualised, flexible and negotiated curriculum program supported by a wide range of external partners.

NSIT Domain 8: Effective pedagogical practices

Domain descriptor

The school principal and other school leaders recognise that highly effective teaching is the key to improving student learning throughout the school. They take a strong leadership role, encouraging the use of research-based teaching practices in all classrooms to ensure that every student is engaged, challenged and learning successfully. All teachers understand and use effective teaching methods – including explicit instruction – to maximise student learning.

Findings

- Increasingly, pedagogical practices are being shared amongst staff members as part of the college improvement strategy. School leaders have privileged time within the college meeting schedule for this to occur.
- Hattie's 'Visible Learning' has recently been adopted by the college and is focusing attention on effective teaching strategies. Teachers made reference to the 80/20 rule for student/teacher talk, the use of learning intentions and success criteria, and effective use of feedback.
- Observations are part of the professional learning community structure. An observation tool is used to support teachers observing practice. Beginning teachers are observed by mentors and supervisors to support their development.
- Teachers receive feedback on their practice from student unit evaluation surveys. Students could confidently describe what quality teaching looks like. They provided examples such as opportunities for collaboration and discussion with peers, as well as the importance of student voice in helping them learn best.
- Some students described that the feedback they received about their learning was helpful but there was inconsistency across subjects.
- Experiential learning opportunities and expert guest speakers support students to engage in deep learning.

NSIT Domain 9: School-community partnerships

Domain descriptor

The school actively seeks ways to enhance student learning and wellbeing by partnering with parents and families, other education and training institutions, local businesses and community organisations. Parents and families are recognised as integral members of the school community and partners in their children's education. Partnerships are strategically established to address identified student needs and operate by providing access to experiences, support and intellectual and/or physical resources not available within the school. All partners are committed to the common purposes and goals of partnership activities. Procedures are in place to ensure effective communications and to monitor and evaluate the intended impacts of the school's partnerships.

Findings

- The college has a rich and varied suite of partnerships with external agencies, educational institutions and individual experts. Partnerships are enhancing learning opportunities for students in a wide range of curriculum and co-curricular settings.
- CCCares, Futures, and the Big Picture programs all have partnerships at their core, and their success is significantly enhanced by this collaboration.
- CCCares is recognised across the ACT and beyond. It attracts significant philanthropic and inter-agency support. For example, a 20-year long connection with ACT Health is in place, whereby allied health professionals provide their services on-site.
- OzHarvest³ is an example of a partnership reaching into the wider college community and having impact. College students are involved in the repackaging of OzHarvest food prior to it being disseminated in the community.
- Internal review of individual CCCares partnerships are so nuanced as to be able to respond at the individual client level. Using a significant philanthropic grant, the college has engaged a consultant to review partnerships to ensure its sustainability.
- The Big Picture program operates through the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding with Big Picture Education Australia. Students are connected with mentors and undertake traineeships in the community. Parents are valued members of the partnership.
- The Futures program connects students, carers and families with external support agencies to provide quality pathway and transitions beyond school. An indicator of their effectiveness is the high level of student engagement in Australian school-based apprenticeships, work experience and in senior secondary certification.
- Partnerships with key community members and organisations are elevating the profile of the college in the community. These are evident across many curricular and co-curricular areas.
- Vocational training opportunities are provided through partnerships with a broad range of external RTOs. An extensive number of industries and businesses support a widely subscribed work experience and apprenticeship program.

³a food rescue charity that collects quality surplus food and distributes it to people in need.

- Strong connections have been forged and maintained with local primary and high schools. This includes the sharing of teacher and college student expertise as well as providing access to quality facilities. Transition activities are enriched by these connections.

Commendations

- Canberra College lives its vision of being a diverse community that values learning, innovation, opportunity and excellence. This is evidenced in how the school embraces young people from very diverse backgrounds and values and nurtures each student's interests and needs.
- A rich and flexible curriculum affords students the opportunity to pursue a very personalised program of study. A suite of both tertiary and accredited courses is coupled with a wide range of vocational education opportunities and complemented by specialist programs (CCCare, Futures, Big Picture). This ensures that every student can pursue pathways that support their individual goals. Multiple opportunities for extension and enrichment augment the formalised courses, providing a rich and stimulating college experience.
- Partnerships have been pursued with strategic intent and maintained with rigour and care. These connections are enhancing the opportunities available to students and enriching their learning outcomes on many levels.
- This college is a place where learning is highly valued. Classrooms are busy places and students are focused on their learning. This is also reflected in the way teachers are expressing their expectations in one-on-one conversations and in their classroom practices.
- The college culture is underpinned by highly respectful interactions. Students share a sense of belonging and connectedness with their college.
- The large-scale formal program, CCCare, is viewed as significant and best practice in relation to the individual reconnection of young parents with their education. The wrap-around care provided, and the flexibility of the services brought in by partners is exemplary.
- Significant resources have been invested to create a vibrant and modern learning environment. Over the life of this strategic plan the college has enacted a broad range of improvement strategies to realise one of its key priorities of developing a sustainable school resource model.
- The college enjoys a positive reputation in its community. Parents and community-based partners speak of the high-quality services being delivered and they value the opportunities to be part of this school.

Affirmations

- The college has enacted its strategic plan and has been actively monitoring the effectiveness of its key improvement strategies. Staff have been involved in this process.
- The college is enacting its data plan and through the analysis of multiple sources of data a culture of using evidence to self-evaluate and reflect is emerging.
- Leaders have been proactive and entrepreneurial in securing resources to support their vision.
- There is a suite of wellbeing and academic services available to students which support

individual progress. High levels of monitoring are evident for students who access, or are referred to, these services.

- Teachers speak positively about the opportunity to share practice through involvement in PLCs. This is facilitating focused conversation on research-based teaching practices.
- In some learning areas, curriculum planning and delivery is expanding beyond the scope of unit outlines. Students report that online platforms, such as Google Classrooms, are supporting them to work at their own pace and to prioritise multiple commitments.
- The college draws upon student feedback through universal implementation of unit evaluations. This is supporting teachers to reflect on how courses can be refined and also supports teacher reflection on personal practice.
- A number of teachers draw on a broad repertoire of practice to differentiate the learning to meet individual student needs.
- The community is invited to make use of the college facilities, and this positions the college as an integral part of the community.

Recommendations

- Develop an explicit improvement plan expressed in specific outcomes for student learning and wellbeing. These should be well defined, time-bound and measurable. Build a shared ownership of this plan to enable teachers to enact the changes in practice required to achieve college targets.
- Continue to build the data culture. Establish clear expectations in terms of consistent practice and routines in the use of learning and wellbeing data and enact these at whole-of-college, faculty and classroom levels.
- Actively promote the use of data to identify and monitor individual student learning needs. Support the regular use of differentiated teaching practices to ensure every student is engaged and learning successfully.
- Ensure that a high priority in curriculum planning and delivery is given to the progressive development of the general capabilities.
- Cater to student need by developing and implementing a proactive, adaptable, contemporary and shared approach to deliver high quality learning and teaching based on best practice research.
- Continue to build a strong professional learning community characterised by:
 - > leaders who spend time working with teachers modelling, evaluating and providing feedback on classroom teaching
 - > a culture of collective responsibility for improving student learning
 - > routines that enable teachers to work together and learn from each other's practice;
 - > formalised mentoring and coaching
 - > professional learning tailored to individual and group need.