PEOPLE, PRACTICE AND PERFORMANCE

School Improvement in Canberra Public Schools
A Framework for Performance and Accountability

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Minister's Message

As the Minister for Education, I am impressed with the work of teachers and school leaders in our public schools. Canberrans know and understand we have a high performing education system. My questions to the Directorate, and to schools more broadly, are: how do we know we have a truly great system of schools, and how do we know every one of our public schools is continually improving?

These are fundamental questions we need to answer with confidence, with credibility and with evidence.

The Directorate's vision for schools is captured within this new School Improvement in Canberra Public Schools- A Framework for Performance and Accountability document.

The Framework and implementation of the accountability requirements will provide us with a clear picture of how our schools are performing. We will have robust evidence of where an individual school is at, and a deep analysis of that evidence. There will be an explicit improvement agenda for every one of our schools.

It is through the School Performance and Accountability Framework that we will be able to make sure our high performing system of schools continues to improve and continues to lead the nation.

Shane Rattenbury MLA
Minister for Education

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Introduction

Our purpose in school improvement

People, Practice & Performance: School Improvement in Canberra Public Schools - A Framework for Performance and Accountability presents the processes and mechanisms to identify how well the ACT's public education system and individual schools are ensuring every child has the best opportunities. Every child in the ACT deserves the opportunities provided through an excellent education irrespective of where they live, their circumstances, or the school they attend.

We know the ACT already has the highest levels of educational achievement of all Australian states and territories. It is from this high benchmark that we strive for even better outcomes for our children and young people. We know that it will be our People, and our Practices that will drive our Performance.

During 2015, the Education Directorate worked closely with Professor Brian Caldwell, an internationally recognised school improvement academic and writer, to advise us on strengthening our existing approaches to the design and delivery of school performance and accountability. His work reinforces that school improvement should be a whole of system strategy and the key part of the work of leaders in every school.

School improvement is everyone's business.

The School Performance and Accountability Framework has school improvement at its centre, with the *National School Improvement Tool* (NSIT) its core feature. The NSIT was endorsed by the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) in December 2012, and is available to all Australian schools for use in their school improvement planning. Canberra Public Schools have been using the NSIT since its inception.

The NSIT provides an evidence-based framework against which schools self-evaluate to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. It encompasses nine interrelated domains that research concludes impact on student outcomes.

Within the ACT we are adopting the NSIT for the purpose it was written, that is, to support schools to work with their communities to self-evaluate with their School Network Leader, and external experts, to design improvement agendas.

The School Performance and Accountability Framework applies to every Canberra Public School. A key element of the Framework is to be able to implement intentional strategies to support schools to further improve, and importantly, the ability to capture best practice and innovation to share and scale across our system of schools. As Professor Caldwell noted to the Directorate, the 'sky's the limit for school improvement' in Canberra's public schools.

By building strengthening cultures of self-evaluation and external reviews, there will be clear evidence on how schools are meeting individual student needs.

Sound educational research and practice guides the design and implementation of the ACT approach to performance and accountability of public schools to the Canberra community.

Building a culture of high expectations for improvement and accountability

School leaders lead and manage their schools to: effectively support, evaluate and develop teacher quality; set strategic direction and monitor progress, using data to improve practice; strategically manage finances and human resources; and collaborate with other schools.[1]

A culture of high expectations provides: clarity about what teachers need to teach and what students are to learn; establishes strong professional learning communities; and leads ongoing efforts to improve teaching practice.[2]

The School Performance and Accountability Framework will be used by schools as they strengthen internal accountability processes to ensure all staff contribute to the delivery of quality outcomes. The Framework supports understanding and adherence to the required external accountability requirements for increased school improvement.

Rigorous internal accountability is a hallmark of a successful school. A key component of internal accountability is the continual self-evaluation of how teacher practice impacts on student learning.

Internal accountability includes:

- how well a school reflects and self-evaluates its programs and practices

- the level of commitment in a school to gather information and analyse data (both quantitative and qualitative)

- how well a school acts on and responds to the evidence to achieve continual improvement.

Canberra public schools are supported in strengthening internal accountability through:

- ongoing reviews and discussions with the School Network Leader

- development, evaluation and reporting of Annual Action Plans

- professional pathways processes

- annual professional discussions.

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1. Beatriz, P., et al. (2008), *Improving School Leadership Volume 1, Policy and Practice,* Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Publishing

2. Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). (2013), *National School Improvement Tool.*

The ACT '…should be a self-improving system of self-improving schools that honours the commitment to a relatively high level of school autonomy, encourages and supports a high level of innovation, and builds capacity for school self-review.'

Brian Caldwell, July 2015

Providing clarity on who is accountable

At the heart of the Directorate's school improvement agenda is a collective responsibility to work together in providing evidence our education system is achieving high standards of educational outcomes for all of our students. We will also be collecting evidence that our schools are managed effectively.

Everyone involved in our schools has a clear responsibility for school improvement. We have an important role to play in improving the systems and processes for which we are responsible.

The following table outlines the internal and external accountability mechanisms for key stakeholders as they contribute to school and system improvement.

Responsibility and accountability in system improvement[3]

Teachers	• Deliver high quality teaching that achieves the priorities and actions within school plans. • Participate in teacher performance, assessment and development processes incorporating actions that contribute to the achievement of school priorities. • Collaborate with peers to develop and shape pedagogical practices that raise student outcomes. • Engage parents/carers as partners to advance student performance. • Comply with legislative and Directorate policies and procedures.
Leaders	• Provide transformational and inspirational leadership. • Provide instructional leadership emphasising the importance of clear educational goals, planning the delivery of curriculum, and evaluating teachers and teaching. • Collaboratively develop, implement and monitor school improvement plans with their school community. • Effectively manage the human and financial resources of the school. • Involve school community to achieve school improvement priorities. • Comply with legislative and Directorate policies and procedures.
School Network Leaders	• Lead, manage and support schools in the design and delivery of school improvement strategies. • Develop a collective sense of efficacy within and between networks to support innovation and excellence. • Manage performance and development of principals. • Provide differentiated support to schools and monitor improvement progress. • Facilitate communication between schools and Central Office.
Central Office	• Set system strategies for improvement. • Provide support and accountability mechanisms to achieve system goals. • Provide consistent data sets to schools. • Build skills and leadership capacity at all system levels. • Comply with legislative requirements. • Regularly evaluate and review Directorate policies and procedures.

3 Adapted from Barber, M., et al. (2010), How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better, McKinsey & Company, page 82
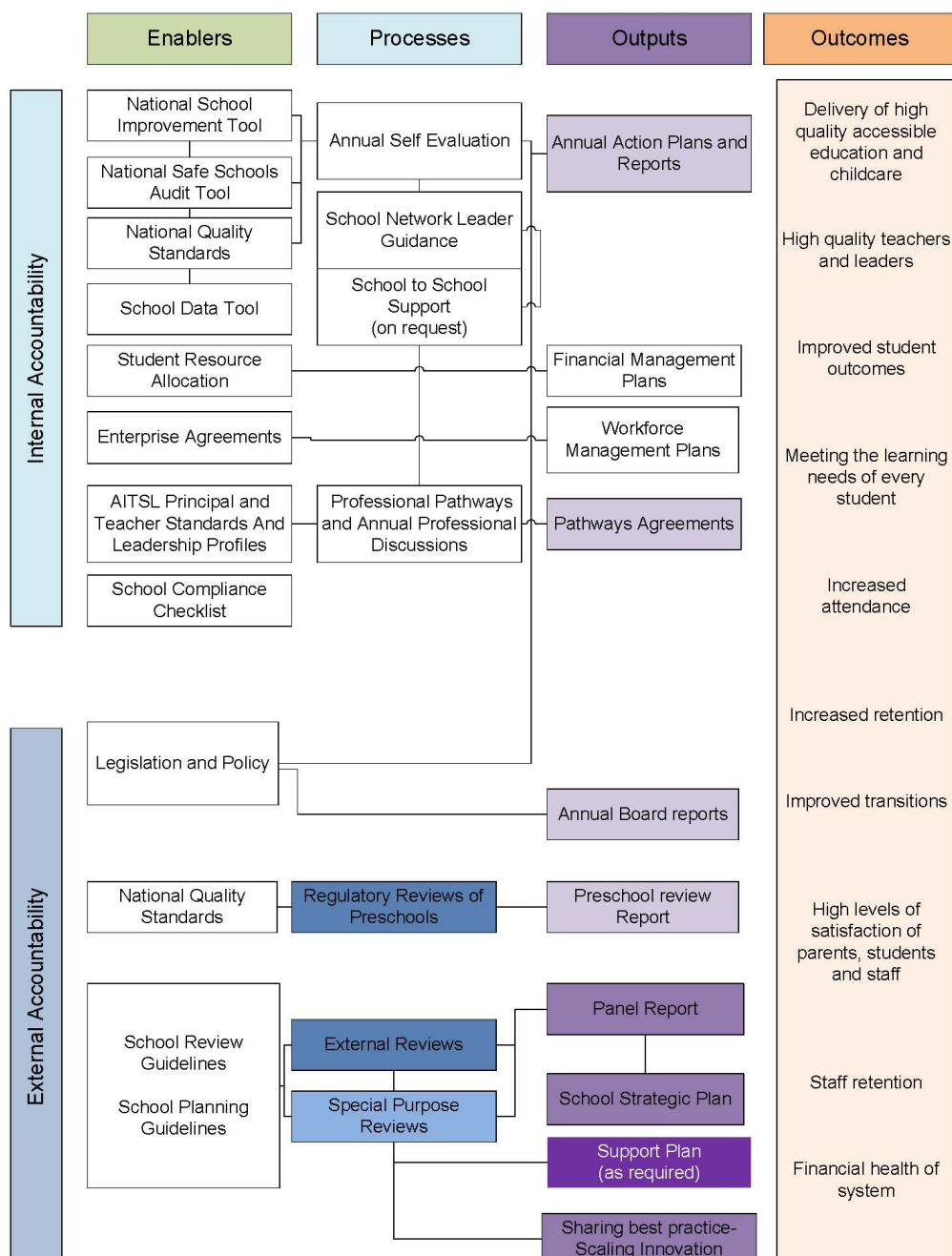
School accountability

External accountability systems are put in place by Central Office to ensure clarity and uniformity of expectations.

The following diagram outlines school accountability within an authorised environment, showing the connectedness of the work of the system and requirements of schools. The legislative requirements of some aspects of school improvement are also captured in the diagram. Both internal and external accountability requirements, highlighting the enablers that support schools as well as processes and expected outputs, are shown below.

The overall responsibility of principals and teachers is to deliver high quality education that leads to improved outcomes for all students.

Internal and external accountability

Enablers	Processes	Outputs	Outcomes

Internal Accountability

Enablers	Processes	Outputs
National School Improvement Tool	Annual Self Evaluation	Annual Action Plans and Reports
National Safe Schools Audit Tool	School Network Leader Guidance	
National Quality Standards	School to School Support (on request)	
School Data Tool		
Student Resource Allocation		Financial Management Plans
Enterprise Agreements		Workforce Management Plans
AITSL Principal and Teacher Standards And Leadership Profiles	Professional Pathways and Annual Professional Discussions	Pathways Agreements
School Compliance Checklist		

External Accountability

Enablers	Processes	Outputs
Legislation and Policy		Annual Board reports
National Quality Standards	Regulatory Reviews of Preschools	Preschool review Report
School Review Guidelines / School Planning Guidelines	External Reviews	Panel Report
	Special Purpose Reviews	School Strategic Plan
		Support Plan (as required)
		Sharing best practice- Scaling Innovation

Outcomes

- Delivery of high quality accessible education and childcare
- High quality teachers and leaders
- Improved student outcomes
- Meeting the learning needs of every student
- Increased attendance
- Increased retention
- Improved transitions
- High levels of satisfaction of parents, students and staff
- Staff retention
- Financial health of system

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The planning and review process

1. Five year School Strategic Plan

The *ACT Education Act 2004* identifies the role of the school board in establishing the strategic direction and priorities for the school across a five year period. A successful school plan not only has the support of the school board but that of its wider community through a process of consultation and discussion. The school plan shows alignment with the Directorate's Strategic Plan, and has clear and relevant improvement targets for its local context.

The plan will be readily available to the school and broader community including through the school's website. School Strategic Plans will be seen as live documents to be reviewed and amended as required.

As part of the Student Resource Allocation program, schools will be supported in the development of Financial Management Plans and Workforce Plans.

2. Development and publication of Annual Action Plans

The school's Annual Action Plan is the day to day guide for schools to map processes, resources and time required to deliver on the commitment in the School Strategic Plan. The Annual Action Plan will be developed taking into account the views of parents and students as appropriate. The school's Annual Action Plan will reflect the Director-General's Letter of Expectation to principals, and align efforts with both the Directorate's Strategic Plan and Annual Action Plan.

3. Evaluation and reporting of the Annual Action Plan

Schools evaluate performance based on robust data and evidence to inform decisions about increasing school effectiveness and student outcomes. Schools will evaluate the success of their Annual Action Plans, using identified targets and indicators of success prior to the end of the school year. This evaluation will ensure there is an evidence-based approach to the development of the Annual Action Plan. The evaluation of performance will form part of the next report to the school board at the end of each school year.

4. Development and publication of an Annual School Board Report

The Annual School Board Report comprehensively conveys to the community information on the school's performance. The Annual School Board Report includes the evaluation of the Annual Action Plan. While most of the reporting requirements within the Annual School Board Report are mandated, schools may also include a range of other information that will encapsulate the achievements of the school. The Annual School Board Report will be provided to the school board as the representative body of the community. The report will be made readily available through school websites and other communication channels.

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4 Fullan, M. (2010), *The Moral Imperative Realized,* Corwin Press, USA

> Accountability in essence involves building cumulative capacity and responsibility that is both internally held and externally reinforced.
>
> *Michael Fullan, 2010*[4]

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5. External reviews

External reviews provide an avenue for schools to demonstrate to the public the effectiveness of their planning and management of school resources to improve student outcomes. Schools use a broad range of data to develop a summative evaluation report based on the achievement of targets as articulated in their current School Strategic Plan.

The *National School Improvement Tool* (NSIT) and the *National Safe School Audit Tool* are important tools to inform the external review of current practices, as well as areas of strengths and needs.

6. Reporting to parents/carers

Schools are required to provide formal reports twice yearly to parents/carers on students' level of achievement. School reports will comply with the Directorate's *Reporting Student Achievement (Preschool to Year 12) Policy*.

7. Performance, assessment and development procedures

Schools are required to adhere to the procedures related to the identification of development needs for teachers and principals as outlined in the current *Teaching Staff Enterprise Agreement, Section P - Annual Professional Learning Program*.

Performance and development plans will be based on the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership *(AITSL) Australian Professional Standard for Principals* and associated *Leadership Profiles* as well as the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*.

Annual Professional Learning Plan (APLP) templates are provided for schools to use when developing a strategic approach to professional development. The *Teacher Quality Institute Continuing Professional Learning Program TQI Accreditation Guide* provides advice and support for development activities. Schools also need to consider what evidence might be collected and analysed to support evaluation of the APLP.

The Annual Professional Discussion with Principals incorporating the *AITSL Leadership Profiles and the Principal's Performance and Development Agreement*, provides guidelines for School Network Leaders and principals in respect to the performance and development process undertaken for principals.

8. Annual Assurance Statement

A refined compliance checklist will assist schools to understand the ACT policies and legislative requirements under which they are required to operate.

This compliance checklist will enable principals to confidently complete an Annual Assurance Statement indicating legislative requirements have been met.

Differentiated external school reviews

Schools will undergo a standard external school review at least once every five years. The reviews will be differentiated in length dependent on the complexities or needs of the school.

The review will be based on the school's self-evaluation of their progress documented in a summative evaluation report based on the *National School Improvement Tool*.

External panels will consist of an experienced external educator and a current leading principal. Panel members will review the data and the school's summative report and meet with staff, parents and students.

The panel will produce a report on the outcome of the review. This report will be readily available to the community through the school's website and other communication channels.

Some schools may undergo a Special Purpose Review. These Reviews will be at the discretion of the Director-General on evidence-based advice from School Network Leaders, and used in one of the following circumstances:

- a new substantive principal is appointed

- the school is achieving significant success in identified areas and the Directorate wants to better understand what is working well and why, in order to identify, share and scale best practice and innovation

- when it is clear a school is in need of further support

- the school is operating in special partnerships with other education providers e.g. Memorandum of Understanding.

Special Purpose Reviews will be conducted using specific Terms of Reference.

Review of education and care services

The Directorate through the Children's Education and Care Assurance (CECA) branch, will conduct an external quality assessment and rating of education and care services in accordance with the National Quality Framework.

The assessment and rating process aims to drive the continuous quality improvement of services and provide families with clear information about their service's quality.

The CECA also monitors compliance with the *Children and Young People Act 2008 and the Education and Care Services National Law (ACT) Act 2011* through visits; data collection and review; targeted monitoring campaigns; and email and phone contact with services.

Support for schools for performance and accountability

School Network Leaders

School Network Leaders are responsible for leading, managing and supporting schools in the design and delivery of school improvement programs and initiatives, in alignment with the Directorate's Strategic Plan and Annual Action Plan.

School Network Leaders are responsible for the supervision and development of principals; they are accountable for overseeing the performance and results of schools, including an annual review of the school's strategic priorities and targets set in the School Strategic Plan.

The School Network Leader will monitor schools on an individual basis, through ongoing review and school self-evaluation. To assist this review process, schools are required to plan, show evidence within their self-evaluation, and provide analysis of data for continuous improvement.

Following evidence-informed assessment of the school, the School Network Leader may consider the school:

- requires minimal support and provides ongoing monitoring of their progress towards the achievement of their priorities within the School Strategic Plan

- requires additional support and negotiates a Special Purpose Review and the development of a Support Plan with the Directorate

- is highly effective and recommends the school for a Special Purpose Review to enable the capturing, sharing and scaling of best practice and innovation.

The line of accountability is exclusively from the principal to the School Network Leader to the Deputy Director-General to the Director-General.

School Network Leaders will provide a conduit from the school to all areas of the Directorate, specifically in accessing expertise, support and information.

There is strength in collaboration… "improvement by schools, with schools and for schools".

Michael Fullan, 2008[5]

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5 Fullan, M. (2008), *What's Worth Fighting for in Headship?,* McGraw-Hill Education, UK

Tools for self-evaluation

The *National School Improvement Tool* (NSIT) provides schools and external review panels with a matrix to consider a school's effectiveness across the identified nine domains for improving student outcomes. The matrix enables schools to make judgments about where they are on their improvement journeys; to set goals and design strategies for improvement; and to monitor and demonstrate school improvement over time. Schools have the opportunity to give priority to particular domains in their improvement efforts.[6]

The NSIT is also the mechanism against which external review panels can assess, based on their professional expertise, and the school's self-assessment. It is a tool to identify areas of high achievement, and areas for further work.[7]

The *National Safe Schools Audit Tool*, linked to the National Safe Schools Framework, provides schools with an online audit tool designed to assist schools to make informed judgments about the extent to which they have created and maintained a safe and supportive learning environment, and to identify gaps for improvement.

The *National Quality Framework* provides schools with the framework and domains identified as best practice for early childhood education. The *ACT National Quality Standard Self Assessment Tool*, linked to the *National Quality Framework*, enables schools to evaluate the effectiveness of preschool units, and to assist in identifying areas for improvement, and in preparation for a review by the regulator, Children's Education and Care Assurance (CECA).

Data sets

A variety of different data sets have been identified to assist schools to use evidence to support self-evaluations. The School Data Tool provides schools with a number of data sets and will be added to over time. The school will also have systems in place to collect and analyse school level data.

Quality teachers and quality teaching frameworks

In addition to the requirements of the Annual Professional Learning Program as outlined in the current *ACT Teaching Staff Enterprise Agreement 2014-2018*, the Directorate provides support and advice on increasing teaching effectiveness through the frameworks Great Teachers by Design and Great Teaching by Design.

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6 Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) (2013), *National School Improvement Tool.*

7 Gonski, D. (2011), *Review of Funding for Schooling,* Department of Education, Employment and Workforce Relations, page 221

Great Teachers by Design Framework

Great Teachers by Design: a systemic approach to ensuring highly effective teachers in Canberra public schools provides school leaders with a range of evidence-based strategies and key actions to support and develop great teachers, and improve educational outcomes for all students. The content of the framework is aligned to the relevant domains in the *National School Improvement Tool*.

Great teachers:

- Engage parents

- Collaborate

- Use data and evidence

- Actively seek and respond to feedback

- Use the Quality Teaching Model

- Engage with research

- Engage in professional learning.

Great Teaching by Design Framework

Great Teaching by Design: evidence-based practices to improve student outcomes in Canberra's *classrooms* provides an evidence base for school level decision making about resourcing and implementing classroom practices that have most impact on positive student outcomes.

Great teaching will:

- Embed formative assessment

- Set high expectations for student achievement

- Provide students with quality feedback.

Student achievement

It is essential that schools provide accurate, accessible and consistent information about students' achievement at school to their parents/carers. This will include information about their children's academic achievement, engagement with their learning, and personal and social development, using a common template.

The *ACT Public School Student Achievement Report: Advice for Schools* provides guidance for schools on reporting. The requirements for reporting apply to every student attending an ACT public school, including students in specialist settings.

To ensure parents and the community have confidence in the judgments of one teacher in a school compared to those of another, teachers will also be provided with the opportunity to discuss, share and moderate assessment tasks.

Compliance checklist

A detailed list of actions, linked to legislation and Directorate policies, will support schools to monitor their compliance throughout the year and provide the evidence for completion of the Annual Assurance Statement.

8 Caldwell, B., Spinks, J. (2008), *Raising the Stakes - From Improvement to Transformation in the Reform of Schools,* Routledge, UK, page xvii

> A self transforming system of schools with a focus on… significant, systematic and sustained changes that secures the success for all students in all settings.
>
> *Brian Caldwell, 2008[8]*

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Glossary

Annual Action Plan

The Annual Action Plan details the specific actions and timelines related to implementation of the key improvement strategies outlined in the School Strategic Plan, within a twelve month period. There will be a clear line of sight between the School Strategic Plan and each Annual Action Plan.

Annual Assurance Statements

An Annual Assurance Statement from schools will inform the Directorate that the principal has been responsive to, and compliant with, all ACT policies and legislative requirements.

Differentiated Reviews

Reviews which will be tailored for the needs of the school, through type of review (standard review or Special Purpose Review) as well as the number of days a panel spends in the school.

Enablers

Policy procedures and system processes that support schools.

Guide to the National Quality Standard

The purpose of this guide is to assist early childhood services, including preschools, to complete the self-assessment and quality improvement planning process by evaluating their current practices and identifying which practices they can or will improve.

Improvement Targets

Targets allow a school to evaluate the effectiveness of the priority and will be SMART i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound.

National Quality Standard Self-Assessment Tool

A tool to assist schools to identify areas of strengths and areas for improvement across each of the National Quality Areas related to preschool education.

Networks

Networks are a group of schools working together to improve student outcomes, based on geographical boundaries or common needs.

School Data Tool

The School Data Tool is a database across a range of key indicators for individual schools available for school principals, School Network Leaders and selected Central Office staff.

School Strategic Plan

The School Strategic Plan is a public document that provides a strategic overview of the school's directions that will guide improvement over the five year school review cycle. The School Strategic Plan will be directly linked to the school context and reflect the outcome of the external review report; it will also reflect the key drivers of the Directorate's Strategic Plan.

People, Practice & Performance: School Improvement in Canberra Public Schools- A Framework for Performance and Accountability

People

Effective Partnerships	• **School-community partnerships:** The school actively seeks ways to enhance student learning and wellbeing by partnering with parents and families, other education and training institutions, local business and community organisations
	• **A culture that promotes learning**: A strong collegial culture of partnership, mutual trust and support among teachers, school leaders and parents in the promotion of student learning and wellbeing
Strategic Management of Resources	• **An expert teaching team**: Building a school-wide professional team of highly capable teachers to encourage the development of a culture of continuous professional improvement
	• **Targeted use of school resources**: Applying staff time, expertise, funds, facilities, and materials in a targeted manner to meet the learning and wellbeing needs of all students

Practice

Effective Teaching and Learning	• **Systematic curriculum delivery**: Coherent sequenced planning to deliver curriculum as an integrated whole
	• **Differentiated teaching and learning**: Ensuring that teachers identify and address the learning needs of individual students
	• **Effective pedagogical practices**: Research-based teaching practice is evident in highly effective teaching in all classrooms

Performance

| An Evaluation Culture | • **An explicit improvement agenda**: Establishing and driving an explicit improvement agenda grounded in evidence from research and practice |
| | • **Analysis and discussion of data:** School-wide analysis and discussion of systematically collected data on student outcomes[9] |

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9 Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) (2013), *National School Improvement Tool.*