



Education and Training

School Excellence Report 2007

Key highlights:

Over 90 percent of parents with children in preschools, early intervention programs and special education settings were happy with their children's programs.

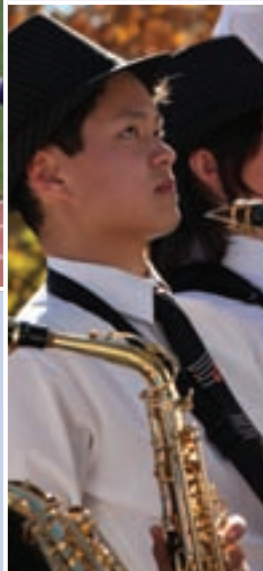
Ninety-four percent of 2006 college graduates were either employed or studying in 2007.

ACT students maintained their high achievement against national literacy and numeracy benchmarks.

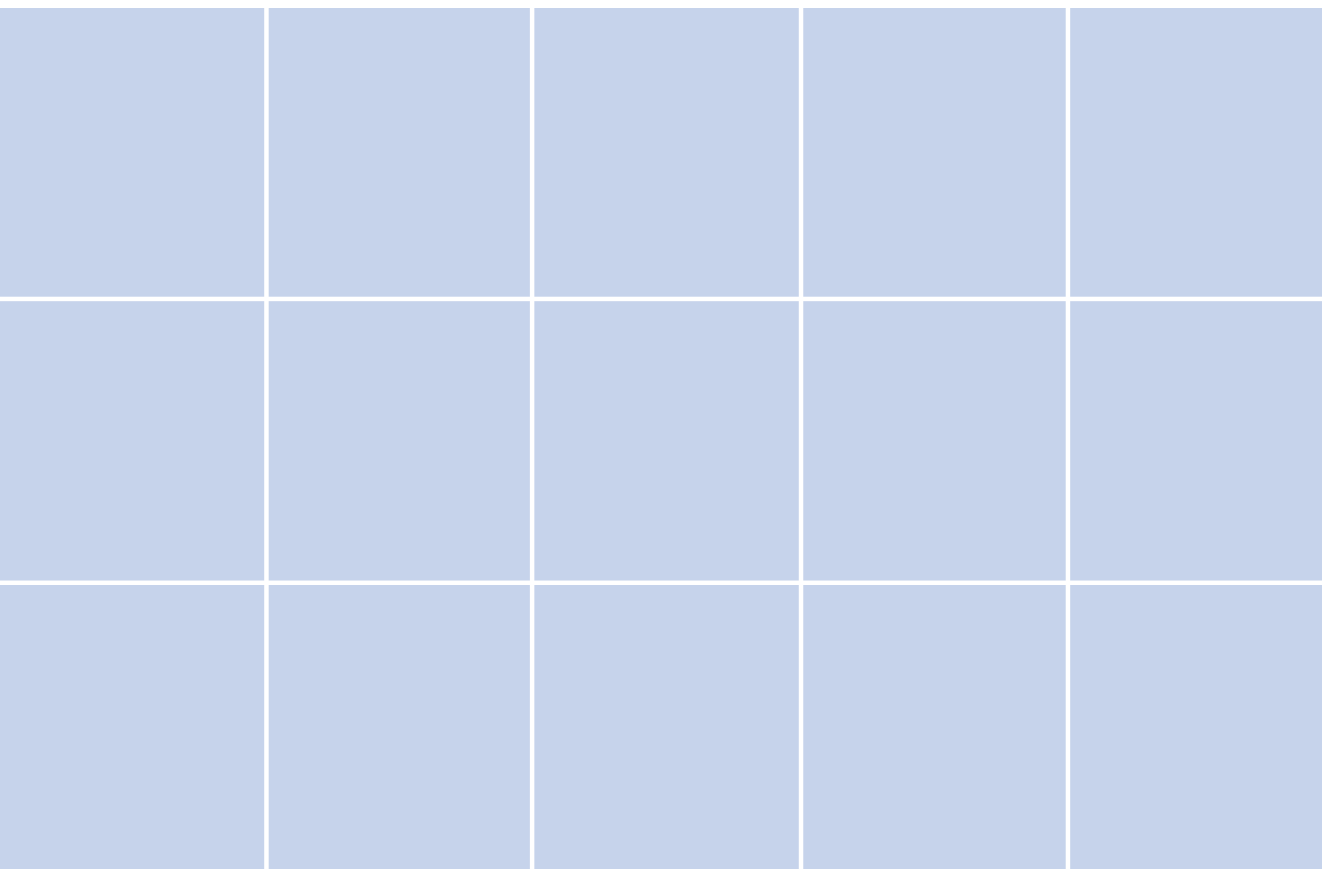
All schools made significant progress towards full implementation of the *National Safe Schools Framework*.

The launch of the ACT curriculum framework (P-10), *Every Chance to Learn*, set exciting new directions.

Through the Schools Renewal program, major capital works improved learning environments in ACT public schools.



School Excellence Report 2007



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Key findings

2007 was a year of significant progress and achievement in ACT public schools. Students continued to perform impressively in academic, artistic, sporting and community pursuits.

Satisfaction with public schools

Surveys of staff, parents, carers and students in a third of ACT public schools in 2007 showed continuing high levels of satisfaction with public schooling with:

- almost nine out of 10 primary school and eight out of 10 high school parents and carers expressing satisfaction with their children's school and education
- nine out of 10 public school staff expressing satisfaction with their workplaces
- eight out of 10 parents and carers across all schools having confidence in school management practices.

Separate surveys indicated that:

- ninety-five percent of parents and carers were satisfied with their child's preschool experience
- ninety-eight percent of parents and carers were satisfied with their child's early intervention program
- ninety percent of parents and carers were satisfied with their child's special education program.

Student achievement

In the ACT Assessment Program (ACTAP), over 90 percent of students in reading across years 3, 5 and 7 were above national benchmarks. ACT students also performed strongly in writing and numeracy.

Results of the National Assessment Program in Information and Communication Technology were also reported in 2007, with ACT students achieving the highest mean score across states and territories.

Eighty-eight percent of year 10 students in ACT public schools received an ACT ICT Competencies Certificate.

Results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) showed that ACT students performed better than other Australian students and better than students from most participating countries.

Other findings

The development and trialling of the new ACT curriculum framework, *Every Chance to Learn*, was completed. The new P-10 framework puts the ACT in a strong position to both influence and respond to the evolving national agenda on curriculum.

Under the Schools Renewal strategy, an impressive range of major capital works and school improvement projects were undertaken in 2007.

Schools continued to embed information and communication technologies (ICT) into teaching and learning. ACT students led the nation in their ICT skills.

Student pathways, from preschool to secondary college and beyond, were supported at the school and system level. Ninety-four percent of 2006 college graduates were either employed or studying in 2007.

The *External Validation Report 2007* commended ACT public schools for their achievements in 2007, including:

- successfully planning for and managing changes to school structures
- strong and sustained attention to literacy, numeracy and ICT
- commitments to making public schools safe and engaging places for young people
- the high level of participation by parents and carers and community members in children's learning.

Introduction

This report provides a snapshot of the activities of ACT public schools through the *School Excellence Initiative*. The purpose of the initiative is to provide an overarching framework for achieving high standards in student learning, innovation and best practice in ACT public schools.

Within this initiative is the *School Improvement Framework*, which identifies four interconnected domains - learning and teaching, student environment, leadership and management and community involvement. These domains form the basis for school planning and for monitoring progress across the system.

All schools participate in a three-year cycle of school review and development. Appendix 1 provides a list of schools participating in each stage of the cycle in 2007.

In the first year of the cycle, satisfaction surveys of parents and carers, students and staff provide schools with their baseline data.

Surveys are conducted in a third of ACT public schools each year. Further information about the surveys is at Appendix 2.

Through three-year strategic plans, schools identify priorities, monitor progress and report outcomes. School boards provide annual reports to their community and to the Department of Education and Training (the Department). For details, see Appendix 3.

In the third year of the cycle, schools review their achievements and participate in external validation. Appendix 4 lists the recommendations of the *External Validation Report 2007*.

The Department supports school development and achievement through its policies, programs, operational and advisory groups and professional relationships.

Overall satisfaction with schooling

Table 1 shows high levels of stakeholder satisfaction with ACT public schools, particularly primary schools. Lower student satisfaction in high schools indicates the continuing need for approaches that support student engagement and achievement in years 7 to 10.

Separate surveys were also conducted for parents and carers of public preschool students. In 2007, 95 percent of preschool parents and carers

indicated satisfaction with their child's preschool experience. From 2008, with the amalgamation of all public preschools into a public primary school, preschool programs will be integrated into the review and development cycle.

The following section details the four domains and illustrates the progress public schools have made within each of these domains along with some areas of high achievement.

Table 1: Overall satisfaction with ACT public schools, 2007

<i>Aspect of satisfaction</i>	<i>Parents and carers</i>		<i>Students</i>		<i>Staff</i>	
	<i>Primary</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Primary</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Primary</i>	<i>High</i>
With the school	87%	79%	85%	63%	87%	79%
With the education the school provides	87%	80%	88%	73%	91%	82%
That the school has high expectations in all that it does	83%	73%	85%	65%	90%	79%
With their work at the school	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	92%	88%

Note: Includes satisfied and very satisfied responses.

Learning and teaching

The key focus of school improvement is to support student learning, progress and achievement.

Characteristics of school success in this domain include:

- high expectations for student learning, supported by the use of data and by sound assessment and reporting practices
- a curriculum that establishes explicit, high standards for learning and is appropriate to student needs
- high levels of teacher expertise and commitment
- appropriate and effective use of learning technologies.

Overall progress

There was considerable evidence of excellence across this domain in ACT public schools in 2007 including:

- a high proportion of students achieving above national benchmarks in years 3, 5 and 7
- the new ACT curriculum framework (P-10), *Every Chance to Learn*, launched after extensive trialling and teacher feedback
- learning technologies further embedded in classroom practice
- school board reports providing evidence of student engagement and success in academic, sporting, artistic and community pursuits
- the *External Validation Report 2007* commending progress and innovation in curriculum renewal, teaching practice and assessment.

Student achievement

Literacy and numeracy

In 2007, students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 participated in the final locally-based assessment program. From 2008, students will participate in the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), where all students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 across Australia will sit the same tests for their year level.

ACT public schools continued to maintain their very high level of achievements in literacy and numeracy as measured against national benchmarks. The benchmarks indicate the minimum acceptable standard of performance below which students will have difficulty progressing (Table 2).

Table 2: Percentage of ACT public school students above national benchmarks, 2006 and 2007

	2006	2007
<i>Reading</i>		
Year 3	96%	95%
Year 5	95%	93%
Year 7	92%	91%
<i>Writing</i>		
Year 3	92%	94%
Year 5	94%	92%
Year 7	89%	87%
<i>Numeracy</i>		
Year 3	93%	93%
Year 5	92%	90%
Year 7	85%	80%

National Literacy and Numeracy Week Awards

The 2007 winner of the major Excellence Award for literacy and numeracy in the ACT was Aranda Primary School. Evatt Primary School was highly commended.

Support for literacy and numeracy

To support students' literacy and numeracy development, the Department continued and extended its programs in 2007.

Six facilitators were trained to ensure the continued success of the First Steps reading program in ACT public primary schools.

The Early Literacy Officer program, which builds teacher capacity in primary schools, was also extended to include a focus on numeracy. In addition, eight public school teachers were trained as facilitators to support the Tactical Teaching program. This program helps teachers in secondary schools improve literacy across all key learning areas.

Success in mathematics

A team of Garran Primary School students came sixth in the 2007 Australasian Problem Solving Mathematical Olympiads. The team scored a combined 248 out of a possible 250. Students from Chapman Primary School also enjoyed success in the competition.

ICT competencies

Eighty-eight percent of year 10 students in ACT public schools received an ICT Competencies Certificate in 2007 and

were able to demonstrate competency in all of the following areas:

- accessing information processes and tools
- communication and collaborative processes and tools
- organisation processes and tools
- authoring processes and tools
- presentation and visual display processes and tools.

In 2007, results of the 2005 National Assessment Program in Information and Communication Technology were reported.

The assessment measured the skills of students in years 6 and 10 and was designed to model students' typical real world use of ICT.

ACT students scored the highest mean score across all states and territories. Fifty-eight percent of ACT students achieved the challenging year 6 proficiency standard, compared to 48.6 percent at the national level. Sixty-five percent of year 10 students achieved the year 10 proficiency standard, compared to 61.2 percent of Australian year 10 students.

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

In late 2007, the results of the 2006 PISA were released. PISA is an international sample assessment of 15 year-olds that assesses students' competencies in three core domains: scientific, reading and mathematical literacy. In the ACT, 986 students participated across public and non-government schools.

The average achievement scores of ACT students in each literacy domain were the highest in Australia across the 2000, 2003 and 2006 PISA assessments.

In PISA 2006, the ACT performance in scientific literacy was significantly higher than all states other than Western Australia, where it was the same. This continued the trend from 2003. In 2006 the performance of ACT students was equal to the highest performing country, Finland.

Forty-six percent of ACT students were in the top two levels for reading literacy, the highest across the country, but below the highest performing country, Korea.

In mathematical literacy, the score for the ACT was similar to that of the highest performing country, Chinese Taipei.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) in schools

There has continued to be strong interest in and support for VET programs in ACT public colleges and high schools. VET programs are designed around Training Packages and are endorsed by specific industry areas.

In 2007, a total of 1506 vocational certificates were awarded to 1432 ACT public school students in years 10 to 12. In addition, 623 vocational placements, which are undertaken by year 11 and 12 students and involve structured training and competency-based assessment, were undertaken in 2007.

A total of 3760 work experience placements were also arranged in 2007 to support vocational learning and student pathways.

ACT Training Excellence Awards

Vocational Student of the Year:

Anne Cox (Lake Ginninderra College)

School-based Apprentice of the Year:

Thomas Mitchell (Canberra College)

VET in Schools Excellence Award:

Canberra College Futures Program

Australian School-based Apprenticeships (ASBA) formed an important component of VET in schools in 2007. ASBAs involve the employment of a young person undertaking a program of paid employment and structured training while still attending school or college. In 2007, there were 219 ASBA student commencements in ACT public schools.

In July 2007, the Department released a new service, ASBA Online, which provides for an improved connection and relationship between Australian Apprenticeships Centres and schools and colleges.

Breakthrough 500 Conference

The Breakthrough 500 Conference was held in June 2007. Stakeholders discussed strategies to achieve the ACT target of 500 new ASBAs. The active cooperation and information sharing between stakeholders is critical to the success of all ASBAs.

Year 12 Certificates and tertiary entrance

There were 2826 enrolments in year 12 in ACT public secondary colleges in 2007. Of these, 2437 students (86.2 percent) received a Year 12 Certificate and 1341 (47.5 percent) received a Tertiary Entrance Score (TES).

All eight public colleges had students achieving outstanding results, with top Universities Admission Index (UAI) scores over 97.5. The highest UAI achieved by a public school student was 99.95. To achieve these results, high performing students undertook English, languages, mathematics, sciences, the arts, humanities and business studies in their packages.

Forty-nine Indigenous students were enrolled in year 12 in 2007 with 34 students gaining a Year 12 Certificate. Ten students gained a TES and of those who did not achieve a Year 12 Certificate, seven partially completed a VET certificate.

ANU Secondary College

The success of the ANU Secondary College continued in 2007. Year 11 and 12 students from public and non-government school sectors completed courses of study in mathematics, physics and chemistry.

The majority of year 12 graduates received early offers for undergraduate courses at the Australian National University for 2008.

Student achievement in the arts

More than 650 ACT public school students participated in the inaugural *Step into the Limelight* event, held at the Canberra Theatre. This 'showcase' event demonstrated outstanding student achievements in the performing arts.

Rock Eisteddfod Challenge

Calwell High School became the first ACT school to win the Sydney Open Grand Final for the Rock Eisteddfod Challenge. The school's performance was inspired by World War 2 experiences on the Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea. The school went on to be placed second in the national titles.

The Department's Instrumental Music Program also hosted the inaugural Music in Our School Month in September 2007. Musical activities and events took place across ACT public schools and included performances in the ACT School Band Festival.

Curriculum

A highlight of 2007 was the finalisation of the ACT curriculum framework (P-10), *Every Chance to Learn*.

In the first half of 2007, the draft curriculum framework was trialled in 22 schools across the public, independent and Catholic sectors. The trial highlighted areas for improvement, while the recommendations of the Australian Council for Educational Research evaluation report were also considered in developing the final framework.

In November 2007, the Minister for Education and Training, Andrew Barr MLA, officially launched the framework. Copies of the framework, with an explanatory DVD, were distributed to schools in time for the 2008 school year. Brochures were distributed to families and a web page established to provide supplementary information and resources.

During 2007, a program of professional learning supported teacher participation

in the trialling of the framework and in planning for its implementation. Teacher response to the framework has been very positive.

Early childhood education

During 2007, Minister Barr launched the ACT Government's discussion paper on early childhood education, *The Best Start in Life*.

The Government also approved a framework for early childhood schools to develop as centres for children (birth to eight years) and their families. Four new early childhood schools, in Isabella Plains, Lyons, Narrabundah and Scullin (Southern Cross), will open in 2009.

A total of 102 children attending preschool in 2007 identified as Indigenous. A number of these children also participated in one of the five Koori preschool programs.

Indigenous health support

In 2007, the audiology testing service undertaken by the Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service was extended to all Indigenous students, in both Koori preschool programs and mainstream preschools.

Teaching

Research indicates quality teaching is fundamental to student progress and achievement. Schools articulate the commitment of their teachers to student learning and to their own professional development through the annual school board reporting process.

Once again in 2007, public schools were commended through external validation on the strong and sustained classroom attention to literacy, numeracy and information technology.

The external validation report also noted the extensive and effective curriculum work undertaken by teachers during the year in working towards the implementation of the new ACT curriculum framework, *Every Chance to Learn*.

National awards for quality schooling

2007 recipients included:

- Peter Blunt (Lake Ginninderra College) for his contribution to outdoor education
- Luke Williams (Canberra High School) for his dedication to student welfare and his capacity to engage students in their learning
- Rosalind Manley (Arawang Primary School) for shaping the school's educational thinking and purpose
- Helen Cant for her leadership of Red Hill Primary School.

Beginning teachers

The New Educator Support Program provides teachers with knowledge, skills and understanding that will be valuable in their first year of teaching and in the years beyond.

In 2007, around 200 beginning teachers benefited from a program of workshops covering:

- curriculum and student engagement
- student welfare and management
- assessment and reporting
- the reflective practitioner.

National Excellence in Teaching Award (NEiTA)

Two ACT teachers were recognised in 2007:

- Jason Wegener for motivating boys in the FARM agricultural program at Charles Conder Primary School
- Dorrie Chamberlain (Black Mountain School) for her long-standing commitment to motivating students with a disability.

An ICT professional learning strategy also developed a stronger emphasis on training people who could be effective coaches and mentors of teachers in their own schools. The strategy included an Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) Master Class program and an ICT Master Class Program.

Interactive Whiteboard days

As part of the new Interactive Whiteboard Master Class program, regular University of Canberra IWB Days were established. Teachers from the IWB Master Class delivered professional learning seminars to around 80 education students.

Learning technologies

In 2007, over 1000 teachers completed the Embedding Learning Technologies program. The program demonstrates how learning technologies can be integrated into classroom practice.

Through the *New Educators Innovative Learning* initiative, public school teachers on the first, second or third step of the teaching service salary scale were introduced to a comprehensive set of teaching skills using best practice ICT methodologies.

Student environment

The student environment domain encompasses policies and practices that make schools safe, supportive and inclusive places for students, staff and families. The foundation for this domain is a rich and challenging curriculum and a school that actively engages all students in their learning and in school life.

Characteristics of school success in the student environment domain include:

- catering for individual student needs
- positive and productive relationships between staff and students
- safe, supportive and culturally inclusive education environments
- high expectations of student performance and behaviour.

Overall progress

There was considerable evidence of excellence across the student environment domain in ACT public schools in 2007, including:

- the *External Validation Report 2007*, which noted the strong focus on making public schools safe and engaging. The report also commended colleges for their commitment to improving student transitions from high school to college and from college to post-school destinations
- schools clearly articulated and maintained well-developed policies and programs to support the inclusion and achievement of Indigenous students, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and those living in difficult financial and social circumstances

- ninety percent of parents and carers with children in special education settings were satisfied with their children's programs
- ninety-eight percent of parents and carers were satisfied with their children's progress in early intervention programs
- the significant progress made by all ACT public schools towards embedding the *National Safe Schools Framework* in their practice
- numerous examples provided in school board reports of progress in promoting respectful relationships across the school and achieving high standards in student behaviour.

The reporting period saw the development and implementation of the *Providing Safe Schools* suite of policies, and the establishment of the Safe Schools Taskforce, chaired by the Chief Executive with involvement of the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, Australian Federal Police, and other key stakeholders. Key achievements of the Taskforce included strengthening links with ACT Policing, school safety audits, and reviewing five key policies that provide guidance and direction to schools in promoting safe school environments.

Alongside these successes are some areas for further improvement. The results from satisfaction surveys suggest that some schools could further develop to meet the expectations of stakeholders.

Schools are giving priority to addressing these challenges. The new curriculum framework, more pathway options for students, continued implementation of the *National Safe Schools Framework* and

innovative approaches that engage and motivate students will underpin progress.

Inclusive education

Indigenous students

During the reporting period, the work of Indigenous Education Officers (IEOs) became more strategic, with an emphasis on improving attendance rates and engaging parents and caregivers of Indigenous students in the communities of cluster schools. Attendance rates improved in colleges and were maintained in primary and high schools.

NAIDOC week

In July, schools across the ACT celebrated the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

National Reconciliation Week

Between 27 May and 3 June 2007, public schools across the ACT celebrated reconciliation with Australia's Indigenous people. Activities included special assemblies and performances and the launch at Ainslie Primary School of art panels telling a local Ngannawal story.

Indigenous students in year 4 were given additional support in 2007 to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Through the Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy program, four officers worked one-on-one with selected Indigenous students across ACT public schools. This program was expanded later in 2007 to enable support to be provided to Indigenous students from kindergarten to year 4.

Professional development was also made available to teachers in the areas

of Indigenous learning styles and cultural awareness.

ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth of the Year

Katina Robson, from Lanyon High School, won the 2007 Youth award for mentoring her Indigenous peers and for her voluntary work at a local youth centre. Katina was also named the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sportsperson of the Year for her achievements in softball.

English as a Second Language (ESL) students

During the reporting period further support was provided to ESL students through Introductory English Centre programs, including the successful use of the Translating and Interpreting Service.

A range of programs including ESL, ESL in the Mainstream and Language Understanding Across the Curriculum were well supported during 2007 and provided effective teaching of ESL students, in both specialist and mainstream classes.

Students with special needs

A total of 1767 students accessed special education settings and programs in 2007. Three hundred and forty-seven students were enrolled in special schools and 1420 were enrolled in mainstream schools, either in special classes or in mainstream classes with varying levels of support.

Support for students and schools was enhanced through the development of an integrated service delivery model, bringing together special education,

school counselling and student management.

Australian College of Educators' Awards 2007

Black Mountain School won the ACT Educational Institution Award for Excellence in Curriculum Innovation in Special Education.

Pathways for students with a disability

The second annual ACT-wide Post-school Options Expo was held in May 2007 with a theme of risk and resilience. The expo was well attended and the feedback from students, parents and carers was very positive.

Student support

National Safe Schools Framework

The Department is committed to the implementation of the *National Safe Schools Framework* (NSSF). Each year, the Department compiles information from public schools on their progress in implementing the framework and reports to the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs.

To support the implementation of the framework, the Department finalised a range of policies during the reporting period including *Providing Safe Schools P-12, Countering Bullying, Harassment and Violence, Countering Racism and Countering Sexual Harassment*. These policies support the NSSF particularly with reference to its Key Element No. 2: Policies, programs and procedures are developed in collaboration with staff, students and parents, and include a statement of rights and responsibilities of members of the school community, including visitors.

In addition to the establishment of the Safe Schools Taskforce, the Department strengthened its reporting processes for critical incidents of bullying, harassment or violence. Mandatory timeframes and notifications for the reporting of the most serious incidents have contributed, over the four quarters of their application, to significant reductions in each quarter.

Figure 1 (overleaf) shows the strong progress ACT public schools have achieved in implementing the NSSF. In 2007, 96 percent of schools had either embedded in practice, or had made significant progress towards, the provision of education and training for staff, students and parents. All schools had embedded in practice, policies, programs and procedures in relation to bullying, harassment, violence or abuse and screening staff and volunteers.

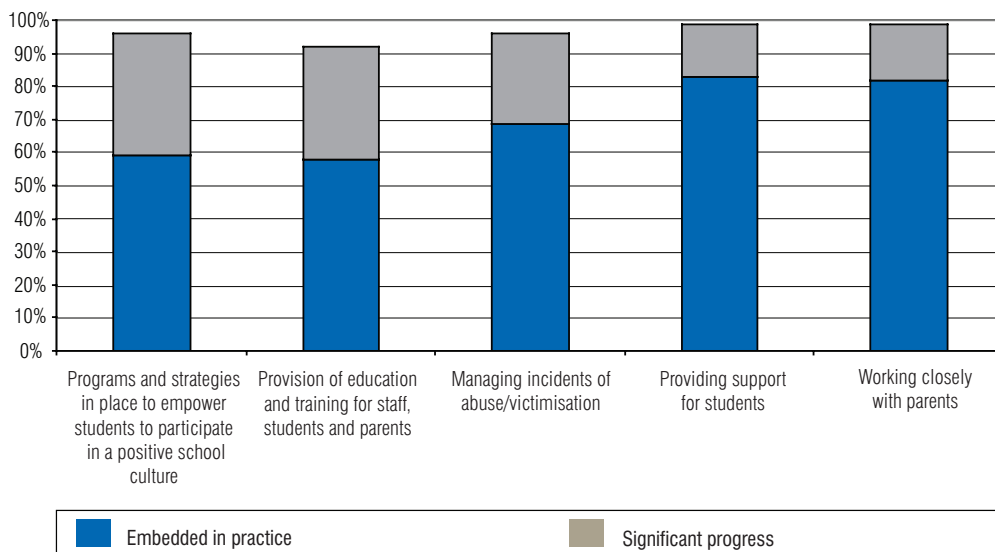
National Safe Schools Week

In May 2007, students across the ACT participated in National Safe Schools Week. The week promotes and celebrates school environments that support student learning in a safe and inclusive way.

Seventeen schools were awarded special grants to promote and publicise the safe school message through displays and performances. (Schools were selected on application, it being a requirement that displays of quality programs and practices would be showcased in local shopping centres.)

Schools ensure safe learning environments through proactive approaches aimed at fostering positive relationships between students, and staff and students. The Department supports schools in the implementation of evidence-based programs and practices, such as the Friendly Schools and Families Program and Restorative

Figure 1: Implementation of the National Safe Schools Framework by ACT public schools, 2007



Practices. Restorative Practices is an approach that holds people accountable while actively engaging them in problem-solving in order to foster appropriate behaviour. This approach has been shown to be highly effective in resolving conflicts, and building and restoring a sense of community.

Promoting student health and well-being

In September 2007, the Minister for Education and Training launched the *Get a Move On* initiative. It promotes school-based programs that increase students' physical activity, supported by three physical education trainers.

Additionally, teacher professional learning focussed on relevant areas of the *Every Chance to Learn* curriculum framework. Teachers wrote units of work on nutrition and participated in information sessions on alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Healthy fundraising ideas for ACT school communities

In July 2007, the ACT Government, together with the Heart Foundation, launched a booklet to help school communities plan fundraising activities that support the health and well-being of students.

Student pathways

Careers

In 2007, 18 public high schools and colleges participated in the Careers Cluster Program. The program helped embed essential content from the new ACT curriculum framework into career programs and provided a formalised structure to support transition from year 10 to year 11 within school clusters.

Canberra Careers Market

The Department and the Rotary Club of Canberra City staged the annual Canberra Careers Market in August 2007. Over 7000 students attended. Features included an ICT Skills Expo and Try a Trade.

Canberra College Cares

Canberra College Cares is a program that supports year 8-12 students, who are pregnant or caring for young children, to continue their education. The program was recognised at the ACT Children's Week Awards in October 2007.

Transition

During 2007, the Department developed and implemented a survey on post-school destinations and satisfaction. The report covers both public and non-government schools, and showed successful post-school pathways for public college graduates (Table 3).

Table 3: Post-school outcomes for ACT public college graduates, 2006

Employed or studying	94%
Employed (full or part-time)	81%
Studying	55%
Overall satisfaction with college	96%

The three-year strategic business plan for colleges was launched in August 2007. The plan provides a framework for ensuring the high standards in public senior secondary education are maintained and extended.

The business plan focuses on improving teaching and learning, providing pathways to post-school destinations and building connections with the wider community.

Over 1000 year 11 public school students and more than 150 parents and carers completed a survey to gauge satisfaction levels with the transition from high school to college. The survey findings indicated that some students:

- require further help with balancing college work with other commitments
- were finding the less structured learning environment of college difficult
- would like more information about VET pathways.

To help students with the transition from year 10 to year 11, a departmental transitions working party has been formed to develop policies and strategies to improve transition for all students.

T10 program

The T10 program, which was successfully trialed by Canberra College and its high school cluster in 2006, was extended in 2007 to Copland College and its high school cluster. The T10 program helps identified high school students connect with college life and supports them through their first college semester.

Sixteen new pastoral care coordinators, recruited toward the end of 2007, commenced work in high schools, with their role to work with teachers to encourage the social and emotional growth of all students.

Leadership and management

Characteristics of school success in the leadership and management domain include:

- shared school values
- a focus on learning for all school community members
- sustained school improvement-based on reliable data
- relationships built on collegiality, communication and trust
- participation by school community members in decision making
- effective management of resources.

Overall progress

There was considerable evidence of excellence across the leadership and management domain in ACT public schools in 2007 including:

- the planning for and management of change to school communities and school structures
- the Schools Renewal program, which supported major school refurbishments and new capital works
- the growing understanding by schools of the process of self-assessment, strategic analysis and evidence-based accountability
- more focused and strategic school plans
- almost eight in 10 (79 percent) parents and carers indicating confidence in the management of their child's school.

Student leadership

In August, Mt Rogers Community School hosted the second ACT Student Representative Council Forum. Year 5 and 6 students from north-west Belconnen public schools were given opportunities to develop leadership and communication skills.

In November, more than 500 ACT public primary school children and teachers participated in the annual Capital Kids: Capital Leaders conference. The conference focused on leadership, resilience and citizenship.

Evidence-based leadership

In February 2007, the Department released a discussion paper and a research paper: *Teachers and school leaders: making a difference through evidence-based practice*. The papers aimed to increase understanding and improve practice in the use of research and data in schools.

A course comprising three workshop modules was subsequently conducted to support evidence-based leadership. The modular course covered the use of system, school and classroom data.

Participants were drawn from 42 schools (K-12) with around 100 participants attending each workshop. Participants were encouraged to enrol in school leadership teams of three to enable a collective focus on improved evidence-based practices at their school.

Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACT) leadership awards

Wendy Hammond	Lyneham Primary School
Sue Harding	Macquarie Primary School
Catherine Le Brun	Hawker College
Penny Mims	Student Services, Central Office
Belinda Moloney	Palmerston Primary School
Alison Moran	Black Mountain School
Mark Nicholson	Amaroo School
Janine Skaines	Amaroo Preschool
Sue Vincent	Amaroo School

Fellows of ACEL (ACT)

George Palavestra	Melrose High School
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Leadership initiatives

Leading to Leadership program

The Leading to Leadership program was launched in August 2007. This professional learning program, with streams for aspiring principals, deputy principals and executive teachers, addressed current issues and future directions for school leadership.

Aspiring principals completed four core modules from September to November 2007 covering:

- what is leadership?
- self-analysis

- interpersonal skills and attributes
- capabilities.

The success of the new program lays the foundation for further professional development in leadership in 2008.

Leadership framework

In the second half of 2007, two executive teachers undertook a research project into leadership frameworks internationally and around Australia.

Consultation was held with ACT principal, deputy principal and executive teacher groups to obtain feedback on the model that would provide the best fit with the ACT context and current practice.

The development of the leadership framework will continue in 2008.

Northern schools cluster initiative

Principals of northern Canberra schools have developed a culture of collegiality and professional growth. In 2007 they led initiatives targeting district priorities. These included:

- development of an assessment toolkit
- school leader capacity building workshops
- student leadership training days
- gifted and talented workshops.

Schools renewal

The Schools Renewal program continued during the reporting period and included a major program of capital works, new models of schooling and consolidation of public school sites.

The ACT Government is investing more than \$350 million, from 2006-07 to 2010-11, to improve the physical environments of public schools.

Some of the initiatives include the modernising of existing facilities, building new schools and the *Smart Schools*, *Smart Students* initiative for information technology in schools.

There is also a focus on improving energy efficiency and environmental sustainability in all capital upgrades and new school buildings.

New models of schooling include the amalgamation of preschools with primary schools, a middle years program at Stromlo High School, collegiate arrangements between neighbouring schools and the development of four early childhood schools. Schools that were moving to new models reported excitement and confidence in the changes being planned or implemented.

The three schools and three preschools that closed at the end of 2007 reported a year of reflection, celebration and transition.

The Department instituted initiatives to ensure students and their families from those schools that closed at the end of 2006 were welcomed and integrated into their new school.

Melba Copland Secondary School

2007 was a planning year for the year 7 to 12 dual campus school. There is strong student, staff and community support from the Melba High School and Copland College communities. Almost \$6 million has been provided for capital upgrades.

School upgrades

During 2007, teams of painters, builders and landscapers refurbished a large number of ACT public schools.

The upgrades included refurbishments of classrooms, administration areas and staff rooms; improvements to science and technology areas; landscape improvements and shade structures; heating and ventilation improvements; and upgrades to facilities such as canteens and bathrooms. Upgrades also included access improvements for children with special needs.

These upgrades were well received by staff, students, parents and carers. They provided the school communities with a more pleasant and invigorating place to work, study and play.

ICT infrastructure

The ACT Government's *Smart Schools*, *Smart Students* initiative to improve ICT in schools and preschools made significant progress in 2007.

Completed projects included the connection of 12 secondary schools to gigabit fibre and an upgrade to the central infrastructure. All secondary schools will be connected to this network by the end of 2008.

Smart Schools, Smart Students

Smart Schools, *Smart Students* provides a \$20 million capital injection over four years for ICT in schools. The initiative was officially launched in April 2007.

Under the Schools IT Infrastructure Fund, the ACT Government has provided \$3.5 million over three and a half years to improve the internal networks and core ICT infrastructure in schools. All schools will benefit from this investment as the school infrastructure is upgraded to allow connection to the fibre network.

Leadership in ICT

Jervis Bay School was recognised as a national leader in the integration of ICT in learning through its participation in case studies for The Le@rning Federation.

Eight hundred and eighty interactive whiteboards and data projectors were installed in schools in 2007. Many of these were funded through the ACT Government's initiative of matching school whiteboard purchases.

The third rollout of Computers for Teaching has supplied over 3250 computers to schools and preschools. The best of the rolled-over computers have been redeployed into student networks, improving the quality of the ICT environment in schools.

New schools

2007 saw significant new public school building and planning in Gunghalin, reflecting the growing educational needs of the region. The new Harrison Primary School (P-6) was built during the year, ready for its opening at the start of the 2008 school year.

A master planning study for the Gunghalin secondary college was also completed during the reporting period. A number of workshops with stakeholders, including members of the local community, contributed to this work. It is expected that the college, scheduled to open in 2011, will not only provide a model for education in the ACT but will set a standard for modern, quality education in Australia generally.

Planning for the new P-10 school at west Belconnen proceeded steadily during 2007. The demolition of Ginninderra District High School was completed by

April and construction of the new school began in August.

Regional school at west Belconnen

The Minister for Education and Training, Andrew Barr MLA, turned the first sod for the construction of the new school for the west Belconnen region in August 2007. The school will open in 2009 and cater for up to 1100 students from preschool to year 10.

Support for school management

Throughout 2007, school-based administrative staff participated in programs supporting their work in schools and their career development. Programs included financial management, classroom support and school maintenance and environmental management.

A highlight of the programs was the range of workshops that built ICT skills. As a result, administrative staff were able to work more effectively alongside classroom teachers to support student learning.

Indigenous trainees

Under the ACT Government's *Indigenous Traineeship* initiative, two trainees were appointed to Richardson and Giralang Primary Schools. The trainees worked in the schools' offices and provided support to Indigenous students.

Community involvement

The community involvement domain encompasses the participation of parents, carers and community members in the learning of children and in the governance and life of the school. Increasingly, this domain is also about extending students' horizons to national and global communities.

Characteristics of school success in the community involvement domain include:

- active involvement of parents and carers in children's learning
- purposeful and strategic school boards
- effective partnerships with external organisations and student participation in community events
- promotion of citizenship.

Overall progress

There were many examples of excellence across the community involvement domain in ACT public schools in 2007 including:

- parents, carers and school communities maintaining their high level of engagement in ACT public schools
- volunteers who provided over 274 000 hours of their time to support student learning and school improvement
- school board reports that contained many examples of student participation in community events and in fundraising for local, national and global charitable organisations
- ACT community members who contributed to departmental advisory groups, thereby influencing policy and practice.

School boards

School boards are a way of sharing authority and responsibility with the local school community. The partnership between parents and carers, teachers and students has been a fundamental principle in the ACT school system since its inception.

The *External Validation Report 2007* recommended that schools involve parents, carers and citizens more comprehensively in the cycle of planning, improvement and review. This includes ensuring school boards play a strong role in strategic planning and in schools' self-assessment and validation processes.

Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Medium Community and Business Partnerships

Stromlo High School won the 2007 award for its partnership with Mirinjani Nursing Home.

To support the partnership between schools, families and community that school boards embody, the Department conducts annual school board forums.

In addition, an Introduction to School Boards workshop was held for new school board members in 2007. The workshop covered the role and governance functions of the school board, the relationship between the principal and the board, annual reports and financial matters.

Feedback on the workshop was positive and a similar session is planned for 2008.

School anniversaries

During 2007 a number of public schools celebrated the anniversary of their opening:

- Lake Ginninderra College (21 years)
- Giralang Primary School (30 years)
- Yarralumla Primary School (50 years)
- Ainslie Primary School (80 years).

Community consultation and partnerships

Consultation

The ACT Government and the Department seek the active participation of parent and community groups through reference and advisory committees and councils. This includes the Government Schools Education Council and the Indigenous Education Consultative Body.

In 2007, parent and community groups were also represented on reference and advisory groups that included the Teacher Registration Project, the Early Childhood Schools Project and the Career and Transition Advisory Committee.

The Department has undertaken community consultation in relation to the design and construction of new schools in Harrison, west Belconnen, Gungahlin and Kambah.

The Department also supported education and awareness raising for parents and carers in relation to key system initiatives. These included the new ACT curriculum framework, the National Assessment Program and the *National Safe Schools Framework*.

Information for parents and carers

Starting School - A guide for parents was distributed for the start of the 2007 school year.

Volunteers

ACT public education is indebted to the large number of volunteers in schools. In 2007, volunteers provided over 274 000 hours of their time. Their contributions included: participation in school governance bodies and fundraising; and assistance with reading, libraries, canteens and breakfast clubs, sporting, social and cultural events and excursions.

Some schools also made use of the services of ACT Volunteers in Schools. This organisation provides mentors for students who need help in their adjustment to school life and learning.

Community partnerships

The public school system is supported by partnerships with many government and community organisations. For example, partnerships with the ACT Departments of Health and Territory and Municipal Services continued to provide for effective delivery of health and safety programs in ACT public schools during 2007.

Business and industry also supported public education through a range of initiatives, particularly those associated with vocational learning in schools.

Adopt a school

The Adopt a School Program encourages businesses to partner with groups of motivated students from one or more schools to give them hands-on learning experiences in specific industry sectors. In the ACT, it is delivered as part of the Student to Industry Program.

Community grants

The Capital Chemist group has recommitted to a further three-year funding cycle beginning in 2007-08. This provides \$60 000 over three years to help selected students continue their education in college.

In 2007, the Country Women's Association awarded grants of \$350 to each of nine students commencing year 12, who have shown the aptitude and commitment to complete their schooling, despite facing particular challenges and hardships.

Citizenship

ACT public schools continued to strengthen civics and citizenship education during 2007, both through the formal curriculum and through school and system activities.

The 2007 national Civics and Citizenship Education Forum provided high quality professional learning for ACT teachers and supported school programs. The main theme of the Forum was to reflect on the contemporary meaning and significance of the 1967 referendum on Indigenous issues.

Citizenship

Five ACT delegates from public schools were joined by over 100 students from all over Australia to participate in the National Schools' Constitutional Convention at Old Parliament House in March 2007.

ACT students have strong links with Japan through sister school relationships, student and teacher exchange programs and celebrations such as the Canberra-Nara Candle Festival. Japanese Fun Day was held at Macquarie Primary School in May 2007 and over 150 students from schools with Japanese language programs participated.

During ACT Children's Week, schools in the Woden cluster participated in a simulated 'world of poverty'. This simulation increased students' understanding of world issues and their roles as global citizens.

Friends of Dili

The Canberra Friends of Dili Friendship Schools Council, was launched in June 2007 at Kambah High School. Six ACT high schools - Calwell, Caroline Chisholm, Kaleen, Kambah, Lanyon and Wanniasa (senior campus) are members of the Council.

The Council brings together the Canberra Friends of Dili and the Australia/East Timor Friendship Schools Project. The Council will support the ACT Government's commitment to providing support and friendship to the people of the East Timorese capital.

Promoting public education

An important dimension of community involvement is the promotion of public education to the ACT community.

2007 saw the marketing of promotional material around a new tag-line, *ACT Public Schools: So much more to offer*.

A network of contact officers in schools was established to assist with communication and marketing activities. A communication strategy continued to provide details to the community about the Government's budget initiatives, including the construction of new schools and school refurbishments.

Public Education Week

Public Education Week, a partnership between the Australian Education Union (ACT Branch) and the Department, was held in May 2007. Events, exhibitions and performances were held across Canberra as communities celebrated the excellence of ACT public schools.

Through Back to School Day, former staff and students returned to their schools to share their personal stories and life journeys. The Australian Education Union Public Education Award was given to Yvette Bice for her work as a classroom teacher at Wanniasa Hills Primary School. The 2007 Public Education Showcase seminar series was also launched during Public Education Week.

Conclusion

The central focus of school excellence is student learning and well-being. Excellence is achieved through evidence-based planning and action, supported by the dedication of school staff, leaders and communities.

Student outcomes across the curriculum, school board reports and external validation processes all provided evidence of a continuing high level of performance across the ACT public school system in 2007.

The *External Validation Report 2007* commended ACT public schools for their continuing commitment to excellence. The report also noted that evidence-based school improvement is a gradual process, an educational journey towards greater effectiveness and greater accountability.

The outcomes of 2007 provide a strong foundation for ACT public schools as they move on to an even more successful future.

Appendix 1

Schools' participation in school review and development

The table below outlines the processes within each stage of the cycle and provides a list of the participating schools in each stage during 2007.

Stage	Schools
Year 1 Establishing baseline data	Primary schools: Ainslie, Aranda, Arawang, Calwell, Campbell, Chapman, Chisholm, Cook, Duffy, Fadden, Florey, Gilmore, Gowrie, Hawker, Isabella Plains, Macquarie, Majura, North Ainslie, Richardson, Southern Cross, Theodore, Weetangera
	High schools: Belconnen, Calwell, Campbell, Canberra, Caroline Chisholm, Stromlo
	K-10 schools: Telopea Park
Year 2 Monitoring progress	Primary schools: Curtin, Evatt, Farrer, Garran, Giralang, Hughes, Jervis Bay, Kaleen, Lyneham, Lyons, Maribyrnong, Mawson, Miles Franklin, Mt Rogers, O'Connor Cooperative, Taylor, Torrens, Turner, Urambi, Village Creek, Yarralumla
	High Schools: Alfred Deakin, Kaleen, Kambah, Lyneham, Melba, Melrose
	Special schools: Black Mountain, Malkara, The Woden School
Year 3 Reporting outcomes	Primary schools: Bonython, Charles Conder, Charnwood, Forrest, Fraser, Higgins, Holt, Gordon, Latham, Macgregor, Monash, Narrabundah, Ngunnawal, Palmerston, Red Hill, Wanniasa Hills
	High schools: Lanyon
	Colleges: Canberra, Copland, Dickson, Erindale, Hawker, Lake Ginninderra, Lake Tuggeranong, Narrabundah
	K-10 schools: Amaroo, Gold Creek, Wanniasa
	Special schools/education centres: Cranleigh, Birrigai

Appendix 2

Satisfaction surveys

One third of ACT public schools conduct satisfaction surveys as part of the first year of their participation in the school review and development cycle.

The surveys are completed by parents and carers, students and staff in primary schools, high schools and colleges.

The surveys are organised under the four domains of the *School Improvement Framework*, with a summary section for respondents' overall views.

The surveys provide a series of statements to which stakeholders respond. An example statement is "My child's reports are useful to me." Stakeholders have the choice of five levels of response covering:

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
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Full details of the surveys are available from the Publications Section of the Department of Education and Training website www.det.act.gov.au.

Appendix 3

School plans: strategic priorities and progress

Strategic priorities

In 2007, all schools gave priority to planning for the introduction of the new ACT Curriculum Framework (P-10), *Every Chance to Learn*. Schools' priorities also reflected other planned system changes, such as the amalgamation of preschools with primary schools from 2008.

Other examples of strategic priorities and goals from individual school plans developed in 2007 include:

Learning and teaching domain

- establish a whole school evidence-based approach to learning and teaching
- engage students in their learning
- expand the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in teaching and learning.

Student environment domain

- focus on student health and well-being
- build respectful relationships across the school community
- empower students.

Leadership and management

- establish strong school values
- build the school's capacity through best practice leadership and good governance.

Community involvement domain

- strengthen communication and partnerships within the school community
- increase use of MyClasses as a tool for home-school partnerships.

School board reports are available on school websites. These can be accessed from http://www.det.act.gov.au/school_education/directory_of_schools.

Appendix 4

External Validation Report 2007: recommendations

The *External Validation Report 2007* made the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Leadership capacity building

The Department further develops leadership capacity in relation to quality assurance, school improvement and accountability.

Recommendation 2: School and college governance

The strategic role of school boards is strengthened so that members are informed and involved in meaningful levels of governance.

Recommendation 3: Evidence-based school practice

School-based decision-making is supported by system initiatives and tools that raise capacity to collect, analyse and interrogate the quality of school services and programs.

Recommendation 4: Curriculum

Schools should increasingly demonstrate their effectiveness through gains in student achievement, indicating positive curriculum and program effects.

Recommendation 5: School Improvement Framework

The review of the School Improvement Framework should clarify the rationale, timing, and processes associated with the school review cycle.

Recommendation 6: School strategic planning

School strategic plans reflect student assessment, perception, demographic and quality assurance data with clear and measurable targets for improvement of student learning outcomes.

This report is available from the Publications Section of the Department of Education and Training website www.det.act.gov.au.