

# School Improvement Framework

Better schools... better futures  
Raising quality and achieving excellence  
in ACT public schools



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# Minister's message

The ACT Government is committed to providing all students with a world-class education system.

The *School Improvement Framework* provides a context for schools to aspire to excellence and high levels of academic achievement.

The *School Improvement Framework* describes a four-year cycle of school review. It engages students, teachers and the school community in a process of continuous improvement. The Framework focuses on four key areas: learning and teaching; leading and managing; the student environment; and community involvement. Between 2009 and 2013, school leaders and school communities will use the framework to reflect on the quality of their practices, identify strategic priorities and embed programs that are effective, challenging and engaging for all students.

Effective schools are reflective schools. They have a strong vision for the future. They are built on a well-researched knowledge base. They analyse their own strengths and areas for improvement. The *School Improvement Framework* outlines processes for self-assessment, planning, external validation and reporting that enable all schools to transparently account for their performance and achievement.

This updated 2009 *School Improvement Framework* incorporates a wide body of feedback and the latest national and international research. Extensive consultation was undertaken with key stakeholders. This 2009 framework replaces and brings together into the one framework, the *School Excellence Initiative* and concepts of school improvement.

The ACT Government is committed to raising the quality of educational outcomes and achieving excellence in all ACT public schools. In focusing on both quality and excellence, we will create better schools for our students.

**Andrew Barr MLA**

Minister for Education and Training



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# The context of school improvement

Achieving excellence in schooling, like all fields of human endeavour, requires a commitment to continuous improvement and quality assurance.

High performing schools direct their energies and resources towards the improvement of learning to maximise achievement and realise the potential of all students. They are committed to making a difference and doing things better. These schools use research and planning to ask questions and to evaluate practices impacting on student outcomes. High performing schools systematically gather data from a range of sources, plan for the future success of all learners and account for progress through reporting and validating their programs. They seek feedback and are confident to expose their actions to external review.

School improvement is about putting in place a set of well-tested processes for identifying and addressing the developmental needs of each school. Effective school improvement is about change that is driven by commitment to increase the learning outcomes of every student. It requires a supportive environment where relationships and trust are developed. While the critical role of quality teaching in the pursuit of school improvement is irrefutable, the capacity of the school leadership team to build a professional learning environment and lead the change process is equally important.

All ACT public schools will complete a four-year cycle of school improvement. As schools progress through the cycle they will regularly review their development and assess their effectiveness. The *School Improvement Framework* assists and supports schools in this endeavour.

## The high performing school

Research identifies high performing schools as continuously improving schools. High performing schools demonstrate a commitment to ongoing self-assessment, evidence-informed practice and strategic planning. They have an unrelenting commitment to improving student performance.

All schools can be high performing schools. It is with this expectation that schools seek to better understand their context and more confidently direct future attention to areas of need in order to deliver better outcomes. Reflection helps schools to focus on what matters and ask important questions, such as: How can this school help students become successful learners and informed citizens? How can this school support quality teaching and leadership? How can this school develop and sustain strong partnerships? How can this school improve outcomes for all students?

While high performing schools have unique aspects relevant to their particular community and circumstances, there are common features that consistently characterise the quality of these schools.

In relation to learning and teaching, high performing schools:

- set high expectations for learning to challenge and engage their students and identify high standards for all students to achieve
- have a strong focus on quality teaching in every classroom and a commitment to professional learning
- deliver a curriculum that provides all students with a solid foundation in core knowledge, understandings, skills and values while being responsive to individual needs.

In relation to leading and managing, high performing schools:

- establish and publish a shared and clear vision of the school's values, goals, priorities and directions
- demonstrate strategic, purposeful and participative leadership, with a strong focus on student achievement through quality teaching
- manage resources and risks in ways that support the school's vision and maintain operational integrity.

In relation to the student environment, high performing schools:

- have structures and processes to identify, support and monitor the needs and performance of each individual student
- ensure all students can access and participate fully in the school's learning programs and promote the involvement of students in the life of the school
- are safe, supportive, inclusive and welcoming places.

In relation to community involvement, high performing schools:

- actively encourage and support parents to be involved in their children's learning
- foster a genuine collaborative relationship with the school community
- celebrate and promote their achievements.

## A framework for school improvement

The *School Improvement Framework* (Figure 1) provides ACT public schools with a structure for raising quality, achieving excellence and delivering better schools for better futures. The framework sets up a dynamic relationship between research and planning that will assist schools to undertake self-assessment, which is context-specific, evidence-informed and outcomes-focused.

All ACT public schools will use the *School Improvement Framework* to critically examine their programs and practices. The framework provides a focus through which schools can evaluate the extent to which they are meeting stakeholder expectations, delivering on system priorities and implementing strategic initiatives, such as the *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2009-2013*.

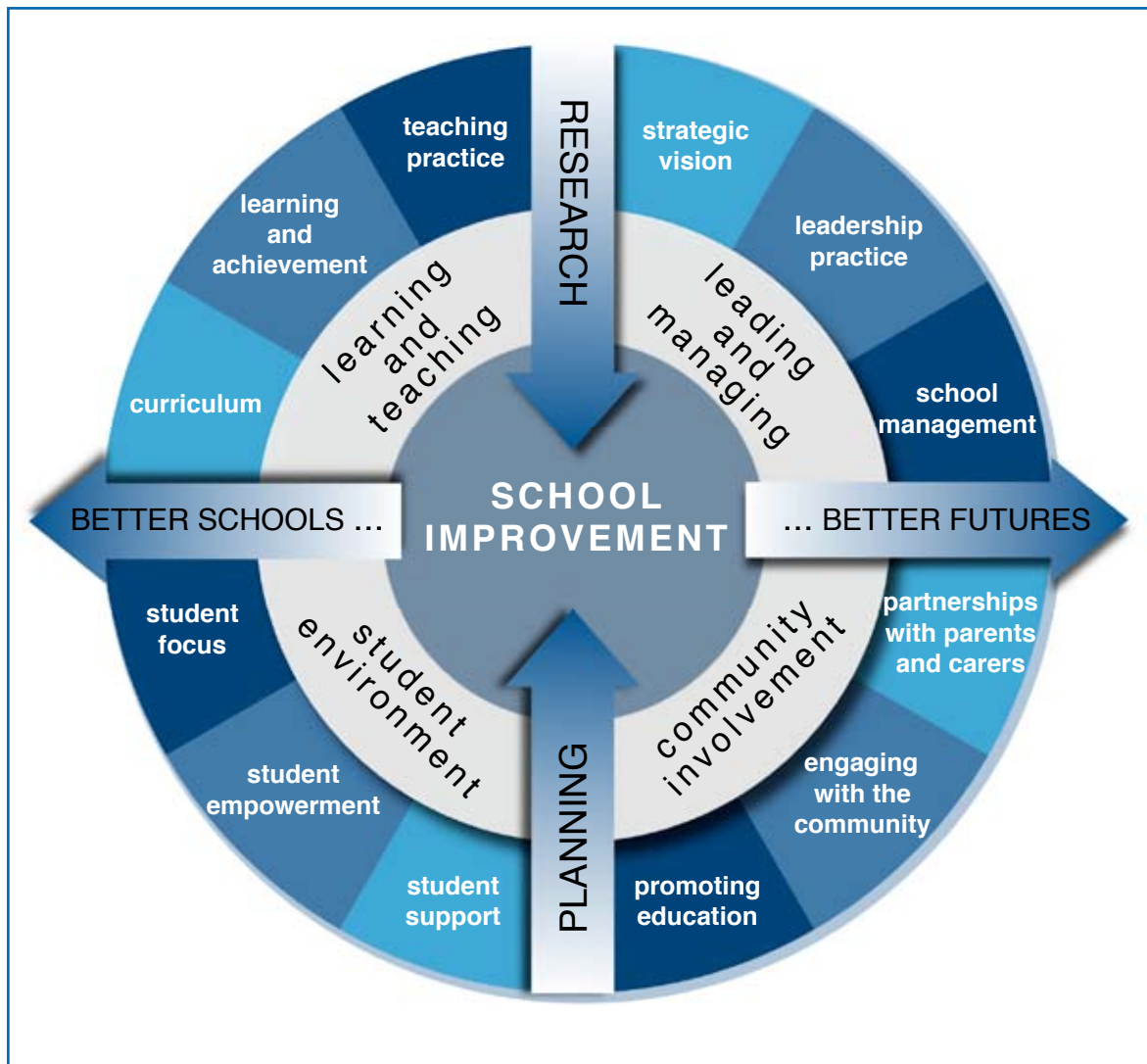
The framework will help schools to:

- make best use of evidence-informed processes and tools to evaluate their performance
- self-assess to identify school priorities

## 2 School Improvement Framework

- develop a four year school plan and an annual operating plan with a focus on improvement over time
- establish accountability measures and targets that indicate their improvements and inform further planning
- report on their progress regularly.

**Figure 1: The School Improvement Framework**



Effective implementation of the *School Improvement Framework* will see schools developing a cyclic approach to achieving and sustaining school improvement. The progress will be evident across four domains of school improvement: learning and teaching; leading and managing; student environment; and community involvement.

The domains represent the four key areas in which school improvement takes place. They describe the essential characteristics of an effective school. They form a structure with which schools can review, question and analyse their systems and processes. School improvement relies on having sound measuring, monitoring and reporting processes in place for each of the domains.

Associated with each domain is a set of three related elements that further inform the nature of research and planning required by a school committed to ongoing improvement. They are the core components of each domain and are designed to guide the school on what they must address in order to achieve sustained success within each domain.

## The domains and elements of school improvement

### Learning and teaching domain

The learning and teaching domain describes the context in which the curriculum is delivered. High quality learning occurs when teachers make appropriate decisions about what is taught, how to engage students in meaningful experiences and how progress will be assessed to inform future actions.



These elements describe how:

- \* teachers apply their contemporary and professional knowledge to establish highly effective learning environments
- \* teachers set expectations, plan for success and assess learning outcomes
- \* school curriculum design and delivery establishes explicit and high standards for learning.

### Leading and managing domain

The leading and managing domain is concerned with communicating a clear vision for a school and establishing effective management structures. Leaders set directions and guide the school community in alignment of its purpose and practice. Effective leadership within the school is collegial, student centred and teacher focused, promoting a collective responsibility for improvement.

These elements describe how:

- \* school vision is collaboratively developed to be realistic, challenging and futures oriented
- \* leaders use reflective practices to appropriately manage people to achieve improvements to teaching and learning
- \* the school's leadership team demonstrates effective resource management to achieve results.



### Student environment domain

The student environment domain describes the promotion of positive and respectful relationships which are stable, welcoming and inclusive. In safe and productive learning environments students willingly engage and participate in the broad range of learning opportunities. They contribute to decisions about their learning and their contributions are valued.



These elements describe how:

- \* quality learning environments are created to focus on student needs and foster potential skills and interests
- \* schools create opportunities for students to develop into self-regulating learners within and beyond the classroom
- \* schools value participation, and encourage student expression of new knowledge and understanding.

### Community involvement domain

The community involvement domain describes the development of quality ongoing community partnerships and networks. Schools are responsive to community expectations, value diversity and encourage contribution. Positive futures and cultures of success are promoted as educational outcomes.

These elements describe how:

- \* schools develop effective relationships with parents/carers to support student engagement with learning
- \* the school enriches the curriculum through partnerships and activities involving the local community and resources
- \* the school celebrates successful learning outcomes and promotes its achievements across the wider community.



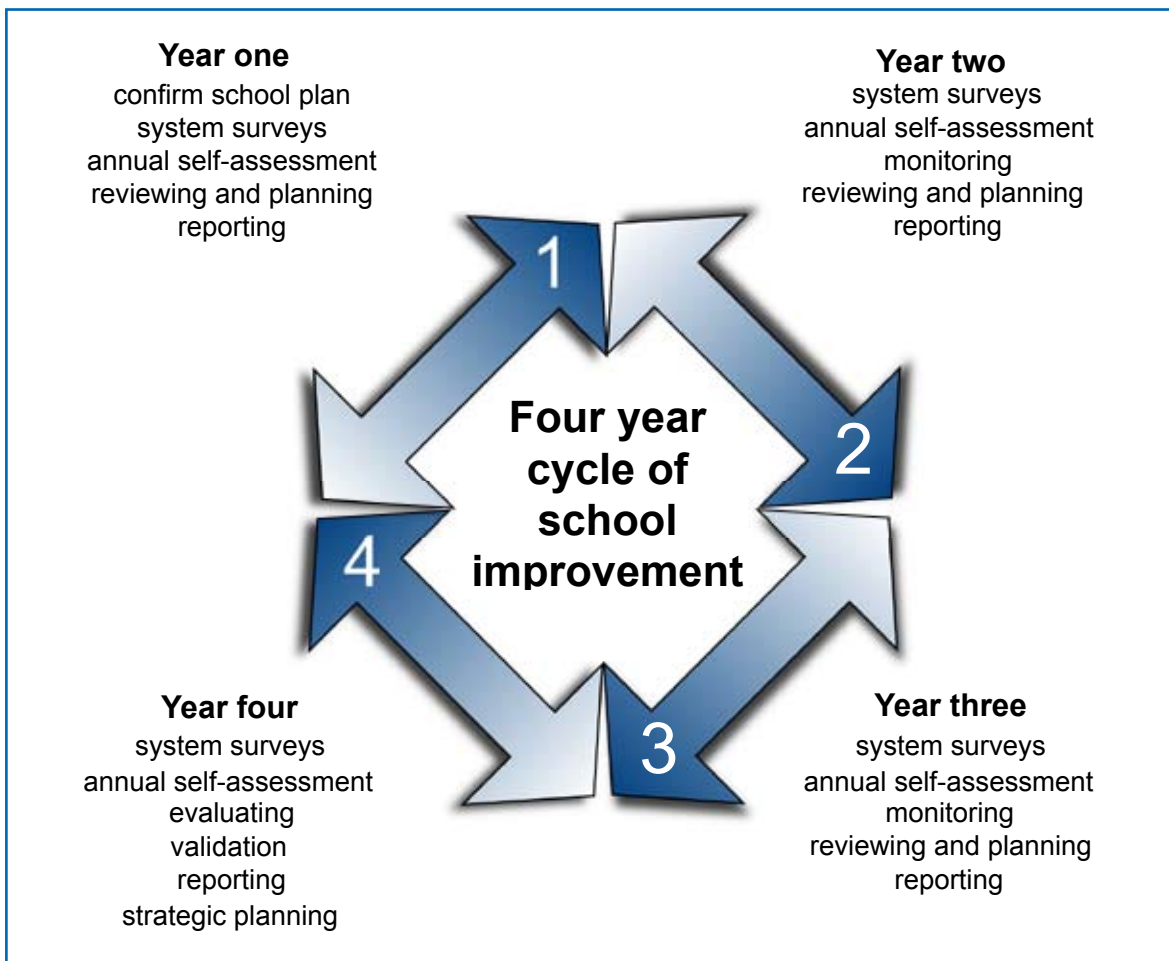
# The school improvement cycle

Research has identified that schools improve when they draw on a range of evidence from a variety of sources to inform their decision-making. Coordination of this evidence-base is a continuous process, designed to efficiently and effectively distribute effort and resources to best meet changing needs and address school and system priorities.

While processes, strategies and timeframes within the four-year cycle are largely managed by each school to best address their particular contexts, the timing of annual surveys, completion of school plans, publication of annual school board reports and external validation are generally at fixed points within the cycle.

Each school will develop a strategic four-year school plan and an annual operating plan, self-assess on an annual basis and report the outcomes against this plan to the school community. Each school will also participate in external validation in the fourth year of the cycle to gain an objective evaluation of its achievements and standards of performance, and to inform future planning for continuous improvement.

**Figure 2: The school improvement cycle**



With a four-year review cycle (Figure 2), schools will move through different stages of self-assessment and reflection. At each stage there is a range of support strategies, personnel and tools available to assist schools as they:

- develop and update school plans
- implement programs and strategies to meet the goals and targets of the school plan
- monitor, review and evaluate inputs, outputs and outcomes
- report student achievement to parents and carers
- report progress towards the achievement of goals through annual school board reporting
- undergo an external validation of their progress over time in the fourth year of the cycle.

## Key components of the cycle

The key components of the school improvement cycle sit alongside an action research and planning continuum. The action-oriented continuum is the core component of reflective practice and a feature of improvement models promoting school review, school effectiveness and school development. Key deliverables are scheduled over a calendar year and are set out in Table 1 on the next page.

The key components of the school improvement cycle are:

### Gathering

- annual self-assessment against the four domains of school improvement
- annual conduct of satisfaction surveys and other school-based surveys, as necessary
- ongoing collection and analysis of student performance data

### Planning

- development of a four-year strategic school plan and an annual operational plan
- annual review and update of the school plan, as necessary, and development of an operational plan

### Reporting

- regular reporting to the school board on key achievements
- ongoing discussions with staff on progress towards achieving performance measures and targets
- annual reporting against the school plan within the annual school board report

### Validating

- preparation of summative presentation for external validation panel briefing
- incorporation of external validation recommendations into planning processes.

**Table 1: Schedule of activities within the school improvement cycle**

	Term 1	Term 2 and Term 3		Term 4
<b>Year 1</b>	<p>School Accountability and Performance Sheets – data profile (January)</p> <p>School plan (and operational plan) completed and signed off by School Director and School Board</p> <p>School plan published on website (February)</p> <p>Annual School Board Report (ASBR)– sign-off by School Director and School Board, published on website (March)</p>	<p>Self-assessment matrix used to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement (ongoing)</p> <p>Annual survey – measure of stakeholder satisfaction (May-June)</p>	<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Data and information sources</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Survey analysis – NAPLAN results – Other school data – External validation (year 4 only)</p>	<p>Complete self-assessment report – Part B of ASBR</p> <p>Operational plan for year 2 – and strategic update of current year’s priorities. Discussed as part of principal appraisal.</p>
<b>Year 2</b>	<p>School Accountability and Performance Sheets – data profile (January)</p> <p>School plan updated if necessary and published on website (February)</p> <p>ASBR – sign-off by School Director and School Board, published on website (March)</p>	<p>Self-assessment matrix used to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement (ongoing)</p> <p>Annual survey – measure of stakeholder satisfaction (May-June)</p>		<p>Complete self-assessment report – Part B of ASBR</p> <p>Operational plan for year 3 – and strategic update of current year’s priorities. Discussed as part of principal appraisal.</p>
<b>Year 3</b>	<p>School Accountability and Performance Sheets – data profile (January)</p> <p>School plan updated if necessary and published on website (February)</p> <p>ASBR – sign-off by School Director and School Board, published on website (March)</p>	<p>Self-assessment matrix used to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement (ongoing)</p> <p>Annual survey – measure of stakeholder satisfaction (May-June)</p>		<p>Complete self-assessment report – Part B of ASBR</p> <p>Operational plan for year 4 – and strategic update of current year’s priorities. Discussed as part of principal appraisal.</p>
<b>Year 4</b>	<p>School Accountability and Performance Sheets – data profile (January)</p> <p>School plan updated if necessary and published on website (February)</p> <p>ASBR – sign-off by School Director and School Board, published on website (March)</p>	<p>Self-assessment matrix used to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement (ongoing)</p> <p>Annual survey – measure of stakeholder satisfaction (May-June)</p> <p>External validation</p>		<p>Complete self-assessment report – Part B of ASBR</p> <p>School plan – with operational plan for year 1 – prepared. Discussed as part of principal appraisal.</p>

## Gathering: sourcing evidence to inform planning and set targets

Processes for identifying and gathering evidence should be fair and balanced, followed by analysis that is valid, reliable and trustworthy. When evidence is carefully gathered and critically examined by the school community (staff, students, parents and carers), it provides a platform for considered debate and consensus, and increases the level of confidence stakeholders place in subsequent findings.

When a school community feels included in the data-gathering process it is more inclined to take greater ownership of findings and be more committed to improvement plans. Likewise, when a school community fully understands an issue, on the basis of balanced information, it is more likely to embrace change.

Each school has a major role in collecting and reporting data that will contribute to an understanding of their performance at both local and system levels. Schools will measure their performance by comparing their results with:

- previous student and school results to find evidence of school improvement and growth over time
- school improvement targets to find evidence that improvement strategies are having an impact
- ACT, national and international assessment results to demonstrate evidence of improvement.

Throughout the four-year cycle of school improvement, schools will also use evidence to:

- assess the quality of programs
- inform planning and set targets
- report on key indicators of school improvement.

### Data sources

Decisions need to be based on a range of high quality data. Each school's data sets should:

- represent qualitative and quantitative sources
- be about performance and achievement
- inform formative and summative processes
- improve accountability and transparency.

Schools should use all data provided by the ACT Department of Education and Training (the Department), together with data collected at the school level, to build a comprehensive profile of performance and achievement. The data sets should include, but not be confined to:

- standardised achievement test data
- data included in the school performance and accountability sheets
- moderation reports from year 11 and year 12 courses
- school data from system surveys.

## **A self-assessment matrix**

A self-assessment matrix has been developed to help schools identify areas requiring a stronger focus, priorities for improvement and baseline data against which they can report progress.

In using the matrix schools should be asking the following questions:

- How are we going?
- What are we doing well?
- What do we need to improve?
- How will we measure our improvement?

The matrix assists schools in their continuous improvement process and can be used to identify and clarify factors inhibiting or accelerating improvement, and the gaps between actual and best practice. This enables the school to develop priorities for action by identifying the largest gaps and relative impact on the school.

### **Components of the self-assessment matrix**

The self-assessment matrix is based on the domains and elements of the *School Improvement Framework*. Each element is described in terms of characteristics and indicators which are critical components of the self-assessment matrix. These extend the framework so schools can evaluate the quality of their programs and validate progress towards excellence.

For each element, a set of observable research-based characteristics has been developed to guide schools towards an evidence-based reflection on their practices within each domain. The characteristics describe key behaviours that would be observed in high performing schools.

The indicators in the matrix serve to describe progressive stages in the improvement process. They also have an aspirational function in that they provide direction to schools by identifying the qualities exhibited by high performing schools. They can assist schools to gauge their stage of development, set goals and track their progress. The indicators have been expressed using terms that will assist schools to take a quantitative and qualitative look at their practices. They are presented along a five-step continuum.

Figure 3 illustrates how the characteristics and indicators of the matrix are presented. The full self-assessment matrix is provided on the Department's website.

**Figure 3: Example of the components of the school self-assessment matrix**

<b>Domain: LEARNING AND TEACHING (LT)</b> <b>Element 2: Learning and achievement</b> <b>Characteristics:</b>					
A. Expectations about learning are communicated so as to value the quality of work and high standards. B. Student learning is personalised to engender motivation, ownership and responsibility. C. School-wide assessment strategies support improved learning outcomes. D. Reporting practice and feedback are aligned with system requirements and policies.					
	1	2	3	4	5
LT.2A	Staff members do not have high expectations for all learners and believe some learners will not achieve. No explicit statements regarding the quality of work or standards are communicated to students. Only technical and procedural criteria are made explicit.	Some staff members have high expectations for learners but this is not widely agreed or programmed. Students are unsure of expectations and standards so there is no motivation for raising achievement or performance.	Staff members have high expectations for learners and put in place practices and programs to support individuals and groups to work towards raised standards. There is little elaboration of what it means to do well.	Most staff members have high expectations for all learners with practices and programs in place to support learners achieve raised standards. Students fully understand what it means to do well.	All staff members have high expectations for all learners, with standards discussed, challenged and improved. It is clear to students how these criteria will be used in assessing their work that results in high motivation to achieve.
LT.2B	Students' background and cultural knowledge is not considered when programs are planned. Students are generally disengaged and passive participants in the learning process.	Most students, most of the time, appear indifferent to learning and achieving. Students' background and cultural knowledge is occasionally reflected in teaching programs. Teacher directed learning is the dominant pedagogy.	Teachers often consider the students' background and cultural knowledge when personalising programs. Student engagement is evidenced through a rise in motivation across a range of subjects. Students usually own the results of their learning.	Nearly all teachers consider students' background and cultural knowledge when developing their teaching program. Students are broadly engaged in the substance of the learning programs. They take ownership and responsibility for their learning.	Students' prior knowledge is always identified and substantially incorporated into the teaching programs in a meaningful way. All students are deeply involved in their learning, taking responsibility for their learning almost all of the time.

## Using the self-assessment matrix

Prior to using the self-assessment matrix the school community should be made aware of the purpose and function of this activity within the school improvement cycle. Self-assessment is a form of reflection on practice, and as such is a critical component of action research and planning. As a school reflects on its practice it will examine existing practices, research possible alternatives and refine or change its future targets, goals and plans for action.

Self-assessment using the matrix is an annual process. All four domains are assessed each year to assist schools to identify their priority areas for action. The information will also assist schools to report against each domain within the annual school board report and, in the longer term, provide evidence for the external validation.

## Planning: developing strategic and operational school plans

The planning process allows schools to identify its priorities and targets over a four-year cycle. The school plan also describes how progress is monitored and how achievement will be measured, including the evidence that will be gathered. Through planning, a school embeds into its processes and practices a capacity to meet internal and external demands.

Over the life of this current school improvement cycle (2009 – 2013), the ACT public school system will work in partnership with the Commonwealth under the National Education Agreement to achieve the following outcomes:

- all children are engaged in and benefiting from schooling
- young people are meeting basic literacy and numeracy standards, and overall levels of literacy and numeracy achievement are improving
- Australian students are excelling by international standards
- schooling promotes the social inclusion and reduces the educational disadvantage of children, especially Indigenous children
- young people make a successful transition from school to work and further study.

To ensure we contribute to these national outcomes, the Department will set system wide priorities and targets in literacy and numeracy to be achieved by 2013. As each school is doing its own planning, it will need to establish school targets and identify strategies to contribute to the achievement of these system targets. School plans will also need to incorporate other system level priorities and commitments that are developed and agreed by the Department.

## Structure of the school plan

The school plan is a blueprint that outlines how the school will achieve improved levels of performance. It establishes the overall strategic priorities for the school in relation to school context. As a public document it provides a whole school focus for continual improvement over the full four-year term of the school review cycle. The school plan will be made available on the school's website at the start of each year.

The school plan will include:

- a statement of school context, purpose and profile
- identified priorities
- improvement targets (including student performance targets)
- major actions (particularly whole school strategies)
- a timeframe
- expected outcomes.

An annual operating plan sets out how the school plan will be progressed in that year. The operating plan is developed after reviewing the school plan and identifying the priorities and objectives that will be the focus for the year. Operating plans are internal to the school and should be developed by school staff. Typically they include:

- the priorities and improvement targets in the four-year plan being addressed that year
- specific strategies that will be employed
- who is responsible for implementing the strategies
- a timeframe for implementation
- resources allocated to the strategies
- ways that the implementation will be evaluated.

Planning should also occur at the classroom level. Classroom planning is central to school improvement as it is what teachers do in their classrooms that impacts most directly on student achievement.

### **The school planning process**

Schools typically prioritise their strategic intentions in ways that provide the best balance between available resources (including human, physical and financial resources) and competing demands of stakeholders across the school. It is important that schools set an achievable number of priorities, at the same time providing the school with a broad range of significant challenges for each year of the cycle.

By identifying a school's priorities and describing them in a strategic and operational context, a school community can begin to systematically map out a plan for improvement in its four-year cycle. For each strategic priority a school will establish an intended course of action. Schools will need to reflect system commitments into their priorities.

School planning is a dynamic and systematic process. Schools should ensure that their processes allow planning to evolve to meet changing needs and circumstances.

Schools will establish a school improvement committee to work with the principal to develop and monitor the school's planning and improvement processes. In devising a planning process the school's improvement committee should ensure:

- full and open consultation with the school community occurs
- strategies for improvement are well researched
- data sources are identified and monitoring processes established
- the processes for improvement are communicated to key personnel

- documentation to support the improvement process is available
- future plans are informed by what has been learned.

## Reporting: providing evidence of performance

The school has a responsibility to report to its community on its performance and achievements. While schools use a range of formal and informal means to communicate with their community, the annual school board report provides the mechanism for the school to report formally to its community, the Chief Executive and the general public.

The annual school board report draws upon evidence from the annual assessment of a school's progress against its strategic priorities, objectives and targets identified in the school plan. It is also the mechanism through which schools can meet reporting obligations negotiated with the Australian Government.

The purpose of the annual school board report is to:

- provide student performance and school achievement information to the public
- record progress in meeting objectives and targets set out in the school plan
- provide evidence of improvement in the process of external validation
- fulfil reporting obligations required by the ACT and Commonwealth governments.

The annual school board report also allows schools to communicate changes in direction that have occurred through the annual review and planning processes.

Each year in term 4, schools will write up the results of their annual self-assessment against each of the four domains of the *School Improvement Framework*. This will allow principals to have a discussion with their school director as part of their term 4 performance appraisal. It will also allow schools to complete the domains section of the annual school board report by the end of the year.

### Responsibility and processes for the annual school board report

The school principal must:

- complete the annual school board report according to a standard format to ensure consistency across the ACT public school system and to facilitate data collection via the report
- ensure that processes are in place that allow the school board to monitor and review school performance and to report on it to the Chief Executive, parents of students at the school and staff (*Education Act 2004*, 39 (1b))
- as soon as practicable after the end of each year approve the annual report by signing off each year's annual school board report, endorsing the process and approving the content as a true and accurate record of the school's achievements (*Education Act 2004*, 52 (2))
- forward the annual school board report to the appropriate school director by the end of February each year for approval and sign off
- submit the signed copy to the Chief Executive by the third week of March each year

- make available to all school stakeholders and the wider school community a copy of the annual school board report on the school's website and provide hard copies to stakeholders on request.

## **Validating: undertaking the external validation process**

External validation is an important evaluation and accountability process that supports continuous improvement and builds public confidence in the quality of public schooling being provided in the ACT.

Each year the school directors will work with schools to validate the school improvement process and the evidence and conclusions described in annual self-assessment reports.

At the end of the four-year school improvement cycle, schools undertake external validation where they demonstrate to an independent panel how they have achieved the objectives of their school plan, and brought about school improvement across all four domains of school improvement. Evidence gathered throughout the four-year cycle of review, and described in the annual school board reports, provide the bulk of evidence for the external validation process.

Commendations and recommendations from the external validation report will inform the annual school board report in the fourth year of the cycle and contribute to future planning for the commencement of the next cycle of school improvement.

### **Consistency and evidence**

The external validation process has been designed to ensure it is rigorous and delivers consistent outcomes across the system. All external validation panel members are trained and fully equipped to conduct the process.

The external validation process reviews the judgements and decisions made by the school in relation to its progress over the school improvement cycle. It draws upon evidence of performance and achievement that has been accumulated by the school through its self-assessment processes. The external validation panel may request supplementary evidence across the four domains of school improvement.

An external lead validator will be appointed to oversee the external validation process across all participating schools. The external lead validator will provide to the Department a summary report each year to highlight commendations and recommendations drawn from the school-level external validation reports. This report will be published on the Department's website.

### **Timeframes and processes for external validation**

Schools will be validated in the fourth year of their review cycle. This allows adequate time to implement, embed, review and assess the relative value of programs and initiatives.

The specific timing of a school's external validation will be advised to schools at least six months prior to the validation panel arriving at the school. The school will be notified of the membership of the validation panel prior to the process commencing.

In the weeks preceding external validation, the school will provide the external validation panel with a briefing session. At this session, the school will provide the panel with all relevant documentation. The meeting will also confirm that the school has suitable working conditions for the panel to carry out its duties.

In preparation for external validation, schools should include all annual school board reports (relevant to the current cycle of review) and any other evidence deemed necessary for the purpose of supporting external validation. Previous external validation reports should also be provided.

External validation is a form of peer review, and as such relies on panel membership that is broadly representative of the ACT school system. In the formation of panels, school directors, in consultation with the external lead validator, will ensure that panels have the appropriate membership balance and representation.

Generally, panels will include a principal (chair), two school leaders and a community representative. Members of the external validation panel will sign a statement protecting confidentiality and privacy.

The validation process will take place over three days. The external lead validator, in consultation with the school director, will oversee the operation of the external validation panels. Constructive feedback is a feature of the external validation process throughout this part of the process.

### **The external validation report**

Following the evaluation process the external panel will prepare a final external validation report. This report will contain a brief analysis of each domain for school improvement, and will provide commendations and recommendations for future school planning purposes. The school's external validation report is a public document and will be provided to the school board and reported on through the annual school board report.

# Implementing the school improvement process

There are a number of key people and processes that are important for the effective implementation of the school improvement process.

## The principal

The principal is responsible for the quality of the education provided in the school and must ensure effective school improvement processes are in place.

The role of the principal is to:

- lead school improvement in their school
- establish a school improvement committee
- establish school targets
- oversee the development and annual review of the school plan
- report regularly to, and consult with, the school board on progress of the school plan and levels of student performance
- report regularly to the school director on development and progress of the school plan and levels of student performance
- approve all forms of school reporting
- ensure that appropriate evidence is retained and made available for the external validation process.

## The school improvement committee

The school improvement committee is responsible for supporting the principal to conduct the school improvement process. The committee is drawn from the teaching staff and broader school community.

The role of the school improvement committee is to:

- conduct an annual self-assessment across the four domains of school improvement
- ensure the annual satisfaction surveys are conducted
- facilitate the school planning process and ensure that a variety of valid data have been sourced
- report to the school principal on development and progress of the school plan
- collate the evidence required for the external validation team.

Members of the school improvement committee may be privy to sensitive information and will need to sign a confidentiality statement to protect this information from dispersal outside the committee process. A copy of the confidentiality form is on the Department's website.

## The school board

The function of the school board is defined in Section 39, Division 3.4.2 of the *Education Act 2004*.

In relation to the school improvement process, the role of the school board is to:

- establish strategic direction and priorities for the school
- monitor and review school performance
- report on school performance to the Chief Executive, parents of students at the school and staff through the annual school board report.

## School directors

The school director is responsible for ensuring schools develop effective school improvement processes and achieve improved student learning outcomes.

School directors work closely with principals, school improvement committees and school boards, to ensure high quality processes are implemented throughout the four-year cycle of review and improvement. The school director should be kept well informed of any changes or refinements to the school's priorities, the effectiveness of its improvement strategies and the school's progress towards meeting its performance targets.

The role of the school director is to:

- validate the processes and outcomes of the school self-assessment process
- validate the evidence used (including school performance data)
- verify that the strategic priorities and targets set in the school's plan are relevant, realistic and meaningful to achieve improved learning outcomes for students
- monitor progress towards achieving the school's targets
- endorse the annual school board report
- support the external validation process in schools.

## School improvement partners

School improvement partners work closely with school principals, the school improvement committee and school directors to ensure that schools have effective and convenient access to data and school improvement resources, tools and processes.

The role of the school improvement partners is to:

- assist schools to develop effective understandings and processes for measuring and monitoring the school's performance and achievement data
- support schools in their use of data to analyse and review current practices and strengthen their school improvement processes
- provide professional support in relation to school improvement.

## Other support for school improvement

A range of tools and templates are available to assist schools in all phases of the school improvement cycle. Links to them are available on the Department's website.

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