



ACT
Government
Education

Majura Primary School

Report of Review, 2019

Date of School Review: 30, 31 July and 1 August 2019
Principal of Review School: Daniel Zobel

National School Improvement Tool Review Report prepared by:

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Report Date: 23 August 2019

Report of Review, 2019 prepared by:

ACT Government Education Directorate
Education Services Division, School Improvement Branch

Report Date: 6 September 2019

Overview of the School Review process

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

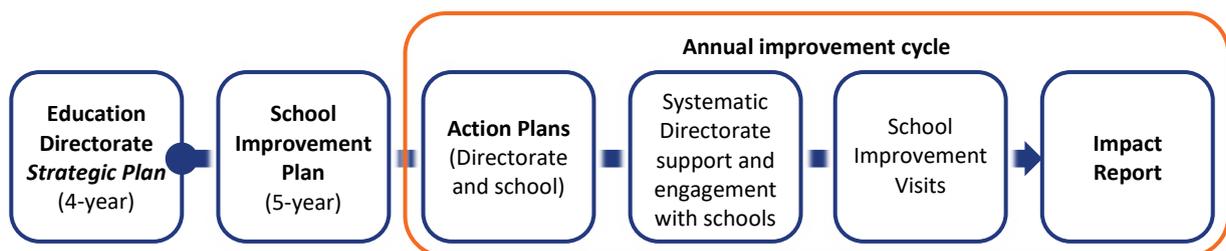
Reviews are undertaken by a team of experienced educators trained in the use of the *National School Improvement Tool* (NSIT) and are led by a Lead Reviewer from the Australian Council of Educational Research. Review Team size depends upon a range of factors, including the size and context of a school.

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

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

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

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



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

What are Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations?

Commendations

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

Affirmations

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

Recommendations

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

NSIT Domain 1: An explicit improvement agenda

Domain descriptor

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

Findings

- The *Majura Primary School 2015-2018 School Plan* describes two priorities: Implement a future focused and targeted curriculum informed by evidence-based assessment to improve student learning; and build a connected school community through embedding the Majura Primary School purpose, vision and values. Each priority has desired outcomes and performance measures that are either student outcomes, or strategies to achieve the outcomes. The school has consistently focused on these priorities over the life of the plan.
- School Board reports and Annual Action Plan (AAP) reports describe achievement in each year in relation to performance measures in the school plan, although trend analysis over time is less evident. School Board reports and AAPs are placed on the school's website as required. School Board members are given access to data about the performance of the school in NAPLAN and school surveys.
- Strategies implemented in the plan have a research base. Some teams are conducting research reviews as part of their action learning.
- Staff and parents are not clear about the school's improvement agenda and general performance. However, staff are able to describe recent strategies for improvement and there is a strong willingness by all staff to use these strategies to improve student learning.
- Connections between committee-level planning and the school plan are not always obvious.
- There is evidence that the school's leadership team monitors available data and plans accordingly. The quality of data available to the team limits decision making.

NSIT Domain 2: Analysis and discussion of data

Domain descriptor

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

Findings

- The school leadership team analyse and triangulate data from multiple sources including NAPLAN, PAT assessment and school data, and this analysis is presented to staff. There is little evidence of how these data are being used to explore student growth from a whole-school perspective.
- The school has a documented data assessment schedule and a data tracker. Staff are trained in using this, and record data on a whole-school spreadsheet.
- Staff received professional learning in ‘common collaborative assessments’ and these data are added to the whole-school data spreadsheet. The leadership team infers from the data that the needs of higher performing students may not always be met.
- A whole-school data plan was recently constructed.
- Assessment data are used widely in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and these data inform students’ placements in ability groups. There is evidence of a review of multiple sets of year 5 and year 6 data. ‘Disciplined Dialogue’ is used to analyse the data and set goals for the team, as a group and for individual teachers. There does not appear to be a consistent approach for all teams.
- There has been a recent focus on gathering and understanding numeracy data to inform teaching that supports student growth.
- A student data review was undertaken to identify the progress of EAL/D students, but data sets were inconsistent. The leadership team has identified that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at the school displayed satisfactory progress.
- Whole-school data are presented to the School Board for consideration.
- Data are used to identify and monitor students who require literacy intervention.
- Analysis of student survey data was used to develop a focus on student voice.

NSIT Domain 3: A culture that promotes learning

Domain descriptor

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

Findings

- All classrooms visited were calm and focussed. Teacher planning aims to ensure students are engaged in productive, meaningful learning.
- There were no obvious behavioural issues and students reported that they can get on with their work with minimal or no disruption. The school has well established values and practices relating to the 'Friendly Schools Plus' program.
- Students reported that teachers try to cater for their individual needs, providing support as required. Some students feel that they could be more challenged at times in their work.
- The school has a history of cultural inclusion and a cultural integrity team is focused on bringing cultural learning into the curriculum. There are many artefacts around the school representing and/or paying respect to the cultures of students.
- Interactions between parents, teachers and students are positive and productive. One student said that the great thing about this school is that there are "friendly teachers and friendly students".
- There is a strong sense of belonging in the school. One teacher said that: "the 'Every Face Has A Place' display typified this feeling for belonging by both staff and students". A parent said: "they always feel welcomed into the school and there is a strong sense of community".
- Many teachers previously used Google Communities to communicate with parents, but this is no longer available. Some teachers are now using Classroom Dojo and other online applications. Learning journeys, parent workshops, semester reports, emails, reporting interviews, and newsletters are used to communicate with parents. Parents help the school through volunteering to support student reading in junior primary classes, and by assisting in the kitchen garden and sharing their expertise.
- Teachers talked about a supportive collegial environment. One teacher said: "I was new, but every staff member was happy to help when asked". Most staff were comfortable in receiving detailed feedback from their peers about their classroom practice.

NSIT Domain 4: Targeted use of school resources

Domain descriptor

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

Findings

- The school uses data to identify individual and small group needs, with a focus on underperforming students.
- Time is allocated for staff in each year level to engage in collaborative planning of programs that support grouping and intervention of underperforming students.
- Diagnostic testing informs the resourcing of a targeted intervention program that is implemented by learning support assistants.
- Staff are deployed in ways that draw on their expertise. Specialist support and enrichment programs include Music, EAL/D and the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden.
- A Learning Support Unit has been established to support students with autism.
- There are Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) in place for identified students.
- Some teachers are exploring the use of Google Classrooms.
- Students at all year levels have access to technology and there is intention for increased access in the future. Technology tends to be used as a substitute or to augment traditional methods, and to support students challenged by reading and writing.
- The school has deployed resources to establish a coaching and mentoring model
- and invests in early career teacher support.
- There is expertise within the community, across a range of fields and parents are encouraged to support learning in classrooms.
- The school has invested in the development of outdoor learning spaces including the kitchen garden and the recently created playscapes.
- Many teachers use classroom spaces flexibly for group work and team teaching.
- The business manager and principal engage in collaborative budgeting processes with consideration of the identified needs of learners and areas of strategic interest.
- Parents talk about a need to improve access to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

NSIT Domain 5: An expert teaching team

Domain descriptor

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

Findings

- Each team within the school is using a model of inquiry to explore strategies to improve practice. PLC time is used to discuss action learning and analysis of results of each project.
- Most teachers interviewed have been observed by a colleague and/or school leader. Observations range from global to targeted, and enable feedback on agreed teaching strategies. Some teachers have recorded lessons to reflect on practice. There is a developing culture of seeking feedback from students to reflect on the success of teaching strategies. The student voice group is key to this work.
- Individual teacher goals are identified from observations and/or teachers' action research inquiry. These goals are used as a basis for annual performance discussions with staff.
- The school has drawn on the 'GROWTH' coaching methodology and some staff have been trained as coaches. Time has been allocated to release coaches to work in classrooms and for teachers to observe each other. Many staff have coached or been coached in this emerging professional learning process.
- Teachers in the first years of their career are supported in line with ACT Education Directorate expectations.
- The school has created four committees to oversee the improvement agenda of the school. Each committee develops plans to build capability.
- The school maintains a register of professional learning to track staff learning. An audit of all staff skills is being discussed; this will be used as a resource for staff development.
- The school maintains a live record of key processes on its intranet to support staff induction. Some new teachers, however, were not aware of the many documents and proformas available.
- Through the model of enquiry, and committee structures, there are many opportunities for staff to take on leadership roles.

NSIT Domain 6: Systematic curriculum delivery

Domain descriptor

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

Findings

- The school's Curriculum Committee, comprising representatives from each year level, documents curriculum planning. Teacher reflection on past implementation of units informs refinements and modifications to most plans.
- Curriculum development and implementation focuses on the Achievement Standards within the Australian Curriculum. These are translated into learning intentions in some classrooms.
- Teachers participate in team-based planning days to develop the intended curriculum each term. A focus of these meetings is the selection of content, based on the connections between Key Learning Areas.
- When discussing units of work teachers generally use the terminology of 'inquiry' and 'integrated' interchangeably.
- While curriculum delivery planning is predominantly teacher focused, teachers are increasingly responding to student perception data by offering more student choice.
- There are some misconceptions about the intent of 'futures focused' curriculum, which is a priority of the school.
- The school leadership team makes some reference to the General Capabilities and Cross Curriculum Priorities but there is little impact evident across the school.
- Mathematics overviews articulate a sequence of achievement standards; there are 'I can' statements and success criteria for each year level.
- Some staff can articulate the function of formative assessment.
- There are specialist programs in arts and music.
- There has been an attempt to integrate curriculum delivery through the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden initiative.
- The school is preparing for the introduction of system-based reporting through the new School Administration System in 2020.
- Teachers are working at understanding the intentions of the Australian Curriculum.
- The review team observed several examples of teachers exploring cultural perspectives in their curriculum planning.
- The school continues to develop its curriculum approach to social and emotional learning. A parent said: "the school took my child from hiding under a desk to becoming a

leader in secondary school”.

- The school uses common assessment tasks to moderate teacher judgements.
- Curriculum adjustments are documented in ILPs.

NSIT Domain 7: Differentiated teaching and learning

Domain descriptor

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

Findings

- Parents report they are informed of their child's progress and aware of how they can support their child/children at home through learning journeys, written reports, and parent teacher interviews.
- School leaders express a commitment to differentiate learning and are committed to success for all students. As a team there is evidence of triangulating data to identify learning needs for individual groups of students. They identify a need to improve the growth of the high achieving students and this is a future focus for the school.
- PLCs use data to group students based on their learning needs. Groups are formed across year levels and in classes. There is some evidence of individual and group learning goals.
- Some planning documents have evidence of differentiation ideas, and consideration is given to the capabilities of literacy, numeracy, creative and critical thinking. However, teachers express a need for professional learning in this area.
- Intervention programs provide targeted support for students. In these programs, data are used to identify student growth.
- A workshop model is being introduced with an emphasis on conferencing and documenting progress of individual student strengths and weaknesses as a means of determining starting points for teaching.
- Evidence of formative assessment including exit tickets and observational data from individual student conferences is evident in some classes.

NSIT Domain 8: Effective pedagogical practices

Domain descriptor

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

Findings

- There is an emphasis on improving writing at the school. A team of teachers has engaged in the ACT Education Directorate’s Early Years Writing Project, and the Essential Literacy Practices initiative. As a result, many teachers are involved in action research on an aspect of writing or reading that they want to improve. Learning walks and talks are implemented to check progress.
- School leaders model agreed practices. Teachers appreciate the opportunity to observe evidenced-based practices.
- Several leaders and staff have attended Principals as Numeracy Leaders (PANL) professional learning. As a result, the PLCs are developing a better understanding of student needs in mathematics and their capability to make appropriate adjustments to teaching and learning.
- The school is using the ‘Letters and Sounds’ program to enhance teacher knowledge of phonics.
- The school has a Visible Learning beliefs statement and most classes have evidence of learning intentions and success criteria visible in their rooms.
- In addition, the school has jointly constructed writing and mathematics beliefs statements however, alignment between beliefs and practices varies.
- The link between professional learning and the strategic direction of the school is not always obvious. Teachers comment on the usefulness of the professional learning opportunities in building their capacity.

NSIT Domain 9: School-community partnerships

Domain descriptor

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

Findings

- Staff value the contributions of parents in supporting the needs of students and are mindful of the reduction in parent volunteers in later years. The contributions of parent reading volunteers are welcomed and highly valued.
- Parents have access to workshops at the school to support their involvement. Sessions include supporting reading at home, and helping your child with writing.
- Learning journeys, parent/teacher interviews, and term letters support family engagement and partnerships in learning.
- The P&C is active and keen to contribute funds to the school. There is a relatively high representation of parents with younger children on the P&C. Parents are interested in clarifying boundaries and opportunities associated with the formal representative bodies of the school.
- As a flagship program, the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden is highly valued by students, staff, families and the wider community. The purposes, objectives and accountabilities are articulated in agreements through this program. There is variable support of, and connection to, the kitchen garden across the staff team.
- The kitchen garden has complemented and been supported financially through the Education Directorate's 'Fresh Tastes' initiative.
- The school has recently been identified as an Affiliated School in the University of Canberra - ACT Education Directorate partnership. This partnership is in its infancy at Majura Primary School.
- The leadership team expresses benefits from cross-network collaboration in strengthening student performance in writing.
- The outcomes required of partnerships are not always explicit.

Commendations

- All classrooms visited were calm and focused.
- Teachers aim to ensure students are engaged in productive, meaningful learning through their programming. Teachers describe the school as a positive and supportive collegial environment.
- The positive school culture enables specialist teachers to share information about student success and needs with classroom teachers through informal opportunities for connection.
- There is a school-wide commitment to every child's success and a strong willingness by all staff to improve student learning.
- The leadership team brings commitment and focus towards improving writing, building teacher capacity in literacy, and confidence in working with the Australian Curriculum.
- There is a process enabling input from senior students in reflection and forward planning. The student voice group values the opportunity to contribute. They acknowledge how teachers lead by example, and attribute their positive experience of school to the relationships they forge.
- The school has a history of cultural inclusion and there is a strong sense of belonging.
- The welcoming climate reinforces Majura's reputation as a community school, making it the school of choice for families enrolling from interstate and transitioning from other settings.
- Development of the outdoor learning environment contributes to the holistic school experience.

Affirmations

- The school has consistently focused on its strategic priorities over the life of the plan.
- The school has an assessment schedule and tracking tool where staff record data.
- Assessment data are used in PLCs to identify and monitor students who require literacy and numeracy intervention.
- Analysis of student perception data has informed the school's focus on student voice. Feedback students provide is beginning to inform teacher practice.
- Teachers are exploring online platforms to improve home-school communication.
- There is expertise within the community across a range of fields, and parents are encouraged to support learning in classrooms.
- The school has invested in the development of outdoor learning spaces including the kitchen garden and playscapes.
- The school has adopted coaching practices guided by the expertise within the leadership team. Time has been allocated for coaches to observe and work alongside teachers in classrooms.

- A workshop model has been introduced to support differentiation. Individual conferencing, including documenting progress is informing teaching and learning.
- Each team within the school is using a model of inquiry to explore strategies to improve practice. PLC time is used to discuss action learning and analysis of results of each project
- A clear strategy has supported the development and implementation of common assessment tasks and other formative assessments.
- Curriculum development and implementation is focussing on the Achievement Standards within the Australian Curriculum.
- The school leadership team is beginning to triangulate data to identify supports for learning needs of individual groups of students.
- Early career teachers are supported through mentors and regular school-based workshops on self-identified topics.
- There has been a strong focus on guided data collection and analysis around writing and formative assessment.

Recommendations

- Collaboratively develop the Majura Primary School Improvement Plan 2020-2024 that is consistent with the school's vision for teaching and learning and provides a narrow and sharp agenda focused on student outcomes, by incorporating explicit targets for student achievement and wellbeing. Progress towards targets should be monitored and initiatives and programs systematically evaluated for their effectiveness in producing the desired improvements in student learning. The progress of this improvement process should be regularly shared with the school community.
- Expand on the current data plan to incorporate the full range of data on student achievement and wellbeing. Develop processes to broaden analysis of school-level data to monitor trends over time and to understand and address the needs of identified groups of learners. Provide professional learning to support staff, as appropriate, to analyse data at the school level and/or at the classroom level.
- Document a professional learning plan that aligns with the school's improvement agenda and focuses on individual professional performance improvement. In doing so, continue to develop the practices of feedback, mentoring and coaching.
- Continue to develop teacher understanding of the Australian Curriculum and a curriculum delivery plan to include all learning areas, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.
- Further develop teacher capacity to cater for individual needs. Continue to provide opportunities for staff collaboration to use student data to determine starting points for learning, monitor learning over time and celebrate progress.
- Develop a platform of shared beliefs about learning to inform strategic decision making, teaching expectations and pedagogy. This includes continuing to drive implementation of the visible learning strategy in the school.
- Continue to develop and refine partnerships, particularly to support the strategic intent.