



ACT
Government
Education

O'Connor Cooperative School

Report of Review, 2023

This page left intentionally blank.

Publication and independent Review Team details

Date of School Review: 13, 14, 15 and 16 June 2023

Principal of Review School: Deborah Lowrey

National School Improvement Tool Review Report prepared by:

- Lead Reviewer: Boyd Jorgensen, *ACER Senior School Improvement Consultant*
- ACT Review Team members: 1. James Barnett, *Principal of Chapman Primary School*
2. Robyn Strangward, *Principal of Lyons Early Childhood School*

Report Date: 16 June 2023

Report of Review, 2023 prepared by:

ACT Government Education Directorate
Education Services Division, School Improvement Branch

Report Date: 21 June 2023

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 support annual implementation of a school's 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.

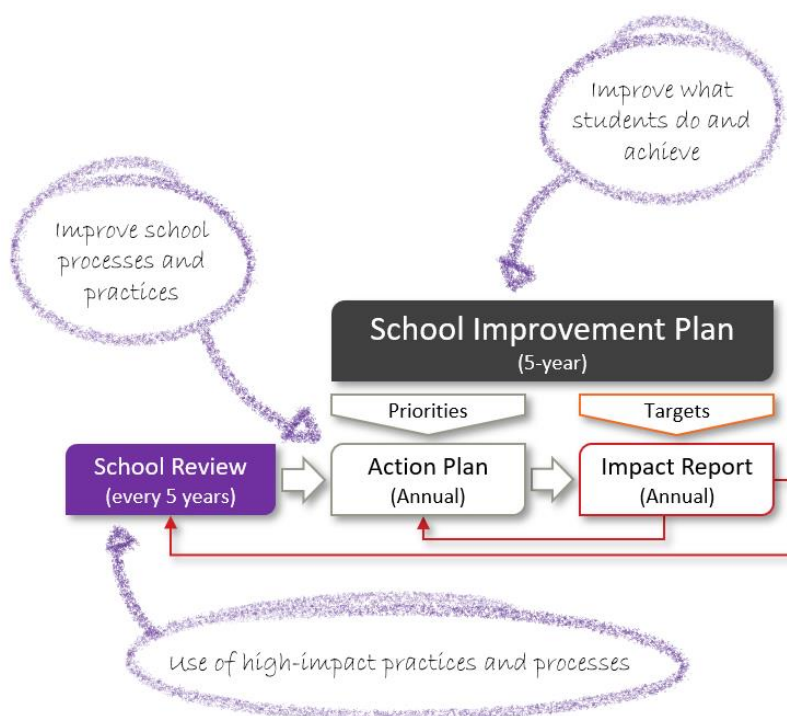
Following Review, the school receives a planning report, which is used as an internal working document, outlining key findings and recommended strategies for continued school improvement. The Education Directorate uses this planning report as a basis for the final *Report of Review* provided to school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

The *Report of Review* includes detailed findings for each of the nine Domains of the National

School Improvement Tool, as well as Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations for continued school improvement.

Where does Review sit within the 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. Additionally, schools are provided differentiated support and feedback by internal and external experts. School Review is one way that this differentiated feedback is provided and typically occurs at the end of the 5-year school improvement cycle.



What are Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations?

Commendations

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

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

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 effectively implementing its 5-year School 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 principal, leaders, staff and School Board are united, committed and very clear about their drive for fostering and improving student learning and wellbeing outcomes and working together in pursuit of that goal.
- All staff express a clear belief in every student's potential, and a strong commitment to every student's success. The staff express high expectations about student learning and providing a safe, nurturing, inclusive and caring educational environment for all learners. Parents indicate that this belief and commitment are clearly and regularly communicated.
- Since the beginning of 2022, the school improvement journey has been guided by the establishment of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) and a vision and core beliefs formed using the Indigenous Engoori strength-based approach¹, collaboratively developed by all staff. Some staff express that they refer to those core beliefs to help guide them in their planning and teaching.
- The School Improvement Plan 2019-2023 identifies two priorities: learning outcomes in numeracy and writing and spelling.
- The Action Plan (AP) 2023 reflects the use of school longitudinal data, and the influence of collaboratively developed PLC beliefs about literacy, numeracy and Inquiry Learning² to inform the current action on those priorities. Staff express familiarity with the targets referred to in the AP.
- The principal and leaders articulate a focus on building distributed leadership where teachers and educators have a voice and clear input into the school improvement agenda. Staff confirm their collaborative role and affirm the importance of the Engoori values, rituals and culture in shaping decision making and monitoring the agenda.
- The principal identifies that through an inquiry approach, parents are provided with opportunities to contribute to the monitoring and shaping of the improvement agenda.
- Representatives of the School Board indicate that they are viewed as a consultative body and partner in planning, with the principal's leadership described as being transparent and responsive. They express high levels of confidence in the leadership of the school. The Board reflects on the progress of the priorities each term.
- With the Preschool class, the Quality Improvement Plan 2022-2023 has been established.

¹ Engoori is a three-phase, strength-based approach which acknowledges that when dealing with complex challenges, having conversations with structure, purpose and process is often the most powerful action anyone can take.

² Inquiry learning enables students to learn through curiosity, discovery and collaboration, rather than being presented with facts through direct instruction.

The principal and some parents identify the elemental role of parents in an inquiry process to review and update the plan.

- Improvement processes and outcomes are shared with families largely through newsletters, regular meetings and the parent inquiry sessions.
- Leaders articulate that they continuously seek new knowledge to inform and improve teaching and learning, including through engagement with external consultants, a book club with teachers to examine relevant research, and networking with other schools.

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

- School leaders place an emphasis on the collection and analysis of data to inform whole-school, cohort and classroom decisions.
- A comprehensive published data plan outlines the timelines for the systematic collection and use of multiple sources of data. That includes student learning and wellbeing, as well as perception and demographic data. The principal conveys that the data plan was reviewed in 2022. Staff voice played a key role in determining the most effective data, and how and where that data should be used.
- Data are analysed using the Spiral of Inquiry³ process, as well as data-analysis questions that support teacher reflection.
- PLCs and Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) provide the vehicle for data analyses. School leaders work collaboratively with teachers to develop and implement strategies to support student learning. Staff articulate that they receive coaching during PLTs in how to use data effectively to inform their teaching and in identifying starting points for students' learning.
- Teachers express appreciation of the support they receive from leaders that assists them to determine appropriate modifications to planning, as well as implementation of teaching strategies to improve student outcomes.
- School leaders assert that the PLTs play a key role in developing staff data literacy and that planning days often include sessions on the effective use of data. Teachers express growing confidence in their data capabilities.
- Data are stored in a folder on the school's Google Drive and are readily accessible to all members of staff.
- Staff findings through a community of practice inquiry into learning stories has strengthened documentation of student learning "in the moment". Stories about students are shared with families through Google Classroom⁴ and in school newsletters.
- Some staff use the Australian Curriculum Literacy and Numeracy Progressions⁵ as useful

³ The spiral of inquiry is a systematic process for investigating and improving learner outcomes: academic, social and wellbeing. There are many calls for teachers to use inquiry as part of their practice because of its associations with improved outcomes for marginalised learners.

⁴ Google Classroom is a suite of online tools that allows teachers to set assignments, have work submitted by students, to mark, and to return graded papers.

⁵ The National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions are a resource that describe how literacy and numeracy learning develops over time. Successful teaching and learning to address student needs in relation to literacy and numeracy requires the teacher to have an understanding of where the student is now and where the student needs to go next in their literacy and numeracy development.

tools to identify the next steps in student learning. School leaders identify this as an area for growth in teaching staff.

- Teachers use PM Benchmarks⁶ to determine reading levels and Venn diagrams are used to identify below, at and above expected levels. Levels are used to determine groupings, as well as the next-steps focus for students.
- School leaders identify the need to employ an early childhood tool which will enable them to measure student wellbeing effectively.
- Student attendance data are recorded and monitored by the Disability Education Coordinator (DECO) using the Sentral cloud-based school management platform. School attendance currently sits at 90.37 per cent. School leaders report there is currently minimal need to monitor negative incidents.

⁶ PM Benchmarks provide teachers with the tools to accurately identify students' reading levels, use evidence to inform teaching practice and lesson planning, monitor students' reading achievement and progress over time, implement consistent assessment practices within and between schools, and capture data for school review and community feedback.

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

- School leaders and staff members place a high priority on developing and maintaining positive and caring relationships between school personnel, students and parents. School leaders and staff articulate and demonstrate a strong belief that every student will learn, develop and experience success.
- There is a positive culture based on respectful, caring relationships that is reflected in the ways in which staff, students and families interact. Teachers and educators indicate that they highly value the deep sense of community. Staff describe morale as very high and that they value the collegiality and supportiveness of their colleagues. Parents remark that the school feels like a family where all stakeholders are nurturing and willing to help and support each other.
- High levels of trust, support and respect are apparent among staff, students and families. Students express a sense of pride and belonging in the school. Students articulate that the things they value about their school include that “all teachers are nice to you, and you can always ask them for help”. Parents express that “every student and parent is known and consulted to develop the school”.
- Parents speak in high regard of the approachability of staff and their commitment to including them in their children’s learning. Parents identify that they believe they are partners in their children’s education.
- Parents indicate that they chose the school for the focus on support for children’s learning and development through a combination of child-led, inquiry and intentional play-based learning.
- The tone of the school is calm and positive in the classroom and the playground, providing a foundation for the focus on learning and teaching. Leaders explain that in recent years, there has been a move to a Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL)⁷ framework of behaviour management. This has focused on positive support and whole-school expectations in the indoor and outdoor learning environments and use of the PBL matrix.
- The routines and culture of positive behaviour are evident in the school to the extent that there are very few behaviour incidents. Community members comment that the school has a reputation for nurturing well-mannered and friendly students. The PBL provides common language consistently applied across the school.

⁷ Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) is a whole-school framework that promotes positive behaviour across a school and helps schools develop safe and supportive learning environments.

- The school promotes a culture of inquiry and innovation. This is evident in the culture of inquiry professional learning and student agency encouraged and facilitated through play-based investigations and the whole-school inquiry process. It is also evident in the school committees in which every student from kindergarten to year 2 participates. Students speak with pride about the work they do in their committees to help improve their school.
- Indigenous perspectives are apparent throughout the school. The school employs the Engoori strength-based approach with the school's PLC. This includes a Country as Teacher commitment and cultural integrity learning. Students sing their school Acknowledgement of Country every morning.

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 principal and leaders give a high priority to enhancing the indoor and outdoor learning environments to enrich student learning. Human, physical and financial resources are targeted to support implementation of school priorities.
- Leaders are explicit about the desired impact of targeted resourcing on student outcomes. The school has prioritised building leadership density by releasing a lead teacher from classroom teaching, as well as reducing the School Leader C's teaching load. This has enabled them to coach and mentor teaching staff across the school.
- School leaders and learning support staff are deployed to help implement intervention programs including targeted reading, writing and numeracy, as well as supporting students during investigations.
- The principal is committed to improving the school's infrastructure. Leaders, staff and parents identify recent improvements and upgrades to the school, including new decking, an all-access bathroom and increased library space, as well as a new covered outdoor learning area in the playground. The focus on improvement is reflected in the 2022 Parent and Carers' School Satisfaction Survey in which 100 per cent of respondents agree the school is well maintained.
- The business manager (BM) assists the principal in developing and monitoring the school budget by examining previous trends, determining predictable repairs and maintenance, major projects and identifying future projects. The BM identifies the need to catalogue resources to increase efficiencies in spending by avoiding unnecessary duplication, as well as creating reserves for future projects.
- Student support processes are clearly documented and timelined. Student wellbeing referrals are managed by the wellbeing team, comprising the DECO, school psychologist, a leader and classroom teacher. The school psychologist and teachers report that a comprehensive profile and relevant interventions are compiled to enable the team to determine areas of need and possible support provisions, including additional resourcing for a targeted student.
- The Parents & Citizens Association (P&C) provides funds to support inquiry learning. Staff created a wish list in 2023 and most projects were funded.
- Indoor spaces are bright and inviting. Classrooms are furnished flexibly to allow for whole-class, small-group and individual work. Spaces to support investigations learning⁸ are interesting and inviting and support the school philosophy of play-based and inquiry

⁸ Investigative or investigations learning is child centred and places importance upon the learner having a greater responsibility for their own learning. It embraces active learning and problem-solving principles.

learning.

- The school's small outdoor learning environment has been developed to enable students to engage, learn and play creatively in a variety of ways. The environment includes a boat, fort, chicken coop, sandpit, table tennis table, soccer goals, basketball/netball court, decking and a mud pie kitchen. Students comment that they love playing in the outdoor environment. They express pride about the voice they had in the recent construction of the fort.
- School-wide PBL signage is on display in key areas, as well as classrooms.
- First Nations artwork and artefacts are visible in indoor and outdoor spaces across the school grounds. The school's yarning circle⁹ supports the cultural integrity journey of staff and students.

⁹ The use of a yarning circle (or dialogue circle) is an important process within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. It has been used by Indigenous peoples from around the world for centuries to learn from a collective group, build respectful relationships, and to preserve and pass on cultural knowledge.

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

- Leaders include teachers in taking an active leadership role in the school. Procedures are in place for a school-wide responsibility for student and professional learning with mentoring and coaching.
- The development of a professional and expert school-wide teaching team, including teachers who actively engage in leadership beyond the classroom, is a primary consideration of the principal and leaders. The school leadership team views the building of staff capabilities as essential to improving outcomes for students. This is evident in the importance placed on professional learning and growth.
- The leadership team expresses a strong commitment to the ongoing development of staff as a highly effective teaching team within the context of the school.
- The strategic plan outlines a strategy to provide ongoing learning that promotes professional standards, builds staff capability, and aligns with school priorities.
- The Professional Learning Plan (PLP) identifies coaching as a key strategy for building teacher capability. Leaders acknowledge that observation, feedback, mentoring and coaching are yet to be developed as a systematic process.
- There are school-wide processes in place to support collaboration among staff. These include a weekly PLC meeting, a PLT timetable that enables teachers and leaders to plan together on a weekly basis, and networking with Narrabundah Early Childhood School (NECS) and Southern Cross Early Childhood Schools (SCECS) in the ACT.
- Teachers articulate that they welcome leaders' regular participation, modelling teaching practice within their classrooms and at PLTs. Teachers express a particular commitment to continuous improvement of their teaching practice and value feedback to support their professional growth.
- Early career teachers are provided with support to build their teaching capability. They are provided with a mentor who supports them through modelling quality practice, observing practice, leading reflective conversations, and providing feedback.
- A strong collegial culture is established among all staff at the school, including leaders, teachers and educators.
- Teachers convey an appreciation of the work of the educators and administration team and the value that they bring to the PLC. All educators and administration team members express how much they enjoy their work, the supportiveness of staff, the culture of collegiality and inclusion, and especially the relationships they develop with colleagues and students.
- A staff book club is active in promoting professional reading and discussion.

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 has a plan for the curriculum to deliver teaching and learning expectations. Teachers reference the Australian Curriculum, cross-curriculum priorities and achievement standards as their starting point for designing units of work for numeracy, literacy and inquiry. Families and teachers articulate that curriculum overviews are communicated each term.
- The school has developed and documented clear guidelines for term and weekly planners that provide the focus for curriculum planning. Teachers identify that they consistently use the whole-school systems for literacy, numeracy and inquiry.
- Some teachers articulate a desire for professional development experiences to support their knowledge and understanding of the Australian Curriculum.
- Some teachers express the need to develop an explicit, coherent, sequenced whole-school plan that ensures consistent teaching, documentation and learning expectations and is a clear reference for monitoring learning across the year levels. School leaders acknowledge that this is a focus area for action.
- Teachers and leaders identify that there is an opportunity to adopt a more structured and systematic approach to Social Emotional Learning (SEL).
- Teaching teams are supported to plan collaboratively with a school leader in PLTs to monitor, reflect and plan curriculum delivery.
- Teachers and educators articulate student learning data are used to inform the planning process in literacy and numeracy and assessments. Educators are included within the planning to monitor learning.
- Moderation of writing tasks occurs each term with NECS and SCECS.
- An external consultant is employed to build staff capacity to develop a whole-school approach to inquiry learning. The student-led inquiry approach builds on prior knowledge through shared experiences. Students develop questions and wonderings from their experiences to research, which they then share.
- Teachers convey First Nations perspectives through yarning circle lessons and Country as Teacher pedagogy.

NSIT Domain 7: Differentiated teaching and learning

Domain descriptor

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

Findings

- The school places a high priority on supporting all students to engage in learning. Teachers are supported to monitor student progress and tailor learning experiences to levels of need. Teaching practices across the school reflect the belief that all students can belong, engage and learn, if given appropriate opportunities and support. The leadership team and staff members place a high priority on catering for the diverse learning needs of students.
- Play-based learning is viewed by staff and parents as an effective pedagogical practice in providing students with choice and voice in their learning. Investigations planning demonstrates opportunities for students to engage in diverse learning experiences that reflect their ideas, interests, strengths and needs.
- Leaders are working collaboratively with teachers to develop a student-led inquiry approach. This provides an opportunity for students to co-construct learning experiences which are interest based and provide opportunities for learners to further develop critical-thinking capabilities.
- Teachers systematically use collected data to identify each student's current knowledge, skills and misunderstandings to identify starting points for teaching and place learners in catch (ability) groups for mathematics and literacy workshops.
- An integral part of the school intervention program focuses on mathematics and literacy, targeting students identified as working below standard. Students are withdrawn from the classroom in blocks of time to work individually or in small groups. Educators and school leaders support focus groups and individualised interventions.
- Students have co-constructed learning goals for mathematics, reading and writing, as well as personal goals. Students can articulate their goals.
- Preschool planning documentation and reflections demonstrate differentiated tasks, scaffolding to support individual student success, use of visual prompts, as well as opportunities for learners to exercise choice and voice.
- Individual learning plans document reasonable adjustments made to meet the needs of identified students. SMART¹⁰ short-term goals, strategies for achievement and success measures are set in collaboration with families and shared with stakeholders.
- Student reports provide families with their child's learning progress over the reporting period and include the next learning focus for the child. Families are provided with information about how they can support their child's learning through interviews with

¹⁰ In education, SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-based. It is a framework used to help students set clear and structured goals related to their learning.

the class teacher.

- Leaders and teachers articulate the need to develop systematic approaches to ensure high-achieving students are engaged, challenged and extended.
- Leaders articulate the need to develop a shared understanding of differentiation across the school.

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

- The leadership team, teachers and educators are committed to the development of effective teaching and learning practices across the school. They recognise that quality teaching is crucial to improving student outcomes.
- Leaders are active in being informed of research- and evidence-based teaching and learning practices and to developing and implementing research-driven pedagogical approaches. The principal identifies that this has created a “culture of curiosity, engagement and inquiry learning for all students across the school”.
- There is a clear expectation that all staff members will build positive relationships with students, reflective of the school motto: “Together we learn, together we grow”. These relationships are manifested in positive, welcoming and nurturing learning environments that are supportive of students and conducive to play-based investigations and inquiry learning.
- The inquiry approach and play-based investigations are fundamental to school pedagogies. These are complemented by pedagogies that include the 10 Essential Literacy Practices¹¹, reading and writing workshop model¹², numeracy using the workshop model and The Thinking Lens protocol¹³ for writing.
- A yarning circle structure is used as part of SEL wellbeing lessons.
- Teachers acknowledge the rich pedagogies that inform their teaching and how the timetable has been refined to support and gain maximum benefits from different approaches. They also acknowledge the support they receive from leaders to help improve their teaching.
- Teachers confirm the value of leaders working with them in classrooms to help them more effectively implement and incorporate pedagogies. They would welcome more of that. Teachers identify that within a relatively short time, there are now more evidence-based teaching strategies in use. Greater clarity of the whole-school pedagogical

¹¹ Research suggests that the 10 practices form a framework that educators can put to use right away in a variety of classroom settings to have a positive impact on literacy development.

¹² A successful workshop has three components: a mini-lesson, a workshop, and a debrief. In the mini-lesson, a teacher briefly introduces a new concept or skill through direct instruction or a more open-ended activity. The workshop component involves students working independently or in small groups to explore or practice the new concept. After the workshop, the class comes back together to debrief about what the students learned and the challenges they faced.

¹³ Authors Ann Pelo and Margie Carter developed The Thinking Lens protocol, in conjunction with their colleague Deb Curtis, as a series of little stop signs reminding educators to pause for reflection: step back, think deeply, and apply the thinking lens to move forward.

approach would be valued. Leaders acknowledge the challenges of achieving consistency, especially in the introduction of the newer strategies.

- Some teachers identify that they refer back to the Engoori values to help them clarify their pedagogical practices.
- Teachers, educators, students and parents identify that the indoor and outdoor learning spaces are used in a seamless manner with learning, especially in the Preschool and Kindergarten, often segueing between the spaces within a lesson. An adjacent outdoor community nature park provides a highly valued learning space, regularly used by all year levels, and the Preschool every Thursday.

NSIT Domain 9: School-community partnerships

Domain descriptor

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

Findings

- The school actively pursues ways to enrich student learning and wellbeing by partnering with parents and families and community organisations. It has developed a range of targeted partnerships in support of improved opportunities and outcomes for students over many years. Engagement with and participation in the wider community are vital elements of school culture.
- Parents and families are recognised as integral members of the school community and partners in their children's education. Parents express a profound admiration and appreciation of the teaching and support staff, whom they believe go above and beyond for all students.
- Parents describe the school as having a very strong community feel. Many describe the school as being like a large family. Parents portray the school as a place where harmony reigns, nurturing and nourishing their children.
- Parents identify staff as dedicated and highly invested in the school. Children are genuinely known, as are their families. Teachers employ many proactive strategies that are very responsive to family contact and requests. Parents articulate that, irrespective of who they speak with in the school, they feel highly valued and welcomed.
- Parents are invited regularly to participate in inquiries related to planning, operations or understanding teaching strategies and approaches to learning. Several parents express that the outcomes of those inquiries are shared with families and that they see action as an outcome of their feedback.
- Members of an active P&C confirm the high levels of transparency and responsiveness evident in their work with the principal, and the general levels of support that they receive from staff.
- Since 2013, the music engagement program has been an integral part of school culture and involves weekly singing for students, fortnightly community singing and occasional outreach sessions. Students say how much they love to sing, and many parents express their delight and support for this program. Staff and many parents identify how the fortnightly singing sessions help to build stronger relationships and bind the community together.
- There is a before- and after-school care program, universally known as "Afters" and operated by the Young Women's Christian Organisation (YWCA). The manager is

regarded as a staff member and ensures that the programs operate seamlessly within the school. The manager and principal articulate that levels of cooperation, communication and reciprocity of support are very high.

- Several parents express concern about the transition of their children into year 3 at larger local primary schools, from the intimate and all-enveloping support that they are used to. Many parents compliment the formal transition activities that the school has with Majura, Turner and Lyneham primary schools and the extraordinary lengths that the leaders and teachers in all four schools go to in ensuring the smoothest process possible. They state their satisfaction with the transition.
- A number of other partnerships and relationships are evident, including: with a local cluster of early childhood schools, networking to share and improve literacy practices; staff from the National Botanic Gardens and CSIRO who act as expert resources for some investigations; local artists; and being a Country as Teacher participant, in conjunction with Jervis Bay School and the University of Canberra.

Commendations

O'Connor Cooperative School is commended for:

- Using the Indigenous Engoori strength-based approach to identify shared values, beliefs and rituals in reinforcing the supportive and inclusive culture.
- Continuing to strengthen the positive culture and deep sense of community based on respectful, caring relationships that are reflected in the ways in which staff, students and families interact.
- The high levels of trust, support, respect and pride in the school that are apparent among staff, students and families.
- Promoting a culture of inquiry and innovation that is manifested in the student agency, encouraged and facilitated through play-based investigations and the whole-school inquiry process.
- The commitment to honouring the history, culture and perspectives of First Nations people that permeates the school and is evident daily in students singing their Acknowledgement of Country every morning.
- Building a work culture where educators and administrative staff are valued team members recognised for the contribution that each makes to creating the positive learning environment.
- Developing an outdoor learning environment that enables students to engage, learn and play creatively in a variety of ways.
- Teaching that facilitates the seamless use of the indoor and outdoor learning spaces.
- The ongoing commitment to cultivating a very strong family and community feel, that creates harmony and nurtures and nourishes young children.
- Championing the music engagement program with weekly singing for students, fortnightly community singing and occasional outreach sessions that help to build stronger relationships and bind the community together.
- Building a strong partnership with the Afters program, working closely with the manager. This has created a relationship where the manager is regarded as a staff member so that the programs operate seamlessly within the school.

Affirmations

O'Connor Cooperative School is affirmed for:

- Building distributed leadership where teachers and educators have a voice and clear input into the school improvement agenda.
- Working closely with the Board to create a consultative, transparent and responsive relationship.
- Developing a comprehensive published data plan that provides clear guidelines for data collection, analysis and use.
- Using the spiral of inquiry process to analyse data and for data-analysis questions that support teacher reflection.

- Introducing The Thinking Lens protocol for writing inquiry, strengthened documentation of student learning “in the moment” and sharing stories about learners with families.
- The high regard with which parents speak about the approachability of all staff. Parents also speak about the staff commitment to including families in their children’s learning.
- Building a calm and positive tone in the classroom and playground, providing a foundation for the focus on learning and teaching.
- Giving students voice in numerous ways, most notably recently in the school committees in which every student from kindergarten to year 2 participates.
- Prioritising the building of staff capabilities by providing time for the lead teacher and school leader C to work directly with teachers.
- Focusing on improving the school’s infrastructure to enhance the learning environment inside and outside.
- Fostering collaboration among staff through PLC and PLT meetings and networking with other early childhood schools.
- Supporting teaching teams to plan collaboratively with a school leader in PLTs in monitoring, reflecting on and planning curriculum delivery.
- The commitment evident in staff to play-based and inquiry learning and support of parents for these pedagogies.
- Supporting students in the development of co-constructed learning goals for mathematics, reading and writing, as well as personal goals.
- Building teacher confidence and capabilities in planning for differentiation – evident, for example, in Preschool documentation.
- The commitment of leaders to being informed in research and evidence-based teaching and learning practices and developing and implementing research-driven pedagogical approaches.
- Inviting and encouraging parents to regularly participate in inquiries related to planning, operations or understanding teaching strategies and approaches to learning.
- Implementing a range of formal and informal transition activities with Majura, Turner and Lyneham primary schools to try to create the smoothest transition possible.

Recommendations

- Refine the PLP to incorporate all methods and processes that the school uses to build an expert teaching team, paying particular attention to incorporating a systematic approach to the observation, feedback, mentoring and coaching of staff.
- Collaboratively develop a coherent, sequenced and locally relevant plan and process for curriculum implementation which pays attention to the vertical alignment and the continuity and progression of learning from one year level to the next. Ensure that general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities are used as active learning streams for all students.
- Collaboratively build a common and agreed understanding of differentiated teaching and

learning to cater for the needs of individuals and groups of students, particularly high-achieving ones.

- Document the whole-school approach to pedagogy to create clarity, precision and consistency of practice in the delivery of curriculum, and teaching and learning.