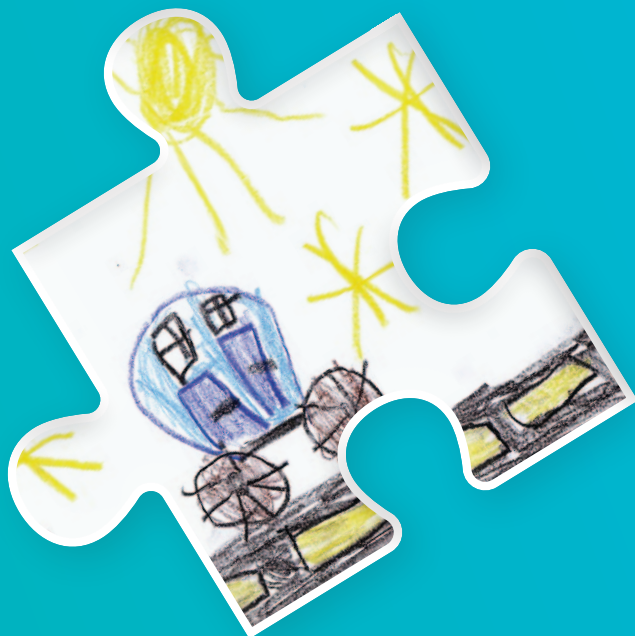




The future of **EDUCATION**

An ACT community conversation

***Some initial themes identified
throughout phase 1 of the
conversation***



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PROJECT OVERVIEW

In February 2017, the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development announced the commencement of the Future of Education conversation, which will result in a long term strategy for education in the ACT.

This project stems from the Government's fundamental belief that every child deserves a great education and the life chances which flow from it and, in line with this, a key focus of the conversation is equity. The strategy will also be strongly tied to the importance of access to quality early childhood education and care.

The Government has established a small group of Community Partners who are providing advice to the Directorate and the Minister throughout all stages of the conversation. Community Partners include representatives from the early childhood, community, government and education sectors. We also have our Partnership Table, who are a group of experts working directly with us and facilitating the conversation in their communities.

We are seeking feedback from across the ACT community as part of the conversation. The Future of Education team has been actively working with schools, parents and citizens associations, school boards and community organisations to facilitate the conversation in the ACT community.

Input is being collected through formal submissions, facilitated sessions, video booth recordings, postcards, the YourSay webpage and social media.

An overview of the conversation is at www.yoursay.act.gov.au/futureofeducation

INITIAL THEMES ARISING FROM THE CONVERSATION

Nine themes are evident from the initial community consultation. A tenth theme (relating to inclusion) has been heard through significant consultation carried out previously.

1. Learning for the future
2. Transitions
3. Individualised learning
4. (In)consistency between schools
5. Real life skills
6. Opportunities and pathways for all
7. What we should be measuring and evaluating
8. Collaboration and support to meet student need
9. Valuing educators
10. What is inclusion?

Equity underpins each of the initial themes, with equity expressed as inclusion and success for all children and young people including those who are disadvantaged and/or high achieving. Comments relating to equity have been expressed by students in particular.

We are now 'playing back' the 10 initial themes in order to identify any surprising inclusions and/or omissions as well as provide opportunity for further input.

The future of EDUCATION

An ACT community conversation

Theme: LEARNING FOR THE FUTURE

"Schools should be teaching creativity and innovation... problem solving and creative thinking. The rote learning approach is not going to assist our children to be prepared for a complex and constantly changing future."

- Parent

Summary

The topic that has received the most comments so far is the need for students to be learning for the future, by developing 21st century skills.

A number of recognised lists have been developed to define 21st century skills, including those by the OECD, the World Economic Forum and the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority. These lists generally include: critical thinking, problem solving, adaptability, creativity, resilience, collaboration, cultural literacy and relationship building as well as both financial and digital literacy.

Jobs and workplaces of the future will require young people to have enterprise skills in order to navigate challenges across a range of professions and industries in jobs that do not exist yet. "Almost 40 per cent of Australian jobs that exist today, have a moderate to high likelihood of disappearing in the next 10 to 15 years due to technological advancements."¹ Many theorists and educators predict that it will become less important for students to learn content or knowledge, and more important for them to develop skills to acquire and interpret knowledge.

As one parent noted: *Children are increasingly going to have to have the skills to create their own jobs, in industries that don't currently exist... financial literacy, physical literacy, conflict resolution skills, communication and relationship skills must be prioritised.*

Voices

"Move strongly in the direction of thinking and problem-solving skills, rather than the old rote learning style and focus even more on social and environmental responsibility and empathy."

- Parent

"Currently what is working is a team of passionate teachers who are willing to invest time to see change. Without them the change is not possible."

- School

"Need 21st century skills, including resilience, flexibility, interpersonal skills, self awareness and empathy."

- Parent

"We should look at schools and programs with an increased focus on social and emotional learning and individualised approaches to learning."

- Community

"[There is a risk of] being left behind globally not just in terms of literacy and numeracy but as a functional, equitable society where innovation, problem-solving, communication, team work and cultural understanding are the dominant currencies."

- School

"[We need a] wider curriculum that includes curiosity and ethics and healthy living and respect and free project-based learning."

- Young people

What the research says:

Educators and researchers "...argue that the knowledge, skills and capabilities needed by students... has become far broader and richer than the framework for Australian schooling currently allows."²

Up to 40% of today's jobs will be affected by automation over the next 10-15 years.³

Education and training systems need to be informed by present and future skills demand to develop up-to-date curricula.⁴

Young Australians do not have sufficient enterprise skills; close to a third of 15-year-olds have low proficiency in both financial literacy and problem solving as well as a quarter demonstrating low proficiency in digital literacy.⁵

1. *Australia's Future Workforce*, Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) 2015.

2. 'Introduction' Bentley and Savage, in *Educating Australia: Challenges for the Decades Ahead*, [Eds.], Bentley & Savage, 2017, 11).

3. *Australia's Future Workforce*, Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) 2015.

4. *Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives: A Strategic Approach to Skills Policies* OECD 2012.

5. *How young people are faring in the transition from school to work*, Foundation for Young Australians, 2016.

The future of EDUCATION

An ACT community conversation

Theme: TRANSITIONS

Starting and changing school is a challenging and exciting time for both children and their families. These transitions see children, families and educators adjust to new roles, identities, expectations and relationships. Successful transitions require professionals to actively foster responsive relationships, recognising the importance of continuity and consistency while acknowledging change.¹

Summary

The community is telling us we need to look at how students can transition smoothly across stages of schooling (into early childhood, then to primary school, high school, and from college to work, training or university). All of the feedback groups (schools, young people, community, parents and individuals) state that there could be more focus on, and support for, transitions.

Many contributors highlight the potential risk of student disengagement through these periods of change. "Youth Coalition members and stakeholders regularly identify that school transition can be challenging for young people, particularly primary to high school... it is a period of change in which the risk of disengaging from school is heightened."²

Many contributors note the role that community agencies can play in providing that continuity: "There is a real lack of ongoing support for children through transitions. Community services can be that continuity".

Feedback also notes that transitions can be more difficult for students who are developmentally vulnerable, experiencing disadvantage or who are already struggling to engage with school.

Some parents comment that the current preschool framework is outdated and unmanageable for families, particularly unmanageable for working parents and single carer households. It has been suggested that preschool needs to be five days a week and must be supported by before and after school care programs.

Voices

"You are told in high school so much by the teachers that college is hard. It really scares you."

- Student

"My daughter was totally unprepared [for high school] and it took us two terms and quite a lot of tutoring to get up to speed."

- Parent

"There is no clear means for early childhood settings to pass on information to schools about future students."

- Schools for All report

"School has lots of change and youth centres like Gudan Gulwan can provide the stability."

- Community sector

"Transitions from preschool into primary school need to be strengthened."

- School

"The ACT Early Learning system (P-2) allows learning through play, engages kids and they enjoy school and focus on the development level of children in this age group."

- Parent

"[School] doesn't prepare us for smooth transitions to the workforce."

- Student

"There are like three different systems, we need some form of consistency."

- Student

What the research says:

An extensive body of national and international research demonstrates the importance of the transition to school to children's outcomes later in life. *"A positive start to school, leading to greater and ongoing connection with school, has been identified as a factor in disrupting cycles of social and economic disadvantage, and in promoting resilience in young people."*³

The transition to secondary school is a social and academic turning point for adolescents.⁴

Research indicates that well-planned and implemented transition programs can support students, their families and even school staff in the process of moving. However, teachers are critical in this passage from primary to secondary schools.⁵

1. *Transition: A Positive Start to School Resource Kit*, Victorian Department of Education and Training 2017.
2. Youth Coalition submission to ACT Budget 2017-2018.
3. *Transition: A Positive Start to School Resource Kit*, Victorian Department of Education and Training 2017.

4. *Following Different Pathways: Social Integration, Achievement and the Transition to High School*, Langenkamp, A., G., *American Journal of Education*, 2009, v. 116, 69-97.
5. *Transition between Primary and Secondary School: Why is it important and how it can be supported*, Hanewald, Dr R, *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 2013, n.38(1), 1, 72.

The future of EDUCATION

An ACT community conversation

Theme: INDIVIDUALISED LEARNING

"Learning should be tailored to individual needs so that every student can get a good education - there are different types of learning, we need to bring them all together. We need to ensure that everyone's abilities can be expanded and supported."

- Student

Summary

The call for more individualised and tailored learning options is particularly strong amongst feedback from young people and schools. Discussions with the Minister's Student Congress emphasised the need for advanced students to have more options, and for these students not to be limited and held back by their year allocation. Conversely, the same young people commented upon the long-term effects of moving students up with their age group when they haven't fully acquired the knowledge and skills they need for the next school year.

Many comments from parents and young people reflect strong appreciation for their teachers and schools. As one grandparent summarised: *"I think this school is doing a marvellous job."*

A significant theme amongst the feedback focused on the need to engage students by better using their interests and skills to develop a love of, and engagement with, learning. As a group of teachers noted: *"Imagine if we could tap into every child's learning style and passion so they enjoyed learning; We need to better recognise that children learn different things at different times."*

Students and young people in particular comment on the need for flexible learning. College students mention that "slightly later start times would assist us with engagement".

Voices

"We are privileged to have so many quality teachers providing such a broad range of experiences to our children at such low or minimal cost. There are amazing growth opportunities available in all areas of development - music, sport, academic areas."

- Parent

"[Finland] allows children to 'live and learn in whichever way they choose'."

- Other

"Differentiate curriculum to extend students if they need extending or supporting."

- Parent

"Because of the child's age we assume that they will be at a certain level of development. We simply move students up to the next year because they are twelve months older. By neglecting to address their failed test results and not fixing their shortcomings, they will continue to fall further behind."

- Parent

"Stop thinking there is a one size fits all model. Children are unique. There is no one right answer. There is a place for small early childhood schools, super schools and other models in between."

- Parent

"What if students only 'attended' school 2-3 days per week with an online or technology driven approach the other days?"

- School Board Chair

What the research says:

John Hattie states that a reboot of the education system in Australia is required. He advocates for five 'big' goals, including '...having multiple ways to be excellent in upper high school'.¹

Researchers have found that many schools do not focus primarily on whether every *student* is learning and making progress but focus instead on how the *school* is performing.²

The research demonstrates that we need to make schools ready for children, not children ready for school. This relies upon the system and schools having the right supports in place to allow educators to make a difference for every child. Once in school, children need a differentiated curriculum and meaningful learning opportunities, particularly gifted children and children from low socio economic backgrounds. Individual, tailored learning influences whether young people can reach their full potential both academically and socially.

'The more age and child appropriate the pedagogical practices, the greater the benefits for children's social and cognitive development.'³

1. *Time for a reboot: Shifting away from distractions to improve Australia's school, Educating Australia: Challenges for the Decade Ahead*, [Eds] Bentley & Savage, 2017, 30.

2. *Schools for All Children and Young People: Report of the Expert Panel on Students with Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviours*, by Roy, Shaddock and Packer, November 2015.

3. *Starting Strong*, OECD, June 2017.

The future of EDUCATION

An ACT community conversation

Theme: (IN)CONSISTENCY BETWEEN SCHOOLS

School autonomy must be supported by effective central policy making, oversight, evidence-based advice and timely support.

- Schools for All

Summary

A theme has emerged across all groups aside from students about school autonomy. In particular many comments refer to consistency and inconsistency between schools in what is taught, how much the school embeds itself in the broader community as well as concern about how data is used.

"The curriculum available at each school is so variable! If we are one education program across the ACT why can't I have the same program choice at each school?"

- Parent

Other respondents indicate that individual school autonomy can provide opportunities for strong engagement with the local community and others noted it as a strength.

"ACT public education teaches within the curriculum, but individual schools are able to approach this from different angles and different focus. I believe this is one of the strengths of the ACT public education system."

- Schools

Even where respondents expressed concern about autonomy and inconsistent practice between schools, there has been no suggestion about removing school autonomy altogether. Rather, respondents express the need for overarching and centralised frameworks and guidance to provide the balance between autonomy and systemic consistency.

Voices

"The current move to greater school autonomy... provides an opportunity for the community sector to work with schools in new ways".

- ACTCOSS and Youth Coalition¹

"We should be taking advantage of this collegiality and collaboration (as a small system) to help shape the whole system."

- School

"School autonomy needs to be re-examined as it has resulted in inconsistent experiences and approaches to education in ACT public schools - a better balance needs to be arrived at."

- Other

"Our current system of autonomy results in large amounts of duplication between schools and a parochial rather than systemic approach to problems."

- School

"Autonomy of schools does not work and has been proven in Britain and America as being detrimental and we end up with the system we currently have - programs all over the place and all students not getting access to all the programs they need."

- Parent

What the research says:

The most powerful evidence on mediating factors linking school autonomy and student achievement is on the work of principals and other school leaders in building professional capacity through staff selection, professional development and appraisal, setting priorities on the basis of data about performance, and communication of purpose, process and performance. Cultural factors may limit effects in some settings. These capacities can be built and made effective in settings where there may be only moderate levels of school autonomy.²

Although some accountability is essential, the more governments and systems dictate when, how and what teachers teach, the more likely they are to drive from schools those teachers most essential to students' success.³

The Auditor-General concluded in *Performance Information in ACT Public Schools*, that the considerable autonomy given to schools '...appears to have resulted in a high level of variability in the use of student performance information and management information systems and a wide range of school-based assessment tools used across ACT Public Schools; for a small jurisdiction such as the ACT this is excessive. A better balance between school autonomy and consistency across schools in how performance information is analysed and used is needed.'⁴

1. *Educational Inequity in the ACT*, ACTCOSS and Youth Coalition Issues paper, July 2015.

2. *Educational Transformations: School Autonomy and Student Achievement Case Studies in Australia*, Brian Caldwell, June 2015.

3. *Hard-to-staff Australian schools: How can we ensure that all students have access to quality teachers?* Rice, S., Richardson P., & Watt, H., in *Educating Australia: Challenges for the Decade Ahead*, [Eds] Bentley & Savage, 2017, 291.

4. ACT Auditor General's Report No 7/2017 *Performance Information in ACT Public Schools*.

The future of EDUCATION

An ACT community conversation

Theme: REAL LIFE SKILLS

"When children leave school and enter the adult world those with more emotional resilience will flourish."

- Parent

Summary

Two clear sets of comments have emerged on this theme, one regarding skills like budgeting and writing resumes, and the second regarding skills related to wellbeing.

Students in particular note in their feedback the need for more real life skills. College students feel acutely aware of leaving the security of school for the world of work, family, relationships and have talked about needing to feel confident they have the skills to negotiate this new terrain.

"We need classes that guide us in being an adult – life skills, housekeeping, taxes etc. We also need social skills. Like an 'adulting' class; this would support students, particularly those with complex home lives."

- Student

Many of the students' comments indicate that they want life skills to be interwoven in what they learn rather than having separate life skills classes. They want their learning to be based in real life.

Many of the comments from students and parents also touch on what could be broadly termed *wellbeing*, including qualities like emotional resilience, self-regulation and inclusion. Research strongly supports embedded integration of wellbeing programs into school culture and many studies note that this coincides and is fundamental to academic achievement, particularly for students living with disadvantage.

Voices

"We want to have learnt job ready skills like job-specific skills, how to handle finances and taxes, how to budget for myself and how to be a good co-worker."

- Student

"We want to have learnt life and social skills like, how to deal with relationships, how to be a good person and to have learnt things that will help in later life."

- Student

"I want my child to have social competence and interpersonal skills and understand the broad social context they are growing up in."

- Parent

"We need to teach life skills, social skills and communication."

- School

"A greater focus on skills, not knowledge. Preparing students for a maths career later in life is heavily influenced by life and academic skills."

- School

"Emotional and people skills should be part of the curriculum."

- Parent

"If there was a class on taxes, life skills, or how to write a resume, then I'd take that. I think there needs to be more information about life after college."

- Student

What the research says:

The research demonstrates the benefits of wellbeing initiatives being part of schools' 'core business'.

Researchers who studied schools that had improved the attainment and behaviour of disadvantaged students concluded that over time, growth in wellbeing and in academic achievement are mutually supportive.¹

A curriculum that prepared students for life and work in the 21st century is likely to be one that includes an emphasis on: deep understandings of subject matter and the ability to apply what is learnt, the ability to communicate and solve problems in teams, the ability to think creatively and to create novel solutions, flexibility, openness to change and willingness to learn continuously.

'Two specific challenges for a 21st century curriculum, both of which have been addressed in the recent development of the Australian Curriculum, are to prioritise depth of learning and to promote cross-disciplinary team-based problem solving.'²

'Every young Australian has to make choices that will affect their future options like: what subjects to study at school; what courses to take at TAFE or university; what apprenticeships to go for; and what first job they should apply for? While none of these choices are irreversible, they are important because they collectively shape our career and employment options over time. In order for young people to make decisions, they need to have information that simplifies the complex world of work and helps them navigate work over a lifetime.'³

1. *Schools for All Children and Young People: Report of the Expert Panel on Students with Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviours*, by Roy, Shaddock and Packer, November 2015.

2. *Five Challenges in Australian School Education*, Geoff N. Masters, *Policy Insights* Issue 5, May 2016, 8.

3. *The New York Mindset*, Foundation for Young Australians, 2016, 6.

The future of EDUCATION

An ACT community conversation

Theme: OPPORTUNITIES AND PATHWAYS FOR ALL

"Children are unique. There is no one right answer. There is a place for small early childhood schools, super schools and other models in between." - Parent

Summary

Much of the feedback on this theme discusses the need for alternative school settings for young people 'at the margins'. There is an emerging emphasis on the creation and valuing of pathways other than one that 'valorises university entry at the expense of other pathways'.¹

"Provide alternative program for students who do not function in the normal classroom settings."

- School

"There aren't good and respected alternative pathways to the academic one."

- Community

There is no clear consensus in the feedback on whether alternative settings should be separate or included in mainstream settings.

The research is also divided on this issue, with concerns about the difficulty for some students in re-entering the mainstream and that students are being sent to alternative settings so as not to affect a schools public profile. Conversely the research shows that effective alternative settings and programs can provide the support some students need to engage and complete study.²

However the general tone of the feedback seems to be less concerned with the most effective strategy than the need to create diverse and varied options and pathways to address the needs of our diverse and varied children and young people.

Voices

"We are always taught that the pathway is college-university-job. More career vocation for students would be great...there are other pathways."
- Student

"We need more flexible learning options like vocational education." - Government worker

"We need more non-uni based pathways and community and business partnerships to help students' access non-uni pathways." - School

"There are innovative partnerships between the private and community sector - including for creating work pathways for disadvantaged students." - Community

"Make a special program to support kids with special needs if someone is behind." - Student

"Need alternative education settings to be genuinely inclusive - integration and inclusion does not mean seating ALL children in regular schools." - Other

"Build another School Without Walls for those who do not suit/respond to the formal education system." - Parent

"We need other setting options between specialist schools and mainstream settings." - School

"[Our system] also fails the gifted children by holding them back, 'limiting them' based on their age and not their advanced capabilities." - Parent

What the research says:

'Research suggests that school provision is overly focused on university entry and that students moving towards vocational education, the workforce or seeking to establish their own business are often poorly served (OECD 2004; Sweet, R., et al., 2009,)'³

The majority of young people in Australia now complete secondary school. But of these, only about half will go to university.⁴

'Smyth, McInerney & Fish (2013) cite the frustration of some young people who find themselves expected to fit into 'static container like classrooms' inhaling 'middle-class' learning experiences that are irrelevant to lives often characterised by high mobility, family dysfunction, unemployment and mental health problems'.⁵

'A recent survey found that around 70,000 young people in Australia are using alternative education programs (te Riele, 2014). [However] there is no systemic response to the provision of education for young people at the margins'.⁶

1. 'What if you're not going to university?' Polesel, et. al, in *Educating Australia: Challenges for the Decade Ahead*, [Eds] Bentley & Savage, 2017, 186.

2. Stokes & Turnbull, Young People at the Margins, in *Educating Australia: Challenges for the Decade Ahead*, [Eds] Bentley & Savage, 2017, 164.

3. Cited in 'Polesel, et. al, above n1, 185.

4. Ibid., 186.

5. Cited in Stokes & Turnbull, above n2, 164.

6. Ibid.

The future of EDUCATION

An ACT community conversation

Theme: WHAT WE SHOULD BE MEASURING AND EVALUATING

"How are we measuring a whole year of learning? One test at the end doesn't show that - it just shows who crams best."

- Student

Summary

Questions about what we are measuring and evaluating across our education system are emerging as a strong theme across all feedback. Parents' clear and highest priority is that their children are happy, engaged and learning how to learn.

"We want our kid to be happy to go to school, inspired, positive about life, enjoying learning and willing to try new things and accept challenges."

- Parent

Many groups have questioned whether the current collection and use of data is useful for identifying students' individual progress and effort, and whether it helps identify students who are slowly falling behind.

A number of School Board Chairs from public schools have expressed an interest in understanding 'what sits behind NAPLAN', including understanding more about the ACT's performance trends. Board Chairs also questioned how the Directorate supports schools to develop strategies in response to a backwards shift in results, including whether these strategies also consider the context of the school community.

Some Board Chairs expressed an interest in an analysis of measures other than NAPLAN.

"For me it's more important that my child has a love of learning and can engage as a successful member of the community."

- School Board Chair

Voices

"What if we spend more time looking at the analysis of measures other than NAPLAN?"

- School

"How should we measure a year's growth/success?"

- School

"Would be great to have a way of gaining information regarding education beyond NAPLAN as I think it results in undue pressure and stress and makes kids think achievement is only in marks."

- School

"Should be measuring individualised growth [not just] standard achievement."

- School

"We learn to the test rather than learning for the sake of learning, or learning because you enjoy it."

- Student

"Children are more than NAPLAN or an A-E grade; how do we recognise what really matters?"

- Student

"Schools need a system that alerts them when a child is sliding... parents need to be alerted through reporting and then free intervention needs to be available for children who can't get outside tutoring."

- Parent

What the research says:

Among the most important things we need... relates to the expertise of the teachers and schools leaders - especially those who can show that their students are at least making a year's progress for a year's input.¹

An alternative to simply holding all students in the same year of school to the same year-level expectations and grading them on how well they achieve those... is to expect every student to make excellent progress in their learning, regardless of their starting point. In this way, what it means to learn successfully is redefined as the progress (or growth) that learners make.²

1. 'Time for a reboot: Shifting away from distractions to improve Australia's schools', Hattie, J., in *Educating Australia: Challenges for the Decade Ahead*, [Eds.] Bentley & Savage, 2017, 21.

2. 'Five Challenges in Australian School Education', Geoff N. Masters, *Policy Insights*, Australian Council for Educational Research, 2016, 17.

The future of EDUCATION

An ACT community conversation

Theme: COLLABORATION AND SUPPORT TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEED

"If schools were able to be HUBS of support - with other agencies on site - this would improve the wellbeing of staff and students and the wider community. - Parent

Summary

There is a strong theme emerging across the feedback expressing support for a whole of community approach to meeting the broad range of student needs.

"Young people should have access to speech/ occupational/physical/mental health therapy on site (school) where they feel safe."

- School

School leaders at ACT public schools have expressed the desire for a whole-of-Government and community approach to early intervention, describing such an approach as a 'wraparound support system'. Additional support that includes partners and agencies beyond the school could further strengthen a schools position in, and engagement with, their community.

Some feedback focuses on providing support for people with limited financial resources.

"Having equity in our school [is important] because some kids are not as fortunate as others and need some extra help."

- Student

Schools, governments, services and the community need to work together to achieve this wraparound approach. Success lies in the right supports being provided at the right time, in the right way. Feedback consistently notes that the key to an effective whole of community approach is more and better collaboration.

Voices

"There are innovative partnerships between the private and community sector -these could and should include our schools and education system."

- Community

"Schools are missing out on knowing what's going on in their community."

- Community

"The super-schools are fantastic. They have lots of support and other programs – really open community feel to them. They are innovative, and actively welcome in community groups and work with those groups to get advice and meet the needs of their culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) clients."

- Community

"To make sure more vulnerable children and young people have high quality education and care we need to create genuine collaborative relationships which have expert intervention in place to make recommendations. Teachers should be seen as key workers who can engage with other professionals."

- Parent

"We need a holistic approach- whole child, wrap around services- coordination- all Directorates working together [creating] schools as community hubs."

- Workforce

"In our small jurisdiction, we should be taking advantage of collegiality and collaboration to help shape the whole system."

- Other

What the research says:

'By working together in a collaborative and cohesive way, already established relationships can be used to support students to remain engaged in school and succeed in education.'¹

'Schools cannot meet all of the needs of these students and their families. ...Several schools visited by the Panel had engaged with external agencies... and reported that they felt that their school was a 'primary hub' which had led to specific benefits...'²

'In some disadvantaged community settings, where families are grappling with numerous other challenges, collaboration is integral to the way that schools, and their partners, pursue student achievement. Collaboration is integral to the way that schools, and their partners, pursue student achievement. They show what could be possible more widely'. '...collaboration results in staff, students and community members gaining access to a network of information, opportunities and expertise that would otherwise be unavailable within the confines of an individual school.'³

'Together, the combination of greater transparency and better data, more consistent funding practices, professional skills development and effective local partnerships between agencies could, over time, contribute to a cultural shift in which Australian schools come to provide education for all young people not just those engaged in the mainstream.'⁴

1. *Educational Inequity in the ACT*, ACTCOSS and Youth Coalition of the ACT Issues Paper: July 2015, 6.

2. *Schools for All Children and Young People: Report of the Expert Panel on Students with Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviours*, by Roy, Shaddock and Packer November 2015, 171-175.

3. 'The shared work of learning: Lifting educational achievement through collaboration', Bentley and Cazaly, Mitchell Institute Research Report 3, May 2015, 3- 5.

4. Stokes & Turnbull, *Young People at the Margins*, in *Educating Australia: Challenges for the Decade Ahead*, [Eds] Bentley & Savage, 2017, 175-176.

The future of EDUCATION

An ACT community conversation

Theme: VALUING OUR EDUCATORS

"I do way better in classes with teachers that I bond with, who let me learn the things I'm interested in."

- Student

Summary

A strong theme is emerging about the importance and value of educators. Overwhelmingly positive comments about teachers in the ACT are being received, including comments that teachers are undervalued in our community.

"Consider how we value teachers; they are fantastic and should be valued."

- Student

A significant component of the feedback relates to the importance of the relationship between teachers and students, which is especially mentioned by students.

"A teacher who cares makes the student care."

- Student

What is also significant in the feedback from students is the number who report that it is teachers that make them feel 'included', or engaged in school.

"I feel included because I get to make decisions about the school. Teachers listen to my ideas."

- Student

Research supports the views of these students. "A significant body of research has been established which demonstrates that positive relationships between teachers and students lead to improved student engagement, achievement and well-being (Cahill, 2017 in Bentley and Savage, p 228)

The other significant issue across the feedback is the need for ongoing support for teachers, including professional development, collaboration, and training on understanding and working with complex behaviours, trauma and the effects of disadvantage.

Voices

"Teachers are the single most important resource to a child's learning."

- School

"Free your teachers from the administrative burden of recording everything and allow them to teach in a way that engages children and provides them with a lifelong love of learning."

- Parent

"What makes us succeed is being surrounded by people [teachers and principals] who encourage you but also push you to be the best you can be."

- Student

"I don't blame the teacher but obviously she isn't getting any support on how to address these types of learning difficulties."

- Parent

"Across the system, there is a lack of understanding about poverty and disadvantage and its effects on children and their learning- Why isn't this part of teacher training and professional development?"

- Community

"We need more teacher training on working with disadvantaged young people."

- School

"We need quality teachers, and the professional development to maintain them."

- School

What the research says:

The variance between schools in Australia is much smaller than the variance within schools. What matters most is the teacher your child has (Hattie J, 'Time for a reboot: Shifting away from distractions to improve Australia's schools' in *Educating Australia: Challenges for the Decade Ahead*, [Eds] Bentley & Savage, 2017, 19).

It is vital that teachers create the right classroom climate for learning: raising students' expectations; developing a rapport with students; challenging students to participate and take risks. (Goss & Sonnemann. *Engaging Students. Creating Classrooms that Improve Learning*. Grattan Institute, Feb 2017, 3).

To improve teacher-student relationships and reap their benefits, teachers should... demonstrate that they care for the learning of each student as a person and empathise with students - "so that they have valuable feedback to self-assess, feel safe, and learn to understand others and the content with the same interest and concern" (Cornelius-White 2007, cited in Hattie, J *Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*, 2009, 119).

The future of EDUCATION

An ACT community conversation

Theme: WHAT IS INCLUSION?

"Everyone needs to feel included." - Student

Summary

Alongside the Future of Education conversation, the Directorate has undertaken a significant consultation process to gather feedback on how ACT public schooling could be further strengthened to be fully inclusive of students with disability and reflective of the type of society we aspire to.

Over 50 stakeholder groups, including students, families, school staff and representative groups participated in face-to-face consultations and/or participated in the survey and submission process.

In the longer term, stakeholders desire an outcome where diversity in the student population would be seen as the norm, and as a strength rather than through a lens of deficit.

However, in the consultation process it became evident that a number of parents and other stakeholders suggested that the Directorate should articulate what is meant by inclusion and set out a policy goal for public schools.

Some ACT parents aspire to a future where students with disability are viewed on an abilities continuum, and where a disability would be the last thing that was noticed about a student, rather than one of the first.

Voices

"Equity – what a beautiful word. Pair it with Diversity and we can guide our public schools to the future we want for Canberra. Let's make 'enhanced equity' flow into employment (vocational training, careers, etc.) for students with a disability."

- Parent

"Goal - for all our young people to graduate from school with the skills they need for the next stage of their lives."

- Parent

"People with disability are only disabled by what we don't provide and we are making them disabled by either not providing them with what they need or by our mindset towards them."

- Teacher

What does the future look like?

"...everyone would be included. We have lots of different things here like dyslexia and cerebral palsy and no one treats anyone differently. No one gets discriminated against because of their disabilities."

- Student

"Discrimination legislation at territory and federal levels promotes the inclusion of children and young people with a disability."

- Schools for All report

What the research says:

We know that the data around inclusion could be strengthened to be more comprehensive, accurate and accessible.

More students with disability are attending mainstream classes with additional support provisions.

'Inclusive education involves embracing human diversity and welcoming all children and adults as equal members of an educational community. This involves valuing and

supporting the full participation of all people together within mainstream educational settings. Inclusive education requires recognising and upholding the rights of all children and adults and understanding human diversity as a rich resource and an everyday part of all human environments and interactions...'¹

1. *Inclusion in Education - Towards Equality for Students with Disability*, Issues paper by Dr Kathy Cologon commissioned by Children and Young People with Disability Australia, 2013.

SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

Schools

Submissions	Comment	Approximate number of people
34	Submissions reflecting staff input (teachers, School Leaders and School Boards).	894 people

Students and Young People

Submissions	Comment	Approximate number of people
26	Including four classroom conversations between the Minister and Year 12 students, a refreshed Minister's Student Congress (2 students from each school) and input from six video booths.	1068 young people

Parents, Families and Carers

Submissions	Comment	Approximate number of people
29	Including three 'school community' submissions resulting from community forums.	131 people

Community Sector

Submissions	Comment	Approximate number of people ¹
6	Community organisations provide a range of services and programs to young people and adults, including homelessness and multicultural services, health, wellbeing etc The organisations (and their feedback) are often representative of a wide group of their stakeholders.	18 people

¹All numbers are approximate as some submissions did not provide exact figures.

Early Childhood Education

Submissions	Comment	Approximate number of people
1	Submissions reflecting staff input.	Unknown

ACT Government staff

Submissions	Comment	Approximate number of people
4	Input from staff in the Education Support (Central) Office reflecting policy development, student support and teaching and learning perspectives.	40 people

Other

Submissions	Comment	Approximate number of people
21	Submissions reflecting input from retired principals, academics, colleagues across Government and anonymous submissions.	54 people

Total number of people contributed via submissions	2205
Total number of people contributed via Yoursay website	138
TOTAL number people who have provided input into the Future of Education conversation	2343