

**2021**

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE  
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**Government Response to Auditor-General Report No.6 of 2021 – *Teaching Quality in ACT  
Public Schools***

**Presented by  
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## Introduction

The ACT Audit Office undertook a performance audit during 2020 to provide an independent opinion to the Legislative Assembly about the effectiveness of the Education Directorate's strategies and activities to improve the quality of teaching practices in ACT public schools. The audit focused on the Education Directorate's actions to:

- identify and articulate key strategies and supports to improve the quality of teaching practices;
- support its teachers to improve the quality of teaching practices in ACT public schools; and
- monitor, review and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and supports to improve the quality of teaching practice.

The ACT Government established its ten-year commitment to improving education for ACT students through the *Future of Education Strategy*. Of particular significance to this audit is the pillar that provides how the government will empower teachers, school leaders and other professionals to meet the learning needs of all students.

All teachers in the ACT must be registered with the Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) which regulates compliance with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers or the Australian Professional Standard for Principals. To maintain registration, teachers must complete a minimum 20 hours annually of professional learning and reflect on how to improve their teaching practice.

The ACT Government is committed to strengthening the opportunities for teachers to improve their professional practice because they are critical for quality educational outcomes for students. ACT public school teachers continue to perform their roles incredibly well and have shown great dedication and resilience throughout the challenges brought by COVID-19. The ACT community asks much of teachers and they continue to deliver with enthusiasm, commitment and compassion.

Through the 2021-22 Budget, the ACT Government has built on this commitment in the *Future of Education Strategy* by funding two professional learning initiatives. These initiatives will provide a capability uplift in gender equality and inclusion through support and coaching for teaching staff as well as the opportunity for teachers to become teacher librarians through continuation of a Masters program.

The ACT Government welcomes the recommendations of the ACT Audit Office in relation to teaching quality in ACT public schools. The government thanks the auditors for the work that has gone into the preparation of Audit Office report. The recommendations assist the ACT Government with continuing to support ACT public school teachers to deliver a high standard of education that assists students with achieving their best learning outcomes.

The report acknowledges the significant work of the ACT Government to prioritise and improve the quality of teaching practices across ACT public schools. In particular, the report notes: "The Education Directorate recognises the importance of improving teaching quality for the purpose of enhancing student performance. Since 2014, strategic planning and government-led initiatives have identified priorities to improve the quality of teaching practices across ACT public schools." It also notes the Directorate has established "a comprehensive school improvement process which provides effective support to schools to plan, deliver and evaluate activities that are intended to improve student educational outcomes, including activities to improve teaching quality."

The Report has made 14 recommendations on the four focus areas, all of which the Government agrees or agrees in principle. This work forms part of the ACT Government's existing program to enhance the use of data, performance information, community perspectives and student voice to

continually improve teaching practice in ACT public schools through supporting teachers in their professional learning and engagement.

### Government response

Recommendation	Response	Notes
<p>1. The Education Directorate should, as a priority develop and publish the implementation plan for the second phase of the <i>Future of Education</i>.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The <i>Future of Education Strategy</i> outlines the ACT Government's commitment to education in ACT schools. Information about Phase Two of the <i>Future of Education</i> will be published on the Education Directorate's website to reflect initiatives being funded through the 2021-22 Budget.</p>
<p>2. The Education Directorate should improve its strategic planning and reporting framework by consistently and specifically reporting on progress towards its planned actions in its six-monthly review reports. Reported progress should include quantitative and qualitative analysis for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. All priority actions identified in its Strategic Plan.</li> <li>b. All indicators for success for each Strategic Plan goal The completion of activities committed to in annual divisional plans.</li> <li>c. The completion of activities committed to in annual divisional plans.</li> </ol>	<p>Agree in principle</p>	<p>The Education Directorate is developing a new Strategic Plan. The implementation of this plan will include reporting that is appropriate to the priority actions, including the initiatives that have been funded through the 2021-22 Budget. The Education Directorate already provides extensive reporting of its performance through the Annual Reporting cycle, as well as providing a range of data, progress updates and information on the Education Directorate website. The Education Directorate monitors performance through existing corporate governance mechanisms.</p>
<p>3. The Education Directorate should review and update the People, Practice and Performance Framework to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Reflect the revised structure of the Education Support Office, including the roles of Directors of School Improvement and Instructional Mentors and their role to support and maintain accountability of principals.</li> <li>b. Reflect the requirements of the <i>Evidence and Data Plan for School Improvement</i> (2019)</li> <li>c. Require all schools to participate in school improvement activities as well as complete and publish all required school improvement documentation on their website.</li> </ol>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The Education Directorate is reviewing the People, Practice and Performance Framework which will be reflective of the existing Education Support Office structure, school-based requirements and data informed practice. ACT public schools participate in school improvement processes and report on the outcome of those processes. The Education Directorate continues to support schools to publish School Improvement documentation on their school website, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Annual Action Plan/Impact Report,</li> <li>- External School Reviews</li> <li>- School Improvement Plans</li> </ul>

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<p>4. As part of Recommendation 3, the Education Support Office should review and revise the People Practice and Performance framework to require the formal evaluation of school improvement documentation on an annual basis. The evaluation should involve consideration of school improvement plans, action plans, school visits feedback and impact reports as a method of gaining specific actionable and timely information about ACT public schools' progress in improving student educational outcomes. The evaluation should then be used to assess and review Education Support Office supports for teaching quality to determine any refinements or additional assistance required to support schools achieve this outcome.</p>	<p>Agree in principle</p>	<p>The Education Directorate is reviewing the People Practice and Performance Framework. The revised framework will incorporate a range of enhancements to the school improvement process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- additional sources of evidence to inform revises</li> <li>- implementation of Annual Action Plans and Impact Report to complement the five yearly school plans</li> <li>- clarification of the role of a Director of School Improvement in the school improvement cycle</li> <li>- Clarification of the expectations of school leaders in the continuous improvement process</li> </ul>
<p>5. The Education Directorate should review the role of Directors of School Improvement and in doing so:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Consider whether individual directors should specialise in sector-specific oversight and support (such as roles focusing on colleges, high schools, primary schools) to better target the implementation of supports for improving teaching quality</li> <li>b) Determine if the directors' span of control allows them to fulfil the requirements of the People, Practice and Performance framework.</li> </ol>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The Education Directorate is reviewing the People Practice and Performance Framework. As part of this review, the role of Directors of School Improvement will be considered.</p>
<p>6. The Education Directorate should establish a development program for new school executive (SLC) that upskills these staff on the instructional leadership practices of the Empowered Learning Professional Leadership Plan during the initial years of their appointment.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The Education Directorate has commenced work to establish a development program for new school executives, however this work was delayed throughout 2020 due to COVID-19. This work has now recommenced, with learning sessions for School Leader Cs conducted in Term 3 2021.</p>
<p>7. The Education Directorate should clearly identify and articulate its expectations for the role and responsibilities of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in ACT public schools. The role could include working with principals and Education Support Office to support school improvement activities, and better using the school network model to connect with other professional to promote better teaching practice in their school settings.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The Education Directorate will continue to work with TQI to better utilise and promote engagement with Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) initiatives. The use of HALTs is beneficial but further work needs to be undertaken to explore how schools can use these highly capable teachers to support improvement of professional practice for individual teachers and across whole of school practice, through system wide approaches or pedagogical best practice methods. There will be a particular focus on how HALTs may be used to support beginning teachers through their first three years, including through mentoring, planning and demonstrating best practice. Consideration is being given to the role of HALTs in whole of system improvement and how greater access to the experience of teachers who demonstrate excellence may be incorporated more broadly.</p>

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<p>8. The Education Directorate should develop a practice for the Education Support Office to oversee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The completion of each school’s annual professional learning program.</li> <li>b. The development of a school’s annual professional learning program as part of the school improvement process. The program should identify the development needs of teaching staff in connection with school improvement goals, and the expected impacts on student outcomes.</li> </ul>	Agree	<p>The Education Directorate will strengthen central oversight of the implementation of the Annual Professional Learning Program (as specified in the Enterprise Agreement) following the delivery of the ACTPS Human Resources Information Management System (HRIMS) Module 2, specifically the Learning Management System platform. The Education Directorate will continue implement responses to system school review recommendations and identify areas for professional development to support the ongoing school improvement processes.</p>
<p>9. The Education Directorate should establish universal professional learning for all school leaders and teaching on the Spiral of Inquiry Model and Multiple Sources of Evidence approach to support school leaders to facilitate these activities. This support should focus on increasing understanding and consistency in the quality and impact of professional learning communities for the purpose of improving the quality of teaching practices in all ACT public schools.</p>	Agree	<p>The Education Directorate will continue to provide professional learning to all school leaders through the Spirals of Inquiry Model and Multiple Sources of Evidence approaches.</p> <p>The Education Directorate will continue to provide professional learning including continuing the new staff and leaders’ induction and refresher sessions as part of universal professional learning offering. This will be captured through the new HRIMS and the Learning Management Platform.</p>
<p>10. The Education Directorate should work with the ACT TQI to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Receive and analyse data to use for evaluation the quality of Education Directorate professional learning activities and identify trends and insights from its teachers’ professional learning to help determine the impacts this has on improving student outcomes.</li> <li>b. Design methods and practices to recognise key profession learning supports, including professional learning communities as accredited learning that meets the requirements of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.</li> </ul>	Agree	<p>The Education Directorate and Teacher Quality Institute will continue to work together to strengthen data to inform the knowledge and application of professional learning, ensuring the system makes informed judgements about the quality of professional learning offered to teachers. Holistic monitoring and evaluation of the impact of teacher professional learning through the design of measures of system-led impact will ensure consistency in approach across all schools and increased confidence in the high quality of teaching practices within ACT Public Schools.</p>

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<p>11. The New Educator Support Program should be reviewed and redesigned. The program should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Be facilitated by the Education Support Office to provide centralised oversight of all Enterprise Agreement provisions, centralised support and resourcing to New Educators in ACT public schools.</li> <li>b. Document a core set of highly effective pedagogical competencies that New Educators are expected to acquire within the first three years of their teaching careers.</li> <li>c. Include a series of centralised, scaffolded professional development activities to build New Educators' capabilities over the course of the three years of the program.</li> <li>d. Provide schools with clear guidance and expectations to facilitated experienced teacher coaching and mentoring of New Educators</li> <li>e. Establish an annual monitoring and evaluation process for the program, which incorporates feedback from New Educators, experienced teacher mentors and school leaders.</li> </ol>	<p>Agree in principle</p>	<p>The Education Directorate will strengthen central oversight of the implementation of New Educator supports outlined in the Enterprise Agreement following the delivery of the ACTPS Human Resources Information Management System (HRIMS) Module 2, specifically the Learning Management System platform. This module will ensure that all beginning teachers have a New Educator Support Plan in place and that the Education Support Office continue to monitor and support implementation across schools.</p> <p>The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers outline the professional requirements at a graduate level. The Education Directorate uses this standard to inform the new educator induction and continuing supports along their teaching journey.</p> <p>Specific training is available for educators during the annual induction week, which targets the needs of new educators and educators new to the ACT system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Education Directorate New Educator Support Guidelines are used to inform the assistance provided to beginning teachers. The supports include: Reduction of face to face teaching hours to allow for transition and preparation</li> <li>- An allocated two professional learning days</li> <li>- Five days induction</li> <li>- The opportunity to work with an experienced teacher to support their learning.</li> </ul> <p>The Education Directorate will strengthen central oversight of the implementation of New Educator supports outlined in the Enterprise Agreement following the delivery of the ACTPS Human Resources Information Management System (HRIMS) Module 2, specifically the Learning Management System. The Education Directorate continues identify, monitor and evaluate professional learning opportunities for early career educators. The new Learning Management System will facilitate enhancements to this capability.</p>
<p>12. The Education Directorate should review and revise the mechanisms that support the distribution and monitoring of the teaching workforce across ACT public schools by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Monitoring the distribution of experienced teachers across ACT public schools to ensure it aligns with Education Directorate priorities under the Future of Education. Developing processes to monitor and review principal decisions to extend teacher placements to ensure schools have appropriate and equitable access to experienced teachers.</li> </ol>	<p>Agree in principle</p>	<p>In March 2021, the Education Directorate launched and implemented its inaugural Workforce Strategy with a three-year horizon. One of the key priority actions identified in the <i>EDU Workforce Strategy 2021-23</i> is the review of the classroom teacher and school leader transfer processes to enable mobility to support professional development.</p> <p>It is noted that the transfer processes are embedded in the <i>ACTPS Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022</i> (Agreement) and changes will need to be agreed with the Australian Education Union in parallel with the current Agreement and/or through the next round of bargaining.</p>

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<p>13. The Education Directorate should develop and analyse data associated with teaching workforce separations by implementing exit surveys and conducting analysis on the reasons teachers resign from ACT public schools.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The Education Directorate recognises the importance of developing a baseline data on the attrition rate (separation) across the system, specifically for our teaching staff, to inform our attraction and retention framework.</p> <p>The Education Directorate is currently developing a Staff Exit Survey/Interview process to support the implementation of the Workforce Strategy 2021-23.</p>
<p>14. The Education Directorate should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Develop guidelines and support for school leaders that enable regular, development - focussed teacher appraisals with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. These should be modelled and encouraged through the Empowered Learning Professionals Leadership Plan and aligned with the professional learning requirements of the ACT teacher Quality Institute ACT 2010 to gain additional benefit from these activities.</li> <li>b. Systematise the performance and development process to improve efficiency and make teacher professional development data available for central oversight and management to improve teaching quality.</li> <li>c. Develop supports for school leaders to manage underperformance for poor teaching practices. These supports should emphasise the need to quickly address performance issues, identify ways to successfully improve performance, and connect underperforming teachers with practical supports to improve their practice.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in principle</p>	<p>The Education Directorate Classroom Teacher, School Leader and Principal Performance and Development Framework underpins the value and need for meaningful and targeted dialogues on performance and development for our teaching staff.</p> <p>The Education Directorate will further develop supports for school leaders to manage underperformance relating to poor teaching practices. These supports will be developed in accordance with requirements of the <i>ACTPS Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022</i> (or its replacement). The ACTPS HRIMS Module 2 will deliver a Performance Management and Learning Management System to support automation and reporting on performance and development discussions and professional learning requirements.</p> <p>The introduction of this module will support school leaders in engaging in performance and development discussions and also provides a clear structure/workflow for managing underperformance.</p>