EXTERNAL VALIDATION REPORT 2012

for

Lyneham High School
Record of Validation Process

The following people were members of the external validation panel for
Lyneham High School conducted on 20 & 21 August 2012

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Grace Dunlop</td>
<td>Kaleen Primary School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robin Egerton</td>
<td>Lake Tuggeranong College</td>
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<td>Angus Tulley</td>
<td>Saint Francis Xavier College</td>
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As chair of the panel I endorse that this is a true and accurate record of the findings from the external validation process.

Name: Grace Dunlop
Date: 7 September 2012

Signature: 

As principal of Lyneham High School I accept the Validation Report on behalf of the school community.

Name: Colleen Matheson
Date: 7 September 2012

Signature: 

As co-director of Quality Learning Australia, external validators for the conduct of validation process in ACT public schools, I concur that the panel acted within the guidelines set by the ACT Education and Training Directorate.

Name: Michael King
Date: 7 September 2012

Signature: 

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Section A: School context

Lyneham High School is a Year 7-10 comprehensive school established in 1959. The school has a current enrolment of 1056 (August 2012) and is at capacity. Approximately 55% of the total student population is drawn from outside the priority enrolment area. The student population includes 24 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, 235 students from Language Backgrounds Other than English (LBOTE), 14 international students, 28 students enrolled in Special Education classes and 11 students who have recognised disabilities. While Lyneham High School has an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) index of 1120 (2011) there are pockets of considerable disadvantage within the school community.

Lyneham High School has a strong reputation which centres on three programs that have become flagships for the school. These are the award winning band and music program, the Lyneham Enriched Academic Program (LEAP) for gifted and talented students and the Sporting Excellence at Lyneham (SEAL) program for talented sports students. Lyneham High School has developed a culture where achievement is celebrated and there is a strong sense of pride in the school.

Key changes in school context over the past four years which have had an impact on school performance and the school’s improvement efforts include the following.

Staff turnover: The current Principal took up the position at the end of 2007, but over the period of the current plan there have been many changes in staff and in the leadership team. Of a leadership team of 15, only four members of the 2007 team remain in the school. There has been a 44% changeover in teaching staff since 2009. While this has meant that the school has been in a constant state of induction, which presents some challenges, it has also brought new ideas and renewal to the school. The panel commends the Leadership Team for ensuring that appropriate systems and processes have been implemented to ensure continuity of school programs in the light of constant change.

The Lyneham Performing Arts Centre: The ACT Government’s decision to build a Performing Arts Centre at Lyneham High School has given the school an outstanding facility which is not just an asset for learning and teaching in the arts, but an asset for the school generally and for the local community. The panel commends the school for the way it has welcomed others to use the Lyneham Performing Arts Centre.

The Network Model: As a member of the North Gungahlin Network of schools, Lyneham High School has taken the opportunity to form partnerships with network schools. Opportunities to share ideas and expertise have contributed to improvement. The panel commends the school for effective transitions to and from Lyneham High School.

The Australian Curriculum: The staged introduction of the Australian Curriculum has meant a change in focus for the school, particularly in terms of assessment and moderation. The panel acknowledges that Lyneham High School has been commended for its work as a Lead School in the ACT in 2011. This has involved a huge investment in time, energy and expertise from staff. The panel commends the work the Lyneham High School staff have done on the Australian Curriculum.
Section B: School performance

The panel congratulates Lyneham High School on its performance as demonstrated by NAPLAN results over the last three years. A simple comparison of NAPLAN Year 9 writing results from 2009 to 2011 shows a steady increase in performance compared with the ACT average. In 2009 the average mean scaled score in Year 9 writing was 8 points behind ACT average; in 2010 it was 5 points below and in 2011 it was 3 points above ACT average.

In other areas of literacy and numeracy, Lyneham High School students achieve considerable success. In 2011 the mean scores of students were above those of the ACT in all areas. Numeracy remains an area of strength for the school as do the results of students who have language backgrounds other than English. It is also noted that in 2011, the number of students below expected growth in all areas, other than Writing (which could not be measured because of a change from the narrative to the persuasive genre) had considerably decreased. In both reading and numeracy, Lyneham High School achieved very good growth from 2009-2011 in comparison to all schools, like schools and for students with similar starting points.

The panel concurs with the school’s identification that improvement in writing, and particularly in the writing of boys, remains an area for development.

Other student successes:

- LEAP classes won the da Vinci Decathlon (Year 7: 2010, Year 8: 2012).
- A student represented Australia in the BHP International Science Fair in America (2010).
- In 2011 Language students were ranked first in the ACT and 24th in the world in a global language competition.
- In 2011 a student won the ACT section in the National Geography Competition.
- In 2011 a student placed in the 99th percentile of an Australia wide writing competition and two Tournament of the Minds teams won their sections in the ACT competition. In 2012 a Year 8 student achieved the top score in writing for both NSW and the ACT.
- In 2010 the school’s Year 9 Concert Band became the first Band to be awarded a platinum award in the Australian National Eisteddfod and we continue to excel in Band and Music. The school musical productions are outstanding with the school being nominated for six Canberra Area Theatre (CAT) awards in 2011.
- Approximately 100 students each year participate in work experience with a number undertaking Australian School-Based Apprenticeships (four in 2010 and 2011 and currently five in 2012).
- Three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have won scholarships to support them in College and beyond.
- The SEAL program continues to offer opportunities for students to excel in a range of sports and to forge strong links with the sporting community.

These successes particularly reflect the strengths of the schools LEAP, SEAL, band and performance programs.
The panel acknowledges the positive staff morale at Lyneham High School. The panel noted the increased staff satisfaction in terms of leadership, feedback, communication and professional dialogue as evidenced in staff satisfaction surveys. Staff satisfaction at Lyneham High School is consistently above that of other Education and Training Directorate high schools.

Evidence cited and its validation

School Board Report 2009
School Board Report 2010
School Board Report 2011
Year 9 Writing mean scaled scores 2009-2011
NAPLAN data summary 2011
Growth data 2011
ACARA growth data graphs
SEAL booklet
Staff Satisfaction surveys 2009 – 2011

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

PART 1: Improvement planning

The Leadership Team spoke knowledgably to the panel about the eleven priorities that had been chosen following the 2008 validation process. They reported that it soon became clear that there were too many priorities on which to focus. The panel congratulates the Leadership Team on their recognition that many of the original priorities were actually strategies contributing to other priorities and for the process that led to the choice of five key priorities for 2011. The priorities were further reduced to three for 2012.

The process to take action on the chosen priorities has involved the setting up of teams which meet fortnightly to take appropriate actions and to collect, collate and act upon the views of various stakeholders and other relevant data. These views have been collected through system and school surveys, school data, forums and discussions and have included input from the School Board, the Students’ Representative Council, the Parents and Citizens’ Association and the school Executive team. A School Review/ Improvement Team was formed each year to collect and reflect on the evidence and to contribute to the Annual School Board Report.

The core priorities that the school has focused on are as follows.

1. Embed the Quality Teaching model as Lyneham High School’s approach to pedagogy.
2. Improve the literacy and numeracy results of our students.
3. Complete curriculum renewal and widen the curriculum experiences for all students.
4. Improve communication throughout the school community.
5. Improve student safety and well-being.
Evidence cited and its validation

School Improvement Plan 2009 -2012
Operational Plans 2009 – 2012
Interviews with members of the Lyneham High School Executive Team

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

PART 2: Improvement actions

Priority Area 1: Embed the Quality Teaching model (QTm) as Lyneham High School’s approach to pedagogy.

The school has invested time, energy and resources into embedding the QTm as part of the culture of collaboration and professional learning. The Principal demonstrated commitment to the model by giving staff verbal and written feedback on their classroom pedagogy in terms of QTm.

Actions

The following actions were undertaken:

- the building of staff familiarity with the QTm through a focus on assessment
- the Executive team attending cluster workshops
- a cluster Executive teacher being appointed to support implementation of the QTm in 2009
- all staff undertaking professional learning at the cluster, school and faculty level
- the QTm becoming a priority in professional pathway plans for all staff
- some Executive staff attending an instructional round at the Amaroo School
- an Instructional Round process being developed for the school
- Principal and Deputies visiting classrooms and Principal devising a template to give feedback to staff
- an expectation that Executive provide feedback to staff in terms of the QTm at least once a term
- an expectation that staff keep a journal which includes at least five pieces of feedback on their classroom pedagogy and reflections on this feedback
- a QTm committee being formed with a representative from each faculty
- Leadership Team members changing work practices to facilitate classroom observations.
Achievements:

There has been a rapid acceptance, take-up and use of the QTm to enhance teaching. In 2011 Term 4 the staff response in the system satisfaction survey to the question ‘I receive constructive feedback on my work’ was 85%. This was a 39% increase on the 2009 percentage.

Priority Area 2: Improve the Literacy and Numeracy Results of Lyneham High School students

The focus for improvement was on three areas: Leadership, Teaching (teachers) and Learning (students). The panel commends the school on its success in gaining funding and providing targeted support.

Actions

The following actions were undertaken:

- the appointment of a Literacy Coordinator in 2009 (the fact that a Music teacher was appointed is noteworthy)
- the appointment of an Executive Teacher (Science teacher) in 2010 to coordinate a team of literacy and numeracy coaches
- the provision of additional support to individual students, teachers and faculties
- the provision of professional learning on the interpretation and analysis of NAPLAN results
- the literacy and numeracy project called ‘Students as Tutors’
- the ‘Accepting the Challenge’ project called ‘Literacy Leaders’.

Achievements

The panel noted that Lyneham High School has achieved creditable literacy and numeracy results and NAPLAN results significantly above those of ACT schools. They show steady improvement in Year 9 Writing over the years 2009 to 2011 (8 points below to 3 points above the ACT average). In 2010 all staff included a literacy/numeracy priority in their professional pathways and showed some journal evidence of working to improve students’ skills. In both 2010 and 2011, 70% of staff indicated in a system survey that they used system testing and processes to inform practice. This is a 24 percentage point increase on survey results from 2009. There is a greater awareness amongst teachers of the literacy and numeracy requirements of their subject areas and a willingness to more explicitly teach these skills in their subject areas.

Priority Area 3: Complete curriculum renewal and widen curriculum experience for all students

Over the life of the Plan curriculum renewal occurred firstly through the embedding of the Essential Learning Areas and then through Phase 1 of the introduction of the Australian Curriculum. From 2009-2012 the curriculum has been widened to meet the diverse needs of students. A stronger focus on assessment and moderation has accompanied the introduction of the Australian Curriculum.
Actions

The following actions were undertaken:

- all faculties mapping their curriculum against Every Chance to Learn in 2009 and 2010
- the introduction of three new programs in 2010: the STAR program for girls; a Trades Course; and an Asian language (Indonesian) program
- introduction of a Year 8 boys’ literacy program in 2012 in English and Physical Education
- Lyneham High School becoming a Lead School for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum in 2011 – Year 7 Science and Year 9 English. Staff have been commended on their work
- strengthening moderation procedures in 2012 through a partnership with Campbell High School. This has included the use of some shared assessment tasks.

Achievements

Lyneham High School has had a constant focus on curriculum that has included imbedding the Essential Learning Achievements within the four Key Learning Areas. This has positioned them in an ideal position to engage with and implement the Australian Curriculum

Priority Area 4: Improve communication throughout the community.

The panel noted that over the course of 2009 to 2011, information was collected from staff, students and parents using system satisfaction surveys.

Actions

A number of changes were made. They included:

- increased frequency of the newsletter and increased use of electronic mailing, automatic mailing of reports to second parent/carer, the formation of a working party to examine homework and increased use of direct email to parents when appropriate
- sending out standardised letters of concern warning parents of issues relating to student progress
- providing students with individual assessment schedules
- developing and publishing a late work policy
- the creation of a new template for mid semester reports to provide more information to parents regarding areas of concern
- standardising of course outlines and publication of these on the school website
- an electronic booking system for parent/teacher night
- communication of student absences via SMS earlier each morning and a number of tighter processes for following up on student absences, including the requirement for
home group teachers to contact parents fortnightly about unexplained absences and the sending home of a letter to follow up automatically on five or more unexplained absences

- an electronic notice board installed at the front of the school in 2012 with a view to improving communication with the community.

Achievements
Between 2009 and 2011, in response to the statement ‘there was effective communication amongst all staff’, there was a 15 percentage point improvement.

Priority Area 5: Improve student safety and well-being
Improving student safety and well-being has been a constant focus for the school over the last four years. A number of policies have been developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders. Restorative practices have been embedded in documentation and procedures at the school with the aim of using these practices consistently when dealing with student conflict.

Actions
The following actions were undertaken:
- tracking of attendance
- improving communication with parents in relation to absences and other attendance issues
- provision of professional learning on restorative practices
- continued focus on anti-bullying and harassment (including cyber safety)
- meetings with SRC and a representative student forum in an effort to listen to the student voice
- work with the students to identify existing areas of school where they have a voice.

Achievements
The panel met with student representatives and was impressed that the students were proud of their school and felt a real sense of belonging. The systemic survey data indicates that student safety and well-being needs to remain an area of ongoing focus for the school.
Evidence cited and its validation

School board reports 2009 - 2011
School plans 2009-2012
School operational plans 2009-2012
School Board reports 2009 – 2011
Sample of Priority Area documentation
System survey results
System trend data; pathways review cycle and mid-cycle review templates 2012
Interviews with Executive Staff, Level 1 teachers and students.

Section C: School improvement planning and implementation

PART 3: Reflection

The documentation provided for the External Validation demonstrated deep reflection on the activities and results of the school. Through its reflection the school identified things it would do differently in the future and things that worked well. The panel commends the Leadership Team for its reflections on the process and concurs with its conclusions.

The school identified that they would do the following things differently.

Begin with a thin plan. The school began with 11 priorities. Thin plans work best and focusing in on priorities means that they become more sustainable over time. By 2011 the school limited the number of priorities.

Differentiate between priorities and strategies: While it was important in 2009 to emphasis the need to used evidence based practice, improve communication and develop more community partnerships, these were no longer considered to be ends in themselves.

Communicate achievements clearly: The school identified the need to continually communicate achievements along the school improvement journey. In drawing achievements together the school realised that various parts of our community, students, parents/carers or staff were sometimes unaware of what others had achieved. The need to develop more formal reporting and sharing at various stages of the school improvement process was identified.

Improve evidence collection: The school realised that there were many good opportunities missed to collect evidence. Student evaluations are seen as an opportunity to hear the student voice, ensuring that questions are clear and unambiguous.

Link school plans more closely to system and network strategies and plans: Over a four year period it will always be important to ensure that the school plan reflects changes in the national and local education scene.

Set realistic but aspirational targets: Over the course of four years the school improvement team became much better at refining targets. However, there was a tension between the desire to be aspirational and to be realistic in setting targets.
Things that worked well:

*Integration of school improvement process in school operations:* Developing a range of staff teams that were tasked with implementing elements of the school plan ensured that more staff had ownership of elements of the plan and more time allocation to meet the priorities. Professional learning, professional development days and professional pathways were all linked to the implementation of the plan. This gave staff not only extra support but also a degree of accountability.

*School Improvement Team and collection of evidence:* A School Improvement team was formed each year to collect and reflect on evidence. Membership varied from year to year. This gave more people opportunities to be involved and to develop a closer understanding of the process. It also meant that evidence was collected and stored for future reference.

*Role of Executive Team:* The executive, as a team, has developed more expertise in collecting, analysing and reflecting on evidence, particularly using the Professional Pathways process. Executive teachers have also worked with the School Improvement team to write this Evaluation Report and to provide these reflections to the School Board.

Evidence cited and its validation

- School Improvement Plan 2009 -2012
- Operational Plans 2009 – 2012
- Interviews with members of the Lyneham High School Executive Team.

Section D: Commendations and recommendations

The Leadership Team and the School Improvement Team are to be congratulated for the quality of the validation documentation. The panel found that the documentation was a delight to read and provided an honest and true overview of Lyneham High School from 2009 to the present day. There was alignment between what was provided as evidence and the discussions the panel had with the School Leadership Team, staff and students.
COMMENDATIONS

Lyneham High School is to be commended for:

1. **The use of the Quality Teaching model**: The use of the Quality Teaching model in conjunction with Instructional Rounds has brought cultural change to the school and a positive shift in staff perception. Teachers are opening their doors and engaging in more professional conversation across faculties. The model has been accepted as a tool for learning and staff members are beginning to provide more valuable feedback to each other on classroom practice. Of particular note is the work of the Principal as an instructional leader and the changes to the work practices of the Principal and Deputies who are now allocating days each week to spend in the classroom.

2. **The development of the Lyneham Performing Arts Centre as a school and community facility**: This new facility provides the school with an outstanding learning and teaching space with excellent acoustics. The space is used, not just by the Music faculty, but by the whole school. The space has also promoted a sense of community. The inner North Canberra cluster of schools has benefitted from performance and professional learning experiences and an increasing and varied number of outside organisations are now hiring the facility.

3. **The development and promotion of School Values**: The development of three succinct school values are now beginning to be reflected across the school and will provide a strong framework for future school improvement.

4. **The support of students with literacy and numeracy needs**: Students with literacy and numeracy needs are being identified and targeted for extra support and more use is being made of available data. The Literacy and Numeracy team is to be commended for turning its focus to professional learning for staff, in-class coaching and supporting faculties.

5. **The support of Student Safety and Well-being**: The majority of staff now follows consistent practices and most issues are dealt with at classroom level. There are effective communication processes in place to track and follow up on student absenteeism. Restorative practices and mediation are common practice. The New “Hive” sessions are reinforcing positive well-being and school values. There is a renewed focus on student governance and voice.

6. **The excellent work in supporting the introduction of the new Australian Curriculum**: Lyneham High School has been active in trialing the new Mathematics Curriculum and as a lead school in English and Science. The school is now reflecting more critically on assessment and moderation processes, has linked these to the Quality Teaching model and is working with colleagues at Campbell High School to develop more consistency of judgment. Communication with parents/carers in relation to student progress has been much improved.
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The panel recommends that Lyneham High School:

1. Ensure that a culture of continuous improvement is fostered through giving, receiving and acting on **feedback**. The Quality Teaching model and Instructional Round process is now being used to develop models to provide feedback to teachers on classroom practice. This should be further developed and embedded in school practice. The panel suggests that reflection on feedback be a focus of pathway planning and the school look to use data more systemically to monitor student learning and teacher efficacy.

2. Examine ways to incorporate **assessment** against the achievement standards of the Australian Curriculum in a school where classes are streamed. As the Australian Curriculum continues to be implemented, there will be an increasing need to differentiate the curriculum and focus on the needs of particular students including the gifted and talented and those with special needs, abilities or disabilities. All teachers are encouraged to see themselves as **teachers of literacy and numeracy**.

3. Find ways to increase **student governance and voice** in school practices and to engage the full range of students. This needs to occur in a safe environment where positive well-being is emphasized. It is suggested that greater emphasis be placed on student evaluation and that common processes be established for students to reflect on their learning. It is also suggested that the school investigate student leadership models and make decisions that align with the Lyneham High School culture.

4. Build upon existing practices of reflection by considering the development of a **standard process for improvement** to be used by school teams. This could include developing clear statements of purpose, desired outcomes, milestones and reporting arrangements.