

25 April 2009

## **Review of Special Education Services in ACT Public Schools**

### **Where we are up to in the Review**

This Discussion Paper is an important part of the consultation process in the Review of Special Education in ACT Public Schools. The Review Team visited many schools and programs and met with a wide range of stakeholders between 16 March and 17 April before writing this paper. In addition, many individuals and groups contributed to this stage of the Review via mail, email or submission on the website. We are most grateful for all of the support we have received in preparing the paper.

### **Purpose of the Discussion Paper**

This Discussion Paper is just that— a document to stimulate discussion. It is not a final report.

In the next six weeks, between 25 April and 6 June, conversations within the ACT community about this Discussion Paper will help us develop the Final Report. The Review Team will refine, reshape and/or add ideas and options.

### **How you can be part of the conversation**

The Discussion Paper will be widely distributed.

We hope to hold at least six community forums across the ACT. The forums will be advertised on the Review website, and on the ACT Government Community Notice Board as soon as they can be arranged. Where possible, two members of the Review Team will attend each forum.

We also invite comment on the Discussion Paper with reference to the Terms of Reference of the Review (<http://www.actspedreview.com/>) via mail, email or on the website. (The website option will be available by 1 May or soon after). Comments can be received up to 6 June 2009.

### **What will happen after 6 June?**

The Review Team will consider all of the input received with reference to the Terms of Reference and to the research on leading practice in Special Education. We will then present a draft report to the Reference Group early in July 2009. The Reference Group, which has broad community representation and considerable expertise in Special Education (see <http://sites.google.com/a/actspedreview.com/www/reference-group>), will provide a detailed critique of the draft report and recommend improvements.

We will then prepare a Final Report for submission to ACT Department of Education and Training on 31 July 2009.

Please take the opportunity to participate in the conversation about future options for the provision of educational service to students with disabilities in ACT public schools.

Yours sincerely

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and

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## Contacting us

*Please read the Privacy Statement available at*

<http://sites.google.com/a/actspecialreview.com/www/privacy-statement>

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**Web:** The web option will be available on 1 May or soon after via a link on the Review website which is <http://www.actspecialreview.com/>

**And finally** ... As stated on the website, my aim was to make the Discussion Paper available on 25 April and to distribute it in hard copy through schools and other outlets after that. (I will also post a 'plain English' summary and PowerPoint presentation on the website as soon as possible). As I already had interstate commitments in the first two weeks of May before agreeing to undertake this Review I took them into account when developing the Review schedule. So, although the Discussion paper will be released I won't be able to get involved in discussions about it until after 11 May – as stated on the website. Certainly send me your ideas by mail, email or via the website. However, if I respond at all before 11 May, it will be a brief response only. Many thanks, Tony Shaddock.

## Disclaimer

This paper is the work of Dr Tony Shaddock and the Review Team. It does not represent, or claim to represent, the views of the Australian Capital Territory Department of Education and Training.

# Service to Students with Disabilities in ACT Public Schools: A Discussion Paper about Issues and Options

## 1. Introduction

This paper aims to contribute to the ‘Special Education Review’ by stimulating community-wide conversation about curriculum and pedagogy for the range of students with disabilities in ACT public schools (see Terms of Reference, Appendix 1 & Dictionary of Terms, Appendix 2). The Review is forward-looking. It was initiated by the Australian Capital Territory Department of Education and Training to assist in future planning and delivery. The discussion of issues and options raised in this paper is one part of a process that commenced with visits and community consultation in March 2009 and will lead to a report and set of recommendations to the ACT Department of Education and Training in late July 2009.

This paper discusses issues raised in submissions and visits and we are most grateful for the input received so far. Many submissions focused on very specific issues, often related to a single student, or to a particular group of students. In this Review however, we are required to take into account the needs of all students receiving special education services.

We have been most impressed by the range and quality of services and programs that are available to students with a disability in ACT public schools and even more impressed by the motivation of all stakeholders to improve them. Even when perceived deficiencies have been mentioned, the motivation for raising them is clearly the great desire of all stakeholders to provide an excellent educational service for every student with a disability in ACT public schools.

The Discussion Paper reflects the Review Team’s current appreciation of the developing Special Education context in the ACT, of international issues and trends, and of the evidence for practices that reflect ‘leading practice’ (see Appendix 2, Dictionary of Terms) in meeting the needs of students with a disability. As we aimed to write a relatively brief and readable paper and focus on significant issues for the future, we did not attempt to address every issue that was brought to our attention. However, the conversations that the Review Team will now have with the ACT community will help us to improve our understanding of the issues before moving towards recommendations about future options.

The Discussion Paper is organised around three broad, interrelated issues. Section One examines *Contextual issues*. Section Two discusses *Curriculum and Pedagogical Issues*. Section Three examines *Organisational Issues*.

To conclude this introduction we draw attention to the statement in the Terms of Reference about “Provid(ing) advice on future options for the provision of special education services in ACT public schools within the existing budget provision.” We well understand that decisions and planning must consider a range of determinants including legal obligations, government policy and budgetary and resource constraints. However we take the view that the initial focus of this Review should be on curriculum, pedagogy and future options based on leading practice.

## 2. Contextual issues

### 2.1 The legal bases

Future options (what *could* be?) for students with a disability in ACT Public Schools must be based on a clear understanding of existing legal rights and obligations (what *must* be!). ACT legal foundations are provided through the *Education Act 2004*, the *Discrimination Act 1991*, and the *Human Rights Act 2004*. Legal obligations are also imposed and elaborated by the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, and the Commonwealth *Disability Standards for Education 2005*.

In opening this Discussion Paper by focusing on the legal basis for the education of students with a disability we make one simple point. That is, although it may appear somewhat uninspiring to consider future options in *education* with reference to existing *legal* obligations, the legal ‘bottom line’ is a good place to start.

The ACT *Education Act 2004* states that education should aim to develop *every* child’s potential and maximise educational achievements, improve the learning outcomes of students who are disadvantaged for a range of reasons and recognise the individual needs of children with disabilities. In addition the Act mentions the need for innovation, diversity and opportunity within and among schools; outlines the need for a combination of central and school-level policies and decision-making; requires effective quality assurance mechanisms and accountability; stresses the importance of partnerships between home, community and educational providers; and emphasises the primary responsibility of the principal for the educational outcomes of every student at the school.

The ACT *Discrimination Act 1991* prohibits discrimination on the ground of disability in the area of education, as does the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA).

The ACT *Human Rights Act 2004* requires that, as far as possible, all ACT laws must be interpreted and applied in a way that is compatible with the human rights guaranteed in that Act. In the area of special education, a number of those rights might be relevant, such as the right to recognition and equality before the law and the right to protection of the family and children. From 1 January 2009, the Human Rights Act also expressly requires public authorities to act consistently with human rights and when making decisions to give proper consideration to relevant human rights.

The *Disability Standards for Education 2005*, (‘the Standards’) were formulated under the DDA. The Standards elaborate the legal obligations of education providers in relation to enrolment, participation, curriculum, student support and avoidance of harassment and victimisation for students with a disability. The Standards also provide specific and non-binding examples of the ways education providers may comply with obligations under the Act. These provisions are further articulated for schools and parents in the 2008 *On the Same Basis As* materials produced by DECS in South Australia.

(<http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/speced/pages/specialneeds/OnthebamebasisDDAEducationStandards/>)

Several features of the Standards, and the obligations of anti-discrimination law more generally, have particular relevance for the current Review of Special Education in ACT Public Schools.

Firstly, the description and meanings of ‘disability’ in anti-discrimination legislation at both the ACT and Commonwealth level are broad compared with definitions of disability that are contained in the eight categories in the ACT Department of Education and Training policy – Intellectual, Physical, Vision, Hearing, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Language, Mental Health and Chronic Medical Condition.

Secondly, many students with a disability require specialised services in order to access the curriculum and to achieve appropriate learning outcomes, e.g., some may need therapy or mental health support that may be provided by individuals and organisations that are not under the direct control of the ACT Department of Education and Training. In these circumstances, the Standards require that the education provider takes appropriate steps to ensure that collaborative arrangements with specialised service providers are adequate.

Thirdly, the Standards do not mention ‘special education’ or ‘inclusion’ or ‘inclusivity’. The Standards simply state and re-state the fundamental right of a student with a disability to participate in education *on the same basis* as a student without a disability. (The phrase, ‘on the same basis’ is used 33 times in the Standards and Guidance Notes).

### ***Continuing the conversation***

1. What lessons might be learned from other jurisdictions that are either more or less prescriptive of education services for students with disabilities?
2. What *could* the provision of educational services to students with disabilities with ACT public schools look like in the future if the ACT rigorously adopted the ‘on the same basis’ orientation of the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*?

## ***2.2 Education, Special Education and the ACT***

International practices, priorities and trends influence Australian education policy. In the past, students with ‘special needs’ in many countries did not participate in public education and this exclusion was based on assumptions and values about what is ‘normal’ or ‘typical’ and the purpose of ‘mainstream’ education. These dichotomous ways of thinking are inadequate for understanding and responding to the diversity in contemporary society and its schools but they continue to exert an unhelpful influence on educational structures, policies, service delivery models and resourcing mechanisms in special education and in education more generally.

Current international trends influence Australian education policy. For example, the international school reform literature urges school systems to focus on:

- Developing learning environments that stimulate student engagement, satisfaction, commitment and learning;
- Organising educational experiences to meet the individual needs and interests of students;

- Facilitating transition from school to work;
- Connecting schools and families in ways that promote student success; and
- Re-thinking school administration and funding policies to promote whole-school reform. (Centre for Social Organisation of Schools, CSOS, nd).

In England the strategies for school improvement include ambitious standards; clear targets, good data and accountability; access to best practice professional development; and devolved responsibility with intervention in inverse proportion to success. With its *Every Child Matters: Changes for Children* policy (Department of Education and Skills, 2004), the United Kingdom has embarked on a revolutionary, whole of government multi-departmental strategy to provide wraparound services that aim to maximise opportunity and minimise risk for *all* children and young people.

The Melbourne Declaration (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008) and its support documents state that the two main goals of contemporary Australian education are that “**Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence**”; and that

**“All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens”.**

Contemporary education policy emphasises:

- Greater flexibility with a focus on improving the educational outcomes of *all* students;
- Assessment of learning against specified educational standards;
- Lifting literacy and numeracy standards particularly for disadvantaged students;
- School leadership and teacher quality; and
- Increased transparency and accountability and decreased reporting and red tape.

The actions proposed to achieve these goals include the facilitation of the following:

- Partnerships with parents, local community groups and agencies;
- Partnerships between schools, sharing facilities and school-to-school mentoring;
- Improving the performance management of schools;
- A focus on the educational needs and well-being of individual students, including personalised planning for learning, provision of targeted support to address the learning of disadvantaged students and the mobilisation of tailored services from outside the school;
- Value-added measures for schools’ performance and analysing student results over time; and
- The establishment of ways of tracking student performance from the first year of compulsory schooling to post-school education and training.

The ACT has numerous policies that are relevant to the current Review. For example, the ACT Social Plan has expressed a priority for the Territory to “**Lead Australia in education, training and life-long learning**” and has given priority to:

- All young people completing 13 years of schooling and achieving a Year 12 certificate or equivalent vocational qualification;
- Industry links for senior secondary students;
- Improving the capacity of government schools to increase literacy and numeracy levels through intensive support for underachieving students;
- Improving learning outcomes for students with a disability;
- Providing early education for Indigenous children;
- Ensuring that Government schools are resourced to deliver information and communication technology (ICT) to students irrespective of school size and financial capacity; and
- Having environments that are conducive to effective learning.

The ACT Government is currently updating policy on outcomes and opportunities for *all Canberrans* who have a disability. Strategic priorities are being developed with the community around key messages from individuals, families, carers and service providers about type of support, contribution to, and engagement with, the community, learning opportunities and the requirements of a quality service system for people with a disability.

Within the ACT Department of Education and Training, key documents include *Students with a disability: Meeting their educational needs* (2008) and *The Inclusivity Challenge: Within Reach of Us All Discussion Paper* (2002). These and many other documents outline the Department’s policies and procedures for supporting the diverse range of students in ACT public schools. There is a strong commitment to ensure access and participation in school curriculum, programs and activities by students with a disability.

### ***Continuing the conversation***

1. How effective is the policy framework around the provision of educational service to students with a disability in ACT public schools? What, if any, are the implications, e.g. for policy development/refinement?
2. What other policy-practice issues are relevant?

### ***2.3 Students with a disability in a diverse society***

Australian society and its schools are becoming more diverse and while students with a disability contribute to this diversity, they are certainly not the only source. Improving pedagogy and curriculum for students with a disability needs to be understood with reference to diversity more generally and the demands it places on schools, teachers and students. For example, over 100 languages are spoken in the homes of students whose families are coming to Australia in large numbers as migrants, refugees or as

humanitarian entrants. Some of these students have experienced trauma and abuse. As well, about 90 indigenous languages are spoken in Australian homes.

A key requirement of contemporary education is to improve the educational performance of the lowest performing school students (Fullan, 2006). These students are sometimes referred to as 'at-risk' and 'disengaged', implying that the 'problem' is in the student. However, they are also referred to as 'put at risk for disengagement', implying that societal and/or educational factors may be the cause. In any case, research shows that raising the literacy and numeracy scores of these students contributes significantly to economic prosperity and social cohesion. Many of these students engage in behaviour that is challenging for teachers and is disruptive of the learning of other students. The recent decision in the ACT to increase the participation age to 17 will no doubt add to school and classroom diversity at high school and college level.

'Students with a disability' contribute to school diversity and they are an extremely diverse subsection of the school population. Descriptions of individual students in terms of typical 'categories of disability' – Intellectual, Physical, Vision, Hearing, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Language, Mental Health and Chronic Medical Condition - cannot convey the unique nature of each student and their needs. Children who share the same diagnostic category may be very different. Furthermore, many students who experience difficulties in learning do not quite 'fit' under any particular disability category, yet, because of a combination of social, educational, behavioural and/or other reasons, they need additional educational support.

Advances in medical science and technology are contributing to school diversity. Many children who once would have not survived because of pre, peri and/or postnatal complications, or who have contracted serious illnesses such as cancer, attend school and many continue to experience severe or subtle learning and developmental difficulties. The prevalence of some conditions is also increasing, or, at the very least, these conditions are being more correctly diagnosed and managed in educational settings, e.g. Autism Spectrum Disorder and Foetal Alcohol Syndrome.

About 6% of children have a primary speech and language delay and many will require additional educational support.

Many students experience the stress of living in a dysfunctional family. Furthermore, research suggests that about 14% of Australian students experience poor social-emotional wellbeing at some stage and 20% experience depression before adulthood.

Approximately 2-5% of students have exceptional gifts and talents and some experience classroom difficulties with social relationships, engagement with the curriculum and conformity with school routines.

While many local educators are working successfully and creatively in this complex and demanding milieu, the contemporary educational environment is extremely diverse and challenging.

### ***Continuing the conversation***

1. How might decision-making about the most appropriate programs for individual students in schools be improved?

2. What opportunities are provided by current circumstances and this Review for the ACT to improve education services for all students while improving education services for students with a disability?

### **3 Curriculum and Pedagogical Issues**

#### ***3.1 Curriculum***

Curriculum is all learning planned, guided and implemented by a school or college.

The aims of the ACT Curriculum Framework, *Every Chance to Learn*, are that:

- Students will have every chance to learn the essential knowledge, understandings and skills that will allow them to be active, effective and responsible participants in society;
- Students will have every chance to learn a core of discipline-based study from the eight key learning areas of English, Mathematics, Science, the Social Sciences, Technology, Health and Physical Education, Languages and the Arts;
- Students will be prepared to take part in further education, training and work in the 21st century;
- Students will be encouraged and enabled to enjoy learning and to realise their individual potential and to contribute to a fair and just society that values diversity; and
- The curriculum will promote continuity and coherence of learning across year and school transitions.

The intent of *Every Chance to Learn* is that it should be applicable to all children from pre-school to Year 10. While the framework identifies learning that is essential for all ACT students, it gives teachers “the professional freedom and responsibility to determine how best to organise that essential learning and to make adjustments to meet the particular needs of their students”. Thus, the adequacy of each student’s educational experience depends to a great extent on their teacher’s ability to ‘differentiate’ the curriculum by making pedagogical adaptations, changes or adjustments to accommodate the different needs of students.

The following curriculum issues are pertinent to the Review of Special Education:

- Differentiating the curriculum is a demanding and time-consuming task even for highly skilled and experienced teachers;
- Differentiation is typically conducted by individual teachers, teams of teachers, sometimes with expert assistance from support services;
- Differentiating the curriculum for particular students and student groups can be exceptionally difficult e.g. those with very high support needs. This may be a function of the complex needs of these students and the necessary focus on preparing them for future life;
- Successful differentiation at the high school and college level is complicated by a variety of factors – structural, pedagogical and organisational. The relevance of the curriculum for some students has been questioned, e.g. for those students

who struggle to appreciate the relevance of the curriculum to their lives and aspirations;

- The linking of *Every Chance to Learn* to the student's Individual Learning Plan (ILP) can be complex, particularly in the mainstream, when a the student has very precise and functional needs that require systematic instruction over a significant period of time to ensure that the knowledge and skills are learned and can be applied, e.g. the development of social and interpersonal skills; and
- The ACT's school-based curriculum policy results in considerable variation in curriculum across the system.

Although better teacher preparation and professional development in differentiating the curriculum are obvious options to consider, teachers also value more context-specific, student-specific, and timely assistance with differentiating the curriculum, and indeed, for navigating the complex terrain of 'special needs provision'. There are a number of effective ways of providing this support, e.g. through having a skilled, school-based person who provides mentoring and coordination and who also acts as the lynchpin connecting teachers with the specialised services and supports with which they may be unfamiliar.

Jurisdictions elsewhere are increasingly making available to school-based personnel web-based supports that provide accessible, practical, teacher-oriented guidance and examples of pedagogy for all students. More systematic ways of sharing 'leading practice' in ACT special and mainstream schools and 'system learning' about curriculum differentiation might be desirable.

Curriculum differentiation takes time. Some schools are already adapting their schedules and organisation to generate the time for teachers to undertake curriculum planning and differentiation.

### ***Continuing the conversation***

1. Would a more detailed differentiation of *Every Chance to Learn*, with the needs of all learners in mind, be desirable? The process of further articulating the curriculum, and linking it to the functional outcomes that many students must achieve, may be educative for teachers and parents, ultimately efficient of teacher time and effort, and benefit a wide range of students.
2. How can a better integration of the *class* curriculum and the *student's ILP* (Individual Learning Plan) be achieved in effective, efficient and feasible ways?

### ***3.2 Individual Learning Plans***

Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) in the ACT Department of Education and Training schools are an adaptation of the general model of Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) that have been a part of special education for over 30 years. They were mandated in USA legislation to bring structure, relevance, coordination and accountability into service delivery for individuals with a disability. ILPs are mandatory for specified students in ACT public schools.

Some individuals commented that the ILP process provides opportunities for teachers to share and act on the knowledge of various participants including family and multidisciplinary colleagues. Others mentioned that the ILP is *the* key process for planning and delivering an agreed educational program for students with a disability.

Since 2001, the ACT Department of Education and Training has put considerable resources into professional learning to increase the effectiveness of the ILP. A Professional Learning Package was researched and developed and system-wide professional learning has been provided by the Inclusion Support Team.

However, operational issues have been raised in relation to ILPs including the following:

- Varied quality and usefulness;
- Difficulty in measuring progress because of the way goals are stated;
- While some ILPs change little from year to year, others change dramatically and appear to have insufficient connection with previous plans;
- Some ILP's do not sufficiently focus on the life skills that students need in order to function successfully in present and future environments;
- The coordination benefit of plans may not be realised because a student may have several plans;
- ILPs have to be developed quickly, sometimes before the student can be known well by those who should have input, e.g. itinerant support staff and/or therapists;
- Some teachers see the ILP more as a bureaucratic requirement than a teaching tool;
- Perhaps for reasons of efficiency, some plans are 'pre-drafted', but this leaves insufficient opportunity for parent involvement;
- Accountability for ILP quality and outcomes is needed; and
- The success of ILPs depends to some extent on the availability of resources.

The literature suggests that individual planning is most effective when it is genuinely student-centered, strengths-oriented and focused on specific learning outcomes that relate to the student's immediate and longer-term goals. The student's learning needs for functioning successfully in present and future environments should provide the framework and logic in which short-term objectives are identified.

Integral to the original IEP concept was the role of a 'case manager' or similar, with responsibility for the quality of the plan and accountability for its implementation. One way to achieve this might be to strengthen 'Case Coordination' at school level.

The ILP is a pivotal process in curriculum planning, delivery and evaluation. Currently the ILP Guidelines state "Many schools provide a line/time allowance for the case coordinator", suggesting the importance of resource allocation at school level so that the full benefits of the individual planning process can be realised.

### ***Continuing the conversation***

1. The development and implementation of ILPs is time-consuming, resource intensive, and time-demanding. What could be done to make the ILP a more effective, efficient, accountable, and feasible support for student learning?
2. Might there be advantages in aligning general policies and procedures for all ILP processes in ACT public schools, e.g. for Indigenous students, gifted and talented students and for students with a disability?

### ***3.3 Transition***

Commencing pre-school or school, and making the transition from primary to high school, high school to college, and college to adult life are crucial occurrences in each student's life. Transitions are often highly stressful for students and parents and carers. The child's transition from the education system to adult life is a major source of concern for most parents and carers of children with a disability.

Transitions raise many issues – systemic, structural, organisational and pedagogical. Transition also raises issues about the necessary skills and infrastructure in the settings to which students are transitioning and the logistics of getting them there. For example, our attention was drawn to the need for basic arrangements that directly affect curriculum and pedagogy such as school location and transport. Teachers and parents know very well that a student who has had a long and upsetting bus trip across the ACT to school may have a bad day, learn little, and disrupt the learning of others.

Early intervention is important but rarely does it remove the need for *ongoing* support to access the curriculum. Many parents and teachers worry that the good work done in the early years of schooling may be undone if the student's 'next environment' is unable to build on earlier achievements.

At a system-wide level, the availability of appropriate educational settings to which students can transition is an issue. In particular, transition can be a major issue for some year 10 students in special schools.

The relevance of curriculum and pedagogy at the 'next' setting is an issue for some parents and teachers. For example, students who have made good progress throughout primary school where the possibly specialised, differentiated pedagogy matched their needs, may not have access to the same pedagogy in the 'next' setting.

Although many teachers and school staff work hard to engage in the necessary communication and liaison to facilitate smooth transitions for all of their students, many of these arrangements are unresourced and informal and may not be sustainable.

Leading practice suggests that senior students with a disability benefit from systematic career guidance and support. In United States planning for adult life is legally required to commence at age 14 and must be incorporated into the student's individual plan.

In Australia and elsewhere, school-based, innovative 'experience of work' initiatives (in contrast to 'work experience') are having great success in assisting senior students, including those with very high support needs, to have meaningful employment and to develop essential friendship networks as they leave school. These initiatives often

involve practical, grassroots, community partnerships, e.g. with Chambers of Commerce or particular businesses or industries, such as are recommended in Australia's Goals for Schooling.

### ***Continuing the conversation***

1. Transition to school is very important and it builds upon the work done in early intervention services. How might students with a disability and their families be supported in making this transition?
2. A key transition for students with a disability is the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Options are available in ACT Department of Education schools targeting this period. How might services be better deployed to improve transition outcomes?

### ***3.4 Pedagogy***

Pedagogy is the term used to describe the art and science of teaching. Pedagogy can be seen in the activity that takes place in classrooms or other educational settings, as well as in the nature of the learning and assessment tasks set by teachers.

In ACT schools there is a tradition of giving priority to pedagogy and to strategies to improve it, e.g., professional learning about good pedagogy. Currently, considerable resources are being directed towards implementing the Quality Teaching Model (known in NSW as the Quality Teaching Framework) through post-graduate training, provision of teaching and resource materials and the establishment of intensive support and networking opportunities for teachers from resource personnel. A commitment to ongoing improvement in pedagogy is a feature of ACT schools and this is reinforced through teacher and principal appraisal processes.

Some school-based staff commented positively on the range of available in-service courses aimed at meeting the individual needs of students in the classroom although these tend to be pitched to the needs of mainstream teachers. The Department has also sponsored many teachers to undertake post-graduate studies and has worked with the University of Canberra to construct courses so that the learning has an impact on pedagogy across the system. All beginning teachers are now required to have completed at least one compulsory unit on special education in their teacher training.

Issues raised about pedagogy during consultations and visits included the need for:

- The theoretical framework and rationale for pedagogy and curriculum to be made clear to parents;
- Teachers to use strategies that have an adequate research base;
- Pedagogy that is available in one setting, e.g. in an autism-specific unit in a primary school, to be available when the student moves to another setting;
- Students to learn relevant 'life skills', e.g., important social skills should be taught for long enough and in sufficient depth for the student to be able to use them.

Research shows that 'individual teacher variables' have a huge impact on student learning, i.e. students' outcomes are directly affected by the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the classroom teacher.

A synthesis of relevant research by Alton-Lee (2003) describes what quality teaching and learning look like. Quality teaching for effective learning:

- Focuses on student achievement (including social outcomes) and facilitate high standards of student outcomes for all students including those with special learning needs or vulnerabilities;
- Enables classes and other learning groupings to work as caring, inclusive, and cohesive learning communities;
- Enables effective links to be created between school and other cultural contexts in which students are socialised, to facilitate learning;
- Is responsive to student learning processes;
- Ensures that opportunities to learn are effective and sufficient;
- Allows students to engage in and complete learning processes so that what is learned is remembered;
- Ensures that curriculum goals, resources including ICT usage, task design, teaching and school practices are effectively aligned;
- Scaffolds and provides appropriate feedback on students' task engagement;
- Promotes learning strength self-knowledge, student self-regulation, meta-cognitive strategies and thoughtful student discourse; and
- Enables teachers and students to engage constructively in goal-oriented assessment.

There is a growing body of research on effective strategies for special and inclusive education (e.g., Mitchell, 2008). The extent to which teachers are using the full range of strategies available to them is unknown.

The provision of just-in-time learning support, i.e., timely assistance, encouragement and professional learning about currently encountered issues, is valuable for teachers. Schools intent on continuous learning and change which matches the needs of students with disabilities must match high expectations with resources such as coaches and mentors and foster collaborative practice such as study groups, action research groups and networking opportunities to encourage the most effective practice among school personnel.

Contemporary research on teaching also emphasises the social context and ‘climate’ of the school and classroom, reinforcing the point that good pedagogy is not just a technical matter of adopting evidence-based techniques.

Finally, leading practice indicates that effective teaching involves establishing good relationships with students and families, consulting students about their learning and organising schools and delivering educational services in student-friendly ways.

### ***Continuing the conversation***

1. Do some students require particular pedagogy? What are the implications?
2. Is there a balance to be achieved between mainstream and specialised pedagogies? Does the Quality Teaching Model provide a language and unifying conceptual framework?

### ***3.5 Providing support for classroom-based personnel***

Many teams have been established to support schools and teachers to meet the specific needs of students, including those with a disability. Relevant to this Review are School Counsellors; Inclusion Support; Transition Support; Inclusive Technologies; Support for Learning Support Units; Disability Services Officers; Vision Support; and Hearing Support Teams. Some of these teams have highly specialised skills, excellent reputations and enjoy strong support from parents and school communities.

Depending on the needs of specific students, teachers and schools may also need support from multidisciplinary personnel employed by other agencies, e.g. services of Speech and Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists or the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.

Many individuals spoke highly of particular support services and valued their contribution to individual students and schools. For example, they commented favourably on:

- Support for ILP development, including where necessary, the development of specialised teaching materials;
- Support in communicating and working with families;
- Detailed and educationally useful assessments; and
- Provision of helpful professional learning and resource materials.

The following issues were raised in relation to support services provided by the ACT Department of Education and Training:

- Some schools and teachers are unclear about how to access additional support and what processes to follow;
- Although some staff have commented positively on the quality of support provided by Central Office, some believe that there are too few consultants to assist with specific disability-related issues;
- Links with these services are sometimes ‘personal’ and when key staff are transferred, communication with the particular support service is interrupted;
- Documentation about these teams is fragmented;
- The services appear to be somewhat compartmentalised and not sufficiently integrated, but this may not be the perception of service users;
- While there was evidence of a case management approach for students with more complex needs, there was considerable variability in philosophy and operation;
- The success of some teams in providing support has led to increased demand and their capacity being stretched;
- Policy around the role of teams to ‘build capacity’ in schools lacked specificity. It was unclear what this meant operationally; and

- Some support staff find it difficult to integrate what they do for the student with the classroom program.

In relation to support services provided by other agencies it was observed, generally, that there are issues around:

- Referrals and the waiting time for necessary services;
- Coordination and communication between schools and these agencies;
- Absence of service protocols or agreements about levels of service to be provided; and
- Particular difficulties around providing therapy for students with a disability in mainstream schools.

Research and contemporary leading practice highlight the importance of:

- A clear philosophical underpinning and vision for the operation of support services in schools with a focus on student learning outcomes;
- The integration of curriculum, pedagogical and support perspectives and goals;
- A case management approach for students with more complex needs;
- Good coordination at school level of the ways services provided by external agencies are managed and integrated with school policies, organisation and routines;
- A focus of student support personnel of building school capacity through:
  - A clearly articulated, jointly developed philosophical framework/rationale for ‘student support’;
  - Development of plans to implement a cohesive approach to student support;
  - Identification of the support that schools need to develop their capacity to meet needs of all students; and
  - Data on the extent to which schools are developing the capacity to meet the complex needs of students; and
- Opportunity to rethink ways of delivering support and identifying the necessary skills.

### ***Continuing the conversation***

1. What options might be considered to improve students’ access to specialist services provided by outside agencies (such as Speech Pathology, Mental Health Services)?
2. What might be done to ensure the integration of support and therapy services with students’ educational programs?

## 4. Organisational Issues

### 4.1 *General models of service delivery*

There is consistent anecdotal evidence that one factor that motivates families to move to the ACT is the quality of the educational services provided for students with a disability. The ACT Department of Education and Training provides a wide range of options for students with a disability, and as summarised on the website ([http://www.det.act.gov.au/school\\_education/special\\_education](http://www.det.act.gov.au/school_education/special_education)) there is a diverse range of services from early intervention to the senior school years, specialised programs of many different kinds in regular settings and in special schools. Many of these options have a specific focus, e.g. on students who share the same diagnostic category. In addition, students with a disability are also eligible for assistance from a wide range of Student Support services.

In general, public education in the ACT is characterised by the following:

- A tradition of good classroom practice with regard to students with disabilities;
- Recognition of excellence. Some schools provide outstanding services and have national reputations;
- School-based curricula that have the potential to link closely with student needs;
- Many initiatives in early intervention and early childhood education;
- Increasing attention, in some schools, to the individual needs of all students;
- Provision of quality, on-going professional development opportunities for teachers;
- Increasing use of technology in schools; and
- System wide adoption of the research-based Quality Teaching Model.

Despite these positive features, a number of service delivery issues deserve mention.

These include:

- The 'Learning Centre' model may be inappropriate for many students and may have marginalising effects. (Students attending a Learning Support Centre do not necessarily have a disability under Australian Capital Territory Education and Training policy);
- There is huge diversity of program delivery approaches in Units and Centres but little data about overall outcomes;
- Services for students with a disability or special needs in some schools could be better coordinated;
- As noted already, difficulties are encountered in accessing externally provided specialist services in a timely way and to the level of intensity needed;
- There is a lack of networking in special education. For example, some mainstream staff who teach students with disabilities have expressed the need for improved links with other special education teachers;
- There is insufficient role clarity, training and professional development opportunities for Learning Support Assistants (LSAs); and

- Staff find it difficult to attend professional development courses for a range of reasons such as the shortage of appropriately skilled relief teachers, the burden their attendance places on their colleagues, and the negative effects on their students of having a ‘new’ teacher for the day.

The diversity of educational practices and programs in the ACT is impressive and the variety of offerings seems to reflect not only school autonomy, but, at a more fundamental level, the interplay among different service delivery paradigms. These paradigms include the Special Education or Psych-Educational discourse (which tends to focus on how students are *different* and to provide special programs and facilities); the Diversity or Inclusion discourse (which tends to focus on how students are the *same* and favours mainstream curriculum and location); and, the variously named ‘Multidisciplinary Service System’ discourse, that seeks to provide, coordinated, multidisciplinary wraparound services based on *need* in the mainstream and with a strong emphasis on learning outcomes (e.g., as described by Gallagher, 2006). While the first two models are essentially delivered by education authorities with some involvement of other agencies, the latter requires considerably more inter-agency commitment, coordination and collaboration.

Differences of opinion about the relative merits of the paradigms described above are evident in the ACT in ongoing debates about whether ‘the management of Special Education’ should be further separated from regular education; whether a functional curriculum or one derived from the regular curriculum should be followed; the manner in which therapy services (such as Speech, Occupational and Physiotherapy) should be provided; and/or whether students with a disability are better catered for in the mainstream or in specialised programs.

While the literature is not consistent or complete enough to allow a definitive statement about what is ‘best’ in any literal sense or ‘best’ for every student in this regard, there is a growing body of research about ‘what works’ in terms of delivery models and school organisation (e.g., Mitchell, 2008). For example, the research we have referenced points to the effectiveness of:

- A school focus on learning outcomes – academic, personal, social and vocational;
- Challenging and supportive school ethos – a ‘community of learners’ approach;
- Professional learning that is focused on improving student outcomes;
- Flexibility and responsiveness to individual needs;
- Whole-school, as opposed to withdrawal or separate programs (generally, but not universally);
- Intervening early – early and proactive interventions;
- Having a specifically identified person in the school with the required training, skills and knowledge to coordinate ‘special education delivery’, e.g. support for programming and differentiation of the curriculum; coordination; liaison with therapists and other support personnel; accessing resources; and leadership in professional development; and
- The commitment of school leadership to, and support for, the planning, organisation and resourcing of supports for students with a disability at the school.

This analysis raises a number of questions for a school system that provides a relatively wide range of program types and delivery models. For example the desirability of incorporating relevant ‘best practice’ features into all programs might be considered. It might also be desirable to consider strengthening accountability for student outcomes around all programs. This information might assist teachers and schools to provide the evidence for particular programs and also inform parent choice and system planning.

The range of program options suggests the desirability of making available to parents and carers up to date and accurate information so they can make informed choices about educational services for their child.

Other obvious implications are that teacher training and professional development give high priority to evidence-based practice and that school communities are further supported to engage in the ‘practitioner inquiry’ that is building the knowledge base and informing professional practice at school level.

### ***Continuing the conversation***

1. Is there any problem/advantage in having multiple service delivery models? What are the implications?
2. Increased accountability for the learning outcomes of all students is mentioned frequently in the literature. Is it desirable? For students? For teachers? What would need to happen to ensure that the task was fair and feasible for schools and teachers and that it benefitted students?

## ***4.2 Resourcing student learning***

We draw attention to the statement in the Terms of Reference about “Provid(ing) advice on future options for the provision of special education services in ACT public schools within the existing budget provision” and first make some general observations about resourcing:

- Schools receive significant resources that are provided for every student;
- Resources are not just points/money. Examples of resources include:
  - Organisational - stakeholder involvement, planning, timetable, school organisation;
  - Personal and personnel – leadership, the skills of school-based personnel, school climate & culture, engagement with school community, communication; and
  - Technical – curriculum, instruction, assessment, use of technology;
- The ACT uses a Student Centred Appraisal of Need (SCAN) process for making decisions about the allocation of supplementary resources to support the learning of students with a disability in schools across the system.

Many participants agreed that the SCAN process is a definite improvement on the previous ascertainment process and it leads to more consistency and system-wide understanding of resourcing.

However, it is inadequate, as an appraisal of a student's classroom needs, as suggested in the following views of parents and carers and/or education personnel:

- SCAN-based resourcing purports to be needs-based, but SCAN funding may not match student need or provide the capacity to implement system policy, e.g. around the Quality Teaching Model;
- The way in which SCAN scores are converted to an allocation is unclear;
- Some schools use the resources derived from SCAN in limited ways, i.e. they select from a narrow range of options; and
- The somewhat negative focus of the SCAN process is confronting and upsetting for many parents.

Special Education budgets in educational jurisdictions throughout the world are experiencing pressure and many potential solutions are being trialed. The following observations from the literature are relevant to the situation in the ACT.

- Funding mechanisms play a big part in determining the characteristics of service systems. Therefore, resourcing strategies should be designed so that they simultaneously direct resources where they are needed and support the achievement of system goals, e.g. towards more inclusive and integrated service delivery, and the use of evidence-based pedagogy;
- Inclusive settings tend to view the points/resources gained through disability-specific processes as supplementary. These resources are not the only source of support for students with a disability;
- Consequently, resourcing that is whole-school focused and flexible rather than strictly individual and student-focused has better outcomes but there needs to be transparency and equity in allocation across schools, accountability in regard to the learning outcomes of each student, and a vision and plan within the school of 'good pedagogy for all';
- Better outcomes are achieved when funding from different sources is pooled at school level (consistent with guidelines and regulations) to foster whole-school approaches to teaching and support for learning;
- A combination of funding mechanisms (such as input, throughput and outcomes-based) is preferable because there are fewer unintended negative consequences than when there is reliance on a single approach; and
- Resource allocation strategies that are developed in partnership with schools and other relevant stakeholders are more acceptable.

### ***Continuing the conversation***

1. The SCAN process is a resource intensive procedure that focuses mainly on student variables. However, theories of learning, and practical experience in classrooms, indicate that learning is dependent not just on student characteristics but on a range of contextual variables. How might the SCAN take these into account and, for instance, become a LOCAN (*Learning Outcomes Centred Assessment of Need*)?
2. If *schools* were allocated resources and supported to use them flexibly to meet the needs of *each student*, what might need to happen to ensure appropriate allocation

of resources and accountability for the learning outcomes of students with a disability? Could a future be envisaged in which SCAN-like processes were no longer necessary?

### **4.3 Staffing**

This section discusses more general staffing issues, such as supply, demand, deployment, utilisation and workforce planning. All of these issues impact on curriculum and pedagogy for students with a disability.

The ways in which teachers are appointed to Units and Centres was raised. It was asserted that some Learning Support Units and Learning Support Centres are staffed by relatively inexperienced teachers who may not have sufficient qualifications or experience in teaching students with a disability. Although there is variation among schools, some teachers in Units and Centres experience a degree of professional isolation from mainstream and special education colleagues and may lack necessary mentoring opportunities.

The ‘Mobility Clause’, a requirement for teachers to transfer within the Department at certain stages in their careers, concerns many educators and parents and carers. It was reported that highly skilled school-based and staff in support roles, e.g. those who provide specialist advice to classroom teachers, are required periodically to move to a different setting and undertake different responsibilities that are possibly unrelated to their specific expertise. Although the arguments for this requirement were understood, it appears to be a policy in need of fine-tuning. Attention was drawn to the apparent inefficiency of this policy for the Department, the disruption and lack of professional control over appointments for schools, disruptions to the careers of teachers committed to special education, and, more importantly, the potential impact of this requirement on students with a disability.

The effective utilisation of staff was frequently mentioned. In relation to therapy staff, there is uncertainty in the ACT about the optimal way to deploy therapists in mainstream schools. In relation to school counsellors, it was reported that they currently devote considerable time and resources to assessing students for ‘program eligibility’. Their skills as educational and clinical psychologists may be underutilised, e.g. in identifying and recommending support for students with forms of dyslexia. In relation to Learning Support Assistants (LSAs), system policy around the nature and scope of their role and the skills they need to assist teachers with curriculum and pedagogy are unclear.

Issues around the current and future availability of appropriately qualified and experienced itinerant staff, special education teachers, learning support assistants, and a range of therapy staff were frequently raised.

Improving the pre service preparation of teachers was frequently mentioned. Currently, all teacher education students at the University of Canberra receive an introduction to responding to individual needs. Some students, perhaps 20-30 per cohort, may choose to undertake a six subject Major in Inclusive Education. However, the Major in Inclusive Education is not designed to prepare graduates to work in special schools.

Training and professional development for LSAs is needed, but prior to that, a clear role that is consistent with current research needs to be developed. The research evidence reinforces the classroom teacher's primary responsibility for teaching and learning and indicates that the LSA role should be essentially to support the teacher to fulfil this role.

The literature suggests that specialist staff such as counsellors should seek to engage in more 'upstream' and preventative interventions and minimise, or seek efficiencies in, resource-intensive functions that only indirectly improve curriculum and pedagogy. Recommended proactive interventions might include assistance with the implementation of whole-school, evidence-based programs that contribute to student learning, e.g. peer tutoring and/or assisting teachers to implement efficient monitoring systems for tracking student outcomes and/or a school's implementation of school-wide Positive Behaviour Support.

There is a need for better data about the system's capacity to ensure it has the staff to implement current policy, e.g. the number of teachers with the types of expertise required in special education schools, in specialised programs and for itinerant specialist support. Such data would allow benchmarking, the development of recruitment and retention strategies, and inform workforce training and professional development policy.

### ***Continuing the conversation***

1. What actions need to be taken to ensure the supply of appropriately skilled staff – teachers, Learning Support Assistants, visiting 'specialist' teachers, counsellors and others?
2. What other staffing issues should be considered in the Review of Special Education?

#### **4.4 Special schools**

ACT special schools deliver positive outcomes for many students and their families and their contribution to public education in the ACT is greatly appreciated and acknowledged in the community. Although unique in character and role, the special schools demonstrate a commitment to tailoring educational programs for students with extraordinarily diverse needs; leadership in data-based instruction; the development of curriculum to meet special needs; and, in particular cases, a very strong commitment to research-based teaching techniques. Enrolments in special schools seem to be relatively stable over time.

It appears that staff with the necessary interest, qualifications and/or experience are attracted to the focused instructional efforts made by special schools (notwithstanding ‘mobility clause’ issues). Special schools have the resource potential to be lighthouses of exemplary practice and several of the ACT Department of Education and Training special schools have already received national recognition for the quality of their programs.

Some staff in special schools have expertise that would benefit other teachers if there were capacity to reach out and support/network with staff who are teaching students with a disability in units and mainstream classrooms. For example, many special school staff produce high quality, tailored instructional and curricular support material that has application system-wide.

However, there are some issues around special schools. Philosophically, the separate locations and history of special schools emphasise ‘difference’. Physical separation and history may result in insufficient recognition of their place within the overall system – a perception of a lack of system coherence experienced by some as ‘not belonging’. For example, some special school staff expressed the view that the manner in which ‘inclusivity’ has been promoted has not positioned special schools well.

Within special school communities many practical issues were raised including:

- Difficulty in attracting and retaining skilled and experienced teachers and Learning Support Assistants;
- Health and safety issues, particularly around the physical nature of the work and the challenging behaviour of some students;
- Issues with infrastructure, space and equipment for meeting students’ highly specialised needs;
- Insufficient influence on system policy, e.g. around curriculum development; and
- Issues with the availability, suitability and location of appropriate educational settings to which their students can transition and related concerns about continuity in terms of curriculum and pedagogy.

The literature reports that some special schools have ‘reinvented’ themselves as hubs of best practice (Farrell, 2008). Their focus has switched from one of relative isolation to ‘what special schools can offer the entire educational community?’

Others have developed the ‘extended school concept’, one that provides, often on a fee for service basis a “range of services often beyond the school day to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community’.

Special schools can also become staging points for in-school therapy provisions, professional development and research into exemplary practices.

### ***Continuing the conversation***

1. How might the level of integration of special schools into educational planning and provision in the ACT Department of Education and Training be further developed?
2. What might be some of the elements in a desirable vision for special schools in the ACT? How might special schools be best configured to be coherent with the primary – high school – college structure?

## ***4.5 Planning***

The Review of Special Education must ultimately identify ‘future options for the provision of special education services in ACT public schools within the existing budget provision’. This requirement emphasises the need for Special Education services in the ACT to be resourceful and efficient, as well as effective.

An effective, efficient and resourceful delivery system requires vision, planning, resources, skills and incentive. While there are many examples in the ACT of individual schools ‘leading practice’ by engaging in processes to define their vision and identify processes to realise it, the *systemic vision* for special education in ACT public schools needs refinement. As implied throughout this Discussion paper, better outcomes for students are likely to be achieved when Special Education, the ACT Department of Education and Training, other services for children and young people, and school communities share a vision for a desirable service for students with a disability. It is to be hoped that the conversations stimulated by this Discussion Paper might lead stakeholders to move towards such a vision.

As has been noted, schools in the ACT have considerable autonomy over curriculum, pedagogy and school policy and management and this degree of freedom is an acknowledged strength of the ACT system. However, these features are somewhat at odds with national developments and they complicate Special Education planning, the delivery of specialised services and programs in the required locations, and accountability for outcomes.

Inclusive practice implies ‘universal design’, i.e. the needs of all students are considered in planning and delivery. ‘Universal design’ is not just about curriculum, pedagogy and physical access. The concept has implications for all aspects of educational provision, including specific architectural conditions (such as space and rooms with appropriate acoustics) that are essential for some students.

A feature of leading practice in education is the use of data. Good policies already exist but good data is required for planning the type and location of needed services, for monitoring policy implementation, and for quality monitoring at system, program, and

school and student level. It would be appropriate to consider how data collection and data management might be given increased priority in ACT Special Education, and, consistent with a refined vision for Special Education, it would be appropriate to consider desirable targets and key performance indicators.

***Continuing the conversation***

1. What information needs to be collected to ensure that ACT schools are able to provide programs to meet the needs of all students with disabilities in the next planning cycle?
2. Would more regionally-based planning improve collaboration, networking, and the provision of complementary services?

## 5 Conclusion

This brief paper has aimed to identify issues of fundamental importance to the future of Special Education in ACT public schools. We are most grateful for the contribution of so many individuals and groups to its development.

The paper did not try and cover every issue. So if readers believe we have missed the significance of particular matters that were mentioned to us, they are urged to raise them again in the conversations that will follow.

Education and teaching are relational activities. They work best when there is cooperation and collaboration that are motivated by a common purpose. That does not of course imply ‘group think’. We appreciate that the quality of the educational opportunities provided to students with a disability is such a crucial matter that there will be strongly held differences of opinion among the various stakeholders. However, if the focus remains on what’s best for the students, if we are respectful of the views of others, and if we attempt to be as evidence-based as possible, the process will produce good results. As in education itself, the success of the Review process is dependent on healthy relationships and good communication.

Although there is a rich and expanding literature about the delivery of special education, as far as we know, no ‘off the shelf’ solutions are available to many of the issues we must address. Throughout the world, various jurisdictions are trying a range of different strategies to provide an excellent service and to do so without expanding costs.

Very often, as noted by Norwich (2008), stakeholders find themselves debating and making choices about recurring dilemmas: whether to *identify* – the identification dilemma; what to *teach* – the curriculum dilemma; *whose views* should be heard – the parent-professional dilemma; and *where* to learn – the integration dilemma.

One of the major advantages that the ACT has over just about any other state or territory anywhere in the world is the extent and depth of the talent in its educational settings and in the community more generally. The ACT community is well-educated, knowledgeable and multi-skilled.

These advantages provide the opportunity, challenge and invitation to chart a way forward together in solutions-focused, data-based and defensible ways – to become creators of leading practice in special education.

Service development is *a journey* and we need to chart a course – one that values, but is not constrained by, where we have been. We look forward to the conversations about the desirable destinations and routes for Special Education within ACT public schools.

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***NB: A complete Bibliography will be added to the website as soon as possible.***

## **Appendix 1: Terms of Reference**

### Objective

The objective is to undertake a review of **leading practice** in **curriculum** and **pedagogy** for the **range of students with disabilities in ACT public schools**. The consultant will be required to **identify future options** for the provision of **educational service** to students with disabilities within ACT public schools.

### Terms of Reference/Requirements

- a) Research leading practice, both nationally and internationally, in curriculum and pedagogy for the range of students with disabilities in ACT public schools, including details of how these practices improve student outcomes; and
- b) Provide advice on future options for the provision of special education services in ACT public schools within the existing budget provision.

## Appendix 2: Dictionary of Terms

**Curriculum:** Curriculum is all learning planned, guided and implemented by a school or college. (ACT Department of Education and Training)

**Leading practice:** The term ‘leading practice’ is used as a replacement term for ‘best practice’ because, in a literal sense, ‘best practice’ is almost impossible to determine. The definition of ‘leading practice’ that we have used is that it is ‘A set of educational processes and procedures for which there is credible evidence of effectiveness with a large number of students and which are recognized within the profession as effective ways of teaching’. This definition is based on the principles of ‘best practice’ outlined by Expedition Workshop/Best Practices, available: <http://colab.cim3.net/cgi-bin/wiki.pl?ExpeditionWorkshop/BestPractices>

**Pedagogy:** Pedagogy is the term used to describe the art and science of teaching. Pedagogy can be seen in the activity that takes place in classrooms or other educational settings, as well as in the nature of the learning and assessment tasks set by teachers. (ACT Department of Education and Training)