Canning College

2016

Independent Review Findings

Independent Review of Independent Public Schools
Disclaimer

This document reports the findings of the Department of Education Services' review and verification of the school's self-review. The school's self-review has been complemented by information provided by the Department of Education, the School Curriculum and Standards Authority and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.

The findings of the independent review are forwarded to the School Principal, the Board Chair, the Director General of the Department of Education and the Minister for Education.

The Department of Education Services does not endorse any commercial organisation, product or service mentioned in this report.

The Department of Education Services can only guarantee the authenticity of original documents. This document is uncontrolled once printed.

To help people with disabilities obtain access to information, this document can be provided in alternative format on request. Please contact ips@des.wa.gov.au with specific requests or telephone 08 9441 1900.
School and Review Details

Principal: Mr Alan Genoni
Board Chair: Dr Bruce Mackintosh
School Location: Marquis St, Bentley WA 6102
Number of Students: 832
Reviewers: Mr Alby Huts (Lead) and Ms Maureen Lorimer
Review Dates: 7 and 8 April 2016
Initial Review: 2013

Purpose of the Review

The purpose of the independent review is to provide assurance to the school and its community, the Director General of the Department of Education and the Minister for Education on the extent to which the school has met its commitments as outlined in its Delivery and Performance Agreement (DPA) and associated Business Plan.

The focus of the review is on:

- how well the school has implemented self-review
- how well the school has improved student learning (achievement, progress and engagement) for all students
- how well the school has created an environment that promotes learning and student well-being
- how well the school is placed to sustain and improve its performance.
Review Methodology

The school has been required, under the DPA, to undertake annual self-assessments of its performance. The outcome of these assessments formed the basis for the school's self-review. The school sent its self-review documentation to the IPS Review Team, Department of Education Services one month prior to the commencement of the review.

The IPS reviewers supplemented the information provided by the school with information on the school's achievements, its processes and its student performance data from a number of sources which included:

- the My School® website
- the Department of Education School Performance Monitoring System
- Schools Online reports
- School Curriculum and Standards Authority Year 12 Student Achievement data.

Reviewers analysed the evidence presented in the school's self-review documentation to verify achievement and developed lines of inquiry where further verification was required.

An agenda for the review visit was subsequently negotiated with the Principal to enable the gathering of evidence to verify claims made by the school. During the review visit the reviewers sourced evidence to support the school's self-review claims through observation and discussion with leaders, teaching and support staff, board members, parents and students.

The evidence provided by the school, along with information gathered by the reviewers prior to and during the review visits, was used as the basis for the verification of how well the school has met its commitments as outlined in the DPA and Business Plan.

This document reports on the findings of the independent review.
School Context

What are the important features of this school’s context that have an impact on student learning?

Canning College is located in the suburb of Bentley approximately six kilometres south of the Perth CBD. The college was established in 1983 on the site of the former Bentley Senior High School and is adjacent to Curtin University.

Canning College is an Independent Public School that provides an adult learning environment that supports both local and international students’ continuing education. The college offers a combination of day and evening classes and also offers a wide range of educational programs to meet the demands of adult learning.

Based on the vision, purpose and values identified in the Business Plan, the college has the following core functions:

- The provision of high-quality educational programs that encourage excellence, promote critical thinking, develop autonomous study skills and foster lifelong learning for tertiary bound students.
- The provision of a wide range of flexible educational opportunities for both local and international students who are in their 17th year or older.

In addition to local students, the college enrolls full fee-paying international students in the Diploma of Commerce (Curtin and University of Western Australia streams), Certificate IV in Higher Education Preparation Studies (Commerce), Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE), the Western Australian Universities Foundation Program (WAUFP) and a range of bridging courses.

The college has 95 staff (equating to 65.16 full-time equivalents) comprised of 58 teachers/administrators and 37 public servants. This mix of staff enables the college to operate for 52 weeks of the year.

Student numbers vary with four enrolment entry points each year and consequently staff numbers also vary. At 3 March 2016, the total college enrolment was 832. International student enrolments appear to have stabilised, with 410 in 2015 compared to 420 in 2014.
Canning College

The college enrolls students from over 50 countries with approximately 37% born in Australia and 63% born overseas (based on full-time equivalents), consequently, a very high proportion of students are English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) learners and the college has successfully developed appropriate programs to meet their needs.

In 2015, Canning College generated income of approximately $9.3 million dollars. The majority of which is received from the Department of Education ($4 million), the international program ($4.4 million) and specialised programs such as the Curtin Enabling Program ($0.6 million).

Surplus funds from the 2015 budget have created the opportunity to improve the college, which suits adult learners with its university-like environment. Students commented very positively about the Library Learning Centre, Gymnasium, International Student Office and the Computer Centre.

All classrooms are either air-cooled or air-conditioned and have a multimedia projector and computer. The college has a ‘rich’ Information and Communication Technology (ICT) environment with eleven computer laboratories and WiFi throughout. Discussions with teachers confirm the availability of and access to the necessary ICT resources to implement an effective teaching and learning program.

The college has a number of long-standing partnerships to cater for the diverse needs of the student population. Partners include Curtin University, The University of Western Australia (UWA), Murdoch University, Edith Cowan University, Education and Training International (ETI), Sport Education and Development Australia (SEDA), The Australian Homestay Network, StudyPerth and Perth Education City.

Partnerships with international education agents and providers are also critical for college operations. The office of Perth Education City and the International Students Office are located on the college site.

Of particular note is the strong relationship the college has developed with schools in China, particularly the Aidi School in Beijing and the Jimei School in Xiamen. Through computer technology, students from these schools have lessons delivered by Canning College staff and are able to study at the college for a term each year. Staff also participate in study tours to China.

The college is very well served by the Board with professional experience and a range of skills beneficial to the good governance of the school. Following the
previous Independent Public School Review the Board has expanded its representation with the inclusion of student and parent representation. Discussions with board members confirm a strong commitment to support the college in providing a high-quality education for all students.

The Board Chair has acknowledged the opportunity for the college and Board to work closely together to achieve the goals, objectives and targets as detailed in the Business Plan.
The School's Self-Review Process

**How effective was the school’s self-review in accounting for its performance during the period of the DPA and Business Plan?**

The Canning College self-review process focuses on how well it is serving its students and the priorities outlined in the Business Plan. The college has used a wide range of appropriate data and information, both academic and non-academic, to measure progress against the improvement targets.

Each year, the college conducts an audit of the extent to which it has met its commitments to the DPA as well as progress against the various improvement targets. The priorities of 2013–2015 Business Plan are: Literacy, the International Program, Professional Development, Curriculum Development, Learning Technologies, Marketing and Promotions, Student Services, Academic Support and Registered Training Organisation. Within each priority area there are strategies the college implements to achieve improvement.

The supporting documentation, including whole-school, learning area, operational and improvement plans indicate that the college has a well-established, well-documented and extensive analysis and review process. The annual analysis and review timeline indicates clear stages where all staff play a significant role in the college's self-review. As a result, achievements and progress towards the targets are monitored and reviewed. The review process has led to the identification of effective measures of success and areas for improvement.

Collection of data and information involves staff and students. Staff are fully involved in the analysis of information leading to action based on the identification of key strengths and areas for improvement. The action takes many forms including targeting specific strategies in various programs, determining the type of professional learning required for staff at individual, learning area and whole-staff levels, and changes in college processes to provide better support for students and staff.

The Board is involved in examining the data analysis and regularly considers the college’s progress in achieving Business Plan targets.

The self-review process encompasses all areas of college life, considers the college’s obligations outlined in the DPA and the targets for improvement in the Business Plan, and is responsive to its unique context.
Self-assessment is included in the comprehensive Annual Report for all priorities and programs to ensure there is a continuous review process that is focused on planning and improvement. This has informed ongoing improvement in the quality of the college's programs, services and facilities for students.
School Performance—Student Learning

How well has the school performed in improving learning (achievement, progress and engagement) for all students?

The vision and purpose outlined in the college Business Plan 2013–2015 sets a clear direction for the provision of high-quality educational programs to tertiary bound local and international students, plus re-entry options for local students who have completed the compulsory years of schooling. The college curriculum provides a range of programs, which are supported by nine priorities linked to three major focus areas. Specific performance targets measure the achievement of the curriculum programs.

With a strong focus on students accessing tertiary education, the college has achieved consistent success with their students being offered places at local universities and universities outside of Western Australia. In 2016, 279 local and international college students received offers to study at university with a further 12 articulating into the Canning College Diploma course.

Over the course of the current three-year Business Plan, the college has added some additional performance targets to reflect the modifications to the curriculum offerings. This has resulted in 11 key areas being reported in the 2015 Annual Report. It is noted that across all programs there are differing entry and exit points, which impacts to a degree on the available data at any given point. The reviewers affirmed that the college has a comprehensive self-assessment regime in place and the judgements on the improvement targets are supported with relevant data. Discussion with college leaders and learning area staff indicated an effective culture of self-review is embedded in the teaching and learning cycle. Due to the unique curriculum offerings of the college, comparisons with Australian, State and statistically similar schools, whilst undertaken, do not provide significant data to direct future planning.

A range of targets for local and international Year 12 WACE ATAR students were set to measure achievement against Department of Education benchmarks, minimum entrance to UWA, median ATAR, literacy requirements, retention rates and engagement in their learning. Not all targets were consistently achieved over the three-year period, which resulted in the addition of a Year 11 WACE ATAR program for local and international students in 2015, and modification of the Flying Start program to a bridging program from Year 10 to Year 11. These changes are a direct response to the academic results of the Year 12 students and the college staff is closely
monitoring the success of these initiatives with 2015 data presented as baseline data for both programs.

Results for the WAUFP are consistently close to or exceeding the set targets. Over 30% (37 students) of students in the Foundation Program achieved an ATAR equivalent above 95, compared to 25% in 2014. Also of note were the 66 Foundation Program students (of the total 120 students) achieving an ATAR equivalent of 80, being the minimum score required for entrance to UWA.

The Curtin Enabling Program has exceeded the target (60%) related to the percentage of students receiving an undergraduate offer from Curtin University with 72.3% achieving this goal in 2015 compared to 54% in 2013. Interrogation of the annual report documentation demonstrates a focus on the college priorities of literacy and curriculum development to enhance the support for students in the program.

Overall, the success rate of students graduating from the Diploma of Commerce and Certificate IV HEPS programs sits at 90% over a five-year period which is substantially above the set targets of 85% and 80% respectively. Individual differences are noted over the time frame related to attendance, retention and student ability with the UniDirect Department prioritising adjustments to teaching and learning to reflect current university practice in 2016 and a focus on teaching and pastoral care strategies to improve the attendance of students in these programs. These courses are offered under the VET umbrella but differ from most VET courses in that they are accredited courses rather than training packages.

The college outsources the SEDA program for delivery in association with the Fremantle Dockers, WA Cricket Association, State Basketball and Netball. With 2015 being the first year that students graduated from the program, the results were very positive with a 97% success rate. All targets were exceeded and of significance is the 100% retention rate of Year 11 students into Year 12. Certificate II and III in Sport and Recreation and Coaching are included in the full WACE program.

The reviewers were impressed with the range and quality of programs available to students and the professionalism of staff in achieving the college goals. In discussion with the college executive team, staff and College Board it is apparent that there is a strong accountability culture, which is driven by the changing needs of the students. A number of new programs have been
developed and implemented over the last two years and are being monitored for their effectiveness in responding to the current student profile.

The college is well placed with a range of survey data to inform the success of the programs and revision workshops on offer. Together with the comprehensive suite of student data, there is an opportunity to set more specific academic achievement targets within individual learning areas to support the overall goals of the college. This approach may assist in guiding the next reiteration of the business plan to reflect the diverse roles of each learning area in the successful delivery of the programs.
Canning College

School Performance—Quality of the Learning Environment

How well has the school performed in creating an environment that promotes learning and well-being for all students and the attainment of the school vision?

The college has a focus on providing the best opportunities for its diverse student population to achieve their goals. Experienced staff, together with a wide range of programs, prepare students for transition into employment or tertiary education within a supportive and caring learning environment. It is evident that the core values of the college—Learning, Excellence, Integrity, Equity and Respect—are embedded in the day-to-day operations of the college and expressed in the adult learning ethos demonstrated in each classroom. There is a focus on teacher innovation, which is allowed to flourish due to the respectful relationships that are formed between the students and staff. The nurturing environment of the college sets it apart from a university campus while allowing for a unique adult learning community.

The Student Services Department and the International Students’ Office provide both local and international students specialised support and guidance from enrolment through to graduation. Well-planned enrolment processes are in place to ensure that students are directed to the best program to suit both their aspirations and ability. Orientation programs are conducted to address the many issues that impact on a student’s ability to successfully transition into their academic studies and, in addition, provide a framework for accessing academic and literacy support available in the college throughout the year. Feedback from students verified the emphasis placed by the college on establishing productive and trustful relationships which safeguard an environment where students feel safe and are part of a diverse multicultural student community.

Another aspect of the Student Services priority is the provision of a broad range of recreational and social activities. To support this, the college has invested in infrastructure that has created facilities that are both attractive and functional and which cater for the students’ academic and non-academic requirements. The team also assists local and international students with accommodation—homestay, on-campus accommodation, shared housing—to ensure they have a comfortable, secure and supportive home environment. The brief for the International Students’ Office encompasses a range of pastoral care activities such as visa issues, taxation and banking matters,
counselling, recreation and more. It was apparent to the reviewers that there are established structures and processes in place to provide outstanding service for students to support their academic endeavours.

The Academic Support priority has targeted strategies in place to enhance students' performance and provide holistic support for students. These include a range of interventions strategies and support structures, such as tutorials and the comprehensive literacy program. Key indicators of the success of these strategies are the performance data, retention rates for individual programs and student surveys, which show the high percentage of students who plan to continue with their learning as a result of their experience at the college.

Learning technology strategies include a comprehensive infrastructure to support teaching and learning within the college, with excellent facilities and equipment available for the delivery of courses and for general student use. Complementing this is the student portal, which provides detailed information relevant to their study at the college. An important aspect of the student portal is the academic support page, which provides students with cross-curricular information about the content of workshops, functional literacy skills, competitions and links to useful websites. Students indicated they make extensive use of the portal, particularly in accessing their results to monitor progress.

The literacy priority employed four key strategies to support improved proficiency in English literacy and language, enabling students to progress and better participate in their chosen program. The reviewers affirmed through discussion with staff and students, the popularity of the academic support workshops, and student surveys indicated the high percentage of students who valued the individual and/or small group assistance provided by the literacy support teacher. It is recommended that consideration be given to monitoring the final results of students accessing these support services to more effectively measure the outputs of these strategies.

Ongoing curriculum development is a feature of the college, particularly over the last two years. Of significance is the introduction of the Year 11 WACE program, which has improved retention and accreditation for students. Linked to the implementation of this program is the change to the Flying Start program with a focus on transition to Year 11 rather than Year 12. These initiatives have provided an educationally sound pathway for students to proceed from a year-long Year 10 course through to Year 11 and then to
Year 12. Adjustments made to the curriculum have assisted in better preparing students with the skills needed for Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (OLNA) as well as life-skills writing. In discussion with staff, and data presented in the annual report, the reviewers were able to confirm that a high percentage of students successfully progress to further studies from the Flying Start program.

In 2015, the college was re-registered as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and has since expanded the scope of accredited courses for international and local students, ensuring more flexible and appropriate pathways and programs for students. The embedding of Certificate I and II Information Technology courses in the Flying Start and WACE program have replaced an in-house certificate that was once part of the bridging program. These accredited certificate courses provide nationally recognised qualifications for students within and beyond the college.

Despite the change of status for the Diploma of Commerce and Certificate IV HEPS to VET programs in 2014, the college staff has maintained the integrity of the courses and reviewed and rewritten the modules to reflect the curriculum offered by Curtin and UWA Business Schools. Both courses provide flexibility for students to extend their program over a longer period of time to ensure that they are prepared for the rigours of university life. In particular, this has proved a useful strategy in supporting students from a non-English speaking background, affording them the opportunity to improve their English levels, and mature academically.

The Curtin Enabling program is specifically for local students and offers an alternative entry to Science, Engineering and Health undergraduate degree courses. Students have dual enrolment at the college and Curtin University, which not only provides a guaranteed place in Curtin University’s Faculty of Science on successful completion of the program but a valuable introduction to university study. The Curtin coordinator of the Enabling Course provided anecdotal evidence of the success of the students who have transitioned to Curtin from the program. The Foundation Program affords similar success for the international students with the program designed to offset the perceived cultural and other biases built into the university entry system.

Communication strategies with key stakeholders differ from traditional high schools to reflect the age range of the student population. The student portal includes an e-newsletter and a wide range of other relevant information. Also available for students and parents is the reporting portal, which is of particular
value to overseas parents for monitoring the progress of their child. The college has in place clear processes for monitoring students’ attendance and welfare that are well supported by effective communication tools. A parent orientation session runs alongside the student orientation sessions, which are conducted at points of entry throughout the year and are well attended by parents from overseas. Parents are also welcome to visit at any time of the year and retain contact with the college through the International Office. Parent surveys of compulsory age students are conducted biennially with 2014 being the most recent. Although only 19 parent, guardian, homestay-hosts completed the survey—11 for local students and eight for international students, this is a reasonable return rate for the number of students. Of more significance are the student surveys as the majority of students attending the college are 18+ years of age. Survey information is used by the college to inform all aspects of college operations.

A sophisticated marketing and promotions strategy ensures that the college is highly competitive in both the local and international education arena. This is evident in the professionalism of the brochures, newspaper advertisements and posters that are used to market the college brand. A range of partnerships enhances the international reputation of the college and the ability to offer relevant programs. Apart from the long-term partnership with Curtin University, the college has a significant partnership with UWA and is developing stronger links with Murdoch University, allowing college students to successfully transition to a university course. Support by the college for StudyPerth ‘Picture Yourself in Perth’ has resulted in direct enrolments to the college. Liaison with Study Perth ensures that agents are kept abreast of the college programs and are therefore able to advise potential students accordingly. The more recent partnership with SEDA has provided another avenue for students to achieve success.

The reviewers commend the college on its strong culture of nurturance within an adult learning environment. There was a positive energy that was apparent at all levels of the organisation, which translated into meaningful and productive student outcomes.
School Performance—Sustainability

*How well placed is the school to sustain and improve its performance into the next planning cycle?*

College planning is comprehensive and the Business Plan 2013–2015 provides clear direction for the Board, the college’s leadership team, teachers and support staff. Implementation of the Business Plan is facilitated by operational plans for learning areas and various programs.

The workforce plan has provided systemic identification and analysis of the college’s workforce needs to achieve the vision as stated in the Business Plan. A particular concern expressed is the aging workforce and the number of senior staff members likely to retire in the near future.

The reviewers confirm that the college has a structured, robust and systemic self-review process, with the Business Plan well understood across the college. The clear focus on analysing the college’s performance drives the business and operational plans with explicit targets to monitor and review student progress.

The college clearly builds on evidence-based research. The effective use of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers to underpin performance management processes, drive improvements in professional practice and guide professional learning is commendable. The reviewers noted that classroom observation strategies were evident within the performance management processes and were linked to priorities in the Business Plan.

The Principal and the executive leadership team comprising the vice-principal, deputy principals, heads of learning areas and program managers demonstrate effective and strongly shared leadership across the college. During discussions with teachers, they consistently commended the college leadership for the clear articulation of the college vision and direction.

The Principal and executive team are commended for their role in guiding the college through an extensive process of self-review resulting in continuous improvements in teaching and learning practices.

The reviewers were impressed by the high level of professional commitment among staff, the strong collegial support and flexible collaborative practice which contributed to the quality of the diverse range of programs provided for students. Furthermore, the degree of innovative practice through quality
distributed leadership to support collaborative teams and committees in implementing operational plans and engaging in opportunities for ongoing professional growth was noted.

As outlined earlier, Canning College receives the bulk of its funding from two main sources, the Western Australian Department of Education and full-fee paying international students.

For the past three years, the college has worked towards achieving a balanced budget. However, an increase in the number of 2015 international student enrolments resulted in a very favourable financial position for 2016. This has allowed for the continuation of an asset replacement program, a maintenance program for grounds and buildings as well as investment in learning technological improvements, professional learning and marketing.

One of the challenges facing Canning College is sustaining student enrolments. Through the auspices of the Canning College International Office and a strong marketing campaign, issues regarding student enrolment are being addressed. Previously, factors such as the half-cohort, the high Australian dollar and the change in Federal legislation, which prevented the college from offering a first year university course, led to a decline in student enrolments. This necessitated the college offering a Diploma of Commerce through VET accreditation. Consequently, international student enrolments have increased in 2015 and 2016.

The Board includes members with a broad range of extensive and relevant skills and experience. These include two members who are representatives of the State and Federal Parliaments respectively, two tertiary representatives (one from UWA and one from Curtin University) as well as representatives from community and business organisations. The Board also has a parent and a student representative. The Board has endeavoured to conduct an annual meeting open to the college community. This open meeting was attended by approximately 30 members of the college community and included representation from staff, college partners, students and parents.

The Board understands its governance role in providing strategic direction and a review of college performance through the Business Plan. The Board is supported in its role through the provision of comprehensive college information and data during the self-review cycle. The established culture is one of robust debate and reflection. Board members are inducted by the
Board Chair and the agendas, as reflected in the minutes, are comprehensive and linked to the Business Plan.

Despite its current challenges, with the support of the Board and the staff, the college is well placed to sustain its performance.
Conclusion

Through the self-review process, Canning College has demonstrated it has evidence-based reflective practices that are embedded, collaborative, rigorous, challenging and responsive to its context.

Quality leadership, committed and innovative teaching and an embedded culture of self-review, leaves the college well placed to build upon current levels of student performance and develop relevant, context-specific targets to provide ongoing direction and focus for the next Business Plan.

Clear direction, communication and support are provided by the Board, Principal and executive team. There is a dynamic, collaborative and determined commitment throughout the college in a safe and supportive environment. Student learning is enhanced by a range of programs to meet the scope of student needs, abilities and educational backgrounds. The college has a number of relevant and long-standing partnerships that effectively caters for the needs of the diverse student population.

Commendations

The following areas are commended:

- the college's commitment to the development of learning programs where curriculum engagement is customised to accommodate not only the students' academic performance but their social, emotional and developmental needs
- the strong culture of nurture within an adult learning community
- the high level of professional commitment among staff, strong collegial support and flexible collaborative practice which contribute to the quality of the diverse range of programs provided for each student
- the role of the Principal and executive team in guiding the college through an extensive process of self-review resulting in improvements in teaching and learning practices
- self-review that is systemic, collaborative and rigorous with purposeful data collection and analysis leading to improved professional practice
the degree of innovative practice which is further enhanced through quality distributed leadership to support collaborative teams in implementing operational plans and engaging in opportunities for ongoing professional growth

- the development of strong well-established partnerships that provide significant opportunities for students

- the quality of the Board and its efforts in pursuing high standards and opportunities for all students.

Areas for Improvement

*The following areas for improvement are identified:*

- set specific academic achievement targets within individual learning areas to support the overall goals of the college
- monitor the final results of students accessing Canning College support services to effectively measure the effectiveness of the strategies employed.
Declaration

We, the undersigned, hereby confirm that the information provided in this findings document is to the best of our knowledge true and correct and is based on the verification of the evidence provided by Canning College as part of the Department of Education Services' independent review process. The Principal and Board Chair have had an opportunity to comment on any matters of fact contained within this document.

9 May 2016
Date

Mr Alby Huts, Lead Reviewer

9 May 2016
Date

Ms Maureen Lorimer, Reviewer

2/6/2016
Date

Mr Richard Strickland, Director General, Department of Education Services