

Issue No. 2

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REVIEW OF SCHOOL FUNDING - WHERE TO NEXT?

Following the release of the Gonski review in February 2012, there has been much debate and consultation around the model and loadings for disadvantage.

With the Federal Government not committing to the funding required to kick start the model and state governments not budging until this commitment is made, it has been a cat and mouse game with a lot of work in the background on loading amounts and definitions.

[Minister Garrett's latest update](#) has rumblings about legislation this year; pundits in education have muted this and believe this won't happen until 2013. For the latest on the review and modelling [click here](#). To familiarise on the review of school funding, [click here](#)

'ACT parents as the new funding model currently stands will be negatively impacted - whether they be from government or non-government schools' said Charuni Weerasooriya, Vice President, APFACTS.

'The ACT as a whole is a high achieving state and one that spends considerably higher than the proposed resource index on each student across all sectors. With the assurance that no school will lose a dollar we watch closely and advocate strongly that the new model will not adversely affect schools and parents in the non-government sector'

APFACTS has been consulting with ACT parents on the review of funding since February and there is general consensus that closing the student achievement gap will not be achieved just by looking at funding alone.

'Parents believe that teachers and teacher training, school leadership, parental involvement and school communities make up the bigger picture that leads to student success.' said Charuni Weerasooriya.

These comments were endorsed by Tony Cook, DEEWR when asked by APFACTS at the most recent ACT Roundtable on Funding held by Minister Bourke in May. Tony Cook advised that high performance schools and those selected as reference schools around the country share common traits: Strong school leadership, on-going focus on teacher education, use of resources flexibly, community as a central focus in a school.

'If all we talk about is the money, it's all we will ever aspire to talk about, there is a greater conversation that needs to be had!' said Charuni Weerasooriya, "We need to further the dialogue, research, policies and programs on parent school partnership and parental engagement in schooling so improved learning outcomes are achieved and enhanced." concluded Charuni Weerasooriya.

Are you interested in joining a working party on ACT Parental engagement? Contact: [Charuni Weerasooriya](#)

ACT BUDGET

The 2012/2013 ACT budget had minimal change for the non-government sector compared to previous budgets.

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President's Message

The progress of the Gonski Review of Funding remains the hottest issue for non-government schools and there is an update in this newsletter.

There is some hope that legislation will be brought to Parliament later this year. Details of the modeling that underpins the Review have become available, though decisions on exactly how the proposed new model will work are yet to emerge.

Several Canberra non-government schools have been selected as reference schools for calculating funding indexation increases in future years.

Notwithstanding the universal support for the Review and the thrust of its recommendations, the majority of our non-government schools are "funding maintained" in our current system, and they stand to experience reduced levels of funding at some point in the future.

- Overall funding for ACT education (government and non-government) was announced to be \$893.2m for 2012/2013.
- There was a one-off grant of \$2m to provide additional support to students with disabilities in non-government schools. This funding is to be on a needs basis and utilises unallocated funds from the Interest Subsidy Scheme. We are awaiting further details from ACT Government on how the sector and parents can access this funding and for what it can be used.
- Recurrent grants paid to non-government schools is up 3.7%. This in the 2012/13 year reflects indexation being applied at 0.7% higher than the CPI rate.

APFACTS in its pre-budget submission of February 2012 and in the post-budget Select Committee Estimates submission had, among other things, urged for:

- A gradual increase in the proportion of recurrent funding by the ACT Government to ACT non-government schools to 25% of the average government school recurrent cost per capita. This would make the ACT comparable to NSW and other states in Australia. Currently, ACT funding is argued to be no higher than 18%.
- Alignment of indexation of recurrent funding with the real cost increases in education, which is significantly higher than CPI.
- Funding levels for students with a disability to be the same regardless of whether they are in the government or non-government sector.
- Restoration of an interest subsidy scheme for capital works in the non-government school sector.

CATHOLIC ISSUES

- Consultation with some local Catholic primary schools on any issues that they may have had with the ACT Government processes for establishing new non-government schools. This consultation followed the change of site of the new Catholic secondary college in Gungahlin, John Paul College, from Throsby to Nicholls.
- APFACTS contribution and input into the Australian Parents Council (APC) submission to the review of National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) by Dr Peter Tannock AO.
- APFACTS congratulated Archbishop Mark Coleridge on his appointment as Archbishop of Brisbane and thanked him for liaison with APFACTS Catholic Issues Committee in his times as Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn (2006-2012). APFACTS acknowledges his achievements in Catholic school education in the ACT, including the establishments of Mother Teresa Primary School, Harrison, and John Paul College.

As a parent in Catholic schools in the ACT, do you have any issues that you would like discussed? Please contact [Paul Sykes](#), Catholic Issues Convenor, APFACTS.

NATIONAL CURRICULUM UPDATE

The following curriculum papers are now available for public consultation:

- Civics and Citizenship until Friday, 10 August 2012. To view the draft shape paper, as well as submit feedback via an online questionnaire, [click here](#).
- Draft senior secondary Australian Curriculum for English, Mathematics, and Science until 20 July 2012. For more information, [click here](#).
- [The Students With Disability: Consultation Report](#) has been published. The summary report provides the findings from the September to November 2011 online consultation focusing on the Australian Curriculum: English Progressing to Foundation and Mathematics Progressing to Foundation for students with disability. The report also provides broad directions for the ongoing development of this

APFACTS continues to make non-government school and parent issues visible through, regular representation on appointed committees, meetings with the Minister, involvement in forums such as the Minister's Round Table on School Funding, and support for special events such as the recent National Parent Symposium (see article in this issue).

What is clearly emerging is a much greater acknowledgement of the contribution parents make in the education of their children.

As the ACT Government election draws closer, APFACTS will be meeting with ACT politicians in the coming months to highlight issues and seek commitment to providing more appropriate support for school education and the non-government school sector.

With the mid-year school break almost upon us, the APFACTS Management Committee wishes Canberra families a safe and enjoyable holiday period.

Executive Committee members

[George Gamkrelidze](#)
President

[Charuni Weerasooriya](#)
Co Vice-President

[Peter Murray](#)
Treasurer

[Kirsten Wilkinson](#)
Secretary

[Paul Sykes](#)
Catholic Convenor

Do you have an event parents would be interested in? We can advertise your event for you in our events page ..

- aspect of ACARA's work.
- In the ACT, the BSSS held a range of consultation forums in May for teachers and interested parties to discuss the senior secondary Australian curriculum subject areas. These sessions were welcomed by APFACTS member schools.

Email us at:
admin@apfacts.org.au

APFACTS represents parents of non-government schools on the ACT Curriculum Taskforce and other related curriculum committees. If you have any areas you would like discussed, please email [Kirsten Wilkinson](#): or [Charuni Weerasooriya](#).

NAPLAN

Students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in the ACT have recently completed the 2012 Naplan test.

APFACTS has received requests from parents interested in learning how to navigate through the NAPLAN data. Some resources we suggest include:

- Student report information for parents, [click here](#)
- ACARA's scales and standards, [click here](#)
- General information on the tests, [click here](#)
- Parent resources on NAPLAN, [click here](#)

APFACTS is interested in your views on NAPLAN. Interested in being involved in a working group (5 hrs p/a) that helps inform ACT parent views on NAPLAN? Please email: admin@apfacts.org.au

NATIONAL PARENT SYMPOSIUM

ENGAGING PARENTS AND FAMILIES IN LEARNING AND SCHOOL

The Australian Parents Council (APC) and ACSSO established the Family-School and Community Partnerships Bureau in 2008 with funding from the Australian Government for the purpose of increasing parental engagement and community involvement in schools. It conducts research, shares promising practice, provides access to case studies and practical support and advice to parents, principals, teachers and others about how to build and sustain partnerships.

The Family-School and Community Partnerships Bureau held its National Symposium- Engaging Parents and Families in Learning and School, in Canberra, 11-12 May 2012. The Symposium brought together educators, parents and researchers from Australia and overseas to discuss successful, innovative and sustainable parent and family engagement theory and practice.

The Symposium featured nationwide programs and significant research findings of high quality partnerships between schools, communities and families.

Keynote speaker, Ms H el ene Gr egoire from Toronto, Canada spoke on: "Engaging Parents, Families and Communities in Children's Learning: A Perspective from Ontario." Ms Gr egoire, who works at the Ontario Ministry of Education, provided examples, from Canada's largest province, of policies and programs that support a range of family-school-community partnerships.

The Family-School and Community Bureau's website contains many of the presentations from the Symposium, [click here](#)

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS PILOT

The Australian Parents Council (APC) and Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) in late 2011 jointly conducted for the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) a pilot of two standards

from the National Professional Standards for Teachers:

- 3.7 Engage parents / carers in the educative process
- 7.3 Engage with the parents / carers

Six consistent themes emerged from the focus groups:

- All parents and teachers were unanimous that the Standards document is a good initiative, and were enthusiastic about their potential for encouraging teaching practices that would lead to more effective parental engagement, and therefore support student learning.
- Parents regard themselves as the 'first educators' of their children, and want to be closely engaged in their children's schooling and learning, to increase learning outcomes.
- Teachers are respectful of the role of parents, and would like to closely involve them in their student's schooling and learning, in any ways that can increase students' learning outcomes.
- The education endeavour is primarily all about relationships, which are grown by effective communication between principals, teachers, students, and parents. It was commonly agreed strong and healthy relationships between teachers and parents were likely to result in increased student learning and engagement.
- The attitude and skills of the school principal matters enormously and sets the tone for the school culture and all teacher-parent relationships and communication within the school community.
- It was perceived that teachers at each of the four Career Stages have unique and differing skills and sensibilities associated with parental engagement, and teachers at each stage could positively impact student learning by improving their relationships with parents. However, whilst it was seen that each career stage entailed a particular combination of strengths and weaknesses, most participants believed that Lead Teachers were likely to be the most skilled and able to establish successful parental engagement.

Final report details, [click here](#).

MIND MATTERS FUNDING GRANTS AVAILABLE TO ACT SCHOOLS

Mind Matters utilises a whole school approach to improve the mental health and wellbeing outcomes of students.

Mind Matters invites schools to participate in the middle and senior program and is offering grants of \$10,000 p/school for professional development. Places are limited; contact Cay Merritt, ACT Mind Matters Coordinator ACT on 62078288.

Principals are also invited to a Mind Matters Breakfast on June 26 from 7.30am – 9.30am@ University House, Balmain Cres, Acton. [Email RSVP](#) by June 19, 2012.

A number of APFACTS member schools are recognised and/or in the process of being accredited for KidsMatter which is the junior school component. It is our hope that schools take up the initiative and enrol so a whole of school approach to student wellbeing is achieved for our students in the ACT.

THE NEST PROJECT

What do you think can improve the lives of children and young people?

APFACTS strongly believes in the importance of wellbeing of young people.

The Nest is an independent project to improve the health, wellbeing and life opportunities of all young Australians. The Nest will focus Australia's efforts on a national plan for coordinated action. It will highlight the best evidence to

show what works, and invite children, young people and the community to join in a conversation about their hopes and aspirations.
Join the conversation and do the [survey](#).

For more information on The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth work on the Nest project, [click here](#).

CYBERBULLIES

Take the cyber out and you're still left with bullies, Shutting down Internet access won't solve the problem.

Contribution by : Anne Coutts – CGGS Principal

We are living in an era of instant communication. It's exciting, vibrant, all inclusive. Our teenagers are comfortable in this world; Facebook, Twitter and smart phones are a constant in their lives. News and gossip travels fast. Small events can be exaggerated and become significant issues quickly.

All of this has brought a new challenge for schools. Facebook pages have been especially set up to gather gossip about individuals. I have had experience of false Facebook accounts where a student uses another student's name and then uses that account to abuse others. Sitting in the quiet of their rooms, students have a false sense of the anonymity of online social networking and express themselves in ways they would not face-to-face. Hurtful texts and emails are being casually sent using language which is shocking to parents. This is what I have seen both in the UK and in Australia. At a former school, I asked a student to walk to the back of my office and read out loud what she had posted online about a classmate. She couldn't.

So what's the solution? Do we restrict or block student access to Facebook? Do we give students an "unsmart" phone on a pay-as-you-go plan? Do we ban smart phones in school? At Canberra Girls' Grammar we don't believe those are the answers. We want to tackle the behavior rather than the technology.

Instead of banning student access to communication technology we are increasing access during class time. We have built up our infrastructure capacity to allow students to start bringing in their own devices and logging into our School ICT network. This will begin with senior students and allow them to use communication technology within lessons on devices students are comfortable with.

Crucially and hand in hand with this access, CGGS is educating students on appropriate behavior. Through our e-learning program girls are encouraged to post their online points of view persuasively yet sensitively. They are encouraged to consider others' viewpoints without needing to accept them, they are taught to consider the consequences of any action BEFORE it's taken.

Many a budding career has been destroyed by inappropriate comments or photographs posted on social networking sites. Students may think pages can be deleted, but one only has to access sites like www.waybackmachine to see that nothing from the Internet is lost.

Let's not concentrate on outlawing 'cyber', let's educate the bullies. In our teaching and in our pastoral care we address these issues at length; what makes an ideal friend, empathy, gossip, styles of communication and assertiveness. We endeavour to give students the tools to become mature adults, to apply critical thinking to what they post and read online. We encourage parents to print out inappropriate postings and bring them to us - it always helps to have evidence to deal with offenders. In the same way, parents should save any texts that are disturbing to their children.

Schools are stepping up to play a major role in regulating online behaviour. But it is important that parents and the wider community understand it is not technology that's the problem, it's the way it's being used.

APFACTS gratefully acknowledges the article provided by Anne Coutts, CGGS Principal

PARENT RESOURCES:

- [Kids and Tech: Parenting Tips for the Digital Age](#) by Sarah Kessler
- [Resilient young people](#) by Andrew Fuller
- [Cyberbullying and your teenager](#)
- Bookmark [APFACTS events page](#) for information on events, seminars and workshops.
- Bookmark [APFACTS parent resources and hot topics](#) to keep abreast of education issues and reports.

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