Negotiated School Review Report for Heathmont East Primary School Eastern Metropolitan Region

School Improvement Division
Department of Education & Early Childhood Development

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1.   Executive Summary

The Heathmont East Primary School Negotiated Review aimed to assess overall performance during the last four years, develop recommendations for the next strategic plan and investigate ways in which an enriching learning environment could be created to cater for all students, especially those performing above expected levels. In addition, the quality and impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching and learning was to be examined and consideration given to how it could be further integrated to enhance student engagement and learning.

The school conducted a comprehensive self-evaluation process in which all members of the school community had input. A critical friend was engaged to examine the data, conduct a review day, make recommendations for the next strategic plan and write the review report. Teams of teachers visited other primary schools to investigate their use of ICT as a tool to support student learning, with a view to developing a proposal for the future provision of ICT at Heathmont East. The Principal Class Officers have been committed to researching how best to support all students at their level of learning with a particular emphasis on those students who are performing at the above level.

The school has achieved some pleasing results in terms of teacher judgements against the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) and National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), with mean scores generally above state means, few students performing below expected levels and high proportions of students performing above expected levels. However, NAPLAN matched cohort growth is below state means and relatively small proportions of students are being assessed by teachers as performing well above expected levels. Student Attitudes to School survey results are strong, but absence rates are above state mean rates.

Time and resources have been allocated to ensure there has been a clear focus on teaching and learning. Teachers spend time working in professional learning teams (PLTs) to share strategies and there has been a strong professional learning focus on learning intentions and feedback. Team goals and peer observation are integral parts of staff performance and development planning.

Nevertheless, there is potential for further improvement, particularly by embedding a whole school approach to teaching and learning that is characterised by high expectations and the delivery of a differentiated curriculum that addresses the learning needs of all students. A priority for the next strategic plan should also be to build the capacity of staff to use ICT to enrich the learning environment and engage students in stimulating, student-centred learning.

2.   Aim / Purpose

In addition to an assessment of overall performance during the review period 2009-2011, the aim of the negotiated review was to:

- investigate the development of an enriching learning environment that caters for all students at their instructional level with a particular focus on those students performing above expected levels.

- examine the quality and impact of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning in classrooms and to consider how it could be further integrated to enhance student engagement and learning.

- develop a strategic plan for the period 2013-2016.

3.   Methodology

School reviews are designed to provide analysis of current school performance and practice and to advise on student outcome goals and appropriate improvement strategies to assist in the development of a new strategic plan. The review process is a significant element of the School Accountability and Improvement Framework for Victorian government schools. A focus of the review is to assist the school to further develop a culture of continuous improvement. The Effective Schools Model provides a lens for this exploration.

The school conducted an inclusive process in undertaking the negotiated review. In order to analyse data and review the achievements of the school over the last four years as part of the self-evaluation, teaching staff were divided into the following teams: the student learning team, led by the principal and leading teachers responsible for curriculum and data; the student engagement and wellbeing team, led by the assistant principal; the student pathways and transitions team,

led by the prep transition coordinator and the grade 6 coordinator. These teams were provided with time to meet after school during term 2. School council was provided with the opportunity to discuss all relevant data sets as they became available during the review period.

Parents were invited to participate in meetings held after school, as well as during monthly education subcommittee meetings to identify the school's strengths, areas for improvement and to make recommendations for future directions. Parents were also invited to respond to a questionnaire provided during Education Week and the week of parent-teacher interviews, in which they were asked to identify things that the school did well and things that could be improved. All students in the school were also given the opportunity to respond to these items.

During term 3 the review team, comprising the principal and three teachers representing the Professional Learning Teams, collated the analyses and recommendations from all of the focus groups to complete the self-evaluation document. Key staff also visited a number of other primary schools during terms 2 and 3 to investigate their use of ICT as a tool for learning in classrooms. Information gathered during these visits was to be used to develop a proposal for the future provision and use of ICT at Heathmont East. The Principal and Assistant Principal have participated in forums and conferences as a source and research into differentiating the curriculum and how to best educate the 'whole child'. Influential speakers noted were Andy Hargreaves, Vic Zbar, Yong Zhao, Pasi Salburg and Professor Kishore Mahbubani.

The critical friend, Gray Ryan, was engaged to analyse the school's data from the last four years, facilitate a review day, make recommendations for the new strategic plan and write the review report in consultation with the principal and assistant principal. Gray is a current school reviewer and former secondary school principal, senior education officer and regional network leader. He visited the school on 21 August 2012 to meet with the principal Kitty Allard and to confirm arrangements for the review. A tour of the school and an introduction to staff members helped set the context for the school's data.

At this meeting, the critical friend received copies of the School Self-Evaluation, School Strategic Plan 2008-2011, School Level Report 2011, Annual Implementation Plan 2012, data sets for the 2011 student, staff and parent surveys and access to NAPLAN data for the last three years.

The review meeting was held on 18 September 2012, attended by the Council President, Greg Perry, Principal Kitty Allard, and Leading Teachers Cameron Agars and Sue Fraser.

4.   Findings

There have been some pleasing student learning outcomes at Heathmont East Primary School over the last four years, during which time enrolment has increased significantly, from 331 in 2009 to the current enrolment of 441. Mean scores for NAPLAN and teacher judgments against VELS have generally been above state means and in the fourth quartile when expressed as percentiles, which is at the expected Student Family Occupation index (SFO) percentile range. Very few students are performing below the expected VELS levels or below national minimum standards (NMS), with not one student performing below NMS in Maths in any of the last three years.

While NAPLAN results indicate a relatively high proportion of students performing in the top two bands, particularly at year 3, matched cohort growth is below state mean growth for every strand and the percentage of Heathmont East students who have made high levels of relative gain in reading and numeracy is well below state means. With regards teacher judgements, apart from reading there are relatively low proportions of students assessed as performing well above expected levels. Hence the school's desire to focus on those students performing above expected levels as part of this review.

The data, school self-evaluation and review day discussions highlighted the following factors as contributing to the school's performance and provide an evidence base on which to plan future key improvement strategies. Discussion is referenced to the eight elements of the Effective Schools Model (highlighted in bold) and the terms of reference (underlined) throughout this section of the report.

Professional leadership is a key factor in effective schools and strong leadership that is distributed and shared is a significant factor in achieving school improvement. The current principal has been at Heathmont East for ten years and the assistant principal for two years. The school leadership team consists of the principal, assistant principal and two

leading teachers responsible for curriculum and data. The leadership team meets weekly to discuss current issues and monitor implementation of priorities. Leadership is further distributed to a management team comprising representatives from every level, specialists, aides and the business manager. This team meets twice each term and its focus is on organisational issues.

A shared vision and goals is another key characteristic of an effective school and this is succinctly expressed at Heathmont East in its motto of "aim high," which appears on the school logo and is well known by all members of the school community. A set of core values was adopted in 2011 following consultation with the school community and these values of respect, acceptance, tolerance, responsibility and teamwork are heavily promoted throughout the school.

A **learning community** culture has been fostered at Heathmont East with a strong focus on **teaching and learning.** Teachers work in a number of PLTs to plan for student learning, share ideas and discuss teaching strategies. Level teams meet on a weekly basis, while four curriculum teams – Maths, English, Integrated Studies and ICT – meet several times each term. These curriculum teams are comprised of teachers from across all VELS levels. Recent professional learning priorities have included a focus on learning intentions and feedback, with all teachers having been provided with access to Toni Glasson's "Improving Student Achievement" as a basis for discussions. All teachers have read and discussed Vic Zbar's paper 'Ensuring a more personalised approach: A strategy for differentiated teaching in schools' to direct focus and our research into the differentiated classroom. It is strongly recommended that the school continues to support the operation of PLTs to continue to build teacher capacity to embed whole school strategies to improve student learning.

As part of the school's performance and development process, all teachers have been expected to include learning intentions and feedback as team goals over the last two years. Progress towards these goals is discussed by the teams at the mid-cycle assessment phase of the performance and development process. Teachers are also expected to participate in two peer observation sessions each semester. Consequently, by linking performance appraisal to teacher practice, the school has strengthened **accountability** for school improvement. It is recommended that the school continues to support peer observation as a means of building teacher capacity and that the leadership team conducts learning walks with an instructional rounds focus to determine patterns of practice and provide feedback to staff.

Purposeful teaching is evident in effective schools, with teachers using data to identify and support student learning by adopting teaching strategies that are matched to individual student needs. Assessment schedules are in place at Heathmont East, including on-demand testing, which was introduced this year. The Student Performance Analyser (SPA) has been adopted as a tool to collate these and other tests, together with NAPLAN and teacher judgements, and to group students as performing at, above or below expected levels. Staff are still in the early stages of familiarising themselves with SPA, but once it has become an established part of everyday practice, it will enable teachers to more easily identify the learning needs of their students and plan lessons accordingly.

The school has introduced several intervention strategies to support students who are performing below expected levels, including the "Toe by Toe" program and reading intervention. However, it is apparent that there needs to be a greater focus on students at the other end of the scale, those who clearly have the ability to perform above expected levels. Differentiated teaching needs to become a professional learning priority in the future, to equip teachers with the ability to provide more personalised learning for their students, using SPA as the tool to facilitate this. Consequently, a learning environment that caters for all students at their instructional level will be developed, with a particular focus on those students performing above expected levels.

This focus can be strengthened further by establishing a culture of **high expectations** for student learning and teacher practice, another feature in effective schools. It will be very important to establish high expectations in behavioural terms for student learning and for staff to model that they expect high standards from students.

The environment in which students learn has a significant impact on the learning that occurs. **A stimulating and secure learning environment** is another element of effective schools. Student Attitudes to School Survey results indicate that Heathmont East students are well behaved and feel safe and connected to school, although absence rates are above state mean rates. The school has adopted a range of social and wellbeing programs and approaches including Everyone Everyday, You Can Do It, Restorative Practices, Peacemakers, Circle Time. Students also have the opportunity to be involved in a number of extra curricula activities during lunchtimes and are also able to access a range of authentic leadership positions.

The school is adequately resourced in terms of ICT. There are interactive whiteboards (IWBs) in seventeen classrooms, three computers attributed to each classroom which includes those in the corridor outside levels 2 and 3, a computer laboratory, and a bank of laptop computers assigned to level 4. Staff have received professional learning in the use of IWBs and the Ultranet is starting to be used as a learning tool, with students creating their own collaborative spaces. However, the school has recognised the need to <u>examine the quality and impact of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning in classrooms and to consider how it could be further integrated to enhance student engagement and learning.</u> Consequently, as part of this review, teams of teachers have visited a number of primary schools to investigate the use of iPads as a tool for teaching and learning. It is anticipated that a proposal for future ICT provision will be developed by the end of the year.

5.   Conclusions and Recommendations

Heathmont East has established a clear focus on teaching and learning, which is reflected in some impressive student learning outcomes. There is strong, distributed leadership in place; active professional learning teams and professional learning activities have addressed strategies such as learning intentions and feedback that have been demonstrated to make a difference for student learning. Classrooms are orderly learning environments in which positive teacher-student relationships are maintained.

Nevertheless, there is potential for further improvement. An agreed, consistent, whole school approach to teaching and learning needs to become embedded into everyday practice at Heathmont East. Teachers need to identify the learning needs of their students and implement differentiated teaching strategies; the use of the SPA tool will facilitate this approach. Teachers should continue to work in professional learning teams and be provided with ongoing professional learning to build their capacity to deliver a differentiated curriculum and to use ICT as a tool to engage students in learning. High expectations must also be maintained as students progress through the school.

Suggested goals, targets, key improvement strategies and recommended actions for the new strategic plan follow.

<u>**Student Learning**</u>

Goal
To maximise the achievement of high quality learning outcomes in all learning domains for all students P-6.

Key Improvement Strategy	Recommended actions to provide focus for each year's AIP
Embed a consistent, whole school approach to teaching and learning characterised by high expectations and the delivery of a differentiated curriculum that addresses the learning needs of all students.	<u>Set high expectations for teacher practice</u> • Develop and implement an agreed model for explicit classroom instruction that incorporates learning intentions, high level cognitive challenge, differentiated tasks, success criteria, feedback and reflection time. • Define high expectations for teacher practice in terms of planning, differentiation of curriculum, classroom practice and professional learning. • Develop team goals to achieve AIP targets. Also ensure each teacher has a target for student learning derived from the AIP in their performance plan. <u>Set high expectations for student learning</u> • Define high expectations for student learning in behavioural terms (presentation and completion of work, effort, homework). • Challenge students to perform above expected levels. Engage all students in setting learning goals, self-assessment, peer assessment and in providing effective feedback to teachers. <u>Enhance strong, distributed leadership</u> • Continue to build the capacity of the leadership team (principal class, leading teachers). Focus on technical leadership (thinks and plans strategically, aligns resources with desired outcomes, holds self and others to account) and educational leadership (shapes pedagogy, focus on achievements and promotes inquiry and reflection). • Utilise coaching, Bastow leadership programs, external consultants and classroom learning walks to further develop instructional leadership capacity.

<u>Professional learning</u>

- Enhance staff professional learning through a whole school strategic approach that involves all teachers and includes the use of coaching, mentoring, team teaching, peer observation and learning walks to provide feedback and share effective practice.
- Use the e5 instructional model and Principles of Learning and Teaching (PoLT) as frameworks to reflect on and improve teacher practice.
- Ensure that differentiation becomes a professional learning priority.
- Provide access to external consultants, online resources and DEECD professional learning programs to further enhance teacher capabilities and practice.

<u>Professional learning teams</u>

- Ensure all staff work within professional learning teams and that the focus of curriculum planning time is to analyse and discuss data, share strategies and plan student learning that has a personalised approach.

<u>Embed school wide assessment practices that inform teaching and track student progress</u>

- Continue to develop and embed P-6 assessment schedules that reflect current teaching practice. Use the *Literacy and Numeracy 6-18 Month Strategy* as a guide.
- Use a broad range of authentic assessment tasks to reflect assessment **for** learning to inform teaching, **of** learning to inform judgements and **as** learning for student reflection.
- Focus on data driven planning for explicit teaching and learning. Triangulate VELS, NAPLAN, and VCAA On-Demand data and utilise the *Student Performance Analyser (SPA)* to collate and monitor student outcomes, inform teaching and track students' progress as they move through the school.
- Ensure the accuracy and consistency of teacher judgements across the school through moderation of student work with a focus on teacher judgements as students move from one level to the next.

<u>Intervention, support and extension</u>

- Implement appropriate literacy and numeracy intervention and extension programs in English and Mathematics to target specific student needs as identified by data collection.
- Ensure individual learning plans are in place for students with particular learning needs and exceptional talents as well as those who are achieving below expected levels.

<u>Australian Curriculum</u>

- Implement the Australian Curriculum for English, Mathematics, Science and History in 2013 and plan for the implementation of other domains as required.

<u>Engage parents in learning</u>

- Provide opportunities for parents to learn about ways they can assist their children's learning.

Targets

Teacher Judgements
It is suggested that the target quantifies the percentage of students who have achieved well above the expected VELS level in all dimensions of English and Mathematics by 2016.

- *Increase the percentage of students P-6 assessed as achieving well above the expected level (A grade) in reading, writing, speaking and listening, number and measurement, chance and data from:*
    - Reading 12% to 16%,
    - Writing 3.4% to 7.5%,
    - Speaking and Listening 0.6% to 5%,
    - Number 5.7% to 10%, and
    - Measurement Chance and Data: 2.3% to 5, *by 2016*

NAPLAN
A target for cohort growth should be considered. It could be to aim for a specific mean scaled score growth target that is higher than the previous mean scaled score growth or that is higher than state mean scaled score growth.

- *Matched cohort mean scaled score growth for:*
    - *Reading to increase from 36.4 to 50,*
    - *Writing from 26.4 to 50 and*
    - *Numeracy to increase from 51.9 to 70, in 2016*

- *Matched cohort mean scaled score growth for reading/writing/numeracy to improve relative to state mean scaled score growth*

    A target might also be considered in relation to matched cohort relative gain.

- *The percentage of matched cohort students to have achieved high relative gain in reading and numeracy to exceed 15% by 2016*

Student Engagement and Wellbeing

Goal

To enhance the capacity of students to become motivated, confident, independent learners.

Key Improvement Strategy	Recommended actions to provide focus for each year's AIP
Build the capacity of staff to use ICT to enrich the learning environment and engage students in stimulating, student-centred learning.	Enhance the use of e-Learning to engage students • Continue to build teacher capacity to use and embed e-Learning as a part of regular classroom practice in order to facilitate students' engagement in learning. • Embed the Ultranet as a tool to support teaching and learning. • Review ICT provision and budget to update software and hardware as required. • Utilise ICT to connect and collaborate with people from across the world. Enhance the expression of student voice in learning • Expand the expression of student voice and the active participation of students in their learning – goal setting, self-assessment, peer assessment, cooperative learning, negotiated curriculum. • Seek feedback from students on their classes to elicit the effectiveness of teaching strategies, feedback received from teachers, level of challenge. Consider including this feedback in the data presented at performance review meetings. • Run regular student forums to explore student opinion and develop appropriate programs to address issues as required. • Skill teachers to engage in higher order questioning and in developing higher order thinking for students. Wellbeing Programs • Continue to provide a range of wellbeing initiatives such as Program Achieve, Restorative Practices and Values Education that build a strong focus on the school vision and values and strengthen students' resilience, relationships with peers and engagement in learning. Continue to promote student leadership and celebrate student achievement • Continue to provide access to authentic student leadership opportunities. • Continue to celebrate student achievement through a rewards program at each year level. Embed agreed, consistent student management practices • Maintain a focus on the need for consistency in terms of high expectations of student behaviour and application of agreed student management procedures. • Ensure all teachers establish and follow set classroom routines. • Continue to train staff in restorative practices. • Ensure school values and rules are clearly displayed in every classroom in the school and are communicated regularly to parents in newsletters and via the Ultranet. Maintain a strong focus on attendance • Continue to make explicit to students and families the strong connection between student wellbeing, regular, punctual attendance and improved learning outcomes and monitor attendance of students with high levels of absence from school. Develop individual attendance plans for students with high levels of absence. • Document an attendance action plan that clarifies the roles of all personnel involved in monitoring attendance. • Investigate the use of a digital roll marking system and SMS messaging to alert parents of student absence.

All targets should show improvement against current performance by 2016.

Student Attitudes to School Survey
- *Stimulating Learning to increase from 4.1 to 4.3,*
- *Learning Confidence to increase from 4.15 to 4.3, and*
- *Student Motivation to increase from 4.49 to 4.6 by 2016*

Attendance
- *Reduction in the average days absent per student, years P-6 from 18.2 to 14 by 2016*

Student Pathways and Transitions

Goal

To enhance student transitions and pathways through the school to enable students to achieve success at school and be well prepared for secondary school.

Key Improvement Strategy	Recommended actions to provide focus for each year's AIP
Maintain high expectations for learning as students progress through the school, with a strong focus on personalised learning for all students.	Strengthen transitions within the school • Strengthen the school's tracking of individual students and monitor their social and academic development, behaviour, intervention support and attendance. Embed the Ultranet, Student Performance Analyser (SPA) and RISC tool to support tracking of student progress. • Continue to review and refine the second semester in-school transition program to ensure students have optimum preparation for the following year. • At the start of each year, at each year level, reinforce high expectations, rigour and routine and explicitly reinforce the school's values and desired behaviours • Ensure the dissemination of student data – learning, wellbeing, behaviour – to the new year level team prior to the beginning of the new school year. Encourage prompt and effective use of this information. Provide pathways planning and support • Plan pathways for all students with special needs including regular reviews of individual learning plans, intervention or support programs and challenge for talented students. • Ensure close monitoring of students who are deemed "at risk" as they enter and move through the school. • Communicate and collaborate with parents over individual student learning needs. Links with pre-schools • Continue to build links with local pre-schools and childcare centres to support the prep transition process. Links with secondary colleges • Continue to build links with local secondary colleges to support 6-7 transition. Review programs, protocols and levels of satisfaction • Review current levels of satisfaction with induction, transitions, pathways and course planning by seeking feedback from students, parents, staff and feeder schools on an annual basis.

Targets

Parent Opinion

Parent satisfaction as measured by the transition variable on the parent opinion survey to be improved by 2016 against the current school mean.
- *Transition variable on Parent Opinion Survey to increase from 5.8 to 5.9 by 2016.*