



SUBMISSION

Reporting Student Achievement Policy

The ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations (Council) is a non-profit representative organisation whose objective is to foster a quality public education system, provide support services for affiliates and make representations to government on behalf of parents.

Council thanks the ACT Education and Training Directorate (ETD) for the opportunity to comment on the draft *Reporting Student Achievement (Preschool to Year 12) Policy* and the associated draft templates.

Our Policy

Council has an extensive internal policy on the reporting of student progress. As stated in Council's *Policy Document*, "parents have a right to be informed accurately and in non-technical language about how students are performing in relation to... objectives and expectations and the extent to which student performances are consistent in general terms with the achievements of students of a similar age".

Council believes that reporting on student progress should:

- a) provide an accurate assessment of student achievement, nominating strengths and weaknesses;
- b) focus positively on progress achieved;
- c) nominate any areas that need attention and indicate what needs to be done by teachers, parents and/or students to overcome difficulties and to improve performance;
- d) inform parents about completion of work requirements, acquisition of knowledge and skills, attitudes, values and social development.

In addition, school reporting processes should:

- a) use plain language;
- b) use languages other than English where necessary;
- c) include explanation of symbols or grading codes;

- d) include explanation of assessment methods;
- e) be supported by records of observations and assessments.

ETD Policy

Overall, Council is supportive of the amended policy. However, we do have questions relating to the procedures that surround the exemption of some students from reporting.

Council is concerned that inaccurate reporting of 'exempt' students may occur due to a lack of understanding around the exemption from reporting criteria. For example, Council has obtained anecdotal evidence that a teacher was required to complete an A - E report on a student in a Learning Support Unit for Autism, despite that student not spending a significant time working on regular curriculum items. It is evident that the 'mainstream' reporting of certain students is impractical and misguided. In the interests of clarity and transparency, Council would like to see a more detailed inclusion of the exemption criteria in the Policy.

Templates

Council recommends that several changes should be made to the report templates.

Australian Curriculum Achievement Standard Descriptions

Council strongly believes that school reports should take an accessible format and use plain language. Depending on the subject and year level, the current achievement descriptions can take the form of anything but 'plain English'. The descriptions in the templates are full of jargon and technical language. In their current form they do not clearly tell parents in simple terms what their children can and can't do. An alternate approach is required. For example, some ACT schools currently adopt an 'I can' approach when describing achievement standards (I can count to and from 10 000). Council believes that these descriptions need to be reworked in order to simplify and specify their intended message.

Effort Indicators

Currently the templates outline a number of various levels of achievement. Council would like to see the inclusion of an 'effort demonstrated' scale on each subject listing. The way in which teachers, students and parents will approach learning difficulties and achievements will vary depending on the level of effort that a student

demonstrates. Student effort is an important indicator that should be adequately addressed.

Development Indicators

Currently the templates focus on a wide range of development indicators including work habits and personal and social development. However the scale used for these indicators is extremely coarse and restricted. Council believes that another category should be added to the existing options of 'always', 'sometimes' and 'rarely'. For example a 'usually' category could be included to provide a more accurate indicator of student development.

Conclusion

During the review process of this policy and the associated templates, Council would like to remind all stakeholders that reporting on student progress should not be strictly limited to a twice-yearly report card. Conceptually, reporting should incorporate a mix of formal and informal modes of communication. Schools should have procedures designed to facilitate early identification of problems and to inform parents promptly so as to enable parents to work with teachers to improve students' learning. The proposed student reports are an effective method of reporting student progress but they should not exist or operate alone.

The merits of a complex reporting scheme should also be carefully assessed when other methods such as one on one interviews and meetings could be more effective in creating a dialogue between parents and teachers. Council believes reporting should always aim to further the educational outcomes of students, not to fulfil a bureaucratic requirement.

Please do not hesitate to contact Council if you would like to discuss any aspect of this submission in depth.