

National School Reform Agreement

Northern Territory Bilateral Agreement: 2020 Progress Report

National School Reform Agreement – Bilateral Agreement Report – Northern Territory – 2020

Executive Summary

The Northern Territory (NT) Department of Education (the department) has successfully completed reform actions due for completion in 2020, as set out in its Bilateral Agreement under the National School Reform Agreement, noting that the timing for one action related to the implementation of NAPLAN Online has been revised as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Progress continues on all ongoing reform directions, and the NT is on track to meet all associated reform actions.

The COVID-19 pandemic had some impact on the delivery and implementation of education reforms in the NT. Despite this, the department and the non-government school sector have continued to implement reform actions and to support student learning, teaching, school leadership and improvement through a range of response measures.

Highlights from 2020 include continuing to support remote and very remote students to engage in accredited training with 634 students from 24 remote and very remote schools enrolled in nationally accredited VET programs.

The department continued implementation of its Local Decision Making continuum model to promote community engagement and strengthen the capacity of Aboriginal people to make decisions about their children's learning, with Local Engagement and Decision Making Committees established in 33 schools.

The department also continued implementation of its School Improvement Framework and developed improvement guides for each of the four improvement journeys (engage, accelerate, recharge and achieve) and 24 Signature Strategies alongside evidence –based resources and guidance for schools.

The department's seven new key system priorities focus on school improvement, ensuring that schools are supported so all students can engage, grow and achieve. Progress against the NT's reform directions along with other departmental initiatives contribute to the achievement of the department's ambition for every child in the NT to have the best start in life and, through early learning and school education to gain a bright future. This work also supports achievement of the national vision for a world class education system.

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Progress Against Each Reform Direction

Reform Direction A - Support students, student learning and achievement

Actions	Sector(s)	Timing	Progress towards implementation of actions (including progress of non-government sector actions)
Implementation of NAPLAN Online			
Cohort of government and non-government schools implement NAPLAN Online	All sectors	May 2019	Completed in 2019
Improved data processes in place to increase integrity of NAPLAN assessment data across both government and non-government sectors	All sectors	Sep 2019	Completed in 2019
All eligible government and non-government schools implement NAPLAN Online, noting that, at the date of signing this agreement, no tested no/low bandwidth solution has been delivered which may affect the Northern Territory's ability to implement in those affected schools.	All sectors	May 2020	<p>Timing revised to May 2021</p> <p>The NT is committed to transitioning all schools to NAPLAN Online. On 20 March 2020, Education Ministers decided that NAPLAN testing would not be conducted in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, this action will be completed in 2021.</p> <p>During 2020, the department and the NT Test Administration Authority undertook preparatory work to support the planned transition of all NT schools to NAPLAN online in 2021.</p>
Growth data available for first cohort of matched students who have NAPLAN Online in 2020 and 2022	All sectors	Sep 2022	On track

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Actions	Sector(s)	Timing	Progress towards implementation of actions (including progress of non-government sector actions)
			<p>The department has maintained the capability to provide matched student gain data for the entirety of the NAPLAN dataset from 2008.</p> <p>With the first NT students participating in NAPLAN Online in 2019, matched two-year gain data for the first cohort of students will be available in 2021.</p> <p>With NAPLAN in 2020 being cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the full cohort of matched student data for NAPLAN Online will be available between 2021 and 2023.</p>
<p>Invest in pathways for remote and very remote students to provide opportunities and deliver workplace-specific skills and knowledge that is tailored to employment opportunities within communities</p>			
Mobile and embedded trainers working with approximately 15 very remote schools in 2018	NTG	2018	Completed in 2018
Up to 225 students are engaged in accredited training	NTG	2018	Completed in 2018
Up to 250 students annually, and their communities, engaged in accredited training	NTG	2019-2022	<p>2020 actions completed, on track.</p> <p>The department continues to work with industry, training providers and schools to ensure that VET programs delivered to secondary students result in appropriate and relevant employment pathways which are aimed at improving the number of qualification completions.</p>

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Actions	Sector(s)	Timing	Progress towards implementation of actions (including progress of non-government sector actions)
			<p>In the 2020 school year, 634 students from 24 remote and very remote schools enrolled in nationally accredited VET programs. A total of 168 students from remote and very remote schools completed a full qualification.</p> <p>In addition to students undertaking VET in schools, 49 students from remote and very remote NT schools were undertaking a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship in 2020.</p>

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Reform Direction B – Support teaching, school leadership and school improvement

Actions	Sector(s)	Timing	Progress towards implementation of actions (including progress of non-government sector actions)
Continued implementation of National Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) with a focus on moderation and quality control measures			
Participation in two cross-sector moderation activities per annum	All sectors	2019-2023	<p>2020 actions completed, on track</p> <p>The department coordinated and led cross-sector moderation activities across the NT.</p> <p>In 2020, 10 cross-sector Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) moderation workshops were conducted both in person and online across all regions in the NT. A total of 55 educators from 42 schools participated, including non-government schools and educators.</p> <p>The moderation workshops assist with consistency of teacher judgement and reporting across NT government and non-government schools. The workshops included reviewing and making decisions about nationally consistent case studies from the NCCD portal, moderating case studies shared by schools to determine inclusion in the NCCD, the level of adjustment and category of disability based on the evidence provided.</p>
Inclusion Support Coordinators in place and teachers trained to use the Learning with Diversity Integrated System	Catholic Education	2019-2023	<p><i>Information provided by Catholic Education NT:</i></p> <p>2020 actions completed, on track</p> <p>Inclusion Support Practitioners were appointed in seventeen NT Catholic schools in 2020 with primary responsibility to upskill and support Inclusion Support Assistants in targeted strategies to improve student</p>

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Actions	Sector(s)	Timing	Progress towards implementation of actions (including progress of non-government sector actions)
			<p>outcomes. Inclusion Support Practitioner positions, job descriptions and expected activities were trialled in 2020 and were adapted to suit the needs of specific schools and student cohorts.</p> <p>The Learning with Diversity Integrated System (LDIS) is embedded in Catholic Education NT’s day to day operations supporting all students with inclusion needs. Data entered into the LDIS informs funding allocation to schools and evidence gathering for NCCD purposes.</p> <p>In 2020, new staff were upskilled in the use of the LDIS through forums and onsite meetings as part of the current practice within each school.</p>
<p>Support teachers through a system of coaching and mentoring to build teacher and school leader capability to ensure students have quality teachers who are proficient in literacy, numeracy and ESL pedagogy</p>			
Project governance structure established through the network leaders within Education NT Strategy (coaches work under network leaders to work intensively with focus schools)	NTG	2018	Completed in 2018
Identify focus schools based on school improvement data	NTG	2018	Completed in 2018
Deliver intensive support to focus schools in 5-week sprints	NTG	2018–2023	<p>2020 actions completed, on track</p> <p>School improvement journeys included the use of analytical and manual placement methodologies to identify schools that are in the Engage,</p>

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Actions	Sector(s)	Timing	Progress towards implementation of actions (including progress of non-government sector actions)
			<p>Accelerate, Recharge and Achieve improvement journeys. A refresh of journeys will occur through these placement methodologies again as part of an agreed 24 month cycle in 2021. This will measure system, school and student trends for movement in journeys across the 2 year period. Each high impact strategy accompanying the four improvement journeys is designed to support schools in moving learning forward and to support the development of their Annual School Improvement Plan.</p> <p>A tiered support model was developed and has been implemented to guide the use of focussed, targeted and universal support as part of a system approach to differentiated support across each of the 4 networks of schools.</p> <p>152 school improvement journeys were mapped and a dashboard developed which identified school requests for explicit expertise from the department. The dashboard was used by the system for delivery of support to schools. Short 'sprints' were identified and a tailored support team aligned to a school in each of the 4 networks during this period. This trial is in addition to existing targeted and universal support provided to all schools through the analysis of Annual School Improvement Plans in 2020.</p>
Evaluate at end of each 5-week sprint – refine strategies where necessary	NTG	2018–2023	<p>2020 activities completed, on track</p> <p>The department partnered with national evidence partners at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) to refine the Signature Strategies and provide elaborations, reflection tools and</p>

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Actions	Sector(s)	Timing	Progress towards implementation of actions (including progress of non-government sector actions)
			<p>improvement continuums to support each of the 'Engage' strategies (E1 – Shared Vision and Values, E2 – An Orderly Learning Environment, E3 – Whole School Curriculum and Assessment Plan, E4 – Whole School Data Plan, E5 – Whole School Instructional Model and E6- Whole School Professional Learning Plan).</p> <p>Elaborations, reflections tools and continuums describe demonstrations of improved practice that are aligned directly to the National School Improvement Tool. They were used to support planning and to evaluate progress within a tiered and differentiated support approach.</p>
Strengthen local governance arrangements in remote and very remote school communities, ensuring decisions are community-led.			
Develop Local Decision Making assessment continuum reflective of the Northern Territory Government Influence Model	NTG	By Dec 2018	Completed in 2018
Ongoing engagement with local communities to enhance school engagement and local governance across 50 per cent of remote and very remote government schools.	NTG	By Dec 2020	<p>Completed</p> <p>Ongoing engagement with local communities in education and training is being achieved through implementation of the NT's Local Decision Making policy including a continuum of engagement model. This includes the establishment of Local Engagement and Decision Making (LEaD) committees that provide a strong Aboriginal voice in the management and decision making of schools.</p>

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			<p>The department has increased community involvement in decision making regarding all aspects of school operations, including the development of School Improvement Plans and in school reviews, and supports implementation of the community led schools model where the community plays a significant role in determining the actions and activities of the school.</p> <p>By December 2020, there were 33 LEaD committees in remote and very remote schools and 10 schools were on a community led pathway. The department has engaged with 83 of the 108 remote and very remote NT government schools (approximately 70 per cent) in relation to local decision making with engagement continuing for remaining schools.</p>
Assist schools to improve governance and financial management practices			
<p>Provide leadership and school board professional development with an emphasis on roles and responsibilities and how to work effectively together</p>	<p>Independent schools</p>	<p>2018-2023</p>	<p><i>Information provided by the Association of Independent Schools NT:</i></p> <p>2020 actions completed, on track</p> <p>The Association of Independent Schools NT delivered one leadership forum in 2020. All independent school systems participated with representatives from 65 per cent of member schools.</p> <p>COVID-19 restricted physical access to remote communities which were closed under the COVID-19 Biosecurity Emergency Direction. Fifty per cent of independent schools in the NT were impacted by the biosecurity restrictions, therefore professional leadership activities and support for</p>

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			school boards was provided by phone, email and virtually during this time.
Provide assistance and training for Independent schools to improve financial management	Independent schools	2018-2023	<p><i>Information provided by Association of Independent Schools NT:</i></p> <p>2020 actions complete, on track</p> <p>The Association of Independent Schools NT provided schools with a number of forums in 2020 which were delivered by Independent Schools Australia. The forums were focussed on changes to the Australian and NT Government’s recurrent funding models and the financial management impacts for non-government schools.</p> <p>The forums were attended by representatives from 14 independent schools and all independent Schools were kept informed through the provision of relevant information.</p>
Assist schools to improve governance practices			
School leader and teacher recruitment and appointment processes reviewed and updated	Catholic Education	2018	Completed in 2018
Review of operations, personnel and structures to ensure support for schools is in line with best practice	Catholic Education	2018	Completed in 2018

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Review and refocus the CENT School Improvement and Renewal Framework to ensure an ongoing, rigorous approach to school self-assessment and review	Catholic Education	2019	Completed in 2019
School Improvement Assessment, External Validation and Registration Renewal processes completed for all schools	Catholic Education	2019-2023	<p><i>Information provided by Catholic Education NT:</i></p> <p>2020 actions completed, on track</p> <p>School Annual improvement plans and Annual Reports were published for all Catholic schools in the NT.</p> <p>External Validation assessments were conducted as scheduled for 3 schools by a panel led by an external consultant over two days.</p> <p>Annual School Improvement Assessments were conducted internally for 10 schools by the Catholic Education NT executive team.</p> <p>The School Registration Renewal processes were conducted for four Catholic schools with one school’s registration renewal visit postponed until 2021.</p>
Professional development programs and appraisal processes implemented for middle and senior school and system leaders.	Catholic Education	2019-2023	<p><i>Information provided by Catholic Education NT:</i></p> <p>2020 activities completed, on track</p> <p>Professional development programs were delivered by the Brown Collective for middle and senior school and system leaders.</p>

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			<p>In 2020, 15 middle leaders participated in the ‘Leading from the Middle’ course and six senior leaders participated in the ‘Leading with Integrity and Excellence’ course. Covid-19 impacted on the mode of delivery of the courses with some components delivered online.</p> <p>Formal appraisals were conducted for middle, senior and system leaders as scheduled. Written appraisal reports informed areas for growth and development and contracts were renewed as appropriate.</p>

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Reform Direction C – Enhancing the national evidence base

Actions	Sector(s)	Timing	Progress towards implementation of actions (including progress of non-government sector actions)
Implement a system wide, data driven, coherent schools and system improvement framework. The reforms will drive evidence-based strategies that will deliver differentiated support for Territory schools and ensure a focus on continuous school improvement			
Establish a School and System Improvement delivery unit to develop and implement a school and system improvement framework	NTG	Oct 2018	Completed in 2018
Develop standardised metrics for schools and system performance and improvement	NTG	2019	Completed in 2019
Develop resources identifying evidence-based school improvement strategies	NTG	By Dec 2020	<p>Completed</p> <p>Improvement Guides for each of the four improvement journeys and 24 Signature Strategies were completed and launched alongside evidence –based resources and guidance for schools. These are embedded into the school planning and annual reporting expectations within the School Improvement Framework.</p> <p>The Leading School Improvement website was developed and launched for school leaders, providing guidance across the NT Inquiry Cycle as well as guidance reports and resources for evidence informed approaches in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving Literacy in Lower Primary • Improving Literacy in Upper Primary

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Actions	Sector(s)	Timing	Progress towards implementation of actions (including progress of non-government sector actions)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving Mathematics in Upper Primary and Lower Secondary • Maximising the Impact of Classroom Support Staff <p>These guidance reports were accompanied by a NT Guide for Implementation, Guide for De-Implementation, and evidence toolkits summarising key literature for each of the 24 Signature Strategies as well as access and guidance for the EBSCO research database.</p>
Evaluate the school improvement framework	NTG	2021	<p>2020 actions completed, on track</p> <p>A regional situational analysis of the School Improvement Framework was completed in consultation with system, regional and school leaders.</p> <p>The department engaged a range of stakeholders (including school leaders, system leaders, external partners, students and educators) in the development of a ‘System Narrative’ that identified seven key system priorities that has supported the development of the next <i>Education NT Strategy for 2021-25</i>.</p> <p>These priorities were developed using key evaluation sources including a School Review System report, which summarised the findings of school reviews conducted across the NT between 2019 and 2020 (with an initial sample of 56 schools) against the nine domains of the National School Improvement Tool and provided trends and recommendations for the department to consider.</p>