

work like
the best



**MIDDLE YEARS
TEACHING AND
LEARNING STRATEGY**
2016–2018

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S MESSAGE



I am pleased to announce the Northern Territory Government Department of Education's commitment to implementing the *Work Like the Best: Middle Years Teaching and Learning Strategy 2016 - 2018* with a view to strengthen the quality, consistency, effectiveness and efficiency of education for our middle years students.

This strategy is guided by the work of independent education consultant, Vic Zbar through his review, *Work Like the Best: Review of Middle Schooling in the Northern Territory*.

His review found that there are many examples of outstanding middle years teaching and learning practice within our existing middle school structures. The report provides recommendations on how to guide best-practice teaching and learning in the middle years of schooling and improve the quality of education being provided to our students.

Critical to the success of the *Middle Years Teaching and Learning Strategy* are quality programs, quality teaching and strong engagement with the school community. The department is fully committed to establishing and maintaining effective engagement and support, particularly for principals, teachers and others with a primary responsibility for the education and wellbeing of students in the middle years of schooling.

I would like to thank all staff across the department who continue to demonstrate their commitment to improving educational outcomes for middle years students throughout the Northern Territory.

Ken Davies

Chief Executive

CONTEXT

In 2006, two distinct stages of secondary schooling commenced in the Northern Territory giving effect to recommendations from a 2003 report *Future Directions for Secondary Education in the Northern Territory*. The new model saw the introduction of middle schools to cater for Years 7-9 and senior secondary catering for Years 10-12 in urban and regional centres, with some remote comprehensive schools tailoring education for middle years students through internal restructures.

The new structure brought changes to the way in which the curriculum was delivered (pedagogy). Other changes targeted the organisational and physical structures of schools and professional development models for teachers.

In 2014, the Northern Territory Government commissioned a review to assess the performance of the middle years of schooling in relation to student attendance, student achievement outcomes, student wellbeing and parent and community satisfaction.

The review was conducted by independent education consultant Vic Zbar and the resulting report, *Work Like the Best: Review of Middle Schooling in the Northern Territory* was presented to the Northern Territory Government in September 2014. The review found that while there were many examples of outstanding practice contributing to improved student outcomes in the middle years, there was a lack of systemic direction. The report outlined 25 key recommendations covering the following areas:

- school leadership;
- school structure and the learning environment;
- curriculum and assessment;
- behaviour management;
- pedagogy;
- transition into and from the middle years; and
- systemic leadership and support.

The Northern Territory Government is committed to addressing these areas in an efficient and effective manner, and the *Work Like the Best: Middle Years Teaching and Learning Strategy 2016 - 2018* is intended to focus the effort of schools on identified goals and targets with a high likelihood of achieving the objectives of the review's recommendations.

This three year strategy is aimed at driving policy and programs in the areas identified as having the greatest positive impact on the quality of education throughout the middle years of schooling, positioning students for success as they enter their last stage of secondary education.

STRATEGY

The *Work Like the Best: Middle Years Teaching and Learning Strategy 2016 - 2018* aims to ensure that middle years education throughout the Northern Territory comprises best-practice, through quality programs, quality teaching and strong engagement by the school community. The strategy is aimed at the six provincial middle schools and four larger comprehensive schools that were identified in Vic Zbar's review.

The ten schools are:

- Centralian Middle School
- Darwin Middle School
- Dripstone Middle School
- Nightcliff Middle School
- Rosebery Middle School
- Sanderson Middle School
- Katherine High School
- Nhulunbuy High School
- Taminmin College
- Tennant Creek High School.

The strategy aligns to and supports the department's strategic plan and is aimed at driving policy and programs most likely to best position middle years students for success as they transition into the final three years of their secondary education.

VISION

The middle years of schooling offers rich, relevant curriculum that develops resilience, life-long learning skills and a strong sense of self in every adolescent learner.

The middle years of schooling guide adolescent learners toward preferred futures through:

- implementing strategies that provide all students with a sense of belonging to their school community;
- building positive student-teacher learning relationships;
- creating high expectations for, and with, all students, teachers and parents;
- involving student voice when designing learning programs that make explicit and purposeful connections between learning in the classroom and the local and global worlds beyond the classroom;
- providing opportunities so that students become independent and responsible learners;
- accommodating the diversity of students' interests and potential career directions;
- building productive relationships with primary and senior colleagues to ensure smooth transitions for student learning and wellbeing; and
- scaffolding students towards intrinsic self-regulation in their behaviour and desire to learn.

GUIDING BELIEFS

The vision is underpinned by the following guiding beliefs:

- Middle years students undergo significant cognitive, physical, social, emotional, ethical and moral changes. During this developmental transition, students develop a sense of identity, which impacts on their need to belong.
- The middle years of schooling provides a sense of belonging to a learning community where learners are engaged in rich and relevant curriculum.
- Middle years learners are supported through:
 - » the development of positive learning relationships;
 - » high expectations; and
 - » teachers understanding their unique needs and recognising the impact this has on the level of student engagement and learning.
- The effective transitions between primary, middle years and senior secondary phases of schooling are integral to continuity of student engagement and learning.
- Parent connectedness to learning throughout adolescence combined with strong family-school relationships enhances student wellbeing and success.



Every student a successful learner

We are committed to creating opportunities and the environment for successful learning for every student in every school.

Key actions for the middle years

- 2.1 Implement and resource a whole-system approach to behaviour management and wellbeing.
- 2.2 Enhance existing middle school practices to ensure students are well known by educators and develop positive relationships to support a culture of inclusivity and high expectations.
- 2.3 Establish student-centric transition practices for student movement from primary years to middle years and middle years to senior secondary.
- 2.4 Ensure pedagogical approaches are current, relevant and appropriate to meet the unique needs of middle years students.

Quality leaders, quality educators, quality learning

We are committed to fostering a strong and collaborative learning culture for our people and schools.

Key actions for the middle years

- 3.1 Provide leadership coaching to each middle school principal and their leadership team.
- 3.2 Establish a middle years leaders' network, facilitated by a peer-elected principal to foster a collaborative learning culture.
- 3.3 Deliver an annual conference in conjunction with the Professional Teachers' Association Northern Territory (PTANT) to enhance the knowledge and skills educators require when teaching students in middle school.
- 3.4 Identify and adopt common instructional models that inform lesson and unit planning.
- 3.5 Continue to support systematic structures that enable teachers to plan and engage in school-based professional development that supports collaborative planning, improvement-focused feedback and classroom observations.
- 3.6 Continue to implement a common and consistent assessment regime to improve data flow and support student transition between the stages of schooling and learning.
- 3.7 Deliver training to literacy and numeracy leaders in the middle years of schooling to enhance their ability to work with other teachers to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for middle years students.
- 3.8 Develop support materials and professional development opportunities that promote the seven fundamental expectations of the Expert Literacy and Numeracy Panel Report.

Coherent and capable organisation

We are committed to being responsive, efficient and effective by providing frameworks and timely services to drive operations and inform decision making across the organisation.

Key actions for the middle years

- 4.1 Implement a user interface which improves accessibility to data and monitors performance and emerging systemic trends.
- 4.2 Develop exemplars that guide implementation of departmental policies and provide formal connections between linked projects.
- 4.3 Trial the Employment Pathways program in selected schools and use outcomes to inform further implementation in the middle years of schooling.
- 4.4 Monitor the progress of the strategy's key actions through schools' annual reports.

Productive partnerships

We are committed to developing and embedding education partnerships and collaborations locally, regionally and internationally that contribute to the economic and social development of the Territory.

Key actions for the middle years

- 5.1 Work in partnership with Charles Darwin University to enhance middle years content in undergraduate training courses.
- 5.2 Enhance partnerships between schools delivering middle years education and their feeder primary schools to enable students to be well known by teachers as a result of the transition process.
- 5.3 Enhance partnerships between middle and senior schools to develop student transition plans that better prepare students to succeed.
- 5.4 Develop parent resources providing advice on how to best support their children's learning during the middle years of schooling.
- 5.5 Undertake a school opinion survey that captures student, parent and staff perceptions to inform local decision making on middle years of schooling services.

MEASURING OUR PERFORMANCE

As part of the Department of Education's commitment to achieving our vision for teaching and learning in the middle years we will measure this progress and work towards achieving the agreed performance targets in the department's 2016-2018 Strategic Plan, *Growing Success Together*. Measurement of progress will focus on the ten schools outlined in this strategy.

MEASURE	2014 Baseline	2018 Target
Proportion of Middle Years students attending four days or more per week		
Non-Indigenous students	85%	90%
Indigenous students	48%	65%*
*Indigenous students 2018 Target is in line with the 10-Year Target identified against Element 4 in the <i>A Share in the Future – Indigenous Education Strategy 2015-2024</i>		
Proportion of Year 7 students achieving at or above NMS in Numeracy		
Non-Indigenous students	91%	93%
Indigenous students	51%	66%
Proportion of Year 7 students achieving at or above NMS in Reading		
Non-Indigenous students	90%	93%
Indigenous students	38%	56%
Proportion of Year 9 students achieving at or above NMS in Numeracy		
Non-Indigenous students	91%	93%
Indigenous students	50%	63%
Proportion of Year 9 students achieving at or above NMS in Reading		
Non-Indigenous students	88%	92%
Indigenous students	35%	54%

*NMS - National Minimum Standard

MONITORING OUR PROGRESS

A six monthly report will be provided to the department's School Education Strategic Reform Committee which will include progress against the key actions of the *Work Like the Best: Middle Years Teaching and Learning Strategy 2016-2018*. The following lead indicators have also been identified to monitor progress:

- student growth data using the Progressive Achievement Test;
- retention rates of students transitioning into middle school from primary school;
- retention rates of students from Year 7 to Year 9;
- retention rates of students transitioning into senior secondary from middle school;
- increased level of student satisfaction collected through the School Survey;
- increased level of staff satisfaction collected through the School Survey; and
- increased level of parent satisfaction collected through the School Survey.



