

STRONG FOUNDATIONS

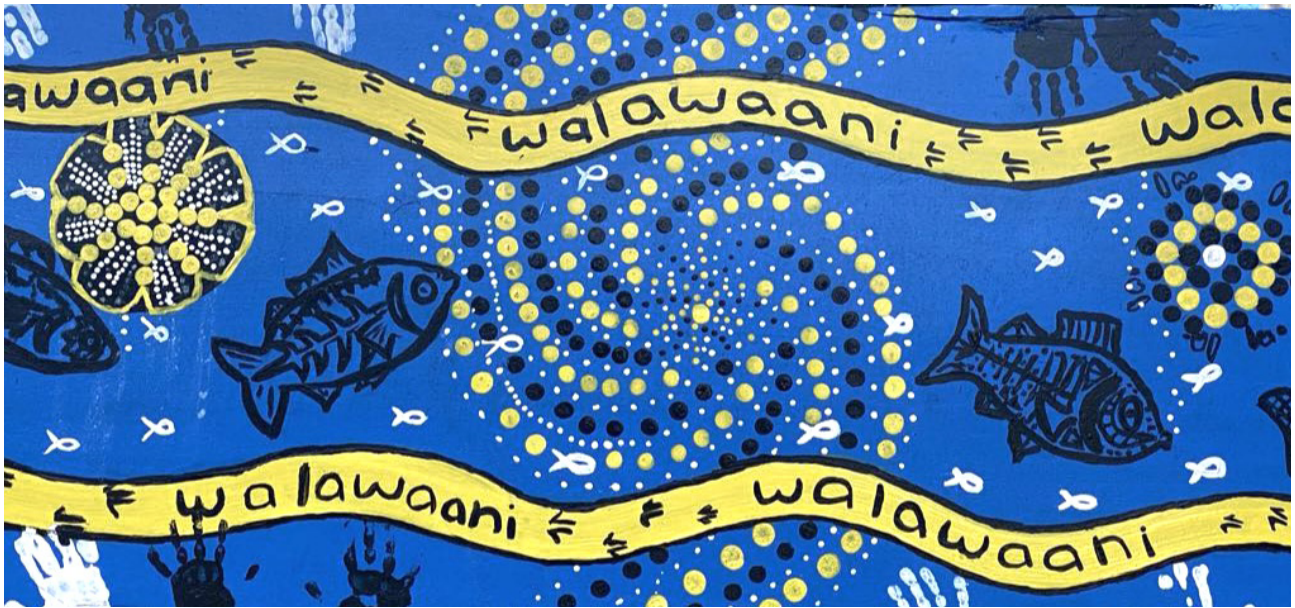
An evidence-informed approach to learning in ACT public schools



ACT
Government

Implementation Plan Phase 1:
Policy and Program Development

September 2024



This artwork was created collaboratively by students in Year 5 and 6 at Jervis Bay School.

"The painting represents students and educators coming together from different places to learn at our little school by the ocean. It shows that we learn in two ways, the 'ancient way' and the 'new way' with both curriculums running side-by-side. Just like this school of fish in the Bay of Plenty (Booderee), we travel closely together on our journey, and we get what we need to thrive and grow. Our ancestors watch us from the sky above, and they are very proud of us."

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Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. We also acknowledge and pay respect to the Wreck Bay peoples as traditional owners and custodians of the land on which the Jervis Bay school is located.

A message from the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs

Every ACT public school student deserves the very best education. The ACT Government is working to make sure every student in Canberra gets ahead.

We are implementing all 8 recommendations from the Final Report of the Literacy and Numeracy Education Expert Panel.

While the Panel's focus was literacy and numeracy, their overarching message to the ACT Government was that to achieve equity and excellence in education, ACT public schools need a system-wide approach to teaching and learning.

The Expert Panel shared with me that they saw examples of excellent teaching across the ACT. Strong Foundations is about making that more consistent.

Strong Foundations will ensure all students at ACT public schools have consistent access to evidence-informed curriculum, teaching, assessments and individual support with a focus on literacy and numeracy.

As the Expert Panel said, implementation will take time. We know that this is a significant change for our system, so implementation will occur in three phases.

Strong Foundations will contribute to reduced workloads for school staff through more system support. It will also support our staff



to collaborate and move between ACT public schools without needing to learn new tools and systems.

Strong Foundations will provide our schools with curriculum and lesson planning support and new professional learning.

ACT public schools already provide high quality education to all our students. Implementing the Expert Panel recommendations will strengthen the great work that is already happening and apply it more consistently across the public school system.

As part of our phased approach, the Expert Panel will undertake an annual independent review of implementation and report directly on progress to the Government.

By providing our teachers with the tools and support they deserve, we are ensuring every child in the ACT experiences an excellent education.

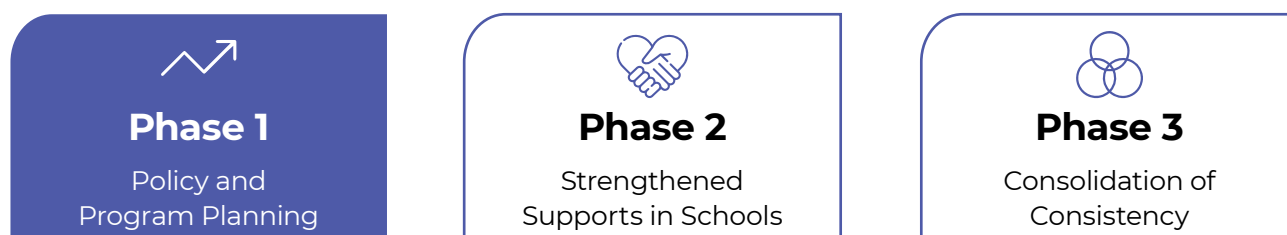
Yvette Berry MLA
Minister for Education and Youth Affairs

What is **Strong Foundations**?

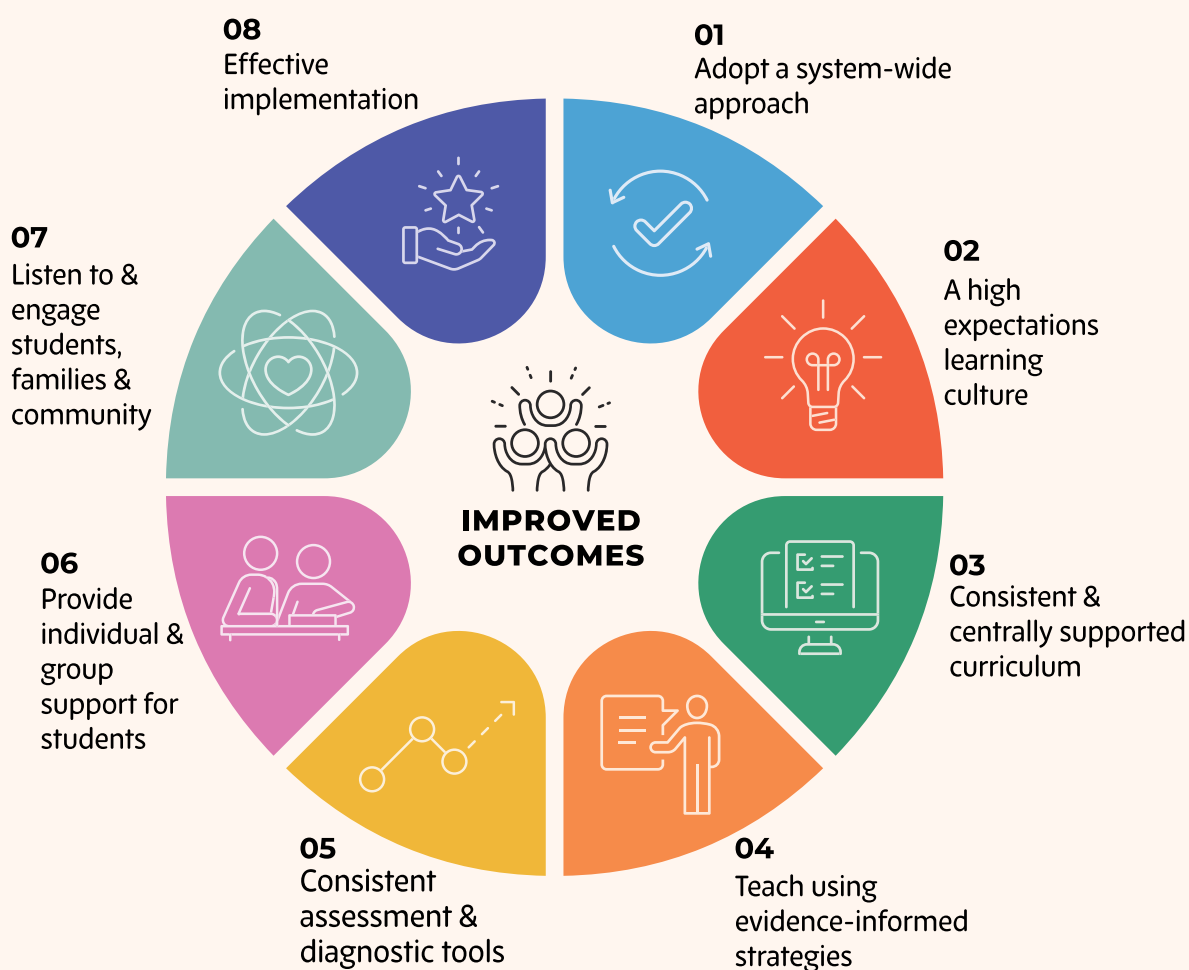
Strong Foundations is our collaborative approach to strengthening evidence-informed learning in ACT public schools. Through a phased approach, Strong Foundations will support all students to receive high quality literacy and numeracy education.

Implemented over 3 phases

Implementation will be based on recommendations and findings from the Literacy and Numeracy Education Expert Panel's Final Report and will occur over three phases:



8 Recommendations to achieve excellence and equity



What will Strong Foundations deliver?

Implementing change in an education system takes time. Students, staff and families will start to see strengthened and new approaches during Phase 1.



For our students:

- > More opportunities to share feedback with their teachers.
- > Teachers will continue to have high expectations of students and help them learn.
- > In primary schools, an increased focus on explicit teaching for literacy and numeracy.
- > Information on how they are progressing towards their learning goals.
- > Quality resources that help them learn.



For our families:

- > Strengthened communications from schools on literacy and numeracy teaching approaches.
- > Fact sheets with information on our system approach to literacy and numeracy.
- > Guidance on how to support students with learning at home.
- > Updated information for families of children with specific learning difficulties.



For our school staff:

- > Evidence-informed literacy and numeracy resources.
- > Enhanced professional learning on evidence-informed teaching.
- > Access to new assessment tools.
- > Instructional leadership development.
- > New data tools to show student learning progress.
- > Resources to support them to communicate with families.

Delivering the 8 Recommendations

To achieve a consistent, evidence-informed approach to learning in all ACT public schools, we will implement the 8 recommendations from the Literacy and Numeracy Education Expert Panel.

01



Adopt a system-wide approach

Develop a consistent approach to curriculum, teaching, assessment and tiered supports for students across all schools.

02



A high expectations learning culture

Build upon the innovative approach of ACT public school leaders with a system focus, making excellent teaching practice more consistent.

03



Consistent & centrally supported curriculum

Deliver the Australian Curriculum and Early Years Learning Framework with more consistency through centrally provided resources and tools.

04



Teach using evidence-informed strategies

Strengthen the use of evidence-informed teaching strategies through additional resources, professional learning and coaching.

05



Consistent assessment & diagnostic tools

Support schools to monitor and respond to learning progress by providing equal access to high quality assessment and diagnostic tools.

06



Provide individual & group support for students

Assist every school to develop a local multi-tiered system of supports that ensures students have access to group and individual attention when needed.

07



Listen to & engage students, families & community

Provide schools with new resources to help them listen to and partner with students, families and the community.

08



Effective implementation

Develop a sustainable, collaborative and long-term implementation plan that includes a detailed change-management approach.

Immediate **Priority Actions**

In 2024, the Education Directorate is working on priority actions that will support the phased implementation of Strong Foundations.



Curriculum resources for preschool-year 2

- > Provide additional funding to support schools with preschool-year 2 students for evidence-informed literacy and numeracy resources for 2025.
- > Examples of resources may include: physical mathematics teaching tools and kindergarten-year 2 decodable readers.



Professional learning resources

- > Prepare new literacy and numeracy professional learning resources to support implementation of system-wide approaches in 2025.
- > Update current professional learning to strengthen alignment with evidence-informed teaching strategies.



Literacy and numeracy assessment toolkit

- > Provide a system-wide literacy and numeracy assessment toolkit to all schools in 2025.
- > Prepare professional learning to support teachers and school leaders to effectively implement new assessment tools in 2025.



Quality assurance process for school resources

- > Develop a process to quality assure resources and professional learning used in schools.
- > Begin to apply the process to literacy and numeracy resources, through a phased approach.



Year 1 phonics check

- > A phased implementation of the Year 1 Phonics Check, starting with 25 ACT public schools during term 3, 2024.
- > Use feedback from pilot schools to determine supports required for full implementation in 2025.



Consultation and evaluation approach

- > Consult with students, schools, families and communities on new initiatives and programs.
- > Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework that will support understanding of progress and impact of Strong Foundations.



Strong Foundations

Phase 1: 2025

How we are working to deliver the 8 recommendations:



01

Adopt a system wide approach

- > Consult and develop a new Learning and Teaching Policy to achieve a consistent approach to curriculum, teaching, assessment, tiered support, and reporting from 2026.



05

Consistent assessment and diagnostic tools

- > Trial different approaches to assessment in schools.
- > Work with educators and experts to develop a new Assessment Strategy, including which assessments will be mandatory from 2026.



02

A high expectations learning culture

- > Develop a consistent approach to professional learning for all staff focused on evidence-informed teaching.
- > Support leaders to strengthen evidence-informed teaching through development of a Leadership Strategy.



06

Provide individual and group support for students

- > Review current approaches to tiered supports across all schools.
- > Identify multi-tiered systems of support models to test in 2026.



03

Consistent and centrally supported curriculum

- > Provide funding for schools to purchase preschool-year 2 literacy and numeracy resources.



07

Listen to and engage students, families and the community

- > Enhance our approach to student voice with a focus on learning.
- > Strengthen advice and resources for schools to enable stronger partnerships with families and community.



04

Teach using evidence-informed practices

- > Develop an Evidence-Informed Teaching Framework that will begin to be used in all ACT public schools from 2026, based on findings from the Expert Panel's Final Report.



08

Effective implementation

- > Listen to students, teachers, school leaders, families and the community when developing Strong Foundations actions.

What does long-term success look like?

- > Students will experience learning growth in literacy and numeracy each year.
- > Families know what their children are learning and how they are being taught.
- > School staff experience a reduction in workload related to planning for literacy and numeracy education.
- > The ACT community is confident that students are receiving an evidence-informed approach to education.



Alignment with current Directorate strategies

Strong Foundations aligns with the **Future of Education Strategy** through:

- > placing students at the centre by ensuring every student attains the foundational literacy and numeracy skills they need to effectively engage in learning
- > ensuring that our school staff are empowered with the right resources, tools and training needed to deliver high quality learning experiences
- > strong communities for learning, fostered through improved engagement with students, families and communities
- > a system that supports learning, through a more consistent and collaborative approach across all ACT public schools.

Strong Foundations also aligns with the **ACT Education Directorate Strategic Plan 2022-25** through:

- > focusing on learning
- > achieving greater consistency and cohesion in the public system
- > incorporating a phased evaluation approach
- > achieving delivery through collaboration.

The implementation of Strong Foundations will support **Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT** and **Inclusive Education: A Disability Inclusion Strategy for ACT Public Schools 2024-2034**.

Strong Foundations will also align with the Education Directorate's **Teacher Workload Reduction Taskforce**, ensuring reducing workload is a key priority.



Consultation, evaluation and review

To support effective implementation the Directorate has developed a staged approach to consultation, evaluation and review.

Implementation Partners

Consultation will occur regularly with an Implementation Partners Group including:

- > Australian Education Union ACT Branch
- > ACT Principals' Association
- > ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations
- > Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body
- > ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies
- > ACT Teacher Quality Institute
- > Community and Public Sector Union.

Embedding Cultural Integrity

Implementation of Strong Foundations actions will embed cultural integrity from the start of consultation and throughout design. Challenging assumptions and established practice will be central to our improvement journey.

Evaluation Framework

An Evaluation Framework will be developed in 2024 to provide a rigorous approach to monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of Strong Foundations. The Evaluation Framework includes:

- > engagement of research organisation and universities as evaluation partners
- > a quantitative and qualitative approach, enabling a mixed-methods analysis
- > collation of baseline and ongoing system-level learning progress data.

Independent Review

On an annual basis, former members of the Expert Panel will conduct an independent review of implementation progress and provide a report directly to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs.

A separate independent implementation and impact review will be conducted in 2029.



Strong Foundations

Phase 1: Policy and Program Development

8 Recommendations		2024 Priority Actions	2025 Phase 1 Implementation
 01	Adopt a system-wide approach	A new quality assurance process for teaching and learning resources used in schools, starting with literacy and numeracy	A new Learning and Teaching Policy will enable consistent curriculum, teaching, assessment and support for students from 2026
 02	A high expectations learning culture	Literacy and numeracy conferences for school leaders Strengthening school-based professional learning to focus on monitoring student outcomes	A system approach to developing school staff that shares evidence-informed approaches to literacy and numeracy education A leadership strategy that focuses on strengthening support for all school leaders
 03	Consistent and centrally supported curriculum	Provide additional funding for all schools with preschool - year 2 for literacy and numeracy resources Work with other school systems to share literacy and numeracy resources	Develop, trial and test new kindergarten - year 2 literacy and numeracy curriculum support for teachers
 04	Teach using evidence-informed strategies	Identify experts to support development of new evidence-informed professional learning	Work with educators and experts to create a new Evidence-Informed Teaching Framework
 05	Consistent assessment and diagnostic tools	Provide schools with system-wide literacy and numeracy assessment for 2025 Phased implementation of the Year 1 Phonics Check Upgrade data tools for teachers so they can easily see assessment results	Develop a new Assessment Strategy to explain what, when, how and why assessments are used Trial and test new assessments to see when they are most useful and what support teachers need to use them effectively
 06	Provide individual and group support for students	Review current approaches to tiered support for students in schools	Trial new tiered-support models in different schools to identify the best approach
 07	Listen to and engage students, families and community	New fact sheets for families on how best to support students with literacy and numeracy	New workshops and online information for families on how to best work with schools to support their children Trial new approaches to gathering feedback from students as partners for learning
 08	Effective implementation	Collaborative development of phased implementation and evaluation plans based on the Expert Panel's advice	Continue to collaborate with principals and key stakeholders to design new policy, strategies and programs



education.act.gov.au/our-priorities/strong-foundations