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16 September 2009

The Secretary
Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601
committees@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Ms Lilburn

On behalf of P&C Council, I would like to provide this submission to the Standing Committee inquiry into the educational achievement gap in the ACT.

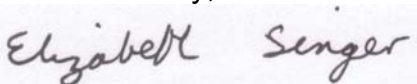
P&C Council (Council) is the peak body representing Parents' and Citizens' Associations (P&Cs) in government primary schools, high schools and secondary colleges in the ACT.

It is a representative organisation whose objectives are to foster a quality public education system, to provide support services for affiliates and to make representations to the government on behalf of parents/carers in government schools. It plays a particularly important role in promoting parent participation in schools and the system as a whole.

Council's submission to this inquiry is based on consultations with P&C associations and school communities, as well as consideration and analysis of existing research and policy approaches.

Please contact me on 6230 1660 or 0420 302 017 if you have any questions about this submission.

Yours sincerely,



Elizabeth Singer
President
ACT Council of Parents' and Citizens' Associations

P&C COUNCIL SUBMISSION TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY INQUIRY ON THE EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN THE ACT

1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The terms of reference for the inquiry are as follows:

That this Assembly refers to the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs for inquiry and report the extent of existing socio-economic differences in educational engagement and achievement in all ACT government and non-government schools, with particular reference to:

- (1) educational engagement and outcomes for students of all interests and abilities, with reference to any implications of cultural background, including Indigenous and ESL students;*
- (2) engagement and achievement rates within the ACT student population including those related to national and international assessments, including:
 - (a) average outcomes;*
 - (b) proportion of students below national and international assessment benchmarks; and*
 - (c) proportion of students achieving at the highest and lowest proficiency levels;**
- (3) qualitative assessments of educational experiences for students from different backgrounds;*
- (4) current programs and initiatives designed to address educational achievement gaps, including resources allocated and relevant experiences in other jurisdictions; and*
- (5) any other related matter.*

2. UNDERSTANDING AND DEFINITIONS

The ACT school system should ensure that all students are performing to their potential regardless of factors such as socio-economic or cultural background. All children should have access to quality child care and preschool education, and these need to be supported by access to health and community services for young children.

P&C Council's formal policy states that 'it is the right of every child to be given the opportunity of an education. Government school education should aim to provide for the maximum development of every student without distinction due to social or

economic status, ability, gender, race, religion, colour or family beliefs' (P&C Council, 2008, Policy A1).

Council understands that the primary aim of this inquiry is to establish whether this is occurring in the ACT for all students regardless of their socio-economic background.

In general, the 'educational achievement gap' refers to the gap in achievement and engagement that exists between successful students and students who are struggling. The term is also used to refer to gaps in achievement between different groups of students. The US Department of Education, for example, defines the achievement gap as the difference in academic performance between different ethnic groups. In the US State of California, the gap is defined as the disparity between white students and other ethnic groups and between English learners and native English speakers, socio-economically disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged and students with disabilities as compared to students without disabilities (State of California, 2009)

On one level, the aim is to close the achievement gap, regardless of the cause or background of students, through a range of strategies. However, to ensure that the most effective set of strategies are in place it is important to examine the barriers to achievement for particular groups of students. Some strategies might be effective for all students (for example, better individual development plans), but other strategies may be needed to address barriers that apply for particular groups of students (for example, the need for culturally appropriate education resources).

Council understands that a key focus of the inquiry is on 'the achievement gap' that exists between successful students and struggling students and the extent to which it relates to their socio-economic background, with special attention to additional implications due to cultural background, including for Indigenous and ESL students.

This understanding is based on debate in the Legislative Assembly on the terms of reference for the inquiry. The ACT Greens proposed an alternative terms of reference to that put forward by the Minister, and this alternative was accepted by the Legislative Assembly. In speaking to this amendment, Ms Amanda Bresnan stated:

The Minister will note that we are interested in and looking both at measurable outcomes and the more qualitative notions of engagement in forming a view about how our school systems are working for the full range of students. The heart of the matter, however, is one of the differences in outcomes across the socio-economic spectrum and how resources can be best targeted to get the best outcomes (Hansard, 2009, p. 2931).

This inquiry will help to shed light on the effectiveness of current policies and programs in reducing the impact of a student's socio-economic background on their educational engagement and achievement, and to define new or different strategies that are needed to improve outcomes. The aim is to create a system and set of conditions where socio-economic background is not a factor that impedes a student in achieving their full potential (wherever they may be on the spectrum of educational achievement.)

Council is concerned, however, that the focus on 'socio-economic status' is unduly narrow, and prefers the concept of 'socio-economic disadvantage'. As explained by a meta-analysis of the most cited research into this area, risk factors indicating socio-economic disadvantage are wider than socio-economic status, and include:

- Poverty
- Single or no parent(s)
- No parent employed full-time/for the full year
- All parents have a disability
- Mother does not have a high school education
- No parent fluent in English

(Gates Foundation, 2005, p. 6)

In terms of closing the achievement gap, the aim is to ensure continuous improvement and success for all students. The achievement gap would be narrowed, for example, if there was a decline in performance of the top performing students, but that is not the intention. The intention is to continually improve the progress of all students, including the acceleration of lower performing students.

3. STATEMENTS AGAINST THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

3.1 Terms of Reference 1: educational engagement and outcomes for students of all interests and abilities, with reference to any implications of cultural background, including Indigenous and ESL students.

Council's comments on this section of the Terms of Reference can be found in Section 3.3 of this document.

3.2 Term of Reference 2: engagement and achievement rates within the ACT student population including those related to national and international assessments, including:

- (a) average outcomes;**
- (b) proportion of students below national and international assessment benchmarks; and**
- (c) proportion of students achieving at the highest and lowest proficiency levels.**

Achievement of ACT students is compared to that of students in other states and territories and other countries in a number of ways :

- NAPLAN testing for years 3, 5, 7 and 9 – done every year – comparisons at state level; data available (confidentially) at school and individual level – done by ACARA

- Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) – every four years, most recently 2007 – done by the National Center for Education Statistics, US Department of Education
- Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) – international comparisons of performance in science - every 3 years, most recently 2006 – done by the OECD

All these instruments allow comparison of student performance in relation to their peers nationally and internationally. Rather than repeat detail that is available from the reports we would like to draw attention to a few general principles and give an example.

NAPLAN has now moved to reporting average scores in each of its categories, and many international comparisons are given as averages for different countries. Whilst averages can be reasonable indicators for overall performance, and changes in averages indicate overall trends, they can mask important trends occurring within different areas. So, for example, an improvement at the lower end can be masked by a decline at the upper end.

Reporting of achievement against benchmarks has in the past been the most common way of making comparisons, probably because percentage achieving a minimum standard is easy for the public to understand, whereas a quoted mean performance in isolation has no real meaning. Term of reference 2(b) and the part of term of reference 2(c) referring to the ‘lowest proficiency levels’ are essentially the same thing. Substantial resources have been devoted to ensuring that students in a number of special categories achieve to their potential and hopefully to above benchmark levels. Such resources need to continue, and much of this submission deals with the needs of such categories of students.

In looking after the lower end of the proficiency spectrum the performance of students at the upper and middle ends can tend to be taken for granted, and may decline through fixed resources being preferentially allocated to groups identified with particular needs. This is where the part of term of reference 2(c) referring to the ‘highest ... proficiency levels’ is so important, and should be carefully examined by the inquiry.

As an example, consider the results for mathematical literacy in PISA for 2000, 2003 and 2006, as reported by Thomson and de Bortoli (2008), Tables 1.9 – 1.11.

Percentile	ACT			Australia		
	2000	2003	2006	2000	2003	2006
5th	407	382	384	380	364	375
10th	438	416	421	418	399	406
25th	487	487	479	474	460	460
Mean	548	548	539	533	524	520
75th	614	612	602	594	592	581
90th	670	670	648	647	645	633
95th	697	699	675	679	676	663

While the ACT scores are still higher than the overall Australian scores, the differences have noticeably decreased at the top (90th and 95th) and the bottom (5th and 10th), while staying similar in the middle. This suggests that support for the students at both extremes is better in other states than in the ACT.

Concentrating on the ACT results it can be seen that from 2003 to 2006 there was a substantial decline in performance at all percentiles except the two lowest. Even at the two lowest percentiles the improvement was not significant, leaving the 2006 levels well below the 200 levels.

Results from these national and international comparisons can be highly variable. However, there are enough instances like the one shown in the table to raise concerns about the quality of education provided to the vast majority of students.

3.3 Term of Reference 3: qualitative assessments of educational experiences for students from different backgrounds.

Council conducted a qualitative survey of P&Cs to provide information on this term of reference. A copy of Council's survey is attached ([Attachment A](#)).

The survey shows that individual schools are being proactive and pursuing a range of actions to value the diversity of their student populations, to promote inclusivity and to engage students from different backgrounds. These range from smaller one-off or day-to-day actions to more formal programs and initiatives, for example:

- School assemblies run by Indigenous or ESL students;
- NAIDOC week and Harmony Day celebrations;
- The inclusion of indigenous art and history in the curriculum;
- Literacy and numeracy assistance programs to ensure that students with diverse needs reach the minimum standards expected on entry to high school;
- College courses for students with low literacy;
- Reading and maths extension programs, and other programs for gifted and talented students;
- Outdoor education programs that build self esteem, confidence and resilience;
- Access to a special teacher who comes into the school to work with Indigenous students, working with them individually with input from classroom teachers and parents/carers;
- Delivery of the *National Values Project* which contains many avenues for studying social issues relating to Indigenous people, minority groups human rights, inclusion, acceptance, tolerance and religious freedom;
- Implementation of a program called 'Learning by Design' with some of the units incorporating Indigenous art, culture and history;

- Implementation of programs for students at risk of dropping out of school early, for example, the Fast Track Program and the V-Tech program (which includes a literacy component);
- Employment of an Indigenous Liaison Officer;
- Artists in-residence;
- Corporate volunteers/mentors assisting with literacy;
- Implementation of the junior International Baccalaureate program, an inquiry-based program that works well in engaging students across all levels.

The issues that emerged from responses to the survey are as follows:

- The need for ongoing support and funding for the programs that are working successfully;
- The costs being borne by parents to try and resolve learning disabilities outside of school, for example, assessment and diagnosis, tutoring, counselling – for some parents costing up to \$100 a week;
- More support in the classroom for challenging students (those that do not fall into a disability category), for example, those with a learning disability or behavioural problems;
- The need to find a way for every school, regardless of size, to have a dedicated Music, Arts and Drama Teacher. The significant and positive impact of these programs in student engagement and development must not be lost in the growing focus on ‘academic achievement’. (This issue is discussed further in Section 4 of Council’s submission);
- The importance of physical and outdoor education programs which engage students, and build self esteem, confidence, resilience which makes them better able to do their study.
- The importance of values education in schools;
- ESL students are not a homogeneous group and they often have issues other than literacy eg post traumatic stress – there is a need for wrap-around services for these students;
- There is a lack of expectation about literacy achievement for students with a disability;
- The need to address inequities across schools in voluntary contributions from parents. If a school has a history of low voluntary contributions, perhaps it should receive an injection of funds from the Department of Education to cover the shortfall. Otherwise schools from ‘rich’ communities have more resources available to them than those in ‘poor’ communities.

3.4 Term of Reference 4: current programs and initiatives designed to address educational achievement gaps, including resources allocated and relevant experiences in other jurisdictions.

3.4.1 ACT Objectives and targets

Council notes that one of the promises made by the ACT Government in the lead-up to the 2007 election was to 'require all schools to develop action plans to reduce the achievement gap in their school'.

Literacy and numeracy

The ACT's *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2009-2013* states that

the ACT Government is committed to bridging the gap between our highest and lowest achievers... While many students perform well, this new strategy will help us prioritise and target our support to those students in most need and those students not performing to their full potential... All students, regardless of their diverse backgrounds, must be supported to progress to higher standards in literacy and numeracy as they move through school.

The objective of the strategy is to improve the literacy and numeracy learning of every student. As part of this the strategy includes the following targets (page 5):

- To increase the mean score in NAPLAN in years 3,5,7,and 9 by eight points in reading, writing and numeracy;
- To reduce the achievement gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy by 25%.

The plan notes that 'Indigenous students, students from disadvantaged backgrounds and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are over-represented in the lowest 20% of students in the ACT' (in terms of literacy and numeracy learning outcomes) (DET, 2009, p. 12).

It also states that 'an analysis of performance trends on national and international assessments over the previous five years has identified specific areas where improvements in student outcomes can be made. Those identified areas are:

- Improving the literacy and numeracy outcomes for all Indigenous students;
- Writing, spelling and numeracy in the primary and middle years
- Maximising the achievements of our high performing students (DET, 2009, p. 12).

Council believes that an important strategy for achieving the targets of the Plan is an increased focus on parent participation and the development of parent-school partnerships. This includes giving parents the skills and confidence to support their child's learning. Council fully supports the U Can Read program, jointly offered by the ACT Department of Education and Training and the University of Canberra, to develop students' literacy skills by providing parents and carers with ideas, knowledge and support.

The Strategy, obviously, focuses on literacy and numeracy targets and initiatives. A system plan and individual school plans to narrow the achievement gap need to be broader than literacy and numeracy alone.

Other ACT programs

This submission does not attempt to describe and evaluate all of the current ACT and Commonwealth government programs aimed at reducing the achievement gap between socio-economic groups, as it is beyond Council's resources to do so. Council would like to highlight the importance of programs such as the Secondary Bursary Scheme (for students in Years 7-10) and the school-based Student Support funds that provide direct assistance to low socio-economic families (for assistance to take part in school activities such as excursions). As a general principle, Council believes that these programs need to be well promoted to the targeted group and funded and administered on a needs basis (that is, all families in need receive assistance rather assistance being provided to families until a program funding cap is reached).

Council remains concerned that students from low socio-economic backgrounds may experience educational disadvantage through a lack of, or limited access to, the internet. As in past Council Budget submissions, we call on the Government to provide funding for home-based access to the internet for students from low socio-economic backgrounds currently without access. Council believes that the process for addressing this issue needs to involve:

- Establishing the broad extent of the need for improved access. Council suggests that schools should conduct a survey within their communities on student access to broadband internet in the home (or this information could be gathered along with enrolment data);
- Investigating the options for providing student access to broadband internet in the home. Possibilities include establishing a pool of laptops with wireless links owned by the ACT Government, the Department of Education or individual schools, providing funds to directly to schools and/or families through an equity fund; negotiating and funding an agreement with an internet service provider to provide low cost internet services to eligible families; and
- Determining eligibility requirements and identifying the low income families that are eligible.

3.4.2 Experiences in another jurisdiction: California, USA

In researching for this submission, Council looked at the experience of the Californian Department of Education in reducing the achievement gap between different groups of students – including between white students and other ethnic groups, between English learners and native English speakers and between socio-economically disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students.

In 2007, the State undertook a project to identify ways of closing California's achievement gap (racial and economic). California established a Council to 'develop, implement and sustain a specific, ambitious plan that holds the State of California accountable for creating the conditions necessary for closing the achievement gap'.

The work of the Council is described on the website www.closingtheachievementgap.org.

The work of the Californian Council was organised around four major themes:

- Access – How can students gain access to what they need? This could include rigorous curriculum and instruction; highly effective teachers; counselors; extra learning options that supplement the education provided in a typical day; and health and social services; etc;
- Culture/climate – How can schools offer the best learning environment for all students? Is it a safe place for students to learn? Is it an environment that promotes learning and a sense of belonging for students and school staff? Does it offer culturally relevant and responsive instruction? Do effective school-family-community partnerships exist?
- Expectations – Are high expectations for all students and teachers truly held? Is it evident in the curriculum, instructional practices, student assignments, and the schools' communication to students, parents, and school staff? Is student progress measured using data and effective instructional strategies?
- Strategies – What practices have proven effective (or are promising) for closing the achievement gap? Strategies should address improving the quality of instruction; differentiated instruction; increasing instructional time; teacher collaboration time; reconsidering how to differentiate schools by grade span; etc.

The Californian Council believes that the State should work to eliminate the following barriers (California P-16 Council, 2008):

1. The systematic and structural lack of access to the support and strategies students need to succeed;
2. School cultures that are too often not conducive to high academic achievement;
3. The pernicious existence of low expectations for a segment of the student population;
4. Lack of effective strategies to deal with the hardest-to-reach students.

O'Connell makes the point that

[I]t must be emphasized that without complementary investment in socio-economic areas that impact children the most (for example, health care, housing, living in safe environments, extended day care) it will be significantly more difficult to close the achievement gap. No program, no matter how well it is designed, can work in isolation.

One of the best features of the website www.closingtheachievementgap.org is that it includes detailed case study material from schools that have experienced success in closing the achievement gap. These schools are non-selective, from high poverty areas

and have achieved sustained success in raising performance. They include primary schools, middle schools and high schools.

The case studies highlight the common factors that have contributed to success, which are listed in detail in Attachment B.

3.5 Term of Reference 5: Any other related matter

This submission focuses on the achievement gap between students from different socio-economic backgrounds and strategies to overcome barriers for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds in achieving their full potential through their schooling. Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are not a homogeneous group, and many face additional barriers to achieving their full potential, for example, they may be a student with a disability, an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, a refugee or from a non-English speaking background. Families from lower socio-economic backgrounds, obviously, have very limited income with which to access the necessary services, materials or equipment for their child. Government services must be resourced at a level that ensures that a child from a low socio-economic background is able to access the services, materials or equipment that they need for their development, and that they are not disadvantaged because of their family background.

As noted in Section 2 of this submission, the difference in engagement and outcomes between socio-economic groups is not the only 'achievement gap'. Another relates to the engagement and outcomes for students with a disability. Council notes that it has made a submission to the Review of Special Education Services in ACT public schools (the Shaddock review) which is to feed into a broader Legislative Assembly inquiry on the Needs of ACT Students with a Disability. Some of the strategies put forward in Council's submission to the Shaddock review apply equally to the socio-economic and other achievement gaps, for example, the need for:

- Rigorous individual development plans;
- Strong family-school partnerships;
- Strengthened training for teachers and Learning Support Assistants;
- The co-location or linking of school and community services; and
- Collaboration between schools and specialist service providers.

In addition, there are strategies that are particular to students with disabilities (for example, those around assessment and funding of needs), as will emerge from the Shaddock review and the broader Legislative Assembly inquiry.

4. A PLAN FOR ACTION

A number of issues emerge from current programs and initiatives, consultations and research. There are a number of areas Council would like to emphasise for action.

These should form part of a structured and funded plan to address the achievement gap as it relates to socio-economic status.

(a) Equitable and needs-based funding

As a general principle, Council believes that school funding arrangements and funding for particular programs should be equitable with a significant needs-based component.

In 2002, Council made a submission to the Inquiry into Funding for ACT Schools (the Connors' Inquiry). The submission was called *A Fair Go for All Kids: Funding for Equity and Excellence in ACT Schools*. The major recommendations put forward in this submission still stand, including those set out below:

1. Council recommends that the Inquiry endorse the following propositions:

That the current educational standards in the ACT in both government and non-government sectors are high, but that since other governments, both in Australia and internationally, are increasingly investing in education, investing in school education should remain a priority for the ACT Government

That given the evidence for pervasive inequalities in educational outcomes in Australia, including in the ACT, the ACT Government should adopt as a particular priority increased funding on the basis of equity and needs, to be directed both in the form of increased support for individual students with identified needs, such as students with disabilities, students identified as needing learning assistance, and students with major behavioural problems, as well as to schools which have significant enrolments of students whose socio-demographic characteristics, such as low socio-economic status and Indigenous origin are currently associated with low educational outcomes.

and

3. Council recommends that the Inquiry endorse the following proposition:

That governments have a particular responsibility to ensure that all students achieve adequate outcomes from education, and to ensure that there is equity in outcomes across social groups, irrespective of the school, or school sector in which they are educated. This means that the priority for funding increases should go to the least well-resourced schools and to the equity components of funding.

Council would like to see funding arrangements improved at the ACT and Federal Government level, and asks that the ACT Government advocate for a better funding model when the funding arrangements are reviewed in the lead up to the new funding agreement to commence in 2013. There needs to be a revised model of funding for Australian schools, government and non-government.

Council is aware that the ACT has in place a number of specific programs to address educational achievement gaps. As a general principle, Council believes that these

programs need to be funded and administered on a needs basis. This is not always the case, as illustrated by the example of the English as a Second Language program.

Council has sought in past Budget submissions, a change in the mechanism for calculating the funding under the English as a Second Language program, so that it relates directly to the actual number of ESL students in need. Currently, the eligibility cut-off point under the program is effectively determined by the funding allocated to the program. This means that instead of being able to provide assistance to all students assessed as in need of ESL specialist support, assistance can only be provided to those of greatest need up to the limit of funding. The current mechanism for funding means that not all students in need of ESL (performing below the mainstream average) receive support. Funding should provide for assistance for all students whose Language Performance rating falls below an agreed level.

(b) Program continuity

Two of the strong messages from P&Cs and school communities during our consultations have been:

- the need to acknowledge the excellent programs that are currently in place in ACT Government schools to address gaps in achievement and engagement – many examples were cited across different schools; and as part of this
- the need to hold onto and share programs that are effective, for example, by:
 - providing secure and long-term funding for programs that are evaluated as having positive outcomes;
 - examining the impact of mobility provisions on specialist programs. Principals should use their power to suspend the mobility provisions in certain cases eg where a teacher has been running a specialist program;
 - targeted recruitment of specialist teachers;
 - running innovative programs as trials to ensure there is reporting and sharing of success; and
 - better sharing of best practice, for example, in-service training for principals on successful programs – allowing principals to choose a particular program that might suit their student population;
 - ensuring that initial teacher training provides a base of knowledge for teaching a range of students;
 - recognising that individual grant programs do not allow the opportunity for economies of scale across clusters or schools with similar needs.

The experience of school communities has too often been that funding and support for programs is discontinued after one or two funding cycles even when they are proving to be effective, or that programs ‘wither on the vine’ when an enthusiastic or specialist teacher moves on and the program is not properly handed on to another teacher.

(c) The importance of school-family partnerships

Research shows that parental involvement in their child's learning has many benefits. For example, in his report on *Closing the Achievement Gap*, Jack O'Connell writes

When families are involved, students hear common messages from home and school about the importance of attending school, staying in school and working hard as a student.

Research indicates that family involvement in schools increases student achievement. The benefit of parent and family involvement include higher test scores and grades, better attendance, high rate of completion of homework, more positive attitudes and behaviour, high graduation rates and greater enrolment in higher education (California P-16 Council, 2008).

Parents are involved in schools in a variety of ways, for example, canteen duty, fundraising, making voluntary contributions. This is highly valuable and valued. Council would also like to promote parent participation and parent-school partnerships in teaching and learning.

Council believes that students who are struggling would benefit most from increased parental involvement in learning, but sometimes/often it is the parents of these students who are the least likely to be involved. There is a need to identify and address the obstacles to participation faced by these parents, for example, as recognised in the Californian success stories cited in Attachment B, there is often a need to provide parents with the support, help, skills, information and confidence to be effectively involved in their children's education. Parent participation is often difficult for parents from non-English speaking backgrounds because of the language barrier.

Council has a formal policy on parent participation (Attachment C). As put forward in Council's policy, the Department has in place a policy entitled *Parents/Carers as Partners in Schooling*. It may be timely to have a renewed focus on this policy and its implementation on the ground. Council's policy also recommends that the ACT Government provide 'additional funding to the government schools budget for central office support for . . . staff time for parent participation co-ordinators in schools and the appointment of home/school liaison officers.' Council believes this approach would be particularly beneficial in schools with students from lower socio-economic communities and from non-English speaking backgrounds.

(d) Individual development plans

Council would like to emphasise that one of the most important strategies for continually improving student outcomes is the implementation of effective and rigorous Individual Development Plans. Anecdotal evidence suggests that parents have had more success getting their students onto an effective Individual Development Plan in the non-government sector. Council would like to see this process embedded for all students in the ACT government school sector.

The IDP plans should allow for:

- the early identification of learning problems or needs;
- an identification of the type of support that is needed;
- collaboration between teachers and others such as specialist teachers, counselors, health professionals.

(e) Plans and programs at school, cluster and system level

As well as individual development plans, plans are needed at the school, cluster and system level. These plans need to be broader than literacy and numeracy. An example of a cluster level plan is the Community Partnerships Agreement recently developed by the North Canberra cluster of school communities on inclusivity and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The Agreement states that:

As a community we will:

- value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures;
- develop mutual respect, acknowledgement and a welcoming and inclusive school environment;
- build quality relationships with students – staff will know their students, their interests and aspirations;
- improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
- provide support for learning, social support and quality teaching that meets students' needs and goals;
- reflect, review and respond together.

Those involved in developing of the Agreement have commented on how useful the process itself has been in making connections, promoting understanding and raising awareness.

(f) Addressing Learning disabilities

An issue that comes up repeatedly in consultations with parents and P&Cs is the need for a set of strategies to better address the needs of children with learning disabilities or behavioural problems. Often parents are trying to resolve these learning disabilities outside of school and are bearing costs for services such as assessment and diagnosis, tutoring and counselling. This support is then not necessarily linked in with what is happening in the classroom, so both in-school and out-of-school support is not as effective as it could be. Where parents are unable to afford out-of-school support, learning disabilities are often not adequately addressed, compounding a student's difficulties throughout their schooling.

The set of strategies needs to include:

- early identification (at three or four years of age) of children with speech, hearing, sight or developmental difficulties that impede the acquisition of foundation literacy skills;
- access to professional support in a timely manner, for example, in the ACT there is a need for a significant increase in speech therapy and in occupational health services for children. Occupational therapist can assist children who have basic mechanical disabilities (such as lessened muscle tone) that impact on handwriting, reading and concentration. At present there are only 2 Occupational Therapists in the ACT each with a case load of approximately 600 clients;
- more specialist teachers and appropriately trained learning support assistants.

(g) Early learning

There has been growing recognition in Australia and overseas of the importance of early learning improving not only school-readiness but also the longer-term educational and social outcomes for children.

Economic, education, public health, and neuroscience research clearly point to the need for increased public investment in quality early learning for children as an effective approach to proven serious negative outcomes such as homelessness, poverty and incarceration. Likewise early learning leads to positive benefits earlier in life, including higher education levels and academic achievement (Gates Foundation, 2005, p. 5).

This paper shows that the highest potential for impact for public investment in education is in the early years where brain growth and development is at its highest (see Figure 4, p. 8).

While learning intervention strategies are in place to assist young ESL students and students with a disability, government funded early intervention should be available in the 0-5 years age group for other students experiencing socio-economically disadvantage (see Section 2). Results of two successful American studies demonstrate the success of early intervention for at-risk students (Gates Foundation, 2005, p. 19 – see Attachment E).

All children should have access to quality child care and preschool education, and this needs to be supported by access to health and community services for young children.

Currently, ACT students take the Performance Indicators in Primary School (PIPS) assessment in Terms 1 and 4 of kindergarten as part of the Early Years Assessment Program. In Council's view the first test should be administered in the final term of preschool so that school welfare teams have an indication of children's progress when they start school, and can plan accordingly.

(h) Breadth of curriculum

P&C Council believes that a broad curriculum is particularly important in addressing gaps in educational engagement and achievement. It is important that the concentration on literacy and numeracy reporting and assessment does not lead to a narrowing of the curriculum.

While it is argued that literacy and numeracy skills are crucial to learning across the curriculum, the same can be said for other subjects, including languages, music and physical education. In this submission, we focus on music as an example.

Music is not often discussed when talking about improving achievement gaps. However, the recent *National Review of School Music Education* (Pascoe et al, 2005) found that the highest achieving schools in Australia all had music as an important component of their school. It noted that the importance of music in learning was even recognized as far back as Plato. Section 2.1.2 of the review, 'The value of music education', is extracted as Attachment D.

No subject is really isolated within our curriculum and music is an essential component for success in other subjects. Studying music has a significant positive impact on performance in other subjects, especially language and mathematics (Walker, 2009).

The benefits of studying music include:

1. Developing the full variety of children's intelligence;
2. Developing the capacity for creative thought and action;
3. The education of feeling and sensibility;
4. The exploration of values;
5. The understanding cultural change and differences; and
6. Developing physical and perceptual skills. (Pascoe et al, 2005, p. 9 – see Attachment D).

Supporting the funding and development of an appropriate curriculum for music (not a watered down 'listen to the top 40 songs' version) advances social inclusion and removes some of the impacts of social and economic disadvantage.

Some ACT schools have successfully used a combination of sport and academic learning to re-engage students. Music shares some of the same advantages and adds social cohesion. Students learning to play a piece of music together become part of a 'team' working towards the same goal, requiring them to co-operate and work collaboratively.

It is also important to remember a broad curriculum is an important means of maintaining student engagement, raising self esteem and building confidence and resilience.

(i) Teacher quality and professional development

The most effective way to improve student outcomes is to increase the quality of teaching. As part of this Council was pleased when the ACT Department of Education and Training introduced the 'Quality Teaching Model' in 2009. The importance of upskilling our teachers using a research based, well designed program is paramount. However, while the model is designed and aimed to be continuously used in ACT schools, the continuation of professional development in 2010 and 2011 will be very limited. It means that schools must upskill their teachers, discuss problems with the implementation of elements at a local level without access to large amounts of further Department funded Professional Development. It is very hard for teachers to embed something like this without continuous access to ample priority support from the Department for at least the next two years.

Initial teacher training must prepare teachers for the range of student needs. Teachers in their first and second years of employment should be once again, allocated additional time for lesson plans and access to senior teaching staff as mentors to assist with the creation of Individual Development Plans for students.

Increased emphasis must be placed on the professional development and upskilling of existing teachers through, for example, incentives for teachers to gain higher teaching qualifications, an increase in the number of professional development days from five under the existing Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, incentives for teachers to undertake additional professional development in non-term time.

Professional development and upskilling is also crucial for Learning Support Assistants (LSAs). This is an area which requires significant attention. It is extremely important for all teachers and LSA's to have a sound knowledge of how to adapt existing programs to suit the variety of learning styles of students they will come across throughout their careers.

(j) Class Sizes

Council also calls on the Government to honour its commitment to reduce class sizes in government schools. In the lead up to the last ACT election, the Government promised 'from 2010, an average class size of 21 in primary schools and high schools, and an average of 19 in colleges'. While we understand that the Government is intending to meet this promise through an average over the system, we ask that it also set a ceiling for class numbers, for example, that there be no individual class in the system of over 25 students.

(k) School Community Links

Council strongly supports the concept of school-community links, where schools become access hubs for health and community services. The ACT Government has been pursuing this model, for example, through the location of childcare and other services at P-2 Early Childhood Schools. This direction needs to be further pursued

and extended across ACT Government schools through the co-location or delivery of services at the school site., To make sure these arrangements work as effectively as possible, there need to be clear and detailed protocols or memoranda of understanding on the working relationships between DET and other service providers (both government and non-government).

(l) Better nutrition and healthy food messages

Council supports programs within schools that promote and develop students' knowledge, skills, values and attitudes towards health and nutrition. Teaching children about health and nutrition in the classroom is an important part of ensuring the health and wellbeing of all Australians now and in the future (*Nourish: The Facts: The Food in ACT guidelines for Preschool to Year 12*, p4).

It also has a positive effect in the daily classroom management as children and adolescents as with appropriate nutrition have improved cognitive development, attention span, work capacity, classroom behaviour and attendance at school and preschool (Nourish, p6).

Although teachers are not trained nutritionists they are however trained to design and facilitate learning. Therefore Council recommends that teachers be trained in best practice for teaching health and nutrition in the classroom.

Council encourages programs that develop a positive health and nutrition ethos in all aspects of the school life. This includes providing a healthy menu in the school canteen, celebratory days, school camps and fundraising activities. It includes providing families with information on the importance of good nutrition and a healthy breakfast through school newsletters.

Council supports schools in adopting and implementing the guidelines for promoting and teaching health and nutrition in schools- as set out in *Nourish: The Facts: The Food in ACT guidelines for Preschool to Year 12*.

School/P&C breakfast clubs are

Council also notes that school/P&C run breakfast clubs are meeting an important need in many school communities. Having a healthy breakfast is important to health, social and learning outcomes for students. School communities should assess whether a breakfast club might fill a need in their community.

(m) Broad economic and social policy framework

In his report on *Closing the Achievement Gap*, Jack O'Connell states that

[I]t must be emphasized that without complementary investment in socio-economic areas that impact children the most (for example, health care, housing, living in safe environments, extended day care) it will be significantly more difficult to close the

achievement gap. No program, no matter how well it is designed, can work in isolation (California P-16 Council, 2008).

The important point is that any plan to address the educational achievement gap must sit within a broader economic and social policy framework.

5. CONCLUSION

Council recommends that a comprehensive plan of action be developed to close the achievement gap and address the barriers faced by students experiencing socio-economic disadvantage to achieving their full potential. This plan of action should draw on the research and points outlined in this submission.

Council emphasises that there is a significant cost to society of not addressing the achievement gaps that currently exist for groups of students. Research shows that investment in education brings long-term benefits to the economy and to individuals. Some of these benefits are outlined in the recently released OECD report *Education at a Glance 2009* (OECD, 2009). To maximise these benefits and to promote social equity, it is important that all students are assisted to reach their maximum potential.

Council is concerned that ACT government schools are currently operating in a restrictive fiscal environment. Current funding is insufficient to adequately address the achievement gap. Without increased funding, improvements to the education of socio-economically disadvantaged students will have to come at other students' expense.

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Questions for parents re ‘The educational achievement gap in the ACT’ inquiry

The Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs is conducting an inquiry into the extent of existing socio-economic differences in educational engagement and achievement in all ACT government and non-government schools. The terms of reference are available at <http://www.parliament.act.gov.au/downloads/terms-of-reference/TORedugap.pdf>.

P&C Council is preparing a submission to the inquiry. We are seeking the input of parents into our submission. Please respond to any or all of the following questions below. Responses are requested by Sunday 16th August. Please email them to parents@canberra.net.au or post to ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, PO Box 4741, Higgins, ACT 2615.

The ACT Education system has a very diverse student population with students having many different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, interests, abilities and life experiences. Our schools must provide each student with the opportunities to achieve their full potential.

We are seeking your comments on how well your school does this. We have some specific questions below that you may want to consider. We also welcome any general comments you wish to make.

- How well does your school engage all students regardless of their background, including Indigenous and ESL students?
- What strategies does your school use to engage all students of different abilities and interests? Are these successful?
- Parents look for many different outcomes from their school, such as encouraging personal development, developing a love of learning and providing a safe and happy environment, as well as the educational outcomes. Does your school produce good outcomes for all students?
- Do you have any examples of the experiences of students from different backgrounds that you wish to share?
- Tell us about any programs and resources used by your school to address gaps in educational achievement, you may wish to comment on how effective they are?
- Are there any references or resources that you think should be considered in developing Council’s submission?
- Are there any other issues you want to raise?

FACTORS FOR SUCCESS IN CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN CALIFORNIA, USA

- a positive school culture emphasizing high expectations, continuous improvement and celebrating success, for example:
 - dispelling the myth that students from high poverty non-English speaking backgrounds cannot be successful;
 - implementation of a 'no excuses' culture, where being solution driven is the norm;
 - having mottos such as 'fight complacency', 'good is the enemy of great';
- a clear mission that is shared with the wider community;
- individual performance goals and plans for students, particularly struggling students:
 - developed and regularly discussed with students and parents;
 - the goals set for students are measurable
 - at one school, the principal meets one-on-one with students to discuss their progress and set goals for the year. Students keep a poster on their desks with their goals;
 - students are rewarded for improved performance;
- providing students with the support needed to achieve their set goals. This could include, for example:
 - after-school tutoring;
 - after-school activities (both academic and recreational);
 - differentiated instruction based on individual student needs;
 - adapting the curriculum to address student needs;
 - funding for part-time Impact Teachers working to an individual learning plan;
 - language, arts and resource specialists to provide support for the lowest performing students;
 - extended day kindergarten for struggling students;
 - literacy-focused classes for struggling students, taught by an experienced teacher with extra support from a reading specialist. The goal is to prepare these students so they can move to a general class within a year;
 - access to reading recovery/reading specialist. The lowest achieving first grade students in reading see a reading specialist either individually or in small groups;
 - a full-time counsellor on-site who meets with students daily to work on behaviour and academic issues;

- staff from school and after school programs work together to align student learning goals;
- continuity of learning assistance programs is crucial;
- continuity and delegation of leadership, for example, leadership duties are distributed or rotated across staff;
- shared decision making and teacher collaboration, for example:
 - regular grade and/or multi grade level meetings;
 - collaboration on the plans to improve student learning;
 - collaboration on best practice and consistent school wide instructional strategies, standards, school policies and programs;
 - sharing of data;
 - articulation across grade levels at the end of the year, that is, teachers meet with grade above and below to talk about strengths and challenges for each student;
- a well-defined plan for instructional improvement, for example:
 - a staff development plan;
 - a focus on professional development, for example, release days;
 - use of assessment data to modify instruction;
 - provide a mentor for teachers to help them move from good to great;
 - teacher training on safety, discipline and attendance;
 - promotion of professional conversations;
 - an array of professional development opportunities;
 - instructional practices that foster critical thinking and problem solving, working independently and in groups;
- extensive family involvement, for example:
 - an expectation that parents to be active partners in education;
 - twice yearly conferences with parents (aiming for 100% attendance by parents);
 - additional regular communication with parents on performance goals and progress;
 - the holding of student assistance team meetings with the parents of struggling students. The meetings include the teacher, principal, resource specialist, language and arts specialists and other support staff. The aim is to work together to develop a plan to support the student;
 - offering parents opportunities to develop skills and knowledge, for example, English language classes, family literacy nights, maths nights by grade level, seminars on parenting and education topics;

- take opportunities to teach parents the skills to help their students, for example, how to read standardised reports, contacting a child's teacher, checking homework;
- address home and family issues affecting students, for example:
 - counsellors aggressively connect students and families to outside resources and services (housing, health etc);
- regular assessments and data analysis to:
 - set goals for individuals, teachers and the school;
 - evaluate progress against goals;
 - track data for individual students over time;
 - modify instructional strategies and/or student groupings;
 - identify lower performing students and develop a plan for their improvement.
 - share data with teachers, parents and students.

B1. PARENT PARTICIPATION

Premise

Parents are partners in schooling by virtue of their role as the central provider/carer and the role they play in their children's learning and development.

Parents have the right to be involved in all aspects of education of their children, at the home, school and system level.

Parent involvement can take many forms: for example, participation in decision making at the school and system levels; consultation on educational and school management issues; representation on committees and advisory groups; involvement in school and classroom programs; the support of learning at home; communication between school and home on student progress; the operation of school canteens and out of hours care programs; and assistance in fundraising.

Parent participation:

- is a democratic right;
- contributes to better outcomes for all students;
- enables the school system and individual schools to respond more effectively to community values, aspirations and needs; and
- enhances the strength and vibrancy of the public education system.

Parent participation requires quality time. Many parents find it difficult to be as involved with their children's lives as they would wish due to inflexible workplace arrangements.

Australia has long working hours compared to other OECD countries, people often feel insecure about not meeting work expectations to the detriment of family and community life. Furthermore, there is often little sympathy for parents taking time off to care for children or participate in their lives on important occasions.

Allowing parents time to meet their family commitments provides overall benefits both at the organisation/business level and for society generally.

Policy

Council believes that the Government, the Department and schools should:

- promote the involvement of parents as partners at all levels of the public education system;

- involve parents through participation in decision making at the school and system levels, consultation on educational and school management issues, and representation on committees and advisory groups;
- welcome and encourage parent involvement in school and classroom programs;
- promote clear two-way communication between schools and families about all aspects of school programs and policies, and on student progress;
- develop system and school level strategies, techniques and programs to enable parents to participate actively in their children's education and to assist learning at home, taking account of different family and cultural backgrounds;
- provide resources and training to make parent participation most effective;
- promote integration of community and support services for children and families; and
- support programs and activities designed to develop parenting skills.

Council believes that parents should actively participate with teachers as partners in their children's education. It is recognised, however, that the extent of participation by parents may be affected by factors such as their own educational, family and cultural backgrounds, as well as by other demands on their time.

The ACT Government should make statutory provision for parent participation in student learning, including requirements for a system level policy and individual school policies to support parent participation in schools.

The system policy statement should include:

- the rationale for parent participation;
- an outline of the nature and scope of parent participation;
- system policy objectives; and
- requirements for school level policies on parent participation and mechanisms schools should consider.

The legislation should also specify system support for parent participation in schools. This includes training opportunities, personnel policies and dissemination of information on successful practices. It should provide for a Department sponsored program to assist parent involvement in student learning at home. It should also provide for a training program for teachers and parents.

Schools should be required to have policies on parent participation in decision-making, policy formulation and in student learning. Schools should be required to develop parent participation initiatives as part of their school development process. Policies on involvement in student learning should include provision for plans to support partnerships in learning.

System and school policies should be complemented by action plans detailing:

- system and school initiatives in support for parent participation;

- guidelines for successful parent participation in schools;
- suggestions for breaking down barriers to parent participation; and
- provision of resources to support parent participation.

Implementation of system and school action plans should be reported on annually and plans should be revised on a regular basis.

The ACT Department of Education should:

- establish a parent participation advisory committee at the system level to advise on policy development and the design of programs and strategies to support parent participation;
- liaise with universities to introduce pre-service training for teachers in parent participation in schools and develop in-service training for teachers and administrative staff through local universities or other programs;
- adopt personnel policies to support parent participation; and
- maintain an information base on examples of successful practice in parent participation in schools, sponsor research on successful programs and practice and disseminate information on parent participation through the school system.

Schools should be encouraged and supported to:

- establish action teams of teachers, parents and students to investigate and develop recommendations on school problems and issues as they arise;
- appoint a parent participation co-ordinator to facilitate training and promote partnerships between teachers and parents; and
- establish parent centres as a way of providing information to parents and a range of opportunities for parent involvement in schools and student learning.

The ACT Government should provide additional funding to the government schools budget for central office support for:

- parent participation in schools;
- in-service training for teachers, principals and administrators in parent participation;
- staff time for parent participation co-ordinators in schools and the appointment of home/school liaison officers.

Council calls for more family friendly workplaces. Council supports moves to make workplaces more flexible in when, where, and how people are employed.

Furthermore, Council calls on the Federal and ACT governments, as major employers in the ACT, to take the lead in creating conditions for their employees which enable them to participate reasonably in their children's educational experiences.

Action

Council will:

- seek to generate community discussion to promote work practices that support family and community life - including reduced hours;
- seek to have representation in forums and bodies that are working towards increasing the family-friendliness of workplaces;
- lobby government at appropriate times when relevant legislation is being considered.

(Adopted 1998, amended 2000, 2004, 2005)

Pascoe et al, 2005, pp. 8-11.

2.1.2 The value of music education

Confucius (551 B.C.) believed that the role of music was to create a harmonious union between heaven and earth, and that perfection in music ensured peace and morality:

He who understands ceremony and music can be called virtuous. Virtue manifests the realisation of the perfect in one's self. (Kaufmann, 1976, p. 33)

This concept of the holistic benefits of music finds a Western counterpart in classical Greek ideas about music education. Pythagoras (6th century B.C.) taught music to his students for moral improvement and physical health benefits:

Pythagoras was of the opinion that music contributed greatly to health, if it was used in an appropriate manner...and he called the medicine which is obtained through music by the name of purification. (Rkudhyar, 1982, p. 167)

Many writers such as Charles Fowler (1996) and others (Oddleifson, 1992; Reimer & Smith, 1992) have articulated eloquently the rationale for including the arts in schools, and the numerous virtues of the arts have been explicated (see Chapman & Aspin, 1997). For years the arts were justified mainly from the aesthetic and utilitarian perspectives. But today, the arts are increasingly being advocated for their practical relevance to 'serve the educational and human priorities of the moment'. This is to satisfy community desire to see prevailing concerns such as 'dropout rates, school reform, cultural diversity and violence' addressed through arts education (Fowler, 1996, p. 37). Since the 1990s, numerous research projects across the world have been successful in documenting and proclaiming the value of arts education.

One American study found that 'engagement in art activities provide more intrinsic rewards than engagement in mathematics or science' (Reimer & Smith, 1992, p. 180). Music was an effective tool used for language intervention purposes in an Australian study (Wilmot, 2002). Case study research by Bresler (1996) and others indicate that the arts can effectively build up a community and promote self-expression. Participants in an innovative integrated arts programme experienced the unexpected connection with their inner selves, and were excited to discover their own voices of creativity, delight and wonder through constructing their own realities (Powell, 1997). A university study found significant increases in the overall self-concept of children at-risk after participating in an arts programme that included music, movement, drama and art (Barry, Project ARISE, 1992). The Cultural Interaction Projects in Saskatchewan, Canada, demonstrates the potency of the arts in fostering interaction between cultural diverse groups (Bush & Therens, 1997). And in Norway, the impact of music in 'reduc[ing] harassment and ethnic tension' surprised researchers of a programme which introduced multicultural music to fourth-graders in 18 inner city schools (Skylstad, 1997, p. 73).

Many researchers have recognised the power of music to exalt the human spirit, transform the human experience and bring joy, beauty, and satisfaction to people's lives. Music's efficacy in inducing multiple responses in individuals ranges from the physiological, psychomotor, emotional, cognitive and behavioural (Sloboda, 1992; Hansen, 1995). For ten years, seven national teams of American researchers conducted a massive study involving more than 25,000 high school students. Using a range of methodologies, they examine a variety of arts education programmes to study the impact of the arts on broader learning and socialisation. Their discoveries were reported in a publication entitled *Champions of Change* (see aep-arts.org). One part of this 'National Educational Longitudinal Survey' (NELS) examined the relationship between engagement in the arts and student performance and attitudes; it also investigated the effects of intensive music instrumental and theatre (drama) involvement on student achievement. Although the researchers conducted their investigations and presented their findings independently, a remarkable consensus exists among their findings. Ten of the major findings are summarised below:

- When well taught, the arts provide young people with authentic learning experiences that engage their minds, hearts, and bodies. The learning experiences are real and meaningful for them.
- While learning in other disciplines may often focus on development of a single skill or talent, the arts regularly engage multiple skills and abilities.
- Engagement in the arts — regardless of art form — nurtures the development of cognitive, social, and personal competencies.
- The arts reach students who are not otherwise being reached.
- The arts reach students in ways that they are not otherwise being reached.
- The arts connect students to themselves and each other.
- The arts transform the environment for learning.
- The arts provide learning opportunities for the adults who work with young people.
- The arts provide new challenges for those students already considered successful.
- The arts connect learning experiences to the world of real work. (aep-arts.org)

Music educators know and believe that music is for everyone (Monsour, 2000), that people can enjoy participating in music at every stage of life, and teachers are in a unique position to help students to achieve this. Labuta and Smith (1997) note that the benefits of musical experiences may be both utilitarian and aesthetic. Music provides opportunities for students to discover and improve their capacity for productive self-expression. On the other hand, the aesthetic viewpoint asserts that music education may lead to non-musical outcomes, but its primary value is its ability to heighten or strengthen students' sensitivity, what the Western Australian Curriculum Framework usefully calls aesthetic understanding (1998, 50). Musical instruction may ultimately improve the quality of students' lives even after they have left the educational

environment. The more students are able to perceive in music, and the more they understand music the greater their appreciation for music and the potential it symbolizes. Olsson (1997) considered the way school music education influences musical preferences, and how these relate to students' aspirations for the future.

Music has been described as '[a]n exercise in friendship and co-operation where the completed whole is more than the sum of the parts [that] represents a goal which few subjects in the curriculum can readily attain' (Hughes, 1983, p. 17). The benefits of studying music include providing 'much needed practice in many educational areas such as aural and visual discrimination, co-ordination of the hand, eye, mouth, ... indeed of the whole body, discipline, co operation and alertness as an individual, in a group or whole class' (Thomas, 1984, p. 12). The 1982 Gulbenkian Report had identified six areas of education that music can contribute to:

1. Developing the full variety of children's intelligence;
2. Developing the capacity for creative thought and action;
3. The education of feeling and sensibility;
4. The exploration of values;
5. The understanding cultural change and differences; and
6. Developing physical and perceptual skills.

Colwell (1997) has summed up the value of music education to students in a succinct way:

[M]usic can bring school success to those students unsuccessful in other curricular subjects (multiple intelligences)...music makes all school subjects more interesting, develops more effectively the right side of the brain, provides greatly enhanced communication skills and the ability to connect and apply learning across subject areas. It develops higher order thought processes and skills in perceptual learning. It provides a command of general knowledge, equips students to deal with ambiguity and to solve problems, provides world awareness...aids in improving self-concept, self-management skills...develops a connection between disciplined work habits and getting results...employs several kinds of literacy... [It] constantly appeals to many different intelligences, visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, social, logical and more. (pp. 20-21)

The value of music education has also been recognised for its contribution to the transmission of cultural heritage as well as to the emotional, physical, social and cognitive growth of children (Gardner, 1983). Hargreaves and North (1997) demonstrate that many of the functions of music are primarily social in nature. Descriptive and experimental studies have documented the effects of music on involvement with the environment, expression of feelings, awareness and responsiveness, positive associations, and socialisation (Vanderark, Newman & Bell, 1983; Prickett, 1988; Smith, 1990). McCulloch (1998) suggests that music had a role to play in the social and vocational aspirations of the classes. The primary functions of music in contemporary everyday life appear to include the enhancement or distraction of attention from a

mundane domestic task, the stimulation of emotionally oriented reminiscence, and the use of music to enhance states of relaxation (Sloboda, O'Neill & Ivafdi, 2000).

Music involvement can contribute to the productive use of leisure time (Gibbons, 1985). Music is like 'Vitamin M' (Lehman, 1985, p. 51) – as a refreshment of life, it holds powerful appeal to human beings in every culture throughout history. As people demand meaningful activities, the issue of leisure should be dealt with effectively, otherwise life can be perceived by many to be depressing, boring, unproductive, frustrating and burdensome. Appreciating music is a 'lifelong enrichment' of leisure time (Ben-Tovim, 1979). The notion of music studies as a component of education that 'prepares' students for a life of work and leisure was the message conveyed in the influential Newsom Report by the Central Advisory Council for Education (1963), and it has remained embedded in much current thinking.

Lifestyle and music go closely together (Swanwick, 1997). Many students listen to music while they study, as they find that it improves concentration, alleviates boredom or increases their rate of learning (Kotsopoulou, 1997). There is a need to think beyond the school level, as the emerging needs of society require an expanded view of education, one that nurtures the lifelong learner (Myers, 1992). Researchers claim that music education has the potential to produce 'better' human beings in the sense of encouraging creativity, mutual understanding (Asia Center, 1998), flexibility, and the ability to communicate and co-operate as well as to develop people who appreciate the tradition of community values, possessing the skills that promote harmonious living (Fowler, 1991). Music education stimulates and realizes potential life qualities for every one (Reimer, 1989), and helps people appreciate the beauty of order (Fowler, 1991). The notion that music could improve the quality of life has also been advocated by other writers such as Rider (1990), Thomas, Heitman and Alexander (1997), and Ruud (1998).

Music has been widely recommended as a technique to enhance the psycho-physical state of participants in sport and exercise. Karageorghis and Terry (1997) conclude that music selected appropriately could enhance enjoyment levels and assist in physical activities. Some fitness classes and sports activities specifically mentioned the use of music in programmes for stress release, strength building and flexibility development (Sports, 2002). Several researchers conclude that rhythmic music may elicit greater participation, a higher level of response, and more purposeful involvement (Hanson et al., 1996). In many ways, music educators have come to claim the same territory as music therapists, embracing the problem-solving approaches, positive attitudes and health-conscious lifestyle (Yates, 2001).

Music has the power to affect our moods (Hallam, 2001). Certain types of music have been found to possess sedative qualities (Iwanaga, Ikeda & Iwaki, 1996), and some studies have indicated that listening to 'soft music' is just as effective as progressive relaxation in reducing anxiety, that it enhances, or surpasses, the relaxation effects (Reynolds, 1984; Scartelli, 1984). Published scientific studies by other experts indicate that music helps to minimize reactions to stress, reduces tension, lowers one's pulse

rate, and effectively minimizes anxiety while enhancing relaxation (Hanser, Larson & O'Connell, 1983; Standley, 1986; Davis & Thaut, 1989; Miluk-Kolasa, Matejek, & Stupnicki, 1996). Research has demonstrated music's effectiveness in treating depression (Hanser, 1990; Adaman & Blaney, 1995; Goleman, 1996; Hendricks et al., 1999). Listening to music could be a method of coping with environmental stressors (White, 1985) and loneliness (Moore & Schultz, 1983) for both adolescents and mature-age students.

Many other research studies which attest to the value of music education can be found on the website of the Music Council of Australia (www.mca.org.au) and the Music Educators National Conference (www.menc.org).

Gates Foundation, 2005, p. 19.

APPENDIX C

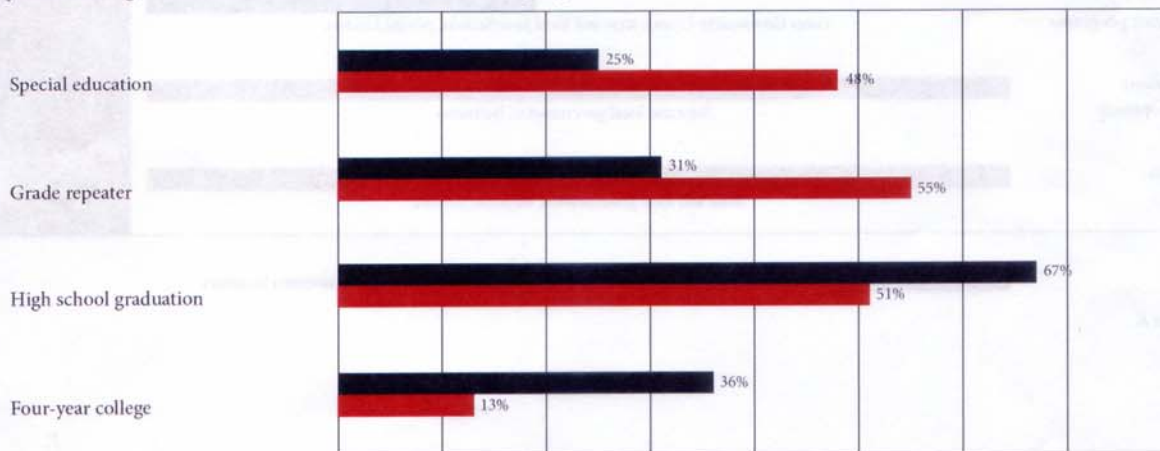
SUCCESSFUL RESEARCH-BASED MODELS EXIST

High/Scope Perry Preschool in Michigan and the Abecedarian Project in North Carolina are two landmark research efforts that demonstrate the longitudinal impact of high-quality early learning.

High/Scope Perry Preschool: 40-year study of 123 low-income African-American children who were assessed to be at high-risk of school failure (58 were assigned to program group that received high-quality preschool at ages 3 and 4, while 65 were assigned to another group that received no preschool program).



The Abecedarian Project: Controlled study in which 57 infants from low-income families were randomly assigned to receive high-quality childcare from birth to age 5 and 54 children were in a non-treated control group.



■ Program group (received high-quality early learning) ■ Non-program/control group (did not receive high-quality early learning)

Source: Heckman and Masterov, *The Productivity Argument*.