

Holistic school improvement: The journey in Australian Adventist schools

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Abstract

This organisational journey traces transition from an initial recognition of an archaic 'inspectorial model' of school evaluation to an encompassing holistic school improvement process. A description of how the world's best practice informed this challenge for schools to engage in further strengthening of their professional learning cultures includes the development of consultation, structures, procedures, policy and process. Key changes emerged that have resulted in a self evaluation process that is internally driven, focused on a culture of improvement and excellence (*The Community of Faith and Learning*), but supported by the whole system. This support is represented within *A Model of Aligned Cultural Change in Adventist Schools*. Three supporting development pillars—the *Quality Adventist Schools Framework (QASF)*, *Data Driven Decision-making and Quality Adventist Schools Cyclic Reviews (QASCRs)*—build upon the foundational elements of purpose and resources, to support the ultimate goal of Christ-focused, service-orientated, excellent student outcomes. In the rapidly changing educational context within Australia and internationally, Christian schools need to ensure they are delivering the very best educational program possible. System implementation by Adventist Schools Australia (ASA) predicts *schools* can successfully evaluate the extent to which they are meeting stakeholder expectations, delivering on system priorities and implementing strategic initiatives to optimise their success.

A journey of holistic school improvement

The concept of school improvement is not new. Committed school leaders and teachers have always wanted the best for their students and

school communities. Hence the journey towards improving outcomes for students is an ongoing pursuit. The journey of Adventist education is no exception.

Thirty nine years ago I commenced my career as a sole charge principal in an Adventist school. The measure of my school improvement efforts, were the reports received from the school inspector, who would visit once a year. He spoke earnestly into his dictaphone regarding what he observed in the classroom and school environment and sometime later a report would appear in the mail outlining my strengths and failings. As archaic as this may sound, as I reflect, I note that his efforts were motivated by a genuine desire to see my school improve.

In the early 1980s the South Pacific Division system office introduced a new approach to school review and improvement. This approach revolved around a school completing a copious self-study instrument once every five years and then going through an external accreditation program where a group of evaluators would come to the school for a period of two to three days to consider the school's self-study report and various areas of school operation. They would then write a raft of recommendations for the school to implement during the ensuing five years of accreditation.

With some minor tweaking here and there the self-study and accreditation program served Adventist education in Australia for over thirty years. In essence the desire was to assist schools improve. However, over time the completion of the instrument became an administrative function that did not engage teachers in reflecting on their practice. The process, which was designed to enhance school improvement, became seen as something done to schools and as a consequence recommendations generated by accreditation teams lacked school ownership and resulted in patchy implementation practices. It was commonly agreed that a new approach to school improvement was needed to support Adventist schools.

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Seeds of change

In 2011, ASA hosted its biennial Educational Leaders Conference in Adelaide. Key speakers were selected to support key system initiatives with one of the foremost being school improvement. Ian Gamble, a noted international expert in the field of school improvement, was invited to present a keynote address. His understanding of the key elements of effective school improvement initiatives across the world provided an invaluable roadmap for Adventist education in Australia. Ian likened externally orchestrated accreditation programs to a farmer banging on the chook shed every now and then. When the banging started there was a loud commotion and feathers flew; however, once the banging stopped everything returned to 'normal', business as usual. It became clear that the key to school improvement was a culture of local engagement and ownership.

Following the conference, ASA hosted a full day think tank with school company directors of education to craft a new school improvement journey for Adventist schools that was cognisant of current research and informed by the directions that other schools' systems were pursuing.

Prior to committing to a particular model or framework to facilitate reflective practices school company education directors felt that it would be valuable to gain a first-hand understanding of the mechanisms utilised by high performing school systems across the world. Hence, in 2012 a group of ASA and school company education directors embarked on a study tour to Singapore, Finland, Scotland, and England.

The insights gained from the study tour were invaluable on many levels. While Finland and Singapore were at the top of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) rankings, it was Scotland that provided the greatest insights into effective school improvement practices. There is no doubt that Singapore and Finland are running excellent school systems; however, much of their success relates to the value placed on education by these small, homogenous cultures (Sahlberg, 2012).

Scotland had over a decade of experience associated with progressing its school improvement agenda and Ian Gamble's fingerprints were evident. The cornerstone of their initiative is a school self review tool—*How Good is Our School?* (Education Scotland, n.d.), now in its fourth edition. Inherent in the tool are a range of components covering a broad range of school operations but primarily focusing on the improvement of learning and teaching. In practice, each school undertakes its own school improvement journey by engaging school leadership and staff in measuring the school's

current level of performance against rating scales provided for each component. Improvement goals arising from component reviews are the outcome of evidence driven professional conversations. It was apparent that such outcomes were 'owned' by school leadership and staff and provided a clear improvement roadmap for each school. Strong cultures of reflection and improvement were apparent.

The context

Adventist education in Australia is comprised of 42 inter-connected schools supervised by regional school companies acting as system authorities. These schools provide holistic Christian education for over 13,000 students. The peak body of Adventist education in Australia is Adventist Schools Australia (ASA). The core functions of ASA are to provide advice and resources to support schools in the development of authentic communities of faith and learning.

Utilising world's best practice to craft a new school improvement journey

In early 2012 ASA appointed a school improvement officer and formed a working group to guide the development of a school review and reflection tool similar to the model developed in Scotland and those developed in several Catholic Education Offices across Australia. Our 'learnings' from these school systems has been significant and ongoing.

The working group designed a framework consisting of twenty components in four domains (see Figure 1). The goal was to maintain a central focus on student learning outcomes while recognising the range of additional facets required to 'build' an effective school. Interestingly, the Australian Government was also working on an improvement tool under the leadership of Masters (2012) concurrently with ASA.

Master's National School Improvement Tool was released in 2012 with nine components which brought "together findings from international research into the practices of highly effective schools and school leaders" (p. 5). The ASA working group was encouraged that it was heading in the right direction. The resolve of the working group was further strengthened by the Australian Government enshrining the need for schools to develop robust school improvement plans within the Education Act (2013), making compliance a requirement to ensure ongoing receipt of Commonwealth funding.

During 2012 over one hundred Adventist educators were involved in the development of rating criteria to populate the twenty components of the school improvement framework. The professional

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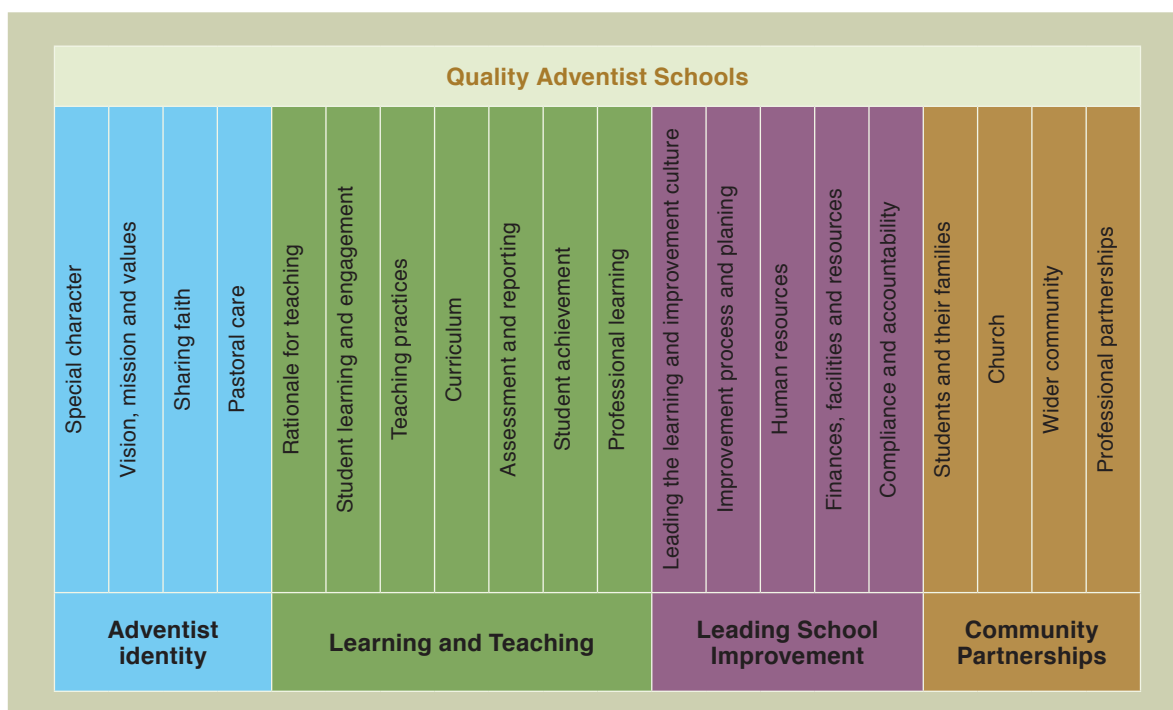


Figure 1: Quality Adventist Schools Framework domains and components

conversations generated within the component writing groups were energising and exciting. They provided a small window into the conversations that we hoped would subsequently be occurring in our staffrooms and amongst our school communities across the country.

In May, 2013 the new school improvement tool for Adventist schools was officially launched as the Quality Adventist Schools Framework (QASF) at the Educational Leaders' Conference at Wyong, NSW. Much had been achieved in the two years since the Adelaide conference and the new tool and its inherent processes provided an exciting opportunity for Adventist schools to move beyond the long established accreditation program and cultural attitudes that had arisen for this approach. It became clear that producing the QASF was only the first part of a process of aligned cultural change in Adventist schools.

The Model of Aligned Cultural Change in Adventist Schools

The philosophical underpinning of Adventist education calls for a balance between the development of the spiritual, mental, physical and social outcomes for students. The twenty components of the QASF reflect this holistic approach and are inherent in the four domains of the framework – Adventist Identity; Learning and Teaching; Leading School Improvement; and

Community Partnerships. However, transforming a tool into an aligned school improvement strategy for a diverse range of schools is complex.

ASA recognised that school leaders and staff work in highly accountable and challenging school environments and face a plethora of daily demands on their time and energy. Adding a new systemic requirement to their lives without providing a clear aligned vision, training and support would result in low levels of fidelity to the QASF. As a consequence ASA retained the services of their school improvement officer and created an aligned system school improvement strategy.

The components of an aligned school improvement framework are outlined in Figure 2, A Model of Aligned Cultural Change in Adventist Schools. Each component of the model plays a critical role in improving outcomes for students in Adventist schools.

The foundations

The bedrock of Adventist education is its mission, vision and values (see Figure 2). Maintaining a strong understanding and articulation of the mission, vision and values is essential for a faith-based school system to flourish. In 2012 an ASA Adventist Identity Working Party created *The Adventist School: A Community of Faith and Learning Model*.

The working group recognised that the creation of school communities where young people are

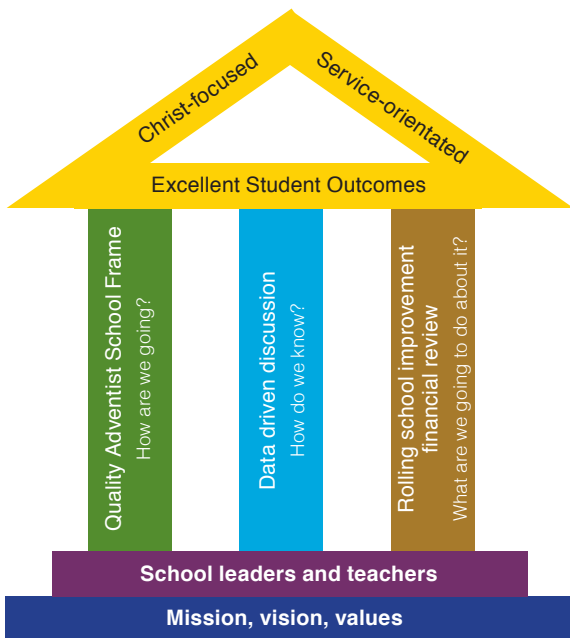


Figure 2: A Model of Aligned Cultural Change in Adventist Schools

provided with opportunities to develop their faith and a 'love of learning' is at the heart of the mission of Adventist education. Figure 3 provides an overview of the Community of Faith and Learning. At its core are the beliefs and values of Adventist education that school leaders and staff uphold. The flow between the key elements of *Belonging*, *Believing* and *Becoming* illustrate the complex and dynamic relationships between supporting students on a personal journey of holistic improvement while at all times maintaining relationships and programs that are Christ-centred, Bible-based, Service-orientated, and Kingdom-directed.

The second essential foundational element to progressing a model of sustained school improvement is the commitment and support of school leadership and staff (see Figure 2). At the heart of a successful school system is its leaders and staff. In a far-reaching research study conducted during 2006 and 2007 McKinsey and Company analysed the performance of more than two dozen of the world's best performing education systems. The reports *How the World's Best-Performing School Systems Come Out on Top* (September, 2007) and *How the World's Most Improved Systems Keep Getting Better* (November 2010) detailed findings identifying why these top-performing school systems perform so much better than most others. In essence their findings highlighted teacher and leader quality as the highest determinant of system improvement. The training and support they receive

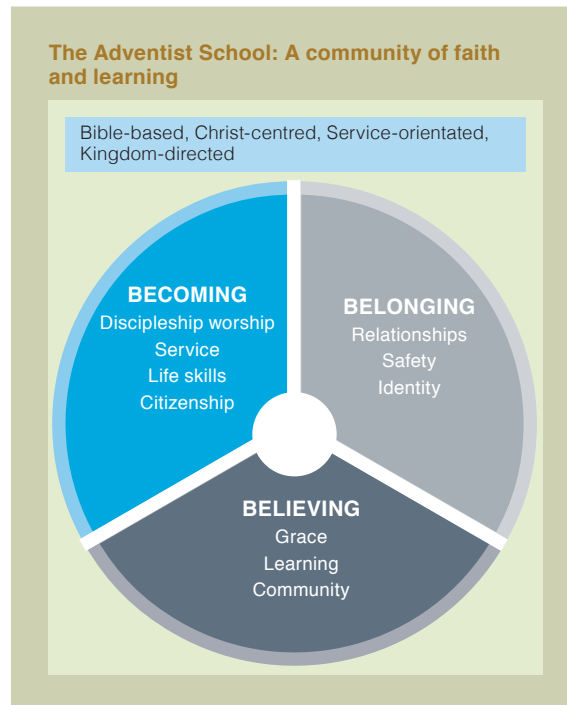


Figure 3: The Community of Faith and Learning

create the school cultures in which they operate, and in turn, student outcomes are either improved or diminished.

Adventist education is blessed by both its committed and talented, leaders and teachers. They share a common vision of the core goals of Adventist education. Such alignment is essential yet often taken for granted in faith-based school communities. The development of the Adventist Encounter Curriculum as a religious education curriculum framework and teaching guide/source, has also served to undergird schools with the beliefs and values that inform genuine communities of faith and learning.

While missional alignment is essential, it is also critical to provide school cultural environments conducive to school improvement. Paterson and Deal (2002) highlight the fact that every school has its own distinct and unique culture comprised of a complex set of rituals, folkways, and values that shape behaviour and relationships. Swygart (2004) maintains that true school improvement depends on changes in school culture. When leaders are attentive to building a culture of reflection, where daily interactions and deliberations focus on teaching and learning, then meaningful improvement will occur (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2006).

In 2012, ASA commissioned research through Insight SRC into principal well-being and school culture. All Adventist schools in Australia participated

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and received a comprehensive report and opportunities to reflect on the findings. While reports varied from school to school there were two overall messages for Adventist education as it sought to provide appropriate foundations for aligned cultural change.

The first message was that principals are highly engaged and passionate about their schools, and in serving as Christian educators. They demonstrated a high degree of ‘openness’ and ‘agreeableness’, indicating receptiveness to teamwork and new approaches to building a better future for their schools and their staff. However, the second key message highlighted a need for school and systemic cultural change. On average, staff wellbeing was lower than in other school systems. A focus on teamwork, empowerment and learning were seen as key opportunities, at the system, company and school levels, for bringing about an improvement in

wellbeing and school effectiveness. In addition, the findings noted that a stronger focus on facilitative leadership styles that empower staff to work through challenges and issues, in a way that enhances shared learning, was required (Hart, 2012).

ASA believes that an aligned approach to school improvement will facilitate the needed cultural changes. The three pillars of the model of aligned cultural change in Adventist schools are at the heart of such cultural change.

The first pillar – The Quality Adventist Schools Framework (QASF)
The first pillar of aligned cultural change in Adventist education is the collaborative development and embedding of the QASF. Unfortunately, as the demand for accountability has risen, school leaders and teachers have been forced to become more reactive to external demands, rather than

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Domain

Component

Element

2


2.5

2.5.1

Learning and Teaching

Assessment and Reporting

Assessment for learning



1	Rating 2	3	Rating 4	5	Rating 6	7
	<p>The school has an assessment policy that is not widely known and needs to give higher priority to developing shared understanding amongst all teachers.</p> <p>The school needs to develop assessment processes that encourage a safe and engaging learning environment.</p> <p>The school needs to implement assessment processes that provide greater scope and opportunities for independent learning amongst all students.</p> <p>Assessment processes need to be implemented that challenge and support all students in their learning.</p> <p>Teachers need to be encouraged to provide helpful and constructive assessment feedback that identifies strengths and relevant areas for students' improvement.</p> <p>The school needs to increase the consistency and regularity of feedback in order to encourage self-assessment.</p>		<p>The school's assessment policy outlines some of the key principles of assessment for learning and is mostly implemented by the teachers.</p> <p>The school seeks to develop assessment processes that to some degree encourage a safe and engaging learning environment.</p> <p>The school's assessment processes broadly seeks to foster independent learning for students.</p> <p>Assessment processes are somewhat effective in challenging and supporting the students.</p> <p>Many teachers provide feedback, which identifies some strengths and relevant areas for student improvement.</p> <p>Many teachers provide assessment feedback that is consistent, continuous and to some degree encourages self-assessment.</p>		<p>Whole school assessment policy comprehensively outlines the key principles of assessment for learning and is consistently implemented by almost all teachers.</p> <p>Whole school assessment processes promote a safe, engaging, innovative and creative learning environment.</p> <p>Whole school assessment processes facilitates student self-regulation and independence, and encourages life-long learning.</p> <p>Assessment processes are highly effective to comprehensively challenge and support individual students.</p> <p>Almost all teachers regularly provide meaningful feedback, which comprehensively identifies strengths and relevant areas for student improvement.</p> <p>Almost all teachers provide assessment feedback that is consistent, continuous, immediate, challenges students, and encourages ongoing student self-assessment.</p>	
Possible Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mark Books and reports to demonstrate student improvement Peer feedback and self-assessment Differentiation evident in programs Marking Criteria Comments and annotations on student assessment tasks 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole School Assessment and Reporting Policy Documentation of assessment in teaching program Professional appraisals and observations to see assessment embedded in the learning environment 		

Figure 4: A sample component for: Learning and Teaching Assessment and Reporting - Assessment for Learning

taking a thoughtful, proactive approach to school improvement. However, the QASF is a framework designed to enhance opportunities for leaders and teachers to reflect on their practice rather than relying on intuition and hunches.

Figures 4-6 provide a sample component of the benchmark criteria (within The Learning and Teaching – Assessment and Reporting component) available to school leaders and teachers to initiate and guide professional conversations.

The heartbeat of the QASF is a collaborative approach to component reviews. Professional conversations in safe and supportive learning communities are essential to the success of a new approach to school improvement (Wills, 2014). Naming a component rating, on a seven point scale, is far less important than the conversation and collaboration around reviewing components that provide members of the school community with opportunities to create grassroots driven goals that

Domain		2	Learning and Teaching			
Component		2.5	Assessment and Reporting			
Element		2.5.2	Assessment Practices and Processes			

1	Rating 2	3	Rating 4	5	Rating 6	7
	<p>Students and parents as yet have limited understanding of the importance of assessment processes and procedures and need to be more fully engaged.</p> <p>Teachers need to consistently document assessment practices and processes.</p> <p>The school needs to ensure that assessment practices and processes are implemented across the whole school.</p> <p>Assessment practices and processes of the Australian Curriculum, state curriculum and National Standard for Teachers are partially reflected in school documentation.</p> <p>There is considerable scope for the school to analyse and use data from external assessment more consistently and effectively to improve student achievement.</p> <p>The school needs to find more opportunities to differentiate assessment to support and meet individual student needs more effectively.</p> <p>Across the school teachers need to be more self-reflective and work more collaboratively to develop more effective assessment practice which improves student learning.</p> <p>Assessment feedback is generally limited and ineffective in improving teaching and learning. The school needs to encourage teachers and students to engage in better feedback of their assessments to assist improvement.</p>		<p>Students and parents are aware of the importance of assessment procedures and are generally cooperative with its processes.</p> <p>Many teachers document assessment practices and processes, and to some degree implement them. Assessment practices and processes are generally sound across the whole school, but there is scope for greater consistency and impact.</p> <p>Assessment practices and processes of the Australian Curriculum and state curriculum and National Standard for Teachers are adhered to in school documentation.</p> <p>Data from external assessment is often used for improving student achievement.</p> <p>Assessment is sometimes differentiated to support individual student needs.</p> <p>Many teachers are self-reflective and work collaboratively to review assessment practice to improve student learning.</p> <p>The school provides some opportunities for students to engage in feedback of their assessment to assist ongoing improvements to learning.</p>		<p>Students and parents are highly aware of the significance and relevance of assessment procedures and are cooperative with its processes.</p> <p>Almost all teachers consistently and comprehensively document assessment practices and processes. Assessment practices and processes are consistent and well integrated in their implementation across the whole school.</p> <p>Assessment practices and processes comprehensively embed the Australian Curriculum and state curriculum documentation, and the National Standard for Teachers.</p> <p>Data from external assessment is analysed and effectively used for improving the quality of student achievement.</p> <p>Assessment is rigorously differentiated to support individual student needs.</p> <p>Almost all teachers are self-reflective and work collaboratively to evaluate and review assessment practices and processes to improve student learning.</p> <p>The school provides regular opportunities for students to engage in evaluative feedback of their assessments in order to improve.</p>	

Possible Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff and Department Meeting Minutes• Unit evaluations and program registers• Peer feedback, self-assessment, surveys, student focus groups• Marking Criteria• Comments and annotations on student assessment tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whole School Assessment and Reporting Policy• Whole School Assessment Policy Student Handbook• Teaching programs• Australian Curriculum documentation, relevant state curriculum documentation, NAPLAN results and NST documentation
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Figure 5: A sample component for: Learning and Teaching Assessment and Reporting - Assessment Practices and Processes

assist the school to reach its desired future. Rather than an outside team of experts coming in and telling leaders and teachers where they must improve, they are reaching their own conclusions and taking ownership of key improvement strategies. The basic message is that educators have a collective sense of direction for and commitment to student learning, aided by constant reflection on their practice within safe and supportive school cultures.

The QASF assists school leaders reinvent themselves as educational leaders. Their enthusiasm and engagement in seeking to answer the key question—*How are we going?*—is central to creating and sustaining successful school improvement journeys. It is difficult to know how to improve if there is no clear understanding of current strengths and weaknesses and a plan to move forward.

Further opportunities for professional conversations and reflection are afforded when component review groups share and refine their findings with whole staff groups. Subsequent component review validation with school company education directors provide further opportunities to have focused professional conversations regarding the findings of a component review and establishing improvement goals for the school’s rolling school improvement plan.

An additional welcome benefit of QASF component reviews has been the identification and nurturing of leadership talent in schools. Wise principals are selecting potential leaders to coordinate component reviews and they are not being disappointed.

Currently Adventist schools are at varying waypoints on the implementation of the QASF and the creation of highly effective cultures of reflection and collaboration. We rejoice at the many ‘bright spots’ appearing across the system.


The second pillar – Data Driven Discussions

The central pillar of the *Model of Aligned Cultural Change in Adventist Schools* is on the cutting edge of current school improvement initiatives. The telling question is—*How do we know?*—whether each child at school is on a suitable learning journey as school improvement can only be achieved as the outcomes of individual students are addressed.

QASF component reviews require the triangulation of data to inform professional conversations, arriving at a ‘component rating’, and formulating specific, agreed goals for improvement. Inherent in each component is an ‘evidence box’, provided to guide personnel involved in component reviews in relation to the types of evidence they may seek (see Figures 4-6). While some schools are

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Domain	2	Learning and Teaching
Component	2.5	Assessment and Reporting
Element	2.5.3	Reporting Principles



1	Rating 2	3	Rating 4	5	Rating 6	7
	Reporting procedures provide limited scope in tracking student achievement. Communication between parents and teachers is under-utilised in reporting student achievement. Feedback in academic reports needs to be more positive and focused on fostering student improvement. Reporting provides a record of student achievement but is not consistently linked to the whole school assessment policy.		Reporting procedures are generally helpful in tracking student achievement throughout their schooling career, although some inconsistencies are evident. Most teachers satisfactorily communicate reporting of student achievement to parents and students. Many teachers provide positive feedback in academic reports with the intention of fostering student improvement. Reporting generally reflects the whole school assessment policy, providing a satisfactory record of student achievement.		Reporting procedures are highly effective in comprehensively tracking student development and achievement throughout their schooling career. Almost all teachers consistently and comprehensively communicate reporting of student achievement to parents and students. Almost all teachers provide positive and constructive feedback in academic reports to foster student improvement. Reporting is fully in line with the whole school assessment policy, providing a comprehensive and accurate record of student achievement.	
Possible Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Teaching DiariesMarks BooksParent feedback on parent/teacher interviewsWhole School policy to ascertain the protocols for communication with parents e.g letter, telephone, email			<ul style="list-style-type: none">Whole School Assessment and Reporting PolicyDatabase and central record of past academic reportsReport commentsSchedule of parent/teacher interviews and protocols		

Figure 6: A sample component for: Learning and Teaching Assessment and Reporting - Reporting Principles

collecting quality data others need assistance on this journey at this time and providing assistance in this area is a priority for ASA as it endeavours to maintain strong system alignment and support.

Masters (2012) identified that data needs to be collected and not created. There is certainly plenty of meaningful data available to Adventist schools through NAPLAN, standardised testing and perception surveys; however, there is scope for ASA to assist in both planning the collection processes and accessing training needed for associated data analysis. This is a work in progress, with all schools to be provided with a data dashboard in 2015.

Jensen (2010) argues that school performance measures published on the *MySchool* website are prone to mismeasurement and may be biased against schools serving lower socio-economic communities. He argues that:

School principals need to be able to identify for which students, in which subject areas and in which grade levels their school is effectively contributing to student progress. Effective programs and instruction can be expanded and less effective areas developed.

(p. 4)

School improvement in Adventist schools will benefit greatly by the creation of strong 'data driven' conversations and a focus on school value-added scores calculated by comparing the progress made by each student between assessments and measured by the contribution the school makes to that progress, controlling for students' background.

The third pillar – Rolling School Improvement Plans/ Quality Adventist Schools Cyclic Reviews (QASCR's) While QASF component reviews informed by triangulated data are essential, there comes a time when the key question comes—*What are we going to do about it?* The key word in the question is 'we'. The fundamental cultural change sought through the Model of Aligned Cultural Change in Adventist Schools was that schools would feel empowered to embark on their own journey of improvement with appropriate system support and their goals for improvement would be those that they have generated and taken ownership of at a grassroots level (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2006; Jensen, 2010; Masters, 2012).

Adventist schools are now in the third year of the first five year cycle of the Model of Aligned Cultural Change in Adventist Schools. However, there are strong signs of cultural change as schools embrace the pillars of the ASA school improvement initiative. In time, like all cultural change, the hope is that principals and teachers will say, *'This is*

just the way we do things here'. Such cultures will support the provision of contextually appropriate holistic Adventist education.

In answering the question—*What are we going to do about it?*—The Australian Education Act (2013) requires schools to have annual school improvement plans in place as one of the accountability criteria for the receipt of Commonwealth Funding. While the current Government has postponed the implementation of this requirement, it highlights the need for schools to have clear, agreed improvement plans. ASA and system school company directors of education expect that schools will develop a functional rolling school improvement plan.

Our system learning to date in relation to school improvement plans, is that schools are often developing overly comprehensive school improvement plans under the four domains inherent in the QASF. Schools are being encouraged to step back and embed fewer, more substantial and aligned strategies, and further that such strategies be sustained until their completion. Principals and school company directors of education have a part to play in ensuring that professional conversations, at the time of QASF component reviews and validation visits, focus on reaching agreement in relation to more overarching improvement strategies rather than focusing on minutia.

The final aspect of the Model of Aligned Cultural Change in Adventist Schools is the institution of the QASCR. Similar to the Scottish and Catholic Education Office processes of monitoring school improvement journeys, ASA has created an opportunity for schools to share their school improvement journey. A review occurs every five years and is confined to a one day program involving key ASA, school company education directors and school personnel.

The dynamics of QASCR visits are radically different to former accreditation visits. Rather than external 'experts' determining the direction of a school, the school shares its journey of improvement through a series of professional conversations. These conversations take the form of three, one hour dialogues, directed by school leadership. The first conversation provides a snapshot of the schools improvement journey – components reviewed and goals set. The second conversation revolves around a discussion of the schools analysis of key data and its implications for school improvement, while the final conversation is a joint reflection on the school's improvement and future areas of focus to enhance a robust improvement journey. Feedback from schools indicates that QASCR visits are providing valuable opportunities for reflection and future goal setting.

“Schools are being encouraged to step back and embed fewer, more substantial and aligned strategies, and further that such strategies be sustained until their completion.”

Excellent holistic student outcomes

The Model of Aligned Cultural Change in Adventist Schools (see Figure 2), establishes the mission, vision and values of Adventist education together with the passion, commitment and skills of its school leaders and staff, as foundational and essential to informing and progressing the three pillars associated with cultural change in Adventist schools. However, it is important to always keep in mind the purpose of a school improvement initiative.

As Figure 2 illustrates, Adventist education in Australia is driven by particular achieved outcomes for the students who attend our schools. Ellen White (1903), a founder of Adventist education stated:

True education means more than the perusal of a certain course of study... It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.

(p. 13)

In essence Adventist education is committed to the provision of an education program designed to provide excellent holistic outcomes for its students. Further, the primary goals of Adventist education are to provide opportunities for young people to commit their lives to Christ and to live lives of service to Him now and in the world to come.

Conclusion

School improvement is an ongoing journey as exemplified by the journey of Adventist education over the past forty or more years. ASA as a resourcing agency of Adventist education in Australia has collaborated with school company education directors to develop a *Model of Aligned Cultural Change in Adventist Schools* after extensive research and consultation in relation to world's best practice in school improvement strategies.

The foundations of the model are the mission, vision and values of Adventist education operationalised by the school leaders and staff. They have the responsibility of progressing Adventist identity through the implementation of new approaches to creating aligned cultural change in Adventist schools. The challenge for school companies will be the provision of appropriate support to ensure that aligned school improvement strategies are sustained. This support will need to be in the form of both personnel and financial resourcing.

The key questions that school leaders, staff and community members will consider are:

- How are we going?
- How do we know?

- What are we going to do about it?

Providing deep and well considered answers to these questions will inform the development and implementation of meaningful rolling school improvement plans at each school. These plans will need to focus on aligned and sustained improvement initiatives rather than on a plethora of small, well-intentioned, modifications to aspects of the schools' programs.

Desired outcomes of pursuing the Model of Aligned Cultural Change in Adventist Schools are based on a holistic approach to the purpose of education. A balanced development of the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions of young people attending Adventist schools remains as the central focus of school improvement initiatives, as does knowing and serving Christ in their communities.

The outcomes of Model of Aligned Cultural Change in Adventist Schools will be reviewed regularly, potentially after each 5-year cycle, to ensure that all Adventist schools are maintaining a strong and effective journey of school improvement. **TEACH**

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