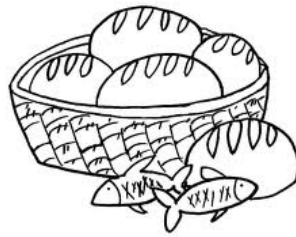


**AN INTRODUCTION TO THE
THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND RENEWAL FRAMEWORK (SIRF)¹
OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION NORTHERN TERRITORY**



The story about Jesus feeding multitudes of people – e.g. Matthew 14:13-21 – has important lessons for school improvement:

*When we deeply understand and appreciate what we **have and can do** - rather than what we don't have and cannot yet do – we are blessed beyond measure.*

Inviting God into our daily work often results in exceptional outcomes. Faith and Grace are powerful allies in any worthwhile endeavour.

Sharing generously is a pathway to abundance; sometimes the sharing involves breaking free of old ways of thinking and acting.

Sometimes a problem is an opportunity in disguise.

Everyone has a role in improvement – master teachers, team players and ordinary people who are willing to participate actively in faith and with goodwill.

¹ Use this booklet when you need to give a new teacher, a new member of the School Board, or other new member of the school community an introduction to School Improvement and Renewal in NT Catholic schools.

The complete version of the School Improvement and Renewal Framework can be found on the CENT Learning Platform.

WHAT IS THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND RENEWAL FRAMEWORK (SIRF)?

The SIRF is a set of ideas and tools that Catholic schools and staff use to build and sustain an improvement culture. A culture in which everyone, everyday strives to be the best they can be.

At the heart of this improvement culture are four key questions that apply to everyone in Catholic Education NT, both individually and in their team:

1. **How well do I know the community, my students and our Catholic mission?** *Do I deeply understand the context in which I work; am I very clear about the vision and purpose of Catholic Education in the NT?*
2. **How am I going?** *What is my/our current level of performance (using standards where applicable)?*
3. **How do I know (how I am going)?** *What evidence do I have to support judgments about my performance?*
4. **What will I do next?** *What actions will I take to build on successes, celebrate achievements and work on areas for improvement?*

WHAT ARE THE 'BIG IDEAS' THAT UNDERPIN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT?

Students will be successful if they have a **positive relationship** with their teacher(s), know what they are **expected to learn** and are exposed to **high quality teaching**.

Improvement planning should be based on **quality information** (evidence), e.g. to provide feedback to learners, understand the school context, report progress to stakeholders, make optimum use of resources and monitor performance.

School improvement is **everyone's business, every day**.

School improvement is multi-dimensional and complex; **careful planning and good communications** are essential.

Acknowledging and appreciating strengths – what we do well – is a key to sustained improvement. In the loaves and fishes story (Matthew 14:13-21) Jesus' focus is firmly on what food **was** available.

KEY ELEMENTS IN THE SIRF

The (Five Year) School Strategic Plan (SSP) outlines the school's vision, mission, goals and targets, and describes how the overall plan will be regularly evaluated. The SSP answers the question: What are the key strategies that we must get right for the school to thrive?

The Annual School Implementation Plan (ASIP) describes how the school will implement the goals in the SSP **this year** - who will lead each strategy (and who else will participate), what is the timeline, what resources will be allocated, and how progress will be monitored.

Detailed **Action Plans** may be required for projects / priorities that involve significant change or resourcing. The Project Management Framework is a guide to this work.

The **School Annual Report** highlights the school's achievements for the year and provides a range of other information for parents and system authorities.

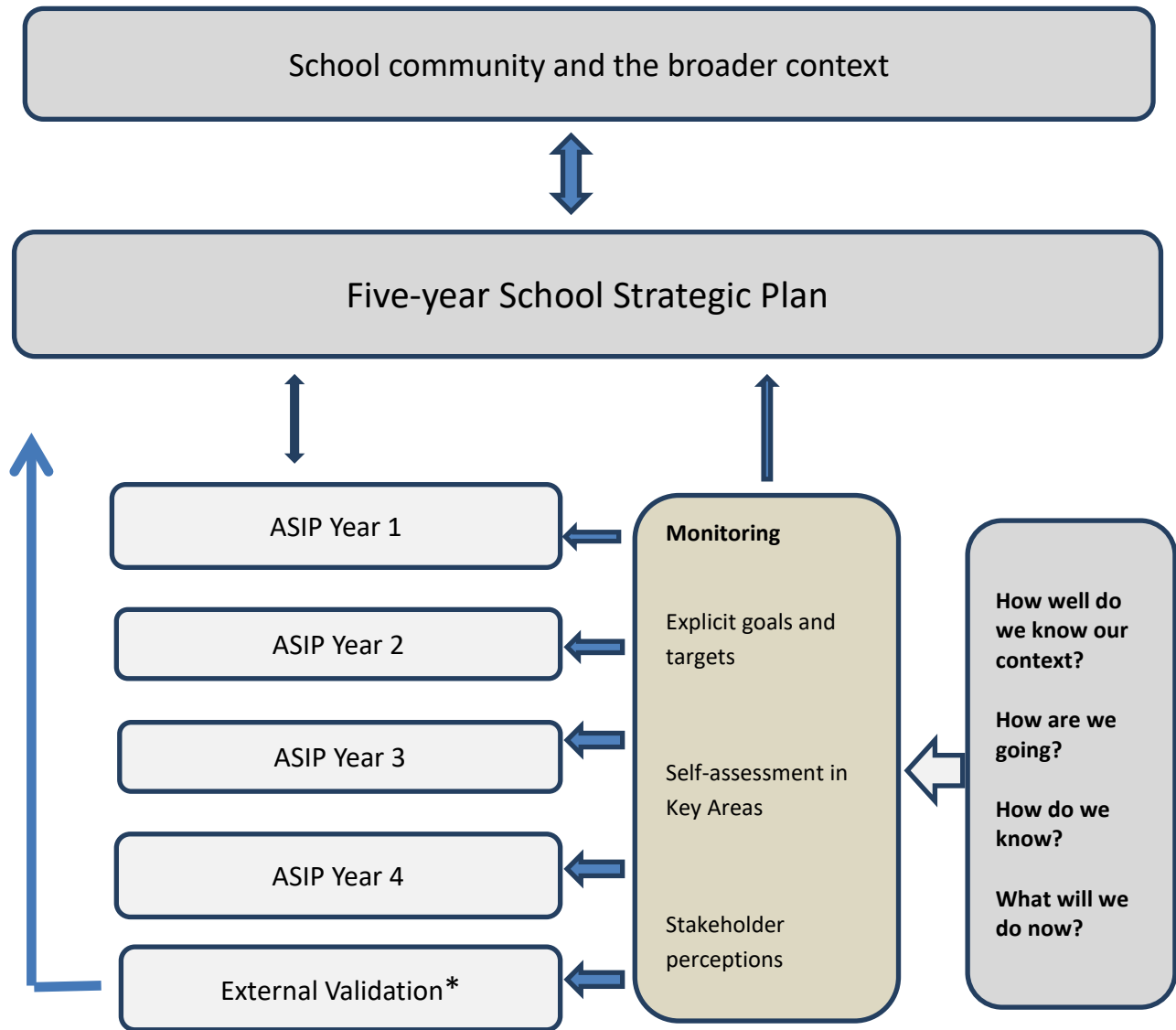
External Validation verifies school improvement processes and school performance during an agreed period, usually 2-5 years. It is an opportunity for the school to describe and provide evidence of its school improvement journey to education experts who are external to the school, including a colleague-principal.

Leadership and support

The CEO Executive, Principal Consultants and other CEO staff support principals and staff in the implementation of SIRF in all Catholic Education sites.

The Principal leads school improvement in the school, forms teams for particular aspects of school improvement and manages communications and community engagement. Teachers and other staff work together to build an improvement culture and work on identified improvement priorities.

THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND RENEWAL CYCLE



*External Validation can happen elsewhere in the cycle

Fig. 1: The school improvement and renewal cycle

SIX KEY AREAS

The School Improvement and Renewal Framework includes detailed descriptions and assessment tools in six Key Areas of schooling:

1. Catholic Identity,
2. Teaching and Learning,
3. Leadership,
4. Pastoral Care and Wellbeing,
5. Community and Culture and
6. Finance, Facilities and Resources.

The six Key Areas remind school leaders, teachers and stakeholders of the scope of schooling and help ensure that school self-assessment and planning affords balanced attention to all areas.

The figure below shows the interdependent and interconnected nature of these six Key Areas.



Fig. 2: The six Key Areas of Catholic schooling in the Northern Territory

ANNUAL CYCLE OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES

This table outlines a typical pattern; it may vary according to school context and other factors. School Improvement is a continuous process and schools may be simultaneously planning for next year while still completing projects from the previous year.

TERM 1	
Jan-Feb	<p>Remind all staff of the priorities in the SSP and ASIP. Appoint a School Planning Team. Begin implementing improvement priorities (and monitoring processes) for this year.</p> <p>Teaching teams develop class or cohort programs and plans that respond to goals and targets in the SSP and ASIP. (Some of this work may have been completed in Term 4 of the previous year)</p> <p>Submit the School Annual Report for the previous year to the Director, Catholic Education</p>
TERM 2	
May	Review progress on the ASIP.
Jun	Finalize the School Annual Report and post it to the school web site.
TERM 3	
Aug	<p>Gather data to assess whole school performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• School self-assessments in Key Areas• Satisfaction surveys or other perceptions data by staff, parents/carers and students.• Assemble student achievement data from sources such as NAPLAN, whole school monitoring, senior school assessments. <p>In secondary schools, begin processes for subject selection, grid generation etc.</p>
Sep	Begin in-depth analysis of all available evidence outlined above to identify progress towards targets in the SSP and the ASIP and review strengths and areas for improvement.

TERM 4

Oct/Nov Complete analysis of the evidence and begin (a) any necessary revisions to the SSP and (b) development of the ASIP for the following year. Take the draft ASIP (and the SSP if necessary) to staff / school community for consultation and refinement.

Nov/Dec Finalize the ASIP and present it to the School Board and the Director, Catholic Education for endorsement. (If substantial changes have been made to the SSP it too should be submitted to the Board and the Director, Catholic Education).

Celebrate successes.

Begin drafting the School Annual Report for the school year.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Should my School Strategic Plan be aligned with the Catholic Diocese of Darwin Strategic Pastoral Plan or the CEO Strategic Plan: Towards 2017, or both?

A. Yes, both. We share common goals and aspirations and there should be alignment between 'the branches' and the bigger 'vine' (John 15:5). Schools and their community contexts vary considerably and school responses to 'higher order' goals may vary considerably.

Q. How does the Principal work with staff in the Catholic Education Office to monitor and review the overall performance of the school and plan for development?

A. There is a day-to-day collaborative relationship between the CEO and schools; school performance is a shared responsibility. Meetings are negotiated between senior staff of the CEO, Principals and other school representatives to discussing school improvement. The scope of meeting varies in accordance with circumstances.

Q. How will the School Improvement and Renewal Framework (SIRF) help ensure that my school meets accountability and compliance obligations?

A. The planning and collaboration that is part of SIRF helps ensure that accountability/compliance obligations – e.g. around planning and reporting - can be met in a timely fashion.

Q. How is school improvement relevant to classroom teachers?

A. School Improvement is everyone's business and the role of classroom teachers and teaching teams is critical. Improvement is about a firm focus on **every child's learning, every day.**

Teachers and School Leaders strive for the highest performance against appropriate standards, e.g. National Professional Standards for Teachers.²

We want teachers and other staff to deeply understand and actively contribute to the improvement goals, targets and strategies of their school. They should understand what the school is trying to achieve and get actively involved in improvement activities.

Q. How does SIRF align with Formation Review?

A. *Formation Review* affords the opportunity for CENT staff to discuss their work and aspirations with a supervising colleague. Essentially it is a conversation about 'how I am

² Organisational Standards, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2012, accessed 3 September 2013

[http://www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au/OrganisationStandards/Organisation:](http://www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au/OrganisationStandards/Organisation)

going now' and 'what I want to do next.' It is about personal 'improvement and renewal'.