

**OVERSEAS MISSION TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND CANADA BY  
THE HON SARAH MITCHELL MLC, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION  
AND EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING  
28 SEPTEMBER – 6 OCTOBER 2019  
POST MISSION REPORT**

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### **Purpose of travel**

The aim of the study tour was to gain a first-hand understanding of the operations, mechanisms, and organisation of other large education systems that are pursuing both excellence and equity.

The Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning and the Deputy Secretary, School Operations and Performance engaged in a study tour of high performing education jurisdictions in the USA and Canada, including:

- District of Columbia, USA
- New Jersey, USA
- Toronto, Canada
- Vancouver, Canada.

The delegation was immersed in learning at all levels of each system, including school visits, system level discussions, roundtables with academics, and meetings with Ministries.

### **Benefits of travel for New South Wales**

There were a number of commonalities across these systems that contribute to their growth and success that NSW can learn from.

These include:

- Mechanisms to recognise, utilise, and reward high performing **teachers** resulting in increased retention, particularly in 'hard to staff' schools, and improved teacher quality and student outcomes across the system.
- Frameworks and processes for identifying **leadership** talent within schools and a variety of accountability mechanisms for monitoring Principal performance.
- A complete focus on **Literacy and Numeracy** in early education, with other curriculum offerings delayed until year 3 (Stage 2).
- Early and extensive engagement with **community** through on site pre-schools (birth to kindergarten), extensive extracurricular offerings, adult/community classes and health and wellbeing services. These were of particular importance in low SES schools and resulted in high attendance and completion rates for students.
- A variety of in-school **skills and trade** programs to prepare students for the workplace resulting in increased engagement with learning and high school completion rates.

### **Official Delegation**

The Hon Sarah Mitchell MLC  
Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning

Accompanied by:

Ms Meghan Senior, Chief of Staff, Office of Minister Mitchell

Mr Murat Dizdar, Deputy Secretary, School Operations and Performance, NSW Dept of Education

## Key engagements

<b>DAY 1 - The District of Columbia (DC), Washington, USA</b> School Visit: Anacostia Elementary DC Prep School
DC Prep has a very high national rating based on lift in student performance over time. From the delegates' observations of the classrooms and in discussions with the Principal and teachers, Anacostia Elementary School's success can be attributed to the following factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• From Grade 1, students have specialist teachers in Mathematics and Science and there is a clear focus on literacy and numeracy in the early years. Social Studies does not begin until Year 6.</li><li>• There is a clear focus on both teacher evaluation and professional development. The teacher evaluation system includes weekly lesson observations, linked to 4% annual pay increases for performance. Teachers undertake 2.5 hours of planned professional development each week. Although charter school teacher pay rates are below that of DC Public Schools, the professional development and support offered by the schools and their investment in school culture attracts and retains high performing teachers.</li><li>• From Grade 3, all students undertake an annual standardised test. Progress reports are completed fortnightly for every child on attendance, uniform/presentation, learning progress and behavioral attributes.</li><li>•</li></ul>
Meeting with Deputy Chancellor of DC Public Schools, Dr Melissa Kim
DC Public Schools have seen continuous improvement over the course of the last nine years. The IMPACT talent strategy for school leaders and teachers has driven changes in teacher quality that have produced, on average, four additional months of student learning per year. IMPACT supports professional growth by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outlining clear performance expectations and providing a common language of success for all school-based employees.</li><li>• DC Public Schools teachers who earn 'Highly Effective' ratings can earn up to \$3.7 million over the course of their careers through IMPACT<i>plus</i> - DC Public School's performance-based compensation system.</li><li>• By paying teachers 'what they are worth', DC Public Schools excel at retaining their most effective teachers, particularly in their highest-need schools.</li><li>•</li></ul>
<b>DAY 2 - Newark, New Jersey, USA</b> School Visit: Chancellor Avenue Elementary School
Chancellor Avenue School ensures all students have the opportunity to succeed in ways that will allow them to choose their life's path and desired occupation with an equitable opportunity to attend college. The school serves 529 students from K to Year 8 - the majority of which are from extreme disadvantage and is almost all comprised of African Americans. The school is generating improved attendance, literacy and numeracy results which can be attributed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Individual Education Plans - 23% of students have a plan</li></ul>

- Focus on Early Learning - by law, every 3 and 4 year old has to be in a school setting in the district.
- A dedicated literacy and numeracy coach and in Years 4 to 8, specialist literacy and numeracy teachers.
- Extensive use of data for the tracking of school growth and student progress and achievement is embedded in the school systems and processes. All teachers use data regularly to inform their practice.
- Setting of targets for literacy, numeracy and attendance set by the Superintendent. These are then translated at a school level and reported upon publicly. Coaching and targeted support is provided for schools who are not on track to meet their targets.
- Teachers attain tenure after 4 years and 1 day. This allows for easier removal of ineffective non-tenured teachers.

Teleconference with Emma Vadehra, former Chief of Staff to Education Secretaries John King and Arne Duncan under President Obama.

Emma assisted in the revision of the national literacy and numeracy test instruments to make them more culturally competent and psychometrically sound. Emma was responsible for 'Race to the Top', federal grants to states to raise standards, student data transparency, teacher standards and appraisal systems and effective teaching strategies. This was a significant structural and systemic change undertaken against a backdrop of a short political window of opportunity to make a difference. Some of the 'lessons learnt' that Emma shared included:

- Not to link teacher appraisal to performance but invest in teacher observation training for any teacher appraisal system.
- Don't try too many things at once - national testing, school performance transparency, teacher and leader appraisal tied to performance.
- Take a measured approach to reform, take time to implement properly.
- Take stakeholders with you.

### **DAY 3 - Toronto, Canada**

Meeting with Martin Beckett, Assistant Deputy Minister, Toronto Ministry of Education

Ontario has had steady growth in literacy over the past 10 years. The Ministry attributes successful student performance and improvement to:

- A sharp focus on priorities
- High standards and expectations for all
- Investment in leadership capacity building related to instruction
- Mobilising data and effective practice as a strategy for improvement
- Being transparent, relentless and increasingly challenging.

Ontario has a School Effectiveness Framework. Schools are recommended to self-assess against the framework but it is not mandatory or validated at any level. Only low-performing schools must have a school improvement plan.

School Visit: Jesse Ketchum Junior and Senior Public School

Jesse Ketchum offers a variety of programs with a strong focus on inquiry. It is a STEM school, and it also has a strong focus on the arts. Useful information gained from discussions with the Principal, teachers and observations of classrooms includes:

- Every teacher in the school is part of the union as Toronto has a 100% union teaching workforce, Principals cannot be part of the union. The school or Principal does not get to select staff.

- There are seven Staff Development Days (no students) every year. The first half of each day is dedicated to compliance training and the second half of the day is professional learning activities decided by the school.
- Jesse Katchum School has adopted an “Empower Reading Program”. The Principal believes the program should be mandated for all schools as it picks up all ability levels and catches those falling behind.

Roundtable with Dr Carol Campbell, Associate Professor of Leadership and Educational Change and colleagues from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) is recognised as a global leader in graduate programs in teaching and learning, continuing teacher education, and education research. Advice provided by the round table and Dr Campbell for improved student and school outcomes included:

- Review of curriculum should inform review of NAPLAN
- Curriculum reform first then followed by assessment reform
- Invest in teacher professional learning to improve teaching quality
- Create career pathways for teachers (teacher track) to improve teacher quality
- Examine and improve teacher working conditions.

Ontario’s success in rural education is directly attributable to the funding regime for rural schools. No matter how small a school is, even if it less than 20 students, they ensure that a full program of education is available for students, which means a principal (non-teaching) and classroom teachers deliver a full school curriculum.

School Visit: Rawlinson Community School

Toronto schools have extensive outside of school day programs administered by the Ministry centrally in Ontario. The delegation observed an International Languages and African Heritage after-school program at Rawlinson Community School. The program is open to all students from Kindergarten to Grade 8, no background knowledge is necessary and they encourage students to explore all languages.

Over 140,000 learners take part across Ontario in an array of outside of school centrally administered programs. These programs include community languages, night school, summer school, gap closing classes, adult ESL classes, general interest programs, outdoor education and before and after school care.

**DAY 4 - Toronto, Canada**

School Visit: Sprucecourt Public School, Cabbagetown

Sprucecourt Public School is the hub of the community. There is a full nutrition program offered at the school, funded by the City of Toronto and an outside agency, which comprises of a free breakfast program, free snack program and a \$2 hot lunch program which is free for many students. The school offers a free after-hours maths tutoring program for all ability levels in conjunction with a neighbouring private school.

The school follows a Model Schools program which means that it is committed to innovative teaching and learning practices, providing support services to meet social, emotional and physical well-being of students and establishing schools as the hearts of the community.

The delegation was impressed by the *EarlyOn Child and Family Centre* a highly successful pre-school program inside Sprucecourt school for 0 to 3 year olds. It runs every day from 8.45am to 12.45pm.

Meeting with Allyson Otten, Executive Director and Nadine Trepanier-Bisson, Director Professional Learning at the Ontario Principals Council

The Council is committed to supporting professional learning. They offer several leadership development programs:

- *The Emerging Leader Development Program (ELDP)* - designed to prepare teachers for a successful transition to a school administrator role.
- *The Principal's Qualification Program (PQP)* - a professional learning program offered to teachers with a minimum of five years teaching experience and appropriate specialist qualifications such as a master's degree.
- *The Principal's Development Course (PDC)* - employs a critical, pedagogical lens to explore the ethical dimensions of leadership.

The Council supports and protects members who face conduct and performance issues and advocates on behalf of public education. They have a very coherent alignment for instructional guidance and leadership development and is guided by the Ontario Leadership Framework.

**DAYS 5 & 6 - Vancouver, Canada**

School Visit: South Delta Secondary School

Delta School District is a leading district for innovative teaching and learner success. Career development is one of the three goals of the education system in British Columbia (BC). South Delta Secondary offers Career Education Programs in the areas of Career Preparation (Work Experience), Training in the Trades (Industry Training) and Youth Work in Trades (Trade Apprenticeships). Informed planning is key to a successful transition from secondary school. Once a week the staff at South Delta participate in 60 minutes of collaborative professional learning time. The school has invested heavily in Inquiry Based Learning and learning beyond the classroom walls. Students participate in world language courses including French Immersion, French and Spanish from basic through advanced levels. A wide variety of elective courses are offered and teachers also run a large variety of clubs, programs and activities voluntarily. Ranking highly in student and parent satisfaction surveys, the school and district constantly strives to build real value in education.

Meeting with Education Minister, Rob Fleming and Deputy Minister, Scott MacDonald

BC's Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) education system is being modernised. As part of this process, a new curriculum is being introduced in all schools.

A key goal in modernising the education system is to provide students with an education that is still rigorous, but also flexible and innovative, one from which they gain the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need to succeed in today's modern world. Another goal is making sure that teachers can deliver the curriculum efficiently and effectively. The new system provides teachers with more time and flexibility to explore topics in depth with students.

Minister Fleming discussed the areas of focus for the state:

- Curriculum Reform - emphasis on Project Based Learning and Capstone Projects.
- Skills Strategy – to address the skills shortage.
- Mental Health – to address raising levels of anxiety and students lost in college.
- Indigenous Contributions – aims to increase the number of Indigenous teachers in the profession and growing Indigenous languages.
- Remote Access – to address the challenge of having 14 communities with only one school each.
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Attending The Premier's Awards for Educational Excellence, Government House (BC)

The Premier's Awards provide students, parents, teachers and other members of the community with an opportunity to celebrate those who make a real difference in BC schools.

The Awards are presented annually to exceptional education professionals in BC's school system working within either the public, independent or First Nations school systems.

Winners receive a \$3,000 personal bursary for professional learning, and a \$2,000 contribution to their school community for professional learning.

### Summary of Mission Expenditure

<b>Minister</b>	The Hon Sarah Mitchell MLC
<b>Portfolio</b>	Education and Early Childhood Learning
<b>Destinations visited</b>	USA and Canada
<b>Dates of travel</b> a) Departure date b) Return date	a) 28 September 2019 b) 6 October 2019
<b>Number of official travel days</b>	8 Days
<b>Number of accompanying</b> a) Minister's staff b) Government officials	a) 1 b) 1
<b>Airfares</b> a) Minister and Minister's staff b) Government officials	a) \$48,212 b) \$24,096
<b>Accommodation</b> (includes any meals/incidentals charged to room) a) Minister and Minister's staff b) Government officials	a) \$6,905 b) \$3,505
<b>Other expenses</b> a) Official gift presentation b) Ground transport c) Meals and refreshments d) Other miscellaneous costs	a) \$287 b) \$ 4,240 c) \$1,887 d) \$0
<b>Official hospitality</b> a) Minister and Minister's staff b) Government officials	a) \$0 b) \$0
<b>TOTAL estimated travel cost</b> a) Minister and Minister's staff b) Government officials	a) \$57,822 b) \$31,939