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The Expectations of Parents, Students and  
Teachers of Secondary Education. A study  
of the Development of a New Flexible Open  
Space High School in the A.C.T.

BY

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## ABSTRACT

The first new system of education to be established in Australia this century was founded in the Australian Capital Territory in 1975. This followed a growing agitation, going back to 1966, for a system of education for the A.C.T. divorced from that of New South Wales which it had followed since 1909.

The general trend overseas, particularly in Great Britain and the United States of America, towards more 'open' and 'progressive' forms of education and the changes in school architecture which would best facilitate this type of education first appeared in Australia in the primary field. In the secondary field South Australia was the first state to embrace 'open-space' education and this state provided the major influence on two new 'open-space' secondary schools in the A.C.T. - Kambah and Belba High Schools.

At a goal setting exercise for the new Belba High School the members of the community saw the following two goals as being the most important for their new school.

### GOAL STATEMENT 4

*Develop skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening.*

### GOAL STATEMENT 11

*Develop a desire for learning now and in the future.*

Those members of staff identified for the new school in 1975 agreed with the parents that these two goals were the most important. These results closely correlated with the original Phi Delta Kappan studies. As a result of this goal setting exercise the following statement appears as objective number one in the statement of school philosophy.

*1. To provide a non-graded programme to extend each child to his full potential in literacy, numeracy, communication, social skills and attitudes at his individual rate of progression.*

In trying to ascertain what teacher characteristics were most preferred by students a survey resulted in a strong degree of consensus between students from differing types of primary schools in the A.C.T. With one major exception there was close correlation between the A.C.T. study and the original overseas study. The Australian students saw the characteristic "Has no favourites" as much more important than their Canadian counterparts.

A survey designed to establish the attitudes of students, staff and parents to secondary education revealed, not only a slight bias towards progressive education but a marked degree of unanimity between parents and teachers. Both parents and teachers were slightly more progressive in their attitudes than the students. This attitude may be modified in the future as a result of the current publicity being given to the problems associated with literacy and numeracy.

In the A.C.T. much more thought must be given to the preparation of staff for new schools and planning methods necessary for the successful opening of new schools.

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