



Australian Government



AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Literacy and Numeracy
National Partnership



Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn
CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE



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INTRODUCTION

This National Partnership for Literacy and Numeracy (NP) focuses on the key areas of teaching, leadership and the effective use of student performance information to deliver sustained improvement in literacy and numeracy outcomes. The target group for support is primary school students who are falling behind in literacy and numeracy development.

While the ACT is recognised as a high performing jurisdiction in educational outcomes, our literacy and numeracy results can be improved. The demographic make-up of the ACT is such that all schools have students who are performing below minimum standards, as well as those at the higher ends of performance who do not appear to show appreciable value added learning.

Participation in the program will provide school leaders and teachers the opportunity to deliver sustained improvements to students' literacy and numeracy outcomes and to embed these practices in school communities across the ACT.

The ACT Department of Education and Training has worked in collaboration with the Catholic and Independent sectors to develop this plan. Where possible, collaborative activity will be undertaken in the implementation of the plan.

First Steps and *Count Me In Too* have been identified as the system-based teaching programs for use across all schools to improve literacy and numeracy achievement. A whole school approach focusing on children's learning and teaching practices is seen as essential for improving outcomes and ACT schools will be adopting this approach.

The Implementation Plan is complementary to the ACT Department's five year *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2009 - 2013*, which is aspirational in that its target is to increase the mean NAPLAN (National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy) score across all schools. Literacy and numeracy have been identified as priority areas in the *2009-2011 Strategic Plan* of the Catholic Education Office (CEO), Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn. National Partnership independent schools will have literacy and numeracy improvement identified in their individual school plans.

In collaboration with the Australian Government, this implementation plan will be reviewed and revised throughout the life of the National Partnership Agreement to ensure that it remains responsive to the changing context of the ACT environment.

This plan is a joint initiative of the Australian Government, the ACT Government, the ACT Catholic Education Office and the ACT Association of Independent Schools.

CROSS SECTOR INVOLVEMENT

The Government and Catholic school sectors have identified *Count Me In Too* and *First Steps* as the system-based teaching programs for use across all schools to improve literacy and numeracy achievement. These are well researched programs which assist teachers to focus their teaching so that students improve their understanding. They have accompanying data collection processes that teachers can use to monitor progress and conduct diagnostic analysis to inform planning. A whole school approach that focuses on student learning and quality teaching practices is essential for improving outcomes, and ACT schools will be adopting this approach.

The use of *Count Me In Too* and *First Steps* builds on previous work in which these programs were partially implemented. The Government and Catholic school sectors have agreed that full implementation will support students' learning, and they will work together in training staff and in sharing effective classroom strategies and support programs. The role of specialist literacy and numeracy officers in schools will be collaboratively developed.

The Independent school sector will participate with the other sectors in the Cross Sectoral Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership Working Party to provide guidance to individual schools. This Working Party comprises executive staff from the three sectors and meets on a regular basis. As the Independent sector are a group of 17 independent schools with a very small Association of Independent Schools office there are challenges, unique to the ACT, in supporting the involvement of these schools. The Association of Independent Schools will work closely with the Government and Catholic school sectors to share strategies for the delivery of literacy and numeracy programs.

Implementation of the Plan will be managed through the cross-sectoral coordination committee comprising senior representatives from the Department, the Catholic Education Office Canberra-Goulburn Archdiocese (CEO) and the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT.

KEY REFORMS - A FOCUS ON WHOLE SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

ACT schools have been moving to a greater evidence-based and engagement approach to student learning. Through the NP, National Partnership schools will participate in a set of reforms which focuses on making a measurable difference to student outcomes in literacy and numeracy. National Partnership schools will be required to demonstrate the following elements:

1. Effective and evidence based teaching;
2. Strong school leadership and whole school engagement; and
3. Monitoring school and student performance.

Further detail about the performance indicators and measures around these reforms is provided in the next section. Successful involvement of National Partnership schools in these elements is a requirement for continued funding under the NP.

Effective and evidence based teaching

All National Partnership public and Catholic schools will be provided with the physical resources and professional support associated with the literacy program, *First Steps Reading and Writing* and the numeracy program, *Count Me in Too* (CMIT) to ensure consistent implementation of the strategies across all schools. These programs are the primary models for delivering literacy and numeracy learning across ACT schools.

Emphasis will be placed on explicit and systematic teaching and developing deeper understandings about using data and evidence to inform practice and planning. In addition, extension programs will continue in both of these programs so that school-based literacy and numeracy coordinators can help embed and sustain use of these resources in their schools.

Some ACT public schools are piloting two targeted numeracy programs, *Quicksmart* (ACT funded) and *The Middle Years Mental Computation Program* (Australian Government funding). Pending the results of the pilots, which will be shared across the Territory and nationally, access to these programs could be extended to more schools.

The *Numeracy Intervention Program* (NIP) will target year 4 students in Catholic National Partnership schools using a three-tiered approach to improving numeracy for students in years 1 and 4. The program aims to achieve accelerated and sustainable higher numeracy levels by appointing Numeracy Intervention Teachers to provide professional learning for teachers with continued support by a trained Learning Support Assistant. It is currently being implemented in NSW Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Canberra/Goulburn area through the Literacy and Numeracy Pilots in Low SES School Communities, an Australian Government Initiative.

The six independent schools participating in the NP will each implement their own individual school-based plan based on their respective needs. A number of the schools have strategic literacy and numeracy plans already in place and these will be tailored to meet the requirements of the NP.

Support for Indigenous Students

From the start of 2008, the ACT Government has funded five Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Officers (ILNOs) who continue to work with teachers and students in small groups to raise literacy and numeracy levels of students in years K- 4. In 2009, through a new ACT initiative, an additional officer has been appointed to support the transition of year 6 Indigenous students to year 7. These officers will work in the National Partnership schools to support the teaching of Indigenous students performing at the lower bands of achievement. The transition officer will support closer monitoring of students at transition to high school.

All Catholic NP schools will be required to develop a school-based plan which responds to the priorities set for literacy and numeracy. In NP schools with Indigenous students, specific strategies will be documented to address the literacy and numeracy needs of Indigenous students in order to halve the performance gap.

There are 100 Indigenous students enrolled in ACT Catholic systemic primary schools. The CEO has increased the staffing allocation for supporting Indigenous education in 2009. An ACT regional approach will be implemented so that high schools are linked with feeder primary schools. Each of the three regions is to be supported by Indigenous Assistants. This is an increase of two additional staff. The CEO Indigenous Officer will supervise and direct the programs that are developed by the regional clusters. The emphasis of these programs will be to increase the educational achievements of students and is a component of the CEO Literacy and Numeracy Strategic Plan

Existing programs, such as *Dare to Lead*, exist in independent schools that have Indigenous students. The type of support and programs in the future will depend on the school.

Support for Schools

ACT public schools attract a pool of beginning teachers annually who are learning their craft and who need guidance about the practical application of their pre-service learning. Central office staff, in conjunction with beginning teacher school coordinators, support these teachers with a program of professional development and mentoring. Over the life of this implementation plan, a pilot program will be developed and trialled to provide explicit and focused literacy and numeracy professional learning for beginning teachers.

The appointment of Literacy and Numeracy Contact Officers for each school is a key component of the *Archdiocesan Strategic Plan for Literacy and Numeracy for 2009 – 2011*. Literacy and Numeracy Contact Officers will be key liaison personnel, along with Religious Education and Curriculum Officers from the Catholic Education Office. The role of these teachers is to guide and support literacy and numeracy within their school.

Strong school leadership and whole school engagement

Public Schools

Twenty one Literacy and Numeracy Field Officers will be appointed to work in school clusters from 2010 - with 16 of these Field Officers to work exclusively in primary schools. This initiative builds on the Early Literacy and Numeracy Officer (ELNO) model that has been used in various formats in ACT public schools since 2000.

The 12 National Partnership public schools will have priority for the allocation of one of these Field Officers in 2010.

The Literacy and Numeracy Field Officers will be responsible for:

- building teacher capacity at all levels across the National Partnership schools through on-site professional learning, coaching, mentoring and modelling
- providing expert advice in literacy and numeracy strategies and their classroom application. As trained facilitators in *First Steps Writing and Reading* or *Count Me In Too* (CMIT) these officers will provide the foundation for developing a common base for building professional discussions across the ACT, and for supporting the

development and implementation of identified literacy and numeracy priorities within the school plan

- strengthening student monitoring processes, including the use of individual learning plans (ILPs) and personal learning plans (PLPs) for low performing students including ESL students, students with a disability and Indigenous students
- providing expert advice and additional support to school Literacy and/or Numeracy Coordinators.

Each school will also identify a School Literacy and Numeracy Coordinator. These coordinators will be responsible for building teacher capacity through coaching and mentoring in classes, including team teaching practices, and the provision of intensive support to identified students. They will also:

- assist in the development and implementation of the literacy and numeracy priority within the school plan
- coordinate the development of systems to track and evaluate student progress, including input into ILPs and PLPs
- support a professional learning team approach as a strategy in building teacher capacity.

A professional learning program for National Partnership school principals will be developed with a focus on understanding student achievement data and on learning from schools with exemplary practice.

Catholic System Schools

The *Focussed School Support Program* will provide specialist education officers to work with National Partnership schools in a collaborative way to develop the literacy and numeracy skills of students. Priority has been given to schools where student results in particular aspects of NAPLAN indicate that this form of support would be beneficial.

The appointment of Literacy and Numeracy Contact Officers for each National Partnership school is a key component of the *Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Strategic Plan for Literacy and Numeracy for 2009 – 2011*. The role of these teachers is to guide and support literacy and numeracy within their school. Literacy and Numeracy Contact Officers will be key liaison personnel from the Catholic Education Office. Professional learning opportunities will be provided during the year for Literacy and Numeracy Contact Officers.

Independent Schools

Each of the independent schools identified in this National partnership has a different governing arrangement for the implementation of their plans, with all schools having nominated a contact officer who will oversee implementation of the plan at their school.

Monitoring School and Student Performance

All ACT schools have been provided with School Measurement, Assessment and Reporting Toolkit (SMART) to support schools to use NAPLAN results as a diagnostic tool in assessing for learning. Teachers will use this information to plan personalised teaching for students to address identified needs. Other data tools and checklists will also be used by schools to monitor progress and continue to ensure focussed teaching.

The Department's Field Officers and School Literacy and Numeracy Coordinators, and the CEO's Specialist teachers and Literacy and Numeracy Contact Officers will support classroom teachers to build stronger instruction pathways in their programming to address the learning needs of all students.

Public Schools

The Department's 2009 *School Improvement Framework* describes a common approach to school review across all ACT public schools. The framework places strong emphasis on evidence-based practices in the context of a system that values excellence and quality. The 2009 updated framework has strengthened the range of self-assessment tools, given greater alignment to reporting mechanisms, and refined external validation to better reflect the formative nature of school improvement.

School improvement is a system-wide investment and the framework establishes a number of initiatives designed to support schools through the process. Three School Improvement Partners (SIPs) will work closely with each School Director to provide schools with assistance in the development of effective school review strategies. The SIPs will also provide schools with expert advice on their literacy and numeracy student results and other appropriate data. The *School Improvement Framework* has more closely aligned school development with student achievement and through use of SMART will further assist schools to align teaching to students' learning requirements.

This school-based focus on improvement will also inform system analysis of overall gains towards agreed targets throughout both phases of the NP.

The three SIPs will support the National Partnership schools by:

- guiding them towards self-assessment that includes action research, target setting and strategic planning
- enabling them to self-reflect on performance and achievement using a range of evidence-based processes and tools
- assisting them with the accountability measures used to validate reported achievements and inform future school planning.

Under this NP, two temporary School Data Analysts will be appointed to help the SIPs to analyse individual school-level results over time and against different cohorts. This will provide school principals with the level of information they require in order to set sensible targets in their school plans and effectively monitor and report student achievement.

Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) testing takes place in March and November for Kindergarten students in public schools. It provides a school readiness indicator and a value added score to identify early intervention support requirements.

Catholic System Schools

In the last two years ACT Catholic schools have completed training in the use of the SMART package and previously the ACTAP data analysis program. As a result of this training all schools are required to undertake an examination of NAPLAN results and other school based assessment data.

Each school is required to create a literacy and numeracy plan, identifying specific targets in the five priority areas listed below for submission to Religious Education and Curriculum Services, Catholic Education Office. Officers work collaboratively with schools to develop these Literacy and Numeracy Plans.

The plans are signed off when completed by the relevant Catholic Education Officer. To develop their Literacy and Numeracy Plans each school undertakes an audit process based on the following five areas within the CEO *Literacy and Numeracy Strategic Plan*:

- co-ordinated approach and whole school planning
- identification of and support for literacy and numeracy needs
- teaching, learning, assessment and reporting
- professional learning
- partnerships.

The findings of the audit process are presented to all staff to enable a formal reflection process on the key findings to determine priorities for planning purposes.

Independent Schools

National Partnership schools will be monitored through consultation and liaison that the agreed governance frameworks are appropriate and being carried out in each school. This will include the Association's Executive Director talking directly with school principals and liaising with the contact officers.

ACT LITERACY AND NUMERACY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2009-2010

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND MEASURES

A Measurement/Reward Framework (the Framework) forms part of the Final Implementation Plan, setting out the performance measures and targets relating to the Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership, under which reward payments will be made. The performance indicators and measures will be used to measure improvements and progress over time in the National Partnership schools and their students.

The Framework was developed in negotiation with the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). The measures were proposed by the ACT Department of Education and Training, based on guidelines developed by DEEWR. DEEWR then engaged with ACER, who assisted with analysis of the measures and their suitability.

The Framework contains 29 performance measures based on National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results for ACT schools participating in the National Partnership. The purpose is to directly measure student literacy and numeracy outcomes, with the NAPLAN assessment being the best tool to achieve this. The choice of NAPLAN is due to the comprehensive nature of the assessment (covering all students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9), its national coverage and comparability and its frequency (conducted annually).

There were three NAPLAN measures that were deemed mandatory by DEEWR. These applied to reading and numeracy, noting that reading has been used as a proxy for literacy. The measures were:

- improvements in the percentage of students above and at or above the national minimum standards;
- improvements in the mean scale score; and
- improvements in the percentage of Indigenous students above and at or above the national minimum standards.

In general, the ACT used measures for:

- improvements in the percentage of students both above and at or above the national minimum standards in both reading and numeracy for years 3 and 5;
- improvements in mean scale scores, again for reading and numeracy for years 3 and 5; and
- gains in mean scale scores for student cohorts from year 3 to year 5.

Local measures were an allowable component in developing the Framework. The ACT proposed that the NAPLAN measures represented the strongest evidence of achievement, and therefore did not propose any local measures.

The measures apply to target schools as articulated in the Implementation Plan for the National Partnership. For Indigenous students, due to the small number in the ACT, the measure developed applies to all Indigenous students in the nominated year (year 3) in all public schools (not only those in the target schools).

The Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership schools include 12 public schools, seven Catholic schools and six independent schools. The performance measures cover a two year period, 2011 and 2012, with 2008 NAPLAN results being used as baseline measures. Targets have been determined for each measure for each of the two years.

SCHOOL SELECTION

Funding under the Agreement will be distributed to each ACT school sector based on the same funding distribution model used by the Australian Government; that is, each sector's share of students at or below the minimum standard in reading and numeracy for years 3,5 and 7 in the 2008 National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).

Twelve public schools, seven Catholic schools and six independent schools have been identified to receive support in the first two years of the NP.

These National Partnership schools have been selected based on data associated with their performance in national testing along with student population characteristics, including disadvantage, Indigenous status, ESL backgrounds and students with a disability.

The twelve National Partnership public schools are: Bonython Primary School, Charles Conder Primary School, Evatt Primary School, Gilmore Primary School, Giralang Primary School, Gordon Primary School, Latham Primary School, Macgregor Primary School, Mount Rogers Primary School, Theodore Primary School, Taylor Primary School, and Caroline Chisholm School.

The seven National Partnership Catholic system schools are: Good Shepherd Amaroo, St Francis of Assisi Calwell, St Thomas Aquinas Charnwood, St Michael's Kaleen, St Thomas the Apostle Kambah, St Matthew's Page, and St Anthony's Wanniasa.

The six independent schools are: Canberra Girls' Grammar School, Canberra Grammar School, St Edmund's College, Orana School, Radford College, and Marist College.

SCHOOL LEVEL PLANS

Within their school plan, all National Partnership Schools will identify the specific reforms, and their strategies for addressing them, linked to the Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership. These school plans will clearly identify the level of National Partnership investment and the specific activities to address National Partnership reforms.

School Plans for National Partnership schools are available from www.det.act.gov.au and individual school websites. A list of National Partnership schools is located on the Smarter Schools site at <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Programs/SmarterSchools/Pages/state.aspx>

Public Schools

All ACT public schools are required to develop four-year strategic school plans and annual operational plans in consultation with their school communities. These plans derive from system-based data, satisfaction surveys (students, parents and staff) and school-based analysis against the four domains in the Department's *School Improvement Framework*:

- student environment
- teaching and learning
- leadership and management
- community involvement.

By the end of 2009, each school will have a plan which articulates the strategies and actions they intend to put in place for achieving sustained improvements in the literacy and numeracy outcomes of their students. This plan will incorporate the school strategic plan required by all ACT public schools and will include the specific initiatives and derived data from this partnership.

Catholic System Schools

All schools are required to develop a school-based plan which responds to the priorities set for literacy and numeracy. In schools with Indigenous students, specific strategies will be documented to address the literacy and numeracy needs of Indigenous students in order to halve the performance gap.

Independent Schools

Independent schools participating in this National Partnership will respond to their own circumstances, school community and leadership framework to implement their plan.

EVALUATION

The first two years of the NP (2008/9-2009/10) is funded by facilitation funding provided by the Australian Government and ACT co-investment funding allocated from school sectors. A total of \$1.8m of facilitation funding has been allocated to the ACT.

In the final two years of the NP (2010/11-2011/12) funding is provided on a reward basis according to achievement of agreed milestones, as assessed by the Council of Australian Governments Reform Council (CRC). These reward milestones are to be further defined once the ambit for reward funding has been determined following the achievement of facilitation milestones. A total of \$4.2m of reward funding is available to the ACT.

LINKS TO OTHER NATIONAL REFORMS

Implementation of this NP is closely linked to the delivery of the Improving Teacher Quality and Low SES School Communities National Partnerships.

A quality teaching workforce is crucial to the successful implementation of any reform in schooling. Support for the National Partnership schools will be complemented and supplemented by support under the Improving Teacher Quality NP through reforms to lift teacher quality, with specific measures to improve classroom practice such as school-based professional learning and leadership development.

The four schools participating in the Low SES School Communities National Partnership will also benefit from this National Partnership. A specialist position will coordinate school activities against the reforms identified in both the Literacy and Numeracy and Low SES School Communities National Partnerships. These schools will be given increased flexibility to fill key teaching and leadership positions within the school and will be priority schools for placement of accomplished and leading teacher positions.

The ACT views all three NPs as a significant opportunity to contribute to the achievement of national policy and reform objectives as part of the National Education Agreement.

