



Australian Government

SMARTER SCHOOLS NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS



SMARTER SCHOOLS NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY
LOW SES SCHOOL COMMUNITIES
LITERACY AND NUMERACY

NSW Progress Report 2010 (1 January – 30 June 2010)



Education
& Training



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Significant achievements.....	2
Implementation challenges.....	3
Section 1 – Overview/Summary of Progress	4
Section 2 – Improving Teacher Quality	5
Six month progress – 1 January to 30 June 2010.....	5
Overview.....	5
National facilitation reform activity.....	5
Reform implementation in NSW.....	6
Significant achievements/activities – 1 January to 30 June 2010.....	13
Centres for Excellence.....	13
Professional experience placements.....	13
School based decision making pilot.....	14
Evaluation.....	14
Barriers to progress – 1 January to 30 June 2010.....	14
Lack of incentive for high level accreditation.....	14
Implementing system-wide reform where there is no ‘system’.....	15
Isolation.....	15
Infrastructure and resources.....	16
Support for Indigenous students – 1 January to 30 June 2010.....	16
Teacher professional development to respond to Aboriginal students’ needs.....	17
Partnerships with Aboriginal communities.....	17
Inclusion of Aboriginal module in pre-service teacher education.....	17
Strategies to attract Aboriginal people into the teaching profession.....	17
Activities you would like to showcase – 1 January to 30 June 2010.....	18
Partnerships with universities to improve the quality of the professional experience.....	18
Foundation Leadership Program for newly appointed principals.....	18
A new Centre of Excellence at Narromine.....	19
Team Leadership for School Improvement K– 12 program.....	19
Mentoring to support teacher accreditation.....	20
Section 3 – Low SES School Communities	21
Six month progress – 1 January to 30 June 2010.....	21
Identification of needs.....	21
Implementation support.....	21
School plans.....	22
Implementing plans.....	22
Implementation support.....	23
Attracting and retaining high-performing staff / Building school leadership and planning capacity ...	23
Professional development.....	24
Additional staff resources.....	25
Building collaboration and partnerships.....	26
Involving parents and communities.....	26
Next steps.....	28

Significant achievements/activities – 1 January to 30 June 2010.....	28
<i>Extension of the National Partnership</i>	28
<i>Publication of school plans aligned to reforms on school websites</i>	28
<i>All schools underway and focused on the reforms in Term 1</i>	29
<i>Implementation of additional tailored learning opportunities and targeted intervention programs</i>	29
<i>Accountability mechanisms developed and implemented</i>	30
<i>Enhanced system support and resources provided</i>	30
<i>Websites developed</i>	31
<i>Increased capacity of school staff to use and analyse data</i>	32
<i>Monitoring and evaluation</i>	32
<i>Early examples of change</i>	33
Barriers to progress – 1 January to 30 June 2010	34
<i>Uptake of Highly Accomplished Teachers</i>	34
<i>Attracting new staff to support Low SES National Partnership activities</i>	35
<i>High turnover of teachers and leaders</i>	35
<i>Community consultation</i>	36
<i>Distance in rural and regional areas</i>	37
<i>School planning and accountability</i>	37
Support for Indigenous students – 1 January to 30 June 2010	38
<i>Introduction</i>	38
<i>Providing intensive support to Aboriginal students who are not meeting minimum standards</i>	38
<i>Building school and teacher capacity to meet the needs of Aboriginal students</i>	39
<i>Schools and Aboriginal communities collaborating to improve outcomes</i>	40
Support for other cohorts – 1 January to 30 June 2010	41
<i>Introduction</i>	41
<i>Building school capacity to meet the needs of ESL students and refugees</i>	41
<i>Meeting the needs of refugee students</i>	43
Activities you would like to showcase – 1 January to 30 June 2010.....	44
<i>Developing teacher and leadership capacity</i>	44
<i>Supporting improvements in literacy attainment</i>	46
<i>Supporting students in special circumstances: refugee students, students with learning disabilities and students in a juvenile justice setting</i>	49
<i>Building student engagement in literacy</i>	52
<i>Overcoming distance, providing homework support and improving Aboriginal students' transition to school</i>	54

Section 4 – Literacy and Numeracy	56
Six month progress – 1 January to 30 June 2010.....	56
Overview.....	56
Teacher professional development	57
Improvements in school leadership	58
Whole school focus on improving student performance in reading and numeracy.....	58
Significant achievements/activities – 1 January to 30 June 2010.....	59
Implementation of literacy and numeracy programs	59
Teacher engagement and professional development	61
Evaluation	62
Progress in key activities	62
Barriers to progress – 1 January to 30 June 2010	62
Cultural change.....	62
Teacher mobility	63
Student mobility	63
Lack of casual teachers	63
Remoteness and size of schools involved.....	63
Support for Indigenous students – 1 January to 30 June 2010	64
Reading and numeracy initiatives.....	64
Aboriginal cultural immersion initiatives in NSW	66
Activities you would like to showcase – 1 January to 30 June 2010.....	67
Whole school approach to numeracy	67
Developing a common language around reading comprehension.....	67
Individualised Support for Aboriginal students	68
Accelerated Literacy boosts student results	68
Section 5 – Milestone Reporting	69
Improving Teacher Quality SSNP	69
Part 1 - Milestones not reported/not achieved/partially achieved in Annual Report for 2009	69
Part 2 - Milestones in Progress Report (Achieved 1 January to 30 June 2010)	69
Part 3 - Milestones that will progress through the 2010 calendar year (with no set milestone date) .	69
Low SES School Communities SSNP	70
Part 1 - Milestones not reported/not achieved/partially achieved in Annual Report for 2009	70
Part 2 - Milestones in Progress Report (Achieved 1 January to 30 June 2010)	70
Part 3 - Milestones that will progress through the 2010 calendar year (with no set milestone date) .	70
Literacy and Numeracy SSNP	71
Part 1 - Milestones not reported/not achieved/partially achieved in Annual Report for 2009	71
Part 2 - Milestones in Progress Report (Achieved 1 January to 30 June 2010)	71
Part 3 - Milestones that will progress through the 2010 calendar year (with no set milestone date) .	71
Appendices	72
Appendix A: Distribution of teacher quality reforms against stages in the teaching lifecycle.....	72
Appendix B: Acronyms used in the NSW Progress Report 2010.....	73
Appendix C: References.....	74

Executive Summary

New South Wales has responded to the National Partnerships (NPs) by undertaking ambitious and significant reform. The sectors have chosen to pursue systemic change rather than short-term, one-off, isolated programs. Reform has been deep as well as wide and has effected an important shift in the way we manage education in this State.

Examples of the scale of our reform ambition include:

- Creating a new teacher career path with a focus on teaching to enable talented teachers to choose promotion in the classroom, rather than in non-teaching roles. Highly Accomplished Teachers are a new classification of teacher, paid over \$100,000 per year, with a different role description and separate award arrangement
- Articulating a clear line of sight from resource allocation to improved student outcomes at school and system levels by developing accountability and evaluation processes for schools and systems, including mandatory planning processes, publication of school improvement plans.
- Supporting evidence-based decisions by constructing rigorous evaluation structures and processes at program level and at cross-sectoral, state wide level. The Minister for Education and Training has appointed a high profile, high calibre independent NP Evaluation Committee to provide oversight to long-term strategic evaluation of the NP initiatives. The work commissioned by this Committee will provide the evidence base for sustained reform measures into the future
- Investing significant additional State funds to expand NP participation to additional schools, so that the opportunities for reform might be shared more widely
- Enabling opportunities for schools to take risks and invest in programs and strategies not previously tried. For example, many schools have implemented phonics-based reading interventions, which is a break-through departure from reading support programs implemented in the past
- Establishing teachers in all NP schools as better users of data to support planning and teaching through training. An online self assessment tool was developed and has helped teachers identify where professional development could best be targeted to support continuous improvement. All students in the Literacy and Numeracy NP schools have undertaken additional, specially-developed standardised assessments so that progress may be tracked regularly and reliably.

New South Wales has created the mechanisms for deep and far-reaching reform, backed by additional State government funds.

There are significant challenges, however, particularly in scaling up and sustaining reform. There is serious risk that some of the significant reforms implemented will begin to dissipate in the next twelve months.

Schools cannot begin the work of self-evaluation and planning around specific reforms if there is no assurance of resourcing for the future. Expanding the number of Highly Accomplished Teachers and Centres for Excellence to support and sustain system-wide improvements will be very difficult.

Significant achievements

The implementation of the Smarter Schools National Partnerships in New South Wales has progressed considerably in the six months to 30 June 2010.

- The NSW Government has extended the Low Socio-economic School Communities National Partnership to an additional ten government schools through the Program Extension Initiative
- All teachers in Low SES and Literacy and Numeracy National Partnerships schools have had access to extensive training in data analysis and assessment
- Almost 5,000 individual learning plans have been developed for students identified as being at risk of achieving at or below national minimum standards
- More than 1,800 teachers are delivering whole school/class reading or numeracy programs
- Teachers and school leaders from all sectors are participating in Aboriginal education and cultural immersion programs to build their knowledge and understanding of local Aboriginal communities
- The NSW National Partnerships Evaluation Committee commissioned an external formative evaluation which has provided timely information to support the streamlining of future implementation of the Smarter Schools National Partnerships in NSW. Six further strategic evaluations are being tendered. Evaluation of individual student intervention and whole class reading and numeracy programs has been commissioned
- All schools involved in National Partnerships have revised, updated and published their school plans on their websites.

National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality

NSW has achieved the following results under the National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality during the six month reporting period:¹

- 145 full time equivalent and part time teacher mentors supporting beginning and early career teachers
- 88 Highly Accomplished Teacher positions and equivalents appointed
- 22 full time equivalent paraprofessionals appointed
- 47 enhanced decision making schools in place
- 89 schools participating in Aboriginal community engagement programs
- 18 Centres for Excellence operational, plus the establishment of three new Centres for Excellence, bringing the total number in NSW to 21

National Partnership on Low Socio-economic School Communities

A total of 331 schools in NSW are currently participating in National Partnership on Low Socio-economic School Communities. NSW has achieved the following under this National Partnership within the reporting period:

- Teachers have completed data analysis training in the *School Measurement and Reporting Toolkit* and the *Data Analysis Skills Assessment*

¹ Numbers cited are cumulative

- At least 369 literacy and numeracy interventions have been implemented across Low SES NP schools, including intensive programs targeting the needs of Aboriginal students
- High quality teaching has been supported through additional staff resources to
 - support professional learning in literacy and numeracy programs
 - provide mentoring for teachers and principals
 - build school awareness of Aboriginal issues, mentor Aboriginal students and support personalised learning approaches
 - build partnerships with parents, local and Aboriginal communities and universities
 - expand schools' roles as centres for community activity by connecting to additional services
- All sectors have implemented personalised and individual learning plans for students at risk of underachievement and for Aboriginal students (as needed)

National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy

All 147 participating schools began implementing their literacy and numeracy programs at the start of the 2010 school year. These programs involved:

- 1,356 teachers delivering whole school/class reading programs
- 496 teachers providing whole school/class numeracy programs
- Individual learning plans for 4,888 students identified as being at risk of achieving at or below national minimum standards, including 1,569 Aboriginal students
- All students in Years 3, 4 and 5 in participating schools completing the August 2010 National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy assessments
- Teachers in all L&N schools completing the *Data Analysis Skills Assessment*
- Training of school leaders in the *NSW Analytical Framework for Effective Leadership and School Improvement in Literacy and Numeracy*

Implementation challenges

Tight timeframes have created significant challenges in the short term for schools and support staff in conducting timely planning and community consultation, but this is expected to become easier for schools in later cohorts.

Schools that commenced in 2009 identified analysing data as an area in which they needed extra support, especially in non-government schools that may not have used student data routinely prior to joining the National Partnership. Almost all schools participating in the National Partnerships have since undertaken training to build capacity to use and analyse student data.

Isolation arising from distance and schools' lack of familiarity with new roles such as Highly Accomplished Teachers were other challenges raised in the external formative evaluation. Intensive support provided by sectors and the opportunities for schools to come together to train, share ideas and plan have helped to address these issues.

The main challenge as the National Partnerships become more embedded in schools will be the sustainability of the reforms in the future.

Section 1 – Overview/Summary of Progress

The implementation of the Smarter Schools National Partnerships (SSNPs) in NSW has progressed considerably in the six months to 30 June 2010. By Term 1 2010, all current National Partnership schools were implementing their reform activities. Early indicators signal that there is real engagement with SSNP activities and we can be cautiously optimistic of the success of our implementation strategies.

Additional investment

The NSW Government has allocated \$35.6m to include additional schools in the Low SES School Communities SSNP via the *Low Socio-economic Status School Communities Program Extension Initiative*. Ten of these schools have begun planning and will receive funding for a two year modified program, focused on improving literacy and numeracy results.

Resources and support systems

A range of support tools, resources and training modules have been developed at the system level to support schools in implementing SSNP reforms. All participating schools have undertaken training in: conducting situational analyses to better inform school planning; improving leadership capacity; and using data more effectively.

Three websites have also been developed to strategically link relevant information and resources for schools and communities.

Cross-sectoral collaboration

There has been an effective collaborative effort across the three sectors. A cross sectoral steering committee has been established to guide the implementation of the partnerships in NSW supported by a series of working groups. Cross sectoral collaboration has resulted in the valuable sharing of resources and experiences.

Evaluation

The NSW National Partnerships Evaluation Committee (NPEC), established at the end of 2009, has begun operating in the reporting period. NPEC commissioned an external formative evaluation of early implementation of the SSNPs in NSW which was completed in March 2010. The formative evaluation provided timely information to support the streamlining of implementation processes and improved support materials for future phases of the rollout activities for the SSNP programs. NPEC also developed a series of evaluation proposals which were approved to go out to tender at their June 2010 meeting.

Implementation consolidated

Significant progress in implementing the National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy intervention initiatives has been achieved and a cultural shift in teaching practice is beginning to emerge. Teachers are more strategically using a range of internal and external data to ensure that individual student learning needs are met.

Low SES School Communities SSNP schools have been well supported in their implementation. A wide range of resources and professional development activities have been developed to enhance teacher capacity. Regional support and enhanced accountability processes have helped ensure implementation of appropriate strategies to meet individual schools needs. Schools have also been supported in developing skills and strategies to monitor and evaluate their own progress towards reform targets.

NSW has participated in significant activity across all 18 Teacher Quality National Partnership facilitation and reward reforms at both a national and state level. At the national level NSW has been actively involved in national committees linked to progressing national standards. At the state level NSW has made significant inroads into improving teacher quality at each stage of the teaching life cycle through specific activities to attract; train; recruit; develop and retain quality teachers particularly in areas of identified potential workforce shortages.

Section 2 – Improving Teacher Quality

Six month progress – 1 January to 30 June 2010

Overview

During early 2010, New South Wales (NSW) has made substantial progress in implementing all 18 of the Teacher Quality National Partnership's areas of reform. Three more Centres for Excellence have been established, bringing the total operating in the reporting period to 21. The following tables provide a cross-sectoral summary of progress on agreed reward triggers from January to 30 June 2010:

Triggers	Previously reported	Cumulative total
Enhanced decision-making schools (Govt sector only)	47	47
Highly Accomplished Teachers and equivalents	29	88*
Teacher mentors	50*	145*
Paraprofessionals (full time equivalents)	17	22
Schools participating in Aboriginal community engagement programs	0	89

* Includes full time equivalent and part time

National facilitation reform activity

NSW has been actively engaged in national committees responsible for progressing the reform agenda including those related to national standards and the National Teaching Workforce Dataset Working Group which will develop the National Teaching Workforce Dataset and the subsequent longitudinal study. Apart from involvement in these committees NSW has made significant contributions to the following areas of national reform:

National Professional Teaching Standards

NSW has taken an active role in developing the national professional teaching standards.

Under the direction of the National Standards Subcommittee, the NSW Institute of Teachers (NSWIT) redrafted the national standards to reflect the consultation responses gathered from all jurisdictions. This work significantly progressed the development of the national standards, taking them to the validation stage.

Pre-service teacher education

NSW has also been at the forefront in progressing reforms to achieve national consistency in pre-service teacher education. As part of this process, the NSW Minister for Education and Training successfully proposed a set of specific requirements for pre-service courses to MCEECDYA which are incorporated in the discussion paper currently under national consideration. The proposal included the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in pre-service teacher education. The NSWIT and the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership

(AITSL) are jointly planning a stakeholder forum to inform the development of the draft pre-service accreditation scheme.

The NSWIT and the NSW Teacher Education Council (representative of all Deans of Education) have begun to develop a common framework for the professional experience component of all teacher education programs in NSW. This will improve the consistency in the delivery of professional experience in NSW and is supported by all sectors. When completed, the common framework will also inform the revision of pre-service programs in NSW.

The common framework will require the development of common templates, such as assessment instruments for applying graduate standards in the practicum, as well as common expectations and role definitions across university and school participants and potential professional learning modules.

Development of a national registration process for teachers

NSW has proposed revisions to the submission regarding national consistency in teacher registration to AEEYSOC's July meeting (in liaison with other jurisdictions and AITSL).

Development of a national certification process for teachers

NSW led the collaborative development of a paper to the National Standards Sub-group articulating the broad principles for a national certification process for teachers. Principles contained in the paper are currently being implemented by NSWIT in the accreditation of teachers at levels of Professional Accomplished and Professional Leadership.

Reform implementation in NSW

When implemented, the national standards will underpin the delivery of several other national facilitation reforms, such as: the national accreditation of pre-service teacher education courses, graduates and teachers at higher levels of professional competence; national teacher registration; and performance management and professional learning.

The reforms contained within the National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality align to five stages of the teacher lifecycle (represented in the Diagram 1).

Diagram 1: The Teaching Life-cycle



Stages of the lifecycle are:

- **attracting** the best entrants into teaching, including through flexible pathways
- **training** pre-service teachers, principals, teachers and school leaders for their roles and the school environment
- **recruiting** school teachers and leaders to minimise skills shortages
- **developing** and enhancing the skills and knowledge of teachers and school leaders through their careers
- **retaining** and rewarding quality principals, teachers and school leaders.

Details of the distribution of NSW's National Partnership reforms activity across the stages of the teaching lifecycle are included at Attachment A.

1. Attracting the best entrants into teaching

In 2010, NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) awarded 267 teaching scholarships, of which 74 were awarded to Aboriginal students. The scholarships program is promoted to Year 12 students, people currently undertaking teacher education studies at university and people seeking a career change.

In addition, the DET also awarded 12 incentives scholarships in the areas of maths and science.

In 2010, the Catholic sector offered 44 scholarships to pre-service teacher education candidates.

Independent schools have offered four scholarships for final year teacher education students to undertake internships in independent schools, with a particular emphasis on meeting the needs of schools with significant Aboriginal enrolments, and regional, remote and hard to staff schools.

2. Training pre-service teachers, principals, teachers and school leaders for their roles in the school environment

Professional experience for pre-service teachers

In 2010, the DET has offered 80 quality placements for pre-service teachers. These include:

- 18 scholarships for pre-service teachers to participate in the *Enhanced Teacher Training Program* to prepare them to teach in schools with significant demographic and locational challenges. This program gives students a minimum of six weeks in a country 'immersion' placement with community mentors in schools with significant levels of Aboriginal student enrolments
- 20 interns engaged in a quality placement programs in government school Centres for Excellence.
- 36 participants from seven universities have taken part in the DET *Beyond the Line* professional experience program in 2010. This program offers students the opportunity to undertake professional experience in regional, rural and remote schools
- six participants in the DET *Beyond the Bridge* professional experience programs in Western and South Western Sydney schools.

Under the Improving Teacher Quality SSNP, the DET has established 10 university partnerships to facilitate the provision of quality professional experience placements in schools including internships. The DET currently supports approximately 16,500 professional experience placements annually.

During Semester 1, the Catholic Education Office in the Diocese of Lismore developed the *Ready to Teach Program* to develop pre-service teachers' skills through working with students with special needs, planning with the class teacher, engaging in team teaching and receiving mentoring support. Offers have been made to 10 graduates who will receive the opportunity to teach for three weeks, supported by a high quality mentor teacher. Each graduate is required to have successfully completed final year practicum and lecture requirements prior to joining the program.

The Independent Schools Centre for Excellence (ISCE) has facilitated 29 new quality teacher practicum placements in collaboration with the University of NSW.

Improving school leadership capacity

The Catholic sector has built leadership capacity at the system and school level through the following activities:

- implementation of the new diocesan learning framework
- provision of executive coaching to support and sustain staff in leadership positions
- provision of Masters of Educational Leadership scholarships
- delivery of the *Leaders Transforming Learning and Learners Program* in partnership with the Australian Catholic University
- sponsoring principals to attend the Australian Catholic University Leadership Conference.

The Independent Schools Leadership Centre (ISLC) has significantly expanded its leadership programs. During the first half of 2010, 74 principals and prospective principals have been supported to undertake leadership training. In addition, course fee subsidies and assistance with travel costs have made ISLC leadership programs more accessible to independent school principals and aspiring leaders in regional areas.

In 2010, the DET delivered a comprehensive suite of professional learning programs for aspiring, newly appointed and current school leaders to support the achievement of school and student outcomes. In 2010, 161 Institute registered professional learning programs were developed and delivered state-wide that supported the key accountabilities of school leaders.

Team Leadership for School Improvement K-12 is a professional learning program that supports distributed leadership in the government schools through focusing on the development, implementation and evaluation of whole school planning. This program provides support for school teams through the process of achieving targets associated with their school's priority areas.

3. Recruiting school teachers and leaders

Internships

Across the three sectors 41 internships were offered to support the recruitment of new teachers in schools identified with geographic or demographic need, including:

- 20 fourth year interns in government schools in collaboration with regional universities. Teacher education students and re-training teachers will have the opportunity to be placed in schools for their final semester, on reduced teaching loads with teacher-mentor support.
- the DET's *Enhanced Teacher Training Program* (described in the section on '*Professional experience for pre-service teachers*') also facilitates future employment by placing final year undergraduates in schools with high Aboriginal student enrolments for an extended professional experience

- the Catholic sector offered 17 internships for pre-service teachers who have completed their academic requirements, are provisionally registered with the NSWIT to teach and have begun the process of accreditation with the Institute. These interns do not have full teaching status and are typically on reduced teaching loads with supervision. Internships provide interns with the opportunity to experience teaching and employers with the opportunity to determine their suitability to teach in the specific context of their school.
- four internships were offered by the independent sector, with a further two under negotiation for final year Aboriginal teacher education students and students teaching in schools with high Aboriginal enrolments.

School Based Decision Making Pilot

A total of 47 government schools are participating in a pilot, which provides principals with increased flexibility in school recruitment, staffing mix and budget. The *School Based Decision Making Pilot* has now been running for two terms. A list of participating schools was provided in NSW's Annual Report for 2009 (April 2010).

4. Developing and enhancing the skills and knowledge of teachers and school leaders through their careers

Accreditation with NSWIT

Across all sectors, 534 teachers, have submitted preliminary assessment applications to obtain accreditation at higher levels (above Professional Competence) with the NSWIT. This represents an increase of 441% in applications since August 2009. This includes applications from:

- 419 government school teachers
- 44 Catholic school teachers
- 71 independent school teachers.

The Catholic sector has also been active in the assessment and registration of professional development programs to achieve NSWIT recognition and support. For example, in 2010 the Archdiocese of Sydney successfully achieved accreditation for 497 courses and programs registered in the Professional Development In-service Guide.

Professional learning

The DET has developed an online state wide professional learning record management system (*My PL @DET*) which has been implemented in all regions. The system maps and reports on the provision of professional learning programs, enrolment and participation. *My PL @DET* has mapped all professional learning against the NSWIT professional teaching standards and found that every standard has been addressed. Additionally, *My PL @DET*:

- provides a '*My professional learning diary*' function which allows staff members to manually store the details of any informal professional learning undertaken
- has the capacity to monitor the coverage of the NSWIT's Professional Teaching Standards across the Department and is able to identify any gaps in provision to inform future planning
- has the capacity to electronically feed information into the NSWIT's professional learning register.

According to *My PL @DET*, between January and July 2010:

- 63,865 registrations of government school teachers and leaders in professional learning courses/programs
- there were a total of 12,734 registrations by teachers participating in courses endorsed by the NSW Institute of Teachers addressing the Professional Competence Teaching Standards.

The DET currently provides the following range of professional development courses:

- 2,422 registered, non-registered and developed courses on *My PL@DET*
- 1,331 professional learning programs and courses aligned to the Professional Teaching Standards
- 1,726 programs incorporating the *DET Quality Teaching Model*

The DET has developed a range of online professional learning programs that can be accessed by teachers and school leaders which have a focus on continuous improvement in schools and leading change in schools.

For example, the *Classroom Teacher Program* was developed in 2010 by the DET and is registered with NSWIT. This is an innovative professional learning program to support early career teachers to achieve and maintain accreditation at Professional Competence level. The *Classroom Teacher* program provides valuable resources for use in teacher induction and supports supervisors, principals and regions in guiding teacher professional learning programs.

Extensive support for professional development has been provided across the independent sector this year. A total of 846 course subsidies have been provided to teachers in independent schools to attend professional development programs supporting quality teaching and deep subject content knowledge within the framework of the professional teaching standards of the NSWIT. All independent schools have access to subsidies for professional development.

“New Scheme Teachers” in the Catholic sector have attended 6,963 professional development sessions registered by the NSWIT in the past six months.

The Independent Schools Teacher Accreditation Authority has also provided additional support to enable teachers to attain the higher levels of NSWIT accreditation. To date, schools have applied for grants to support 22 teachers prepare for accreditation and 37 teachers have undertaken training to prepare them to seek accreditation at the NSWIT’s levels of Professional Accomplishment and Professional Leadership.

Supporting the quality of teachers of Maths and Science

In 2010, the DET and higher education providers have expanded the provision of professional learning to support teachers of maths and science. This includes:

- *Physics Science Foundation Summer Schools* (University of Sydney): This program supports secondary science teachers to maintain currency of knowledge and skills in the teaching of science and increase teacher capacity to engage students.
- *Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics* (STEM) Project (Macquarie University): This initiative supports the Peninsula Community of Schools (at Narrabeen) to develop and implement innovative teaching and learning practices within STEM curriculum areas

- *Building Outreach Opportunities for Students and Teachers (BOOST)* project (University of Newcastle): This project aims to build teacher capacity in the teaching of stage 6 Mathematics through provision of a targeted professional development program.

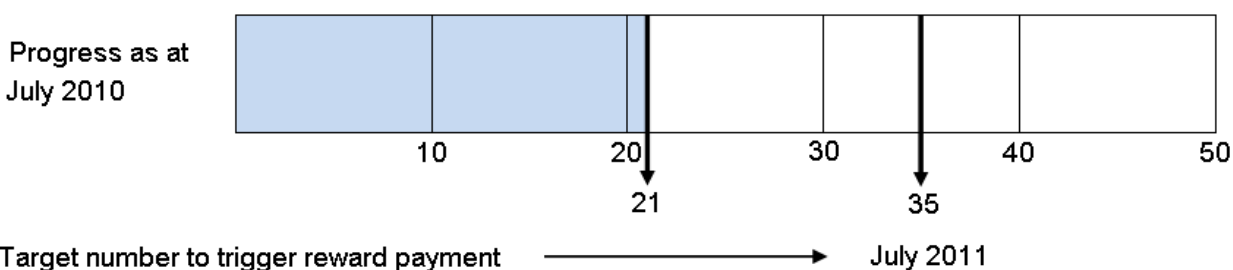
Centres for Excellence

Centres for Excellence are school sites for demonstrating, developing and sharing high quality teaching across a cluster of schools leading to improved outcomes for students.

All 18 Centres for Excellence were operational in 2010 (13 government, 4 Catholic and 1 independent – details were provided in the April 2010 Report).

Since April 2010, three new Centres for Excellence were established in the Catholic sector: St. Augustine’s Parish Primary School (Wilcannia-Forbes Diocese), the Sustainable Learning Centre (Maitland-Newcastle Diocese) and ‘Outside the Bell Curve’, a virtual centre for Excellence. This takes the total number of Centres for Excellence established by the end of the reporting period to 21, putting NSW on track to meet the state’s 2011 target of 35.

Improving Teacher Quality National Partnerships - Centres for Excellence



In line with the focus on consolidating structures and processes begun in 2009, the Independent Schools Centre for Excellence is now fully operational and is helping to facilitate an increase in high quality teaching practice among all independent schools. Planning to support and sustain professional learning of teachers in smaller schools has been made more achievable through larger schools providing teacher relief for smaller schools.

Data collection and consultation has been completed to inform the selection of the next tranche of 22 government school Centres for Excellence, which were announced in September 2010.

All 13 current government Centre for Excellence schools are fully functional and have completed detailed plans aligned to the Centre for Excellence guidelines and the school’s context/needs. Centre for Excellence school plans outline goals, strategies, responsibilities, resources, timelines, outcomes and key performance indicators.

Government school Centres for Excellence are developing reciprocal relationships with higher education providers which extend beyond the traditional roles of supporting pre-service teacher education professional experience placements.

5. Retaining and rewarding quality principals, teachers and school leaders

Cultural awareness training

Teachers and school leaders from all sectors are participating in Aboriginal education and cultural immersion programs to develop their knowledge and understanding of local Aboriginal communities. The purpose of these programs is to connect newly appointed staff with the local Aboriginal community to support teacher integration and improved cultural understanding.

Additional staffing support

Highly Accomplished Teachers (HATs) in all 13 government school Centres for Excellence are playing a central role in providing targeted support and professional learning for beginning, early years and more experienced teachers within their schools. The HATs are also establishing networks across Centre for Excellence clusters and developing relationships with universities to support quality professional experience placement processes. The government sector has appointed a total of 15 HATs which include the 13 located in Centres for Excellence and two established in schools participating in the Low Socio-economic Status School Communities National Partnership.

The Catholic sector has appointed 73 (part time) Highly Accomplished Teachers this year, known as *'Teacher Educators'*.

In 2010, mentors have been employed in the Catholic and government sectors to support beginning and early career teachers. This includes:

- 50 in the government sector which support beginning teachers in 90 schools
- 45 part time positions in the Catholic sector

In the government sector, mentors provide quality support and supervision programs for beginning and early career teachers aligned to the *NSW Professional Teaching Standards* and focus on supporting them to achieve accreditation at Professional Competence level.

Across the three sectors 22 full time equivalent paraprofessional positions were established in 2010.

During Terms 1 and 2 of 2010, 13 full time equivalent paraprofessionals commenced operation in government schools. These positions have resulted in 19 staff employed in a range of paraprofessional capacities within or across classrooms, focusing on areas such as literacy, numeracy, technology and supporting professional experience placements. Paraprofessional positions include:

- 'Educational paraprofessionals' who work under the guidance of teachers to assist in areas such as literacy and numeracy
- 'Operational paraprofessionals' who work in a broader role across the school to assist in areas such as technology (Technology Learning Facilitators), professional experience placements, and co-coordinating home school partnerships with Aboriginal communities.

In the independent sector 7.8 full time equivalent paraprofessionals have been employed by schools during the period January-June 2010. In addition, 25 teachers in regional and remote independent schools have benefited from subsidies for accommodation, transport and teacher release to enable them to participate in professional development opportunities.

The Catholic sector is providing extra support to teachers in the Western NSW Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes through the employment of information, communication and technology teacher positions for every school in the region.

Significant achievements/activities – 1 January to 30 June 2010

Centres for Excellence

Across the three sectors, 21 Centres for Excellence are now operational and implementing their plans and developing their networks and partnerships.

The 13 government school Centres for Excellence have been established as hub schools co-locating the newly established positions of Highly Accomplished Teachers and paraprofessionals. These centres support cluster schools to improve teacher quality through:

- Coordinating professional learning aligned to teaching standards
- Expanding partnerships with universities to improve the quality of the professional experience
- Supporting beginning and early career teachers with quality support and supervision programs focusing on the achievement of accreditation at Professional Competence with the NSWIT. In addition to induction programs, ongoing structured supervision programs are provided
- Supporting more experienced teachers to gain accreditation at higher levels with the NSWIT
- Providing in class and out of class support to enable teachers to focus on teaching and learning.

The Centres for Excellence in the Catholic and independent sectors include two innovative virtual centres that are providing support and networking opportunities for schools and helping to facilitate an increase in high quality teaching practice.

For example, the independent virtual centre facilitates collaborative planning and larger schools providing teacher relief for smaller schools, enabling them to provide, support and to sustain professional learning of teachers.

The Independent Schools National Partnerships Management Council circulated a survey to all independent schools in NSW in May-June, which has resulted in a number of grants being offered to schools for collaborative projects through the Independent Schools virtual Centre for Excellence.

These projects will focus on supporting teacher accreditation at the higher levels, increasing schools' capacity in providing teacher education placements, internships for final year teacher education students, addressing the needs of Aboriginal students and communities, and sharing expertise to meet the needs identified by schools themselves.

The survey provides valuable direction for independent schools' participation in the National Partnership on Teacher Quality and guides the development of programs within the Independent Schools Centre for Excellence.

Professional experience placements

During 2010, 119 quality professional experience placements have occurred across the three sectors. These include 10 in the Catholic sector, 29 in the independent sector and 80 in the

government sector. It is important to note that while the nature of quality placements will vary between sectors, they represent an enhanced practicum experience for pre-service teachers.

School based decision making pilot

47 government schools are participating in a pilot, which allows principals increased flexibility in school recruitment, staffing mix and budget allocation. Decisions, including staffing, are based on an understanding of the total financial position of the school.

All pilot schools are seeking to align resources more closely to their school's needs, with each school developing innovative solutions to their requirements. In some cases schools in the pilot are working together in groups, sharing financial and staff resources, including staff mix variations, to good effect.

Flexible staffing appointments under the pilot have been implemented on a temporary basis, with the pilot project to conclude at the end of 2011. Over 200 variations to normal staffing arrangements have been implemented by schools participating in the pilot.

Evaluation

The NSW National Partnerships Evaluation Committee approved two teacher quality evaluation proposals to go to tender at their meeting in June 2010. The evaluation projects will focus on:

- the impact of the Highly Accomplished Teacher, Paraprofessional and Centre for Excellence initiatives
- the impact of professional experience reform measures

Barriers to progress – 1 January to 30 June 2010

Lack of incentive for high level accreditation

Teachers regularly express the view that there is limited incentive to gain accreditation in NSW, especially as new national processes are soon to be introduced.

Teacher accreditation is now a well accepted requirement for beginning a teaching career across all school sectors in NSW. Teachers who are accredited at Professional Competence understand the value of a set of standards for describing good practice and in also gaining accreditation as an accomplished or outstanding teacher. However, for experienced teachers, the incentive for seeking accreditation at higher levels is not always apparent.

NSW accreditation processes are rigorous and require significant commitment from teachers. They are required to demonstrate all standards using evidence from an external observation of their practice, from referees and in documents from their teaching practice. These are not familiar processes to most experienced teachers. In some sectors, financial incentives have been created (e.g. through salary agreements) to encourage teachers to seek higher level accreditation. In the government sector, teachers with higher level accreditation (or who have embarked on the process) may apply for Highly Accomplished Teacher positions.

Although figures from the NSWIT identify a significant increase in the number of teachers seeking accreditation at higher levels of professional accomplishment, further cultural change is required for this to become normal practice for experienced teachers.

Implementing system-wide reform where there is no 'system'

The non-government sector is, by its nature, not systemic, and faces particular challenges implementing reform. The absence of centralised information systems exacerbates the difficulties.

Diversity is the hallmark of the independent sector and the individuality of each school is respected and valued. Each school has its own approach to education, sets its own goals and takes responsibility for its own budgets, staffing and school information. This is both the strength of the sector and a barrier in the implementation of a national initiative predominantly designed for school systems. Without a ready database of information about schools, centralised information gathering can be extremely time consuming.

A key strategy in mitigating this challenge is the development of an intensive communication plan and comprehensive approach to engaging schools. This has been a major undertaking of the Independent Schools National Partnership Management Council in its rollout of the survey of all independent schools in NSW and subsequent support of collaborative teacher quality projects. The survey informed schools about the National Partnership reform activities and elicited information from schools regarding areas of expertise and current professional learning needs, within the context of the National Partnership reforms.

The distributed structure of the Catholic school system in NSW has also posed a number of challenges in the planning, developing, publicising, implementing and reviewing of national initiatives. To address this issue, the Catholic Education Commission of NSW has hosted a number of National Partnership Forums for teachers to provide opportunities to schools to share ideas, plans and strategies. At these forums all participants are encouraged to take leadership responsibility for various aspects of reform.

Isolation

In an evaluation of early implementation of the Smarter Schools National Partnerships in NSW, one of the issues raised by principals within the National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality was the need for more opportunities to communicate with other schools to share ideas and effective strategies to support reform activities (ARTD Consultants; 54).

The Highly Accomplished Teacher in the government sector is a both a new classification and a new role. As such, it is not only important for the DET to promote awareness and understanding of the role, but also to enable the sharing of experience by establishing a network of quality leaders and learners at this level.

To address the challenge of isolation, Highly Accomplished Teachers in Centre for Excellence schools have established networks to share ideas and achievements through web boards, email, telephone and face to face contact. In some parts of the state where a number of Highly Accomplished Teachers are located within a reasonable distance of one other, a peer support/buddy process has been established, in addition to regular networks and meetings. The role is also being promoted to other schools at network meetings and regional conferences.

The paraprofessional position is also a new classification and a new role in the DET which experiences similar problems to those of the Highly Accomplished Teacher. The paraprofessionals are able to share information through web boards and videoconference facilities. Induction and ongoing support are focused at the school level.

The Catholic sector has also experienced difficulty in providing support to staff in newly created paraprofessional positions due to the diversity of their roles which require quite different skill sets than traditional teachers' aides e.g. in special education or science laboratory management. Developing professional support programs to cater for this diversity has required careful consideration, testing and development.

Infrastructure and resources

The most significant barrier faced by government schools participating in the *School Based Decision Making Pilot* is lack of access to an integrated and accurate HR/payroll/finance model, with the capability to produce automated reports for principals and finance support staff in schools. Progress towards the resolution of this issue has tended to focus on broader system improvements, such as an enterprise data warehouse and the rollout of NSW DET's Systems Applications and Products (SAP) data processing.

The *Smarter Schools National Partnerships in NSW: Evaluation of Initial Implementation* report noted that: "although the majority of school pilot school principals were aware of one or other of the resources for school pilots, around one third were not aware of the electronic resource planning tool for staff planning," despite its usefulness being rated highly by principals who were aware of it (ARTD Consultants; 53). This evaluation report recommended the wider promotion of the staff planning tool. NSW has responded by offering ongoing professional learning, including conferences and Project Officer and Senior School Administration Officer visits to pilot schools across NSW. All pilot schools are now aware of the electronic resource planning tool and staff are able to use it with various levels of proficiency.

Another barrier faced by schools participating in the *School Based Decision Making Pilot* is the ongoing need for professional learning and large cost of provision, as pilot schools are widely distributed across the state.

Some industrial concerns were raised by unions early in the reporting period. These concerns have diminished considerably in recent months as informal peer mentoring between principals participating in the *School Based Decision Making Pilot* has enabled changes to staffing mix to occur, whilst ensuring adherence to accepted awards and agreements.

Support for Indigenous students – 1 January to 30 June 2010

Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership reforms underpin the delivery of all three Smarter Schools National Partnerships and are reflected in reforms and performance targets included in the NSW Literacy and Numeracy and Low SES School Communities NP implementation plans. Of the 2009 NSW Aboriginal student population², 26 per cent were enrolled in schools participating in the Low SES SSNP and 10 per cent in schools participating in the Literacy & Numeracy SSNP.

As relationships with spoke schools in the Centres for Excellence initiative develop, there will also be an increase in the number of Aboriginal students directly affected by the Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership reforms.

² Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school student enrolment data is collected annually and will next become available in December 2010.

Teacher professional development to respond to Aboriginal students' needs

The DET provides extensive professional learning for teachers to support the learning outcomes of Aboriginal students. This is facilitated via the state-wide online professional learning record management system, *My PL @DET*.

To date, 1200 participants have undertaken 24 DET training courses that support the learning outcomes of Aboriginal students. Specific examples include:

- 'Implementing Personalised Learning Plans for Aboriginal Students'
- 'Building Cultural Competencies in Aboriginal Cultures'
- 'Embedding Aboriginal Perspectives - Years 5-9'
- 'Gaining a Better Understanding of our Local Aboriginal Culture'
- 'Integrating ICT through Aboriginal Culture K-12'
- 'Interactive Whiteboards in the Aboriginal Languages Classroom'
- 'Articulating Aboriginal Cultural Immersion into Teaching and Learning'
- The Aboriginal Education Consultative Group's three-day program of locally delivered cultural immersion experiences (currently being piloted in National Partnership schools)

The independent sector has provided tailored professional support to assist independent schools participating in the National Partnerships to develop personalised learning plans in collaboration with the Aboriginal students and their families.

Partnerships with Aboriginal communities

In 2010, 89 government schools began working in partnership with their local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups and Aboriginal communities to develop school plans and educational practices intended to contribute to improved outcomes for Aboriginal students.

To date, all 89 school communities participating in this initiative have formed school advisory committees and signed partnership agreements with their Aboriginal communities to ensure a stronger focus on improving outcomes for Aboriginal students and support school improvement.

Inclusion of Aboriginal module in pre-service teacher education

In 2010, NSW significantly contributed to the development of pre-service teacher education when the NSW Minister successfully proposed a set of specific requirements for pre-service courses (including requirements addressing Aboriginal issues) to the Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs. It is anticipated that a mandatory module on Aboriginal perspectives and teaching and learning strategies will be approved later this year.

Strategies to attract Aboriginal people into the teaching profession

NSW employs strategies to support Aboriginal students and improve their outcomes by attracting Aboriginal people to both the teaching profession and paraprofessional positions, and by offering opportunities for pre-service teacher education students to undertake internships and extended practicum placements in schools with high Aboriginal populations. *(For further details see '1. Attracting the best entrants into teaching' in the 'Progress' section above).*

Activities you would like to showcase – 1 January to 30 June 2010

The snapshots below highlight good practice in current reform activity across all three sectors.

Partnerships with universities to improve the quality of the professional experience

All government school Centres for Excellence schools have established links with universities with the major focus on improving the quality of the professional experience placements. One school, Nowra High School in the south east of NSW, has indicated through their program and the work of the Highly Accomplished Teacher that they and the Centre for Excellence cluster schools have accommodated an increase in the number of pre-service teachers undertaking professional experience placements in their schools through their relationship with the University of Wollongong.

Oxley High School, in the north west of NSW, has been participating in the University of New England's Virtual Synchronous Supervision Professional Experience Project which aims to better support professional experience placements in regional and more isolated parts of the state. The technology supports real time streaming of the pre-service teacher's lesson to the university supervisor and enables effective and timely feedback to occur. Teachers at the school have participated in being filmed to test the process, gain a different professional insight into their learning and engage in a dialogue about the reality of the classroom and different teaching strategies with university personnel.

Foundation Leadership Program for newly appointed principals

This program has been designed to meet the most pressing challenges encountered by newly appointed principals. The course focuses on supplementing participants' emerging understandings of governance, financial, legal and other leadership issues that they may have encountered in previous roles.

The individualised professional support each participant receives from the leadership coach assigned to them is a special feature of the program. Leadership coaches are matched to participants from a pool of trained, experienced independent school principals.

In the independent sector, the principal of Minimbah Aboriginal Primary School in Armidale, has sought to improve her leadership competencies by participating in the 'Foundation Leadership Program for Newly Appointed Principals' run by the Independent Schools Leadership Centre.

Minimbah Aboriginal Primary School's principal, an Aboriginal person herself, speaks highly of the value of the support she receives from her coach. The school now presents itself more positively to visitors and the wider community, as a result of her recent training in strategic planning.

A new Centre of Excellence at Narromine

St. Augustine's Parish Primary School at Narromine, located 37 kms from Dubbo, became a Centre for Excellence this year. Narromine is a rural town with a strong community spirit that helps unite the local population.

As a Centre for Excellence, St Augustine's Parish Primary School has been designed to respond to local needs. It operates as a hub school extending participation to a network of schools in and beyond the Narromine area to support teacher quality.

The Centre operates in strong partnership with the University of Newcastle to promote the Quality Teaching Framework (which focuses on intellectual quality, quality learning environments, and learning significance for all students) and the Australian Catholic University to increase the use of technology in the classroom through the Connected Classroom Technology Program.

Team Leadership for School Improvement K – 12 program

The DET's Team Leadership for School Improvement K – 12 program provides school leaders and their teams with structured and comprehensive support to identify school priorities and plan appropriate actions for school improvement.

Since February 2010, 334 facilitators have been trained across the DET's 10 school regions to support local school implementation.

The program develops greater leadership capacity for promoting and managing results-focused school improvement, based on current research on quality teaching and leadership practice.

The program includes a range of materials and sessions such as 'Strategic Resourcing', 'Sustaining and Evaluating Improvement', 'Working Collaboratively', 'Leading Quality Teaching' and 'Leading as Partners with the Community'.

Team Leadership for School Improvement K – 12 is currently operating in all the DET regions and five Catholic dioceses.

Mentoring to support teacher accreditation

Teachers are being encouraged and supported to apply for higher levels of teacher accreditation within independent schools, through an innovative scheme of professional development for potential applicants and in-school mentors (also known as 'critical friends' in the independent sector).

The advantage of this approach is that teachers undertaking the accreditation process are supported by a collaborative group of peers within the same school context.

Over 20 teachers have already completed training to prepare to apply for higher levels of accreditation with the NSWIT, while eight other teachers have trained as supporters.

It is hoped that teachers in other participating schools will be encouraged to seek teacher accreditation at the higher levels after witnessing the effectiveness of this mentored approach.

One of the participating independent schools reports that this model has allowed them to build a strong professional learning culture using a circular system of coaching and mentoring that harnesses the expertise of teachers who have more teaching experience or are more advanced in the accreditation process.

Similar initiatives are in place in government and Catholic schools. By building in-school capacity, a strong accreditation culture and supportive structures for teachers, the initiatives are laying solid foundations for future sustainability.

Section 3 – Low SES School Communities

Six month progress – 1 January to 30 June 2010

The period 1 January to 30 June 2010 has seen all 331 Low SES School Communities National Partnership schools progress from the planning phase to full implementation of the strategies that schools identified in their school plans.

The strategic ongoing development and deployment of resources and support both centrally and locally continues to enable schools to optimise the impact of the significant additional funding provided by the Smarter Schools National Partnership for the Low SES School Communities National Partnership (Low SES National Partnership) across the six reforms.

Identification of needs

To inform their planning and implementation, all schools participating in the Low SES National Partnership undertook a rigorous situational analysis to identify their schools' needs and develop strategies to address these in their school plans.

The situational analysis included the collection, analysis and synthesis of internal and external qualitative and quantitative data sources to enable the identification of the strategies best able to effect significant change in the local school context.

Implementation support

This process was supported locally by regional personnel and at higher levels for each sector. Regions and central offices provided principals with support, advice and resources to enable them to lead transformational change through the Low SES National Partnership.

The DET and regions developed a broad suite of resources, professional learning opportunities and strategic intervention programs to support schools' planning and implementation of the Low SES National Partnership. These include but are not limited to leadership programs, working with community resources, extensive school self-evaluation resources and resources supporting the ongoing development of personalised learning plans for Aboriginal students. Specific activities included:

- To support the school situational analyses
 - professional learning to build capacity around self evaluation
 - *School Measurement Assessment Reporting Toolkit* (SMART) data professional learning programs
 - the *Data Analysis Skills Assessment* (DASA) was completed by all staff
 - online survey and analysis tools for literacy, numeracy, leadership, student, teacher and parent satisfaction and community engagement
 - recording and reporting templates
 - electronic data sheets
- To support school planning and Low SES funding allocation
 - professional learning school planning workshops including strategy selection, target setting and funding alignment

- school planning templates
- sample school plans
- electronic resource planning tool
- research synthesis and professional reading identification

School plans

Based on their situational analyses, schools revisited or created their school plans to address the six reforms of the Low SES National Partnership.

Plans included actions to improve the availability of high quality teaching and professional development for school executives in leadership and for teachers to help them analyse and use student data.

Explicit and rigorous school plan approval processes were followed with final approval by appropriate sector personnel.

Implementing plans

All 331 Low SES National Partnership schools began implementing their school plans in Term 1 and by the end of March 2010, all school plans were published on their school websites.

During Semester 1, 2010, schools further refined their strategies and adjusted funding allocations to ensure that resources effectively supported their school plans.

Schools have developed plans which closely align strategies to the funding allocated and the six reforms of the partnership. School plans are used as the basis for monitoring progress and achievements by school and sector. Schools monitor and evaluate strategies in their school plans with the support of the regions and central office and request variations where appropriate.

Based on their plans, many schools have begun significant curriculum, mentoring and leadership development programs. Some communities of schools have pooled resources to contribute and share additional expert personnel to lead, mentor and coordinate activities across schools.

For many schools this has required identification of additional teaching and non teaching staff to lead professional learning and program implementation and to support the work of teachers in classrooms. 274 of the 295 government schools currently implementing the Low SES School Communities National Partnership have allocated some component of their National Partnership funding to additional leadership, teaching or support positions including Highly Accomplished Teachers and equivalents and paraprofessionals.

All schools are now liaising with their school communities, including, where appropriate, Aboriginal communities and local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups in the planning and implementation of their strategies. Schools continue to work closely with their communities including local partner schools to further develop strong relationships to enhance the support for the learning of all students.

Schools have used Low SES National Partnership funding to purchase additional resources to further develop and enhance teaching and learning programs and technologies to ensure the provision of innovative and tailored learning opportunities and curriculum delivery.

School strategies have included both strengthening and initiating new relationships with universities and other service providers.

Implementation support

Sectors have provided extensive support to enable schools to evaluate what works and why on a local and regional basis, through direct support, networking, publications, training and tools and resources.

The following resources have been provided to support this activity:

- direct central and regional office support
- a suite of literacy and numeracy intervention programs
- leadership programs
- working with community resources
- monitoring and evaluation professional learning, resources and advice
- online Low SES forums – professional learning forums held each term via virtual conferencing to highlight good practice, feedback, latest research and emerging issues. Over 80 DET “sites” have accessed the most recent forums

A further strategy that has been implemented to support evaluation has been the development of 12 case studies of school and regional initiatives in government schools. Additional case studies will be developed as implementation progresses.

Debriefing sessions for the 295 2009/10 government schools currently involved in the National Partnership provided a timely opportunity for feedback on planning processes including joint planning and funding allocation to address reforms, an update on resource support, an opportunity to discuss evaluation and monitoring requirements and to showcase, share and discuss a range of emerging “good” practices.

The government sector produces regular newsletters with information, scenarios and case studies to support schools employing additional staff. These are available on the Low SES website along with employment guidelines.

The independent sector has also created a newsletter to support the 2010 group of schools and to promote and share the progress of the National Partnership. The first edition was published in May 2010.

Attracting and retaining high-performing staff / Building school leadership and planning capacity

Building and sustaining a school culture of ongoing professional growth is a strategy for attracting and retaining high-performing staff. Schools have focused on building and further developing the capacity of their leadership teams to ensure systems and processes that impact on and improve student learning outcomes are strengthened as outlined below.

Government schools are implementing a variety of high quality leadership programs. Programs include the DET developed program *Team Leadership for School Improvement* and the *Great Leaders Great Results Covey Leadership Program*. It is expected that all 295 government schools currently involved in the Low SES School Communities National Partnership will undertake a leadership program.

In the reporting period 243 facilitators have been trained and 443 schools have participated in the *Team Leadership for School Improvement Program*, drawn from the Literacy and Numeracy and Low SES National Partnerships. Some of these include the 2011 and 2012 National Partnership schools.

The 2010 cohort of 12 independent schools has completed a three day leadership program, held by the Independent Schools Leadership Centre (ISLC). The ISLC has provided support to principals and school executive staff in leading the development and publication of school plans.

In the Catholic sector, leadership programs are supporting school executive staff to develop and revise school plans in response to strategic environmental analysis. Leadership programs, as well as structured external support from diocesan office staff, are also being provided to encourage transparency in school plans regarding areas for improvement attention and to ensure school leaders are working within 'achievable goals' and existing skills ranges where appropriate.

The development of school leadership capacity has also been identified as a critical factor in driving change to improve student learning outcomes and teacher quality.

Professional development

A wide range of professional development activities have been undertaken in relation to situational analysis, school planning and data analysis as detailed elsewhere in this document.

Some schools are providing whole school professional learning locally using funding to provide additional executive staff time to improve the quality of teaching through mentoring teachers, developing workshops, programs and resources.

All 295 government schools are providing a suite of professional learning strategies using Low SES funding including:

- targeted whole school and individual literacy and numeracy intervention programs such as *Reading to Learn, Accelerated Literacy, QuickSmart, Taking Off With Numeracy, MULTILIT and Focus on Reading 3 - 6* (details of programs provided in the 'Significant Achievements' section)
- professional development for school leaders and teachers in the use of data to inform teaching and learning including the SMART2 package and e-learning modules
- leadership development programs including the DET developed *Team Leadership For School Improvement*, to further develop leadership capacity and density at the school and system level
- explicit and systematic implementation of the *NSW Quality Teaching Model*
- executive mentoring of teachers to further improve the quality of teaching

Strategies identified by the independent sector include training in targeted literacy and numeracy interventions and professional development for school executives and teachers to assist them in using and analysing data to address student needs. Professional development in ESL pedagogy is a strategy that has been adopted in some city schools.

Most independent schools have begun accessing the professional development linked to the literacy or numeracy intervention programs, as well as accessing professional learning in leadership and the management of change.

The Catholic sector has invested in professional development programs, such as:

- Professional development in English as a Second Language (ESL) pedagogy and skills, particularly the use of *ESL Scales*
- Professional learning in data analysis, writing SMART goals and data literacy

- The development of *ESL Matters/Reading Matters* and *Numeracy Matters* online modules to support in-school professional development.

Additional staff resources

Schools are beginning to employ additional teaching and non teaching staff to support professional learning and leadership development, learning outcomes and program implementation.

Some schools have chosen to employ additional teachers to team teach, mentor teachers and support students' learning needs by reducing class sizes. Other schools have used National Partnership funding to employ external consultants or other professionals to support teacher professional learning in literacy and numeracy interventions. The majority of government schools have employed additional staff to support innovations in teaching and learning and coordinate National Partnership activities.

Many government schools have begun significant curriculum, mentoring and leadership development programs. This has required identification of additional teaching and nonteaching staff to lead professional learning and program implementation and to support the work of teachers in classrooms.

Examples of activities being provided by additional school staff as a direct result of Low SES NP funding include:

- principal mentoring
- teacher mentoring
- establishing university partnerships
- connecting to the local community and interagency providers
- student well being programs
- provision of parent education classes
- development of student and staff information and communication technology skills
- provision of training for teachers in occupational therapy, music therapy and speech pathology
- development of an Aboriginal boys' education strategy

All sectors are beginning to employ paraprofessionals to support teachers.

274 of the 295 government schools currently participating in the National Partnership on Low SES School Communities have allocated approximately 27% of their funding towards the employment of additional leadership, teaching or support positions including Highly Accomplished Teachers (HATs), additional school learning support officers and educational and operational paraprofessionals.

The Catholic sector is also employing paraprofessionals to support teachers. One Catholic diocese is also networking with external agencies for the provision of professional support in the areas of speech and language, occupational therapy, psychological and counselling support.

A number of Catholic schools are also utilising volunteers to support teachers and students in the areas of student wellbeing and social development.

The establishment of the new HAT positions, known in the Catholic sector as 'Teacher Educators', has been well received by Catholic schools and their communities. Teacher Educators have played an important role in developing resources to support the specific learning needs of ESL students, particularly in metropolitan Low SES schools.

Building collaboration and partnerships

Within the Low SES National Partnership, all sectors have actively provided opportunities for schools to work together. All 295 government schools took part in joint planning during their situational analysis process.

Examples of schools working together include:

- sharing literacy or numeracy expertise across more than one school
- joint employment of staff to support professional development and knowledge sharing
- joint employment of executive staff across more than one school
- joint employment of local regional National Partnership coordinators across more than one school
- networking and attending professional development with other schools
- inviting local schools that are not participating in the National Partnership to join professional development activities.

Some communities of schools have pooled resources to enable the employment of expert personnel to lead, mentor and coordinate across partner schools including partner primary and high schools.

In the Western NSW region, schools in each of the 7 School Education Groups have contributed funding towards a partnership mentor, a connected learning coordinator and an Aboriginal pedagogy officer (deputy principal level) to lead professional learning and improve the availability of quality teaching across the region.

Some schools are working cooperatively to strengthen links with universities and other agencies to support the development of new pedagogy and innovative organisational practices. For example, Sydney Archdiocese staff have participated in the *Leaders Transforming Learning and Learners Program* run through the Australian Catholic University. Other Catholic schools participating in the Low SES NP will commence this program in August 2010.

A number of government schools, communities of schools and partner schools have begun developing university partnerships to ensure their schools access current research and practice around quality teaching. Participation in action research projects is a strategy being used to build teacher capacity in some of these schools. Others have established a mentoring relationship with universities to strengthen action research around the NSW *Quality Teaching Model* and to develop 'screen literacy' programs to improve student literacy and engagement levels.

Involving parents and communities

Active engagement and communication with parents, community members, other schools, businesses and local organisations is essential to the integration of initiatives across school communities. Under this National Partnership, a range of strategies are being developed and implemented to engage parents and communities more effectively.

The majority of schools consulted with parents through parent representative groups, holding special parent forums, focus groups, interviewing or surveying parents and through newsletters. Some schools have also commenced significant new activities to develop parental engagement, including workshops to build parent capacity in supporting their child's learning at home, a new playgroup or the employment of a parent coordinator.

All Low SES NP government schools consulted with parents as part of the process of conducting a situational analysis and developing their school plans.

The strategies employed by the 295 government schools to involve parents and communities have varied widely due to the variety of school types and settings and the number involved.

Strategies employed include all of the activities listed above. Other examples include:

- establishment of homework centres and co-curricular activities
- a variety of parent workshops including how to help their children with literacy and numeracy at home, assessment processes and guidelines, the demands of the School Certificate and HSC and vocational education pathways.
- appointment of a paraprofessional (Community Engagement Officer) or a Community Liaison Officer to assist in building stronger links between the school's parent body and community members
- expanding the range of services and programs offered to support parents and community members and to develop the notion of the school as a centre for community activity.

A new resource for schools to engage with communities is also being developed. The *Team Leadership for School Improvement Program* incorporates a *Working with Community* module. 443 government schools have already accessed this training.

To ensure engagement with the local Aboriginal community, work is underway on the development of a significant program for teachers and school leaders around cultural immersion and connecting with country. The program is being developed in collaboration with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and the Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate.

The independent schools' engagement has been largely targeted at their own local communities, particularly parent involvement. Initial strategies to involve parents have been through contribution to surveys in the situational analysis or participation in the school's National Partnership team. In two schools with significant Aboriginal cohorts, the school leaders are actively building stronger links with local school community and local Aboriginal organisations, including the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group. One of these schools has established a homework centre which has stimulated parent interest and support.

An example of a resource to support schools in engaging with their communities is the Catholic sector's Partners4Learning Centre for Excellence website.

The Catholic sector has found the use of individual learning plans to be a useful approach to involve parents in targeted learning interventions. Parents are being encouraged to work in partnership with schools to support their children's needs and progress. Student achievement is jointly celebrated and the students have been encouraged by the collaborative approach.

In order to empower parents to engage teachers in discussions about their child's learning and academic progress, a number of bilingual focus groups and workshop sessions on parenting and literacy and numeracy learning have been held by Catholic schools.

Next steps

Briefing sessions for 165 government schools beginning the National Partnership in 2011 have given principals and school executive teams a clear understanding of the purpose of the Low SES School Communities National Partnership. The sessions have clarified requirements and reforms that are the focus of the National Partnership. To ensure strengthening of community participation in the planning process, representatives from the community were invited to attend briefing sessions, including members of the local Aboriginal community and AECGs. The briefing sessions were used as an opportunity to highlight successful joint planning initiatives and processes.

Significant achievements/activities – 1 January to 30 June 2010

Extension of the National Partnership

The NSW Government has allocated an additional \$35.6m to extend the Low SES School Communities National Partnership through the *Low Socio-economic Status School Communities Program Extension Initiative*. So far, ten government schools have been allocated funding for a two year modified program, which will focus on improving literacy and numeracy results through providing programs that break new ground and tailored literacy and numeracy interventions. Their work is focused on reforms 1 and 4 only. Each of the schools employs a Highly Accomplished Teacher and educational paraprofessional.

Schools participating in the extension initiative will focus on supporting teacher and executive professional learning and providing innovative programs and tailored literacy and numeracy interventions (reforms 1 and 4 only). Each of the schools will employ a Highly Accomplished Teacher and one or more educational paraprofessionals.

Schools identified are from low SES communities and have performed below or substantially below like schools in the previous year's NAPLAN results.

Schools were identified and notified during Term 2 and began their supported situational analysis and planning process to be included in revised school plans for implementation from semester 2. At this time schools received a seeding grant of \$5000 to fund these processes. Six of the schools attended briefing sessions for the 2011 cohort.

Publication of school plans aligned to reforms on school websites

All schools participating in the National Partnership developed and published school plans aligned to the National Partnership reforms on their school websites.

In government schools, all 295 school plans were developed based on information collected through the rigorous situational analysis process. All school plans explicitly aligned their implementation strategies to the six reforms of the partnership and the Low SES NP funding allocations.

The development of school plans was a particularly significant achievement for the independent sector which adapted their planning processes to the new format to suit the National Partnership requirements. The 12 schools in the 2010 cohort have plans with a strong focus on Reforms 1 and 4 (see table below).

Independent schools joining the Low SES National Partnership in 2010 have primarily focused on attracting high performing principals and teachers and tailored student interventions.

Independent schools have most commonly nominated targets in the areas of improvements in literacy and numeracy. Some have also included student attendance and retention.

Cohort	Reform 1	Reform 2	Reform 3	Reform 4	Reform 5	Reform 6
2010	56.75%	1.53%	9.68%	29.34%	0.42%	2.29%
2009	20.48%		15.52%	54.69%		9.31%

All schools underway and focused on the reforms in Term 1

An additional 193 schools joined the Low SES National Partnership in 2010, bringing the total numbers to a total of 331 schools: 295 government schools, 23 Catholic schools and 13 independent schools.

Rigorous school situational analyses have ensured the implementation of the most effective strategies and resource allocation in the local context to effect transformational change.

To reflect the significant additional funding provided by the National Partnership, schools revised their school plans in 2010 to enhance existing strategies and include new strategies informed by their situational analysis.

Government and Catholic schools have further refined their strategies and funding allocations during Semester 1, 2010 to ensure the most effective resource allocation using National Partnership funds.

Independent schools monitored actions in their school plans against budget with the support of the Association of Independent Schools of NSW and requested variations where appropriate.

Implementation of additional tailored learning opportunities and targeted intervention programs

Schools are providing targeted intervention programs for groups and individual students following an analysis of student assessment and other data. These programs are addressing specific identified needs and are beginning to make observable improvements.

Individual learning plans

Personalised and individual learning plans are being implemented in all sectors for Aboriginal students as required and students at risk of under achievement.

Literacy and numeracy interventions

Government schools have implemented a total of 356 literacy and numeracy interventions as a key strategy. The development of students' literacy and numeracy skills is a high priority for government schools in this National Partnership with 24.9 per cent of funding allocated against Reform 4.

English as a Second Language scales and the *ESL Matters Program* are being implemented across a number of Catholic schools, and professional learning is being provided for some more isolated schools on the *First Steps Program*.

Targeted approaches implemented in government and independent schools include:

Literacy and Numeracy Programs	Number of Schools
<i>Reading to Learn</i>	104
<i>Accelerated Literacy</i>	97
<i>QuickSmart</i>	62
<i>Taking Off With Numeracy</i>	27
<i>MULTILIT</i>	59
<i>Focus on Reading 3 - 6</i>	17
<i>Learning in Early Numeracy / Learning in Numeracy</i>	3

Accountability mechanisms developed and implemented

School strategies are selected on the basis of a rigorous situational analysis.

Each school plan shows a clear line of sight between the NP reforms, the strategies being implemented and the allocation of Low SES NP funding. In support of transparency and accountability the school planning process in NSW is underpinned by rigorous scrutiny. In the government sector, school plans are approved by School Education Directors and Regional Directors. Catholic sector school plans are approved by the local diocese. Independent school plans are reviewed by the secretariat supporting the Independent Schools National Partnership Management Council.

In all government schools, plans are discussed and revised if necessary during the Principal Assessment and Review meetings with School Education Directors (SEDs) to ensure the selection of improvement strategies that are best able to effect significant change in the local school context. These meetings occur at least once every term. SEDs discuss implementation of plans, budgets and funding and provide advice around strategies for school improvement.

The DET have also developed an electronic planning tool to assist schools in allocating and tracking Low SES National Partnership funding. The tool enables schools to more effectively plan and monitor funding allocations against the six reforms of the National Partnership. The Resource Planning Tool is an innovative resource assisting schools to strengthen school accountability and to more effectively align and track resources at the school level.

Enhanced system support and resources provided

Regions and central offices have developed systems to provided principals with support, advice and resources to enable them to lead transformational change through the Low SES School Communities National Partnership.

Independent schools in the Low SES National Partnership have been supported by regular visits by the National Partnership Coordinator of the Association of Independent Schools of NSW (AIS). An AIS team spent a day at each school supporting the school's leadership team to review and refine the National Partnership plan and test it against the data and conclusions in the situational analysis.

Schools have also been provided with sector specific resources to support the conduct of a situational analysis, to develop or refine a school plan and to support the management of funding. These have included model surveys, guidance on survey construction, templates and proformas.

AIS has also provided schools in the 2010 cohort with professional learning in leadership and the management of change.

In the government sector, the successful situational analysis process, school planning, implementation, monitoring and ongoing evaluation of the Low SES School Communities National Partnership has been facilitated through:

- extensive support from School Education Directors, central and regional office personnel
- extensive professional development, leadership, data analysis and self evaluation training
- curriculum programs such as literacy and numeracy interventions
- a wide range of resources, including online tools, templates, proformas, sample school plans and surveys to support planning and analysis
- joint school planning processes
- rigorous school plan approval processes with final approval by regional directors
- forums and case studies to showcase good practice

All government schools have completed their Annual School Report (ASR) for 2009, and the ASR template is being adjusted to enable all 470 government schools participating in the National Partnership in 2011 to explicitly report on their 2010 Low SES National Partnership activities and planning activities to their school communities in the next cycle of ASR reporting.

In response to schools' capacity to address Reform 6, the DET developed a *Working with Community* module for inclusion in the *Team Leadership for School Improvement Program* which a significant majority of government Low SES schools are accessing. Independent schools will be able to access this training from 2011.

Websites developed

The DET developed a *Supporting Low SES School Communities* website as a central point to strategically link all information and resources for the Low SES National Partnership. Over the period from 1 January to 30 June 2010, 14,104 users visited the website. Of these, 44% are new visits. The website hosts a broad suite of resources and links including resources around self evaluation, planning, reporting, funding allocation, staffing arrangements, research underpinning the National Partnership's reforms, newsletters and sharing of examples and exemplars of the work in Low SES School communities. The most visited pages include the pages containing information about the Low SES School Communities National Partnership, resources page, community engagement tools, strategic research and student engagement information.

All 295 Low SES School Communities National Partnership school plans are posted on their school websites. The school plans include strategies that address the six Low SES School Communities National Partnership reforms and they show a clear line of sight between reforms, strategies and funding.

The Catholic sector has also developed a website (Partners4Learning Centre for Excellence). The website is available to all NSW schools, to support their community engagement strategies.

Increased capacity of school staff to use and analyse data

There is now an enhanced and growing capacity in each school to use and analyse data. Staff from all NP schools have attended data analysis workshops where they analysed results and identified group and individual needs to inform intervention strategies. The support and resources provided to the schools to conduct their situational analysis and develop their plans, which included setting targets, has also supported the development of increased capacity of staff to identify and use data and evidence.

The DET has developed the *Data Analysis Skills Assessment (DASA)* to measure and support teacher and school executive use of data across seven domains. *DASA* is completed online and provides immediate feedback to the user, access to professional learning materials and a professional learning plan which can be monitored by the user over time.

Most schools have implemented the *DASA* training for staff participating in this National Partnership.

The School Measurement and Reporting Toolkit (SMART) was also developed by the DET. The toolkit is used extensively in NSW schools, including non-government schools, in the analysis of (NAPLAN) student performance.

All government and independent schools have undertaken data analysis training in SMART to improve educational planning and feedback to students.

Training in data analysis including the use of the SMART package is a mandatory requirement for executive teams of all government schools, prior to conducting their situational analysis. All regions conducted SMART data training workshops for school executive teams.

Six independent schools have completed whole staff professional development in the analysis and use of NAPLAN data within the initial phase of implementation of the school plan, while the remaining six plan to complete this professional development in the latter half of 2010.

The independent school sector has observed a growing capacity in each school to use and analyse data, as a result of conducting a situational analysis. School leaders are reporting that more teachers are accessing and using data, especially NAPLAN data when planning teaching and learning programs for their classes.

Monitoring and evaluation

There have been significant achievements in the area of school monitoring and evaluation. All school sectors are undertaking extensive monitoring to identify the progress made towards the achievement of school targets and the effect of the improvement strategies selected. This is resulting in increased school capacity to respond quickly and refine strategies re-allocate resources appropriately and respond to potential risks in a timely fashion.

Central office and regional personnel have significantly enhanced the work around existing school monitoring, evaluation and accountability frameworks to provide explicit strategic support aimed at strengthening existing school processes.

A significant number of government schools are developing capacity in school self evaluation processes through professional learning sessions for principals and executive teams. In the Hunter Central Region, for example, all Low SES National Partnership government schools are attending training and workshops on the school self evaluation process.

Debriefing sessions for the 2009/10 cohort provided feedback on school planning processes; an opportunity to discuss evaluation and monitoring requirements; and a forum in which to showcase and discuss a range of emerging examples of good practice. Resources to support schools have also been developed including online surveys and a revised situational template for schools to use when evaluating and reporting on progress on targets and school plan strategies.

Twelve case studies have been developed in the government sector and will continue to be tracked, monitored and further developed to highlight and share good practice. The case studies reflect regional and school strategies including:

- strategies to build capacity around the use of data to inform planning and teaching and learning,
- strategic community of school based leadership coaches and mentors,
- additional support for Aboriginal students
- programs to improve outcomes for refugees and students from non-English speaking backgrounds
- programs with other service providers to support the learning of students in schools for specific purposes including intellectually disabled students and juvenile justice settings
- community of schools programs to improve student outcomes in the middle years
- mentoring programs
- whole school professional learning strategies

Snapshots of the case studies are used to showcase school and regional strategies within this report.

NSW National Partnerships Evaluation Committee

The NSW National Partnerships Evaluation Committee approved two Low SES evaluation proposals to go to tender at their meeting in June 2010. The evaluation projects will focus on:

- school external partnerships
- school staffing management and accountability initiatives.

It is expected that these evaluations will commence in 2011 and run for the life of the National Partnerships. They will include a formative component to be used to inform future planning and interventions.

Early examples of change

Much of the planning and activity is now starting to take shape with schools and regions building on resources and professional development to generate innovative strategies to address the reform goals.

Joint planning and implementation has been undertaken based on models of quality planning and situational analyses from Low SES School Communities National Partnership schools across a variety of contexts. For example, strategic professional discussions with regions, central office and school leaders have highlighted exemplary planning, monitoring and evaluation products and processes and strategies.

An example of a whole of region approach to developing leadership capacity in the planning and implementation of the Low SES NP is the Western NSW model outlined in the following snapshot.

Developing leadership capacity for schools in Western NSW region

Government schools in the Western NSW region have taken a whole of region approach to developing leadership capacity, through the creation of a number of dedicated positions that have transformed the implementation of school improvement processes.

Government schools in seven School Education Groups have contributed funding towards a shared National Partnership mentor and a connected learning coach to lead and support professional learning. A regional Aboriginal pedagogy officer has also been appointed to lead professional learning across the region. The approach has already provided coaching and mentoring opportunities at the regional executive level and the engagement of principals and school executives in professional learning regarding data analysis, effective school improvement planning, and the integration of technology into quality teaching.

The regional executive has reported that strengthened school improvement processes have resulted in more effective data analysis and improved quality of school plans.

Professional learning program for whole school monitoring and evaluation

Hunter Central Coast region has also taken a coordinated regional approach to develop capacity across the region in relation to evaluation and monitoring.

The region has developed internal review training to support principals and school leaders to plan and implement rigorous evaluations of school strategies, professional learning, student performance and systems. The course covers methodology, evaluation planning, collection of evidence, data analysis, and the development of recommendations and strategies. Each session is structured as a workshop which facilitates the sharing of good practice among schools.

47 school leadership teams have completed the training to date, which has significantly developed leadership capacity in the Hunter Central Coast region.

For further details see 'Developing teacher and leadership capacity' within the 'Activities you would like to showcase' section.

Barriers to progress – 1 January to 30 June 2010

Uptake of Highly Accomplished Teachers

Most schools have allocated a component of their National Partnership funding to additional leadership, mentoring, teaching or positions to support professional learning and program implementation, however the uptake of the newly created Highly Accomplished Teacher positions or equivalents in both government and independent schools has been slow to gather momentum.

The employment of Highly Accomplished Teachers and their equivalents is one of the key strategies in NSW's implementation plan to both improve the recruitment and retention of high quality teachers and reward high performing teachers in Low SES school communities.

The DET will increase the number of Highly Accomplished Teachers (HATs) under the *Low Socio-economic Status School Communities Program Extension Initiative*. The ten new schools already announced will employ a HAT and one or more educational paraprofessionals to commence in Semester 2 2010. An additional 37 HATS will commence in schools to be included in this extension initiative in 2011.

The DET is also examining other strategies to encourage the uptake of these newly created positions. Government school regions are identifying schools for 2011 onwards that would benefit from the employment of a HAT and are actively working with the principals of these schools to encourage their employment. This semester, extensive information on the benefits of employing a HAT has also been provided to schools and regions through the government schools' Low SES National Partnership website, regional briefing sessions and a variety of newsletters.

Uptake is expected to increase in the government sector as principals receive feedback on the successful implementation of the role in other schools and become more familiar with the process for employment.

Teachers in independent schools achieve Highly Accomplished Teacher status by achieving Independent Schools Teacher Accreditation Authority recognition at the higher levels of accreditation, before receiving the additional payment for the position. These teachers also seek recognition by the NSW Institute of Teachers.

As at 30 June 2010, 37 independent school teachers had completed courses to prepare for accreditation and were working towards this goal. The number of independent school teachers seeking accreditation is expected to increase once the national professional teaching standards and the new process have been agreed.

Attracting new staff to support Low SES National Partnership activities

The recruitment of new staff to support Low SES National Partnership activities has proven to be a significant barrier for the independent sector, affecting eight out of the twelve independent schools participating in the Low SES National Partnership in 2010.

Both the independent and Catholic sectors have experienced difficulties in recruiting staff to remote schools and a lack of suitably qualified English as a Second Language and Learning Support teachers. A flexible approach to staffing has provided some success in addressing this challenge. For example, one independent school has taken a flexible approach to working hours and duties and has accepted part-time applicants.

The Catholic sector also offers subsidies to counter the cost incurred by individuals willing to teach in some remote locations.

High turnover of teachers and leaders

High turnover particularly affects staff in rural and remote schools and schools that provide for at-risk students who can no longer be accommodated in mainstream educational settings.

An increase in targeted principal, executive and teacher professional learning for staff working in Low SES NP schools is expected to significantly improve capacity and retention of high quality leaders and teachers in these schools over the long term.

Government schools have employed executive staff to lead, mentor and coordinate leadership and quality teaching in a school or across a group of schools. These executive staff are leading professional learning and program implementation and support the work of teachers in classrooms. 274 of the 295 government schools currently implementing the Low SES School Communities National Partnership have allocated some component of their funding to additional leadership, mentoring, teaching or support positions.

High quality induction programs and support provided by trained mentors have supported government and Catholic school teachers at the start of their careers in low SES schools with high numbers of students with significant social disadvantage and educational needs.

Community consultation

The initial implementation evaluation suggested that schools may need more specific support to engage in effective consultation with parents and the wider school community in future. Some government school principals also reported difficulties in consulting with parents. (ARTD Consultants; 54)

Despite the time constraints around the planning process in 2009, the evaluation of initial implementation in NSW found that 70% of Low SES respondents said that their schools had consulted with parents or the community (ARTD Consultants; 19). It is envisaged that community and parent consultation will be expanded when current schools revisit their situational analysis in 2010.

In the government sector it is a mandatory requirement that schools consult with their parents and the local community during the situational analysis and school planning process, including where relevant Aboriginal communities and local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups. School Education Directors verify this consultation process has occurred before plans are signed off.

The DET supports parent and community engagement through

- a *Working with Community* module included in the *Team Leadership for School Improvement Program*
- a suite of community engagement surveys for schools to use during the consultation process
- sharing good practice in community engagement and engagement of the Aboriginal community at a Low SES government schools' forum during Term 2 that focused on
- the development of a two phase cultural immersion program: *Being Culturally Aware, Becoming Culturally Inclusive: A Pathway to Cultural Competence and Connecting to Country*

The independent schools' engagement strategy has been largely targeted at their own local communities, particularly parent involvement. Initial strategies to involve parents have been through contribution to surveys in the situational analysis or participation in the school's National Partnership team. In two schools with significant Aboriginal cohorts, the school leaders are actively building stronger links with local school community and local Aboriginal organisations, including the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group. One of these schools has established a homework centre which has stimulated parent interest and support.

The Catholic sector has found the use of individual learning plans a useful approach to involve parents in targeted learning interventions. Parents are being encouraged to work in partnership

with schools to support their children's needs and progress. Student achievement is jointly celebrated and the students have been encouraged by the collaborative approach.

In order to empower parents to engage teachers in discussions about their child's learning and academic progress, a number of bilingual focus groups and workshop sessions on parenting and literacy and numeracy learning have been held by Catholic schools.

An example of a resource to support schools in engaging with their communities is the Catholic sector's Partners4Learning Centre for Excellence website.

Many SSNP schools have high numbers of parents with language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE). Schools can experience difficulty in engaging with LBOTE parents. Schools address this challenge through the use of interpreters to engage parents. For example, 2970 on-site and telephone interpreters were employed across all government schools for the first six months of 2010, to distribute key messages in the main languages spoken in the school community, to support communication with parents and to facilitate parental engagement.

Distance in rural and regional areas

In rural areas, travel distances and the nature of parental occupations often impede parent attendance at school functions.

In rural and remote areas government schools use video conferencing to connect with parents including parents of students from Low SES NP schools. For example a *Rural and Distance Education Relate* Video Conference (VC) is held each term. In June, the guest speaker for the VC, Michael Carr Greg spoke on Adolescent Mental Health issues. This VC had an audience of 639, most of them parents.

To address the issue of distance, independent schools are implementing strategies such phone calls to parents and teacher release to visit parents at home. The creation of DVDs of parent workshops is also being trialed.

School planning and accountability

The Low SES National Partnership's focus on improving outcomes through school planning and innovation is a significant shift for some schools. In the early stages of this culture change, some schools were anxious about being held accountable publicly for improvements in results, particularly when attempted in challenging low SES environments. Principals and staff have articulated the following concerns (ARTD Consultants; 16-17):

- that setting high expectations among students may not be achievable in the short term or in isolation, without the support of other community change programs
- there are challenges in accurately tracking student progress when there is high student and staff turnover
- plans may need to be altered where improvement strategies are not working, or to adapt to new opportunities as they emerge
- capacity for brokerage support to develop effective external partnerships, and extended services through schools

In the independent sector, schools workshop the critical features of their school plan as part of the annual Independent Schools Leadership Centre *Leadership Program* and receive mentoring by an independent leadership expert. Regular school visits from coordinators also assist schools to maintain a focus on monitoring, reflect on the achievements and identify areas of further development.

Principal and school system capacity to align whole school resources and at the same time track allocation of discrete funding sources is also challenge. The DET have specifically designed the Resource Planning Tool to address this issue.

Support for Indigenous students – 1 January to 30 June 2010

Introduction

26 per cent of the 2009 NSW Aboriginal student population was enrolled in schools participating in the 2009 and 2010 cohorts of the National Partnership on Low SES School Communities.³

The following key strategies are being implemented in schools participating in the Low SES NP to improve education outcomes for Aboriginal students;

- intensive support to Aboriginal students who are not meeting minimum standards
- building school and teacher capacity to meet the needs of Aboriginal students
- collaboration with Aboriginal communities to improve outcomes
- strengthened engagement with local Aboriginal communities and parents.

Some of the strategies which have been co-developed with local communities include the use of Aboriginal School Learning Support Officers, Aboriginal language programs such as the Catholic sector's *Let's Talk Dhawunda Program*, a government school's Wiradjuri programs and Aboriginal elders, artists, writers and parents working in classrooms.

Providing intensive support to Aboriginal students who are not meeting minimum standards

Targeted initiatives cater to Aboriginal students' needs and provide intensive support to improve educational outcomes.

Personalised Learning Plans

Most schools in the Low SES National Partnership are implementing personalised learning plans (PLPs) for their Aboriginal students.

Personalised learning plans provide a direct and targeted intervention for students that allow teachers to tailor teaching and learning to the needs and abilities of individual students. PLPs support the roles of the student, teacher and parent/carer and develop collaboration with Aboriginal parents, community members and local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups.

The Catholic sector has found PLPs invaluable as a means of involving the parents of Aboriginal students in identifying educational approaches and goals for their children.

A direct outcome of the SSNPs in the independent sector has been the development of a cohesive approach across the sector to support this initiative.

Other initiatives

Schools are implementing intensive support programs explicitly targeting Aboriginal students. For example, 96 government schools are implementing *Accelerated Literacy* and 99 schools are implementing *Reading to Learn* to improve literacy outcomes for Aboriginal students.

³ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school student enrolment data is collected annually and will next become available in December 2010.

In the independent sector, the primary school with the largest Aboriginal student cohort has adopted the *Accelerated Literacy* initiative - a research-based K-12 mainstream pedagogy that has been demonstrated to accelerate improvements to the literacy outcomes of Aboriginal students. The secondary school with the largest Aboriginal student cohort has taken up the *Reading to Learn* initiative, which is another whole school literacy program designed specifically to engage Aboriginal students.

A combination of initiatives is also being employed by schools to lift learning outcomes. For example, one government school has split one K-6 class into two classes (K-2 and 3-6) to increase individualised literacy support provided to students. *Accelerated Literacy* pedagogy now underpins the school's approach to literacy instruction and the school's Aboriginal education officer is working closely with parents/carers to further support student literacy learning.

For more details see 'A whole school approach to literacy: Walhallow Public School' in the 'Activities you would like to showcase' section of this report.

Building school and teacher capacity to meet the needs of Aboriginal students

Cultural immersion programs

Cultural immersion programs are intended to develop cultural knowledge and understanding of local Aboriginal communities among teachers and school leaders.

The *Let's Talk Dhawunda* cultural immersion program has been offered to all 24 Catholic schools in the Armidale Diocese. *Let's Talk Dhawunda* is a five day program designed for teachers and leaders of Catholic schools with a significant Aboriginal student enrolment. The program engages staff with local Aboriginal elders and community members and focuses on Aboriginal cultural history, the effects of European settlement on Aboriginal communities and the educational needs of Aboriginal students.

The DET is also in the process of developing a three day 'in-the-field' cultural immersion program for new-service and relocating in-service teachers in regions with significant numbers of Aboriginal students. This cultural immersion program is being developed in collaboration with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG).

The program *Being Culturally Aware, Becoming Culturally Inclusive: A Pathway to Cultural Competence* is held in local communities. To date, 30 government schools participating in the Low SES National Partnership have completed this component of the program through their inclusion in the Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership.

All government schools participating in the Low SES National Partnership will have access to the two phases of the *Connecting to Country Program*, regardless of the level of Aboriginal enrolments.

Phase 1 is cultural awareness training and phase 2, which is being co-developed by the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and the NSW Department of Education and Training, focuses on implementation of the training in school teaching and learning programs.

Employment of Aboriginal paraprofessionals and education support workers

Many government schools have employed additional Aboriginal school learning support officers as a result of the Low SES School Communities National Partnership, to provide explicit, individualised tutorial support to all students including Aboriginal students.

Aboriginal school learning support officers in the government sector also:

- build school awareness of Aboriginal issues
- mentor students
- support the development of personalised learning plans for all Aboriginal students
- facilitate the involvement of families, Aboriginal support services and community agencies
- help facilitate the community engagement module of the *Team Leadership for School Improvement Program*.

Aboriginal education support officers have also played a key role in the Catholic sector by:

- building school awareness of Aboriginal issues through cultural awareness programs
- challenging schools to improve their response to the learning needs of Aboriginal students as part of the school planning process.
- supporting personalised learning approaches for Aboriginal students
- facilitating the involvement of families, Aboriginal support services and community agencies

In the independent sector, both of the 2010 Low SES NP independent schools with a high proportion of Aboriginal students have increased the hours of employment of their Aboriginal paraprofessionals, with the secondary school now employing an Aboriginal paraprofessional on a full-time basis.

Schools and Aboriginal communities collaborating to improve outcomes

Engagement with parents and Aboriginal communities is a key focus for school leaders in the 295 government schools. This focus has been reinforced through the inclusion of a module designed to build teacher capacity to engage with the school communities and, in particular, Aboriginal communities within the DET's professional development program, *Team Leadership for School Improvement*. Most Low SES government schools are now accessing this module.

The Catholic sector has sought the advice of Aboriginal elders and communities in the selection of approaches being trialed and in building broader teacher understanding of Aboriginal students' needs. Where appropriate, Aboriginal support workers also support the school by advising and working directly with staff and students.

Some schools are also working to build the capacity of local elders and Aboriginal community members to provide support inside the classroom, particularly in key areas such as attendance, literacy and numeracy.

The two Low SES NP independent schools with the largest Aboriginal student cohorts are also building stronger links with their local school communities and with local Aboriginal organisations. To date, strategic partnerships have been significantly strengthened with local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups, the National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee, the Durrie Aboriginal Medical Service and the elders of the Dunghutti language group.

Support for other cohorts – 1 January to 30 June 2010

Introduction

Significant numbers of English as a Second Language (ESL) students, including refugees, are enrolled in Low SES NP schools.

- 13 per cent of the 2009 first phase ESL student population found in NSW government schools was enrolled in schools participating in the 2009 and 2010 cohorts of the National Partnership on Low SES School Communities.⁴
- 11 per cent of the 2009 refugee student population found in NSW government schools was enrolled in schools participating in the 2009 and 2010 cohorts of the National Partnership on Low SES School Communities.⁵
- The independent sector reports that five of the thirteen independent schools currently participating in the Low SES National Partnership have large student populations that are almost entirely from a Language Background Other Than English (88%).⁶ Three of these schools are Islamic schools.

Note: At present, ESL proficiency (ESL phase data) and refugee enrolments are only reported to the National Partnership team by NSW government schools.

Building school capacity to meet the needs of ESL students and refugees

English as a Second Language (ESL)

A large number of government schools are implementing whole school professional learning programs for teachers and the school executive, targeting ESL pedagogy and direct student interventions to lift the results of students requiring ESL support.

Whole school programs employed in the government sector include

- *Teaching English Language Learners Program*
- *Teaching Refugees in My Classroom Program*
- training in the use of *ESL Scales* for assessment purposes
- homework centres.

Two Low SES NP government schools are also participating in the *Successful Language Learners* (SLL) project. SLL seeks to improve the language, literacy and numeracy performance of students who are learning English as a second language, including refugee students. It is

⁴ English as a second language school student enrolment and phase data is collected annually and reported concurrently with enrolment data. 2010 ESL enrolment figures will be provided in the NSW Smarter Schools National Partnerships Annual Report in April 2011.

⁵ Refugee school student enrolment data is collected annually and reported concurrently with enrolment data. This data will next become available in December 2010.

⁶ Note: Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE) and first phase ESL enrolment data cannot be compared, due to a difference in definitions. Phase 1 ESL identifies students with a high level of educational disadvantage, who have generally been learning English for less than one year and are often characterised as new arrivals to Australia. LBOTE students either speak a language other than English or live in a home where a language other than English is spoken. LBOTE students may or may not require ESL support.

funded by the Australian Government under the Literacy and Numeracy Pilots in Low SES Communities.

The *Successful Language Learners* project provides:

- targeted support for students, such as assessment on *ESL Scales* once per semester and analysis of student progress
- professional learning for teachers in language, literacy, numeracy and ESL pedagogy
- professional development for school leadership in ESL pedagogy, language, numeracy, understanding the needs of refugee students, data analysis and parent and community engagement
- an expansion in the range of services and programs offered to support students, parents and community members.

Many of the target Low SES schools in the Sydney Archdiocese have very high proportions of students from language backgrounds other than English. Teacher Educators (Highly Accomplished Teacher positions in the Catholic sector), have proven to be a key component of Smarter Schools National Partnerships strategy in these schools. Achievements of particular note include:

- significant professional development in ESL across the Sydney Archdiocese, particularly accurate identification and assessment practices and the use of *ESL Scales* for assessment, reporting and programming
- development of *ESL Matters/Reading Matters* and *Numeracy Matters* online modules to support in-school professional development.
- principal participation in professional learning in data analysis, budgeting, visioning and understanding the context of their schools' high ESL enrolment

Three of the independent schools with high English as a second language student enrolments have employed specialist, experienced ESL teachers to provide in-class professional learning through team teaching and/or lead whole school professional learning in ESL pedagogy. However, these schools have found it difficult to attract and retain ESL teachers with the necessary capabilities. Eight full time teachers were required; and although 6.4 full time equivalent teachers were employed by the end of June 2010, two will not continue in 2011.

One of the largest independent schools in the group has established a homework centre to support 120 NESB students with high learning support needs, which provides four hours of support per week.

Meeting the needs of refugee students

Government schools are providing focused transition support for refugee students, including both newly-arrived students and those transferring from an Intensive English Centre to high school.

In early 2010, four government Low SES schools participated in facilitator training in the *Teaching Refugees in My Classroom Program*.

This course has been developed to support mainstream teachers to develop effective strategies for teaching refugees in their classrooms from kindergarten to year 12.

The course consists of five modules, including between-session readings and tasks to embed learning into practice. Outcomes of the course include:

- improved teacher understanding of the experiences, skills and knowledge of current refugee populations
- enhanced knowledge of the language related needs of recently arrived refugee students with low levels of literacy
- improved teacher awareness of the specialist personnel, external agencies, training programs and resources available to support refugee students
- increased skills in effective teaching of refugee students in mainstream classrooms
- development of transition plans for refugee students entering mainstream schools

One example of a school providing intensive support to refugees is a government high school with an eight per cent refugee enrolment and a high proportion of students with English as a Second Language. The school's Intensive English Centre caters for newly arrived students prior to their transition to high school.

In 2009, the school was selected to implement the *Refugee Transition Program* to support refugee students' transition from intensive English programs into mainstream high school and to help students plan their transition from school to further education, training and employment.

A strong focus of the *Refugee Transition Program* is on the professional learning of effective ESL pedagogy strategies for mainstream teachers, which is provided by qualified ESL teachers and regional consultants. The school plans to train facilitators and implement the *Teaching English Language Learners Program* during Semester 2.

The school also works with the youth workers to provide regular group activities to improve participants' technology, study and organisational skills and to raise their awareness of educational and vocational pathways, school and workplace cultures and expectations.

For further details, see 'Improving the engagement of refugee students: Chester Hill High School' in the 'Activities you would like to showcase' section of this report:

Activities you would like to showcase – 1 January to 30 June 2010

Developing teacher and leadership capacity

Schools have recognised the importance of building leadership capacity to improve outcomes in Low SES school communities. The following snapshots provide examples of action taken to develop leadership capacity in two government school regions and one rural technology high school.

Developing leadership capacity in DET's Western NSW region

During the first six months of 2010, DET's Western NSW region has transformed the way in which schools are supported in school improvement.

Principals and School Education Directors have introduced a new joint collaborative support structure that supports schools at the local School Education Group level.

Using Low SES National Partnership funds, schools in each of Western NSW's seven School Education Groups have contributed funding towards a partnership mentor and a connected learning coach to coordinate and lead professional learning. An Aboriginal pedagogy officer has also been employed at deputy principal level to lead professional learning across the region.

The new positions build leadership capacity in schools through providing support to principals; supporting effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Low SES National Partnership reforms; and facilitating the sharing of examples of good practice across the region.

The model has already provided coaching and mentoring opportunities at the regional executive level and the engagement of principals and school executives in professional learning regarding data analysis, effective school improvement planning, and the integration of technology into quality teaching.

As a result of the introduction of the Aboriginal pedagogy officer, collaboration has been enhanced between the regional Aboriginal education team, the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and school communities. This has resulted in the development of a suite of professional learning modules for schools.

In June 2010, the regional executive reported that strengthened processes to support school improvement have resulted in more effective data analysis and the improved quality of school plans.

Developing leadership capacity in DET's Hunter Central Coast region

The Hunter Central Coast region has developed internal review training to support schools participating in the Low SES National Partnership.

The aim of the training program is to support principals and school leaders to plan and implement rigorous evaluations of school strategies, professional learning, student performance and systems.

The course covers methodology, evaluation planning, collection of evidence, data analysis, and the development of recommendations and strategies. Each session is structured as a workshop which facilitates the sharing of good practice among schools.

In order to increase community participation in the planning process, representatives from school communities were invited to attend briefing sessions. The sessions were well attended by members of local Aboriginal communities and representatives from Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups.

47 school leadership teams have completed the training to date, which has significantly developed leadership capacity in the Hunter Central Coast region.

Developing teacher and leadership capacity: Canobolas Rural Technology High School

Canobolas Rural Technology High School is a comprehensive high school located 261 kilometres west of Sydney in Orange, NSW. The school has an enrolment of approximately 730 students, 20 per cent of whom are Aboriginal. The school has a support unit for approximately 50 students with special needs. The staff includes both experienced teachers and an increasing number of early career teachers.

Early in the school's participation in the Low SES National Partnership, the school's situational analysis highlighted a need to support the professional development of teachers in the teaching of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum and to enhance skills in data analysis.

All classroom teachers now engage in regular professional learning and share effective classroom practice.

A series of professional learning groups have been established to support teachers to achieve their professional learning goals. Each professional learning group is comprised of five to eight staff members from each key learning area. In addition, head teachers and year advisors are now allocated additional time to support their professional learning needs and build the capacity of school executive and teacher leaders.

The following strategies have been critical to the school's success in building teacher and leadership capacity through an in-school professional learning model:

- The establishment of an in-school professional learning centre to provide a designated space and resources to support professional learning in data analysis, quality teaching, literacy, numeracy and technology use*
- The implementation of a flexible timetable structure to support a site-based professional learning model for all teaching staff*
- The establishment of two new community engagement officer positions at the school to assist in building stronger relations between the school and its local community; and*
- The establishment of a strategic partnership with Charles Sturt University to strengthen action research around the NSW Quality Teaching Model and to develop a 'screen literacy' program to improve student literacy and engagement levels.*

Supporting improvements in literacy attainment

Several government schools participating in the Low SES National Partnership have chosen to prioritise literacy attainment. The snapshots below provide examples of some of the initiatives being implemented in schools to support improved literacy outcomes.

A whole school approach to literacy: Walhallow Public School

Walhallow Public School is located in Caroona, a small rural community in the New England region of NSW. Walhallow Public School has a student enrolment of 25. All students are Aboriginal. The school has a teaching principal, one classroom teacher, a full-time Aboriginal education officer and a part-time school learning support officer.

In the early stages of the school's participation in the Low SES National Partnership, the school's situational analysis highlighted that interventions to support the literacy learning of students were required to improve student outcomes. A number of student and teacher interventions have since been implemented.

As a direct result of the funding received from the Low SES School Communities National Partnership, Walhallow Public School has significantly restructured service provision by moving from one K-6 class to two classes (K-2 and 3-6). This has enabled the more effective provision of individualised support to students in literacy.

In addition, an expert teacher has been employed to lead mentoring and professional learning for staff in the use of the Accelerated Literacy program in the classroom. The use of Accelerated Literacy pedagogy now underpins the school's approach to literacy instruction. The school's Aboriginal education officer is also working closely with parents/carers to support student literacy learning.

Parents and community members' willingness to participate in classroom and school activities has been critical to the effectiveness of the school's approach to literacy. A stronger partnership has been developed between the school, the Parents and Citizens' Association, community members and the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, as a direct result of the school's participation in the Low SES National Partnership.

Teachers have reported that they are more confident in their professional judgements of students' progress as a result of their participation in professional learning opportunities.

Data show that 100 per cent of students have improved their reading by a minimum of three Reading Recovery levels since the beginning of 2010. Teacher assessments indicate that students have shown improvements in their reading, speaking and listening skills.

Early evidence gathered through teacher and parent interviews also showed that students are also more engaged in reading and writing activities.

Individualised tutorial support: Cowra Public School

Cowra Public School is located in a rural area of Central West NSW. 373 students are currently enrolled at the school. 19 per cent of students are Aboriginal and two per cent of students having a language background other than English. 36 teachers are employed at the school.

Cowra Public School identified literacy as a focus for 2010 through the analysis of NAPLAN and NSW Best Start Kindergarten Assessment performance data during the school's situational analysis and planning process. Data gathered from teacher, parent and community surveys also indicated that additional classroom support would assist in improving student outcomes in literacy.

As a result, Low SES National Partnership funding has been used to employ six additional school learning support officers to provide tutorial support in literacy to individual students.

A daily 30 minute literacy tutorial is provided to students on an individual basis over a 10-15 week period, through the School Learning Support Officers Program. Three of the additional school learning support officers are members of the local Aboriginal community and support Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. A National Partnership Mentor leads and coordinates the program and provides professional learning for the school learning support officers, in consultation with classroom teachers.

After just 13 weeks of tutoring, data already shows that student reading ages have increased by between 5 months and 2 years, using Australian Council for Educational Research and Woodcock testing as pre- and post-intervention measures. Qualitative data based on the observations of classroom teachers also suggests an increase in student confidence; better engagement in attempting new tasks; improved skills levels; and improved student behavior, in some cases.

Building capacity at all levels to improve reading outcomes: Lidcombe Public School

Lidcombe Public School is located in South West Sydney, 17 kilometres from Sydney's CBD. 557 students are currently enrolled at the school. 87 per cent of the students have a language background other than English, with 44 language backgrounds represented in the school.

The school's situational analysis identified reading as a focus for 2010. The school has also identified the need to strengthen its communication with, and engagement with, parents. As a result, resources provided by the Low SES School Communities National Partnership are being used to:

- *Introduce timetabled small group reading instruction with a focus on the systematic teaching of literacy resources (i.e. code-breaking, meaning-making, text-using, text-analysing)*
- *Enable weekly professional learning sessions for the school's leadership team to build capacity, using action learning **
- *Transform the role of the assistant principals to increase their focus on building the capacity of 'stage teams' through mentoring and team teaching*
- *Appoint a community engagement officer to strengthen engagement between parents and the school*
- *Introduce leadership coaching to the executive through provision of two days of support in each school term.*

** An action learning approach is used for the leadership team to evaluate, reflect on and improve both quality teaching practice in reading and the support provided to stage teams. The school leadership group and staff have identified English as a Second Language (ESL) pedagogy to support ESL learners as a key focus area for professional learning.*

Teachers across all stage levels are already reporting that student reading ability has improved. This observation is based on mid-year assessment data and monitoring mechanisms such as individual student progress on the literacy continuum and Reading Recovery levels.

“The students are more engaged in the task. The improved use of teacher feedback is resulting in increased confidence.” (Teacher)

“The most improved group of students in every class has been the lower ability group. This is the group that has traditionally been withdrawn by the Support Teacher Learning Assistant but this year, we have chosen to keep with the class teacher.” (Stage 3 Assistant principal)

Classroom teachers are also reporting that they feel empowered by a clearer sense of responsibility for improvements in reading for every student and ownership of their teaching and learning programs.

“It makes me reflect on what I’m doing... although I have been in this position for several years; this is the first time I feel like I am really leading.” (Assistant principal)

Parental engagement is also improving:

“Workshops for parents, led by executive teachers, to assist them to support their child’s reading at home have had unprecedented attendance. Parents who have never attended school-based activities are now coming to the school for a range of formal and informal parent events such as the weekly multicultural café run by the community engagement officer.” (Principal)

Supporting students in special circumstances: refugee students, students with learning disabilities and students in a juvenile justice setting

Improving the engagement of refugee students: Chester Hill High School

Chester Hill High School, located in South Western Sydney, is a large comprehensive co-educational high school which includes an intensive English centre. The school has a full time enrolment of 1152 students. More than 80 per cent of the students are from language backgrounds other than English. A significant number of these students are English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. Eight per cent of the school's enrolments are refugee students, many of whom have limited prior educational experience.

Assessment data analysed as part of the school's situational analysis revealed that refugee students were performing well below stage appropriate syllabus outcomes and demonstrated a lack of confidence in interactions with peers and staff at school.

In 2009, Chester Hill High School was selected as one of ten secondary schools to implement the Refugee Transition Program designed to support refugee students in the transition from intensive English programs into mainstream high school and to help them plan their transition from school to further education, training and employment.

Following the positive outcomes of this program, the school has used Low SES NP funding to expand participation by increasing the staffing allocation from 0.6 to 1.0 full time equivalent and increasing the number of student participants from 18 to 34.

A strong focus of the Refugee Transition Program is on the professional learning of effective ESL pedagogy strategies for mainstream teachers provided by qualified ESL teachers and regional consultants.

*"I now understand the importance of ensuring that I explicitly teach the language demands of the syllabus and carefully sequence tasks in small steps."
(Classroom teacher)*

The school plans to train facilitators and implement the Teaching English Language Learners Program during Semester 2.

Chester Hill High School also works with the youth workers at JobQuest Community Connections who run regular group activities for students participating in the Refugee Transition Program.

The activities assist students to improve their technology, study and organisational skills and to raise their awareness of educational and vocational pathways, school and workplace cultures and expectations. This is followed up at school in individualised sessions for students with the program teachers.

"I now have part-time work and feel more confident to talk to people. I want to take up a pre-apprenticeship at TAFE when I finish school" (Refugee student)

As a member of a network of schools implementing the program, Chester Hill High School will use the Refugee Transition Program evaluation process to determine improvement in refugee students' transition from the Intensive English Centres into mainstream classes. This involves:

- *pre- and post-assessment of students' level of English language using ESL Scales*

- *results from class assessment tasks and student work samples for literacy, numeracy and technology levels*
- *qualitative evaluation using student, staff and parent surveys around confidence and competence in the school setting, knowledge of vocational pathways, study skills, cultural awareness and student wellbeing.*

Get Ready for Life – working with the local community to support student transition from a special education setting: G S Kidd Memorial School

GS Kidd Memorial School is located in Gunnedah, a rural township situated in the Namoi Valley region of North Western NSW. The school supports students from Kindergarten to Year 12 assessed as having a moderate to severe intellectual disability. The school currently enrolls 24 students divided into three classes which are grouped by age.

Early in the school's participation in the Low SES National Partnership, the school's situational analysis highlighted issues relating to transition programs, workplace readiness and the learning needs of the students. In particular:

- *Student destination data showed that the majority of students who completed Year 12 had highly successful transitions into the workplace, but the majority of students who left the school prior to completing Year 12 were not currently employed.*
- *Employers have reported that 90 per cent of students undertaking work experience required initial job coaching.*

As a result, G S Kidd Memorial School has strategically used Low SES School Communities National Partnership funds to design and deliver a life skills extension program.

The Get Ready for Life program is designed to enhance students' post school destinations, and increase students' independence and self-esteem. The program focuses on team building, safety, emergency procedures, survival and first aid, providing first steps in achieving skills to support further employment and education.

The assistant principal leads and coordinates the program, which was developed in collaboration with parents, staff and community members. The Get Ready for Life program is supported by a transition job coach and community volunteers who help the students to complete practical activities in the classroom. Teachers participate in the delivery of the program to build the school's capacity to sustain this initiative.

Following the implementation of the Get Ready for Life program in Term 1, 2010, the school is already reporting that students are actively engaged in the program; making positive comments to staff about their participation in the program; and becoming increasingly confident in simulated activities (e.g. cardio-pulmonary resuscitation).

Providing professional learning for early career teachers and executive to improve student engagement in a juvenile justice setting: Lincoln School

Lincoln School is a school for specific purposes for male students aged 10 to 21 years old. The school is a community care regional facility based in the Orana Juvenile Justice Centre in Dubbo, with students primarily coming from the Central West and Western areas of NSW. 90 per cent of students are Aboriginal.

The enrolment includes students awaiting court appearances and those serving custodial sentences. While the school has an enrolment base of 42 students, an annual enrolment of over 250 students is common. Students are able to enrol for periods ranging from one day to a number of years. Students often have a history of fractured or chronic school non-attendance and multiple school suspensions and/or expulsion.

Analysis undertaken during school planning indicates that students enter the school with very low levels of literacy and with low levels of prior participation in formal education. The situational analysis also revealed a need for professional learning in a broader range of educational settings both within and outside Schools for Specific Purposes, as half the teaching staff are early career teachers.

As a result of the recommendations of the situational analysis, Lincoln School has chosen to use Low SES School Communities National Partnership funding to increase the provision of professional learning opportunities for both early career teachers and members of the school executive to improve student achievement in literacy learning.

Lincoln School has jointly funded three new positions to lead and support professional learning for staff in partnership with four other schools. These positions include:

- a partnership mentor to lead professional learning and leadership development*
- a connected learning coach to facilitate the effective integration of interactive technology into classroom practice; and*
- an Aboriginal mentor to facilitate quality teaching and learning for Aboriginal students*

The above positions have facilitated the provision of on-site leadership mentoring; targeted professional learning; staff participation in an intensive literacy program; opportunities for visits to other schools (both juvenile justice and mainstream) for exposure to literacy programs; and observations of quality teaching practice and behaviour management systems. In addition, flexible timetabling and release time have been implemented for teachers and the school executive to work together on personalised learning plans.

Assistant principals and early career teachers are now supported to strengthen skills in the use of technology in the classroom, implement a variety of effective literacy strategies and develop units of work that meet the learning needs of students in this setting. The executive has a key role in leading the changes in the school and provides direct support to staff in the development of personalised learning plans for students, and in student assessment and programming.

Lincoln School's focus on professional learning has already resulted in teachers applying a broader range of literacy strategies. All teachers now engage in professional development; integrate technology into units of work; apply the NSW Quality Teaching Model; and communicate student learning outcomes to students and parents/carers.

Building student engagement in literacy

The snapshots below provide examples of initiatives being implemented in Catholic schools to build student engagement in their own literacy learning.

Building responsibility for learning: St Mary's Catholic Primary School Batlow

St Mary's Catholic Primary School Batlow, is a small rural school located in the South West Slopes of NSW. It is a co-educational primary school with an enrolment of 50 students from Kindergarten to Year 6.

St Mary's Batlow are implementing an innovative learning model that sees responsibility for task completion and learning gradually transfer from the teacher to the student over time under the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model.

The school is utilising this strategy in combination with the First Steps Literacy 2nd Edition – Reading intervention and the Team Leadership for School Improvement Program.

Together, the student and teacher move through various phases:

- **Modelling** – teachers model their own metacognitive processes as active readers.
- **Sharing** – students and teachers to think through the text together
- **Guiding** – students practise strategies learned in meaningful reading contexts, using a variety of texts
- **Applying** – students transfer and generalise skills and knowledge across a range of texts, text types and contexts.

Teachers undertake professional learning in the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model and are observed by their peers on a formal and informal basis, as well as receiving formal feedback from a National Partnership facilitator.

According to St Mary's Catholic Primary School's principal, the implementation of the model has transformed the school into a genuine community of practice.

"Morale of the staff has improved significantly and there is a real 'buzz' happening around teaching and learning in the school. Professional dialogue about pedagogy and teaching practice has increased markedly over the course of the program and feedback from the students is that the lessons are more engaging and tailored to their needs."

Students are also reported to be utilising the strategies they have learned in reading in other key learning areas.

ICT to build literacy engagement: St Peter's Primary School Stockton

St Peter's Primary School Stockton is a small school with an enrolment of 63 students, located in Newcastle, that has chosen to focus on literacy attainment, particularly reading and comprehension.

The school is addressing the challenges faced through a combination of the Focus on Reading 3-6 (FOR) literacy intervention, improved access to computer technology and the You Can Do It program, a social / emotional education program which helps students to form positive attitudes towards learning and life.

The FOR intervention has been well received by both teachers and students. Teachers are reporting that they have been able to apply FOR strategies across different areas of learning to good effect. The appointment of a Teacher Educator has also provided support to teachers in the classroom and mentoring in teacher planning and pedagogy.

The purchase of 20 laptops has improved student engagement, as well as building teacher capacity to integrate ICT into planning and lesson activities on a regular basis.

The You Can Do It program will commence in Term 4. St Peter's plans to invite some parent representatives to this training and later hold a parent workshop. You Can Do It will gradually be introduced to the children through Term 4 with the aim of full implementation in 2011.

Overcoming distance, providing homework support and improving Aboriginal students' transition to school

The diverse profile of the independent school sector is showcased in these snapshots of some of the early success stories emerging from schools participating in the Low SES National Partnership.

Overcoming distance: Namoi Valley Christian School

Namoi Valley Christian School is a relatively remote regional rural school located in Wee Waa. Through participation in the Low SES National Partnership, the school has implemented a number of strategies to overcome the many disadvantages associated with distance.

The school used some of the Low SES NP funding to release a teacher to visit parents living in remote locations at their homes. This has secured strong parental engagement in the development of the school plan, including the situational analysis.

Effective communication has also been established between parents/carers and the school where the level of literacy in the home is an issue.

The school plans to hold parent numeracy workshops later in the year and will produce DVDs of the presentation as another strategy to further engage local parents.

Homework and English language support: Al Amanah College

Al Amanah College is a large K-12 school located on two campuses in South Western Sydney. 100 per cent of the students are from non English speaking backgrounds.

A combination of the limited English literacy of some families and the weakness of the English literacy skills of some students has resulted in students being unable to complete their homework independently or even at times attempt it. These students do not have the opportunity to practise or apply what they have learned after school.

To address these challenges, Al Amanah has developed a homework program, which provides four hours of after school support per week.

The program aims to provide a structured, quiet and supervised space for students to complete their homework and access targeted assistance in additional English literacy support if they require it.

120 students, comprising 40 secondary students and 40 from each of Al Amanah's two primary campuses, have been selected to participate in the program. Students are identified for participation in the program in accordance with a clear set of criteria developed by the school.

Following one term of operation, teachers and parents are already reporting a positive impact among students participating in the program.

Improving the transition to school: Minimbah Aboriginal Primary School

Minimbah Aboriginal Primary School is a regional primary school located in Armidale. The school has a large proportion of Aboriginal students and an Aboriginal principal.

Staff at the school have been working to establish the early identification of students (preschool and kindergarten) and ongoing monitoring of students to detect Otitis Media. This inflammation of the middle ear is the most common cause of hearing loss in young children and is more prevalent in Aboriginal children.

The inflammation commonly goes undetected for a long time as it is not easily diagnosed. Quite often children suffer with fluctuating hearing losses, meaning that students' hearing can seem "normal" on some days and not others. This can result in children being accused of not paying attention or being naughty and stubborn or just not wanting to listen.

Meanwhile, students affected by this inflammation face difficulties in adjusting to the classroom environment.

Student screening checks are now being conducted each term at Minimbah Aboriginal Primary School, in collaboration with parents, teachers and doctors. During screening, students are assessed, where necessary by a learning support teacher, an educational psychologist and a speech therapist.

Teacher awareness and understanding of this condition is particularly important to address potential barriers to learning caused by Otitis Media inflammations, to both ensure that children are hearing the classroom teacher and identify and manage any gaps in learning caused by hearing loss. Teachers at the school are establishing classroom routines to support students in their learning as part of this strategy.

Otitis Media screening forms part of a comprehensive transition program being developed in collaboration with parents and the Aboriginal director of the preschool co-located on the school site.

Section 4 – Literacy and Numeracy

Six month progress – 1 January to 30 June 2010

Overview

In NSW, 147 schools committed to participate in the National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy. During 2009, all these schools undertook preparation to ensure that they would be well positioned for full and effective implementation of the National Partnership initiatives in 2010. This preparation included:

- school evaluations to identify whether the school focus should be on literacy or numeracy. 102 schools are implementing literacy initiatives and 45 schools are implementing numeracy initiatives
- training in the use of data to support monitoring of student progress in reading or numeracy against school targets and priorities, including the *School Measurement, Assessment and Reporting Toolkit* and *Data Analysis Skills Assessment (DASA)*
- revising 2009 school plans to align with the National Partnership priorities and promote a whole school focus on literacy/numeracy
- reviewing school plans against the needs identified by student data analysis to ensure the plans will effectively address targets.

In the reporting period January - June 2010, all 147 schools in the Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership have begun implementing their revised plans and utilising their enhanced data analysis skills.

State implementation has been further strengthened through the training of school leaders in the *NSW Analytical Framework for Effective Leadership and School Improvement in Literacy and Numeracy*.

There is emerging evidence of teachers becoming increasingly engaged in the reform activity. For example:

- the establishment of school improvement leadership and implementation teams
- principals reporting greater involvement in structured and incidental pedagogical discussions around effective teaching of literacy and numeracy
- teachers building on data analysis skills training in their planning
- early indicators and evidence suggests a culture shift towards teachers and school leaders ensuring individual student needs are being more strategically met. Despite the early stage in implementation, initial student assessments suggest that, the Literacy and Numeracy reforms may already be having some positive impact on student outcomes.

Significant progress in implementing and progressing the literacy and numeracy initiatives has been made in the reporting period.

Schools plans were all realigned to meet the reform goals and published on schools websites at the beginning of the period.

All schools in the partnership began implementing their programs in Term 1 and considerable progress has been made in engaging teachers and developing their skills and delivery of the programs.

Teacher professional development

Teachers have been participating in professional development activities and training focused on the particular reading programs they are teaching and building on their data analysis training undertaken at the beginning of the partnership. Schools are using the analysis of their Data Analysis Skills Assessment (DASA) to identify areas for further professional learning.

In 2010, the SMART (School Measurement, Assessment and Reporting Toolkit) e-learning module has been accessed by 752 teachers. Analysis of student data continues to be a focus for teacher professional learning in the specific reading and numeracy programs schools selected.

In the Bathurst Diocese, for example, teachers completed phase one of the *Reading to Learn* training. Stage teams now meet on a weekly basis to collaboratively plan for more explicit teaching, more focused assessment, and more consistency in teacher judgments with the goal of achieving better learning outcomes for students. These teachers are also collaboratively analysing and reflecting on student data and using these results to more sharply focus teaching and learning strategies in reading and comprehension in their teams.

A similar approach has been taken in the independent schools who are taking collective responsibility for analysing their data and developing processes to ensure that teachers utilise data to improve lesson planning.

In the Parramatta Diocese, schools implementing the *Mindful Learning, Mindful Teaching Program*, a whole-school approach to teaching and learning of comprehension, have introduced peer observation and feedback sessions.

Teacher capacity and skills have been developed through teacher's observing each other's practice and teaching of reading comprehension skills. This has resulted in increased teacher engagement and changes to their teaching practice.

The *TOWN* whole-class intervention program for numeracy is also developing teachers' data analysis skills. An integral component of the program is the use of student performance data to monitor where students are placed along the *Learning Framework in Number*. Teachers are becoming increasingly skilled in the framework to track student progress and identify students at risk of underachievement.

Analysis of this data is being used to:

- increase teacher knowledge and understanding of numeracy and further build their capacity to deliver consistent, high quality numeracy lessons
- identify students at risk, and develop individual and class learning plans which are implemented and monitored with a clear focus on the evidence of student achievement.

Improvements in school leadership

Improvements in school leadership have been supported by professional development and other resources.

The *NSW Analytical framework for effective leadership and school improvement in literacy and numeracy* has proved to be a useful practical resource for supporting implementation of the National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy in their school. Principals and school leaders have reported that this evaluation tool provides an excellent resource from which to develop strategies for school improvement. Some principals have commented that they often consulted the *Analytical Framework* as a point of validation to support their own professional judgment.

The *Association of Independent Schools Leadership Program* was conducted on a cyclical basis supporting the seven participating schools to meet centrally to gain a greater understanding of the expectations of the National Partnership and to share and reflect on progress, highlights and challenges. This leadership program has provided schools with an opportunity to learn from and reflect on research-based evidence regarding the use of data to improve learning, building capacity and ways of sustaining change.

In the Parramatta Diocese's National Partnership schools there has been an increase in active participation by principals and teachers as co-learners through involvement in peer teaching linked to their professional learning around reading comprehension strategies.

Whole school focus on improving student performance in reading and numeracy

Progress towards the reform goals includes improvements in whole school engagement in reading and numeracy.

There is increased evidence of whole-school engagement with in-class professional learning building teacher expertise and confidence in the teaching of reading.

For example, in schools implementing *Focus on Reading 3-6*, there have been a number of changes in teaching approaches to literacy. These changes include teachers making concerted efforts to include texts that are more culturally relevant and engaging for students in their school. Teachers have reported increased student engagement in reading activities and a reduction in time taken up in managing student behavioural issues.

In four schools in the Sydney region professional learning is supported by the classroom leaders who guide teachers to make the connections between theory and practice.

Teachers trialling *Focus on Reading 3-6* have been encouraged by noticeable improvement in students' reading skills and significantly improved student engagement in this reading program. In these four schools the development of a community of schools to share ideas and strategies has created opportunities for in depth professional dialogue around reading.

Drawing from school-based assessment data, significant growth for most Year 3, 4 and 5 students has been reported in five schools implementing whole school *Reading to Learn Program* in Western NSW, despite their high levels of student mobility.

A learning community approach has been adopted in the nine schools implementing *TOWN* in the North Coast region. The identification of expert teachers as classroom leaders and their subsequent enthusiasm and commitment has been critical to the successful implementation of whole-school numeracy programs in these schools. Classroom leaders and regional consultants participate in regular video conferences and lesson study opportunities to share relevant teaching strategies, challenges and solutions.

Significant achievements/activities – 1 January to 30 June 2010

The foundational work of 2009 has placed NSW on track to meet National Partnership targets. In the period from January to June 2010, there are signs of early success. Initial tracking of students suggests that, despite the early stage in implementation, literacy and numeracy reforms appear to be having an impact on student outcomes that is greater than anticipated.

Significant achievements include:

- Strong cross-sectoral collaboration which has resulted in the innovative appointment of a single cross-sectoral co-ordinator for this partnership in 2009. This has proven to be an excellent strategy for ensuring continuing effective implementation and providing integrated support for schools throughout the reporting period
- School leadership teams in all 147 schools in the Literacy & Numeracy National Partnership have revised their school plans to align with the reform priorities and reviewed them against the needs identified by student literacy and numeracy data analysis.
- All revised school plans were published on school websites in February 2010.

Implementation of literacy and numeracy programs

- All 147 schools began implementing their literacy and numeracy programs at the start of the 2010 school year. These programs involved:
 - 1,356 teachers implementing whole school/class reading programs
 - 496 teachers implementing whole school/class numeracy programs

The following tables show the spread across whole class/school reading and numeracy programs:

Reading Programs – Whole Class/School	Number of Teachers	Number of Schools
<i>Focus on Reading 3-6</i>	388	37
<i>Accelerated Literacy</i>	515	30
<i>Reading to Learn</i>	220	21
<i>Mindful Learning: Mindful Teaching</i>	160	8
<i>First Steps Literacy 2nd Edition – Reading</i>	50	4
<i>Effective School Wide Reading Model</i>	18	1
<i>Successful Language Learners</i>	6	1

Numeracy Programs – Whole Class/School	Number of Teachers	Number of Schools
<i>Taking Off With Numeracy</i>	488	41
<i>Count Me In Too</i>	16	1
<i>Learning in Numeracy K-8</i>	4	1
<i>First Steps Numeracy</i>	12	1
<i>Numeracy Matters</i>	33	1

- 90 schools are implementing individual student reading interventions targeting 2,288 students
- 45 schools are implementing individual student numeracy interventions targeting 1,511 students

The following tables show the spread across individual reading and numeracy programs. Significantly by June 2010, 573 students have reached their reading goals in word attack skills, sight word recognition and supported book reading in the *MULTILIT Program*.

Reading Programs – Individual Student Intervention	Number of schools	Number of students targeted	Number of students completed program
<i>MULTILIT</i>	78	1,738	573
<i>Mindful Learning: Mindful teaching</i>	8	323	
<i>Working Out What Works</i>	2	26	
<i>First Steps Reading</i>	2	23	
<i>Supporting Individual Readers</i>	1	30	
<i>LEXIA</i>	1	9	
<i>Reading for Students at Risk</i>	1	60	
<i>Reading Tutors</i>	1	59	
<i>QuickSmart Literacy</i>	1	30	
<i>School-based individual reading intervention programs</i>	7	638	

Numeracy Programs – Individual Student Intervention	Number of schools	Number of students targeted	Number of students completed program
<i>Taking Off With Numeracy individual intervention</i>	27	1,114	
<i>QuickSmart Numeracy</i>	14	428	64
<i>First Steps Numeracy</i>	1	24	
<i>Low SES Numeracy Pilot</i>	1	16	
<i>Numeracy Matters</i>	1	43	
<i>Individual learning plans</i>	1	7	

- In the *QuickSmart Numeracy* individual student intervention, 64 students this year have completed the program which focuses on improving students’ understanding and recall of basic number facts, performance of elementary calculations, and problem solving skills.
- individual learning plans have been developed for almost 5,000 students identified as being at risk of achieving at or below national minimum standards.

Teacher engagement and professional development

- Teachers are becoming increasingly engaged across schools and across programs despite some initial resistance to change, an early indicator that cultural change is beginning to occur. Principals have reported greater levels of enthusiasm by teachers for literacy and numeracy programs and strategies. It has also been noted that teachers are increasingly engaging in professional dialogue about effective pedagogies for literacy and numeracy at both formal and informal levels.
- Teacher uptake of ongoing professional learning opportunities to reinforce their knowledge, understanding and application of data analysis and the importance of using evidence-based teaching strategies further supports this trend.
- Schools are acting on the results of their *Data Analysis Skills Assessment* to identify areas of potential professional development to support continuous improvement in teachers’ use of school and student data. Teachers are also using the *Literacy Continuum*, *Learning Framework in Number* and *Place Value Framework* to track student progress in mastery of foundation skills.
- Increasingly teachers are demonstrating confidence and skills in using diagnostic tools such as system developed literacy and numeracy continuums, and locally designed ones such as reading and numeracy rubrics, to analyse student performance data to inform teaching and learning. Teachers are also differentiating lessons more effectively to address identified student needs.

School leaders report that the *NSW Analytic Framework for Effective Leadership and School Improvement in Literacy and Numeracy* has underpinned their school’s implementation of the

National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy and has proven to be an excellent resource to validate professional judgement and develop strategies for school improvement.

Evaluation

- The NSW National Partnerships Evaluation Committee approved two literacy and numeracy evaluation proposals to go to tender at their meeting in June 2010. The evaluation projects will focus on the comparative impact of literacy and numeracy initiatives on student outcomes
 - the take-up and sustainability of new literacy and numeracy practices in NSW schools.
- In early 2010, a cross-sectoral Program Evaluation Reference Group was established to oversee the evaluation of the selected reading and numeracy intervention programs. Scoping documents for program level evaluations have been developed to investigate the effectiveness of:
 - *MULTILIT*
 - *Focus on Reading*
 - *Taking off with Numeracy*
 - *Mindful Learning, Mindful Teaching.*

It is expected that these evaluations will be completed in 2011 and will be used to inform future planning and interventions.

- Support has also been provided to leadership teams to assist them in developing their own processes for on-going monitoring and evaluation.

Progress in key activities

There has also been significant progress in the following key activities:

- Developing strong school leadership to support reforms in literacy and numeracy
- Whole school focus on improving student performance in reading
- Whole school focus on improving student performance in numeracy
- Enhanced teacher capacity to use data to inform evidence-based teaching including NAPLAN student and school performance data along with other locally developed diagnostic tools and assessments
- Monitoring student performance to support individual student learning improvement

Barriers to progress – 1 January to 30 June 2010

Cultural change

Some schools reported that it has taken time to change the well established practices of experienced teachers, some of whom previously questioned the need for whole-school programs in reading or numeracy or were initially reluctant to engage in data analysis to inform teaching and student learning. Some teachers may also have been reluctant to share classroom practice and engage in professional learning.

The following strategies have been implemented to address these concerns:

- engagement of program facilitators in planning with school leadership teams to promote the reform strategies at school planning days and to involve the school leadership team leading in whole school professional development for reading or numeracy interventions
- whole-school involvement in the development of school plans
- in-class support and modelling by classroom leaders
- development of specific reading or numeracy action plans
- an increased focus on data and evidence of student performance.

Teacher mobility

Maintaining the continuity of student progress when teachers are newly appointed to a National Partnership school and do not have an understanding of the whole-school reading or numeracy program being implemented is an issue for some schools.

Strategies identified by schools to alleviate this problem have included:

- provision of mentoring support for new teachers
- greater involvement of support staff and casual staff in aspects of professional learning
- planned professional learning activities at the start of each school year and school term.

Student mobility

High student mobility is a concern for schools in communities where there is a transient workforce and social and economic factors contributing to family mobility. Strategies that respond to this challenge include:

- the careful selection of teacher and class
- uninterrupted literacy or numeracy sessions
- the development of individual student learning plans that can be taken by the student to their next school.

Lack of casual teachers

Many rural and remote communities experience a lack of casual teachers, which makes the release of teachers to attend professional development problematic.

To date, the following strategies have been implemented to address this issue:

- provision of professional development out of school hours (on Saturdays and after school)
- forward planning to access casual teachers and the restructuring staff meetings to allow for a greater focus on professional development
- support from metropolitan independent schools to provide casual relief for rural schools.

Remoteness and size of schools involved

Particular problems were identified among small and remote schools:

- lack of casual teachers in small communities
- increased workload for teaching principals in small schools

To date, the following strategies have been implemented to address these barriers:

- use of video teleconferencing for professional conversation, planning and review to reduce travel time
- forward planning for professional development days to make the most of time spent away from the school
- reorganisation of staff meetings for greater facilitation of professional learning

Support for Indigenous students – 1 January to 30 June 2010

10 per cent of the 2009 NSW Aboriginal student population were enrolled in schools participating in the 2009 and 2010 cohorts of the National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy.⁷

Reading and numeracy initiatives

It should be noted that the suite of reading and numeracy programs identified for implementation in NSW contain teaching and learning strategies designed to raise all students' achievement across the full range of learning abilities and needs. All reading and numeracy programs in this suite have the capacity and flexibility for teachers to tailor intervention strategies to the particular needs of their students, including making appropriate and relevant links to local cultural backgrounds and contexts.

This flexibility includes specific strategies for supporting all Aboriginal students to achieve growth in reading and literacy standards of achievement. For example, the *Focus on Reading 3-6 Program* emphasises the development of an increased awareness of the literacy needs of Aboriginal students and investigates the common ground between Aboriginal pedagogies and optimal pedagogies for all learners to inform explicit classroom literacy instruction. The *Focus on Reading 3-6 Program* supports teachers to plan a series of explicit teaching sessions aimed at meeting the needs of diverse student groups, including Aboriginal students. This is achieved through its focus on the needs of the Year 3-6 learners, the subject-specific texts they need to access, the tasks learners are required to carry out using these texts, and the continuous cycle of assessment, planning and instruction.

Teachers are assisted to track and monitor student progress on specifically designed *Learning Sequences* for *Comprehension*, *Vocabulary knowledge* and *Fluent text reading*. Teacher professional learning in this program supports teachers to implement class learning plans using a combination of the reading strategies and NAPLAN information. These class learning plans are recommended as a starting point to assist the development of individual learning plans for all students requiring additional support.

⁷ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school student enrolment data is collected annually and will next become available in December 2010.

Case study example: Alma Public School

Alma Public School is implementing Focus on Reading 3-6. With a 25 percent enrolment of Aboriginal students Alma's student performance data indicates that both Focus on Reading 3-6 strategies and MULTILIT have achieved early success reflected in improvement in reading levels and student confidence.

Alma Primary School reports that linking with the local Aboriginal Consultative Education Group and engaging their local community are key strategies in implementing their reading programs.

This community support has resulted in four community members being trained as MULTILIT tutors. A third cohort of students is currently progressing through the MULTILIT program with 12 students completing the program in 2010.

Case study example: Bourke Public School

Similarly at Bourke Public School, with 73 percent Aboriginal student enrolment, all teachers in Stages 2 and 3 are training in Reading to Learn strategies which are embedded in the daily literacy cycle.

As well as intensive strategies in Reading to Learn for Stage 1 students, 33 students in Stages 2 and 3 are receiving tutoring in MULTILIT with early positive results.

The TOWN numeracy program is specifically designed to assist teachers to address the numeracy learning needs of all students both within the whole-class and individual student intervention elements.

The importance of schools working closely with their local communities to improve learning outcomes for students, in particular for Aboriginal students, has been emphasised from the initial training and in subsequent professional learning videoconferences.

Case study example: Port Macquarie Primary School

One example of how the TOWN numeracy program supports teachers to improve students' numeracy achievement is at Port Macquarie Primary School.

The leadership team meets regularly with Regional officers to monitor the implementation of the school plan under the National Partnership reforms. Data from the Learning Framework in Number is being used to increase teacher knowledge and understanding of numeracy and further build their capacity to identify, monitor and teach for individual student learning.

NAPLAN, National Partnership Literacy and Numeracy school assessments and TOWN data are used to inform school and class plans with a clear focus on the achievement of student outcomes including those for Aboriginal students.

More than 1500 Aboriginal students have received individual learning plans. Please note that the following figures are provided by schools and may vary from national data collections.

Individual Learning Plans	Number of Students
<i>Total number of students with individual learning plans</i>	4,888
<i>Number of Aboriginal students with individual learning plans</i>	1,569

Aboriginal cultural immersion initiatives in NSW

All schools with newly appointed teachers are expected to participate in a locally delivered program of Aboriginal cultural immersion. In addition to currently provided local cultural immersion programs offered by regions and sectors a new program has been developed specifically for piloting with National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy schools. Following implementation of the program with National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy schools the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) *Cultural Immersion Program* will be offered more widely by local AECG Aboriginal communities.

This initiative consists of two elements:

1. ***Being Culturally Aware, Becoming Culturally Inclusive: A Pathway to Cultural Competence***

This program is both developed and delivered by the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG). The program comprises a three day in-the-field Aboriginal community cultural awareness experience delivered by local AECG community members.

2. ***Professional learning to integrate Aboriginal cultural knowledge in teaching and learning.***

This component is the equivalent of two days of follow up delivered as school-based professional learning for teachers who participate in the cultural immersion program delivered by local AECGs

To support the further development of regional and sector expertise a two-day cross-sectoral workshop *Articulating Aboriginal Cultural Immersion into Teaching and Learning: Sharing and planning* was conducted on 7 and 8 June 2010 for 105 participants.

See Case studies 4 and 5 below: Taree Christian College and Hillvue PS – Individualised Support for Aboriginal students

Activities you would like to showcase – 1 January to 30 June 2010

In the early stages of implementation schools are already reporting a very positive impact across all Literacy and Numeracy NP reform elements. The following case studies highlight good practice and demonstrate the single focus on student improvement in literacy and numeracy being generated by an integrated approach to the implementation of the NP reforms.

Whole school approach to numeracy

Telarah Public School has focused on numeracy using the Taking Off With Numeracy' (TOWN) program as the whole school program and QuickSmart Numeracy as the individual intervention program.

The implementation and support has included a classroom leader working with teachers in classrooms four mornings per week to provide team support and demonstration lessons; and coordinating the School Literacy Support Officers who are working one on two with students on the QuickSmart Numeracy program three days per week.

The school has programmed an additional professional learning meeting once a week that is TOWN specific focused on pedagogy, differentiation, group strategies, sharing, discussion and additional professional learning activities.

Teachers complete tasks in between sessions to embed new learning into classroom practice. Class teachers have been used as numeracy leaders to support other teachers in demonstration lessons, team teaching, collaboration on lesson planning and assessment measures, and reflection on teaching practice.

Developing a common language around reading comprehension

(Diocese of Parramatta)

The leadership team at St Aidan's School Rooty Hill has embraced participation in the Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership with enthusiasm. This involvement ensures discussion of the SSNP program is a priority at weekly leadership team meetings. The leadership team also regularly engages in professional reading related to the teaching of literacy and in particular strategies to improve comprehension skills.

Staff at St Aidan's Primary School acknowledge the effectiveness of the program in the school. One of the members of the leadership team has provided the following comment:

"Our staff worked together to develop a common language about reading comprehension. We are dedicated to identifying pedagogy that improves the comprehension skills of our students and developing teachers' skills through purposeful collaboration. Teachers have learnt how to identify the student's specific learning needs and to program and teach to these appropriately."

Individualised Support for Aboriginal students

Hillvue Public School has identified a significant number of Aboriginal students who would benefit from the individual intervention program MULTLIT. This has been employed as the individual reading intervention program in the school.

Students were identified in the first instance using NAPLAN data, with students at and below the national minimum standard or 'at risk' considered for inclusion in the individual intervention program. NAPLAN results were triangulated with a range of in-school assessment data collected primarily by the designated Support Teacher Learning Assistance and supplemented by the classroom teachers' assessments.

All identified students completed the placement tests for the intervention program with Individual Student Learning Plans created for 30 targeted students.

Group learning plans were developed where students had very similar learning development needs, making it more manageable for the classroom teacher to 'individualise' instruction while working in-class with students in reading groups.

Accelerated Literacy boosts student results

Taree Christian College has embraced the National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy by adopting a strategic shift in pedagogy, to incorporate the Accelerated Literacy approach throughout the primary years.

Teachers have responded with enthusiasm, participating in extensive professional development and continually sharing and discussing highlights and challenges through dedicated fortnightly staff meetings.

Regular assessments have indicated substantial improvements in both literacy and numeracy levels at every year level tested, with increased average scores, reduced proportions of students achieving lower bands, and increased proportions of students achieving higher bands.

A dedicated support teacher has introduced Personal Learning Plans for all Aboriginal students. The individual learning plans of targeted students are monitored by the school leadership and classroom teachers with mentor support from the Association of Independent Schools.

Section 5 – Milestone Reporting

Improving Teacher Quality SSNP

Part 1 - Milestones not reported/not achieved/partially achieved in Annual Report for 2009

Milestone (States and territories may wish to identify whether the milestone relates to all sectors or a particular sector within their jurisdiction).	Detail of achievement against milestone Quantitative and Qualitative	If not achieved or partially achieved, reasons why. Qualitative	Strategies put in place to achieve milestone (including updated timeframe) Quantitative and Qualitative
Not applicable – all NSW milestones for the 2009 annual report were achieved			

Part 2 - Milestones in Progress Report (Achieved 1 January to 30 June 2010)

Milestones	Detail of achievement against milestone Quantitative and Qualitative	If not achieved or partially achieved, reasons why. Qualitative	Strategies put in place to achieve milestone (including updated timeframe) Quantitative and Qualitative
Revised implementation plan with priority actions for 2011	Submitted to DEEWR 29 Oct 2010	Not applicable	Not applicable
State Progress Report 2010	Submitted to DEEWR 29 Oct 2010	Not applicable	Not applicable

Part 3 - Milestones that will progress through the 2010 calendar year (with no set milestone date)

Milestone	Detail of achievement against milestone Quantitative and Qualitative	Strategies put in place to achieve milestone (including updated timeframe) Quantitative and Qualitative
New milestones are provided for 2011 and the following years as part of the revised implementation plan.		

Low SES School Communities SSNP

Part 1 - Milestones not reported/not achieved/partially achieved in Annual Report for 2009

Milestone (States and territories may wish to identify whether the milestone relates to all sectors or a particular sector within their jurisdiction).	Detail of achievement against milestone Quantitative and Qualitative	If not achieved or partially achieved, reasons why. Qualitative	Strategies put in place to achieve milestone (including updated timeframe) Quantitative and Qualitative
Not applicable – all NSW milestones for the 2009 annual report were achieved			

Part 2 - Milestones in Progress Report (Achieved 1 January to 30 June 2010)

Milestones	Detail of achievement against milestone Quantitative and Qualitative	If not achieved or partially achieved, reasons why. Qualitative	Strategies put in place to achieve milestone (including updated timeframe) Quantitative and Qualitative
Revised implementation plan with priority actions for 2011	Submitted to DEEWR 29 Oct 2010	Not applicable	Not applicable
State Progress Report 2010	Submitted to DEEWR 29 Oct 2010	Not applicable	Not applicable

Part 3 - Milestones that will progress through the 2010 calendar year (with no set milestone date)

Milestone	Detail of achievement against milestone Quantitative and Qualitative	Strategies put in place to achieve milestone (including updated timeframe) Quantitative and Qualitative
New milestones are provided for 2011 and the following years as part of the revised implementation plan.		

Literacy and Numeracy SSNP

Part 1 - Milestones not reported/not achieved/partially achieved in Annual Report for 2009

Milestone (States and territories may wish to identify whether the milestone relates to all sectors or a particular sector within their jurisdiction).	Detail of achievement against milestone	If not achieved or partially achieved, reasons why.	Strategies put in place to achieve milestone (including updated timeframe)
	Quantitative and Qualitative	Qualitative	Quantitative and Qualitative
Not applicable – all NSW milestones for the 2009 annual report were achieved			

Part 2 - Milestones in Progress Report (Achieved 1 January to 30 June 2010)

Milestones	Detail of achievement against milestone	If not achieved or partially achieved, reasons why.	Strategies put in place to achieve milestone (including updated timeframe)
	Quantitative and Qualitative	Qualitative	Quantitative and Qualitative
Revised implementation plan with priority actions for 2011	Submitted to DEEWR 29 Oct 2010	Not applicable	Not applicable
State Progress Report 2010	Submitted to DEEWR 29 Oct 2010	Not applicable	Not applicable

Part 3 - Milestones that will progress through the 2010 calendar year (with no set milestone date)

Milestone	Detail of achievement against milestone	Strategies put in place to achieve milestone (including updated timeframe)
	Quantitative and Qualitative	Quantitative and Qualitative
New milestones are provided for the remainder of 2010 and 2011 as part of the revised implementation plan.		

Appendices

Appendix A: Distribution of teacher quality reforms against stages in the teaching lifecycle

	1. ATTRACTING	2. TRAINING	3. RECRUITING	4. DEVELOPING	5. RETAINING
REFORMS	Facilitation Reform 2: New pathways into teaching	Facilitation Reform 1: World leading professional development and support which will empower principals to better manage their schools to achieve improved student results and higher quality to lead performance improvement at the local level	Facilitation Reform 10: Improved mobility of the Australian teaching workforce	Facilitation Reform 5: New professional standards to underpin national reforms	Reward Reform 1: Improved pay dispersion to reward quality teaching
	Facilitation Reform 3: Better Pathways into teaching	Facilitation Reform 7: Joint engagement with higher education providers to improve teacher quality	Facilitation Reform 11: Improved quality and availability of teacher workforce data	Facilitation Reform 6: Nationally-agreed process for accrediting /certifying Accomplished and Leading Teachers	Reward Reform 2: Improved reward structures for teachers and school leaders who work in disadvantaged/rural remote and hard to staff schools
	Facilitation Reform 4: Aboriginal education pathways	Facilitation Reform 8: Establish quality placements for teacher education courses	Reward Reform 4: Increased school based decision making about recruitment, staffing mix and budget	Facilitation Reform 9: Establish Schools as Centres for Excellence	Reward Reform 3: Improved in-school support for teachers and leaders, particularly in disadvantaged, Aboriginal, rural/remote and hard to staff schools
				Facilitation Reform 12: Improved performance management and continuous improvement in schools (linked to professional learning and national standards)	Reward Reform 6: Aboriginal teachers' and school leaders' engagement with community members
				Reward Reform 5: Continual improvement program for all teachers	

Appendix B: Acronyms used in the NSW Progress Report 2010

AECG	Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
AEEYSOC	Australian Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Senior Officials Committee
AIS	Association of Independent Schools of NSW
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
ASR	Annual School Report
BOOST	Building Outreach Opportunities for Students and Teachers Project
DASA	Data Analysis Skills Assessment
DET	NSW Department of Education and Training
ESL	English as a Second Language
FOR	Focus on Reading 3-6 literacy intervention
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
Govt	Government
HAT	Highly Accomplished Teacher or equivalent
ISCE	Independent Schools Centre for Excellence
ISLC	Independent Schools Leadership Centre
LBOTE	Language Background Other Than English
Low SES NP	Low Socio-economic Status School Communities National Partnership
MULTILIT	Making Up for Lost Time in Literacy Program
My PL@DET	NSW government online professional learning record management system
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
NP	National Partnership
NPEC	NSW National Partnerships Evaluation Committee
NSWIT	NSW Institute of Teachers
NSS	National Standards Sub-group
NSW	New South Wales
PLPs	Personalised Learning Plans
SAP	Systems Applications and Products data processing.
SEDs	School Education Directors
SES	Socio-economic Status
SLL	Successful Language Learners Program
SMART	School Measurement and Reporting Toolkit
SSNPs	Smarter Schools National Partnerships
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Project
TOWN	Taking Off with Numeracy Program
VC	Video conference

Appendix C: References

ARTD Consultants, 22 March 2010, Smarter Schools National Partnerships in NSW: Evaluation of Initial Implementation; Final Report; Report to DET