



Australian Government

SMARTER SCHOOLS NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS



SMARTER SCHOOLS NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY
LOW SES SCHOOL COMMUNITIES
LITERACY AND NUMERACY

Australian Capital Territory Annual Report for 2009 (April 2010)



Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn
CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE



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The National Partnership Agreements on Literacy and Numeracy, Low SES School Communities and Improving Teacher Quality are collaborative initiatives supported by funding from the Australian Government, the Australian Capital Territory Government and the Catholic and Independent school sectors.

Section 1 – Smarter Schools Summary

Highlights

The ACT has a strong focus on building teacher capacity to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes and innovative approaches at the classroom level through the Smarter Schools National Partnerships (NP).

In 2009, a Literacy and Numeracy Field Officer was appointed to each of the 12 Literacy and Numeracy and 4 Low SES NP public schools to coach teachers in literacy and numeracy teaching practices and to work with school executive in the development of school initiatives to monitor student performance and improve student outcomes.

Literacy and Numeracy professional development has been identified for teachers in all sectors. The ACT Improving Teacher Quality Implementation Plan has been developed by a cross-sector coordination group, and the University of Canberra has agreed to function as an Academic Partner to work with the four Low SES NP schools, acting as a critical friend, helping with action research and with writing up research findings at the schools.

Several initiatives are in their formative stages. Working Groups have been established to look at improving pre-service teacher placements and improving pathways into teaching. The model and program for the initial School Centre of Teacher Education Excellence is currently under development.

Cross sector collaboration

In September 2009, the ACT established a Cross sectoral group, that acts as an authoritative forum for cooperative and collaborative advice that supports the Department of Education and Training, the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT to address agreed COAG reform priorities. The committee meets four times a year.

The ACT Improving Teacher Quality Implementation Plan was developed by a cross-sector coordination group with representatives from the ACT Department of Education and Training, the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT. The committee has established a number of cross sectoral working groups to progress reforms.

The Department of Education, the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools ACT have identified common areas of professional development. Cross-sector meetings have been held with department staff and independent school principals on the Literacy and Numeracy NP reforms.

The agreed professional development programs identified in the Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Plan that are available from the start of 2010 across the three sectors are:

- *First Steps Reading*
- *First Steps Writing*
- *Count Me In Too*

This professional development is offered centrally in Train the Trainer mode to train facilitators who will then present the PD at school level. This training will ensure consistency across the ACT.

Stakeholder consultation/engagement

During 2009, Field Officers at the NP Schools have introduced themselves to their school communities by attending School Board meetings, Parent and Citizen meetings, beginning of the year parent meetings, teacher meet and greet events and parent teacher interviews. Field Officers are also working on community involvement in their schools and student engagement by attending parent group meetings and also developing parent/student/staff questionnaires. In many instances these activities focus on Indigenous/ESL/Low SES/special needs/poorly performing students.

Field Officers in Low SES schools are also auditing community and outside agency programs delivered in and through their schools to ensure alignment with community needs and NP reform areas.

Indigenous literacy and numeracy support officers are working with schools again this year and analysis of NAPLAN data will be scrutinised with regard to improving Indigenous student performance.

Because schools, communities, and families play interconnected roles in educating children, providing parents with information and resources to support their children's education is essential. Questionnaires have been developed to measure the quality of community/school partnerships and progress toward NP goals. The questionnaires will also assist to develop creative solutions that support partnerships between families, schools and communities and measure participation in and satisfaction with family and community involvement in activities.

School level plans

School plans have been published on each NP school's website. The plans highlight strategies by which the school intends to meet the NP agreed targets. Individual school plans are expected to provide further detail during 2010.

During 2009, all NP schools sought to engage with parents and the community in the development of school plans. A number of schools ran parent information sessions to inform parents about the NP program and how it would affect the school community.

Section 2 – Improving Teacher Quality

Progress statement

The ACT Improving Teacher Quality Implementation Plan was developed by a cross-sector coordination group with representatives from the ACT Department of Education and Training, the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT.

The plan detailed the establishment of the Teacher Education Committee as a key stakeholder group responsible for overseeing the implementation of teacher education initiatives as part of the NP. This committee has been successfully established and has commenced its work in improving partnerships between teacher education providers, employer groups and schools in the ACT.

The committee has established a Professional Experience Subcommittee which will look at improving pre-service teacher placements; and two working groups - School Centres for Teaching Education Excellence Working Group and Pathways into Teaching Working Group. These working groups will be progressing reforms under the NP during 2010.

Milestones and Performance Indicators

The first two milestones detailed in the ACT Implementation Plan have been achieved during this reporting period, the partial completion of the third milestone is detailed below.

Milestone 1: Cross-sector Coordination Committee established

The Cross-sector Coordination Committee was established in early 2009. The Cross-sector Coordination Committee produced the ACT Improving Teacher Quality Implementation Plan.

The Cross-sector Coordination Committee is responsible for conducting the Standards Consultation process for the jurisdiction, which includes providing a combined ACT response. The Committee is involved in the establishment of the ACT Teacher Quality Institute, chairing the steering group on a rotational basis. The group is also responsible for developing and implementing a communication strategy for the Teacher Quality National Partnership across all sectors.

This group continues to meet to oversee the continued development of the reform initiatives from this plan and their collaborative implementation in the three education sectors.

Milestone 2: Teacher Education Committee established

The Teacher Education Committee was established and held two meetings during November 2009. The purpose of the Committee is to provide oversight of the implementation of the teacher education initiatives contained in the National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality for the ACT. The Committee has negotiated a schedule of meetings and held the first of four meetings for 2010 in March. At this meeting the Committee agreed to establish the Pre-service Experience Sub-committee and working groups for Improved Pathways into Teaching and School Centres of Teacher Education Excellence.

The Pre-service Experience Sub-committee has been established to develop strategies to improve pre-service teacher professional experience and provide recommendations to the Teacher Education Committee. The Pathways into Teaching working group will develop proposals for improved pathways into teaching within the jurisdiction. The School Centres of Teacher Education Excellence working group will develop proposals for additional models of operation for School Centres of Teacher Education Excellence.

The Teacher Education Committee will provide oversight of the implementation of teacher education initiatives contained in the Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership. This includes the establishment of School Centres of Teacher Education Excellence and improved professional experience placements.

Milestone 3: Model and program developed for initial School Centre of Teacher Education Excellence

The model and program for the initial School Centre of Teacher Education Excellence is currently under development. A working group has been established and consultation has occurred with local teacher education providers. Proposals being developed have taken into account key stakeholder feedback surrounding the structure and mode of operation of the initial centre.

A final model of operation for the initial School Centre of Teacher Education Excellence will be decided upon and participating schools identified during 2010. Liaison will occur between the schools and university staff, with the pilot project to commence in June 2010.

A symposium to facilitate stakeholder feedback on additional models for operation will be held during May 2010. Proposals on operational models will be put to the Teacher Education Committee for consideration. Additional operation models will be established from 2011.

Implementation or impact issues

The proposals of models for the initial School Centre of Teacher Education Excellence have required adjustments and further consultation due to changes in local university course structures. Timetables now include a winter term, which will impact on pre-service teacher professional experience placement timing. There have been delays getting agreement on the overall purpose of School Centres of Teacher Education Excellence and therefore delays getting agreement on an appropriate model.

Engaging with the wider teacher workforce is also proving to be complex. Feedback from representative groups indicates that not enough time is available for people to engage with the large number of initiatives requiring consultation at both a jurisdictional and national level. Competing consultation periods combined with current reporting requirements and teaching workloads is proving a barrier to involvement.

Activities supporting Indigenous students and/or teachers

A Cross-sector Coordination Committee is ensuring that reform activities are designed to provide support to Indigenous students and teachers in all of the three education sectors in the ACT. Specific reform initiatives applicable to each sector continue to be refined.

The Teacher Education Committee has been established and is responsible for providing oversight of the implementation of teacher education initiatives within the NP. This includes the future development of flexible teacher education pathways for Indigenous Australians. A working group has been called for by this committee to progress the development of pathways into teacher education.

Good practice (optional)

Sub-committees and working groups formed under this partnership have all been established with representation from each of the school sectors, the two universities and the two education unions within the jurisdiction. Engagement across the three sectors is facilitated through the commitment to this membership for each group, ensuring the development and implementation of initiatives under this national partnership is a cross-sectoral responsibility. The collaborative and cooperative approach allows shared access to initiatives across the sectors, which will assist in improving the quality of all teachers.

Section 3 – Low SES School Communities

Progress statement

In July 2009, a Project Coordinator was appointed to coordinate activities against outcomes and work with school improvement partners and school Principals to monitor progress against NP reforms. In October 2009, Field Officers were recruited and placed in each of the four NP schools.

Regular meetings have been held with the Project Coordinator, Field Officers and Principals of the NP schools to progress the agreed reforms, assist with development of school NP plans and to assist integrate the Field Officers into the school community.

All NP schools have appointed Literacy and Numeracy Coordinators and have been informed of their literacy and numeracy targets. Professional Learning programs have been developed and delivered for Field Officers and Literacy and Numeracy Coordinators. *First Steps* and *Count Me In Too* programs have begun to be delivered in the NP schools.

The University of Canberra has agreed to function as an Academic Partner to work with the four NP schools. They will be acting as a critical friend, helping with action research and with writing up research findings at the schools. Discussions were also held with Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) around their offer to run programs for schools aimed at expanding educational horizons for students and the whole school community.

Milestones and measures

School based operational plans have been published on each school's website. The plans highlight strategies by which the school intends to meet the NP agreed targets. Individual school plans are expected to provide further detail during 2010 by which the school intends to meet the specific targets.

Implementation or impact issues

There have been some delays in recruiting and appointing Field Officers in the NP schools. While all four positions have been filled, the delay in filling the positions has caused some lag in programs beginning in the schools.

Activities supporting Indigenous students

Only one ACT NP school has a significant Indigenous population and they are engaging their community through their reconciliation activities, launch of their "Values Garden" and Indigenous partnership and the use of Indigenous elders and community members in significant events at the school. Community members are used to promote connections with school and learning for Indigenous students.

Field Officers in Low SES schools are also auditing community and outside agency programs delivered in and through their schools to ensure alignment with community needs and NP reform areas.

Good practice (optional)

The University of Canberra has been appointed as an Academic Partner to work with field officers on an audit of school practices and a needs analysis to enable them to address improvements in reform areas. In the first week of 2010, each staff member at the NP schools was interviewed to give them an opportunity to declare what they personally need in order to be able meet the shared target of raising student literacy levels.

From this process, areas that could impact on student outcomes such as staff expectations and perceptions of teacher performance were identified, and will be a focus in future staff meetings and professional learning. This work will be written up as part of the research and reporting component of this NP.

Performance Indicators (not required for 2010 Annual Report)

N/a

Section 4 – Literacy and Numeracy

Progress statement

A professional development program has been developed for *First Steps* in Reading and Writing. The program is planned to start February 2010, and include facilitators and/or Field Officers in all sectors.

Public Schools

In July 2009, a Project Coordinator and a data analyst were appointed to coordinate activities against outcomes and work with school improvement partners and school Principals to monitor progress. A second data analyst started in October 2009.

Regular meetings have been held with the Project Coordinator, Field Officers and Principals of the NP schools to progress the agreed reforms, assist with development of school NP plans, and to assist integrate the Field Officers into the school community.

Recruitment of the 12 Field Officers took place in term 4 with all but two positions filled on a permanent basis.

All NP schools have appointed Literacy and Numeracy Coordinators and have been informed of their literacy and numeracy targets. Professional Learning programs have been developed and delivered for Field Officers and Literacy and Numeracy Coordinators. *First Steps* and *Count Me In Too* programs have begun to be delivered in the NP schools.

Independent School Sector

Discussions with the Association of Independent Schools Board on the proposed funding model were held, and applications opened for independent schools to apply which were then assessed.

Ongoing in-depth and detailed work with schools on the preparation, drafting and appropriateness of their plans took place and schools developed their own action plans and embedded these into planning for 2010. Schools met with the ACT Department of Education and the Association of Independent Schools to discuss their plans and they were published on their respective websites. Staff allocations and budgets in each independent school were amended to align with the plan.

In a number of cases, independent schools began professional development they had identified in the plans, and worked with the Department of Education and the Catholic Education Office to identify common areas of professional development.

Catholic Systemic Schools

All NP schools have appointed Literacy and Numeracy Contact Officers who are responsible for implementation of the NP reforms. Regular meetings with Principals of identified schools were held to communicate reforms contained in the Agreement, assist with development of school operational plans and communicate expectations around the role of school-based facilitators. Professional Learning was completed by Literacy and Numeracy Officers.

National Partnership schools have been participating in training for implementation of the NSW Department of Education and Training Team Leadership for School Improvement course. Relevant staff have also completed a SMART data analysis workshop to review the school's reading and numeracy performance and conduct a supported self evaluation process (NSW resource). Schools completed a comprehensive school report based on NAPLAN data analysis and self evaluation process with completed Literacy and Numeracy Plans as part of Annual School Management Planning process. Relevant school staff have complete training in *First Steps Reading* Program and first phase of Numeracy Intervention Program

Milestones and measures (targets from 2011)

There are no Literacy/Numeracy milestones in 2009.

School plans have been published on each school's website. The plans highlight strategies by which the school intends to meet the NP agreed targets. Individual school plans are expected to provide further detail during 2010 by which the school intends to meet the specific targets.

All schools across the three sectors have been provided with spreadsheet templates to collect data at the school level. All schools are using *First Steps* Map of Development and *Sena* testing from *Count Me In Too* to track individual student progress.

Schools are also developing other data collection methods such as Individual Learning Plans for students identified as needing additional support, special needs team tracking identified students and pre and post testing of students to collect baseline data and measure progress. Some schools are trialling on-line diagnostic testing. Field Officers and schools are sharing expertise and models for data collection and student tracking tools as they are developed.

Implementation or impact issues

There have been some delays in recruiting and appointing Field Officers in the public sector NP schools. Two of the twelve positions have not been filled on a permanent basis. These positions have been filled on a temporary basis, for semester 1 2010, while further recruitment efforts continue.

The recruitment of a second data analyst was delayed until October 2009, rather than the planned July 2009, because of difficulties recruiting a specialist to the position.

Activities supporting Indigenous students

School Plans reflect the priorities for Indigenous students' improvement in literacy and numeracy.

Schools wrote their operational plans at the start of 2010. They have identified their Indigenous students, and Individual Learning Plans have been developed for those students identified as requiring additional support. More specific information on Indigenous student improvement priorities will be available in the progress report.

Good practice (optional)

A model was developed for the professional learning and up skilling of field officers that started in 2009 and will continue into 2010. The field officers meet regularly with officers from Literacy & Numeracy Section for delivery of PD in coaching, literacy & numeracy program implementation in schools and sharing of practices. These sessions also provide opportunities for reinforcement of system PD and programs *First Steps* and *Count Me In Too*.

Having all field officers involved in professional learning programs encourages consistency of practice and agreed actions in all NP schools. While each school's practice will be tailored to its needs, by working towards mutually agreed solutions we are compiling resources that can be applied across the whole system to improve student outcomes and teacher practices.

Section 5 – Other evidence

Part A: Evaluation, scoping, research and case studies

N/a

Part B1: Australian Capital Territory - Milestone Reporting - Annual Report 2010

| Milestone | Detail of achievement |
|--|---|
| Teacher Quality | |
| Cross-sector coordination committee established for development of ACT Implementation Plan and objectives | The Cross-sector Coordination Committee was established in early 2009. This committee led the development of the ACT Improving Teacher Quality Implementation Plan. This group continues to meet to oversee the development and collaborative implementation of reform initiatives in the three education sectors. |
| Teacher Education Committee and its sub-committees established | The Teacher Education Committee was established and held two meetings during November 2009. The Committee has negotiated a schedule of meetings for 2010. The Committee has established the Pre-service Experience Sub-committee and working groups for Improved Pathways into Teaching and School Centres of Teacher Education Excellence. |
| Model and program developed for initial School Centre of Teacher Education Excellence in an Early Childhood school | A working group to develop the model and program for the initial School Centre of Teacher Education Excellence has been established. Consultation has occurred with local teacher education providers and departmental early years learning representatives on possible modes of operation for the centre within an Early Childhood School. A timeline has been established for the development of proposals for models of operation of the initial centre. |
| Low SES | |
| Low SES School Communities National Partnership school plans have been developed in consultation with the school community | All schools have developed plans that are on their school website. |
| Literacy and Numeracy | |
| There are no Lit/Num milestone activity milestones in 2009 | For future development of these reports the data is still to come. Payments made in 2011/12 are informed by the 2011 reports covering 2010 activity. |

