

# Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Schools in the Australian Capital Territory

## NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT ON EMPOWERING LOCAL SCHOOLS

### PRELIMINARIES

1. This Implementation Plan is created subject to the provisions of the **National Partnership Agreement on *Empowering Local Schools*** (the Agreement) and should be read in conjunction with that Agreement.
2. The objective of the *Empowering Local Schools* initiative is to empower participating schools to make decisions at a local level, supporting them to better respond to the needs of students and the local school community and provide services designed to assist their students to achieve their best educational outcomes. The *Empowering Local Schools* initiative complements reforms being delivered through the Smarter Schools National Partnerships and aligns with and builds on the broader schools reform agenda.
3. The Agreement will contribute to delivering greater local decision-making in at least eight government schools in Australian Capital Territory participating in Phase One of the *Empowering Local Schools* initiative.
4. An independent evaluation of Phase One will collect evidence regarding the achievement of greater local decision-making in participating schools across the country. The Evaluation will consider the unique circumstances in each state and territory and provide an opportunity to learn and share what works effectively in different settings.

### TERMS OF THIS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

5. This Implementation Plan supports and complements the Agreement. Information provided within this plan will be critical to supporting the evaluation of activity under Phase One of the *Empowering Local Schools* initiative.
6. This Implementation Plan will commence as soon as it is signed by the Commonwealth of Australia (the Commonwealth), represented by the Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, and the Australian Capital Territory, represented by the Minister for Education and Training.
7. This Implementation Plan will cease on 30 June 2014 or on completion of the project, including the processing of final payments against the performance milestones, the acceptance of final performance reporting and completion of the project evaluation, unless terminated earlier or extended as agreed in writing by the Parties.
8. This Implementation Plan may be varied by written agreement between relevant Ministers.

9. Either Party may terminate this Agreement by providing 30 days notice in writing. Where this Implementation Plan is terminated, the Commonwealth's liability to make payments to the State is limited to payments associated with Implementation Milestones achieved by the State by the date of effect of termination of this Implementation Plan.
10. The Parties to this Implementation Plan do not intend any of the provisions to be legally enforceable. However, that does not lessen the Parties' commitment to this Implementation Plan.

## CURRENT LEVELS OF LOCAL DECISION-MAKING IN THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

11. School-based management for facilities has been in place since 1998. Government schools in the ACT have financial responsibility for general administrative expenses of the school including day-to-day running costs and educational expenditure. They do not have responsibility for the actual dollar cost of staffing. The current staffing model allocates resources through a mixture of staffing points, days and dollars. Principals have the autonomy to develop a staffing profile within this staffing point allocation.

Recruitment of classroom teachers is conducted centrally and teachers are allocated to schools by a central committee with input from the principals. Classroom teacher transfers are also managed centrally. Similarly many staffing functions for school leaders and administrative staff are managed through central processes.

School boards are already in place at all schools and their role is to establish strategic direction and priorities for the school. Other than the school principal, members of the school board are elected from the parents and general school community, the school staff and, in secondary schools, the students. School boards monitor and review school performance; develop, maintain and review the school's curriculum; develop and review school policies; establish budgetary policies for the school and approve the school budget; and ensure the efficient and effective use of school assets and the management of financial risk. Day-to-day management of school operational matters, including staff selection and management, is the responsibility of the principal.

K-10 schools currently use the Australian Curriculum as a Framework within which there is flexibility for local input.

12. The Education and Training Directorate is currently working with eight partner schools as part of the ACT Government's Empowering ACT public schools initiative and the Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership reward reform of "increased school-based decision-making". In 2011, these eight partner schools were allocated a single-line dollar budget for staffing and report monthly on the school's overall financial position. For 2012, the number of partner schools has been increased to fifteen.

In addition, the partner schools have been given greater autonomy in the recruitment of classroom teachers. Each school advertised independently both for *ad hoc* vacancies during 2011 and for some expected vacancies at the beginning of 2012. Selection was conducted independently at the school level.

13. The Australian Capital Territory is currently moving towards a School Autonomy Framework, developed and published in 2009, in all schools with modified centralised administrative arrangements to support school-based decision making. The Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership and now the National Partnership Agreement on Empowering Local Schools will both inform and support this initiative.

Initiatives implemented under the Empowering Local Schools National Partnership Agreement will complement and align with initiatives arising under the Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership, as the Directorate moves towards school autonomy in all schools from the commencement of the 2013 school year. The Empowering Local Schools National Partnership will allow for the development of system programs to support the implementation of school

autonomy and will bring forward the number of schools participating in the development and roll out of the framework and procedures.

## FOCUS OF ACTIONS TO INCREASE LOCAL DECISION-MAKING

14. The focus of actions to increase local decision-making will be to improve student learning. This can be achieved by strengthening schools' capacity to allocate and redistribute resources on the basis of priority and need.

*School autonomy in finances* involves providing principals with greater flexibility in the management of the school's annual resource allocation to maximise student learning experiences and outcomes. Schools will be provided with a dollar budget for all staffing allocations. Principals will then have greater flexibility to direct resources to where these will be most effective in improving student learning outcomes.

*School autonomy in staffing* will involve principals and schools being given greater decision-making in selecting, developing and managing staff to create and develop high-performing teaching and support teams. Staff selection, both recruitment and transfer, will move from a centrally managed process to a school-based process, however capacity for a limited number of system placement of staff, in consultation with the principal, will be retained.

15. Greater autonomy is accompanied by greater accountability and an obligation to build capacity across the system. All operations under school autonomy will be conducted in accordance with legislative and industrial arrangements. Autonomous staff selection procedures will be developed in consultation with the Australian Education Union.
16. Current governance/school board arrangements will be strengthened to ensure greater consistency in the operation of the school board and a better understanding of the scope of the board's operations. The current school board member induction process and school board guidelines will be reviewed to incorporate the changes in local decision-making in financial and staff management.

## CHANGES TO ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

17. Funding from the ELS National Partnership combined with ACT resources will fund anticipated changes to centralised administrative arrangements that will be required to support increased local decision-making, including:
- Development of IT-based, management-system support for schools
    - ◆ Development of an on-line system to provide real-time access to staff profiles for school administration
    - ◆ Desk-top portal for schools to access financial and human resources data
  - Development of a school staffing manual containing staff selection and management guidelines and templates
  - Introduction into the teachers' collective agreement of progression through the salary scales being based on performance, informed by annual professional discussions tied to the national teaching standards; a common increment date for classroom teachers and changes to staff selection and recruitment processes

#### National Partnership agreement on Empowering Local Schools

- Implementation of recommendations from the review undertaken as part of the Teacher Quality National Partnership into efficiencies in localised infrastructure management, planning and maintenance
  - Up-front dollar allocation for costs associated with the employment of casual staff to cover staff on unplanned leave to provide greater flexibility in the use of this resource
18. A central support team will be established to develop documentation, develop learning and development modules and to provide advice and training to principals, school business managers and school boards.

## PARTICIPATION OF SCHOOLS

19. An Information Session was held for all schools interested in participating in the ACT Government's School Autonomy initiative, Empowering ACT public schools, and the Empowering Local Schools National Partnership in November 2011. Schools were invited to apply for selection to participate through an expression of interest. Submissions closed at the end of November 2011 and the successful schools were notified of their inclusion for 2012 before the end of the 2011 school year. A total of fifteen schools were selected across the two initiatives.
20. Expressions of interest addressed the following criteria:
- 1) Leadership capacity within the school to assume greater responsibility for its own affairs.
  - 2) Commitment to system reform and willingness to take on a leadership role in developing school autonomy.
  - 3) School readiness for autonomy in staffing and finances, including demonstrated sound staff and financial management.
  - 4) Demonstrated capacity to manage resources effectively to improve student outcomes.
21. The Directorate selected schools to participate taking into account the school's capacity to take on greater responsibility for managing their own affairs, the agreement of the School Board for the school to participate, the level of capacity to use the greater autonomy for the benefit of their students and the broader community and the school's agreement to participate in the independent evaluation of the initiative.
22. For the schools identified to participate as Empowering Local Schools National Partnership schools, the Directorate will seek to include schools across all sectors and sizes and across a range of student populations. The involvement of at least one cluster school arrangement will be a priority in the selection of schools for 2012. These schools will be identified following signing of the National Partnership agreement.
23. Each school will be allocated \$50,000 from Commonwealth funding, including an allocation \$3,500 for professional learning of the principal and the school community.
24. The partner schools participating in the development of school autonomy in 2012, including those to be identified under the Empowering Local Schools initiative commenced operating within the school autonomy framework from the commencement of the 2012 school year.
25. Eight ACT public schools will participate in Phase 1 of the Empowering Local Schools National Partnership during 2012. These eight schools will be identified from the fifteen schools selected at the end of 2011. The eight Empowering Local Schools National partnership schools will continue to work in partnership with the fifteen schools currently operating under the ACT Government

initiative. Since the commencement of the 2012 school year, all twenty three schools have been involved in trialling and providing feedback on financial and staffing processes.

26. Schools not participating in the 2012 stage of the implementation of school autonomy for ACT government schools will be kept informed of progress through regular newsletters and reports from participating schools to School Network meetings. Similar communication arrangements will be implemented for School Board forums and Parent and Citizens meetings. In addition, consideration will be given to all schools trialling aspects of local decision-making in the selection of school staff during 2012. Also all schools will commence receiving more detailed salary and financial information in preparation for further devolution in 2013.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

27. In consultation with schools and their communities through partner school meetings, school networks and school board forums, training programs will be developed to build capacity in the school community. The areas of focus will be financial management in the light of greater autonomy for principals, deputy principals and business managers and staff selection and management training for school leaders and classroom teachers. In addition training will be provided where required for school board chairpersons and members.
28. New learning and development modules will be developed for inclusion in leadership development programs for aspiring and current principals as well as for the new principal Induction program. The current learning and development program for school business managers will be reviewed and updated to ensure the continuing implementation of school autonomy to all schools is fully supported.

## PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

29. The ACT will be undertaking activities that are applicable to the following performance indicators:
  - 1) the number of schools participating in this initiative;
  - 2) the degree to which centralised administrative arrangements support schools to manage increased local decision-making responsibilities;
  - 3) the degree to which schools are responsible for their finances and school budgets;
  - 4) the extent and effectiveness of school-based decision-making, particularly in relation to governance, funding and infrastructure, and workforce, including staffing profiles;
  - 5) the availability and appropriateness of training and professional development provided to principals and school communities;
  - 6) the number and range of opportunities for engagement of parents and carers and the school community; and
  - 7) the extent to which schools are better able to respond to the needs of students and school communities, including the needs of students experiencing disadvantage.

## PERFORMANCE MILESTONES

The following performance milestones apply to the implementation of the Empowering Local Schools Initiative in participating schools in the ACT:

Performance Indicator	Performance Milestone	Date
1. Number of schools participating in initiative	Eight National Partnership schools identified	March 2012
2. Degree to which centralised administrative arrangements support schools to manage increased local decision-making responsibilities	Central support team established	February 2012
	School Management Manual developed	Commenced March 2012
	On-line management system support for schools scoped	April 2012
	Upgrade primary school Business Manager positions	May 2012
	On-line management system support for schools trialed	October 2012
	Principal desk-top portal developed and installed	February 2013
3. Degree to which schools are responsible for their finances and school budgets	Regular program of partner school meetings established	February 2012
	All partner schools operating on a dollar staffing budget	March 2012
4. Extent and effectiveness of school-based decision-making, particularly in relation to governance, funding and infrastructure, and workforce, including staffing profiles	Partner schools trialling school based staff selection processes	June 2012
	All partner schools filling a proportion of their staffing vacancies through a school-based process	September 2012
7. Extent to which schools are better able to respond to- needs of students and school communities, including- needs of students experiencing disadvantage		
5. Availability and appropriateness of training and professional development provided to principals and school communities	Principals and business managers trained in the management of their staffing budget	Commenced March 2012
	Learning and development modules for current and aspiring principals developed and implemented	Commenced March 2012
	Learning and development modules provided for school business managers	Commenced May 2012
	Revised school board member induction program developed	May 2012
	Empowering Local Schools included as regular item on the agenda for School Board forums	June 2012
	School communities represented in the selection of the school principal	March 2012

Performance Indicator	Performance Milestone	Date
community	School communities represented in the selection of the school principal	March 2012

Parties have confirmed their commitment to this agreement as follows:

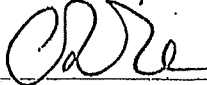
  
Signed for and on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia by

**The Honourable Peter Garrett AM MP**  
Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth

[Day] [Month] [Year]

23. 4. 12

Signed for and on behalf of  
the Australian Capital Territory by



**Dr Chris Bourke MLA**  
Minister for Education and Training

[Day] [Month] [Year]

