

Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Schools in New South Wales

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 up to 229 government schools in New South Wales 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 State of New South Wales, represented by the Minister for Education.
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 NSW

11. Currently, decisions are made across three contexts: schools, regions and the state office. Regions and state offices provide resources and support, such as information and advice, maintaining an appropriate policy framework, coordinating programs, ensuring compliance with policy and legislation, facilitating communication and sharing best practice.
12. Many decisions currently being made centrally could be made in schools, as principals, teachers and school communities are best placed to understand and know how to respond to their particular needs and circumstances. Current levels of local decision-making in the areas of governance, workforce, funding and infrastructure are described below.

Governance

13. The school principal plays a central leadership and management role in school governance, including educational leadership, whole school self-evaluation, planning and reporting processes and resource and risk management.
14. The three-year School Plan is the framework for identifying priorities for teaching and learning, the strategic allocation of resources, and school performance monitoring and reporting within the local school context. The planning process is an opportunity for principals to collaborate with their staff, students and communities to identify priorities and subsequently determine outcomes and improvement targets. However, involvement of the community and consultation around planning and decision-making varies greatly between schools according to the local context.
15. The majority of schools have Parents and Citizens (P&C) Associations, through which parents are involved in varying degrees in activities such as school staffing selection panels, fund-raising, cultural activities. The principal is an ex-officio member of a P&C body, and meetings are an opportunity for the principal to work with parents, carers and community members to ensure they are well informed about relevant school and wider system matters.
16. School councils operate in some schools as advisory bodies consisting of parents, carers, staff, students (where appropriate) and community members. The P&C is responsible for the election of a parent representative to the council.
17. Aboriginal communities are represented through Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups, although the degree of involvement varies significantly across schools.
18. Parents have variable input to a section of the Annual School Report, usually through the P&C, and all parents and the community have access to the Annual School Report through the school's website and published copies. Some school information is also provided to parents, carers and communities through the *My School* website.

Workforce

19. Under current staffing procedures, many teachers are placed in schools through a centralised staffing process. For the remaining placements, schools can choose from options that include

advertising or selecting from lists of employment applicants, graduates or service transfer applicants.

20. Changes to the staffing system in the last few years have provided schools with some increased flexibility in filling positions, for instance in the filling of vacant classroom teacher, principal and executive positions, except where a transfer placement is made.
21. The current mix of roles in schools is determined largely by a 'one size fits all' formula based on student numbers, which leaves some schools with little flexibility to respond to their unique circumstances and student needs.
22. Should a short-term budget surplus arise in a school (for example, during a secondment), the school may seek additional staff, and schools receiving funding through equity-focused programs such as the Low SES School Communities National Partnership can purchase extra staff for specific purposes.
23. Decisions regarding temporary and casual teacher staffing are controlled at the school level.

Funding & Infrastructure

24. The majority of funding to and spending on schools is controlled centrally under current arrangements, including salaries for school-based staff (teachers, administration and support staff), capital works, maintenance and cleaning.
25. While there are benefits to the current system such as economies of scale, centralised procurement systems can slow down access to goods and services and restrict schools working with local communities.
26. Schools currently have limited control over minor capital works, with most management of major and minor capital works occurring at regional level. Where a state-wide contract has been arranged for the supply of goods or services, that contract must be used by schools (when using government funds, both tied and untied).

National Partnerships

27. Under the Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership reward reform "increased local decision-making about staffing, recruitment and budget", 47 NSW government schools piloted a range of reforms to increase flexibility in local management.

The pilot was based on increasing flexibility and authority at the local level to drive cultural change and more effective use of resources to improve outcomes for students. Participating schools were supported to take on expanded roles in managing budgets and staffing.

Evaluation feedback indicates that the principals of these schools were innovative and creative in better meeting the needs of their schools, were largely positive about the benefits of school-based management and had evidence of positive outcomes.

The 47 pilot schools are in a strong position to transition successfully into the *Empowering Local Schools* initiative, and will be invited to be included in the National Partnership.

28. Through the Low Socio-economic Status School Communities National Partnership, schools have been implementing flexible school organisational practices at the local level, including employing additional temporary staff to support innovative and flexible approaches to teaching and learning.

FOCUS OF ACTIONS TO INCREASE LOCAL DECISION-MAKING

29. The New South Wales Government has committed through the *Local Schools, Local Decisions* initiative to give increased school-based decision-making to principals, teachers and school communities. The initiative is an acknowledgement that local schools should make local decisions because they are best placed to know about the particular needs of a particular school and community.
30. The *Local Schools, Local Decisions* initiative will provide schools with increased local decision-making in managing funding and resource allocation, greater control over staffing decisions to respond to students' needs and greater capacity to make local decisions about maintenance and purchasing.
31. NSW will progressively introduce increased school-based decision-making so that most decisions are made by principals and staff in schools, in consultation with their communities, as they are best placed to know the decisions needed to improve student learning. *Local Schools, Local Decisions* will be the framework for increased school-based decision-making that will be initiated through *Empowering Local Schools* for up to 229 NSW government schools.

Governance

32. Schools will be able to use a single School Plan as the key mechanism for managing their resources in a way that best contributes to improved student outcomes. The School Plan, as outlined in Paragraph 14, will also be the basis of school accountability and, as much as possible, all school reporting will be against this plan in the form of an Annual School Report provided in March each year. This will reduce the administrative burden on schools and allow them to focus on the strategic management of their resources to further improve student learning outcomes. NSW government schools participating in the *Empowering Local Schools* initiative will be the first to use the School Plan in this way.
33. NSW government schools participating in the *Empowering Local Schools* initiative will:
 - (a) lead the development of a newly integrated planning and reporting system as part of the School Plan process that puts the school at the centre and replaces currently separate planning and reporting processes;
 - (b) undertake comprehensive community consultation as part of the planning process that assures the inclusion of views of parents, carers and local communities. Schools will use consultation mechanisms that are most suited to its local context such as a Parents & Citizens Association, an Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and/or a School Council;
 - (c) trial newly-developed tools and templates and engage in targeted professional learning in strategic planning, management and reporting where required; and
 - (d) contribute to consultation around the negotiation of new role statements for principals and school education directors, and other roles as appropriate, to ensure all staff have a clear understanding of devolved authority as it applies to their workplace.

Workforce

34. Schools are best placed to determine and select the right mix of staff for their local needs. Within this overarching priority, some state-wide mechanisms remain of value in meeting the need to have quality teaching in every school. This is particularly the case for positions for which it can be challenging to attract and retain qualified staff, for example, in rural and remote locations. Reforms to increase local flexibility within a state-wide staffing system will therefore be progressively implemented and evaluated.

35. NSW government schools participating in the *Empowering Local Schools* initiative will have increased flexibility over their staffing by:
- (a) being able to vary the mix of permanent and temporary staff in the school as vacancies arise, to better meet the needs of their students;
 - (b) being able to choose the number and roles of staff within their budgets to best meet local needs;
 - (c) having greater access to local selection of staff once incentive transfers and Aboriginal employment applicants have been placed, by being able to choose between merit selection, graduate selection, or top of the pool employment for at least every second appointment; and
 - (d) being able to share teaching and non-teaching staff with other schools or groups of schools.
36. NSW government schools participating in the *Empowering Local Schools* initiative will also:
- (a) implement improved performance management, planning and development processes for staff that align with professional standards and with the School Plan; and
 - (b) contribute to developing and trialling materials for planning, development and management of staff, including targeted professional learning; and
 - (c) use streamlined processes to enable schools leaders to swiftly identify and respond to under-performance, in line with agreed industrial agreements.

Funding and Infrastructure

37. Control of an increased percentage of the total education budget, increasing from 10% to approximately 70%, in the form of a streamlined and simplified budget, which will include teaching and learning resources, school-based teaching and non-teaching staff and planned maintenance. This will give schools the flexibility to customise and organise their resources around their School Plan.
38. Schools will be funded using a new Resource Allocation Model which considers school complexity as well as student numbers. The school budget will be in two streams, one for staffing and the other for non-staffing items.
39. NSW government schools participating in the *Empowering Local Schools* initiative will:
- (a) have a streamlined budget that will enable them to manage their resources in a more holistic way without requiring extensive reporting against individual program budgets;
 - (b) be able to make planned maintenance decisions employing local contractors;
 - (c) make local procurement decisions up to a value of \$5,000;
 - (d) be able to make more use of local tradespeople and businesses;
 - (e) be able to use streamlined processes for easier sharing of facilities and other resources between schools or across groups of schools.
40. Schools will contribute to developing and trialling materials to assist:
- (a) in the general management and control of finances, including targeted professional learning to build capabilities in these areas where required; and

- (b) in the management of planned maintenance and to make more local procurement decisions, including targeted professional learning in probity and governance.

CHANGES TO ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

- 41. The full suite of administrative systems and arrangements that will support increased local decision-making for NSW government schools is extensive, including a complete rebuilding of the human resources and financial management systems for public schools. These changes are beyond the scope of the Empowering Local Schools National Partnership, but will play an important enabling role in the future management of more devolved decision-making in schools.
- 42. NSW is currently designing and implementing a Learning Management and Business Reform (LMBR) solution to improve the quality, relevance and usability of information and tools to support schools in making more local decisions and to reduce and automate many information management and reporting tasks currently required of schools, for example, information on student enrolment and assessment.
- 43. The roll-out of the new systems in LMBR will be implemented to support the move to greater local decision-making wherever possible. Schools will be supported using adjustments to existing systems where LMBR is not yet able to provide the full functionality required for devolved decision-making.
- 44. Immediate steps to support increased local decision-making will include:
 - (a) the development of a program of key professional learning as referred to in paragraph 52 for all principals of participating schools; and
 - (b) ongoing support through a principal coaching and mentoring network. This network will enable principals experienced in local decision-making and school-based management (such as those who have participated in the 47-school pilot) to act as coaches and mentors for less-experienced participating principals.

PARTICIPATION OF SCHOOLS

- 45. At least 229 NSW government schools will be selected to participate in the initiative. A school selection process has been developed to identify appropriate schools for inclusion, using selection criteria that assess a school's readiness and capacity to take on greater decision-making responsibilities. The application process involves Regional Directors and departmental administrative units, and is inclusive of parents, carers and the school community.
- 46. The selection criteria require schools to provide evidence of:
 - the individual learning needs of all students being addressed;
 - a culture of high expectations of both students and staff;
 - the leadership team working together for whole school improvement;
 - planning processes that are inclusive and collaborative;
 - sound financial management practices and systems in place;
 - staff and community engagement and support to participate in this initiative and the capacity to use their participation for the benefit of students, parents and carers and the broader community over time; and
 - school agreement to participate in the independent evaluation of the initiative.
- 47. As far as possible, the range of schools selected will match the Agreement's preferred breadth of participating school profiles including: school type, size, student population and geographical location; and a proportion of regional schools that reflects the NSW regional school proportion.

48. The participation of schools with a high proportion of Indigenous students and schools located within the three NSW sites identified for Place-Based Initiatives (Bankstown, Wyong and Shellharbour) will be encouraged where appropriate.
49. Once participating schools have been identified, the available school start-up grants will be determined and allocated according to the terms of the Agreement.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

50. Coordinated training and professional learning opportunities for principals and school communities will support them in the identified areas of governance, workforce, and funding and infrastructure.
51. The development of these programs and resources will be informed by the Partnership schools themselves and by the training and development needs of principals and communities identified through the 47-school pilot evaluation and State-level *Local Schools, Local Decisions* consultation.
52. The professional learning opportunities for principals are likely to include the following:
 - (a) basic financial management (including interpreting data and HR information);
 - (b) strategic planning and decision-making (including community engagement), with a focus on the School Plan as the key planning/decision-making process;
 - (c) organisational and educational leadership (including change management);
 - (d) governance and probity.
53. Principals will also be able to buy the professional learning support they need from internal or external sources.
54. A principal coaching and mentoring network will be developed to enable principals experienced in local decision-making and school-based management (such as those who have participated in the 47-school pilot) to act as coaches and mentors to less-experienced participating principals. Each mentor principal would form a cluster with a group of other participating principals to assist them in implementing school-based management.
55. The emphasis of the professional learning program is to provide access to expert advice and support with minimum disruption to schools through a mix of face-to-face and online learning.
56. The needs of parents, carers and the broader school community will be addressed by principals and staff according to the local context of each school. For example, these groups have a role in developing the School Plan and contributing to elements of the School Annual Report, as well as understanding and accessing how students learn in specific curriculum areas.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

57. Achievement of the objective and outcome of this Agreement will be informed with reference to the following performance indicators:
 - (a) the number of schools participating in this initiative;
 - (b) the degree to which centralised administrative arrangements support schools to manage increased local decision-making responsibilities;

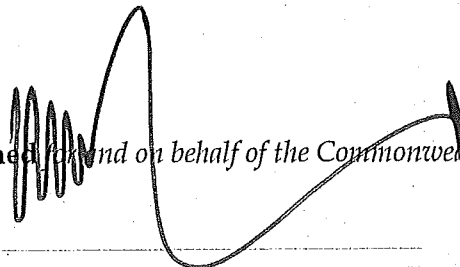
- (c) the degree to which schools are responsible for their finances and school budgets;
- (d) the extent and effectiveness of school-based decision-making, particularly in relation to governance, funding and infrastructure, and workforce, including staffing profiles;
- (e) the availability and appropriateness of training and professional development provided to principals and school communities;
- (f) 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

Performance Indicator	Performance Milestone	Date
The number of schools participating in this initiative	New South Wales will invite at least 229 schools to participate in this initiative	May 2012
The degree to which centralised administrative arrangements support schools to manage increased local decision-making responsibilities	<p>Centralised administrative arrangements will be established to support schools to manage increased local decision-making responsibilities, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a newly-developed resource allocation model that funds schools on complexity factors as well as student numbers will be developed and progressively introduced; - schools on the Partnership will progressively have access to a rebuilt human resources and financial management systems for public schools; - those schools awaiting access to the new systems will be supported using adjustments to existing systems. 	<p>December 2012</p> <p>June 2013</p> <p>February 2013</p>
The degree to which schools are responsible for their finances and school budgets	Schools participating in the Empowering Local Schools National Partnership will be progressively responsible for up to 70% of the total education budget for their school (presently at 10%)	December 2013
The extent and effectiveness of school-based decision-making, particularly in relation to governance, funding and infrastructure, and workforce, including staffing profiles	<p>All schools will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop a School Plan and report against this plan in the Annual School Report; - use one or more community consultation mechanisms to consult with parents, carers and the community such as a Parents and Citizens Association, an Aboriginal Education Consultative Group or a School Council, according to their local context; - once incentive transfers and Aboriginal employment applicants have been placed, have greater access to local selection of staff by being able to choose between merit selection, graduate selection, or top of the pool employment for at least every second appointment; 	<p>October 2013</p> <p>June 2013</p> <p>October 2012</p>

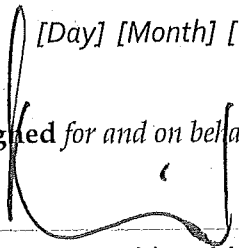
Performance Indicator	Performance Milestone	Date
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use improved performance management, planning and development processes for staff which will be developed to better align with professional standards for teachers and principals; - be able to make planned maintenance decisions employing local contractors; and - make local procurement decisions up to a value of \$5,000. 	<p>October 2012</p> <p>July, 2012</p> <p>April 2013</p>
<p>The availability and appropriateness of training and professional development provided to principals and school communities</p>	<p>All principals will have access to training and professional development in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - basic financial management (including interpreting data and HR information) - strategic planning and decision-making (including community engagement), with a focus on the School Plan as the key planning/decision-making process - organisational and educational leadership (including change management) - governance and probity - A principal coaching and mentoring network <p>Parents, carers and the broader school community will be supported to contribute to the development of the School Plan and the School Annual Report as well as being enabled to support their children's learning.</p>	<p>December 2012</p> <p>December 2012</p> <p>June 2013</p> <p>December 2012</p> <p>July 2012</p> <p>December 2013</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>Schools' response to the needs of their students and communities will be identifiable in the content of the School Plan which will be consistent with the strategic directions in the Office of Public Schools Plan, and in the School Annual Report. Areas of relevant activity and decision-making affecting the needs of student and communities will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - leadership and management - curriculum and assessment - engagement and attainment - literacy and numeracy - Aboriginal education - organisational effectiveness. 	<p>2012 – 2014</p>

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 State of New South Wales by

The Honourable Adrian Piccoli MP
Minister for Education

[Day] [Month] [Year]

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