CASE STUDIES – LOW SES SCHOOL COMMUNITIES NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

WESTERN NSW – REGIONAL MODEL

A whole of region approach to supporting school leaders

Reforms

All six Reforms of the Low SES School Communities National Partnership are addressed in this regional model.

Reform 1  Incentives to attract high-performing teachers and principals
Reform 2  Adoption of best practice performance management and staffing arrangements that articulate a clear role for principals
Reform 3  School operational arrangements that encourage innovation and flexibility
Reform 4  Providing innovative and tailored learning opportunities
Reform 5  Strengthen school accountability
Reform 6  External partnerships with parents, other schools, businesses and communities and the provision of access to extended services (including through brokering arrangements)

Key words

building capacity, support, leadership, professional learning

The context

Western NSW region covers 385,000 square kilometres, supporting 195 schools and approximately 43,000 students. The region services some of the most remote communities in the state and some of the poorest communities as measured by a variety of SES indicators. The region has a current Aboriginal student enrolment of 19 per cent, a figure which will increase according to current demographic projections.

Western NSW region is characterised by a large number of early career teachers and inexperienced executive and high staff turnover.

Ninety-nine schools in the region were identified to receive funding through the Low SES School Communities National Partnership. All schools commenced on the Partnership in Semester 2, 2009.

Description of the area being highlighted

Western NSW region has transformed the ways in which schools are supported. With the agreement of principals, a new structure has been developed that supports schools at the local School Education Group level. This agreement, or accord, as it is better known focuses on:

- building leadership capacity in all schools by supporting school executive to develop highly skilled teachers across the region
- providing direct support for principals
- facilitating effective implementation of the Reforms within the Low SES School Communities National Partnership
- improving student learning outcomes across the region.
Following a regional think tank, the regional director established a principals’ reference group and presented the group with a possible model based on benefits of a new model of cooperation, effective schools research and cost modelling.

### Professional support and learning at the school level

The regional model has supported:

- coaching and mentoring at the regional executive level, led by a School Education Director
- professional learning on data analysis for school teams, including data for accountability and data from classrooms, for executive and stage/faculty groups
- principals and school teams with effective school planning
- integration of technology into quality teaching, led by the connected classroom coordinators
- collaboration between the Regional Aboriginal Education team, the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) and school communities to develop a suite of professional learning modules for schools.

### Evidence-base

In 2009, the region conducted a regional risk assessment, based on what the region knew about the Partnership, as well as an analysis of:

- the levels of experience of teaching staff and school executives
- the region’s capacity to support schools
- historic patterns of management of funds in schools, including previous funding and support models used across the region
- effects of the availability of temporary and casual staff on expenditure of targeted funds.

### Indicators of success

Success will be measured against the achievement of The Office of Schools targets for Western NSW 2010 and 2011 as outlined in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>At and below minimum standard</th>
<th>At and above minimum standard</th>
<th>Proficiency standard</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year 3 Reading</strong></td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>21.8</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Year 5 Reading</strong></td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>30.8</td>
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<td><strong>Year 7 Reading</strong></td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>31.8</td>
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<td><strong>Year 9 Reading</strong></td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>32.2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Year 3 Numeracy</strong></td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>26.9</td>
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<td><strong>Year 5 Numeracy</strong></td>
<td>30.8</td>
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Evaluation and monitoring

Ongoing evaluation and monitoring of the regional model will involve high levels of transparency and accountability through:

- advice being referred to the regional director via the principals’ reference group
- regular progress reports form the regional executive and Partnership mentors
- case studies
- situational analyses and revised School Plans
- student outcome and growth data as reported through NAPLAN
- regional student retention and attendance data.

Progress

The regional executive reports the following progress in mid June 2010:

- schools have been able to meet all deadlines associated with National Partnerships, indicating that the management of the process has been successful
- funded positions across each of 7 School Education Groups have been filled until the end of 2010, including:
  - a Partnership mentor (per School Education Group)
  - a Connected learning coordinator (per School Education Group)
- an Aboriginal pedagogy officer (Deputy Principal level) has been appointed to lead professional learning across the region
- strengthened processes around school improvement led by Partnership Mentors and School Development Officers have resulted in:
  - improved quality of School Plans, in particular target setting
  - improved practices around data analysis and the use of data in developing effective School Plans, evident in all participating schools
- ongoing support for the regional model from principals and principal groups.

Success factors

Key to the success of the regional model has been:

- the implementation of the accord, with the agreement of more than 190 principals, including principals of schools not receiving Low SES School Communities National Partnership resources
- strong leadership from the regional director, principal autonomy and high levels of trust
- the strengthening of existing programs such as ‘I teach’ and ‘8 ways of knowing’
- a high level of support using trusted colleagues and the implementation of a targeted training program for Partnership Mentors.

Support

Regional support to schools and communities of schools is provided through:

- a regional officer to coordinate regional implementation
- a coordinated process underpinning the joint planning for schools led by the regional Country Areas Program consultant, Priority Schools Programs team and the Regional Equity Coordinator
• a Literacy and Numeracy team with expertise in *Reading 2 Learn, Maths Matters and Taking Off With Numeracy*
• external consultants and mentors, e.g., Lithgow High School utilised a team from Charles Sturt University to validate the school’s data.

**Interagency collaboration**

Due to the size of the region and the differing footprints of partner agencies most interagency collaboration is occurring at individual and communities of schools levels.

For example, the region encompasses:

• five AECG regions - schools and School Education Groups are supported by the Regional Aboriginal Education Team and the Director, Community Partnerships and Early Years to make connections with local and regional AECGs and other partner agencies.
• four different ‘regions’ for the implementation of the Commonwealth funded School, Business, Community Partnership Broker Program.

**Challenges**

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<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
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<td>Developing an accord with all principals across the region.</td>
<td>Establishing principals’ reference group and strong leadership were important in achieving this.</td>
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<td>Incomplete information available at the time of implementation.</td>
<td>Working closely with state office staff for support with the implementation.</td>
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<td>Short time frames for completion of their situational analysis.</td>
<td>Regional funds were used to second staff from schools to support the process over a five week period.</td>
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<td>Implementing a big project without underlying regional support.</td>
<td>A regional officer was released to coordinate the implementation.</td>
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<td>Level of principal turnover in the region necessitated a high level of support.</td>
<td>Establishment of positions in School Education Groups provided strong support for the principals.</td>
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<td>Difficult to provide regional office support due to distance between schools and remote locations.</td>
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**Additional resourcing**

Regional funds were used to support schools with the situational analysis.

Strategies are jointly funded across programs. For example, 63 schools receive Priority Schools Programs funding and 13 schools receive Schools in Partnership funding.

**Next steps**

Early in Term 3, principals will provide feedback on the effectiveness of strategies and negotiations will commence as to the future of each of the 7 School Education Group positions.
A phased program to support schools to revisit the situational analysis and revise the School Plan will be implemented. This will be led in each School Education Group by a management team comprising the School Education Director, School Development Officer, Partnership mentor, and a regional consultant. Data will be gathered to inform ways to strengthen strategies around Reforms 5 and 6.

**Relevant research**


