

***SMARTER SCHOOLS NATIONAL
PARTNERSHIPS IN NSW: EVALUATION OF
INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION***

Final Report

Report to DET

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ARTD Consultancy Team

Wendy Hodge, Marita Merlene, Kerry Hart and Ofir Thaler

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Executive Summary

This is a report of the evaluation of the first stage of implementation of the Smarter Schools National Partnership reforms in NSW 2009—Low SES, Literacy and Numeracy and Teacher Quality—by the NSW government, Catholic and independent school sectors.

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach; an online survey of all participating school principals (311 or 62% returned across the four reforms); interviews with a random sample of 39 principals; interviews with seven support staff; and focus groups with 22 support staff.

Key findings

All sectors and reforms used a similar implementation process—a mix of direct State/ regional/ local support for schools, provision of training and information resources and/or planning tools—which has been appropriate and met the support needs of most schools.

This timeframe for planning and implementing reforms has been determined by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace for reward payments based on 2010 and 2011 targets. These timeframes provided a restricted opportunity for schools to plan. The short timeframe and the perception that requirements were evolving over time created significant challenges in the short-term for both schools and support staff.¹ The planning process is very resource intensive, needing executive staff to dedicate substantial hours to complete the plans. Schools need sufficient lead time to plan and consult with school and community stakeholders and to set achievable targets. Schools also need clear and consistent information.

Planning and implementation should be much easier after this year, as schools will have a longer lead-in time and the process should be more streamlined. There will also be established requirements and expectations, and program facilitators/ support staff who have completed the first year of the Partnerships will be experienced in supporting schools to implement the Partnership reforms. Where possible, it would be useful for new schools to meet with those who are currently implementing the program.

Progress in implementing the reforms

Most schools completed their planning in 2009 and have begun implementing the reforms, although a sizeable minority (40%) of Teacher Quality schools who responded to the survey are still in the planning phase. Schools are planning to employ new staff (teachers and para-professionals), are reassigning staff to leadership and mentoring positions, attending leadership training and organising professional learning for teachers. Schools are also improving their ability to monitor student performance, and introducing new literacy and numeracy programs to meet the needs of their students.

Enabling factors for implementing the reforms

The approach of bringing schools together to train, share ideas and plan has been very much appreciated by schools across all sectors and reform areas. The two websites, www.nationalpartnerships.nsw.edu.au and www.lowsesschools.nsw.edu.au, are effective portals for disseminating information on the reforms and their implementation. The planning tools have also been very useful resources for schools, although the resource planning tool needs some

¹ This timeframe was determined by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace for reward payments based on 2010 and 2011 targets. The start date was impacted on by the timing of the joint ministerial announcement

refinement to be useful for smaller schools, and the Finance Tracking Tool more explanation/ training.

Program facilitators/ support staff respondents reported the following successful strategies in working with schools:

- the involvement of program facilitators/ support staff in planning and implementation
- providing the SMART package and NAPLAN data to assist school planning, to see where improvement is needed and where it can be achieved
- providing training in using student data and completing needs analysis (self-evaluation or situational analysis) and support for completing the task
- providing leadership training
- having curriculum consultants supporting classroom leaders while the regional coordinator works with the leadership team (Literacy and Numeracy).

Challenges to implementing the reforms

At the State office level, the CEC and AIS support staff respondents expressed frustration about being given late notice about changes in requirements or new resources, and having limited opportunities to influence the approach to implementation. Nevertheless, at the current level of commitment, all sectors have adapted the implementation process for their own systems and schools. The government school sector, as the lead sector, should take account of the difference in the way schools operate within sectors to ensure that information and tools can be shared between sectors in a timely way and that support can be provided appropriately.

An important issue is ensuring that regions or Dioceses have sufficient resources and information to consistently coordinate support, especially with the expansion of the reforms. This is particularly an issue for Low SES schools where all sectors are using existing infrastructure to support schools.

Areas where schools may need more specific support in planning are:

- involving parents and the wider community in planning, especially where existing relationships are weak and consultative mechanisms are not functioning. Some DET school principals we interviewed said they found it difficult to consult with parents because they did not have functioning Parents and Citizens groups
- identifying activities to address specific reform areas. The Low SES analysis of plans showed some reform focus areas that schools are less likely to be addressing at this stage
- setting achievable targets and defining school goals. Literacy and Numeracy support staff have found it useful to help schools define goals, keep the focus tight and plan small steps to see progress
- analysing student data (Catholic and independent schools). Schools in these sectors may not have used student data routinely before being part of the National Partnership.

Early successes

The evaluation report documents the following positive findings already reflected in the relatively short timeline for implementation to date. Principals participating in interviews

- commonly mentioned that they expected improved student outcomes as measured by NAPLAN scores. Some principals expect improvement in students across all ability levels rather than just those in low NAPLAN bands

- recognised that changing the whole school teaching culture will promote long-term sustainable change
- observed that teachers' understanding about pedagogical issues for whole-school literacy and numeracy have improved
- see the benefit of the program beyond the life of the program and are developing the school in a way that will allow activities to be sustained.

1 Introduction to the evaluation

This is a report of the findings of the effectiveness of the first implementation of National Partnership reforms in 2009 and early 2010 by the Department of Education and Training, the Catholic Education Commission (CEC) and the Association of Independent Schools (AIS).

Although each sector and reform area used different mechanisms and developed specific information resources to support the implementation of the reforms in schools, all used the same elements. These are: providing advice for each school's implementation team; developing information resources about the reform; assisting schools with the self-evaluation process, planning and providing professional development.

The report shows that these approaches have largely met schools' support needs, although some information resources and support tools need revising to be more useful, and the time allocated for planning was seen as unreasonable by most schools. Having dedicated support staff at a regional level is one enabling factor, as is providing relief and professional development for school managers and classroom teachers.

1.1 The National Partnership Agreements

In November 2008, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) approved National Partnership Agreements aimed at raising education standards in all schools. In NSW, the three sectors of NSW Government, Catholic and independent schools are implementing three of the National Partnership Agreements:

1. National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality
2. National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy
3. National Partnership on Low Socio-economic Status School Communities.

Each of these areas is understood as being a crucial factor in students' educational performance. Each of the plans also includes specific strategies for supporting Aboriginal students, in line with the aim to halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade.

The three National Partnerships, while working towards a common overarching goal, each have aims and strategies specific to their particular focus area. Under the National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality, NSW will deliver system-wide reforms targeting critical points in teachers' careers, from pre-service through to leadership, designed to attract, develop, retain and reward a high calibre workforce. It also aims to improve the quality and availability of teacher workforce data.

The National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy is being implemented in primary schools, targeting students who are falling behind in these areas. Its main strategies are high quality, evidence-based teaching of literacy and numeracy, strong leadership, and effective use of student performance information.

The National Partnership on Low Socio-economic Status School Communities aims to provide the best quality teaching in schools where it is most needed. It will also undertake initiatives with business and the community and extend the services offered by schools. Participation in this Partnership is for four years, commencing in late 2009.

Table 1.1: No. schools participating in three National Partnership reforms

	Improving Teacher Quality		Literacy and Numeracy	Low SES School Communities
	Centres for Excellence	School Pilots		
Total number	50	47	147	638
January 2010	13*	47*	147	331

*NSW Government schools only.

The Teacher Quality initiative includes:

- Centres for Excellence
- School Pilots.

Within each of the National Partnerships, there are a number of interventions, some of which are mandatory.

The mandatory components for Literacy and Numeracy, and for the Low SES Partnerships are

- support and incentive programs to attract and retain high quality staff
- professional development for school executives and teachers to help them use and analyse student data (for example, NAPLAN) to cater for student needs.

The Literacy and Numeracy initiative also includes

- individual student interventions, for example Multilit; Mindful Learning, QuickSmart numeracy
- whole-school reading interventions, for example Focus on Reading; Reading to Learn, Accelerated Literacy; Mindful Learning; First Steps
- whole-school numeracy interventions: Taking off with Numeracy (TOWN)
- school leadership programs.

The Low SES initiative also includes

- innovative and flexible school practices and technologies
- school accountability strategies
- parent and community engagement strategies
- innovative and tailored learning opportunities.

Support for Aboriginal students, teachers, school leaders and school-community partnership activity is embedded across all Partnerships. The evidence-based strategies in each Partnership have been chosen because they have already proved successful in practice at improving the educational outcomes for Aboriginal students.

1.2 The evaluation

1.2.1 Terms of reference

The purpose of the implementation evaluation is to

- provide formative information to inform the later uptake across all schools
- provide baseline data showing where schools are at in terms of planning and implementation

- provide early warning of potential challenges or lack of clarity regarding activities
- identify gaps in knowledge of, or access to available resources
- identify enablers for implementation
- supplement the collection of information for the first progress report to the Commonwealth on National Partnership implementation.

The scope of the evaluation project covers implementation across the three school sectors and participating schools - all of the 147 Literacy and Numeracy schools, 278² Low SES schools, 13 Centres for Excellence schools and 47 School Pilots and 41 independent schools who have participated in Leadership Programs. All schools were given an opportunity to give feedback via a survey.

The evaluation is not canvassing the effectiveness of the reforms or interventions.

1.2.2 Key evaluation questions

The key evaluation questions are:

1. Was the implementation of the National Partnership (NP) effective? If yes, in what ways? If no, in what ways was it ineffective?
2. How could implementation be more effective in future?
3. What are schools planning to do?
4. How advanced is the implementation in schools?
5. Have schools received adequate support?
6. What lessons have been learnt by schools that can help future implementation? How could schools be better supported?
7. How satisfied are schools with the implementation of the National Partnership?
8. How can the initiatives be sustained beyond the life of the National Partnership?
9. What early benefits is the NP providing the school community?

1.3 Methods

The evaluation used a mixed method design, and collected data using qualitative and quantitative methods.

In total, 311 principals completed surveys and 39 were interviewed; 22 support staff participated in focus groups and nine were interviewed (see table 1.2).

The Equity Programs and Distance Education Directorate has reviewed Low SES schools' plans against the reform areas and provided the results of this analysis for the evaluators.

The Literacy and Numeracy plan data was also provided but was determined not to be useful for the purpose. Similar information was not available from the Teacher Quality Partnership schools.

² Information details about 278 of 331 Low SES schools provided.

Table 1.2: Overview of methods

Study group	Sample size	Data collection method	Comments
School principals of government and independent* schools implementing Low SES reform	153	Online survey	163 of 273 ³ schools or 60% responded
	14	Semi-structured interviews	Random stratified sample. 1 government school refused interview
All Catholic school principals implementing Low SES reform	6	Semi-structured interviews	5 of 6 schools interviewed
All principals of schools implementing Literacy and Numeracy reform	116	Online survey	116 of 147 schools or 79% responded
	15	Semi-structured interviews	Random stratified sample
All principals of government schools implementing the Teacher Quality reform (School Pilots)	21	Online survey	21 of 47 schools or 43% responded
	4	Semi-structured interviews	
Principals of independent schools implementing the Teacher Quality reform, attended leadership training	2	Semi-structured interviews	Purposive sample. 2 schools not contactable
All principals of government schools implementing the Teacher Quality reform (Centres for Excellence)	11	Online survey	11 of 13 schools or 73% responded
	4	Semi-structured interviews	Random stratified sample
DET regional support staff - Low SES reform	1 group with 5 participants	Focus group via video-conference	Central office team not interviewed
	1	Semi-structured interview	Person unable to attend focus group
DET regional support staff - Literacy and Numeracy reform	1 group with 5 participants	Focus group via video-conference	Central Office team not interviewed
	1	Written response to interview questions	Person unable to attend focus group
CEC Diocese support staff (across NP reform being implemented locally)	1 group (12 support staff)	Focus group	Group held at State conference, included all attendees
DET regional support staff - Teacher Quality	5	Semi-structured interviews	All relevant staff
Independent schools - Teacher Quality Support	1	Semi-structured interviews	All relevant staff
Independent schools - Literacy and Numeracy and Low SES Support	1	Semi-structured interviews	All relevant staff

Notes:

* One independent school.

³ Note: 295 schools involved; 281 school email addresses provided, and eight emails bounced and were not included in the denominator.

1.3.1 Online surveys of school principals

Surveys were distributed to 488 schools participating in four reform areas (see table 1.3). A customised survey was designed for each reform area, with common questions and specific questions about information materials and support activities relevant to the reform area. The content of surveys reflected the different approaches across the reform areas in government schools.

Participating schools from the Catholic and independent sectors were not surveyed for two reform areas because the survey content around support materials and support activities was not directly relevant:

- Low SES reform—the six Catholic schools were not sent a survey. Five of the six school principals were interviewed
- Teacher Quality Schools reform (Teacher Leadership Program)—independent schools were not sent a survey. A sample of four school principals was approached to be interviewed, and two completed interviews.

Response rates

Overall, 311 school principals returned surveys, which is an overall response rate of 62% (table 1.3).

Table 1.3: School principal response rates by reform

Group	Submitted	Total	Response rates*
Low SES	163	273**	60%
Literacy and Numeracy	116	147	79%
Teacher Quality – Pilot Schools	21	47	45%
Teacher Quality - Centres for Excellence	11	13	73%
Total	311	486	62%

Notes:

* Response rate = submitted divided by (total distributed minus the 8 school email addresses which bounced). Note - 295 schools were involved in 2009, and 281 email addresses were provided.

1.3.2 Semi-structured interviews with school principals

A total of 39 school principals were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide, with one refusal and one person not available. All interviews were conducted over the telephone. Six of the 39 schools were involved with more than one Partnership. See tables 1.4 to 1.6 for details of completed interviews by National Partnership reform, sector and location.

The principals were selected using a stratified random sampling approach. This ensured we spoke to principals from across all sectors and locations and regions and across all reforms. The sampling frames are shown in Appendix 1.

Because the Catholic schools implementing the Low SES reforms were not surveyed, we attempted to interview all six schools (five interviews were completed).

We interviewed three schools who also implemented the SIP (Schools in Partnership program for schools with a high proportion of Aboriginal students).

Table 1.4: Teacher Quality completed interviews with school principals

Sector	<i>Sydney metro</i>	<i>Regional city</i>	<i>Rural town</i>	<i>Total</i>
Government	3	1	4	8
Independent schools	1	1		2
TOTAL	4	2	5	10

Table 1.5: Literacy and Numeracy completed interviews with school principals

Sector	<i>Sydney metro</i>	<i>Regional city</i>	<i>Rural town</i>	<i>Total</i>
Government	5	3	3	11
Catholic	1	1	1	3
Independent schools			1	1
TOTAL	6	4	5	15

Table 1.6: Low SES completed interviews with school principals

Sector	<i>Sydney metro</i>	<i>Regional city</i>	<i>Rural town</i>	<i>Total</i>
Government	3	3	3	9
Catholic	2		3	5
TOTAL	5	6	3	14

1.3.3 Focus groups and interviews with program facilitators/ school support staff

A total of 20 program facilitators/ support staff from DET regions and Dioceses provided feedback via focus groups and interviews for the Low SES and Literacy and Numeracy Partnership reforms. For Teacher Quality, we interviewed six State office support staff.

Focus groups with regional DET program facilitators/ support staff were conducted via video-conference using Department facilities.

Table 1.7: Profile of support staff participating in the focus groups

Reform	Participant profile
Low SES	2 School Education Directors; 2 regional management staff; 1 School Development Officer
Literacy and Numeracy	7 program facilitators

2 Implementation of Low SES reforms

This chapter shows that the Low SES reforms have been implemented successfully to date, with most schools having completed their planning in 2009 and being satisfied with the support and information materials provided.

The approaches used to support schools have been appropriate, but the level of support at the regional level for government schools has differed between regions, and some tools and resources need refining.

2.1 Implementation status

2.1.1 All government schools completed planning at the end of 2009

Each school has a school plan for implementing the reforms, which outlines specific student and school needs and the activities to address these.

All government schools did their formal planning for the Low SES reforms in Term 3 and Term 4 2009 (100% completed and submitted plans in Term 4 2009), and have begun implementation in Term 1 2010.

All government schools have also received their Semester 1 funding to implement their planned activities.

2.1.2 What schools are planning to do

The Equity Programs and Distance Education Directorate has reviewed schools' plans against the reform areas. The data are summarised in tables 2.5 to 2.10, section 2.4.

All schools have activities planned under each of the six reform areas, with some incentive strategies being more popular with schools than others.

Reform areas and incentives where most schools have plans in place to address are:

- Reform 1—using incentives to attract high performance teachers. 65% of schools are intending to provide executive with release time; 59% to employ additional executive for support teaching and 50% to lead professional learning; 44% to participate in leadership programs
- Reform 2—adopting best practice performance management and staffing arrangements; performance management incentives. School plans indicate that schools are using expert teachers to mentor, run professional learning, develop resources and model best practice in teaching and learning
- Reform 3—operational arrangements that encourage innovation and flexibility. 84% of schools intend to use new technologies to allow access to and sharing of resources, and 40% to introduce flexible organisational practices
- Reform 4—provide innovative and tailored learning opportunities. 100% of schools intend to use and analyse student data; 92% to use targeted approaches and 58% to develop transition plans
- Reform 5—strengthen school accountability (100%). The DET notes that all government schools are involved in system-wide accountabilities
- Reform 6—schools building external partnerships with parents, other schools, businesses and communities and the provision of access to extended services (including through brokerage arrangements). 77% of

schools are planning to expand services, in particular transition to school programs.

Reform areas and incentives where relatively few schools have explicit strategies in place to address at this stage are:

- Reform 1—using incentives to attract high performing teachers. 9% of schools have plans to be involved in cross-sectoral networks
- Reform 3—operational arrangements that encourage innovation and flexibility. No schools had plans to introduce an alternative timetabled curriculum for refugee students but this may be because they have existing structures in place. Just 7% plan to appoint para-professionals, although this figure is difficult to interpret because the term has a specific definition and the review may not have recognised professionals with similar roles, and some schools are likely to have existing arrangements. Amongst the nine government schools we spoke to, five of the nine had plans or already had arranged to employ professionals such as occupational therapists, speech pathologists and music therapists. Just 11% of schools are planning to establish partnerships with universities
- Reform 4—provide innovative and tailored learning opportunities. Just 5% of schools are planning to use whole-school professional learning in ESL pedagogy, and 12% to use new learning models such as online modules and project-based learning
- Reform 6—schools building external partnerships with parents, other schools, businesses and communities and the provision of access to extended services (including through brokerage arrangements). The data shows that few school plans appear to articulate strategies for expanding school programs, in particular homework centres, provision of before or after school care and brokering services. But these data are difficult to interpret and may not reflect what schools have in place as many schools have existing arrangements, which are not acknowledged in the plans.

2.1.3 Schools have begun implementing their strategies in Term 1 2010

Interviews with school principals show schools have begun implementing the reforms, commonly using the expected funding to increase staffing levels and reassign staff, provide professional development and buy new resources (see table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Examples of implementation activities in Literacy and Numeracy NP and Low SES NP

Source: Interviews with 14 school principals across all sectors, selected as Low SES schools

Reform area	Activity	Examples of what individual schools are implementing
Reform area 1 - Incentives to attract high-performing principals and teachers	Provided professional development for teachers	Leadership training Employed a deputy principal, shared with another school as Accelerated Literacy consultant, to provide one to one professional development Observations of classroom teaching and feedback
	Established peer mentors/ training	Trained two senior staff in coaching methodology and given teachers one hour per week to meet coaches
Reform area 2 - Adoption of best proactive performance management and staffing arrangements that articulate a clear role for principals	Employed more staff to take on responsibilities for managing reform activities	School administrative office to set up finance program Employed assistant principal (0.4 FTE) to coordinate professional development around accelerated reading (Low Literacy and Numeracy strategy)
Reform area 3 - School operational arrangements which encourage innovation and flexibility	Employed more teachers or reassigned staff to implement activities	Employed more teachers to reduce class sizes Accelerated Literacy consultant shared with 3 schools New teacher educator (1 day a week) Re-assigned class teachers to be teacher educators Employed numeracy consultant for 2 days a week to support professional learning
	Employed specialist/ professionals to conduct specific activities	Occupational therapist Speech pathologist paid to do assessments, assist students with disabilities Music therapist one day a week to work with selected students Aboriginal elder to implement boys strategy Employed teachers aides for QuickSmart program
	Assigned staff responsibility for coordinating specific programs	Half day a week teacher to coordinate girls education strategy Deputy principal coordinating the NP reforms for 3 days per week
Reform area 4 - Providing innovative and tailored learning opportunities	Purchased new equipment/ resources to increase teacher effectiveness	SMART Boards to assist Accelerated Literacy lessons Direction Instruction numeracy resource
	Audit of literacy and numeracy resources	Checking resources to see what can be used at home
Reform area 5 - Strengthen accountability	Changed organisational processes	Developed Distributed Leadership approach which is tied into professional learning New process for team meetings to monitor

Reform area	Activity	Examples of what individual schools are implementing
arrangements		progress Developed an IT-based tracking system to monitor individual students' learning progress
Reform area 6 - External partnerships with parents, other schools, businesses and communities and the provision of access to extended services	Established arrangements to partner with university health professionals	Partnership with Speech Pathology Department to regularly assess kindergarten students and contribute to Multilit program
	Started new activities for parents	Retired principal will run workshops for parents New playgroup Intend to employ a parent coordinator

2.1.4 School principals are leading the delivery of Low SES reforms

In the majority of government schools (62% of survey respondents), principals have the main carriage of the reforms, as required. Only a small proportion of schools (14%) placed that responsibility with an implementation team rather than the principal.

80% of principals who responded to the survey report no change in staff responsibilities for managing the implementation process in 2010.

Table 2.2: Government schools - main responsibility for implementing the Low SES reforms

Main responsibility	N	%
School principal	95	62%
School executive	17	11%
Implementation team	22	14%
Deputy principal	6	4%
Head Teacher	0	0
Teacher Educator	0	0
Other, please specify	14	9%
Total	154	

2.1.5 Schools are working together on planning and implementing Low SES reforms

As part of the implementation process, all sectors have actively provided forums for schools to work together.

Most schools are working together on planning and/or implementing the Low SES reforms—75% who responded to the survey said they had the opportunity to align their activities with other schools. All government Low SES schools were required to participate in joint planning.

Schools have taken joint planning opportunities to share information, expertise and resources. Schools want to talk with colleagues that have implemented similar

projects to hear their journeys, build on their successes and replicate their strategies.

Examples of ways that schools are working together include

- sharing a regional Accelerated Literacy tutor; the tutor is released a couple of hours a week to work with the other Low SES funded schools
- sharing a deputy principal with another school
- coaching the Leadership Team at another school
- informal arrangement with a Literacy and Numeracy NP-funded school in the area to use their expertise to help with training teachers in the TOWN program
- sharing the Deputy principal Accelerated Literacy consultant half-time with another school
- attending the Team Leadership course with three other schools
- working with another school to deliver the 'Making it count' program
- local principals of schools with Low SES funding employing a local regional coordinator – each school put in around 3-5% of funding
- next term a school is trying to involve the two local small schools who don't have NP funding, in their technology training
- AIS leadership course
- three Catholic school principals meet regularly with other schools at meetings hosted by the Catholic Schools Office, 'when we have meetings with the Catholic Schools Office all the other NP Catholic schools in the Diocese are involved – we share information, informal support and conversation'. One Catholic school does not meet with other schools as they are many kilometres from the nearest Catholic school.

The independent schools meet with other schools involved in Literacy and Numeracy reforms at a leadership course.

2.1.6 Schools and regional staff have identified some challenges to implementing the reforms

School principals we interviewed foresee some potential obstacles to implementing their plans and achieving expected outcomes, as do regional support staff.

Principals who responded to the survey were equally divided at this time about whether the timeframe for implementing the reforms is reasonable (49% respondents agreed the timeframe is reasonable).

DET regional officers were concerned that regions might not have sufficient resources to coordinate support.

One issue for the implementation process is the perception amongst school principals that it might be difficult for schools to alter their plans if strategies are not working or new opportunities emerge. Low SES NP schools have received communication about their options for further refinements for Term 2 and Semester 2 2010 and are able to submit revised plans again for 2011.

Conversely, some schools are concerned about being able to measure the success of their activities, especially in the context of turnover of staff and students, which could mean measures of progress might be diluted by the results of new students.

Some principals also expressed concerns about meeting high expectations that may not be achievable in the short-term or in isolation without other community change programs. Regional support staff were unclear about how much feedback schools

will get about the success of the reforms overall and some also expressed the view that schools may have set 'unachievable targets'.

Catholic sector stakeholders commented that the approach to implementing the reforms is being led by DET. The Catholic and independent sectors have different approaches to disseminating information and making decisions, which are devolved to the school level. Even so, the experience in 2009 has demonstrated that it is possible for the different sectors to adapt approaches to their own sector.

At the school level, other challenges identified by school principals or support staff include

- for Catholic schools, the ability of Diocese and/or the Catholic Education Office to provide sufficient support in the context of implementing other national reforms, 'the Education Revolution' and the 'Digital Education Revolution'
- program fatigue for schools, meaning less effort being made to implement the Low SES reform
- pressure from the media about League Tables, super teachers
- staff resistance to change. In the Catholic school sector, support staff indicated that some schools were initially resistant to doing self-evaluations but have come to understand the rationale and benefits of doing the exercise
- tension between skilling-up staff and keeping them in class
- being able to employ and attract skilled staff, and to fully support professional development needs
- the strong influence of students' home lives on their ability to learn
- for one Catholic school, uncertainty about the availability of chosen programs and the timing of training about programs, for example, Reading Recovery
- knowing what programs will work for the target students.

2.2 How schools selected and planned reform activities

2.2.1 Low SES schools selected reform activities based on situational analysis and consultation

Most schools we surveyed (87%) selected school strategies/ activities based on the situational analysis process and consulted staff (87%) and the community (70%) as part of this process (tables 2.3 and 2.4).

Schools analysed student NAPLAN data as part of the situational analysis exercise. Government schools were given extensive support through data workshops to further develop the capacity of principals and executive to analyse NAPLAN data. Catholic schools were also given intensive support to do so as they were unfamiliar with using these data at the school level.

The situational analysis helped schools identify where they needed outside support, and the learning needs of their students. One school principal we interviewed said they found the consultation data very useful. Principals, as evidenced by the surveys, took account of the program options that would suit their school, for example one school said that spelling skills were lower than average and as a result they chose to do the 'First Steps in Reading and Writing' program.

The school executive staff used the evidence gathered from the situational analysis and the views of the school community to decide what strategies to select. But their views also had some influence on the decisions taken. Some principals stated that they were already aware of specific needs, and these influenced the way strategies

were selected. For example, one Catholic school said that many of their students have a poor command of English and their comprehension and inference is a problem.

For Catholic schools, their decisions were also guided by the Catholic Education Office.

Table 2.3: Who the respondent schools consulted with when selecting Low SES strategies

What informed the selection of the strategy	N	%
Highlighted as an area for potential improvement in the school self-evaluation/ situational analysis	137	87%
School staff/ executive supported the selected program more strongly	59	38%
Regional initiatives	56	36%
Community support for the strategy/ program	35	22%
School was already doing/ had already done the program	21	13%
Principal's area of interest	9	6%
Program cost	6	4%
Other, please specify	6	4%
TOTAL	157	

2.2.2 Schools consulted widely within the school community

Executive staff commonly consulted with teachers using a range of processes—at staff meetings and portfolio meetings.

Where schools consulted with parents, this was through parent representative groups, by holding special parent forums, interviewing or surveying parents and through newsletters. Two of the government schools we interviewed also formally consulted students using surveys.

Schools who did not consult with parents explained that the short timeframe limited opportunities to do so, or said they did not have a functioning parents' representative group which made reaching parents difficult.

Around one-third of schools consulted local Aboriginal community groups, as required.

Table 2.4: Who schools consulted with in deciding on Low SES strategies

Who was consulted	N	%
Selected as part of school self-evaluation processes using the school performance analysis	135	89%
Staff consultation	131	87%
Parent/ community consultation	106	70%
Consultation with local or regional AECG, or local Aboriginal community members or organisations	51	34%
School executive selected	42	28%
Principal chose	26	17%
Regional support staff	7	5%
None - regional office chose	4	3%
Other, please specify	2	1%
TOTAL	151	

Note: 12 not applicable. Multiple responses allowed.

2.3 Effectiveness of education sector advice, support and information resources for Low SES schools

2.3.1 How sectors are supporting Low SES schools to implement the reforms

The sectors are supporting schools by providing a mix of information, professional development, advice from regional or area-based sector staff and/or access to specific planning tools or specific information materials. The one independent school is being supported directly by Association of Independent Schools officers.

The information materials for government schools are listed in section 2.7.

For government schools, the Equity Programs and Distance Education Directorate (EPDE) is leading the implementation process. They provide direct support to regions and have developed all information and resource materials, including budget planning tools. Information packages have been provided to the Catholic and the independent sectors by the EPDE.

A Low SES reform website (www.lowsesschools@det.nsw.edu.au) has been created by the Equity Programs and Distance Education Directorate as a communication portal and a repository for information resources, tools, guidelines and professional literature. This site was established in September 2009 and has received 15,349 visits to date. The EPDE are also holding forums once a term to assist schools in implementing the reforms.

At the regional level, support is provided by School Education Directors and regional contact officers under the guidance of Regional Directors. Regional officers provide briefing sessions supported by State staff, facilitate regional planning activities supported by State staff, assist individual schools in their planning processes and provide professional development (for example, leadership course, induction sessions and training to use student data.) They regularly meet and liaise with EPDE staff and frequently direct inquiries from principals to State office staff.

The DET regional support staff also work with other staff in their offices, such as Equity and Curriculum Support staff. For the most part, the role of support staff in

supporting the Low SES reforms is recognised as part of a wider National Partnership strategy for the regions. One regional support person observed that Low SES schools are a lower priority in their area.

For the Catholic sector, support is provided by Diocese education consultants across all the reform areas and Catholic Education Commission officers. The support is being provided using existing infrastructure and Diocese staff. Diocese consultants meet with individual schools, organise teacher educators, facilitate community and university partnerships and deliver training. Each school will have access to a school teacher educator. Diocese staff are assisting schools to develop their own leadership teams to take over implementation. This reflects the ethos of the Catholic sector, where activities in schools are largely driven by the schools.

The CEC support staff are also working with community groups such as refugee and migrant centres, local councils, local Aboriginal groups, businesses (Apple and Cisco) and universities.

The AIS has offered independent schools leadership training and follow-up facilitators to discuss any practical or theoretical issues, for example what makes strong leadership, managing community expectations. A link with this program and the Teacher Quality program is offered. The principals involved with this program also have ongoing links with the Independent Leadership Centre.

2.3.2 Schools are generally satisfied with the support package

Overall, 75% of schools said they were satisfied with the support they had received to implement the NP (14% were completely satisfied).

Detailed findings about the usefulness of support and the resource materials from the school survey and comments from principals, are shown in section 2.4, table 2.11.

From the perspective of most government school principals, the mix of support being provided is appropriate and most principals are positive about many of the support activities and the regional staff providing support. One school principal said of their DET regional support person, 'our NP mentor has been brilliant, on the ball, helping with the plan, sending updates'.

Principals indicated that the ability to meet with other schools is very useful, to share ideas and discuss ways to pool resources. Regional support staff also commented that schools get a lot out of these joint meetings.

School principals also had a high level of awareness and use of NP resources for the Low SES reform (table 2.11). Most school principals who responded to the survey (85%) agreed that the information in the materials is relevant and readily available (table 2.12).

The most useful support material for government schools has been the situational analysis report template and accompanying materials, because they were essential for the planning process, 'the situational analysis template was great - it was a hugely daunting task but having a template was great' (DET school principal).

2.3.3 Some resources and tools need refining

Although the resource planning tool was regarded as very useful by two thirds of schools, schools did encounter some technical difficulties using this tool and tailoring it to their school's situation.

Problems encountered by school principals are

- 'unable to change one field'
- 'gave average results only, which made it difficult to plan'
- 'confusing when had to estimate staffing or where to put which figures'
- 'our school was not included so I had to use another school's template and that was a problem as it was a remote school and we aren't so there were differences in the funding'
- 'not suitable for small schools'
- 'got the tool too late'.

Other support activities seen as less useful are online forums and video-conferencing, probably because fewer schools have used these. Some schools do not have facilities to participate in video-conferencing.

2.3.4 Mixed views on the adequacy of DET regional support role

Although most schools said support staff are responsive (89% respondents), easy to access (87% respondents), provide timely advice (81% respondents) and are knowledgeable about the reforms (74%), schools in some regions are less satisfied.

School principals reported different experiences with the level and quality of support provided. Regional support staff indicated that the way support is coordinated at the regional level varies and that the roles of support staff can differ based on their regional context.

Although regional staff appreciated the efforts of Equity staff, they also said that the regional support role was not clearly articulated or communicated at the start and expectations changed over time. Some regional staff felt over-burdened, particularly in the planning phase, and would have liked training to help fulfil their role.

Schools appreciated having one-to-one support, being regularly updated and where the support person was able to interpret requirements and provide sound guidance. Schools less satisfied with the level of support said the regional support staff seemed uninformed about resources, were not available when needed or could not provide sufficient one-to-one advice⁴. One area where regional support would like to give better advice is helping schools spend their funding effectively so they can achieve the best outcomes possible.

More support from regional person. Needs to be a sense of promotion and a high level of integrity about how wonderful it is to have the NP. (DET school principal)

Both schools and regional staff felt a dedicated regional position would provide more resources to coordinate and assist the implementation of reforms. Regional staff said that to foster change in the classroom, schools need ongoing training and regular visits from support staff and that providing sufficient ongoing support might be difficult over the long-term because School Education Directors have other responsibilities. In addition, the strain on existing resources is expected to be exacerbated when new schools join next year.

A few schools suggested that being able to access consultants with expertise on the effective use of funds to increase literacy outcomes would be useful.

⁴ Three of the nine government schools interviewed.

2.3.5 Catholic schools highly satisfied with support staff

The five Catholic school principals expressed appreciation about the level and quality of support they had from the Catholic Education Office and Dioceses. In particular, they were satisfied with the in-service training about using student data and one-to-one support for the planning process.

The principals also commented that the support staff were organised and interested in assisting them to plan within their own school culture.

Diocese support staff reported that they have experienced difficulties fulfilling other responsibilities whilst supporting schools involved in the reforms. Consequently, they are taking the opportunity to use the National Partnership resources and training to develop and support schools not involved in the reform.

2.3.6 Limited timeframes for planning and evolving requirements created significant challenges for schools and support staff

The planning process is very resource intensive, needing executive staff to dedicate substantial hours to complete or revise school plans for government schools and in some cases complete a new plan for the Catholic and independent sectors. In this context, the limited timeframe given to schools in which to do the situational analysis and plan (four weeks) and the timing (Term 4) created significant challenges for schools and for the staff supporting them, especially smaller schools and for Catholic Diocese support staff. Most school principals who completed the survey were dissatisfied with the time given to plan their NP strategies. Diocese staff indicated that the process was very resource intensive for Dioceses, with only a few schools benefiting.

School principals described having to juggle schedules and responsibilities and suffering considerable stress. Executive teachers were taken off classrooms, and principals described being frustrated that they were unable to take more time to consult and consider findings. Indeed, a few schools told us that given the time over the holidays to think about the implications of the situational analysis, they may have made different decisions.

Another challenge was the evolving nature of requirements and information resources, which left some schools and support staff uncertain about what was allowed and expected. School principals perceived that the support staff were 'only one step ahead of schools' and described instances where new instructions were provided at 'the last minute'. CEC support staff said the initial information about the requirements for the Partnership were too broad, and AIS support staff that the evolving nature of requirements made implementation more difficult than it needed to be.

A substantial minority of schools surveyed (40%)⁵ were dissatisfied with how change was managed. This issue was followed up in our interviews with school principals, who said

- tools were often not available or completed at the appropriate time, for example 'we were told the surveys would be available online but when we got back to school they weren't ready', 'no information was given to school staff re the codes for resources, operating expenses of the NP funding'. One school commented 'DET should have waited until all the information was available and then had the initial meeting and then it would have been received better'

⁵ DET schools.

- lack of evidence regarding whether strategies were effective, 'want access to research which shows what works and what doesn't work'
- little guidance re what schools could do, 'I would have liked a menu of options of things we could do', 'guidelines are very glossy but not specific enough about what schools could do'
- 'there is an issue re sharing a Deputy principal with another school, the NP program says it will not fund .5 positions so we have left them to sort it out'.

Catholic schools faced specific challenges

- a few Catholic schools found it difficult to ensure a smooth fit between what schools want to do and plan to do, and what is expected by the NP
- delays in external training on situational analysis
- cost of transport, time and accommodation to get to professional development

2.3.7 No significant gaps in support and information resources

There are no significant gaps in support or information resources for schools implementing the Low SES reform. But there is a need for existing resources to be tailored to better meet the needs of smaller schools, in particular the resource planning tool.

Individual school principals we interviewed identified other resources, which could be useful for schools:

- a pro forma for submitting the plans
- more information about employing staff and processes for organising payment for new positions.

2.4 Low SES reform appendix—detailed results

2.4.1 Analysis of school plans

Data provided by the Equity Programs and Distance Education Directorate.

Table 2.5: Proportion of schools using different incentives to attract high-performing teachers and principals (Reform 1)

Incentive	Yes (n)	Total (N)	% Yes	Missing (n)	Comments
Attracting high performing principals	18	230	8%	65	Strategies for attracting high quality principals would be reflected in whole of region strategies rather than school level strategies, hence some plans did not address.
Attracting high performing teachers	49	265	18%	30	Schools may not have a strategy explicitly described as attracting high performing teacher; however the overall impact of strategies may have this effect.
Cross-sectoral networks	27	295	9%	0	
Other incentives*	295	295	100%	0	School plans indicate that schools are using expert teachers to mentor, run PL, develop resources and model best practice in teaching and learning.
<i>Additional executive employed to support teaching</i>	173	295	59%	-	
<i>Additional executive employed to lead whole-school PL</i>	148	295	50%	-	
<i>Executive provided with release time</i>	191	295	65%	-	
<i>Participation in leadership programs</i>	129	295	44%	-	

Data: N=295.

*Multiple response item (some schools are undertaking more than one strategy), column totals may exceed 100%.

Table 2.6: Proportion of schools adopting best practice performance management and staffing arrangements that articulate (Reform 2)

Incentive	Yes (n)	Total (N)	% Yes	Missing	Comments
Performance management	288	295	98%	0	"No" reflects no explicit reference to strategies for performance management in school plan. All government schools manage performance through agreed industrial processes.
Staffing arrangements	183	246	74%	49	Numbers do not add up to 295 as officers have not interpreted information in 1c as flexible staffing arrangements. Further follow-up will clarify this information. School plans indicate that schools are using expert teachers to mentor, run professional learning, develop resources and model best practice in teaching and learning.

Table 2.7: Proportion of schools with operational arrangements that encourage innovation and flexibility (Reform 3)

Incentive	Yes (n)	Total (N)	% Yes	Missing (n)	Comments
School flexibility and innovation	291	295	99%	0	
Appointment of para-professionals	21	291	7%	0	
Implementation of flexible school organisation practices	116	291	40%	0	
Use of new technologies to allow access to and sharing of resources	244	291	84%	0	This reflects significant work in the Office of Schools priority area "Connected Learning". It includes enhancing strategies with video conferencing and electronic whiteboards and significant additional teacher professional learning.
Alternative timetabled curriculum for refugee students (for example, Refugee Transition Program)	0	291	0%	0	Needs further follow-up with schools. Schools have existing structures as well as existing strategies that would not be NP funded.
Partnerships with universities re new pedagogy/ innovative organisational structures (including Centres for Excellence)	33	291	11%	0	
Schools working together	295	291	100%	0	All government Low SES schools undertook joint planning as part of the situational analysis and revised school planning process.

*Multiple response item, column totals may exceed 100%.

Table 2.8: Proportion of schools providing innovative and tailored learning opportunities (Reform 4)

Incentive	Yes (n)	Total (N)	% Yes	Missing	Comments
Professional development					
<i>Use and analysis of student data</i>	295	295	100%	0	
Targeted approaches	284	295	92%	0	
<i>Targeted interventions implemented</i>	247	284	87%	0	
<i>Transition plans developed for students</i>	165	284	58%	0	Many schools have described strategies for Pre-school to Kinder programs, Years 6-7 and Years 10-11.
<i>New models to ensure achievement of syllabus outcomes (online modules, project-based learning)</i>	34	284	12%	0	
<i>Whole-school PL in ESL pedagogy (for example, Teaching English Language Learners, Teaching Refugee Students in My Class, ESL Scales training)</i>	14	284	5%	0	

*Multiple response item, column totals may exceed 100%. N=284 (number of schools using targeted approaches).

Table 2.9: Proportion of schools working to strengthen school accountability (Reform 5)

Incentive	Yes (n)	Total (N)	% Yes	Missing	Comments
Strengthen school accountability	295		100%	0	Government schools already undertake system-wide accountabilities through the school planning and Annual School Report process. There is ongoing accountability for teachers through the Teacher Assessment Review Schedule (TARS) process. School Education Directors meet with school principals at least four times per year as part of the Principal Assessment Review Schedule (PARS) process.

Table 2.10: Proportion of schools building external partnerships with parents, other schools, businesses and communities and the provision of access to extended services (including through brokerage arrangements) (Reform 6)

Incentive	Yes (n)	Total (N)	% Yes	Missing	Comments
Schools working with communities	295	295	100%	0	
<i>Parent education 'classes' related to student learning</i>	219	295	74%	0	Interpretation of parent "information" sessions has been included here. Further follow-up in relation to the depth of these programs will be undertaken with regions and schools.
<i>Aboriginal elders and community members providing classroom support</i>	87	295	29%	0	
<i>PL for whole-school student wellbeing initiatives</i>	168	295	57%	0	
Expanding schools' services	227	295	77%	0	"No" does not necessarily mean that schools do not offer expanded services. Many schools would have these as existing strategies or strategies funded in other ways. For example, before and after school services and homework centres. Ongoing follow up with schools/ regions will clarify.
<i>Extended transition to school programs*</i>	143	227	63%	0	Many schools have described strategies for Pre-school to Kinder programs, Years 6-7 and Years 10-11.
<i>Support services implemented (allied health, counselling, HSLO)*</i>	74	227	33%		
<i>Employment of Partnership officers in Aboriginal communities*</i>	76	227	33%		
<i>Programs with STARTTS*</i>	1	227	<1%		
<i>Provision of homework centres*</i>	33	227	15%		
<i>Provision of before- or after-school care*</i>	9	227	4%		
<i>Brokered services (youth workers, grants providers)*</i>	2	227	<1%		

* Multiple response item, column totals may exceed 100%.

2.4.2 Information and support materials

Table 2.11: Awareness, use and perceptions of usefulness of National Partnership resources

Resource	Aware	Used	Very useful	Principals' comments on resources (interview schools)
Preliminary information package for schools	99%	97%	43%	Like an executive summary, used to present to staff; good, especially when writing the management plan; useful but vague; I also wanted to know what else was involved so I could start getting moving
Draft information package for schools (November 2009)	98%	94%	44%	Set out exactly what you had to do; I want a bit more information - initial information about the NP
Situational analysis report template	98%	99%	72%	It underpinned everything; it was a hugely daunting task but having a template was great; one school had not seen it and made up their own template. A small school commented that some information was not relevant to them, for example, averages for NAPLAN, as the template was based on schools with a larger number of students
Self-evaluation/ situational analysis materials	97%	99%	70%	Really good, learnt a lot, most valuable document to us; the situational analysis was brilliant..... it gave us a lot of good information; there was not time to do it justice; one school did not use it 'I sat with my data and with the STO, I'm down the track re data, and looking at it and deciding where we are'
Resource planning tool	95%	94%	62%	Mixed views on usefulness in interviews: budget planning tool is particularly useful; very useful; it didn't work properly - one field was not able to be changed; confusing when had to estimate, but it gave me ballpark figures; really hard for

				me to understand, working out where to put which figures I struggled with, my Partnership mentor came up with an alternative which was easier and I transferred the material across; this was confusing, my school wasn't included so I had to use another school's template and that was a problem as it was a remote school and we aren't so there were differences in the funding; in a small school, this document doesn't work well, we have a small budget so it is pretty straightforward to do; the document was released too late, 'we only received it 3 days before the plan was due and by then everyone had worked out our resource needs'; would have liked more time to go through the resource tool and more information about how it works
Low SES website (http://www.lowsesschools.nsw.edu.au/)	91%	96%	50%	Used some of the surveys; quite useful, especially when working on the management plan; lots of links; can find critical information here; not always timely; not as much information as you'd expect, would like more practical measures, all very general information; sometimes it says there are links to other things but there are no links there yet
Arrangements for staffing document	84%	78%	40%	For schools for whom this was a relevant document, it was considered useful, although one school commented 'it was not particularly easy to use', and a couple noted it came out after they had done their initial planning
The National Partnerships website (http://www.nationalpartnerships.nsw.edu.au/)	91%	91%	37%	Had a good flowchart for the school evaluation, it had information on focus groups, and on interviews; accessed it a couple of times, seemed to be okay; I had a bit of a look, there is

				good stuff there, read the newsletter; good to refer parents to if they want information on the NP; one school did not find it useful at all and rated it '1 out of 5'.
Implementation Plan for Smarter Schools National Partnerships (July 2009)	57%	81%	35%	Handy to know dates
Employment of Para-professionals Guidelines	85%	65%	35%	Used it to employ a para-professional; expect to use it in the future; this document came out after we had done our planning
Newsletter	87%	77%	33%	We printed them off for the team writing the submission and for the SAS staff and our principal. They were useful, very succinct and useful in telling you what you should be doing; they are good - just enough information; I have pulled out relevant bits and given them to staff; one school would like them to be published more regularly; our region publishes newsletters weekly with specific items about the NP, which we find very useful
National Partnership Power Point Presentation to School/ Community	76%	69%	33%	A few schools had presented this information to parents, some through the school newsletter, others showed it to the P&C but it 'didn't hit the mark', one school modified it to suit their community, another showed it to a couple of parents who came to an invited session. Some schools presented the information to their staff as a way of informing them about the NP, 'used it with my staff, good for staff to see what was involved in the NP'. Some schools had seen it but didn't use it because of time constraints

Regional support document	79%	84%	33%	Found the document useful; one school asked 'who is there for Low SES, is there anyone?'
Community engagement tools	57%	76%	26%	Part of our parent program came from this; used some but mainly adapted our own; one school said the tools were not appropriate for their community 'didn't hit the mark for our community—could be more creative in how they inform parents, it was very verbose, we had to water it down, want more ideas of what to do'. Some schools did not use the tools as they already have processes in place for consulting with their community, 'useful but we use these strategies as a matter of course so these are not overly new'.

Table 2.12: Satisfaction with content and access to resource materials

Question	Agree
The information covered in the guidelines/ instructions is relevant to our school	90%
Information about the National Partnerships is readily available	85%
The guidelines for implementing the NP initiatives were sufficient to plan our school's activities	84%
The messages about the National Partnerships in the information materials are consistent	84%

2.4.3 Schools' satisfaction with advice and support

Table 2.13: Satisfaction with support and advice for Low SES reforms

Staff supporting the National Partnerships implementation	Agree
...are responsive when we raise issues about the implementation process	89%
...are easy to access	87%
...provide sufficient support to help us successfully implement the National Partnerships	81%
...provide sufficient support to help us successfully prepare our school's National Partnerships implementation plans	80%
...provide advice and support in a timely way	77%
...are knowledgeable about the implementation of the National Partnerships	74%
...understand local issues	72%

Table 2.14: Satisfaction with specific support activities for Low SES reforms

Support activities	Positive overall	Very useful	Principals' comments on materials (interview schools)
Workshops for analysing school data	93%	53%	Mostly positive views: informative and a chance to reflect on data; workshop would have been more useful if held earlier, before we did our analysis
Advice and support from staff supporting the National Partnerships implementation	91%	42%	Mixed views from interviews reflecting different experiences with level and quality of support, typical comments are: one-to-one support essential, clear guidance, updates, fundamental to planning, helps interpret NP; support person not well informed about resources, not as available as would wish
Briefings for school principals	93%	40%	Mostly positive views: very useful, could not do NP without them; useful to talk with other principals about how working together; did not learn anything new
Workshops to support school planning processes	94%	40%	Mixed views: found useful; nothing new
Email support	92%	33%	Mixed views: email updates are handy; less reliance on emails and more in-person support
Leadership courses for school executive	85%	31%	Just 2 schools interviewed had attended: information not relevant to our school
Video-conferencing	72%	18%	2 schools interviewed had used; others did not have facilities to do so
Online forums (for example, Wiki)	52%	4%	Interviewed schools had not participated in these

Table 2.15: Satisfaction with management of the implementation of Low SES reforms

Question	Agree
We have had opportunities to align our activities with other schools involved in the National Partnerships	75%
When there are changes to the implementation process, they are managed well	60%
The timeline for schools to implement their National Partnership is reasonable	49%
The timeline for schools to plan for implementing the National Partnership was reasonable	11%*

* 1% agreed completely with this statement.

3 Literacy and Numeracy reform

This chapter shows that the implementation process for the Literacy and Numeracy reforms has been effective. Schools have successfully completed their planning and started implementing the reform agenda, particularly whole of school initiatives. As for other reforms, the main challenge has been the short timeframe and changes in requirements, which have impacted on schools' abilities to consult with the community.

3.1 Implementation status

3.1.1 Almost all schools are implementing the reform

There are 147 schools participating in the Literacy and Numeracy initiative, 114 government schools, 26 Catholic and seven independent schools. 116 of these schools responded to the online survey (78%): 93 government schools, 19 Catholic schools and four independent schools. Fifteen principals were interviewed: 11 government schools, three Catholic and one independent school.

Almost all of the schools (98%) are currently implementing their plans.

3.1.2 Literacy and Numeracy schools are implementing whole-of-school initiatives and working with other schools

Our interviews indicate that schools appear to be further ahead in their implementation of whole-of-school initiatives ('Reading to Learn' and 'Focus on Reading 3-6') than individual interventions (Multilit and TOWN). Some schools conducted at least some of the training for teachers during Term 4 2009.

A majority of responding schools (70%) report having opportunities to align their activities with other schools. The school principals we spoke with that are within a reasonable distance of another school doing a similar initiative, are working together with them. Amongst the principals we interviewed, it was only the rural and regional schools not located near other schools participating in the reforms that were not working with other schools. Schools are working together through

- joint professional development
- regular meetings to discuss progress
- joint planning
- pooling resources to fund a regional consultant position to help NP planning and implementation.

The main activities undertaken by schools to date are summarised in table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Implementation activities in schools

Activity	Examples of what individual schools are implementing
Provided professional development for teachers	<p>Organised Focus on Reading 3-6 training for all staff</p> <p>Run several training days on whole-of-school initiative together with other schools in the area</p> <p>Sent teachers who will provide the individual intervention to specialised training</p> <p>Teachers met during holidays to complete training before the beginning of the 2010 school year</p> <p>Teachers implementing Taking off with Numeracy participated in two training video conferences</p>
Employed more teachers or reassigned staff to implement activities	<p>Given a teacher two days off class per week in order to manage implementation of the initiatives in the school</p> <p>Released an experienced teacher from classes for three days a week to help teachers write scripted lessons</p>
Teachers using aspects of the initiative in planning and teaching	<p>Teachers are being withdrawn in age groups to develop plans focusing on effective teaching based on FoR 3-6</p> <p>Teachers have started to implement FoR 3-6 strategies in the classroom</p> <p>Teachers and program facilitators are working together to create Individual Learning Plans for all targeted students</p>
Employed specialist/ professionals to conduct specific activities	<p>Pooled together funding with other schools in the area to hire a couple of extra consultants dedicated to assisting principals to train staff and help schools plan and implement the initiatives</p> <p>Independent school employed a para-professional who went through special Multilit training with the AIS</p>
Established arrangements to partner with other National Partnership schools	<p>There is email interaction between principals of NP schools in the area to discuss implementation of the initiatives</p> <p>Organising regular meetings with schools in the sector doing similar strategies to discuss methods and ideas for effective implementation</p>
Conducted assessment of students	Conducted assessment of students to ascertain who needs individual intervention through the initiatives

Most principals expect to see improved teaching practices and improved student learning outcomes, as measured by NAPLAN scores, as a result of the current initiatives. Many expect to see improvement across all ability levels, not just those in low NAPLAN bands.

3.1.3 Implementation teams have carriage of literacy and numeracy reforms in schools

The most frequently employed management model for this initiative is a small implementation team, formed for this purpose (43% of schools). In a quarter of schools the principal has this responsibility, and for another quarter of schools it is the school executive. For a very few schools the Teacher Educator, Deputy or Head

Teacher is responsible. The person or team responsible for management has remained stable for most schools (84%).

The National Partnership funding has enabled many schools to take some teachers off class for several days a week (or for the full week) in order to coordinate the implementation and support other teachers.

3.2 How schools selected and planned reform activities

3.2.1 Literacy and numeracy schools selected reform activities based on situational analysis and support of the executive

Overall, responding schools mainly selected strategies based on the self-evaluation process (87%) and the strong support of school executive (47%). Other important influences were whether a school was already offering a particular program (28%), and alignment with regional initiatives (28%). The self-evaluation was a greater influence in government schools (91%) than other sectors, and the influence of regional initiatives was strongest for Catholic schools (56%). See table 3.2.

Just under 70% of Catholic schools who responded to the survey conducted self-evaluation and consultation processes. One Catholic principal from a regional area was hampered by the difficulty in sourcing casual teachers to allow teachers to have time off class to do the evaluation. Catholic schools mentioned that the Catholic Education Commission (CEC) had a strong influence on their decisions.

Some schools we spoke to had already been running the programs on offer, such as 'Reading to Learn' and 'Accelerated Literacy', and saw benefits in continuing to offer these programs and those approaches.

Some principals we spoke to who were delivering the Accelerated Literacy program claimed that improving literacy skills, especially reading comprehension, is a prerequisite to improving numeracy skills. Schools implementing the TOWN program said that consultation didn't make a difference as there were few options for whole-school numeracy programs.

Table 3.2: Factors that inform schools' selection of literacy and numeracy strategies

Reasons for selection	Overall	Gov (N=80)	Catholic N=16
		n	
Self-evaluation process	87%	73	11
Staff/ executive selected	47%	36	7
Already doing the program	28%	25	4
Regional initiatives	28%	20	9
Other	12%	10	3
Community support	8%	9	0
Principal's area of interest	3%	3	0
Program cost	3%	2	0

Multiple responses permitted.

3.2.2 Many schools consulted with the teaching staff but were unable to consult with the wider community

Most responding schools used the self-evaluation process (93%) and consulted with their staff (85%) when deciding which strategy to select. Wider consultation was difficult given the short timeframe for planning and developing the program. One Catholic school argued that wide consultation was unnecessary given the

requirement for the decision to be supported by findings from the data analysis. The survey showed that only 39% of schools consulted with parents or community.

A range of consultation methods were used. Surveys were used to canvas the views of staff and parents. Meetings were also held with parents and staff. One principal sent teachers to visit schools that were already running the 'Reading to Learn' program to examine the outcomes and practical difficulties, which was very helpful.

After completing their data analysis, schools consulted with regional/ Diocesan program facilitators about the practical details of the different strategies.

The group that made the decision in most government and independent schools was comprised of the principal and some executive staff, one or two staff members and sometimes a community representative. One independent school involved a parent in the planning committee.

Table 3.3: Who schools consulted with in deciding on literacy and numeracy strategies

Who was consulted	Overall	Government N=84	Catholic N=17
Self-evaluation process	93%	96%	59%
Staff consultation	85%	90%	59%
School executive	45%	44%	35%
Parent/ community consultation	39%	40%	24%
AECG or local Aboriginal community	17%	21%	0%
Principal chose	13%	12%	18%
Regional/ Diocesan staff	8%	7%	12%
None - regional office chose	11%	6%	41%
Other	4%	5%	0%

3.2.3 The short timeframe to implement is one of many challenges

Schools identified a range of challenges for implementing the reform and achieving outcomes in their school. Similar results were found across the different sectors.

Most prominent of these challenges is the unrealistic timeline, which only 35% of survey respondents agreed is reasonable (only 8% completely agreed). School principals also expressed concerns about the short timeframe for achieving expected student outcomes and commonly felt these expectations to be unrealistic. They emphasised the importance of having reasonable timeframes for implementing an initiative and making changes before having to show improvements through assessments. Some were concerned they would be blamed directly if student outcomes don't meet expectations.

As already noted for planning, the changing information about implementation of the Partnership has been a challenge for schools to accommodate. Around half of the schools surveyed (53%) thought that changes to the implementation process had been well managed (only 10% completely agreed).

Regional program facilitators commented that some schools have needed to redo action plans due to changes in requirements, even though these arrived after the plans had been signed off. One cautioned that 'slipping things in the side door' can increase frustration in schools. Changes have been made to targets, training requirements for principals and budgets.

Other challenges included staff turnover, which would require ongoing re-training of staff to ensure that whole-of-school pedagogic initiatives can have their intended effect.

3.3 Education sector advice, support and information resources

3.3.1 How sectors are providing direct support to schools implementing the reforms

The Department of Education and Training (DET) has funded literacy and numeracy program facilitation positions in each of the State regions. These staff are supported by State managers and work closely with regional curriculum consultants and with School Development Officers.

Last year these staff helped schools with action plans and timetabling. This year they are advising schools on priorities and updating and delivering the school plans. Theirs is mostly a coordination role, with some also delivering training, especially with school leaders. Some are working with classroom teachers and leadership teams.

In the Catholic education sector, Diocesan program facilitators are also working with school leadership teams, organising and delivering training, in both ESL and numeracy.

In the independent sector, schools are being offered leadership courses and being supported by a facilitator, leadership and AIS consultants via emails, telephone advice and visits (a challenge given these schools are widely dispersed).

3.3.2 High level of satisfaction with support

Overall, 84% of schools said they were satisfied with the support they had received to implement the NP (27% were completely satisfied). Satisfaction was similar across the sectors.

School principals were generally satisfied with the advice and support provided and agreed that the support had assisted them to successfully implement the reforms (tables 3.4 and 3.5). Many principals mentioned ongoing individual support from regional/ Diocesan program facilitators (regional facilitator, SED, SDO) as most helpful to the effective planning and implementation. Most agreed that support is easy to access, and the staff are responsive and provide advice in a timely way.

An important part of the self-evaluation was using NAPLAN and other EMSAD data in order to determine the specific issues that needed extra support. The professional support given to develop staff and executive to use this data helped schools to do this. School-specific data was also used, including examples of student work and student surveys. Other useful supports mentioned are having access to data other than NAPLAN and getting funding for technology, for example electronic whiteboards.

One area where advice and support may be improved is in understanding local issues.

Principals were split on how well informed they were about the available supports during the initial phases of the National Partnership. Many said that the regional program facilitators were available to answer questions and did so in a timely way. Some said that the program facilitators were pro-active and contacted them at times to let them know of new information. Many principals noted that the program

facilitators were 'only a couple of steps ahead' of the schools, with guidelines and other information being developed and advice changed with very little notice.

Table 3.4: Satisfaction with support and advice for literacy and numeracy reforms

Staff supporting the National Partnerships implementation:	Catholic	Gov.
...are easy to access	94%	88%
...are responsive when we raise issues about the implementation process	95%	85%
...provide advice and support in a timely way	71%	83%
...provide sufficient support to help us successfully prepare our school's National Partnerships implementation plans	84%	82%
...are knowledgeable about the implementation of the National Partnerships	72%	80%
...provide sufficient support to help us successfully implement the National Partnerships	89%	79%
...understand local issues	72%	73%

Table 3.5: Satisfaction with specific support activities

Support activities	n	Catholic		n	Government	
		Very useful	Positive		Very useful	Positive
Workshops for analysing school data	18	50%	100%	93	58%	94%
Baseline assessment report from Education Measurement and School Accountability (EMSAD)	18	22%	94%	91	51%	93%
Advice and support from staff supporting the National Partnerships implementation	19	32%	100%	94	47%	98%
Email support	16	19%	94%	90	40%	98%
Workshops to support school planning processes	17	47%	94%	90	40%	90%
Leadership courses for school executive	18	44%	100%	94	31%	80%
Video-conferencing	2	0%	0%	65	31%	82%
Briefings for school principals	17	29%	82%	91	30%	97%
Online forums (for example, Wiki)	3	0%	67%	49	14%	71%

3.3.3 Development of NP resources by DET

A number of resources were provided to schools to support them during their planning process. These included

- tools to support school planning processes—available on the Educational Measurement and Schools Accountability (EMSAD) website, for example analysis spreadsheets, survey examples, templates
- information related to school self-evaluation/ situational analysis
- Implementation Plan for Smarter Schools
- the National Partnerships website
- Preliminary Information Package.
- Information Package (November 2009)
- National Partnerships PowerPoint Presentation to School/ Community

The Preliminary Information Package was provided to schools when the Smarter Schools National Partnership was officially announced, and followed up with the detailed Information Package.

The timeline for new program development was short, less than six months for the following programs: the school self-evaluation process; Smart data workshops; the development of the Data Analysis Skills Assessment; the report to schools on the April National Partnership School Literacy and Numeracy Assessment by the Educational Measurement and School Accountability Directorate; the development of the Team Leadership School Improvement Program and the Analytical Framework for effective leadership and school improvement in literacy and numeracy by the Professional Learning and Leadership Development Directorate;

the literacy program 'Focus on Reading 3-6' and numeracy program 'Taking off with Numeracy', by Curriculum Directorate K-12.

3.3.4 Usefulness of resources and other supports for planning and implementation

Detailed comments on resources from principals we interviewed and survey respondents can be found in appendix 3.4.

Overall, school principals (survey respondents) had a high level of awareness and use of National Partnership resources (table 3.6). Principals who responded to the survey also endorsed the relevance and availability of information, although most only 'tended to agree' with these statements, indicating some qualification of satisfaction.

All of the resources were regarded positively, so in order to differentiate between them we are reporting on ones which schools found to be very useful. In general, government schools found the tools to be more useful than did Catholic schools (see table 3.6).

Across all schools, the most useful resources for planning were the tools on the EMSAD website, such as analysis spreadsheets and survey examples (71% found these very useful), and the information related to the school self-evaluation (66% found this very useful).

Least useful were the Power Point Presentation to School/ Community (32% found this very useful), possibly because these were provided to the regions and may or may not have been provided to schools; and the Preliminary Information Package (30% report this as very useful). Principals we interviewed and respondents to the survey commonly stressed the importance of timely and consistent information.

Other useful supports for schools have been

- networks
- links to SMART data
- time and permission to focus on this priority area
- cross-sector training/ support by DET program facilitators (where it has occurred).

Table 3.6: Perceptions of usefulness of literacy and numeracy resources by sector

	Catholic			Government		
	n	Very useful	Positive	n	Very useful	Positive
Tools to support school planning processes found on EMSAD website	11	45%	100%	83	73%	100%
Information related to school self-evaluation	18	44%	100%	84	70%	99%
Implementation Plan for Smarter Schools	16	31%	94%	54	46%	96%
Information Package	14	29%	100%	79	44%	99%
The National Partnerships website	10	40%	100%	65	43%	98%
NP Power Point Presentation to School/ Community	7	14%	100%	45	33%	100%
Preliminary Information Package	16	6%	94%	79	33%	99%

3.3.5 Training seen as very useful

A few principals mentioned the initial DET briefing session as being helpful. Others felt they were 'hastily arranged' and not very professional – mainly due to the lack of concrete information about what schools were required to do.

Program facilitators we spoke to from all sectors consider that the most useful training delivered so far includes

- team leadership course/ training
- Michael Fullan – 6 Secrets of Change
- Focus on Reading
- SMART
- GROW
- Taking off with Numeracy
- what is working well
- Multilit communication.

3.3.6 Limited timeframe and changing requirements created challenges for schools and program facilitators

The major issue raised by many principals as a challenge in planning was the perceived unreasonably short timeframe given for planning and implementation.

This timeframe was determined by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace for reward payments based on 2010 and 2011 targets. The start date was impacted on by the timing of the joint ministerial announcement.

Only one-fifth of the survey respondents thought that the planning timeframe was reasonable, (and only 3% completely agreed with this statement). Principals believed that the process could have been much more helpful, thoughtful and revealing about the school if it hadn't been rushed.

Several principals said they were told they were participating in the program and had to have plans ready within a month. In some cases there was simply no time to engage in community or student consultation.

Some principals were concerned they may not have chosen the best strategy or initiative for their school due to the requirement to make the decision quickly, rather than closely examine all the options. Additionally, some were not aware of all of the available options. One principal we interviewed reported that the team at his school were not happy with Multilit but only found out about WOWW (Working-Out-What-Works), which they were much more satisfied with, late in the year, which caused delays.

3.3.7 Perception of changing requirements

Given the complexity of developing new programs, designed specifically for this National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy, the trial of these new programs in the first implementation met with some inevitable requests for clarification that required program facilitators to respond to school, regional and sector feedback, and to their diverse and changing needs.

From the principals' perspective, their capacity to plan was also hampered by the perceived lack of information available about what schools were required to do. Principals said they were not given concrete information and templates for planning from the beginning. They said that the requirements kept expanding and changing well into the planning period, with very little notice. The Preliminary Information

Package was provided to schools when the Smarter Schools National Partnership was officially announced and followed up with the detailed Information Package.

Conducting these additional activities during Terms 3 and 4 was difficult, since Term 4 is a very busy time for schools with end of year school activities (for example, ceremonies, exams, formals). Several principals felt that taking teachers off class during Term 4 in order to complete training may have affected end of year results for students due to a lack of time with their regular teachers.

Catholic schools were concerned that DET staff involved in supporting initiatives had not made allowances to support the inclusion of Catholic school staff in training or planning meetings such as video conferences. Independent schools and program facilitators had similar views, saying that communication in the first year of implementation has been poor. They cite not knowing how to access reading, literacy or numeracy programs such as QuickSmart as a barrier to planning.

Principals noted that all of these issues made for an extremely stressful term for everyone and contributed to resistance from teachers who were worn out. Support staff from all sectors also expressed concern about the unrealistic timeframe and targets that schools were being asked to meet. The short timeframe is especially problematic for the Catholic and independent sectors whose program facilitators have other roles and responsibilities.

Support staff say that schools want to prioritise National Partnership initiatives, but it is difficult as there is a lot happening within schools. Schools are concerned about overwork and burnout and want to prevent this.

Some program facilitators felt that the unexpected changes to requirements made the program appear uncoordinated. Schools find it challenging working with 'developing plans' in both curriculum and implementation of the National Partnership. One school observed that misunderstandings by schools seem to be more often due to lack of engagement in the detail of the programs, rather than inconsistencies.

Table 3.7: Schools' views on the management of the implementation process

		Catholic		Government
	n	Positive	n	Positive
Changes to implementation process are well managed	19	53%	92	51%
We have had opportunities to align with other schools	19	63%	91	70%
The timeline for planning was reasonable	19	21%	94	19%
The timeline for implementing is reasonable	19	32%	94	34%

3.4 Appendix: Numeracy and Literacy Survey Tables

Table 3.8: Awareness, use and perceptions of usefulness of National Partnership resource materials

Resources N=116	Aware	Used	Very useful	Principals' comments on resources (interview schools)
Tools to support school planning processes*	90%	98%	71%	The EMSAD website is very beneficial; mixed views on ease of use; online survey was very good
Information related to school self-evaluation	97%	98%	66%	A lot of information—enough to complete the self-evaluation
Implementation Plan for Smarter Schools NP	74%	91%	44%	The timeline was clear
The National Partnerships website	92%	82%	44%	Easy to access and navigate; good information; used to keep abreast of what's happening
Information Package (November 2009)	92%	99%	43%	Mixed response - information clear and comprehensive; not much specific information on expectations, structure and timelines; the presentation was helpful, although a bit rushed; examples of how a plan would look was very helpful; good summary of the programs; very prescriptive rather than negotiated and open
NP Power Point Presentation to School/ Community	69%	78%	32%	Principals found this helpful as a guide, which they tailored to the needs of their school and community; the information was clear. [AIS school]: pretty good – didn't use for the community, but did use for staff
Preliminary Information Package	94%	98%	30%	Useful but short. It lists the names of programs, but information is sketchy

* On EMSAD website, for example analysis spreadsheets, survey examples, templates.

Table 3.9: Satisfaction with specific support activities for Literacy and Numeracy reforms

Support activities	Positive overall	Very useful	Principals' comments on materials (interview schools)
Workshops for analysing school data	95%	59%	Mostly positive views: the SDO organised it all and it was helpful; good - organised by the regional coordinator; helped us confirm our decisions – it was very valuable; the executive had already looked at the data, but it was very good to have the staff see how to use it as well; very confronting for some teachers - the survey on data knowledge of teachers was difficult and not very helpful
Advice and support from staff supporting the National Partnerships implementation	98%	47%	Mostly positive views: ongoing support from the regional coordinator was important – he organised a lot of the other support activities; a huge amount of support - the NP liaison officer has helped us rewrite plans several times when necessary, the Numeracy coordinator helped with data management and using technology in the classroom; [Catholic school]: lots of support from the Catholic Education Office – it was a partnership; the leading learners are helping with implementation – it's always good to have another set of eyes looking at what we're doing and giving ideas; brilliant – literacy consultant was flexible and able to support us in an expert manner; [AIS School]: AIS NP consultants provided individual support – highlighted key points of the program and various expectations
Baseline assessment report from Education Measurement and School Accountability (EMSAD)	94%	46%	Mostly positive views: very useful
Workshops to support school planning processes	91%	43%	Mostly positive views: attended by executive and maths groups – excellent
Email support	97%	38%	Excellent – received regular e-mails with updates from the regional coordinator
Leadership courses for school executive	83%	35%	Mostly positive views: 5 went – a lot of information – schools selected what was useful for them. Useful to

Support activities	Positive overall	Very useful	Principals' comments on materials (interview schools)
			look at our structure and organisation; very good – we've been running workshops for other staff based on them
Briefings for school principals	95%	31%	Information provided continued to change
Video-conferencing	79%	30%	Somewhat positive views: gave us an update of where we're up to and what to do; good that the maths coordinator was involved in the TOWN VCs; it's not better than face-to-face but it is useful
Online forums (for example, Wiki)	70%	13%	

4 Implementation of Teacher Quality reforms

This chapter shows that the Teacher Quality reforms have been implemented fairly successfully to date. A large minority of schools (40%) are still completing their planning. Most schools are satisfied with the support and information materials provided.

4.1 Implementation status

4.1.1 Over half of Teacher Quality schools are implementing plans

Each school is expected to have a school plan for implementing the reforms, which outlines specific student and school needs and activities to address these.

Most schools have done their formal planning for Teacher Quality, with six Centres for Excellence and 61% of Pilot Schools already implementing their plans.

Interviews with school principals show schools have begun implementing the reforms, commonly using the expected funding to increase staffing levels, reassign staff and provide professional development (see table 4.1). Much of the activity is focused on building leadership capacity and professional learning structures within the schools, and engaging with the university sector and other schools.

**Table 4.1: Examples of implementation activities
(Source: Interviews with school principals)**

Activity	Examples of what individual schools are implementing
Centres for Excellence	
Employed Highly Accomplished Teacher (HAT)	The HAT is taking a leading role in implementing Teacher Quality strategies in Centres for Excellence schools
Assigned staff responsibility for coordinating specific programs	Head Teacher teaching and learning to work with HAT
Employed extra staff	Para-professional to assist teachers with the use of technology in classrooms Para-professional to do K-2 literacy and numeracy
Partnership with spoke schools	Planning meetings and agreements in place with spoke schools
Partnership with local university	Planning meetings and agreements in place with university partners
Planned professional development for teachers	Professional development plan, including with university partner
Pilot School program	
Employed more teachers and teachers aides or reassigned staff to implement activities	Employed more classroom teachers to reduce class sizes and create single grade classes Created a second infants class Engagement teacher taking small groups Two additional assistant principals in one large school Teachers receiving pay supplement and acting at a

higher level, including providing classroom support. All with mentors

Assigned staff responsibility for coordinating specific programs	Appointed a Head Teacher mentor New supervision positions Responsibility for setting up school data analysis
Employed extra staff	Increased office staff numbers and hours, including bilingual office staff to encourage parent participation Additional groundsman Looking at flexible arrangements for cleaning contracts
Partnership with local schools	Meet weekly with six local schools to synchronise timetables and share students and resources

4.1.2 Carriage of reforms in schools differs across schools—principals, implementation teams and Highly Accomplished Teachers

Although school principals have main carriage of the reforms in around half the School Pilots and Centres for Excellence, some schools have placed responsibility in leadership groups, and one third of Centres for Excellence schools, in their Highly Accomplished Teacher (HAT). Two Centres for Excellence school principals commented on the high quality of leadership their HATs are providing.

Most principals report no change in staff responsibilities for managing the implementation process in 2010.

Table 4.2: Main responsibility for implementing the Teacher Quality reforms

Main responsibility	Centres for Excellence		School Pilots	
	N	%	N	%
School principal	5	46%	11	52%
School executive	4	36%	3	14%
Implementation team	1	9%	3	14%
Deputy principal	1	9%	2	10%
Head Teacher	0	0%	2	10%
Teacher Educator	0	0%	0	0%
Other, please specify	0	0%	0	0%
Total	11		21	

4.1.3 Schools and regional staff have identified some challenges to implementing the reforms

Teacher Quality schools found the timeline for planning and implementing their program quite challenging. Teaching and office staff were also concerned about the prospects of an increased workload.

Centres for Excellence needed to advertise and hire a Highly Accomplished Teacher (HAT). Rural schools had some concerns about attracting high calibre applicants for a two-year position. Also, the timeline for the application process meant that only some teachers would have the requirements in place allowing them to apply.

One principal expressed concern about the impact on students of having teachers away from the school demonstrating good teaching while their classes were covered by casual staff.

Support staff for Pilot Schools commented that delays in receiving National Partnership funding posed a risk for this program.

4.2 How schools selected and planned reform activities

4.2.1 Teacher Quality schools selected reform activities based on situational analysis, existing initiatives and the views of executive staff

Although the majority of schools selected school strategies/ activities based on the situational analysis process, for Teacher Quality schools the influence of executive staff and consideration of existing similar programs were also important (tables 4.3 and 4.4). For example, one school formed a steering committee to make decisions about how to use the National Partnership funding and another involved an existing teaching and learning group.

Most School Pilot schools consulted with staff and the community as part of the process. Just two of the 24 schools consulted with local Aboriginal groups. One school said the program selected met both their literacy and numeracy needs, and another that selection was linked to college opportunities.

Only half of Centre for Excellence schools consulted with the community when selecting their strategies.

Table 4.3: Factors that inform school's selection of TQ strategies

What informed the selection of strategy	C For E (n=11)	School Pilots (n=21)	
	N	N	%
Highlighted as an area for potential improvement in the school self-evaluation/ situational analysis	6	13	68%
School was already doing/ had already done the program	5	7	26%
Regional initiatives	3	6	26%
School staff/ executive supported selected program more strongly	3	5	37%
Community support for strategy/ program	3	5	26%
Identified by DET as Centre for Excellence	2	N/A	
Principal's area of interest	1	2	32%
Other	0	0	11%

Note: 4 N/A.

4.2.2 School Pilots consulted widely within the school community

School Pilots and Centres for Excellence took different approaches to involving the school community, with a high proportion of School Pilots consulting with staff and parents. Only four of the eleven Centres for Excellence report they consulted with parents and/or community as part of their planning process, and six with staff.

The Centres for Excellence schools consulted with their program partners, i.e. with the various spoke schools, when deciding on the focus of their joint activities. They also met with university partners to plan how they would work together. Some of the Centres for Excellence schools commented that they were not consulted about participating in the initiative, but were informed by their regional office that the school had been selected.

Table 4.4: Who schools consulted with in deciding on Teacher Quality strategies

Who was consulted	C for E (n=11)	School Pilots (n=21)	%
	N	N	
Selected as part of school self-evaluation processes using the school performance analysis	6	9	47%
Staff consultation	6	18	95%
Parent/ community consultation	4	15	79%
School executive selected	3	9	47%
Consultation with local or regional AECG, or local Aboriginal community members or organisations	3	2	11%
None - regional office chose	2	2	11%
Other	2	3	16%
Principal chose	0	4	21%

4.3 Effectiveness of education sector advice, support and information resources for Teacher Quality schools

4.3.1 How sectors are supporting Teacher Quality schools to implement the reforms

The sectors are supporting schools by providing a mix of information, professional development, advice from State office staff and/or access to specific planning tools or information materials. Independent schools are being supported directly by Association of Independent Schools officers.

The Association of Independent Schools is delivering two leadership courses for schools involved in the Teacher Quality Leadership Program—Preparation for principals leadership course, and Newly appointed principal leadership course. Each leadership course takes place over six months and aims to provide principals with support structures, including the autonomous management responsibilities they require as part of being an independent school. The National Partnership funding enabled the expansion

Figure 4.1: AIS Leadership courses Newly appointed principal leadership course

The course provides principals with information about how to relate to School Boards, and support re their financial responsibilities. The training also has components on developing leadership, with a focus on the role of principal. The third component of the training involves each principal teeing up with an experienced independent school head.

Preparation for principals leadership course

This course runs over 6 months. The course focuses on 1) the governance relationship, 2) financial management training for principals to understand financial matters, 3) planning for the future. The course aims to assist prospective principals to think about whether they really want to become a principal. The program attaches the prospective principal for 2 days with an experienced principal (the idea is that the experienced principal looks at the prospective principal's concerns; and the prospective principal comes up with clear goals of what they want to learn from the experienced principal). The prospective principal is paired with a school that is different to theirs so they understand the diversity of independent schools. They are supported to know how to record strategies they saw, and attend a debrief afterwards. It is strictly confidential who the prospective principals visit, so they can get to see very confidential information.

of the reach of the Newly appointed principal leadership course so that there are now three times as many participants in the program; 40% subsidy to schools for the program; and DEEWR classified schools as rural/ remote, to apply for funding to attend the training.

The School Pilots are supported by DET staff at the State level in relation to finance and budgeting, human resources and overall planning. Guidelines for implementation have also been produced.

Centres for Excellence are also supported by DET State level staff with information, interpretation of requirements and assistance with coordinating partnerships with spoke schools.

The information materials for government schools are listed in table 4.5 (section 4.4).

4.3.2 Schools are generally satisfied with the support package

Overall, 85% of School Pilots and 82% of Centres for Excellence schools said that they were satisfied with the support they had received to implement the NP.

From the perspective of government schools' principals, the mix of support being provided is appropriate, and principals are positive about the support being provided by State office staff.

Centres for Excellence school principals had a very high level of awareness and use of National Partnership resources for Teacher Quality reforms (table 4.5). Most principals agreed that the information in the materials is relevant (11 out of 11 responding schools) and readily available (10 out of 11 schools). The resource to promote Centres for Excellence to the community was rated relatively low on usefulness (one responding school rated it as very useful).

Although the majority of School Pilot school principals were aware of one or other of the resources for School Pilots, around one third did not know about the electronic resource planning tool for staff planning. Amongst those schools that used this resource, its usefulness was rated highly. The other resources have been used by most schools that were aware of them, with around half of the schools rating these as very useful. 80% of responding schools tended to agree or agreed these guidelines were sufficient to plan their activities, and 79% that the information is relevant for their school.

The interviews and survey results indicate that the most useful support for government schools implementing the Teacher Quality reforms has been the personal support provided by State staff. Principals are very appreciative of the responsiveness of these staff and their ability to clarify questions and provide feedback on whether schools were meeting the requirements of the program. They also appreciated the organisation of video conferences which allowed schools to share ideas.

Centres for Excellence school principals have also been well supported by their Highly Accomplished Teachers. Some are also receiving good support from their local university. One principal commented that 'working as a group is great. Once we got started we've been our own support'.

Rural independent schools have appreciated the financial assistance to travel to courses.

4.3.3 High levels of satisfaction with central office support across sectors

All agree that central program facilitators (CEC, AIS, DET) are easy to access, and most that staff are responsive when issues are raised about the implementation process, they provide sufficient support in a timely way, and are knowledgeable about the National Partnership.

School Pilot schools were generally positive about the different forms of support provided, finding the professional development, email support and advice from designated officers for staffing, finance and IT particularly useful. Centres for Excellence school principals found the two workshops less useful.

The AIS reports that an internal evaluation showed principals were very satisfied with the initial courses attended.

4.3.4 Implementation process managed well

Although Teacher Quality school principals were generally more positive about the management of the implementation process than other schools involved in National Partnership reforms, the limited timeframe given to schools to plan and the timing created challenges for around half these schools.

Teacher Quality principals raised a few issues about the management of the implementation process:

- the need for clear and consistent instructions
- a wish for more choice in programs and more flexibility in decision-making
- request for help in 'dealing with the unions'
- need for more opportunities to communicate with other schools to share ideas and effective strategies (all schools have been given the contact details of other schools and are able to communicate with each other on a one-to-one basis.)

4.3.5 No significant gaps in support and information resources

There are no significant gaps in support or information resources for schools implementing the Teacher Quality reform.

Individual school principals we interviewed identified other resources, which could be useful for schools:

- technological support in linking their group of rural schools with their university partner for demonstration lessons, lectures, talks, etc.
- a year calendar with all the main dates/ milestones to use as a ready reference.

4.4 Teacher Quality appendix: Survey table

Table 4.5: Awareness, use and perceptions of usefulness of National Partnership resources

Resources	Centres for Excellence (N=11)			School Pilots (N=21)		
	Aware	Used	Very useful	Aware	Used	Very useful
Guidelines for Centres for Excellence	11	11	6	N/A	N/A	N/A
The National Partnerships website (http://www.nationalpartnerships.nsw.edu.au/)	11	8	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
National Partnerships Power Point Presentation to School/Community	10	8	7	N/A	N/A	N/A
Information resources to promote the Centres for Excellence to the Community	9	7	4	N/A	N/A	N/A
Implementation Plan for Smarter Schools National Partnerships (July 2009)	8	9	4	N/A	N/A	N/A
Information related to school self-evaluation/ situational analysis*	6	11	8	N/A	N/A	N/A
School pilot participating schools instructions (hard copy)	N/A	N/A	N/A	74%	100%	46%
Designated advice officers for staffing, finance and IT	N/A	N/A	N/A	76%	88%	50%
Electronic resource planning tool (staff planning)	N/A	N/A	N/A	68%	87%	62%

5 Lessons for implementing the reforms in 2010

The implementation approach used, a mix of State, regional/ local support, training and information resources, has proved an appropriate approach to supporting schools.

Bringing schools together to train, share ideas and plan has been very much appreciated by schools across all sectors and reform areas. The two websites are effective portals for disseminating information on the reforms and their implementation, especially if kept up-to-date. The planning tools have also been very useful for schools, particularly the situational analysis and self-evaluation templates, although the resource planning tool needs some refinement.

At the State level, the sectors should continue to discuss and take account of the difference in the way schools operate within sectors to ensure that information and tools can be shared between sectors in a timely way and that support can be provided appropriately.

At the regional and Diocese level, an important issue is ensuring that regions or Dioceses have sufficient resources and information to consistently coordinate support, especially with the expansion of the reforms. This is particularly an issue for Low SES schools where all sectors are using existing regional or State infrastructure to support schools.

At the school level, schools need to be given sufficient lead time to plan and consult with school and community stakeholders and to set achievable targets. Schools also need clear and consistent information.

Principals recommend that new schools be organised, methodical and realistic about planning. This means having clear timeframes and roles, having a realistic understanding of the abilities of the school and staff, and taking time to ensure that planning is done correctly. Literacy and Numeracy school principals recommend having an Improvement Team with clear roles and responsibilities. One recommended a more democratic decision-making model, open to stakeholders of the school, especially staff.

Principals from Centres for Excellence schools recommended that schools integrate plans into the current strategic direction of the school and align them with regional priorities. This would ensure greater support and higher potential for sustainability. One principal recommended using money that is allocated early to buy relief time for a deputy or other senior executive level staff to work with the principal and the Highly Accomplished Teacher on planning.

When selecting a Highly Accomplished Teacher, Centres for Excellence should consider their capacity to transfer knowledge to adults and also their skills at project management. It is also important that the school community has a good understanding of the role of the Highly Accomplished Teacher.

Principals also made the following points:

- principals and schools should seek and use all the support they can get
- surround yourself with good people to assist with implementing the program and hire the right people for the job
- work with parent groups - they have good insights
- look at your school leadership from a different perspective. Be creative and 'think outside the square' when considering options

- get an auditor in to make sure that your budget is on track and that you have everything covered
- understand that, although consultation is very important and very helpful, the principal must ultimately make a final decision and ensure that it is final.

Sector program facilitators reported the following successful strategies in working with schools:

- wherever possible, the regional coordinator or other program facilitators should be part of the planning process as well as the implementation
- providing the SMART package and NAPLAN data are very helpful for school planning, to see where improvement is needed and where it can be achieved
- providing training in using student data and completing the needs analysis (self-evaluation or situational analysis), and providing support for completing plans
- providing leadership training
- having curriculum consultants supporting classroom leaders while the regional Literacy and Numeracy coordinator works with the leadership team.

Areas where schools may need more specific support in planning are

- involving parents and the wider community in planning, especially where existing relationships are weak and consultative mechanisms are not functioning
- identifying activities to address specific reform areas
- setting achievable targets and defining school goals. Literacy and Numeracy program facilitators have found it useful to help schools define goals, keep the focus tight and plan small steps to see progress
- analysing student data (Catholic and independent schools).

6 Early and anticipated benefits for schools

School principals from all sectors anticipate significant benefits from participating in the National Partnership reforms for individual students such as improved literacy and numeracy skills, and for teachers, improved teaching practices and skills. Schools will also be better resourced with technology.

6.1 Low SES schools

School principals are expecting that the reforms will bring organisational and cultural change for their school, which will improve the status and profile of the school.

Schools are also anticipating there will be more opportunities for professional learning, and schools will establish a culture of professional learning, 'bring it to the fore, give it the importance it deserves, that teachers will see action learning as part of their business'. Principals are already observing a willingness amongst staff to embrace change, 'the most significant buzz is around what it means to be doing something as profound as Accelerated Literacy with a DP-level consultant available, this is professional development at a close level - team teaching, modelling, giving feedback, building on the skills of the teachers, giving the teachers feedback' (DET school principal).

Another significant long-term benefit expected is the improved ability to identify and monitor students' learning needs and performance.

Other expectations were specific to individual schools:

- aim to have continuity of teachers, 'noticed kids' results suffered through changes in teachers through the year'
- 'the playgroup helps with the transition to school, and helps increase the numbers in the school'
- 'increased involvement of parents in the school'
- 'linking parents' priorities with the curriculum'
- 'lifting the tone of the school through the social skills and anger management, getting kids able to cope and be resilient'.

6.2 Literacy and Numeracy schools

Almost all principals we interviewed said they had noticed that the understanding about pedagogic issues by teachers who attended training in whole-school literacy and numeracy approaches had improved. Several mentioned they had overheard teachers in the staff room discussing teaching methodology with enthusiasm. Some have observed greater satisfaction among teachers and a general rise in staff morale.

Having extra teaching and support positions has enabled smaller class sizes. Several teachers mentioned anecdotal evidence of progress in the abilities of students, especially those in low NAPLAN bands. This included improved engagement with literacy activities; students being happier in class due to having a greater understanding of numeracy material; and development of meta-language skills in students doing Accelerated Literacy.

Other benefits include improved resources, such as electronic whiteboards.

6.3 Teacher Quality schools

Employing additional teachers and having increased flexibility of staffing for School Pilots has meant that some schools do not have composite classes this year. One principal is seeing better student attendance and engagement, with fewer suspensions, as a direct result of this greater teacher flexibility.

Centres for Excellence schools are benefiting from the teacher training and development that has already been received, as well as teachers engaging with each other across faculties. Schools are anticipating many benefits from working together with partner schools and universities. One principal reports that there is a lot of goodwill and community support towards what the school is doing.

One of the anticipated results of the program is having an increased number of teachers registered with the Institute of Teachers and actively engaged in professional development.

7 Principals' views on how schools can sustain reforms

School principals would like to maintain the initiatives and are considering how to sustain these reforms in their schools.

Schools are optimistic that many of the strategies and benefits of the reforms will be sustained. But a major concern is losing the funds for extra staffing and enhanced pay and how these increased costs can be covered without special funding. Without the additional funding, schools are uncertain about how special positions can be maintained, or even that staff promoted to leadership positions will remain at higher levels. One school is concerned about updating new technology when needed.

School principals expect that the reforms' focus on professional development and training will mean that schools will have the capacity to continue specific programs (for example Accelerated Learning) and activities. Other specific strategies that they expect to be sustained include

- the whole school assessment and tracking
- the use of technology
- changes in school culture, such as engagement with the community.

Some principals are also optimistic that individual interventions can be sustained through having experienced teachers train newer ones in the programs, which will make them more affordable. Programs requiring extra teacher time, such as Multilit, are considered less likely to continue without the support of National Partnership funding.

Literacy and Numeracy principals say that whole-school initiatives like 'Focus on Reading 3-6', which aim to create a change in the culture of teaching, are likely to continue. This will be helped by teachers who have been trained in the whole-of-school initiatives being able to train new teachers.

Some anticipate that the success of the program would see a reduced need for continuing the programs in the school. Others felt that more time would be needed for the impact to be apparent, which would encourage teachers to make cultural changes necessary for embedding new methods.

Appendix 1 Sampling frames for principal interviews

Sampling frameworks are provided below for the three reform areas.

Table A1: Teacher Quality – sampling frame [10 interviews]

Sector	Sydney metro	School	Regional city	School	Rural town	School
Government	CFE x 1 SP x 2		CFE x 1 SP x 1		SP x 1	
Independent	LP x 2		LP x 1		LP x 1	
TOTAL	5		3		2	

Note: No Catholic schools participated in 2009.

Key to type of school intervention:

CFE = Centre for Excellence

SP = School Pilot

LP= Leadership Program

Table A2: Literacy and Numeracy – sampling frame [15 interviews]

Sector	Sydney metro	School	Regional city	School	Rural town	School
Government	5		2		3	
Catholic	1		1		1	
Independent			1			
TOTAL	7		4		4	

Table A3: Low SES – sampling frame [15 interviews]

Sector	Sydney metro	School	Regional city	School	Rural town	School
Government	3		3		3	
Catholic	3		3			
TOTAL	6		6		3	

Note: All schools implementing programs to attract and retain quality staff and professional development for school executives and teachers to help them use and analyse student data (for example, NAPLAN) to cater for student needs.