

Ready, Set, School 2010

A report to school communities in Western NSW





In recent years Western NSW Region has focussed on developing great teachers and putting in place a range of initiatives to improve the quality of education offered to students wherever they live in the region.

We have been at the forefront of introducing digital technology to

classrooms, sharing curriculum and resources across schools and improving student literacy and numeracy standards.

2010 will be an exciting year. New initiatives under the Smarter Schools National Partnerships coupled with a range of exciting regional projects will have a direct impact on the quality of education our schools provide.

Undoubtedly, there are significant challenges for many schools in Western NSW Region. We have a responsibility to ensure that all students, including those in our remote and very remote schools and in those schools with low socio economic profiles, obtain a quality education.

Parents and teachers will notice some changes through 2010, the Year of Learning for Sustainability. Our schools and their structures will be different, we will collaborate between schools more and there will be new ways of working with our school communities.

Professional Learning in Western NSW Region is expanding to support teachers working with students, communities and parents during the early years of education. The positions of Director Professional Learning and Director Community Partnerships and Early Years will provide additional support to schools.

As it is the Year of Learning for Sustainability, we will also promote the importance of environmental issues and explore ways students and staff can contribute positively to the environment.

A cycle of evaluating schools and regional operations is also being undertaken by our School Development Officers. Initial evaluations will focus on secondary education and numeracy.

The advances we have made in recent years have the region well prepared to face the challenges ahead. This report highlights some of the initiatives and projects implemented through 2009.

Carole McDiarmid

Carole McDiarmid PSM
Regional Director

2009 HSC Achievements

All Rounders

(Band 6 in at least 5 subjects)

Bethanie Hain, Coonabarabran High School

HSC Top Achievers

Megan Anderson, Dubbo College Senior Campus
2nd in State, Business Services Examination

Daryl Firth, Dubbo School of Distance Education
3rd in State, Metal and Engineering Examination

Lauren Doyle, Dubbo College Senior Campus
4th in State, Textiles and Design

Audra Field, Mudgee High School
4th in State, Primary Industries Examination

Wesley Rohr, Kandos High School
4th in State, Metal and Engineering Examination

Jessica Westcott, Parkes High School
13th in State, Personal Development, Health & Physical Education

Tannica Ferguson, Dubbo School of Distance Education
20th in State, Personal Development, Health & Physical Education

Distinguished achievers' schools

Blayney High School
Bourke High School
Broken Hill High School
Canobolas Rural Technology High School
Condobolin High School
Coolah Central School
Coomealla High School
Coonabarabran High School
Cowra High School
Denison College of Secondary Education Bathurst High Campus
Denison College of Secondary Education Kelso High Campus
Dubbo College Senior Campus
Dubbo School of Distance Education
Forbes High School
Gilgandra High School
Gulgong High School
Kandos High School
Lithgow High School
Molong Central School
Mudgee High School
Narromine High School
Orange High School
Parkes High School
Peak Hill Central School
The Henry Lawson High School
Tottenham Central School
Warren Central School
Wellington High School
Willyama High School

Academic Performance

The diversity of Western NSW Region and a variety of other factors influence the performance of individual students.

The National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) enables schools to chart student improvement from year 3 to year 5 to year 7 and to year 9.

We are proud that over 90% of students are performing at or above minimum standards in year 3 reading, year 5 numeracy, year 7 numeracy, and year 9 numeracy.

Over 85% of students met minimum standards in the remaining assessment points of year 3 numeracy, year 5 reading, year 7 reading and year 9 reading.

The analysis of region wide NAPLAN results shows our students improve at rates comparable to the State average in both literacy and numeracy through to Year 7.

Our challenge is to continue this improvement from year 7 to year 9. Our secondary curriculum team is progressively implementing projects designed to address this challenge.

Over 1,200 Western NSW Region students completed the Higher School Certificate in 2009.

Of these, 138 were named as Distinguished Achievers (scoring above 90% in at least one subject) collecting a total of 218 band 6 results.

Aboriginal Education

Closing the attainment gap between Aboriginal and non Aboriginal students continues to be a high priority for Western NSW Region. The goal is for Aboriginal student outcomes to match that of the broader school population.

A number of strategies are in place to achieve this goal. These include;

- Personalised learning programs
- Strengthening participation in sporting academies linked to academic performance
- Continued development of the Aboriginal Knowledge and Practice Centre. A gathering of Western NSW communities will be held in 2010 to celebrate the official opening of this centre

- Identifying gifted Aboriginal students in culturally appropriate ways
- Partnering local and regional Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups

These initiatives are having a positive impact.

Student Services

Ensuring students feel safe and valued in their school creates a positive learning environment. A broad range of student support programs are in place in every Western NSW Region school.

Among the successful strategies for supporting improved student behaviour in schools has been the adoption of Positive Behaviour for Learning. Positive Behaviour for Learning has been introduced to 50 schools in Western NSW Region. Participating schools report attentive behaviour in classrooms, clear understanding of expectations and a genuine respect between students and teachers alike.

Vocational Education and Training

Vocational education and training in schools across Western NSW Region is about giving students the knowledge and skills to succeed in trades related careers.

The level of industry involvement, workplace experience and practical skills assessment ensure our students are job ready and have the skills that employers expect.

Thirty seven high and central schools in Western NSW Region are now linked to a Trade Training Centre.

Funding from the Federal Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations will progressively update existing school facilities to industry approved standards.

The region also retained its status as a Registered Training Organisation after a successful VETAB audit in 2009.

Connected Classrooms

There are now 126 schools in Western NSW Region fully equipped with interactive classrooms. Classroom teachers are developing quality resources in all curriculum areas that make full use of technology and engage and excite students to learn the skills they need in the 21st century.

Common activities in modern classrooms include digitally illustrating and narrating students' original creative writing pieces, writing scripts, stage directions, modelling and filming claymation episodes and competing with students from around the world in on-line maths games.

On-going professional learning for teachers helps ensure the classroom activities they develop are educationally rich and focussed on syllabus outcomes.

Complementary programs such as the roll out of laptops for teachers and year 9 students, upgrading of school wireless networks and bandwidth upgrades enhance the opportunities available through digital technology.

Selective High School Provision

xsel is the Western NSW Region selective high school provision. The first 30 students commenced a selective school strand of English, maths and science at the start of 2010.

The students were selected from over 180 applicants.

The staffing and organisational structures of xsel were finalised late in 2009 with the appointment of an xsel manager, a teaching and learning coordinator, support officer and nine part time teachers. Like the students, the teachers are located in schools across the region.

xsel will continue to grow as each cohort progresses through high school and a new intake of Year 7 students starts each year.

The Early Years

The Western NSW Region Early Childhood Strategy continues to enhance understanding among principals, teachers, service providers, parents and community about the range of experiences children have in their early years (birth to 8) and the impact these have on their education.

The importance of early childhood expertise and knowledge is being included in school planning across the region.

In 2010 this will be extended as stronger connectedness grows between schools and communities.

Our commitment ensures more successful experiences for children as they start school. Best Start assessments (conducted as students start Kindergarten) then identify student strengths and needs.

The overall outcome is improved results in the first years of primary school leading to a positive education experience.

National Partnerships

In 2009 a number of significant Federal and State government initiatives have injected new funding and resources to support the work of schools across the region.

The three elements of the Building the Education Revolution program have delivered:

- Primary Schools for the 21st Century - New or upgraded large scale infrastructure such as halls, libraries, covered outdoor learning areas, or classroom refurbishments in 159 primary schools. All new works are expected to be completed by December 2010.
- National School Pride - Refurbishment and enhancement projects for 192 schools. such as security fencing, landscaping, upgrades to staff and student facilities, refurbishment of computer rooms and classrooms.
- Science and Language Centres - New or extensively refurbished science and language centres are being constructed at 27 high and central schools.

The Smarter Schools National Partnership Agreements on Literacy and Numeracy, Low Socio-economic Status School Communities and Improving Teacher Quality also made a significant impact.

- 11 schools were selected in Literacy and Numeracy National Partnerships
- Mudgee High School was selected as a Centre of Excellence and will work closely with other hub schools
- A Highly Accomplished Teacher has been employed at Mudgee High School
- 99 schools across Western NSW Region are partners in the Low SES National Partnership.

Low SES National Partnership schools have pooled their resources to establish new support positions. Seven partnership mentors will help schools on planning, data analysis and leadership development. Seven connected learning coaches will train teachers in using new technologies in classrooms. An Aboriginal pedagogies mentor will support schools to develop more effective teaching and learning programs. Two additional Teaching Learning Coordinators will support Literacy and Numeracy programs.

Expectations are high for schools in receipt of partnership funding. There is a strong emphasis on accountability and transparency and local school communities will see the impact of the partnerships reflected in classroom practices and school leadership.



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