Early Action for Success
Implementing the NSW Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan
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Improving literacy and numeracy in schools participating in the NSW Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan.
Introduction

The evidence is clear that well developed literacy and numeracy skills are essential to students’ success at school and fundamental to improving their life chances in a diverse and ever changing world.

Using the Early Action for Success strategy, the Department aims to improve students’ performance through a targeted approach in primary schools in the lowest quartile of NAPLAN performance in literacy and numeracy.

The key feature of the strategy is the appointment of high quality Instructional leaders, Literacy and Numeracy in the identified schools.

The strategy combines high quality leadership, a focus on the individual students and early intervention to ensure students at risk of not achieving expected outcomes are identified and receive additional support.

Ensuring that quality classroom instruction and intervention is in place in the early years means that learning problems will be diagnosed, addressed and less likely to persist.

This strategy complements the Connected Communities and Every Student Every School reforms.

- Connected Communities positions identified schools as community hubs, broadening the influence of the community and school leadership to better deliver key services to support children and young people from birth through school into further training, study and employment.

- Every Student Every School which provides a comprehensive range of reforms to strengthen learning and support in every school in NSW including for students with disability and learning difficulties.
Overview of Implementation

The implementation will focus on the early years of schooling, with resources targeted to deliver the greatest educational impact by:

- focusing on hands-on instructional leadership
- explicitly assessing the learning needs of students and using ongoing assessment to plan, teach and personalise learning and to monitor student progress
- focusing on classroom-based professional learning for teachers
- using a range of classroom intervention strategies for students who need particular support.

**Early Action for Success** will:

- strengthen leadership capacity and teaching expertise at the local level
- encourage a confident start to learning for all students
- engage all students in a comprehensive, personalised, one-on-one assessment on entry to school to find out what they know and can do in the areas of literacy and numeracy
- ensure all students have access to high quality, personalised classroom based assessment and teaching in literacy and numeracy
- tailor small group and one-on-one literacy and numeracy support that is personalised to each student’s needs, with intensive support for the students who need it most
- ensure that the literacy and numeracy progress of students remains on track throughout the K–2 years of schooling
- provide targeted schools with the resources and flexibility needed to take action on literacy and numeracy under achievement that is responsive to their local school context
- reinforce that high quality professional learning that builds on teachers’ and school leaders’ professional knowledge, skills and confidence is fundamental to achieving improvement in teaching and learning.
Key elements of Early Action for Success

Instructional leadership

Instructional leadership in literacy and numeracy will be enhanced through the appointment of an Instructional Leader, Literacy and Numeracy. The Instructional Leader, Literacy and Numeracy will have a strong understanding of effective classroom practice and strategies in literacy and numeracy learning and will be able to build staff capacity through the collaborative evaluation of teaching and its effect on student learning.

Instructional Leaders, Literacy and Numeracy will clearly communicate expectations and targets for student learning and align strategies and resources for the achievement of desired outcomes.

Personalisation

Personalisation of learning means that each student’s specific learning needs are assessed and addressed. Assessment for learning and clear feedback to and from students enables teachers to tailor classroom teaching designed to engage, challenge and support students to achieve or exceed expected levels.

Assessment for Learning

Key to the effective implementation of the Early Action for Success strategy in schools will be the use of Best Start Kindergarten assessment and ongoing monitoring using the Literacy and Numeracy Continuums.

The Best Start Kindergarten assessment that is used in NSW public schools assists teachers in gathering consistent, accurate and reliable information about each student’s knowledge, skills and understandings. It enables teachers to plot all students’ starting points for literacy and numeracy teaching and learning on the Literacy and Numeracy Continuums. Individual student’s progress will be monitored and assessed against the continuums across the K-2 years.
High quality professional learning

Teachers and school leaders will be provided with high quality professional learning to ensure they have the expert skills and knowledge to implement personalised approaches to learning and to effectively use assessment to improve student outcomes in literacy and numeracy.

They will be supported in the development of expert knowledge in literacy and numeracy learning as well as school data management, planning and target setting; high quality classroom practice and assessment for learning; and individual and small group instruction.

Three tiered approach

Tiered intervention allows the delivery of tailored learning support for students. With tiered intervention teachers can clearly identify students’ current levels of achievement, monitor their progress, provide evidence-based targeted support and programs and adjust the intensity and nature of support depending on the students’ needs.

Tier 1  personalised learning delivered through classroom teaching

Tier 2  individual and small group interventions by a class teacher or specialist

Tier 3  intensive, personalised specialist assessment and intervention for students with more complex literacy and numeracy needs.
Identification and appointment of Instructional Leaders

To ensure the success of the strategy it is essential that teachers with exceptional leadership skills are identified as Instructional Leaders, Literacy and Numeracy.

Regional Directors will recommend implementation models based on specific school contexts to the Deputy Director-General, Schools.

As shown in the graph, Instructional Leaders, Literacy and Numeracy will be initially identified through nomination. As the strategy is progressed other means of identification of suitably qualified people will be implemented, for example, Expression of Interest and external advertisement.

Appointments will be temporary. The Regional Director will determine the length of the temporary appointment. In general, it is likely to be of three years with the possibility of extension.

Instructional Leaders will have
- proven successful experience in instructional school leadership that has improved learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy for students
- demonstrated knowledge of, and experience in, implementing successful innovation and change that has resulted in improved learning outcomes for students
- demonstrated deep understanding of current research in effective instructional school leadership and effective high quality teaching in literacy and numeracy
- demonstrated experience in the provision of high quality differentiated professional learning that has enhanced teacher capacity in improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for students
- demonstrated capacity to work alongside teachers to both model and improve teaching and assessment skills in literacy and numeracy.

Regional Directors will determine whether an incentive allowance will be offered, and the type and quantum of the allowance. Recommendations will be approved by the Deputy Director-General, Schools.
An in-school Instructional Leader, Literacy and Numeracy works to build the capacity of a school to improve student learning outcomes.

An Instructional Leader, Literacy and Numeracy works in a targeted school to build the capacity of that school to improve student learning outcomes. In this instance the target school is part of an existing community of schools. Actions undertaken in the community of schools through sharing of high expectations and more effective practices will improve the learning of all students.

Instructional Leaders, Literacy and Numeracy work with two schools jointly developing the capacity of both schools to improve student learning outcomes.

Instructional Leaders, Literacy and Numeracy work across and between schools building connections and collaborating as a new learning community to develop capacity to improve student learning outcomes.
An Instructional Leader, Literacy and Numeracy works in up to three schools through an in-school instructional leader (deputy/assistant principal level). The Instructional Leader, Literacy and Numeracy focuses on the development of the leadership capacity of school leadership teams and the in-school instructional leaders to implement school improvement strategies. The Instructional Leader, Literacy and Numeracy also facilitates the formation of a collegial network between schools.

An Instructional Leader, Literacy and Numeracy works within their own school and with two other target schools. The Instructional Leader, Literacy and Numeracy is relieved from their substantive duties through funding support provided by the target schools and works as an Instructional Leader, Literacy and Numeracy in these schools. For each of the schools involved an in-school instructional leader is identified (deputy/assistant principal level) to lead school improvement in literacy and numeracy at that school.

A successful instructional leader from a high performing school is released from some responsibilities in their own school to work as an Instructional Leader, Literacy and Numeracy with the leadership team and staff in a target school. Onsite exchange and connection via interactive technology will support shared opportunities for reflective practice and collaborative professional learning.
The Department will implement a common evaluation framework across participating schools to support a consistent and coordinated approach to the evaluation of Early Action for Success.

The common evaluation framework will be developed within the broader context of the evaluation of the NSW Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan to allow ongoing monitoring and review of implementation processes.

The common evaluation framework will have, at its core, three principles:

- use of valid and reliable data
- a focus on outcomes
- objectivity.

Key components of the Early Action for Success strategy’s evaluation include:

- collection of baseline data against which improvements in student achievement, teacher learning and school leadership practices can be measured
- ongoing monitoring and reporting against key milestones
- development of common performance measures against which student progress is judged.

Monitoring, accountability and reporting

The monitoring accountability and reporting requirements will be fully developed within the Department’s common evaluation framework.

Schools will be required to participate in the evaluation of Early Action for Success.

Schools will be required to monitor and track student progress against the Literacy and Numeracy Continuums.

Schools will be required to report to their communities on the school’s literacy and numeracy performance through the Annual School Report.
The following diagram provides an overview of the governance structure for Early Action for Success.

The Ministerial Advisory Group on Literacy and Numeracy will advise the Minister for Education and the education sectors, including the Department of Education and Communities, on early learning in literacy and numeracy.

The General Manager Learning and Development will provide strategic guidance in the implementation of Early Action for Success.

Regional Directors will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of Early Action for Success within their regions.

Instructional Leaders, Literacy and Numeracy will report to the relevant officer at the school or regional level depending on the context specific model in place for the school or group of schools. The Instructional Leader, Literacy and Numeracy will also liaise with the Program Leader, Early Action for Success, on operational matters.

Consultation with key stakeholders, including primary principal groups and the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc., will be ongoing.
Schools will be identified to participate in the Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan in 2012 through a common methodology.

The methodology includes:

- an analysis of schools’ performance data including NAPLAN and Best Start
- The schools’ contextual characteristics including:
  - The degree of disadvantage of the schools or groups of schools using the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA)
  - Enrolment size
  - Student demographic data
- Participation in national partnerships – Literacy and Numeracy, Low SES and Teacher Quality.

In 2012, all participating schools will be in the lowest quartile of Year 3 NAPLAN Literacy and Numeracy performance.

The appointment of Instructional Leaders, Literacy and Numeracy to the first five schools will be through identification by the Regional Directors.

Additional schools will progressively join Early Action for Success throughout 2012.

Up to 50 Instructional Leaders will be appointed by the end of 2012.
Steps to implementation

Regions

1. Identify schools to receive additional support
2. Determine specific school contexts and the most appropriate implementation option for allocating Instructional Leaders, Literacy and Numeracy
3. Regional Directors identify Instructional Leaders, Literacy and Numeracy
4. Deputy Director-General, Schools approves the selection of Instructional Leaders
5. Negotiate the employment package for each Instructional Leader
   Implement ongoing monitoring of progress and adjust resource allocation
6. Implement planned evaluation.

A Program Leader, Early Action for Success will be identified and appointed to coordinate state level support for regions and schools.

Schools and Instructional Leaders, Literacy and Numeracy

1. Identify school priorities and plan appropriate actions to bring about literacy and numeracy improvement
2. Realign school plans, targets, expectations and resources to meet identified needs
3. Target additional personnel and resources to meet identified needs
4. Engage in high quality professional learning
5. Implement ongoing monitoring of student performance in literacy and numeracy
6. Adjust allocation of resources and professional learning to meet needs
7. Participate in ongoing evaluation.

Although participating schools, led by the Instructional Leader, Literacy and Numeracy, will have flexibility in the strategies and actions they implement, they will be required to undertake certain actions. These will be outlined in a set of guidelines for principals and will include:

- utilise The NSW DEC Analytical framework for effective leadership and school improvement in literacy and numeracy
- implement Best Start Kindergarten assessment and use the Literacy and Numeracy Continuums for the ongoing tracking and monitoring of students’ progress and achievement at regular intervals.