



NSW Secondary Education Priorities 2011-15

Position paper prepared by the NSW Secondary Principals' Council

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Contents

From the President	4
About NSW Secondary Principals' Council	5
Summary of Recommendations	6
SPC Priorities for Education in 2011	8
SPC Priorities for Education in 2011	8
1. Funding	8
Business Managers	8
2. Digital Education	9
3. Flexibility in staffing formulas and allocation	10
4. Local decision making	10
5. Quality curriculum and assessment	11
6. Teacher Development	11
7. Adolescent mental health	12

From the President

Secondary principals have a responsibility to play a leading role in shaping the future of public education for the benefit of students in NSW public schools and for the society and economy at large, by preparing today's youth for tomorrow's jobs and to be productive citizens.

With this responsibility, the NSW Secondary Principals' Council (NSWSPC) has prepared a position paper *NSW Secondary Education Priorities 2011*, to outline priority areas for policy and funding in education.

There are seven key priority areas:

1. Funding
2. Digital Education
3. Flexibility in staffing formulas and allocation
4. Local decision making
5. Quality curriculum and assessment
6. Teacher development
7. Adolescent mental health

Reform or change at any level within our education system cannot succeed without the proper engagement of principals who will ultimately lead the classroom response, through processes of improvement and innovation.

To deliver that improvement and innovation Principals must be supported with adequate funding, authority and flexibility to tailor the needs of a diverse group of schools and contexts across New South Wales.

Our members will be speaking with all relevant stakeholders to promote the 22 recommendations in the position paper across the 93 electorates.

The NSW Secondary Principals' Council is uniquely placed, through involvement and interaction with a wide range of key stakeholders in education, to work with the next Government and build on the strong foundation that is public education.

Christine Cawsey
President

About NSW Secondary Principals' Council

The NSW Secondary Principals' Council (NSWSPC) brings together in one professional body more than 500 principals leading high schools, colleges, community and central schools and other state schools with secondary enrolments within the public education system in New South Wales.

The Council's purpose is to:

- enhance the effectiveness of principals through collegial support and development
- provide forums for discussion and debate on key educational issues
- participate in policy development and decision making at system level.

In our role as **educational leaders** in NSW public schools, Members recognise and value:

- the paramount role that public education plays in building a cohesive democratic society
- government policy that ensures an educational provision for all NSW secondary students equivalent to the best offered in the OECD
- belonging to a state-wide system of public education that provides frameworks and shared values for the operation of schools, curriculum and assessment
- the diverse cultural and social contexts of public secondary school communities in NSW and high quality educational outcomes for all students
- the effectiveness of school-based decision making
- the meaningful use of information and communication technologies to inform and empower the lives and learning of principals, staff, students and their families
- working collaboratively with deputy principals and all other members of the school community.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1 – Real increases in funds for teaching and learning.

Recommendation 2 – A 5 per cent increase in the global budget for teaching and learning.

Recommendation 3 – Increased funding to cover the increasing costs of utilities.

Recommendation 4 – Guaranteed protection of school funds generated by the school through careful financial management and by the community (including all interest on school accounts and on term deposits).

Recommendation 5 - A more equitable funding model for schools in NSW based on a student resource package that recognises both enrolment (base funding) and complexity in allocating resources to schools including those that are rural and remote.

Recommendation 7 - Extension of the 1:1 electronic learning device program to include every secondary age student from enrolment in Year 7.

Recommendation 8 - Retention of Technical Support Officers in all secondary school settings.

Recommendation 9 - Allocation of explicit and targeted professional learning funding (in addition to the current Teacher Professional Learning Fund) focussed on technology delivery and learning in the classroom.

Recommendation 10 - Continuation of the state T4L program to support ongoing ICT rollout and the maintenance of ICT co-ordinator funding in secondary schools.

Recommendation 11 - a broadening of the staffing formula for senior years, (currently Years 11 and 12) to Years 10-12. This staffing should be allocated to each school to enable the Principal and staff of each school to meet local needs with specialist programs, transition coordinators, a broader curriculum, vocational education programs in Stage 5 and innovative new programs developed locally.

Recommendation 12 – Greater decentralisation with more local decision making and increased principal authority.

Recommendation 13 – Protection of education and learning equality in the public education system for all students and all communities in NSW.

Recommendation 14 – Continued opposition by government to the misuse of student performance data to create inaccurate and unfair league tables.

Recommendation 15 - Increase TPL funding to \$900 per annum per teacher including the annual fee for public school new scheme teachers to maintain their status with the Institute of Teachers.

Recommendation 16 - Performance pay for teachers and principals based on the achievement of professional standards, set by the profession for the profession. This includes the use by NSW of the national standard for principals.

Recommendation 17 - A more streamlined process for addressing teacher efficiency that would be completed within 12 weeks from start to finish.

Recommendation 18 - Secondary consultancy experts that can assist and advise schools and teachers in secondary pedagogy including VET in schools.

Recommendation 19 - A full time counsellor for all secondary schools and access to counselling services for all secondary students in central schools.

Recommendation 20 - Increased access to Allied Mental Health services and workers across the State.

Recommendation 21 - A comprehensive, coherent and transparent framework for the development of policies for the safety and well being of adolescents in secondary settings.

Recommendation 22 - Additional professional development for teachers to understand and address the mental health needs of adolescents.

SPC Priorities for Education in 2011

1. Funding

Funding cuts in real terms over the past decade to the education budget have been made at the expense of the secondary education sector.

For more than 10 years the Department of Education and Training (DET) has been asked to make 1 – 1.5 per cent productivity savings each year. The impact of years of cost cutting that now approaches more than 12 per cent in real costs over the last decade is a real cut to services to schools and, more recently, threats to school funding itself.

In addition, funds have been diverted from secondary and central school programs to maintain other parts of the DET, including the diversion by the Federal Government of funds for science laboratories in central schools being moved to cover the costs of the BER program. Less than 10% of secondary schools have received funding through the national partnership program.

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Business Managers

Secondary schools are complex businesses with on average over 100 full-time employees, over 1,000 students and budgets and assets under management greater than many medium sized businesses.

Most Principals in NSW manage this complexity to deliver the educational outcomes required by the State without the technical qualifications or prior experience in business management or administration. This is in direct contrast to many government secondary schools in other states, most private schools in Australia and schools overseas, all of which have Business Managers to manage the business and ensure the core business of the school is focussed on education.

The management model in NSW diverts NSW Principals from the core business of teaching and learning. In addition school principals have had a range of new requirements and accountabilities added to their role in the last four years as governments (both Federal and State), the Coroner, the Ombudsman and local communities have raised expectations and requirements without additional support or resourcing.

Recommendation 6 - The appointment of a Business Manager who reports to the Principal in all secondary and larger central schools.

2. Digital Education

To be competitive with other OECD and developing countries, the NSWSPC believes it will be essential that students have the opportunity to learn in a 1:1 digital learning environment from Year 7.

The current Digital Education Revolution (DER) program is federally funded, but only for a fixed period - the follow up program is in the Federal government's forward estimates, but requires the States to contribute 25 per cent of the cost. The current federal program/funding will cease during the life of the next State government.

The rapid changes that are occurring with the use of technology in schools will continue and the NSWSPC would like to promote the collaborative approach of government, Department of Education and Training and the Principals' Association that ensured the successful implementation of the DER program in NSW public schools and resulted in an award winning program for NSW public education.

To support the students in this new learning modality, it is crucial that the appropriate support is provided. This includes the presence of Technical Support Officers in every school and ITC training and development for teachers.

Recommendation 7 - Extension of the 1:1 electronic learning device program to include every secondary age student from enrolment in Year 7.

Recommendation 8 - Retention of Technical Support Officers in all secondary school settings.

Recommendation 9 - Allocation of explicit and targeted professional learning funding (in addition to the current Teacher Professional Learning Fund) focussed on technology delivery and learning in the classroom.

Recommendation 10 - Continuation of the state T4L program to support ongoing ICT rollout and the maintenance of ICT co-ordinator funding in secondary schools.

3. Flexibility in staffing formulas and allocation

The reform to the school leaving age which began 12 months ago requiring school enrolment until the age of 17, unless otherwise employed fulltime or in vocational training, has impacted on secondary schools in that alternative programs and support have had to be focussed on students who would previously have left school at 15 or after the School Certificate. The impact has fallen differentially on comprehensive high schools, central schools and schools for special purposes who cannot select their enrolments.

The SPC is committed to increasing retention in line with the State Plan, however this cannot be achieved without a broadening of the staffing formula for senior years beginning in year 10, nor without local decision making on staff deployment.

Recommendation 11 - a broadening of the staffing formula for senior years, (currently Years 11 and 12) to Years 10-12. This staffing should be allocated to each school to enable the Principal and staff of each school to meet local needs with specialist programs, transition coordinators, a broader curriculum, vocational education programs in Stage 5 and innovative new programs developed locally.

4. Local decision making

Both the state and federal governments have advocated more local decision making, increased principal authority and greater local control of funding, resources and staffing for schools and this has been welcomed by the NSWSPC and its Members.

The NSWSPC would like to develop a working alliance with the State Government, DET and the Primary Principals' Association to ensure moves towards greater local decision making will not divide school communities by advantaging some schools at the expense of others.

The SPC opposes Independent/Charter government schools on the grounds that increasing exclusion within and between sectors creates division and does not result in improved student performance. The best performing systems in the OECD remain comprehensive until at least Year 10.

Recommendation 12 – Greater decentralisation with more local decision making and increased principal authority.

Recommendation 13 – Protection of education and learning equality in the public education system for all students and all communities in NSW.

5. Quality curriculum and assessment

NSW has arguably the best curriculum in Australia, following a long and sustained period of syllabus and assessment development by the Office of The Board of Studies. The process of curriculum development, delivery and accreditation in NSW engages representatives of all systems and professional organisations and takes time to develop, trial, implement and evaluate changes in curriculum and assessment.

The SPC supports the current approach and response of the NSW State Government and the Office of the Board of Studies to the Australian Curriculum. This approach recognises the importance of the NSW curriculum context ensuring that any new curriculum does not take NSW curriculum backwards.

Recommendation 14 – Continued opposition by government to the misuse of student performance data to create inaccurate and unfair league tables.

6. Teacher Development

For many years, NSW has enjoyed the educational benefits of a highly experienced and committed teaching workforce. However, more than one third of teachers and up to 60 per cent of school leaders will retire in the next five years. This seismic workforce change is occurring at the same time as technology, network communication, learning theory and schools reshape to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Quality teaching will continue to underpin the academic, social and personal successes students achieve in public schools. It is also recognised that many of the administrative structures in which teachers work were developed for a far more centralised and hierarchical system than will exist in the next few years.

To offer 21st Century teaching requires educators to be professionally learned and expert. Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) funding has not increased since its establishment and a funding increase is a priority. Together with the maintenance of a standards based approach to teacher development and accreditation will work towards improving the quality of teaching in NSW.

Recommendation 15 - Increase TPL funding to \$900 per annum per teacher including the annual fee for public school new scheme teachers to maintain their status with the Institute of Teachers.

Recommendation 16 - Performance pay for teachers and principals based on the achievement of professional standards, set by the profession for the profession. This includes the use by NSW of the national standard for principals.

Recommendation 17 - A more streamlined process for addressing teacher efficiency that would be completed within 12 weeks from start to finish.

New South Wales Principals' Council – Secondary Education Priorities 2011

Recommendation 18 - Secondary consultancy experts that can assist and advise schools and teachers in secondary pedagogy including VET in schools.

7. Adolescent mental health

Adolescence is a time that puts pressure on young people as they go through the great changes personally and educationally. It is widely recognised that the pressure of academic studies in high school, the impact of social media, family dysfunction, refugee experience, poverty, floods, drought, abuse and the emergence of adolescent health issues all add to a rising prevalence of adolescents and young adults with identified mental health issues.

Recommendation 19 - A full time counsellor for all secondary schools and access to counselling services for all secondary students in central schools.

Recommendation 20 - Increased access to Allied Mental Health services and workers across the State.

Recommendation 21 - A comprehensive, coherent and transparent framework for the development of policies for the safety and well being of adolescents in secondary settings.

Recommendation 22 - Additional professional development for teachers to understand and address the mental health needs of adolescents.