

Teachers for a Fair Go: Exemplary teachers of students in Priority Schools

Information Flyer

What is the project?

Teachers for a Fair Go is a joint project between the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) and the University of Western Sydney (UWS) and is based on the UWS *Fair Go* Project. The project is funded jointly by Priority Schools Programs (PSP) and the Australian Government through an Australian Research Council (ARC) grant.

PSP support communities with the highest concentrations of students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds across NSW. We recognise that there are many outstanding teachers in Priority Schools throughout NSW. Teachers are *the* decisive educational resource in helping narrow the equity gap of social and academic outcomes for students living in low SES communities.

The aim of this project is to identify exemplary teachers whose work is characterised by high levels of student engagement. These teachers will then be invited to be co-researchers in the project, helping the UWS researchers explore, analyse and document their classroom practices.

Teachers are currently being identified from Priority Schools across the three stages of schooling: early (K - Year 4), middle (Years 5 - 9) and later (Years 10 -12). Thirty teachers will be selected (15 rural, 15 urban, 10 from each of the three stages). There is still a need to identify teachers to be part of the project, particularly in the early and later years of schooling.

The project will inform the Australian Government and the NSW DET about successful ways to encourage and support teachers to develop engaging classroom practices resulting in improved learning outcomes for students from low SES backgrounds.

How will the project work?

- ❑ Based on the previous *Fair Go* project and related research by the UWS research team, this project has developed criteria to help teachers identify what student engagement means in classrooms and how that is linked with improved student learning outcomes.
- ❑ We are asking for teachers who are keen to participate to fill in an application form with the support of their school principal. Selection will be based on the criteria outlined in this flyer. Please note that we still need teachers in the early and later years of schooling to apply.
- ❑ From these applications, 30 teachers will be selected and then invited to become critical members of the project. It needs to be emphasised that teachers will be selected in order to achieve the greatest range of

representation: not only across the early, middle and later years of schooling and from rural and urban centres, but also reflecting a range of teaching experience. Chosen teachers are not regarded as the “30 best” teachers in Priority Schools, but as highly engaging, exemplary teachers who represent a broad cross-section of the profession in those schools.

- During 2009 there will be intensive case studies of each teacher’s classroom work undertaken by UWS and DET researchers in partnership with the teachers.
- After that, the case studies will be analysed and this analysis will be shared across all the case studies within and across early, middle and later years teams. This process will include an exploration of the personal and professional journey that has brought each teacher to their current pedagogical position.
- Finally, there will be documentation and dissemination of results across the public education community at national and NSW levels. Note that the UWS team has final responsibility for this documentation.

Who can apply?

Any teacher in a Priority School who is keen to participate, regardless of years of service, can submit an application. Selection will be based on the criteria below.

What criteria should I look for?

- The critical criteria will be around student engagement. *Teachers for a Fair Go* have classrooms that students really want to go to. In these classrooms students enjoy being involved in relevant learning experiences of high intellectual quality at the same time as they learn to become better learners. Learners feel good about themselves in these classrooms. There is an environment of sharing and reflection and the development of a genuine community of learners. Students are supported to value school and to see the importance of improving their learning. Classroom management is more focussed on learning than on controlling behaviour.
- Closely related to the criteria around student engagement will be criteria around learning outcomes. *Teachers for a Fair Go* have classrooms where students are helped towards achieving strong classroom results, relevant to the particular teaching context.
- *Teachers for a Fair Go* have their classroom work recognised for its quality by their local school community. Their teaching might also be acknowledged more widely across the professional community. Note that early career teachers might not yet have achieved this wider recognition and this should not preclude them from submitting an application or being selected to participate in the project.

What’s in it for me?

- I become a co-researcher in a nationally recognised research team and I can develop and refine my research skills.

- ❑ I have the opportunity for independent study with credit towards Masters or PhD study.
- ❑ I have new networking opportunities opened up for me across my local district, the region and the state in a variety of modes including on-line.
- ❑ I have great prospects for professional learning as I reflect on my teaching and share my work with other teachers.
- ❑ I am recognised as an “exemplary” teacher and this might enhance pathways to professional standing and promotion.
- ❑ I have excellent chances to contribute to the improvement of educational and life chances for students in Priority Schools.

What will be my responsibilities if I join *Teachers for a Fair Go*?

- ❑ I will need to commit myself to the project in 2009 and 2010 and work with my co-researcher/s in my classroom for a full week to build the case study.
- ❑ I will have to be reflective about my work, including being willing to keep a professional journal (this will not be an onerous task).
- ❑ I will share professional ideas with my co-researchers in a variety of modes including on-line.
- ❑ I will take part in interviews about my work and professional journey.
- ❑ I will come to meetings with the whole research team to analyse my own and other teachers’ work.

Note that becoming involved in the project will mostly impact on you and will not place too many extra demands on your school, You will need the support of your principal to ensure you are able to be released for project activities. Funding for release time is built in to the project budget.

How do applications work?

- ❑ Teachers from Priority Schools who believe they meet the project criteria can submit an application. In some cases principals, other teachers or regional officers may identify teachers they believe meet the criteria and encourage them to submit an application.
- ❑ Teachers complete the application form, found at www.psp.nsw.edu.au, and have their principal approve their involvement in the project.
- ❑ Applications are then submitted on-line to Priority Schools Programs.

What are the timelines?

- ❑ Application processes are being conducted in 2008 and will be finalised early in 2009.
- ❑ Case studies will be conducted in 2009 and the research will be finalised in 2010.