

Support Sheet #1

Priority Schools Funding Program

NEW SOUTH WALES
DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION
AND TRAINING



What are the social justice and equity principles that underpin the Priority Schools Funding Program?

The social justice and equity principles underpinning the Priority Schools Funding Program (PSFP) are:

**Fair Go
Fair Share
Fair Say
Fair Content.**

Each of these principles relates to an important area of school action and contributes significantly to student success at school.

Social Justice and Equity Principles

*Fair Go
Fair Share
Fair Say
Fair Content
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Fair Say
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Why are social justice and equity important?

Students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds are a diverse group encompassing the full range of learning abilities. School staff in PSFP schools recognise that students from low SES communities can and do achieve high standards when given the appropriate opportunities and support.

Currently, there is a significant and unacceptable gap between the average achievement of low SES students as a group and all students. This difference in achievement is also reflected in areas such as further education and training.

Socio-economic disadvantage should not predetermine the outcomes of schooling for individual students or groups of students. The National Goals of Schooling state that 'The learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students should improve and, over time, match those of other students'.

Every teacher has a responsibility to ensure that all students benefit as fully as possible from schooling. Research clearly demonstrates that families in socio-economically disadvantaged communities see education as the key to their children's chances of future success. It is important that teachers and families maintain high expectations and work in partnerships to support the educational achievement of all students, taking account of their backgrounds.

Overcoming the educational impact of socio-economic disadvantage is often made more challenging by circumstances such as homelessness, illness, family crises, unemployment and isolation. It may be associated with Aboriginality, gender, culture, geographical location and disability. These factors may work together to compound educational disadvantage.

Fair Go

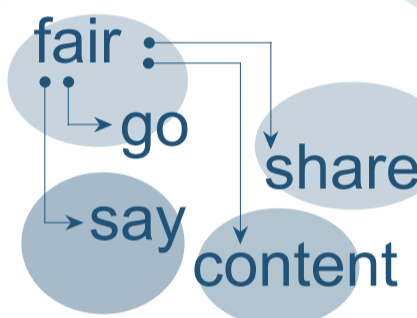
Fair Go refers to equal opportunities and the way schools are organised and run. All students and their communities have access to education and training facilities and curriculum. Classrooms and schools are organised in ways that are inclusive of all students, their families, teachers and community members. In PSFP schools this means having practices that:

- Provide all students with opportunities for educational success, taking account of their backgrounds and personal circumstances.
- Reflect the genuine belief that in a diverse society all students and their families are equally entitled to have their needs responded to positively.
- Develop a positive school culture that maintains high expectations for all students from low SES backgrounds at every stage of their schooling.
- Provide students with well-trained, committed, caring and knowledgeable teachers.
- Avoid stereotyping of individuals on the basis of past performance of a group or the assumed capabilities of a particular group.
- Avoid discrimination of all kinds and implement effective appeal processes and grievance procedures.
- Ensure that aspects of students' personal lives are not viewed as limiting their successful engagement in learning.
- Welcome and support parents and the wider school community in all aspects of school life.

Fair Share

Fair Share refers to the ways resources are distributed. Resources in a school are allocated strategically so that priority is given to those students who need them the most. In PSFP schools this means that:

- Additional and more intensive support is provided to some groups of students if necessary to assist them to work towards achieving syllabus outcomes.
- Priority is given to those students or groups of students most at risk of not achieving the necessary literacy and numeracy standards required for success at and beyond school.
- The specific educational needs of students from low SES backgrounds are acknowledged, respected and valued by all school staff.
- Outcomes for students from low SES backgrounds are comparable to the distribution of outcomes for the student population as a whole.
- Every teacher is supported to deliver quality teaching in well resourced and efficiently organised classrooms.
- All parents are provided with accessible and appropriate information and support to assist their children's learning at home.
- All students have access to high quality learning materials, including advanced technologies, that continue to engage them in learning at every stage of schooling.
- All students receive the benefits and outcomes of education and training to improve their future lives and employment opportunities.



Fair Say

Fair Say refers to participation in school life. Students, their families, teachers and community members have the right to express their views, to be heard and to be understood. In PSFP schools this means that:

- Students have a sense of belonging and feel safe at school.
- Students express their identities and connections to their own families and cultures without harassment.
- Positive relationships across the whole school community are developed and based on mutual respect, trust and recognition of differences between individuals and groups.
- Family and community members are entitled and encouraged to participate in the decisions that affect their children's learning and experiences of school.
- Teachers and school leaders regularly listen to the views of students, their families and the community on school issues that affect them.
- Language is used thoughtfully and respectfully to build shared understandings of expectations about learning and behaviour among all members of the school community.
- Teachers provide honest and constructive feedback to students and their families about student work and participation at school.
- Diversity of expertise and experience among the school staff is recognised and valued in ways that support a positive school culture.

Fair Content

Fair Content is about what is taught and how it is taught. The school curriculum, programs, teaching methodologies and assessment engage all students and reflect their interests and strengths. Consideration is given to the backgrounds and experiences of all students. In PSFP schools this means that:

- All students are supported to achieve the outcomes for their stage within the standards framework of the syllabus.
- Teachers select teaching resources that are inclusive, culturally appropriate and link to the syllabus outcomes.
- Teachers value and build on students' backgrounds and prior knowledge, skills and values in developing teaching and learning programs.
- Learning is a negotiated process between teachers and students based on syllabus content and outcomes in all subjects and key learning areas.
- All students develop the literacy and numeracy needed to acquire the knowledge and skills in each subject and key learning area.
- Students, teachers and family members are engaged in conversations about student learning and assessment.
- Students are supported by teachers and their families to understand the benefits to them of working hard.
- Students are aware of and have access to the full range of curriculum choices available to them.
- School activities are relevant to students' lives and connected to the world.

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How does the Priority Schools Funding Program support social justice and equity practices in schools serving low SES communities?

The PSFP is an equity program that is part of the NSW Government's commitment to social justice. It supports the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century and the NSW State Literacy and Numeracy Plan.

The PSFP provides additional resources to achieve equity of educational outcomes for all students in schools with high concentrations of socio-economically disadvantaged families. All PSFP schools receive consultancy support, significant additional funding and staffing supplementation to assist with the development of social justice and equity understandings and practices.

The PSFP works with school communities through local consultants and community development officers to investigate, identify and implement effective practices to improve student literacy, numeracy and participation. It works within the three inter-related action areas of:

- 1 Home, school and community partnerships
- 2 Quality teaching and learning
- 3 Classroom and school organisation and school culture.

The work of the PSFP contributes to system wide understandings, policies and practices about the specific needs of students from low SES backgrounds.

The DSP working paper *Raising Expectations: Achieving quality education for all* (1999) discusses social justice and equity issues and effective practices. It is a document for school communities to use in building a focus on social justice and equity for all students.

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