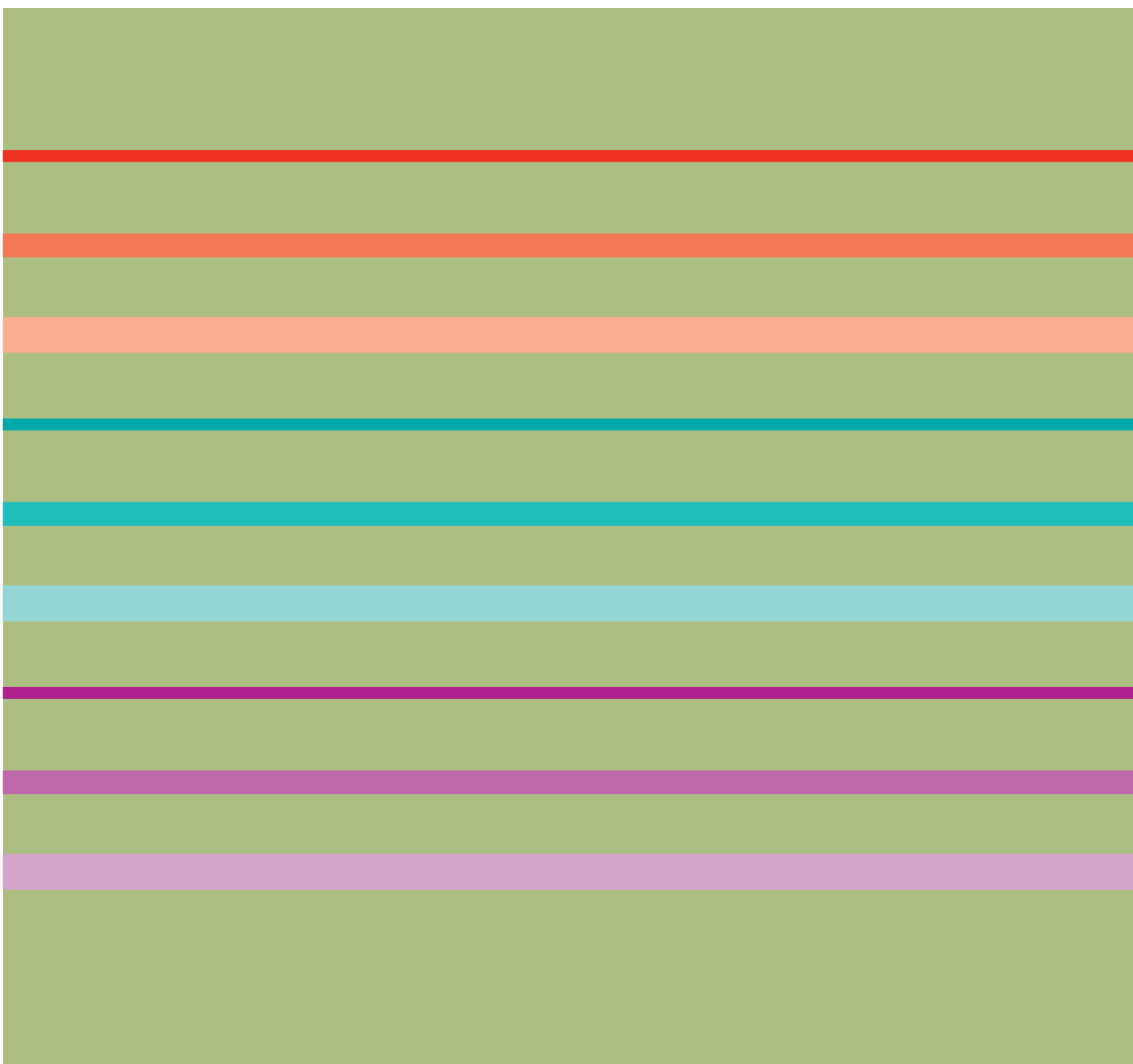


NSW Priority Schools Programs Guidelines 2009

Equity Programs and Distance Education



NSW Priority Schools Programs Guidelines 2009

1. Introduction

Educational research confirms the profound and growing effects of social and economic inequality on the educational outcomes of students.

Currently, there is a significant and unacceptable gap between the average achievement of students from low socio-economic status families as a group and all students. This difference in achievement is also reflected in students' participation in further education and training. Socio-economic disadvantage should not predetermine the outcomes of schooling for individual students or groups of students.

Priority Schools Programs support government schools serving the highest densities of low socio-economic status families in New South Wales. These programs provide resources to improve the literacy and numeracy achievements and engagement of students from low socio-economic status backgrounds. These are the most critical requirements for student achievement across the full range of education and training outcomes.

Priority Schools Programs comprise the Priority Schools Funding Program and the Priority Action Schools Program.

Priority Schools Programs resources are provided to targeted schools in addition to the resources provided to all NSW government schools.

* indicates additional requirements of schools receiving Priority Action Schools Program resources

— underlined sections indicate where additional resources are available as hyperlinks

2. Identification of Priority Schools

The Minister for Education and Training approves the list of NSW government schools eligible to receive Priority Schools Funding Program resources. Priority Schools to be supported from 2009-2012 have been identified as a result of the 2008 Priority Schools Programs survey.

The Priority Schools Programs survey is a voluntary and statewide survey that collects information including occupational status, hours worked and educational qualifications of parents and caregivers.

Priority Schools are identified every four years to coincide with the Commonwealth's funding quadrennium.

- * In addition to the resources provided to all Priority Schools, 101 Priority Schools that are most affected by the impact of high densities of low socio-economic status receive Priority Action Schools Program resources.

Priority Schools supported by the Priority Action Schools Program resources:

- have been identified as a Priority School through the Priority Schools Programs survey
- have an enrolment of a minimum of 160 students (minimum PP4)
- are not in receipt of additional resources from *Schools in Partnership*, *Targeted Aboriginal Student Strategy* and *Targeted School Initiative*.

3. Purpose of Priority Schools Programs resources

Equity programs in NSW are underpinned by principles of equity and are part of the NSW Government's commitment to social inclusion. Priority Schools Programs provide additional support for schools serving high densities of low socio-economic status communities to address the priorities in the Office of Schools Plan.

Priority Schools Programs resources include:

- direct grants to schools
- staffing supplementation to improve the ratio of staff to students
- consultancy support through targeted regional consultants and partnership officers.

The purpose of Priority Schools Programs resources is to reduce the achievement gap in literacy, numeracy and engagement outcomes for students in Priority Schools. This is achieved through Priority Schools Programs objectives which are to:

- improve the literacy and numeracy outcomes of every student
- increase the level of students' participation and engagement in learning
- improve the quality of teaching and learning
- ensure all students achieve the syllabus standards for their stage of schooling, where appropriate
- raise the expectations of students, teachers, school executive, parents and caregivers
- strengthen partnerships between schools, parents and caregivers and community agencies
- increase the effectiveness of classroom and school organisation
- develop and sustain a positive and inclusive school culture.

Priority Schools Programs resources should be used in conjunction with other resources available in the school to support whole school improvement.

All levels of the Department are committed to supporting Priority Schools to *do things differently with more*, rather than, *more of the same*. That is, innovation is encouraged, supported and expected.

* There is an additional expectation that schools receiving Priority Action Schools Program resources will use these significant resources provided to:

- improve student literacy and numeracy outcomes
- strengthen partnerships with the community
- implement innovative approaches to staffing
- develop professional knowledge
- build a culture of learning and continuous improvement.

4. Allocation of resources

Priority Schools Funding Program resources

Priority Schools Funding Program grant

Schools receive Priority Schools Funding Program grants through a formula made up of a base grant and a component which reflects student enrolments. All enrolments, including any pre-school, special education, Intensive English Centre and distance education students, are used in the calculation of a school's allocation.

Each year, schools supported by the Priority Schools Funding Program are advised of their likely level of funding based on anticipated enrolments. The final allocation is based on actual Term one figures. Priority Schools Funding Program funds are sent to schools in semester one and semester two each year as part of the special purpose, 'tied' equity grants in the global budget allocation.

Priority Schools Funding Program staffing supplementation

Staffing supplementation is provided to improve the ratio of staff to students in Priority Schools to improve student achievement in literacy and numeracy. The staffing supplement is based on the actual enrolment of students in regular classes as supplied to the School Staffing Unit in February of the previous year. The School Staffing Unit advises schools of their Priority Schools Funding Program staffing supplementation.

Specialist consultancy support

The Priority Schools Programs regional consultancy positions are integral to the targeted, specialised support provided to Priority Schools to improve the literacy and numeracy achievements and engagement of students in learning. Priority Schools Programs consultants and partnership officers work within regional teaching and learning teams to support Priority Schools and networks.

Priority Schools Programs consultants and partnership officers are made available to Priority Schools in addition to other regional consultancy services, as a guarantee that the neediest schools in NSW are supported by equitable and high quality frontline service.

In addition, Coordinators, Equity Programs and Distance Education are located in regions. These officers coordinate regional equity consultancy and support equity programs to deliver integrated support to schools.

* *Priority Action Schools Program resources*

Priority Action Schools resources are available to identified schools in addition to Priority Schools Funding Program resources.

From 2009, there are significant changes to the ways in which identified schools will access, use and manage these resources.

School enrolments for identified schools must remain above the minimum of 160 students. If school enrolments fall below this threshold, a review of access to Priority Action Schools Program resources will be conducted.

From 2009, Priority Schools receiving Priority Action Schools Program resources will be advised of a notional allocation:

- schools new to the program will have access to 50 per cent of their notional allocation for 2009 only and thereafter access to the full notional allocation
- schools continuing in the program will have access to their full notional allocation
- schools retiring from the Priority Action Schools Program in 2009 will receive 50 per cent of their 2008 allocation for 2009 only.

To assist schools in accessing Priority Action Schools Program resources, the following processes will be implemented:

1. Schools will receive formal written advice regarding their notional allocation from the Priority Action Schools Program.
2. To access notional Priority Action Schools Program allocations, new, continuing and retiring schools will be required to participate in an **Expression of Interest** process (Appendix A) to be assessed by the school education director that shows evidence of:
 - the use of Priority Action Schools Program resources in conjunction with other resources available clearly identified within the school plan or draft school plan
 - significant use of Priority Action Schools Program resources to support innovative staffing approaches – a guide for schools is that historically, the allocation of resources to staffing has ranged between 70 and 80 per cent of the total allocation
 - clear evidence in the school plan of whole school community consultation and commitment to the purpose and objectives of Priority Schools Programs
 - written endorsement of the planned use of Priority Action Schools

Program resources from the school education director.

3. On the basis of the planned use of Priority Schools Program resources, the recommended level of funding from the notional allocation will be approved by the school education director.
4. The recommended level of funding will be distributed to the school in two semester payments.

A member of the Priority Schools and Equity Coordination Unit will play a support role at each phase of these processes.

5. School planning

There should be one school plan (see Memorandum to Principals DN/08/00231 and DN/08/00232). This plan should clearly show the use of Priority Schools Funding Program resources against literacy, numeracy and engagement strategies.

As indicated in the School Planning Policy and School Planning Implementation Procedures:

The Principal is responsible for leading the school community in the implementation and monitoring of the school plan ensuring resources are used to maximise outcomes, including the integration of equity and other targeted funds (4.1.3).

While effective planning for improvement is important for all schools, it is critical for schools serving high densities of low socio-economic status families to ensure that school-based decision making results in actions leading to a reduction in the achievement gap for students.

All schools that receive Priority Schools Programs resources must plan to use these to improve the literacy and numeracy achievements and engagement of students in learning. These additional resources should be used in conjunction with other funds to meet the specific program objectives.

Schools are encouraged to take an evidence-based approach to the use of all Priority Schools Programs resources and to use them in conjunction with other available resources to support whole school improvement.

Schools should use regional support to plan for the use of resources. The value of working in clusters or networks of schools to target resources and implement strategies should also be considered.

From 2009, clear identification of the use of all Priority Schools Programs resources in school plans, including the cash grant and staffing supplementation, will be an audit requirement. Any changes to the planned use of Priority Schools Programs resources within the school plan, from one semester to the next must be approved by the school education director.

All new and continuing Priority Schools are expected to participate in induction and continuous professional learning for the whole school community. An induction toolkit and a range of resources including effective strategies implemented by schools are available on the Priority Schools Programs website. The regional consultancy should support the school with implementation of these materials.

All schools that receive Priority Schools Programs resources must:

Use data and evidence- based approaches

to identify current achievement levels of students and effective strategies to meet the school plan targets.

Raise expectations

to improve teacher, student, parent and community expectations and reflect these expectations in planning.

Focus on whole school improvement and implement a range of strategies

Effective schools research has identified the importance of planning through the three Priority Schools Programs inter-related areas of action:

- quality teaching and learning
- classroom and school organisation and school culture.
- home, school and community partnerships

Engage in professional learning

to build the capacity of school leaders and the whole school community.

Monitor and evaluate

to track progress towards school plan targets through qualitative and quantitative data.

Account and report

to demonstrate effective and appropriate use of resources to improve literacy and numeracy achievement and student engagement.

Priority Schools may use a range of flexible strategies including the employment of additional teaching and non-teaching staff as a key strategy to strengthen the school's capacity to implement strategic and evidence-based action research.

Priority Schools Programs resources must not be used to:

- provide financial assistance to individual students. Support is already provided for this purpose in NSW through the Student Assistance Scheme and other programs.
- fund excursions, resources and activities that are not specifically linked to the improvement of student outcomes in literacy, numeracy and engagement and not articulated in the school plan.

Activities that focus on the improvement of student engagement should be explicitly linked to the improvement of students' literacy and numeracy outcomes.

Asset purchases including technology items must be clearly evident in the school plan. They should be integral to the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy and should be a minor part of a major initiative.

It is expected that schools will keep costs for the administration of the programs to a minimum.

6. Management of resources

Specific advice regarding equity programs funds is included in Schedule B in the Memorandum to Schools issued twice a year in week one of Terms 1 and 3 by Finance Directorate in association with the global payment to schools.

It is expected that Priority Schools Programs resources provided within any one year will be expended within that year to maximise opportunities for that year's student cohort. Any unspent or uncommitted resources in excess of 5% of the semester allocation will be deducted from the next semester's funding allocation.

- * From 2009, Priority Schools will be responsible for all matters related to the employment of teaching and non-teaching staff using Priority Action Schools Program resources. This includes implementing departmental recruitment and employment procedures for teaching and non-teaching staff.

For the employment of teaching and non-teaching staff please note that on costs have been deducted already at state level.

7. Accountability and reporting requirements

Accountability and reporting requirements are subject to audit by officers of the Audit and Risk Management Directorate. A Priority Schools Programs audit module is now a routine part of any audit in a Priority School. This process has been implemented as a recommendation of the 2007 Priority Schools Programs audit to address issues arising from the audit.

From 2009, all financial and educational accountabilities related to targeted equity funding, including Priority Schools Programs and Country Areas Program resources, have been integrated into system's requirements to simplify and streamline processes for schools. These processes also ensure that equity program funds are managed efficiently to support priorities within the school plan.

As indicated in the School Planning Policy and School Planning Implementation Procedures:

School Education Directors will monitor school plans for compliance with accountability requirements including equity or other targeted funding (5.1).

Schools are required to submit evidence that equity program funds have been expended appropriately to improve the literacy and numeracy achievements and engagement of students in learning. School education directors must sight and approve the following documentation by **1 April** and **1 December** each year. The school education director with responsibility for equity will provide evidence that schools that receive equity program resources have met accountability requirements in a regional return to state office.

a. School plan

The school plan must clearly indicate where equity funds and staffing supplementation support the achievement of school targets and strategies. That is, proposed expenditure and the source of program funds must be identified.

1 December: School plan or draft plan for the following year

1 April: School plan for the current year

b. Annual School Report

The Annual School Report should provide evidence of the contribution of funds and staffing supplementation from specific equity programs to the achievement of school targets and improved student learning outcomes. Schools should report on student learning outcomes utilising a range of school data, external student performance data and other value added data.

1 December: not required

1 April: Annual School Report from the previous year

c. OASIS Payment Details Report from Sub-dissection and Note Four Tied Funds Report

An OASIS Payment Details Report from Sub-dissection and Note Four Tied Funds Report, should provide separate and detailed expenditure of equity funds including the program source.

1 December: Evidence in the current school OASIS account of expenditure that support strategies in the school plan
and

Note Four Tied Funds report and OASIS report for the current year

1 April: Evidence in current school OASIS account of expenditure that support strategies in the school plan

It is expected that equity program resources provided within any one year will be expended within that year to maximise opportunities for that year's student cohort.

Unexpended funds remaining in school accounts at **1 April** and **1 December** must be committed in an updated school plan and certified by the school education director. All committed funds must be expended before **30 June**. Any unspent or uncommitted resources in excess of 5% of the semester allocation will be deducted from the next semester's funding allocation.

*** d. Additional requirements: Priority Action Schools Program only**

Due to the significant level of resourcing under the Priority Action Schools Program, regions should support schools to monitor their progress in meeting financial and educational accountability requirements. An annual review process will be undertaken of all Priority Schools receiving Priority Action Schools Program resources. This review will include the principal and members of the school team, regional team and the state office team.

The state office team can provide additional support to regions through:

- statewide data analysis
- monitoring and evaluation
- models of educational and financial accountability
- examples of effective planning and strategies.

Expression of Interest

Priority Action Schools Program 2009

A completed Expression of Interest form, with a copy of the approved school plan attached, must be submitted to the school education director **by 1 December**.

School code	School name

The staff, students, parents and caregivers and community members accept the invitation to participate in the Priority Action Schools Program in 2009.

In doing so, we agree to implement strategies to meet the objectives of Priority Schools Programs to:

- improve the literacy and numeracy outcomes of every student
- increase the level of students' participation and engagement in learning
- improve the quality of teaching and learning
- ensure all students achieve the syllabus standards for their stage of schooling, where appropriate
- raise the expectations of students, teachers, school executive, parents and caregivers
- strengthen partnerships between schools, parents and caregivers and community agencies
- increase the effectiveness of classroom and school organisation
- develop and sustain a positive and inclusive school culture.

A summary of planned strategies and resources used to achieve these objectives as evident in the attached school plan (or draft) include:

Planned strategies	*add or delete rows as necessary	Priority Action Schools Program resources \$
		\$

Total Priority Action Schools Program resources	

Principal's signature	Principal's name	Date

The principal's signature confirms that representatives from the whole school community including staff, students and parents have been consulted in the planned use of Priority Actions Schools Program resources to support the school plan.

Parent/Community representative	Name	Date

To be completed by the School Education Director

2009 Priority Actions Schools Program notional allocation	Recommended Priority Actions Schools Program allocation 2009
\$	\$

School education director's signature	School education director's name	Date

The school education director's signature confirms that:

- regional officers have been involved in the development of planned strategies using Priority Action Schools Program resources in the school plan
- the region will provide ongoing support for the implementation of planned strategies using Priority Action Schools Program resources
- the strategies are consistent with advice in the Priority Schools Programs Guidelines 2009.

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This resource can be downloaded at www.psp.nsw.edu.au

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