



# NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP ON IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY

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Bulletin 1

## The Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales Limited

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“The Smarter Schools National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality has at its heart the belief that the teacher is pivotal in students’ learning and that high quality teaching is the single greatest in-school influence on student engagement and outcomes.”

## Overview

The NP TQ is a five year program of collaboration between the Australian Government, the NSW Government, the Catholic Education Commission and the Association of Independent Schools of NSW, on behalf of the independent sector. It aims to raise student performance by improving the quality of teaching in schools.

There are 12 Facilitation Reforms, of which seven form the agenda for achieving improved teacher quality through increasing in-school support and professional development for teachers and school leaders, increasing the number of teachers accredited at higher levels of the professional standards, and expanding the pathways into teaching.

The remaining five are national level reforms aimed at implementing national professional teaching standards and improving workforce data.



Australian Government



The Smarter Schools National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality is a joint initiative of the Australian Government, the NSW Government, the Association of Independent Schools and the Catholic Education Commission.



## The Independent Schools Centre for Excellence Council

(formerly known as Independent Schools National Partnerships Management Council)

The ISCE Council was established to provide advice to AISNSW regarding implementation of the National Partnerships in the independent sector and has representatives from independent schools across NSW.

In May 2010 the Council circulated a survey focused on the National Partnerships Teacher Quality Facilitation Reforms to all independent schools. The survey has provided valuable direction for National Partnerships work, guiding the development of programs within the Independent Schools Centre for Excellence.

### *How independent schools can be involved*

1. By accessing funding under the National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality
  - All independent schools have access to subsidies for eligible courses that enhance quality teaching, build deeper subject content knowledge and support leadership development. Eligible AIS PD courses have already been subsidised. To date, well over 1200 teachers have benefited from this support.
  - Regional and remote schools can apply for travel grants to provide subsidies for teacher release, travel and accommodation for teachers and leaders attending eligible professional learning.
2. By accessing funding through the Independent Schools Centre for Excellence.
  - For details of the grants available see page 4
  - Guidelines and applications for Subsidies and Grants are available from the AIS website: Funded Programs > National Partnerships > Applying for Grants
3. By discussing your ideas with Lynne Stone, National Partnerships Coordinator, [lstone@aisnsw.edu.au](mailto:lstone@aisnsw.edu.au) ■

## Teacher Quality in Action

### *Leadership Development*

The principal of Minimbah Aboriginal Primary School in Armidale, Carolyn Briggs, (pictured left), herself an Aboriginal woman, has developed her leadership skills by participating in the Foundation Leadership Program for Newly Appointed Principals which is run by the Independent Schools Leadership Centre.



This program addresses the most pressing challenges encountered by newly appointed principals. Its focus is on developing the emerging understandings of governance, financial, legal and other leadership issues that participants bring from their previous roles.

A special feature of the program is the leadership coaching provided to participants by trained and experienced school principals.

Carolyn speaks highly of the value of the support she received from her leadership coach. As a result of her work on strategic planning, Carolyn has changed the way her school presents itself to visitors and the wider community and implemented a number of strategies to build the learning culture at Minimbah.

Assisted by a Building Relationships Grant, Minimbah has also entered into a mutually beneficial partnership with The Armidale School working on critical reflection on classroom practice and cultural awareness to build deeper understanding. ■

### Professional Exchange and Mentoring Program

Over 50 teachers across the independent sector are participating in a 5 day program of mentoring and professional exchange designed to support New Scheme or professionally isolated teachers, especially in regional areas, or teachers in challenging environments. The program has provided new challenges for mentors who are generally very experienced teachers, often accredited at the higher levels or working toward it. One of the mentors, Kiersten Check of St Ignatius' College reflected on her experiences saying:

*Mentoring provided the unique opportunity of assisting others while enhancing one's own professional and personal attributes. I enjoyed the challenge of finding ways to strengthen and broaden my mentee's repertoire of teaching strategies, assessment and evaluation tools by sharing my knowledge and experiences. While my mentee was able to gain self-confidence through having someone to help and coach her through areas of uncertainty, I was able to gain self-confidence through engaging in an endeavour that was new to me and participating in an experience that was intrinsically rewarding.*

### Building a Culture of Teacher Accreditation

Through Teacher Accreditation Grants, schools are being supported to assist teachers to apply for higher levels of teacher accreditation.

An innovative scheme of professional development matches potential applicants with in-school critical friends. Separate courses have been developed to build the capacity of both in-school critical friends and the teachers seeking accreditation.

Together they share their knowledge of the Professional Teaching Standards and their understanding of the evidence required for the accreditation process. The power of this approach is that those undergoing the accreditation process have a collaborative, collegial group in the same school context. It encourages others to seek teacher accreditation at the higher levels.



*Mentor, Larné Jacobs (right) of Rouse Hill Anglican School, working with Charmian Price (left) from Moree Christian School.*

For teachers at St Philip's Christian College, this model has supported them to build on an already strong culture of professional learning and improvement. Using a continuous system of coaching and mentoring, St Philip's harnesses the expertise of teachers who have more teaching experience or are more advanced in the accreditation process. By building in-school capacity, this initiative provides a sound basis for future sustainability.

### Flexible professional learning for regional and remote schools through video conferencing

The independent sector has a diverse range of schools with 45% having a population of less than 200 students and 67% of schools having an SES rating equal to or less than the NSW average. Schools in regional and remote areas struggle to fund travel and time release for school leaders and teachers to attend professional learning activities.

The AIS has launched the first of ten regional videoconferencing facilities (HUBS) to provide links to quality professional learning activities in metropolitan areas.

Early in term 2, the first HUBS at Kinross Wolaroi (Orange), Bishop Druitt College (Coffs Harbour) and Central Coast Grammar School (Erina Heights) hosted a series of consultations on the Australian Curriculum, bringing together city and regional teachers in an historic link-up.

As programs expand, video conferencing facilities across the state will make professional learning more accessible, with increased opportunities for mentoring and support for teachers and leaders in regional independent schools. ■



## The Independent Schools Centre for Excellence



The Independent Schools Centre for Excellence (ISCE) is dedicated to facilitating the sharing of high quality teaching practice among independent schools and the building of strong relationships between schools and Aboriginal communities.



The ISCE is an initiative under the Smarter Schools National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality and currently offers the following grants:

1. *Teacher Accreditation Grants* up to \$4,000 per teacher to assist schools to support teachers seeking higher levels of accreditation.
2. *Internship Grants* of up to \$10,000 each. There are four different categories for internship grants: schools in regional and remote locations; schools with high Aboriginal enrolments; schools seeking to have an Aboriginal intern; and schools seeking interns in Mathematics, Science or TAS. Internship grants are designed to support schools to take final year teacher education students, with the aim of providing these students with an enhanced internship/practicum experience. These grants have the potential to encourage final year education students to consider teaching in independent regional schools, in more challenging environments and in subjects where there are teacher shortages. Nine internship grants have been awarded in 2010 and 2011.
3. *Building Relationships Grants* are intended to promote sharing and supportive relationships across schools in the independent sector. The purpose of these grants is to encourage schools to work together to foster high quality teaching practice. To support the learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and increase cultural awareness, schools might also work to establish strong relationships with Aboriginal elders and communities.

The 14 schools awarded grants in 2011 are working on projects addressing one or more of the 12 National Partnership Facilitation Reforms to improve teacher quality.

For more information on the reforms go to [www.aisnsw.edu.au](http://www.aisnsw.edu.au) > Funded Programs > National Partnerships

4. The *Professional Exchange and Mentoring Program* operates across independent schools in NSW. Participating schools receive up to five days of teacher release to support a teacher to work with a teacher in another independent school.

The program covers includes all travel costs including accommodation as well as training for mentors.

For information about the Independent Schools Centre for Excellence and how to be part of its initiatives go to [www.aisnsw.edu.au](http://www.aisnsw.edu.au) and click on the ISCE button. ■

### For further information contact:

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