



# Professional learning for school leaders and teachers improves student engagement

**Wellington Christian School is a small rural school participating in the NP for Low SES Communities. The principal has participated in a 10 day Leadership course, through the Independent Schools Leadership Centre (ISLC), as well as accessing support for professional learning and mentoring for his staff through the Independent Schools Centre for Excellence (ISCE).**

Led by their Principal, the entire community, including the Board, decided to focus on developing best practice by incorporating educational research. They studied “Why Not The Best Schools” by Caldwell and Harris (2008) and embarked on creating and strengthening four kinds of capital in their school – intellectual, social, spiritual and financial. They particularly focused on intellectual capital: the level of knowledge and skill of those who work in or for the school.

Over the past six months, the Principal and teachers have worked to address the key indicators of intellectual capital: capacity for acquiring and sharing professional knowledge; a comprehensive and coherent plan for the professional development of all staff; participating in networks with other schools to share knowledge, solve problems or pool resources; and where necessary outsourcing to augment the professional talents of its staff.

For a small rural school located in a low SES area, the school community did not previously have the resources necessary to achieve their goals. The funding through the National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality supported the Principal to participate in an extensive Leadership Program of coaching by meeting with an experienced principal. In addition, the funding has enabled teachers to access to high quality professional development through networking with teachers outside their school. Through the Professional Exchange and Mentoring Program Wellington Christian School has also been able to support a beginning teacher with five days of on-site support in programming, teaching strategies and assessment.

Through the support available under the NP TQ, the Wellington Christian School has seen significant growth in teacher understanding to strengthen their teaching practice and hence student learning, motivation and engagement.