



Early Childhood and Primary Education
Secondary Education
Technical and Further Education
Vocational Education and Training
Higher Education
Adult and Community Education

The Hon Grant McBride MP
Acting Chair
Public Accounts Committee
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000



DGL 09/2018
RML 09/5946, 10307

Dear Mr McBride

I write in response to the former Chair's correspondence of 11 November 2009 regarding the Auditor-General's Report *Improving Literacy and Numeracy in NSW Public Schools*.

I would like to acknowledge the opportunity that this report has provided to support our efforts in ensuring that all students achieve appropriate standards in literacy and numeracy.

The audit process has been valuable in posing key questions that have guided our work in responding to the recommendations, including whether the literacy and numeracy needs of each child are assessed adequately, whether there are adequate programs for students with literacy and numeracy learning needs and how do we know if our programs are successful.

The attached submission provides a summary of the work undertaken by the NSW Department of Education and Training to address the recommendations of the Auditor-General's report. I am pleased to report that a number of recommendations have been addressed and we are well on track in addressing the remaining recommendations.

Yours sincerely

Michael Coutts-Trotter
**DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF TAFE NSW**

13 December 2009

SUBMISSION: PERFORMANCE AUDIT – IMPROVING LITERACY AND NUMERACY IN NSW PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	ACCEPTED OR REJECTED	ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN	DUE DATE	STATUS/COMMENT	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>1 Ensuring by July 2009 that schools use the School Measurement, Assessment and Reporting Toolkit (SMART) to help understand their performance.</p>	Accepted	<p>Teachers can access NAPLAN data through SMART to successfully inform teaching and learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Workshop for Principals on using SMART b. SMART available to all teachers c. Smart to be installed on laptops for all secondary teachers along with a training video on how to use SMART. d. SMART training to be provided for low SES schools and schools identified for involvement in the 	<p>June 2009</p> <p>June 2009</p> <p>Term 4 2009</p> <p>December 2009</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>e-Learning modules will be made available to schools in Term 4 2009 that will train teachers on how to use and analyse data in SMART.</p> <p>On track</p>	<p>Educational Measurement & School Accountability Directorate</p>

		Accepted	NAPLAN. Teachers access literacy and numeracy continuums to support student assessment	December 2009	Numeracy continuum K-6 draft complete. Literacy continuum K-2 complete, 3-6 well advanced.	Curriculum K-12 Directorate
3	Developing by December 2009 a more systematic means of identifying and supporting the 'at risk' student, so as to facilitate early identification, assessment and targeting of resources.	Accepted	Teachers are able to determine which students are at risk of not progressing to their next stage of learning a. prepare draft definition of at risk students b. consult with key groups to formalize proposed definition c. finalise definition for use in relevant DET literacy and numeracy materials	April 2009 Term 4 2009 December 2009	Complete Cross portfolio writing party now working on developing a draft inclusion statement with professional accountabilities. Draft for broader departmental and stakeholder consultation early in 2010	Disability Programs

4	<p>Providing by July 2009 clear guidelines to support the development of individual learning plans and requiring such plans for all 'at risk' students.</p>	Accepted	<p>Teachers are able to prepare targeted individual learning plans for those students at risk of not progressing to their next stage of learning</p> <p>a. scope the elements of individual learning plans</p> <p>b. develop draft materials and consult with key groups</p> <p>c. Develop new literacy and numeracy document <i>"Working Together. Supporting at risk students in literacy and numeracy"</i></p> <p>d. Support document to be developed <i>Working Together: Developing individual learning plans</i></p>	November 2009	<p>On track</p> <p>Components of On line training currently under development include "Assessment", "Learning Plans" and "Setting SMART Goals".</p> <p>On track</p> <p>On track</p>	Disability Programs
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5	Ensuring its new management systems are fully developed by December 2010 and quickly put to use to enable the effective tracking and analysis of student performance and students needs over time.	Accepted	Teachers are able to access software to support student assessment a. Software to be developed linked to continuums (funding through NP)	December 2009	K-2 software - completed Yr 3-6 software – delayed	Curriculum K-12 Directorate
6	Working with other agencies to provide earlier identification, intervention and information sharing prior-to-school on children with learning difficulties.	Accepted	Greater capacity for information sharing to support early identification of children with learning difficulties a. Scope opportunities to identify children with additional learning needs b. Investigate ways in which information gathered by other agencies, service providers about additional learning needs of children under school age can be shared with schools.	December 2009	On track The data collection of the AEDI has concluded with checklists completed for 98% of all kindergarten children in NSW. Initial release of data will be available to all NSW schools in December 2009. In addition to release of data at a community level each school will receive a school profile.	Early Childhood and Interagency Programs

					Data will identify children in each of the five domains. Draft national report prepared by Commonwealth. Data release strategy prepared.			
7	Systematically assessing student needs for the literacy and numeracy support at the school and regional level.	Accepted	Teachers have clear guidance on how to monitor and respond to the literacy and numeracy learning needs of their students a. Provide specific level curriculum based assessment tools to compliment the continuums b. Support document to be developed <i>Working Together: Assessing the additional learning needs of students</i>	December 2009	On track	Disability Programs		
8	Periodically surveying the adequacy of resources and support.	Accepted	Periodic survey of literacy and numeracy resources and support	November 2009	Curriculum based assessments to build on the literacy and numeracy continuums Awaiting official release of continuums.	Curriculum K-12 Directorate	On track	

9	<p>Providing by July 2009 better information for all schools on what additional instruction and support students should be given, what learning resources works best for their specific needs and what funding programs a school may be eligible for.</p>	Accepted	<p>Teachers have access to teaching and learning materials in literacy and numeracy that address the educational needs of every learner.</p> <p>a. map and document the range of resources accessed by schools for teaching literacy and numeracy</p> <p>b. develop a draft guide that provides teachers with key knowledge about individualizing instruction can be used by teachers /schools to identify effective programs</p> <p>c. finalise draft guide detailing materials for teachers that links specialist support and specialist resources for literacy and numeracy teaching across program areas</p> <p>d. Support document to be developed <i>Working</i></p>	December 2009	<p>On track- Human resource mapping complete.</p> <p>On line Module covering individualized planning under development.</p> <p>Support documents to link with the Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Teaching Guides under development. Due for completion December 2009.</p>	Disability Programs
				December 2009	Under development	

10	Strengthening by December 2009 the literacy and/or numeracy teaching skills of teachers working with the lowest performing students, such as by accelerating its planned introduction of expert literacy and numeracy learning leaders, particularly those with expertise in teaching 'at risk' students.	Accepted	<p><i>Together: Providing instruction, interventions and support</i></p> <p>Teachers have access to support provided by specialist staff skilled in responding to students considered at risk of not progressing to their next stage of learning</p> <p>a. identify professional learning support available to support teachers in literacy and numeracy teaching</p> <p>b. Build capacity of regular classroom teachers and literacy/numeracy leaders to teach 'at risk' students</p>	End Term 4	On track	Disability Programs
				End Term 4	From Assessment to Programming document available on line. This document provides support to teachers in meeting the needs of students with literacy difficulties in primary and secondary schools.	

			c. develop and document professional learning and include in new support material <i>"Working Together: Supporting at risk students in literacy and numeracy"</i>	End Term 4	On line Module under development – has focus on supporting 'at risk' students.	
11	Undertaking more intensive monitoring and review of how under-performing schools are using their resources, what changes are being made, and what impact they are having.	Accepted	Review of use of resources in underperforming schools			Educational Measurement and School Accountability Directorate
			a. Focused support schools identified	September 2009	Complete	
			b. Review of school development policy and focused school support	November 2009	On track	
			c. Develop materials to support monitoring of student progress	August 2009	Complete	
			d. Develop school self-evaluation support materials	August 2009	Complete	
12	Developing by July 2009 clear and consistent guidance on what intervention is needed, based on the results of a student's assessment, regardless of the overall performance of funding	Accepted	Teachers and schools are able to identify appropriate support for students considered at risk of not progressing to their next stage of learning. Schools identify and access			

13	<p>status of the student's school.</p> <p>Strengthening accountability arrangements by rationalizing funding programs to more closely align with students needs, increasing quality assurance, and more clearly establishing authority and responsibility for such programs at the school and regional level.</p>	Accepted	<p>resources to support teachers and students</p> <p>a. Provide a guide to the steps to be taken when a student is not making progress against the continuums</p> <p>b. Support document to be developed <i>Working Together: Providing instruction, interventions and support</i></p> <p>Teachers are able to access specialist professional support and or specialist resources when needed in responding to the literacy and numeracy learning needs of their students.</p> <p>a. Developing the new <i>'Working Together: Supporting at risk students in literacy and numeracy documents</i>. Support documents include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Assessing the additional learning needs of students</i> ▪ <i>Providing instruction,</i> 	<p>November 2009</p> <p>Term 1 2010</p> <p>End term 2, 2010</p>	<p>On track</p> <p>On track</p> <p>On track</p>	Disability Programs
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			<p><i>interventions and support</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Developing individual learning plans</i> ▪ <i>Working in partnership with parents</i> 	<p>December 2009</p>	<p>Not commenced</p>	<p>Disability Programs</p>
<p>14</p>	<p>Providing by July 2009 more specific guidance to parents on what support students can expect and how they can be involved in helping schools.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Teachers are able to provide more specific information & guidance to parents about their child's progress and support that they can provide.</p> <p>a. Support document to be developed <i>Working Together: Working in partnership with parents</i></p>	<p>October 2009</p>	<p>New state plan targets are presently being determined. New Office of Schools targets reflecting these will replace the existing interim Office of Schools targets.</p>	<p>Educational Measurement and School Accountability Directorate</p>
<p>15</p>	<p>Ensures that all regions and schools work together to set explicit targets for literacy and numeracy attainment by December 2008.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Targets for reading and numeracy are determined at state, regional and school level and schools are supported in setting their targets</p> <p>a. New state and regional targets for At and Below Minimum Standard for reading and numeracy determined</p>	<p>October 2009</p>	<p>New state plan targets are presently being determined. New Office of Schools targets reflecting these will replace the existing interim Office of Schools targets.</p>	<p>Educational Measurement and School Accountability Directorate</p>

			b. New state and regional targets for Proficient for reading and numeracy determined	October 2009	New state plan targets are presently being determined. New Office of Schools targets reflecting these will replace the existing interim Office of Schools targets.	
			c. School target setting tool to be updated and distributed to schools	October 2009	Update and distribution of School target setting tool dependent upon State Plan targets/Office of Schools targets.	
16	Rationalising and consolidating the programs that aim to improve literacy, and (separately) the programs that aim to improve numeracy.	Accepted	<p>Audit of literacy and numeracy programs</p> <p>a. Map and profile current programs/Identify overlaps and gaps</p> <p>b. Plan action & Implement</p>	July 2009	On track	Curriculum K-12 Directorate
17	Establishing at the outset of such programs the expected impact over time on literacy or numeracy outcomes.	Accepted	<p>Schools are better able to identify current performance and set improvement targets for literacy and numeracy.</p> <p>a. Develop procedures by which schools implementing programs identify current performance and set</p>	September 2009	On track	Curriculum K-12 Directorate

			improvement target.					
18	Monitoring program performance with a suite of performance indicators and with studies of individual students over time.	Accepted	A suite of program performance indicators. a. Identify indicators for each program	December 2009	On track			
			b. Develop procedures by which indicators are to be monitored and reported (perhaps similar to the RR process)	December 2009	Not commenced			
19	Leading a whole of government assessment by July 2009 of the value of strengthening transition to school support and programs in communities with the poorest performing public schools.	Accepted	Increased capacity to support student transition to school. a. Work with other government agencies to determine value of strengthening transition to school programs for children in disadvantaged areas.	July 2009	Complete			Early Childhood and Interagency Programs

B. EFFECTIVENESS OF AUDIT PROCESS:

- The audit process has been a valuable opportunity in strengthening the Department's activities to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of all students in government schools.
- It has provided key questions to guide this work and a renewed focus on those students at greatest risk of not achieving adequate skills in literacy and numeracy.
- The Department found that the auditors were open to feedback and pleased with the consultative and collaborative nature of the process.
- The cost of the audit process for the Department was approximately twenty per cent of the time of a Principal Education Officer responsible for this work. This would equate to approximately \$23,400.