

# Response to the Review of Funding for Schooling Emerging Issues Paper

Council of Catholic School Parents NSW/ACT

March 2011

CCSP NSW/ACT  
PO Box A960  
Sydney South NSW 1235  
(02) 9390 5338  
E-mail: [office@ccsp.catholic.edu.au](mailto:office@ccsp.catholic.edu.au)  
Website: [www.ccsp.catholic.edu.au](http://www.ccsp.catholic.edu.au)



## 1. Preamble

- 1.1. This submission has been prepared by the Council of Catholic School Parents NSW/ACT [CCSP] on behalf of the parents of 240 000 students in Catholic schools in NSW. This is the second submission made by the CCSP to the Review of Funding for Schooling. The first being in response to the Draft Terms of Reference and was jointly prepared by the Federation of Parents & Friends Associations of Catholic Schools in Queensland and the Victorian Catholic Schools Parent Body. The CCSP also met with the Review Panel on 9 July 2010.
- 1.2. The CCSP is an independent association and the officially recognized body representing the interests of parents and carers with children in Catholic schools in NSW. The work of the Council is guided by the principals of choice, equity and social justice.
- 1.3. The CCSP is represented on the National Catholic Education Commission Parent Committee and through that Committee has contributed to the development of the NCEC position on schools funding. In the light of this, this submission does not offer advice on particular models of funding. This advice will be provided through the NCEC submissions to the Review Panel. Rather this submission provides general comments on Key Themes identified in the Emerging Issues Paper with a particular focus on equity and parent, family and community engagement with schools (see pp 3-5 and 8-11).

## 2. Catholic Schooling in NSW

- 2.1. Catholic schools in NSW:
  - have been providing a quality education for Australian children for over 180 years
  - educate more than one in five students
  - have significant geographical and socio-economic coverage
  - reflect the cultural diversity of contemporary Australia
  - are a national asset
- 2.2. The mission of Catholic schools is to be more than providers of high quality education - they also seek to support the spiritual life of students and families and exist to advance the common good of Australian society<sup>1</sup>.
- 2.3. There are 586 Catholic schools in NSW serving educationally, geographically, culturally and socio-economically diverse communities. They enrol over 240 000 students.
- 2.4. The range of school types is also diverse covering primary, secondary, senior secondary and central (K-10) models of schooling, special schools (for students with special needs and those with behavioural or other needs), vocational colleges and systemic and Independent schools.

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<sup>1</sup> NCEC (2009). Funding Principles for Catholic Schools. National Catholic Education Commission. Available at: [www.ncec.catholic.edu.au/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=cat\\_view&gid=39&Itemid=53](http://www.ncec.catholic.edu.au/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=39&Itemid=53)

2.5 . Catholic schools have a commitment to accessibility and low fees. On average, Catholic schools operate with fewer resources than other schools (this was confirmed by the MySchool 2.0 financial data). Yet despite this Catholic schools continue to achieve strong and equitable educational outcomes. On this basis, Catholic schools can be said to represent value for taxpayer funds.

### 3. Response to the Emerging Issues Paper

#### 3.1. Equity of educational outcomes

- 3.1.1. The CCSP strongly believes that equity is about “securing educational success for all students in all contexts”.<sup>2</sup> The alternative - just some students in some contexts - we believe is morally unacceptable. We also strongly agree with the sentiment expressed in the Emerging Issues Papers that “equity should ensure that differences in educational outcomes are not the result of differences in wealth, income, power or possessions”.
- 3.1.2. There is a broad range of factors affecting educational outcomes and achievement and hence educational equity. These factors can be divided into two broad types, namely ‘in-school’ and ‘out-of-school’ influences. Quality teachers are widely cited as the most significant in-school factor. Other school factors may include school location, resources and leadership. Out-of-school factors include student characteristics, the home environment, the socio-economic and cultural backgrounds of children and families, parent involvement/engagement and the broader social context. Researchers such as Hargreaves and Shirley, Harris, Andrew-Power and Goodall, and Miller have argued that often the greater proportion of effects on student achievement come from outside the school<sup>3</sup>. A number of researchers put the proportion of effects at 20% in-school and 80% out-of-school. So while schools do make a very significant difference, that difference is mediated by many other factors.
- 3.1.3. No doubt many of the submissions from schools and school authorities will rightly shine the light on how the various in-school factors can be leveraged to achieve greater equity in educational outcomes for children. Our expertise however lies in linking and aligning the in-school factors with out-of-school factors.
- 3.1.4. SES, in the context of education, often relates to the resources available in the home to support children. Resources such as parental income, parental education and parental occupation are the three main indicators of SES. The effect of SES on an individual student’s outcomes is significant but the combination of children’s SES at the school

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<sup>2</sup> Harris, A. (2009). *Equity and Diversity: Building Community. Improving schools in challenging circumstances*. Paper based on an Inaugural Professorial Lecture delivered at the Institute of Education, University of London, on 26 April 2009

<sup>3</sup> Hargreaves, A., and Shirley, D. (2009). *The Fourth Way: The Inspiring Future for Educational Change*. Corwin: California, CA; Harris, A., Andrew-Power, K., and Goodall, J. (2009). *Do Parents Know they Matter: Raising Achievement through Parental Engagement*. Continuum International: London; Miller, K. (2003). *School, Teacher, and Leadership Impacts on Student Achievement*. Policy Brief for Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL).

level is even more important<sup>4</sup>. A key implication of this, according to Professor John Hattie, relates to how schools are funded to support greater equity and ameliorate some the negative effects of low SES. He suggests that supporting families to bridge the divide between home and school, to understand the culture and language of schooling and building parent capacity and self-learning can be important innovations to overcome the effects of poverty on children's learning outcomes<sup>5</sup>

3.1.5. This means that while the relationship between socio-economic disadvantage and underperformance "is powerful, resilient and resistant"<sup>6</sup> it is also true that the nexus can be broken by using positive family and home influences as levers, together with such things as quality teaching, to achieve high quality social and academic outcomes for children.<sup>7</sup> The following section on Parent and Community Engagement (pp 8-11) looks at this in more detail. Many of these strategies do not require additional resourcing but rather simply a will and commitment to embrace them as good practice. Other strategies will require additional financial resources.

3.1.6. In terms of systematically addressing the sources of educational disadvantage the evidence is clear that:

- We must target additional (equity) funding to the *needs of students* wherever they are – that is funding must follow the student regardless of the school or school sector that the student attends.
- High levels of disadvantage in any one school may require additional support for that school.
- As each school is socially and culturally unique with "their own starting points and distinctive set of issues and problems"<sup>8</sup> funding programs and other support infrastructure must empower schools and communities to respond to their local needs in ways that are meaningful to those communities.
- Top down, standardized responses alone will not sustain long-term improvements, especially in disadvantaged communities. Indeed, as Professor Alma Harris contends: "issues of equity and diversity will only be addressed by building a strong infrastructure of localised and context-specific support between teachers, parents and other professional groups. Building strong communities with schools at the centre will ensure that all young people have the same opportunities and life chances, wherever they happen to live"<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Hattie, J. (2009), *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*. Routledge: New York

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*, p61-63

<sup>6</sup> Harris et al. p11

<sup>7</sup> Biddulph, Biddulph and Biddulph. (2003). *The complexity of community and family influences on children's achievement in New Zealand: Best Evidence Synthesis*. Report prepared for the New Zealand Ministry of Education.

<sup>8</sup> Harris, A. (2009). *Equity and Diversity: Building Community. Improving schools in challenging circumstances*. Paper based on an Inaugural Professorial Lecture delivered at the Institute of Education, University of London, on 26 April 2009, p21.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*, p2.

- Integrated forms of support are crucial. The concept of ‘extended schools’ is one approach that has been used successfully in many jurisdictions both here and overseas – see Appendix A for more detail.
- “[C]ontinuous, cross-context family involvement is necessary to meet the goal of educational equity”<sup>10</sup>. This means that supports for families, but particularly disadvantaged families, must be comprehensive and holistic in their approach to encouraging family involvement and engagement in learning.

3.1.7. The CCSP is of the belief that schools funding must be considered in the broader context of how we support young people and families (particularly the most vulnerable) in and out of school. This requires an integrated approach - similar to the approach taken in the United Kingdom with the *Children’s Plan* (under the previous Labor Government) that provided a holistic view of how we fund schools and associated agencies to support children’s achievement and well-being.

3.1.7 The CCSP strongly believes that the federal government should develop and implement a comprehensive and long-term family involvement strategy with resources for capacity building, monitoring, accountability, and professional development, as well as incentives for innovation and evaluation. A policy framework such as this would require all portfolios with responsibilities for families to work together to achieve common policy goals. This approach reflects the view that schools alone cannot address all the factors impacting on disadvantage and hence educational equity and that a much broader repertoire of supports is needed.

## 3.2. Recurrent funding, Targeted and needs-based funding and Capital funding

3.2.1. The CCSP believes that all children have a right to share equitably in the public expenditure on education. This right is aligned with the right of parents to choose the most appropriate education for their children, including the right to choose a faith-based education.

3.2.2. The CCSP also believes that the distribution of public funds from all levels of government must be needs-based.

3.2.3. In relation to future funding models the CCSP would support arrangements that: Provide distinct funding allocations based on:

- a basic per capita funding entitlement for students that recognises their right to a public investment in their education
- a needs based component which recognises the higher costs of schooling associated with addressing educational disadvantage (arising, for example,

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<sup>10</sup> Weiss et al, p 28.

from disability, rurality, Indigeneity, language proficiency) or other special needs associated with the child or school.

- a capital allocation (block funded) which provides adequate support for current and future capital needs particularly for school communities with little capacity to raise capital funds themselves (for example low SES communities), new Catholic schools in growth areas and new streams in existing schools.
- Provide at least current levels of funding in real terms
- Support system block funding to State Catholic Education Commissions [CECs] so that general recurrent funds can be redistributed by the CECs according to need. We strongly believe that state authorities and their diocesan members are best placed to know and understand the range of local needs across the system and distribute funds accordingly to ensure equity
- Fund non systemic or Independent schools on an amount determined by looking at schools' available resources and an agreed socio-economic index
- Guarantee each student a minimum basic entitlement
- Link indexation with actual government school recurrent costs

### 3.3. Support for students with special needs and students with disability

3.3.1. The National Disability Strategy and the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, call on all Australian Governments to embrace the challenge of educating all children to achieve their full potential.

3.3.2. Ensuring the highest quality education for all students with special needs is a particular challenge faced by all schools.

3.3.3. Catholic schools in NSW have been educating students with disabilities since the 1870s, long before comparable provision was made in Government schools<sup>11</sup>. The fastest growing enrolments in Catholic schools over the last three decades have come from students with a disability<sup>12</sup>. This statistic is true across all Catholic school jurisdictions not just NSW.

3.3.4. In NSW there are over:

- 10,357 students defined as Students with Disabilities (SWD)
- 483 students in Catholic Special schools
- 54 satellite classes for children with Autism.
- approximately 24,000 students enrolled in NSW Catholic schools who require learning support but who are not classified as Students with Disabilities under the current NSW Disability Criteria<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> CEC NSW (2010). NSW Special Needs Inquiry: Submission to the NSW Legislative Council, Catholic Education Commission NSW. Available at: [www.cecsw.catholic.edu.au/dbpage.php?pg=view&dbase=submissions&id=6](http://www.cecsw.catholic.edu.au/dbpage.php?pg=view&dbase=submissions&id=6)

<sup>12</sup> NCEC (2010). Australian Catholic Schools 2009. National Catholic Education Commission. Available at: [www.ncec.catholic.edu.au/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=cat\\_view&gid=40&Itemid=53](http://www.ncec.catholic.edu.au/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=40&Itemid=53)

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*

3.3.5. The cost of providing for these students is substantial and increasing rapidly, however the current policy and funding arrangements for SWD in Australia mean that there is a persistent shortfall in resources needed to provide the appropriate educational adjustments many children need.

3.3.6. As a matter of urgency we need:

- A policy settlement on a national definition of Students with a Disability
- Funding arrangements (involving both state and federal governments) that:
  - are transparent and fair and result in increased financial support for SWD
  - are sufficiently nuanced/sophisticated to address the individual needs of children and provide appropriate educational supports
  - provide commensurate amounts of funding across all education sectors according to where the student enrolls to ensure equal access for SWD in education
  - recognise all Australian schools, both government and non-government, are increasingly bound by the same national policy imperatives whether that be National Disability Standards, reporting and accountability, an Australian Curriculum, Teacher Standards or the National Goals for all Young Australians and should be supported to achieve their obligations under these initiatives commensurately
- Action on improving the co-ordination and supply of essential services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy especially for rural and remotes areas
- Defined teacher standards relevant to the needs of special needs students and appropriate professional development to support teacher capacity
- Appropriate recognition in national curriculum development of the diverse learning needs of students
- An comprehensive, coherent and integrated policy framework to support children with disabilities and their families that takes into account the in-school and out-of-school supports these families need

3.3.7. In order for the promise of educational equity (and the promise that all children fulfill their potential) to be realised we must transform our collective approach to funding students with disabilities as a matter of urgency.

## 3.4. Community and family engagement

- 3.4.1. Our joint submission on the Review's Terms of Reference dealt with the issue of community and family engagement with schooling in some depth. This submission recaps some the key issues raised.
- 3.4.2. There is now a substantial body of research, spanning some forty years, highlighting that the role of families, especially when they are 'engaged' is a "powerful enabling and enhancing variable in children's educational success" - before, throughout and beyond school<sup>14</sup>.
- 3.4.3. Parent engagement, through family-school partnerships, has been positively associated with the enhanced academic achievement and social and emotional outcomes for students. It has also been found to positively affect behaviour, attendance and school retention. For families themselves, it can provide a sense of connectedness and enhanced self-efficacy and for schools it can generate professional rewards for teachers and staff, increased social capital, and a greater sense of community and belonging<sup>15</sup>. The benefits are there for all families but particularly for families from lower SES backgrounds.
- 3.3.4. Close partnerships between families and schools can therefore improve educational outcomes for students and contribute to positive outcomes for both school staff and parents.
- 3.3.5. We believe the current national reform agenda (as articulated through COAG and the National Goals for Young Australians) provides a strong impetus for a focus on family school partnerships and enhancing parent engagement with learning and highlights the need for more urgency in this area.
- 3.3.6. Many schools need greater assistance to be able to work more effectively with families. They cannot, however, be expected to do this work alone and without additional resources (both financial and human). This view was confirmed at the then Deputy Prime Minister's Principal's Forum in 2009 where Principal's highlighted that schools are aware of the building pressure to engage parents on new terms and to better support parental capacity in some cases but that schools are struggling to do this work on their own. They highlighted:
- The increased expectation that schools and principals will take on roles that

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<sup>14</sup> Hoover-Dempsey, K.V. and Sandler, H. M. (1995). 'Parental Involvement in Children's Education: Why Does It Make a Difference?', *Teachers College Record*, Vol 97, Number 2, Winter 1995

<sup>15</sup> Henderson, A., and Mapp, K., Johnson, V and Davies, D. (2007). *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships*, The New Press, Canada; Desforges, C., and Abouchaar, A. (2003). *The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievements and Adjustment: A Literature Review*, Research Report RR433, Department for Education and Skills, London; Pushor, D. (2007). *Parent Engagement: Creating a Shared World*, Invited Research Paper, Ontario Education Research Symposium, January 18-20, 2007, Ontario Canada; Harris, A., Andrew-Power, K., Goodall, J. (2009). *Do Parents Know The Matter? Raising Achievement Through Parental Engagement*. Continuum International Publishing: London; Weiss, H., Kreider, H., Lopez, M.E., and Chatman-Nelson, C. (2010). *Preparing Educators to Engage Families: Case Studies Using an Ecological Systems Framework (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed)*, Sage Publications, California.

were traditionally the responsibility of parents.

- Concerns that this trend places pressure on the time and resources of schools, teachers and principals, and their ability focus on education.
- The need to target the development of parenting skills and engage parents in short school-run programs that address student wellbeing issues, and consider funding grants to support schools to deliver these programs.
- The need to encourage children to be more involved in communities, clubs, associations, and sporting teams and involve community members within the school.
- The need to provide funding for more support staff within schools to assist engagement with specific community groups and more school counsellors.
- The critical need to engage parents and the community to improve outcomes for Indigenous children.

3.3.7. We suggest that the role of Parent, Family and Community Coordinators (or liaison officers) is an effective way of addressing social exclusion, the educational achievement and retention gap for disadvantaged children and enhancing parental engagement with schooling. Such roles can be a vital asset in schools, especially in alleviating some of the concerns raised by Principals – see Appendix A for more detail on this proposal.

3.3.8. It is vitally important that future policy and planning make a distinction between parent involvement and parent engagement. The *involvement* of parents in school governance - on P&Cs and P&Fs and school boards - while important in many ways does not have a direct link to improved educational outcomes<sup>16</sup>. Parent *engagement*, however, is more concerned with the beliefs, attitudes and activities of parents and other family members to support children’s learning at home and at school – this type of parent behavior has a direct association with student learning outcomes. Engagement, according to Pushor, implies “enabling parents to take their place alongside educators in the schooling of their children, fitting together their knowledge of children, teaching and learning, with teachers’ knowledge”<sup>17</sup>. In order to make in-roads in terms of educational equity – family engagement more than involvement is the key.

3.3.9. Of course, involvement and engagement are not mutually exclusive strategies and one can, and often does, provide a vehicle for the other. But the research is clear, engagement strategies that are linked to learning have a greater effect on outcomes than other types of involvement. Having said that, there is still a strong argument to be

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<sup>16</sup> Harris, A., Andrew-Power, K., Goodall, J. (2009). *Do Parents Know The Matter? Raising Achievement Through Parental Engagement*. Continuum International Publishing: London

<sup>17</sup> Pushor, D. (2007). *Parent Engagement: Creating a Shared World*, Invited Research Paper, Ontario Education Research Symposium, January 18-20, 2007, Ontario Canada.

made that “in order to raise achievement parents need to be both involved in schools *and* engaged in their children’s learning”.<sup>18</sup>

3.3.10. Many of the day-to-day strategies for building more effective partnerships with families and communities (and engaging parents in the learning of their children) are not in themselves resource intensive but simply involve schools doing things differently and more mindfully.

3.3.11. The CCSP was awarded funds through the National Partnership for Teacher Quality for a Centre of Excellence in Parent and Community Engagement. The resource can be found at [www.partners4learning.edu.au](http://www.partners4learning.edu.au). It provides an evidence-based approach to building parent and community partnerships by focusing on the needs of schools and school staff. Feedback on the resource suggests that by working more mindfully (not necessarily harder) teachers can begin to build highly effective partnerships with families and the broader community.

3.3.12. In order to build the capacity of teachers to partner with parents and communities more effectively, however, pre-service teacher training and in-service professional courses will need to be enhanced. Currently, many pre-service teacher training courses have one or two sessions in a four year degree devoted to parent and community engagement.

3.3.13. Similarly, in order to achieve sustainability and provide some of the evidence-based strategies that we think are particularly important, like wrap-around family support through extended services and parent and community coordinators, an on-going investment by the federal and state governments will be necessary.

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<sup>18</sup> Harris, A., et al. (2009).

# Appendix A

## a) Extended Schools

Extended schools, also referred to as Full-service schools or schools as community hubs, put the needs of children and families first.

Extended schools are seen as a key means of lifting children out of poverty and improving their outcomes and life chances in later life.

Essentially an extended school works in partnership with other local schools, partners from the voluntary, community and private sectors, to offer access to a range of services and activities which support and motivate children and young people – in effect ‘a hub for services’.

These services and activities can include the following:

- Early childhood services and before and afterschool childcare
- Parenting support - structured, evidence-based parenting programmes, as well as more informal opportunities for parents to engage with the school and each other
- Community access to school facilities – but only where these facilities are suitable
- Access to adult learning programmes
- Access to targeted and specialist services - early identification of, and support for, children and young people who have additional needs or who are at risk of poor outcomes. This includes those with behavioural, emotional and health needs or other difficulties.

## b) Parent/Community Coordinators<sup>19</sup>

Parent, Family and Community Coordinators (or liaison officers) have long been suggested as a possible way of addressing social exclusion, the educational achievement and retention gap for disadvantaged children and enhancing parental engagement with schooling.

A number of schools in Australia have already introduced parent support personnel into their schools. The role, however, is much more common in overseas jurisdictions, including the UK and various jurisdictions in the US. Some examples are outlined briefly below.

The Australian Family-School Partnerships Project: A qualitative and quantitative study (2006) identifies 20 elements of best practice emerging from the evaluation of 61 family-school partnership pilots. One element (no.18) was “Appoint a parent/community liaison person to the staff” (p50). On the importance of this element, parents, principals and the researchers noted that:

“A Community Liaison Officer, though not a paid position yet in the school seems an integral part of making projects with parents really work in an environment where staff are very busy”.

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<sup>19</sup> Information in this section is based on a submission to the Australian Government 26 January 2010 by Cronin, D. and Millar, N. (2010). *Parent and School Community Coordinators* and Millar, N. and Cronin, D. (2010). “A Pastoral Parent Coordinator within the School Community” in *Bridging the Gaps Between Families and Schools*. Sydney: St Pauls Publishers.

[It is important to] “Have someone on the staff as a liaison person with time to do the role rather than just fitting it on as an extra”.

“The allocation of a staff member to organise activities for parents was a masterstroke as it took the school’s interest in the parents’ welfare to a deeper level”.

“The person working to enhance the relationship between home and school should be a person who cares about the welfare of parents”.

The 2006 Commonwealth Report also found that the seed money provided to the pilot schools was crucial for the success of the partnership projects and that many schools used the money to employ a parent liaison officer. The report states that “if there was a single most critical use for the money, it was the employment of a parent liaison officer” (p25). In relation to this and resourcing more generally, the report recommends:

*That remote areas and areas of social and economic disadvantage be considered priority areas for the promotion of family-school partnerships (Recommendation 2 , p26)*

*That it be recognized that time and resources are necessary to embed partnership work in schools (Recommendation 3, p26)*

*That the work of schools in building community capacity and social capital be recognised as an emerging responsibility of schools in contemporary Australia, and be resourced accordingly. It should be promoted and encouraged so that over time it becomes part of the core function of schools. It seems to us that money invested here at all levels of government would be repaid several times over in the beneficial effects of improved educational outcomes and better-functioning communities. Not only this, but the community are already voting with their feet: they are increasingly turning to schools for this kind of assistance. Not to recognise this reality leaves schools caught between trying to meet these increasing demands from the community and lack of the resources necessary to do so. How this should be done is a political question (Recommendation 8, p27).*

The primary role of Parent, Family and Community Coordinators is to empower parents in culturally appropriate ways to become active participants in the education of their children. Typically they are also be involved in:

- Facilitating parent-school communication;
- Building relationships with and between families;
- Assisting school leadership team and school parent associations with parent engagement;
- Signposting and facilitating connections with government, non-government and community agencies and organisations;
- Encouraging parent involvement in the school
- Raising awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children's educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills;
- Fostering trust between parents and the educational community;
- Fostering enhanced student outcomes through collaboration with school personnel.

Parent Coordinators provide particular support for those parents who:

- need help in determining how best to help their children;
- are infrequent participants in school activities;
- may need clarification of their role in the educational process;
- need assistance in making connections and accessing services;
- associate schools with past negative experiences.

We propose four possible ways forward:

- **Universal access** – based on the assumption that all children and parents benefit from enhanced parental support (New York City and England models)
- **Targeted funding to low-SES communities** – based on the assumption that these communities may not have the resources to employ a parent coordinator without targeted assistance and that these communities may have higher levels of (and multiple forms of) disadvantage and social exclusion. The National Partnerships provide for this option but encouragement to use funds to support such a role is needed.
- **Communities self-identify** – based on the principle of subsidiarity and the notion that local communities know their needs best and the assumption that those that identify a need are more ready to receive assistance of this kind and put it to good use. A re-focussed National Chaplaincy Program could be applied here.
- **A national pilot** – to build up a more substantial Australian evidence base (although the Family-school Partnership Project pilots provided some very good evidence that this is a strategy that works) before proceeding to either 1,2 or 3.

## Examples of Models

### USA

**TITLE:** Parent Coordinators

**JURISDICTION:** New York City Department of Education, US

**DESCRIPTION:** Parent Coordinators are trained professional staff working on-site in schools. They are responsible for encouraging and promoting active involvement by parents in their children's education. They are an additional point of contact for families in addition to Principals and teachers. They also assist the school leadership team and school parent associations in terms of helping them engage parents, help with by-laws, elections etc while remaining independent of the association. Parent Coordinators also connect with community organizations and faith-based groups to coordinate activities/services such as health care, after school and mentoring programs. They provide outreach to families, convene regular meetings and events for parents and act as a liaison to central and regional parent support staff.

Parent Coordinators are employed to work different hours to other school staff – working some school hours as well as nights and weekends. Parents have direct access to the Parent Coordinators through the use of dedicated mobile phone numbers.

**GOALS OF PROGRAM:** to create a strong base for parent services for all families; encourage and promote parental engagement; create more welcoming schools; help to resolve issues at school level as they arise; provide families with information and services they need to help their children.

**FUNDING:** Each school is provided funding for one Parent Coordinator. Initially the program cost US\$43 million.

**UNIVERSAL/TARGETED PROVISION:** Universal (1200 system-wide = 1 per school).

**OTHER:** Parent Coordinators are supported by 13 Parent Support Offices located in Learning Support Centres and in District Offices. Training for Parent Coordinators and other parent support staff is conducted through a "Parent Academy" and they receive on-going training throughout their employment.

**SOURCES:** NYC Department of Education *How to Get Involved:*

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Parents/Get+Involved/default.htm>

*\*Public Advocate of New York City (April 2008) "Is Anybody Listening: A Follow-up Survey of New York City Department of Education Parent Coordinators". A report by the Office of Public Advocate of New York City.*

## UK

**TITLE:** Parent Support Advisors

**JURISDICTION:** Department for Children, Schools and Families, England.

**DESCRIPTION:** The Parent Support Advisors [PSAs] Pilot was a government funded initiative to support 20 Local Authorities (LAs) to introduce PSAs into their workforce. Initially, the main focus was on pupil attendance and punctuality, however, in reality there was a very wide range of activities undertaken and practice has already developed to be much broader. One important role was that of mediation between school and parents. They are seen to occupy an important position at the interface between schools, which typically employ them, and parents. Local flexibility in terms of the role of the PSA is very evident.

Typically the role entails: building relationships with parents; attendance and punctuality; working with children; working with parents; listening and being with parents; mediation and communication between home and school; establishing and being a link with local community and signposting services for families; transition.

Other roles included: developing mothers' parenting skills; running parenting courses/workshops/guest speakers; working with families whose child has been excluded from school; arranging activities for students after school if asked to do so by parents; helping parents to achieve literacy skills; attending parent evenings; home visits.

**GOALS:** to improve the life chances of children and young people and to deliver equality of opportunity through: supporting parents to meet their responsibilities to their children; support for all, with more support for those who need it most; and prevention and working to prevent poor

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outcomes for children, young people and their parents from developing in the first place\*

**FUNDING:** A government grant (£40 million) was made available to fund the employment of PSAs over the period 2006-2008.

**UNIVERSAL/TARGETED:** Pilot ended August 2008. In 2008, 717 PSAs were in place in 1167 schools. LAs were chosen largely on the basis of deprivation, but also looking for a mix of conditions (such as LA/school size and a rural/urban mix with at least one LA from each region). The program will become a universal program.

**OTHER:** Initial training was provided by specialist training body, the Training and Development Agency. The TDA was also developing a specific post-entry qualification. The training received to prepare them for the role was based on generic children's workforce training modules developed by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and role-specific modules developed by the TDA, and modified and implemented at LA level to reflect local needs. Existing qualifications of PSAs were varied, ranging from none to GCSE to degree level. Often these were professionally relevant including qualifications and experience in counselling, nursing, childcare and psychology.

SOURCE: Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007) "*Parent Support Advisor Pilot First interim report from the evaluation*", The University of Warwick Research Report No DCSF-RW020 [www.dcsf.gov.uk/research](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research). \*p1

## **TITLE: Family Liaison**

**JURISDICTION: Department of Education and Science, Ireland**

**DESCRIPTION:** The Home School Community Liaison Scheme was established in Ireland in 1990. Teachers were initially appointed as liaison officers in a number of primary schools throughout the country in areas of urban disadvantage. In 1991, the scheme was extended to post-primary schools and in 1999 the scheme was extended to all designated disadvantaged schools.

**GOALS:** The aims of the liaison scheme are: To maximise the participation of the children in the learning process, in particular those who might be at risk of failure; To promote active co-operation between home, school and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of the children; To raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children's educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills; To enhance the children's uptake from education, their retention in the educational system, their continuation to post-compulsory education and to third level and their attitudes to life-long learning; To disseminate the positive outcomes of the scheme throughout the school system generally.

**FUNDING:** The home school liaison co-ordinator has access to specific funding and this is provided by the Department of Education and Science.

**UNIVERSAL/TARGETED:** The scheme is targeted at students who are at risk of not reaching their potential in the educational system because of economic or social disadvantage.

## AUSTRALIA

### TITLE: Family Liaison Officer

**JURISDICTION:** Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Broken Bay, NSW.

**DESCRIPTION:** Two Part-time positions (one 4 mornings per week and the other 3 mornings per week 8.30 to 12 noon) for a Family Liaison Officer in two schools on a yearly contract basis. Officers had to be supportive ethos of Catholic Education, have excellent communication skills including the capacity to empathise and maintain confidentiality, be able to work unsupervised as well as collaboratively with Principals, school staff and local welfare agencies, have knowledge of local community, an ability to work with Principal and staff members to empower parents in understanding education today and so better support the education of their children at school and develop leadership support for parents in local school/parish programs and be well organized with good time management skills.

**GOALS:** a full service model of family support within the school, parish and community framework and the development of stronger relationships between parents, school and families in the community.

**UNIVERSAL/TARGETED:** targeted to low SES communities

### TITLE: Community Liaison Officer (CLO)

**JURISDICTION:** South Australian Government, SA.

**DESCRIPTION:** The Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) work in Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) schools. CLOs work collaboratively with students, school leaders, teachers, school counsellors, guidance officers, community organizations, parent groups, school councils, and government agencies.

CLOs provide support by: liaising with school leaders, staff members, parents/caregivers and students; Working with students to develop their knowledge, skills and understandings to enable them to participate fully in our culturally and linguistic ally diverse society; Encouraging student retention at school; Referring students to study support programs; Contributing to student and parent/caregiver participation in cultural activities and events within the school and broader community to promote multiculturalism; Encouraging parent/caregiver participation in schools; Providing information about careers, employment opportunities and vocational programs; ; Interpreting and translating; Liaising with community and state agencies (eg. Family and Youth Services); providing professional development for both district and school based staff as well as parents/caregivers and community members.

**GOALS:** to develop understandings about students' cultural backgrounds; to provide information about the Australian education system and curriculum policies to parents/caregivers; to contribute to students' improved schooling outcomes by working closely with school communities and external agencies to ensure the provision of and access to the most appropriate educational programs.

## **TITLE: Home School Liaison Officer**

**JURISDICTION:** Department of Education, Tasmania.

**DESCRIPTION:** The duties of the Home School Liaison Officers are: to provide an effective communication link between schools and students and their families; Provide information to parents regarding the public education system and the alternative educational courses available to students; Assist in the development and implementation of programs to involve parents in the education of their children; Provide reports as required by Department officers; Provide advice to the principal on community involvement strategies; Provide advice and support to families to encourage young people to participate and succeed in schooling.

Home School Liaison Officers are expected to have sound knowledge of Tasmanian public education system; High level communication skills and the ability to communicate sensitively and effectively; The ability to liaise effectively between individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds, together with the ability to establish rapport with, and provide counselling to, students who are having difficulties; Proven personal and interpersonal skills, including organisational and problem solving skills, together with the ability to work effectively as a member of a team; Proven experience in the successful and effective development and implementation of programs.

**GOALS:** to facilitate effective communication between the school and the community and contribute to the development of community involvement strategies. Assist with the improvement of retention rates of students to Year 12.

**OTHER:** Responsible to and with guidance only from the Principal.

## **TITLE: Parent/Community Educators/ Parent Resource Officers**

**JURISDICTION:** Catholic Education Offices, Parramatta, Sydney, Lismore, Maitland Newcastle, Broken Bay, NSW.

**DESCRIPTION:** Various role descriptions for regionally-based parent officers. They work closely with schools and parent bodies (P&Fs and similar). They organise parent education courses, assist with parent association constitutions, provide mediation between school and the parent body. Develop structures for the effective participation of parents.

**GOALS:** The main aim is to foster the partnership between parents and teachers in the education of children in Catholic schools by supporting, developing and implementing programs with that aim.

**UNIVERSAL/TARGETED:** Regional support for all schools in the region.

**OTHER:** Qualifications: group/teamwork facilitation skills, and highly developed adult education.