

Context

The Queensland Government has provided \$52M in funding to the Catholic sector for the period 2013 -2017 to focus on professional excellence in teaching. The Queensland Catholic Education Commission is pleased that the Queensland Government has acknowledged the flexibility required to effectively administer these funds to meet the requirements of a diverse sector while still being accountable to the outcomes and high standards demanded of the initiative.

The 300 Catholic schools in Queensland are governed by five Diocesan education authorities and 17 Religious Institutes employing 19,000 teachers and staff. This governance is grounded in two basic principles.

1. The first principle of the common good is characterised by promoting a spirit of co-operation rather than competition, effective communication, and individual responsibility.
2. The second principle of subsidiarity states that decisions should be taken as close to the local level as appropriate and /or feasible.

These two principles provide Catholic schooling authorities, principals, staff and school boards with considerable decision making ability to implement curriculum, design pedagogy, determine staffing structure, design facilities and manage finances as well as ensure collaboration and teamwork in schools. This level of flexibility enables Catholic school authorities and their schools to respond to local context and needs, operate efficiently and be inclusive of parental/community engagement.

These principles also underpin a process whereby each school authority consults with their schools to determine the focus of actions and report these to QCEC annually on a report template supplied by QCEC.

Introduction

This 2016 report summarises the 250 planned projects which the 22 Catholic schooling authorities determined, in the context of their operations and capacity, to promote excellence in teaching and allow Catholic schooling authorities and schools to make decisions that best suit their local communities. Queensland Catholic Education Commission has identified six priority areas that promote professional excellence in teaching and support school decision-making and projects are aligned to these areas:

1. Improve teaching and learning
2. Recognise and promote the development of high performing teachers
3. Promote and support great teachers especially in the areas of early years, students with disability, learning difficulties and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, family and community engagement
4. Promote partnerships across schools, authorities, sectors and providers to enhance and provide professional excellence
5. Develop excellence in mentoring and coaching
6. Develop aspiring leaders.

1. Improve teaching and learning

The 22 Catholic Schooling Authorities are planning 107 initiatives over 2016 that particularly focus on improving teaching and learning. These projects can be broadly described as:

- 1.1. Curriculum planning
- 1.2. Developing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
- 1.3. Improving differentiated learning pedagogy
- 1.4. Data literacy
- 1.5. Literacy projects

The following lists the type of projects under each of the descriptors above.

1.1 Curriculum planning

Projects focused on the development of curriculum involve:

- mapping and review processes
- using an Instructional Design model
- implementing more engaging and interdisciplinary programs
- embedding deeper understanding and development of skills.

1.2 Develop Professional Learning Communities

These projects aim to improve student learning outcomes through the development of teacher capacity using professional learning communities. They include:

- operational protocols
- observational strategies for peer collegial support.

1.3 Improve differentiated learning pedagogy

The 10 projects planned include:

- providing increasingly flexible and inclusive education
- further developing differentiated teaching and learning strategies
- workshops specifically for teachers who encounter students who struggle with self-regulation of effort and motivation, anxiety and depression.

1.4 Data literacy

There are 14 projects that deal with the issue of using data to inform practice for staff through:

- improving the availability, usability and understanding of student data
- improving the capacity of teachers to provide meaningful feedback to students through assessment design
- using consultants to guide and in-service staff
- mentoring and coaching of curriculum leaders
- using resources for targeted feedback, for example numeracy and reading comprehension.

The scale of these projects range from school based to whole of diocese.

1.5 Literacy projects

Seven of the projects are aimed at improving the skill level of junior and middle school teachers in order to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for students. These include:

- literacy intervention
- reading support
- feedback cultures

Accelerated Literacy Learning Professional Development workshops, data analysis and mentoring are also being implemented.

2. Recognise and promote the development of high performing teachers

These projects are diverse and meet a variety of purposes for different contexts. Some projects develop staff capabilities to:

- reflect on their pedagogy
- include observation of classroom practices including video observation discussions

- discuss and share learnings in collaborative groups
- use consultants to act as critical friends.

Other strategies use a number of programs that encourage excellence in teaching and learning such as:

- Harvard Visible Thinking
- Marzano's Art and Science of Teaching
- Professional Growth Model
- Praxis Community Development Training
- Educator Impact to undergo self-reflection/assessment involving feedback through student & staff surveys
- Using the University of Creative Careers (SCAD) eLearning's collaborative online environment for sharing of professional practice
- VET in Schools: A New Venture used to allow VET Teaching Teams to upskill.

High performing teachers are also being invited through some initiatives to apply for scholarships to enhance their capacity.

3. Promote and support great teachers especially in the areas of early years, students with disability, learning difficulties and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, family and community engagement

3.1 Students with disability

Initiatives in this area will involve specialist one on one training in Applied Practice Training, differentiated instruction and a program to improve the autonomy and literacy of students with diagnosed speech impairment.

3.2 Learning difficulties

Further support and training is being offered to help differentiate the curriculum to better meet the needs of students with high learning needs.

3.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education

In the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education, projects planned are:

- Peer Mentoring
- the engagement of external experts in coaching teachers
- enhancing staff understanding of and connection to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- partnerships with James Cook University and other external bodies to foster and develop in teachers effective skills and ability in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and English as a Second Language students in the classroom
- workshops on Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity Training
- understanding and appropriately responding to differentiated needs and styles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait students as well as other students experiencing disadvantage or difference
- trauma, suicide and working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, training programs.

4. Promote partnerships across schools, authorities, sectors and providers to enhance and provide professional excellence

A range of initiatives to promote partnerships is being planned for 2016. These include:

- university based academic support for teachers across schools to collaboratively engage in research
- developing shared opportunities including Professional Learning Communities across schools for the sharing of ideas and for training purposes
- creating an eLearning Conference where teachers present and discuss pedagogy with teachers from other schools
- visitations and sharing of best practice with schools in Victoria and NSW to identify, assess and implement good practice in preparation for the new senior assessment
- a literature festival with an increased awareness for teachers of access to events for rural and remote schools through Skype
- middle leaders leadership exchange programs

- staff exchange peer mentoring
- *Teacher teaming* project to enable leading teachers from schools spread across a huge geographical area to support more isolated and remote school communities, especially their teachers, in situ.

5. Develop excellence in mentoring and coaching

Mentoring and coaching projects aim to develop working agreements and frameworks that allow staff to mentor and build teacher capacity for mentoring and coaching across primary and secondary settings. Other initiatives include:

- the provision of peer coaching based on AITSL Standards
- engagement of consultants such as QUT to deliver *Teacher Peer Mentoring* to selected staff
- consultation on the process of learning and how to create inclusive flexible learning programs.

Mentoring is being used to deliver school initiatives including:

- the constructs of positive psychology
- mindfulness
- student wellbeing programs
- the reflection, observation and appraisal of performance to increase student engagement program
- critical reflective practice and group supervision development.

Other Catholic schooling authorities are building a coaching approach to performance conversations and leadership.

6. Development of aspiring leaders

Projects planned to develop aspiring leaders include:

- using the *AITSL 360 Group Tool* for a deep reflection on performance
- Emerging Leaders Challenge Programs
- Teaching and Leading for Understanding
- Team Leaders Program
- *Technology of Participation (ToP)* leadership training
- Tertiary study support for an Aboriginal staff member to complete a Bachelor of Education
- Sponsorship to attend *Women in Educational Leadership Conference* and QELi's *Middle Leadership Program*
- Support to do the Teaching and Leading for Understanding Harvard On-line Courses and
- Scholarship programs to support aspirant middle, senior and principal leaders through leadership studies programs.

There are programs being offered for aspiring principals of small schools in a diocese that has a high percentage of rural and remote small schools.

Project plans also include an induction program for leaders and professional learning for senior leaders with an external provider on the emerging trends in leadership. This initiative is linked to reflective practice on strengths and areas for development.

Further Report

QCEC will provide a further report of the progress and outcomes of these planned initiative in Term 4 2016.