

School planning

Frequently asked questions



Updated 19 April 2017



Schools develop a comprehensive three-year school plan and annual report in consultation with the school community, connected to a budget and student outcomes. The school plan clearly reflects the Department of Education strategic directions and Premier's priorities, is underpinned by the School Excellence Framework and demonstrates the school's commitment to excellence as part of NSW public education. The school plan includes strategic directions, demonstrating the alignment and commitment to excellence for all schools as part of NSW public education, and improvement measures, against which the impact of the strategic directions will be monitored and evaluated. Schools will publish their three-year school plan on the school website and should refine it annually based on evidence.

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Q1

Do school plans need to reflect departmental plans?

Principals in NSW public schools operate in the context of a strong public education system.

The school vision statements that guide school planning must consider and reflect the current priorities and directions of the:

- State priorities: [Making it happen](#)
- Department of Education plan: [Five Year Strategic Plan 2012-2017](#)
- Public School NSW Strategic Directions: [Creating Futures Together, 2015-2017](#)

Creating Futures Together 2015 – 2017 articulates three strategic directions and key reforms that are being implemented to support every learner in all NSW public schools:

- raising expectations and enhancing the quality of student learning
- fostering quality teaching and leadership
- new and better ways of delivering public education.

Q2

What support is available for school planning?

The following support is available for schools to undertake school planning and reporting:

- advice, guidance and support from Directors, Public Schools NSW and Principals, School Leadership.
- [School planning 2015-2017 video](#)
- [The School Excellence Framework](#)
- [The Business Intelligence tool](#) and [School Excellence Framework \(SEF\) data reports](#)
- [Communicating and Leading Change - a guide for leaders and managers](#)
- School Planning Guidelines
- Help text within the SPaRO software

For further information: [Leadership and High Performance](#) intranet page.

Q3

Who should we consult when developing the school plan?

Consultation needs to occur with the school community including students, teaching and non-teaching staff, parents/carers and community partners.

Where appropriate, this consultation also includes local Aboriginal elders and the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc. (AECG) or local land council representatives.

Q4

Why is community consultation important to school planning?

The school planning approach offers opportunities for schools to develop planning processes that facilitate authentic, inclusive, whole school community consultation.

Research indicates that strong partnerships between a school, its teachers, parents/carers and community make a positive contribution to student learning.

Broad community involvement in developing the school plan is intended to lead to increased engagement by the school community.

Q5

What strategies should we use to engage our staff and community in consultation?

Ensuring that staff are actively involved in reviewing the previous school plan and contributing to the development of the school's vision and strategic directions of the plan will assist in developing a shared understanding of the importance of a teacher's role in improving student learning in the local context.

Resources to develop consultative decision-making with the whole school community, including school stories case studies, [Making decisions with your community](#) and the [Equity Funding Support package](#), are available on the [Local Schools, Local Decisions](#) pages of the intranet.

Q6

Is there scope to work with other schools in developing plans?

Yes. Schools may consider working in partnership to develop one or more common strategic directions. School settings where this approach has proved valuable include communities of schools, colleges, SSPs and hospital schools.

These groups of schools found it beneficial to jointly develop their strategic directions to reflect their cohesive, interdependent ethos in their school plans.

Q7

When do I need to have my school plan completed?

The school plan is to be made available to the community by the end of Term 1 each year on the school's website. Following ongoing self-assessment, schools make annual adjustments (where appropriate) to the three-year plan using the School Planning and Reporting Online (SPaRO) software. Once finalised, principals will 'approve' and 'publish' the plan to the school website. Both options can be found in the Reports section under the self-assessment tab in SPaRO. Once published, the school plan will be automatically uploaded to the school's website, if managed by SWS. Schools that do not use SWS will be required to upload their plan manually.

Q8

How does the Resource Allocation Model (RAM) support school planning?

The RAM delivers funding based on student needs.

Principals consult with staff, parents and carers to determine the best way to support the learning needs of students in their schools using the total resources available.

All schools have a school plan published on their school website in which they must show their school communities how they propose to support students. Accountability for how the funds have been used occurs through the Annual Report.

The School Planning and Reporting - Equity Funding Support Package is available to support principals with planning for the strategic use of equity funding resources. It is available on the [Local Schools, Local Decisions](#) intranet page.

Q9

What tools are available to gather data?

A range of tools are available to gather data including:

- Community engagement
 - [Aboriginal education and Community engagement](#)
 - NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc. (AECG) Website: [Interactive map](#) that provides details for Regional AECG
 - [Engaging culturally diverse communities](#)
 - Local Schools Local Decisions: [Making decisions with your community](#)
- Surveys
 - [School Survey](#)
 - [Tell Them From Me](#) (TTFM)
 - [School Excellence Framework Self-assessment Survey](#) (SES S-aS)
- Data
 - [SMART](#) (School Measurement, Assessment and Reporting Toolkit)
 - [Business Intelligence](#)
 - [School Excellence Framework \(SEF\) data reports](#)
- Further Reading
 - [Evidence guide for school excellence](#)
 - [Learning Curve](#) publications highlighting findings from analysis and evaluation produced by the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation including:
 - What Works?
 - Using value-added measures to identify school contributions to student learning
 - Student engagement and wellbeing in NSW.

Q10

Do we need to write a new school plan each year?

No. The school plan is a three-year plan. Following each end of year self-assessment, schools make adjustments to their school plan for the following year.

Adjustments to the school plan need to be developed through a collaborative approach in order to sustain growth and ensure ongoing ownership by the whole school community.

Schools publish the new version of the plan on their website by the end of Term 1.

Q11

What software is available to support school planning?

Schools will generate their school plan using School Planning and Reporting Online (SPaRO) software available through My applications on the department's staff portal.

The principal is the only user with rights to create, setup and save a new school plan.

To set up a new school plan, principals click on the 'School Plans' tab and select the relevant school planning cycle from the drop down menu. Select the number of strategic directions and milestones each term and click '+ New Plan'. Check all relevant key initiatives and enter any other school focus areas before clicking 'Save Plan'.

Use the left menu to navigate to different areas of the school plan.

The Help menu icon (?) in the top right corner of the screen will display help text outlining specific information for each area of the school plan.

For further information: [SPaRO – Quick Start Guide](#)

Q12

What should be included in the school vision statement?

A school vision statement is short and precise, describing a school's high level goals for the future, shared values and philosophy.

It is a statement about student learning and achievement that is based on the Department's strategic directions.

Q13

What should be in the school context statement?

The school context statement includes information on the geographic, educational and social landscape of your school that shapes your education provision. It includes:

- contextual details
- characteristics of the student body
- significant student groups
- community characteristics
- extracurricular activities
- distinctive attributes of the school
- significant alliances and partnerships.

Q14

What should be in the school planning process section?

The school planning process documents the engagement of the community in contributing to the plan and the school's commitment to working with the community to achieve the strategic directions.

It provides transparency and ownership for the community and supports the principal in leading the implementation of the plan.

Q15

What do high quality strategic directions look like?

Strategic directions are high level statements that encapsulate the plan for the future (three years and beyond) to bring about transformational change. They embed the three components of the School Excellence Framework: Learning, Teaching, and Leading.

Strategic directions are evidence-based and meaningful e.g. consistent, high standard educational practices across our community of schools. They should be short, memorable statements so that the community can share in the school's purpose.

For further information refer to the [School planning](#) intranet page.

Q16

Why do we need a purpose statement?

The purpose statement explains why a strategic direction was chosen as a focus for improving student and school learning. It also articulates why the strategic direction will transform practice.

Articulating the purpose for each strategic direction enables the school to communicate why it has been identified as most important to contributing to sustained improvement in student learning.

Identifying the difference each strategic direction will make and why, will assist members of the whole school community to understand the ways in which they are able to contribute to sustained growth.

Q17

What are improvement measures?

Improvement measures are 2-3 high level measures against which the impact of the strategic direction will be monitored and evaluated.

The improvement measures should reflect the outcomes to be achieved as intended by the purpose statement.

They should highlight the lift in quality of educational delivery and outcomes expected to be achieved through the successful pursuit of the school's strategic directions.

Schools receiving equity funding under the Resource Allocation Model (RAM) need to explicitly state improvement measures related to those student groups.

For further information refer to: [How to develop the 5Ps planning pages](#).

Q18

How do we monitor progress towards the improvement measures?

For each strategic direction, schools will identify projects or initiatives that are fundamental to the implementation of the plan. These are articulated as Processes in the school plan. Progress is monitored regularly so that achievement of improvement measures can be reported annually.

Schools develop milestones to monitor the specific processes relating to the implementation and achievement of each strategic direction and determine the most appropriate timeframe for regular and routine monitoring.

Milestones have two purposes:

- To provide a sustained focus on the achievement of implementation, and
- to provide a mechanism for routine and regular monitoring of impact and progress towards the strategic directions and to track funding for improved student outcomes.

The milestones are a breakdown of the activities within each process to achieve the determined improvement measures.

While it is recommended that milestones are designed for five-weekly reviews, principals can choose to have from 2 to 10 milestones per term. A process of green/amber/red traffic light signals whether the achievement of the milestone is on track. Monitoring and evaluating the quality of implementation at regular points in time is planned within the milestone to ensure progress is achieved towards the attainment of improvement measures.

Q19

What is required in the people component of 5P planning?

The people component should identify the skills, knowledge, capabilities and mindsets which need to be enhanced or developed to bring about transformational change.

They address how the capabilities of the whole school community (including students, parents/carers, teaching and non-teaching staff, leaders and community members) will be developed to ensure the products and practices are achieved.

For further information refer to: [How to develop the 5Ps](#).

Q20

What are processes?

Processes are the 2-3 major activities or projects that will be implemented to achieve the products and practices. They define how the school plan will be implemented.

For further information refer to: [How to develop the 5Ps](#).

Q21

What are practices and products?

Practices and products are developed to be achieved by the end of three years and need to be measurable, observable and/or describable in order to facilitate monitoring and reporting. These products and practices are reported in the school's annual report and will form part of the school self-assessment.

A practice articulates what students, staff and leaders will be doing differently if the plan is successfully implemented. It also outlines how parents and community members can be supported to contribute.

A product is either quantitative or qualitative and reflects the achievement of a strategic direction.

For further information refer to: [How to develop the 5Ps](#).

Q22

How can we ensure that evaluation and self-assessment are embedded in the plan?

School evaluation and self-assessment are key components of the school planning cycle. Schools assess the implementation of activities as part of their regular monitoring processes outlined in the school plan.

For each strategic direction schools develop a plan for how they will evaluate.

The evaluation plan outlines the strategies and types of evidence that will be used to monitor progress towards achieving improvement measures. The evaluation plan is actioned and the findings recorded in the implementation and progress towards monitoring section of the plan.

Schools will evaluate the implementation and progress of activities undertaken for each process on an ongoing basis throughout the year. This will include at least two reflection points: mid-year and annually. The evaluation needs to focus on impact.

The following reflection questions should be considered when completing mid-year reflections and annual milestone evaluations:

- How are we doing and are we on track?
- How do we know? What evidence do we have?
- What have we achieved? What changes are we seeing?
- Is our spending on track with our planned spending?
- What adjustments need to be made to our future milestones and plan?

Q23

How is resource expenditure recorded and evaluated in the school plan?

Resources expended are recorded for each strategic direction and key initiative or other school focus area. This includes monitoring expenditure of equity funding throughout the year.

Resource expenditure is monitored in the strategic directions improvement progress section within SPaRO, along with milestone implementation and progress monitoring.

Schools are required to expend equity funding in the year it is allocated. Schools may choose to record in the 'Resources' section cumulative expenditure throughout the year as part of annual milestones reflection.

Q24

What is the role of the principal in the school planning process?

In accordance with the School Excellence Policy, the principal is responsible for:

- leading the school community in the development and successful implementation of the three-year school plan, including annual updates
- publishing the school plan on the school's website by the end of Term 1 at the commencement of a planning cycle. During the cycle, updates to the plan will be published annually by the end of Term 1 each year
- leading a collaborative, ongoing process of self-assessment that involves critical reflection on the school's progress
- adjusting the plan, as necessary, to include state priorities and ensure successful implementation
- the ongoing assessment of the school's practices using the School Excellence Framework to inform school plans and the annual report, including the annual completion of the online School Excellence Framework Self-assessment Survey.

To effectively implement the policy, principals:

- ensure that the school plan documents how the whole school community is included in the development
- collaboratively develop improvement measures that demonstrate the overall performance in terms of learning outcomes for all students and for groups attracting additional equity funding.

Q25

What is the role of the Director, Public Schools NSW in the school planning process?

The Director, Public Schools NSW is responsible for:

- guiding and supporting the principal and engaging in regular professional conversations regarding the school's planning, self-assessment and reporting processes
- endorsing the school planning process as being an accurate representation of the strategic directions and improvement measures developed in consultation with the school community
- monitoring school planning and annual reporting processes for compliance with legislative and policy requirements, including equity or other targeted funding, and for consistency with the State and the department's priorities
- working collaboratively with each principal to affirm the school's External Validation submission as being an accurate representation of the school's processes in planning, self-assessment and reporting.

Q26

What is the role of the Principal, School Leadership in school planning and annual reporting process?

Principals, School Leadership are responsible for supporting school planning and annual reporting processes. They work collaboratively with the principal and leadership team, where required, to support school planning, self-assessment, external validation and annual reporting.

Q27

What are the NSW government's state priorities and Premier's priorities for education?

The Government has published 30 State priorities, two of which relate to education. These priorities aim to improve education outcomes across NSW. Twelve of these are the Premier's priorities.

One of the Premier's priorities is to increase the percentage of all students in the top two NAPLAN bands for reading and numeracy by 8% by 2019. Premier's priorities: [Improving education results](#)

NSW Department of Education

The second priority related to education, is to increase the percentage of Aboriginal students in the top two NAPLAN bands for reading and numeracy by 30% by 2019. State priorities: Better services: [Improving Aboriginal education outcomes](#).

Q28

When do we need to incorporate the State priorities into our school plan?

NSW public schools have always had a core focus on literacy and numeracy development.

Most school plans already make explicit reference to improving literacy and numeracy (see the Premier's priorities: [Improving education results](#) and State priorities: Better services: [Improving Aboriginal education outcomes](#)). If not, this will be a requirement for schools for their 2017 school plan update (due for publication in Term 1, 2017).

To assist schools to plan and report on these priorities, new measures have been included in the School Excellence Framework (SEF) data reports to show the proportion of all students in the top two NAPLAN bands for reading and numeracy.

Q29

How does the school plan link to the annual report?

All schools develop a comprehensive school plan and annual report connecting student outcomes, budget and a rigorous self-assessment process.

The school plan documents the strategic directions and associated improvement measures that have been developed by the school community to bring about sustained change and deliver quality education for all students.

As part of the school planning cycle, schools conduct annual self-assessments of their progress towards achieving the improvement measures set out in the school plan using the School Excellence Framework, and report on them in their annual report.

Each school develops an annual report which flows from elements of the school plan and the self-assessment process. The annual report also accounts for funding, including equity funding.

Q30

Do schools need to complete the School Excellence Framework Self-assessment Survey (SEF S-aS) annually?

Yes. All schools are required to complete this online survey by the end of Term 1 annually. The online survey will be available in the SPaRO software for schools to complete.

Leadership and High Performance

[School planning intranet page](#)

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