



New South Wales

The Hon Carmel Tebbutt
Minister for Education and Training

23 November 2006

Schools Given a 'Fair Go' to Achieve their Best

State Plan Target S4 – Increasing Levels of Attainment for all students
Target: Reduce the number of low performing students in literacy and numeracy by 30% by 2016

The Minister for Education and Training, Carmel Tebbutt, today released a report into a NSW Government project which provides students at schools in disadvantaged communities opportunities to reach their academic potential.

Ms Tebbutt said the report, *School is for me: Pathways to student engagement*, examines the Fair Go Project, which is an innovative project at ten south-western Sydney schools jointly funded by the Department of Education and Training's Priority Schools Funding Program and the University of Western Sydney's (UWS) School of Education.

"The lemma Government is working hard to provide opportunities for young people to achieve their best," said Ms Tebbutt.

"Often this comes through providing students with a flexible system that is adaptable to the needs of individual students.

"This Government has a clear direction for the future of education in New South Wales. This report is another step along that path, but there's more work to be done.

"Since 1995, the Labor Government has invested almost \$89 million in students at socio-economically disadvantaged schools.

"Part of this commitment is the Priority Schools Funding Program which supports 152,000 students in 574 schools across the State.

"The Fair Go Project has investigated quality teaching methods to engage students to reach their potential.

"The Project has examined how funding is spent and the results it has achieved. This report is about sharing that information so that other schools can benefit from the experience.

"The report also provides schools with models, strategies and approaches to get the best results," Ms Tebbutt said.

Ms Tebbutt said the report highlighted some of the outstanding programs implemented by schools involved in the Fair Go Project including:

- Cartwright Public School which has linked lessons on Australian culture and identity with the students' experiences of Australian artworks to improve their visual literacy. This included peer assessments, personal reflection and hands-on activities.

- Ashcroft Public School and Liverpool Public School which engaged students in science, technology, English and HSIE by getting them to investigate, design and make a range of products.
- Cabramatta West Public School engaged students with English and technology by having them investigate newspapers and magazines.

The report recommends schools in socio-economically disadvantaged communities use the following teaching strategies to engage students:

- Provide connections for students between the classroom and the community
- Give students a sense of ownership of their learning
- Empower students to make decisions about their learning experiences
- Providing opportunities for students to discuss their learning experiences
- Encourage participatory decision-making and collective responsibility
- Encourage students to use their experiences and culture in the classroom
- Provide opportunities to discuss learning at school and at home
- Build partnerships between students, teachers and parents

According to one of the UWS researchers Dr Geoff Munns, lecturer in the School of Education, one of the unique features of the Fair Go Project is the ongoing attendance of researchers in the schools.

"The Fair Go Team worked alongside teachers in classrooms on a weekly basis and therefore developed strong relationships with participating schools," says Dr Munns.

"The fact that teaching staff have been willing to trust our teams and make changes to their teaching approaches has really bolstered the outcomes of each project."

Schools participating in the Fair Go Project include:

Ashcroft Public School	Busby Public School
Cabramatta West Public School	Carramar Public School
Cartwright Public School	Curran Public School
Fairfield West Public School	Harrington Street Public School
Heckenberg Public School	Liverpool Public School

Ms Tebbutt said all schools participating in the Fair Go Project will receive copies of *School is for me: Pathways to student engagement*.

"*School is for me: Pathways to student engagement* gives schools and communities advice and practical ideas on how to make school engaging for their students," Ms Tebbutt said.

"This is another great resource that will support schools in closing the educational gap for students with the greatest needs," she added.

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