

Schools Plus 



Impact Report

Changing students' lives through smarter giving to schools

May 2017

Introduction

At Schools Plus, we believe every child deserves the education that will allow them to thrive in this fast-changing world.

But right now, too many students miss out on learning experiences that would give them the skills and confidence to succeed. Circumstances out of their control – like family background, location or finances – severely affect a child’s education.

Schools Plus helps close the education gap caused by disadvantage. We connect schools in need with donors who know the value of a great education, to create learning opportunities that change students’ lives. These initiatives focus on improving learning outcomes and are led by the teachers who best know the needs of their students.

This Impact Report – our first – tells how we’ve worked with schools and donors across Australia since our launch in April 2015, to help more than 40,000 students reach their potential.

By analysing nearly 350 funding submissions, we reveal which schools have been most likely to seek donor support, the initiatives they have sought support for and how donations are being used.

Among its findings, our report shows:

- schools are most likely to seek support for projects that improve student engagement
- donations are frequently used to buy equipment, train staff or bring in external expertise
- projects are more likely to be successful if they have a clear link with the school’s strategy and the support of the school leadership team.

As the 2011 ‘Gonski Review’ into school funding (one of the catalysts for the establishment of Schools Plus) put it: “Philanthropy can and should be used to create partnerships with those schools that have the greatest need to improve student outcomes”. Now with Gonski 2.0 we have an opportunity to contribute to a bigger conversation on how funding, both government and philanthropic, can have the greatest impact.

This report shows that schools welcome philanthropic partnerships as an exciting new way to deliver the education that will set up our nation’s students for future success.

13%
of disadvantaged
schools

have connected with
Schools Plus* ^

40,973
students

benefited from projects
funded through Schools Plus*

* Between April 2015 and March 2017

^ Percentage of schools below 1000 ICSEA that have engaged with Schools Plus’ funding programs, Teaching Awards, workshops and enquiry line.

Background

The situation Students in more than 4,600 schools across Australia are at risk of falling behind due to circumstances beyond their control.

The response In 2011, the Review of Funding for Schooling (the “Gonski Review”) recommended an organisation be established to better connect schools in need with the individuals, companies and foundations that want to support them.

And that’s why Schools Plus exists We make it simple, effective and tax-deductible to donate to schools which will benefit the most.

Our vision is that all young Australians reach their full potential through access to a great education.

Tax-deductible donations In March 2015 Schools Plus was granted Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR1) status, making donations to eligible schools tax-deductible. Since then, we have distributed more than \$3.5 million in donations to support 156 projects in schools.

A targeted approach We connect schools and donors to create learning opportunities that will make the greatest difference to students’ lives.

How we work Through our programs we work closely with teachers and principals to create high-impact projects that are evidence based and have a lasting impact on students and the school community.

Changing the education landscape Through carefully targeted philanthropic support, the schools we work with are creating measurable change that can be shared and replicated across the education system. As we connect more schools, grow donor support and provide opportunities for educators to share their knowledge, we will inspire and influence practice across the country.

How we support schools

Our programs connect donors with the schools that will benefit most from their support. We also aim to build schools’ capacity to develop new partnerships and think strategically so the impact is greatest for students and the school community.

High-Impact Initiatives

Through our Smart Giving (national) and Fair Education (NSW) programs, donors support major projects that align with schools’ strategic plans and address issues that hold students back. To select and shape these projects, we draw on independent experts and offer expert coaching to schools.

Community Fundraising

Schools use our crowdfunding platform to run fundraising drives in their networks. Donors also nominate schools to support – for individuals, this is often the school they attended or their children attend; for businesses, a school in their community.

Commonwealth Bank Teaching Awards

Our Awards, in partnership with CBA, celebrate great teaching and school leadership. Recipients take part in a 12-month Fellowship, which includes professional development, opportunities to develop and influence teaching practice and funding for a major project at the Fellow’s school.

Our reach

Australia has approximately 4,600 schools that meet Schools Plus' criteria for disadvantage by sitting below the median in the national Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA). At these schools, disadvantage takes many forms – they serve communities in low socio-economic, regional or remote areas, have high numbers of refugee, migrant or Indigenous families, or enrol students with disabilities or who have dropped out of mainstream schooling.

In our first two years, Schools Plus has engaged with just over 600 schools. We've received their applications for additional funding, read about their outstanding teachers and principals and helped them reach out to donors with our crowdfunding platform, workshops and phone support. While no two schools are the same, they're all connected by a similar vision: to ensure their students reach their full potential through access to a great education.



606 schools

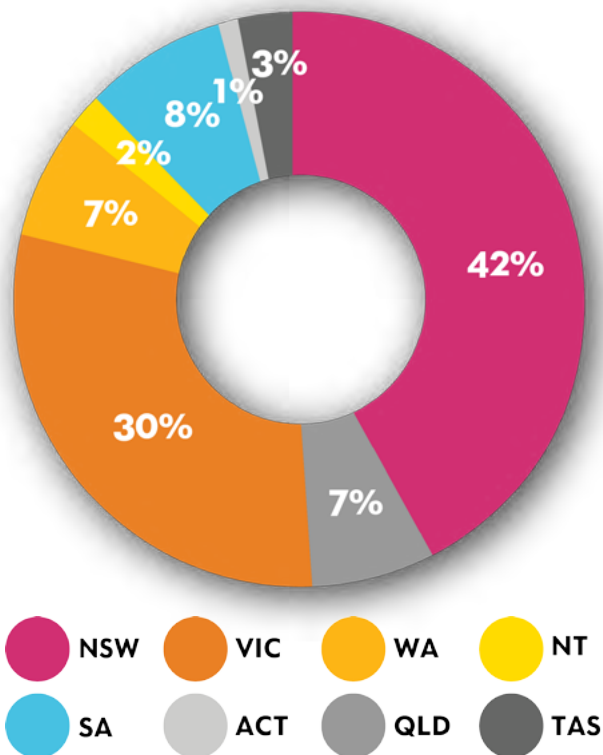


13%

of disadvantaged schools

The following graphs show which schools have sought support from donors to fund projects. They are drawn from the 342 funding applications received by Schools Plus between April 2015 and March 2017 (this data doesn't include Teaching Awards applications).

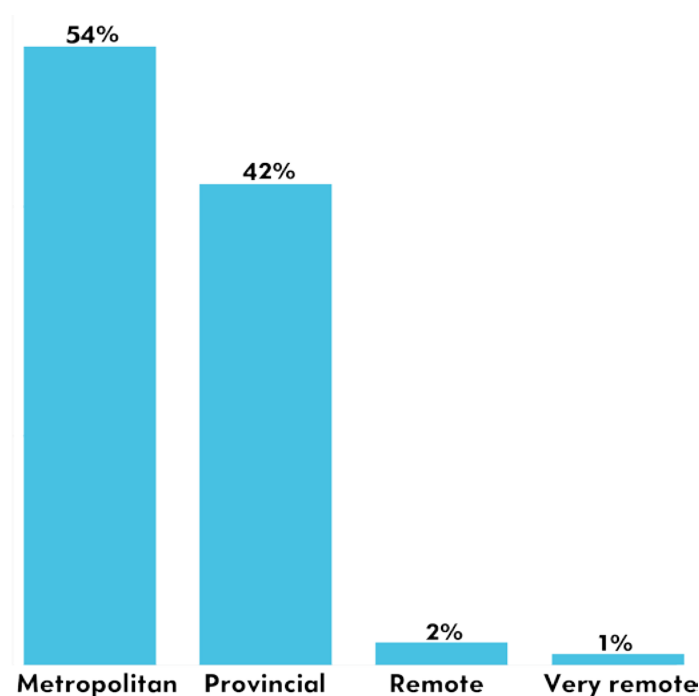
Breakdown by state



In this state breakdown, NSW funding applications are high because NSW is the only state eligible for the Fair Education program (42% of applications compared with 33.5% of all eligible schools). Queensland schools are under-represented in our applications (7% compared with 21% of eligible schools) – we see this state as a particular growth target over the next two years.

Our support is based on need, not on sector. Government, Catholic and Independent schools have applied for funding, in close alignment with the sector breakdown of all low-ICSEA schools. Primary schools account for 52% of applications, with 31% from high schools, 10% from K-12 schools and 7% from special schools (eg. schools for students with disabilities or who have disengaged from mainstream education).

Breakdown by location



Metro schools have been more likely to seek donor support than regional or remote schools. This contrasts with the breakdown of all eligible schools (37% metro/53% provincial). We believe awareness of Schools Plus has spread more easily in metro areas and many city schools may have more resources to dedicate to writing submissions. We will focus on building awareness and capacity in regional and remote schools.

Our impact on Australian students



40,973
students*

- This is how many students have benefited from projects funded by donors to Schools Plus from April 2015 - March 2017. These initiatives have been matched with major donors or schools have conducted their own fundraising. Many projects are whole-school initiatives affecting hundreds of students; in comparison, some projects target a small number of at-risk students who need specific support to reach their potential.

Here are a few of the diverse schools we've supported^



1. Biggest = Marsden State High School. It has 2060 students.

2. Highest proportion of students from a language background other than English = Old Guildford Public School. 98% of students have English as an additional language at this multicultural school.

3. Smallest = Seaspray Primary School. It has only 6 students.

4. Most remote school = Tjuntjuntjara Remote Community School. It is at the end of a dirt road 660km east of Kalgoorlie.

*Data is calculated from school reports of intended or actual beneficiaries depending on progress of project.^ Figures from 2015 My School data

What schools say they need

Schools are most likely to seek funding for initiatives that improve students' ability and readiness to learn. An analysis of the submissions made to Schools Plus shows projects that aim to lift student engagement account for one third of the initiatives that need support.

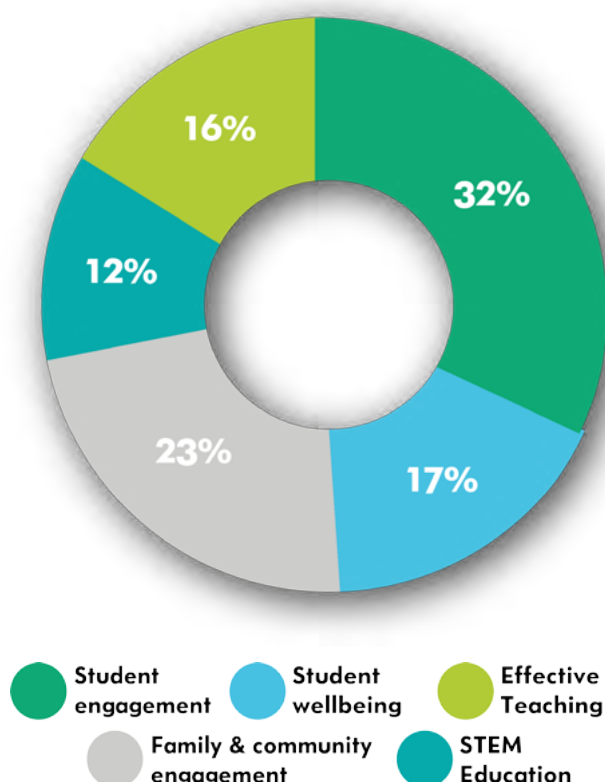
Student engagement is one of the five main themes we use to classify projects. These themes were developed with education experts to reflect the activities most likely to improve student outcomes.

All projects are led by the principals and teachers who know best the needs of their students and communities, and how to meet them. Our experienced team, which includes educators, regularly work with schools to ensure projects are designed with one overriding purpose: to strategically improve the learning and life outcomes of their students.

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This section provides more detail about the types of projects for which schools have sought philanthropic support through Schools Plus between April 2015 and March 2017.

The big picture: our five key themes



Student engagement: improving learning by targeting issues such as attendance, the transition to primary/high school and then into work, or additional support for students in literacy or numeracy.

Student wellbeing: initiatives that develop resilience, social skills and mental health (often whole-school approaches that also target teachers and families).

Effective teaching and leadership: improving teaching practice and school leadership through professional development. Teaching quality is recognised as the most significant influence, in a school, on student achievement.

Family and community engagement: lifting involvement of parents, family members and the community in learning at school and home, to give children a headstart, help them perform better and stay at school longer.

STEM education: innovative approaches to science, technology, engineering and maths education to equip students for future jobs.

A closer look: tackling specific needs

In addition to the five main themes, we ask schools to identify up to two specific areas of need their projects will address.

Here are the needs targeted by schools most often:

- 1 At risk students: initiatives that identify and re-engage those students who would be less likely to transition successfully into adulthood.
- 2 Literacy: providing additional support in reading and writing through reading interventions and other programs.
- 3 Early learning: supporting children in their pre-school years to develop the social, emotional and learning skills required to succeed at school.
- 4 Indigenous: focusing on the learning success and active participation by students of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background.
- 5 Numeracy: targeted help for students who need additional support to better understand and work with numbers.
- 6 Transition: preparing students with the knowledge and confidence to successfully make the transition from primary school to secondary school.

Breaking it down: a state analysis

Here's more of what we've learned about the needs of schools:

- STEM is a significant focus area for NSW, SA and WA schools. NSW is the standout in this area, accounting for 45% of all projects submitted with a STEM focus.
- Effective teaching and leadership are the key focus areas for both Victorian and Queensland schools with their projects making up 49% of the total.
- For schools in WA, improving opportunities for Indigenous students is a high priority, accounting for 33% of applications addressing this area of need.
- Victoria accounted for the highest proportion of early learning projects while NT has a strong focus on girls' education.

A headstart to school - Moomba Park Primary School

"The first year of schooling is so important. The first term is all about learning how to sit, listen, being independent, how we interact with our peers," says Abby Croft, a Foundation (Prep) teacher at Moomba Park Primary in Melbourne's North. "If the children are coming in without these skills, it's going to take longer for us to get to that academic stage."

Moomba Park introduced its Steps to Prep program in 2016 to give its youngest students a headstart. With a grant obtained by Schools Plus, the students enrolled to begin school in 2017 attended weekly pre-school sessions to develop their social, cognitive and motor skills.

As a result, the Steps to Prep students have settled in to school more quickly than previous classes. Attendance is up, and teachers have worked with parents to address learning difficulties like speech delays earlier than usual.

Another big difference has been the increased engagement of families in school activities like parent/teacher night. Abby says: "The parents are really involved, we haven't had that in the past. It's the awareness of the importance of school."



Key Success Factors

For an initiative to have maximum impact on students' lives, we look for these features:

1 Clear link between the project, the school's strategy and the school's greater community to ensure it is embedded in day-to-day operations. Projects are not 'bolt-on' programs delivered by external facilitators.

2 Use of research and evidence in the project design to ensure it focuses on what really works.

3 Strong involvement from school leadership team - projects should not rely on one person for delivery.

4 Staff training incorporated into projects with new equipment or a new program. This ensures school leaders and teachers have the capacity and confidence to fully implement the program.

5 Projects to include adequate time allocation/resourcing for professional development.

6 Business involvement is encouraged where appropriate. Schools Plus has helped broker numerous partnerships that create opportunities for students (eg. work experience) and are rewarding for the business staff engaged.

What is funding for?

To best equip students for the future, schools are seeking resources to support 21st century learning.

The most commonly requested items are:



- Equipment is by far the greatest request eg. robotics kits, technology, 3D printers.



- Professional training and development to ensure teachers are informed and supported when implementing a new program or equipment.



- Teacher salary/cost of teacher release to plan and deliver initiatives.
- Resources for teachers and student learning materials.
- External expertise eg. trainers and consultants.



- Licences or subscriptions for learning programs.
- Student activities to increase engagement through real life learning experiences eg. excursions, camps and exhibitions to present student work to community.

Other items requested include:

- Student support and welfare resources eg. counselling or speech therapy.
- Infrastructure to deliver initiatives eg. repurposing spaces to create new learning areas that encourage creativity, collaboration and team work.
- Parent and community workshops and activities to increase engagement.

Students leading learning - Woonona High School

Research shows students do better at school when their families and communities are engaged in their education. In the beachside town of Woonona in NSW, Principal Belinda Wall knew to lift parent and student aspirations a major cultural shift was required. Through support from Schools Plus' Fair Education program, they introduced 'Learn to Learn' to empower Year 7 students to take ownership of their learning and build parents' capacity to effectively support them.

Students attend weekly sessions to explore the science of learning and understand how their brains work to establish a growth mindset. The lessons help students rethink the way they learn and set specific goals together with teachers and parents.

To facilitate this learning, a 'futures focused learning space' has been created to encourage creativity, collaboration and critical thinking. In this colourful non-traditional classroom, walls and desks double as whiteboards and students work together on 'Google Classroom'. "Teachers are already seeing a shift in students' and parents' learning beliefs," says Belinda.

"Students who once believed they were simply no good at certain subjects are now setting goals they never would have previously considered and working hard to achieve them" - Belinda

Creating careers for girls - Marsden State High School

Marsden State High saw the danger signs for its female students' future job prospects: high unemployment in its part of Brisbane, and a dwindling number of girls studying industrial subjects.

Its response was a trade training program specifically for female students. The program exposes the students to careers in construction, automotive, furnishing and engineering, and teaches them the skills they need to get their first job break.

With the support of Schools Plus' donors, the school purchased industry-grade equipment such as a laser cutter, formed partnerships with local businesses and TAFE and held masterclasses in trades like bricklaying and tiling to give its female students the best shot at finding work.

Teacher Adam Cheesman said an extra class was formed after the first year to accommodate the girls who wanted to participate. "We used to have a 50% drop out rate [from industrial subjects] but now it's 10%," he says.


"We do skills tests, get them to use the machinery, to find out what they're good at, what they enjoy and tap into that.

"The industry partnerships are the most important thing, the kids get to see what work's really like. We try to show them it's a career [pathway]."

Seventeen-year-old Tegan is one of the early beneficiaries, already landing a part-time apprenticeship in carpentry with a local firm. "I have always been a hands-on kid, it really sparked my interest."

"My apprenticeship is better than I imagined. I definitely don't think I would have my apprenticeship now [without the program]. It helped me find out what I wanted to do." - Tegan



A photograph of two young women in school uniforms sitting in front of a school building. The woman on the left is wearing a green and white plaid shirt with a white collar that has 'C.H.S.' on it, and a brown headband. The woman on the right is wearing a white button-down shirt. They are both smiling. In the background, other students are walking, and there is a red brick building with a clock and a mural that says 'There's more to me' with a tree made of hands.

Together, we can close the education gap

Schools Plus 