

IMPACT
REPORT
2020



Schools Plus 

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We believe all young Australians deserve an education that enables them to reach their full potential.

Schools Plus is a national charity that exists to help vulnerable children flourish at school.

We were founded on the basis of a recommendation in the 2011 Gonski Review to make it simple, effective and tax-deductible to donate to schools in need*. **Disadvantage is the greatest factor affecting children's learning**, and our aim is that all students have the education they need to thrive at school and beyond.

We have now been operating for **more than 5 years**, and in that time we have made a difference to the education of **over 233,000 students**. We have raised over **\$17 million** for schools and have worked with teachers and principals on projects across student wellbeing, engagement in learning, effective teaching, family engagement with schools, and STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) education.

As we prepare this report examining the difference we have made to students' lives across Australia, the coronavirus has created a host of new challenges for schools and teachers and reinforced our mission to close the education gap caused by disadvantage.

We are eternally grateful to the thousands of donors who have provided financial and other support to the **758 schools** we have funded to date and are excited to share with you just a few examples of the impact that funding has achieved.

*More than 4,600 schools across Australia (government, Catholic and independent) are eligible for support through Schools Plus. Eligible schools have a value below 1000 on the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) or are defined as special schools by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

In five years, we have received nearly 1,400 applications from schools seeking funding worth more than \$50 million



DIRECTED
\$17.8 million



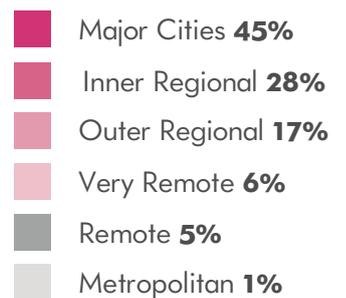
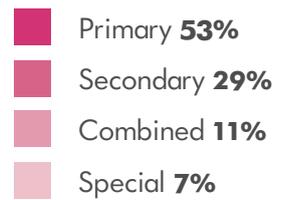
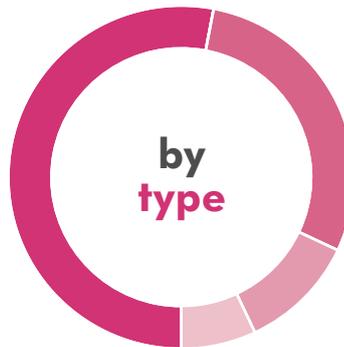
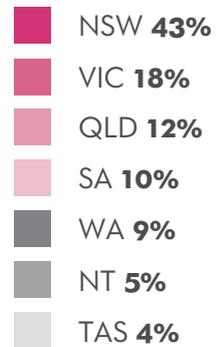
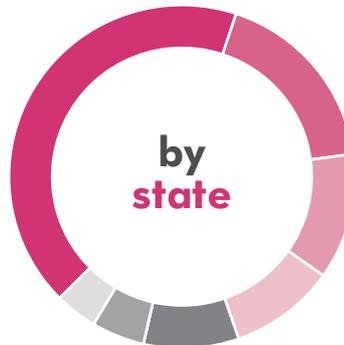
TO SUPPORT
758 schools



& BENEFIT OVER
233,000 students &
12,500 teachers**

** from projects completed and still underway
All data is from April 2015 - March 2020

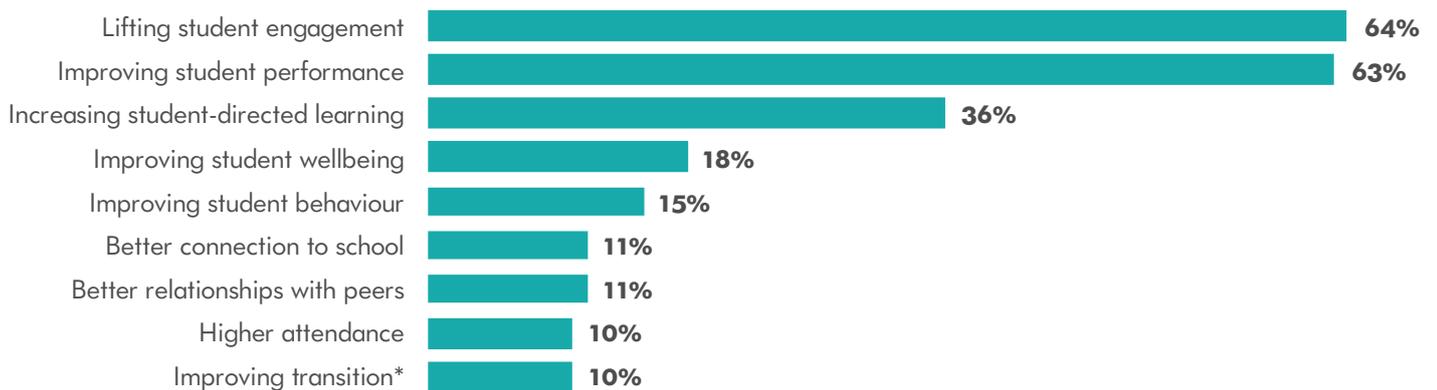
Schools we've supported



Our impact

At Schools Plus, we believe teachers, principals and schools are best placed to identify how they can help their students to flourish. We start that process by working with the schools to see what needs to be improved.

What areas do schools want to improve?

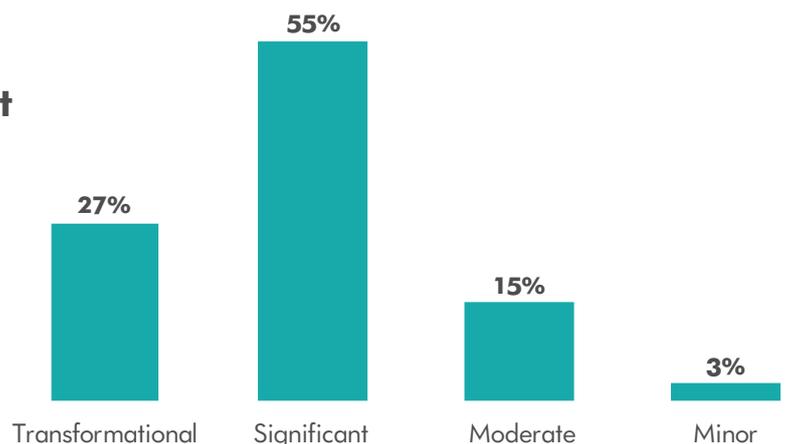


*into school, between primary and high school, post-school

We improved the way we ask schools to report on their projects in 2018 and provided tools to help them set goals and track their progress. On average, schools were **76% of the way to achieving their goals after a year.**



More than **80%** of schools say the change they have generated through their project has been **SIGNIFICANT** or **TRANSFORMATIONAL**



At **Clayton View Primary School** in Perth, students' oral language skills were significantly below expectations for their age. With funding from Schools Plus, the school engaged an expert literacy coach to improve teachers' ability to explicitly teach speaking and listening skills.



On one literacy measure, the number of junior primary students at the expected level rose from **17% to 94%** in one year.



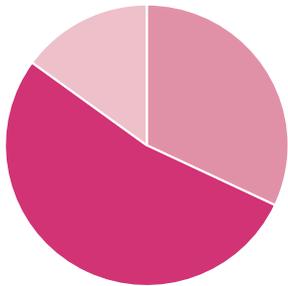
Skye Primary School in the southern suburbs of Melbourne introduced a whole-school wellbeing program to help its students build resilience and coping strategies, to address the 1,000+ negative behavioural incidents reported each year.

Since beginning this project, the school has reduced its rate of student suspensions from an average of 15 students per semester, to close to **zero** in the past year.



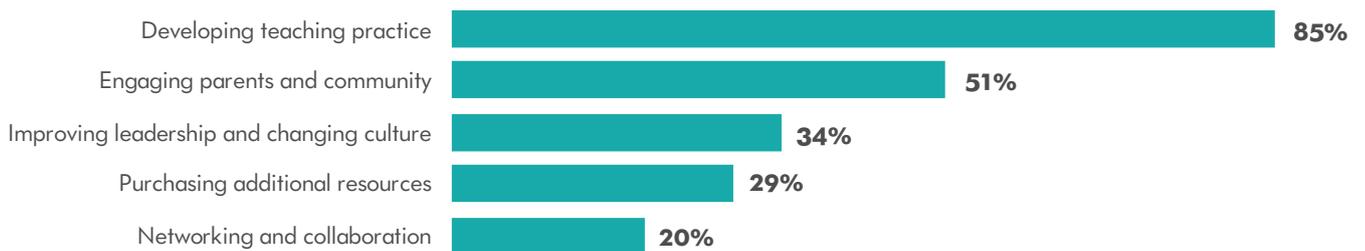
School strategies

How are schools using the funding to achieve their aims?



- 53% on professional development and engaging learning specialists
- 32% on technology, materials and resources
- 15% on other funding areas including student programs and activities

What strategies are schools using?



Developing teaching practice

Four small schools in rural Victoria led by **Springhurst Primary School** worked together to develop their teachers' capacity to build students' literacy skills. The teachers met regularly to learn how to better structure their reading and writing lessons and take a more consistent approach across the schools. Student engagement in reading rose from 50% to 90% as a result of the initiative.



"The benefits have been twofold. Firstly, students are undeniably more engaged in literacy and their results have improved. Secondly, and importantly, this has had a significant impact on teacher confidence and learning in literacy. Whereas we had previously been focused on sporting events etc, the emphasis is now on improving teaching and learning across the schools including analysis of data, joint professional development and moderation of individual student work."



Improving leadership and changing culture

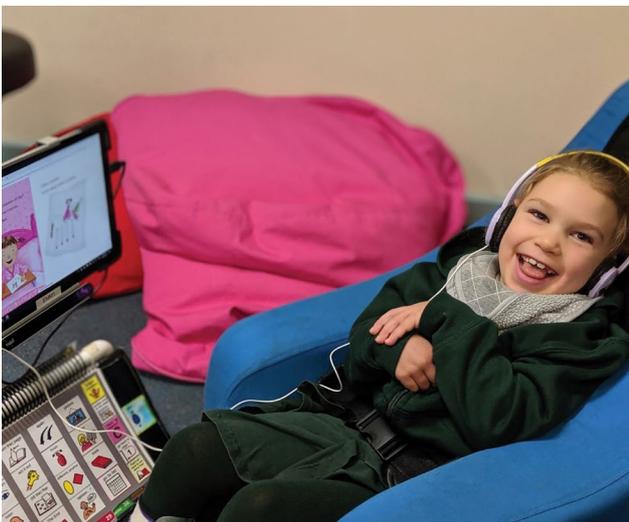
A cluster of schools led by **Cable Beach Primary School** near Broome, WA, undertook a huge professional development program to build the skills of 85 teachers so they could dramatically improve the support they gave their students. Students lacked the skills to regulate their behaviour and engage in their learning, and many had been exposed to trauma. The schools also had many early-career teachers. A small number of teachers were trained to coach their colleagues in effective trauma-informed classroom practices, and the schools rigorously collected data on teacher practice and its effect on student behaviour and engagement. The initiative reduced the number of significant behavioural incidents by over 40% and increased on-task learning in classes by students by approximately 25%.



Purchasing additional resources

Glenallen School in Melbourne, caters for students with physical disabilities; more than half of the students use wheelchairs and have limited use of their hands. The library was poorly set up for them – students couldn't independently choose a book, or hold a book and turn the pages without an adult's help. The school used the funding to create a digital library with ebooks and audiobooks students can read using accessible software, and eyegaze technology so they can browse the full catalogue on a device using just their eyes. Students are now asking to go to the library – 82% say they enjoy reading, compared with 47% before the project.

“One unexpected outcome was that staff from our school had the opportunity to present at forums in Perth and Melbourne about the benefits of independent reading, and how this project supported us to achieve our goals. This has been an amazing opportunity for us to share our knowledge with other schools. We already know of a few other special schools in Melbourne who have since adopted the same technology or are looking to do so in the next year or two. It is fantastic to see our project spreading to other schools and supporting more students across the state to access books with more independence.”





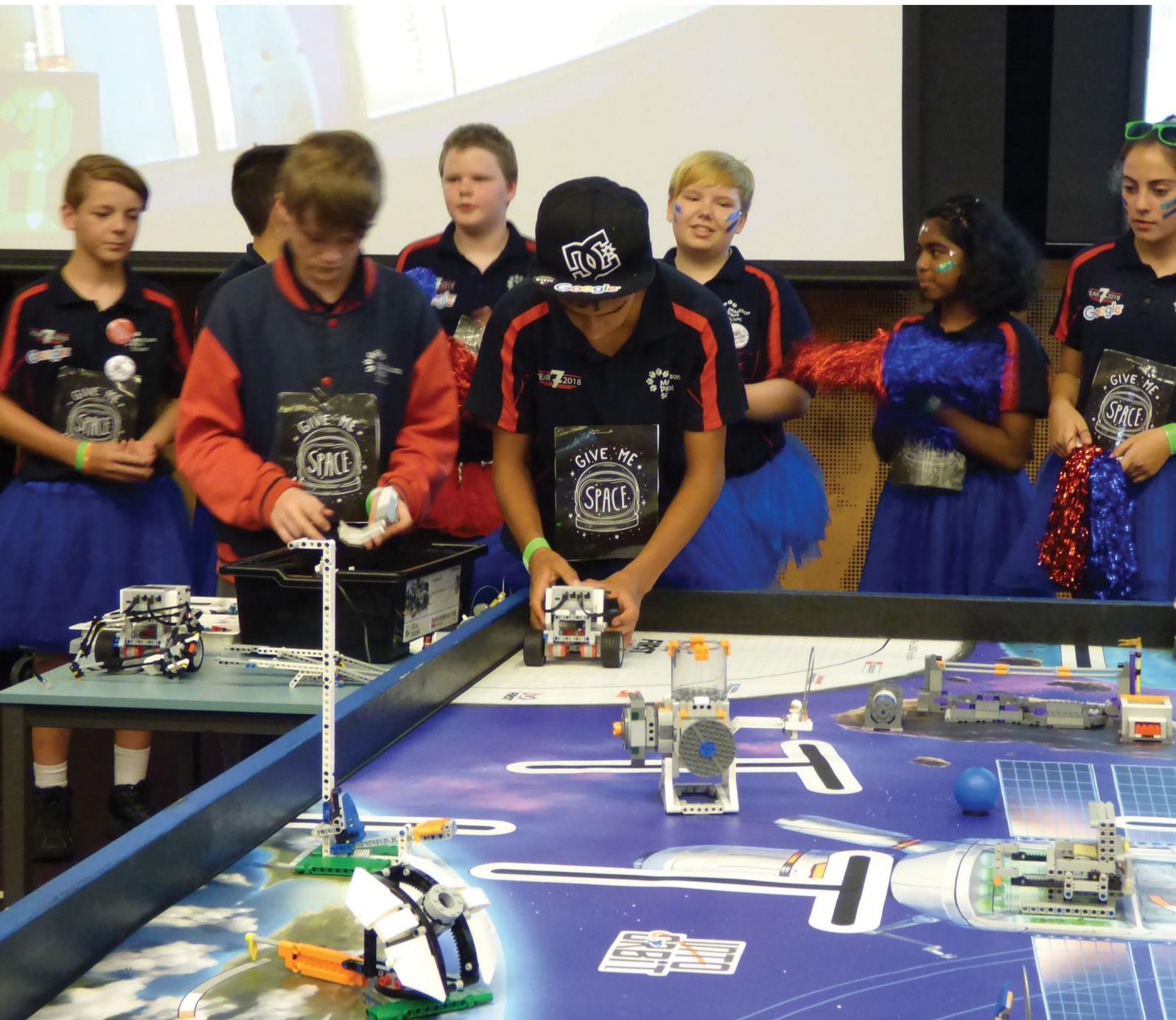
*"I am going to be a robot when I get older, well a robot programmer, being a robot would be weird".
Kane, Year 4*



Goodna State School in Brisbane wanted to ensure its students had access to the technology and STEM learning activities that would set them up for their future studies and careers. It purchased a range of equipment including robotics kits, iPads and laptops and invested time in professional development so teachers were confident to introduce digital technologies in the classroom.



Students passing technology assessments rose from **24%** to **over 80%** after one year.



At Madison Park School in Adelaide's north, students had limited opportunities to learn technology skills because of a lack of equipment and teaching skills in STEM.

"We now have a robotics program that promotes teamwork, problem solving, research and fun. This has resulted in a culture change... we've transformed our parents' perception of what STEM learning is and how it applies to their children's future, and we've had students go interstate and compete at a national level and represent our school with pride. Our younger students can now see that there is something for them to aspire to be a part of when they reach Years 5-7 and have seen the high quality work that the current participants have produced."

Fair Education

Schools Plus' Fair Education program is one of the key initiatives underpinning our work to drive family and community engagement. Originally set up in partnership with The Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation in NSW, it has now expanded into Queensland and Victoria thanks to growing support from donors. **The goal of Fair Education is to help school leaders lift the engagement of parents and carers, families and the community** – such as local businesses and support organisations – in student learning.

As the first educators of children, parents/carers play an essential role in setting students up for success in life. Extensive research highlights family engagement is associated with improvements in academic attainment for students of all ages. Also, through community partnerships, schools can increase their ability to offer a range of experiences, support and resources to improve students' learning and wellbeing outcomes.

The Centre for International Research on Education Systems (CIRES) at Victoria University has evaluated the effectiveness of our initiatives to support family and community engagement. These outcomes have been drawn from the latest CIRES reports and the schools' reports to Schools Plus.

Fair Education programs were rated as having an impact of **7.8 out of 10**, in terms of **student outcomes**, by school leaders in NSW.

In Queensland, feedback from parents is encouraging after just the first year of the three-year project.

50%

report an improvement in **wellbeing and support** given to their child

48%

report an improvement in **student transition** in and out of school

47%

report an improvement in **keeping parents informed** of school matters

FUNDING + COACHING + PROGRAM MANAGEMENT + EVALUATION



FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP CAPABILITY & KNOWLEDGE SHARING



Family and community engagement

At **Hassall Grove Public School** in Sydney's west, many children began Kindergarten unprepared for school. Without the foundational social and early learning skills, these children took months and even years to catch up and reach their potential – and there was a danger they would always be behind. A parent involvement program was established to teach children and their carers essential skills for emotional and behavioural development.



Parent participation in learning up from **30% to 84%**

Parent participation in school up from **45% to 99%**

"It was important parents had their own sense of belonging here because many didn't have their own positive experience in school. We wanted to foster a positive space for learning for their children, so they felt comfortable with what was happening behind the school gate."

"We've seen a shift at home where parents are more confident discussing homework activities with their children and they have a better understanding of what is happening in the classroom. We've also seen significant change in student behaviour, parental engagement and levels of support for students in transitioning in and out of our school."

Hassall Grove Public School: ATSC Parent afternoon tea



Loganlea State High School, QLD

This southern suburbs Brisbane school is determined to change the current attitudes towards excellence in the school community, with many students feeling held back by negative representations of their community. The school's 'Signature Excellence' program is using mentoring with local businesses and organisations to improve the youth profile in the community.

"The program is the biggest piece of work and the most important piece of work in our careers. We learned the true weight and significance of this in the last six months. We have always perceived our work as being something that just needs to be done but we have all realised recently how significant this project is to our community."
Kiri Griffiths, Humanities and English Head of Department and Brenton Farleigh, Principal.

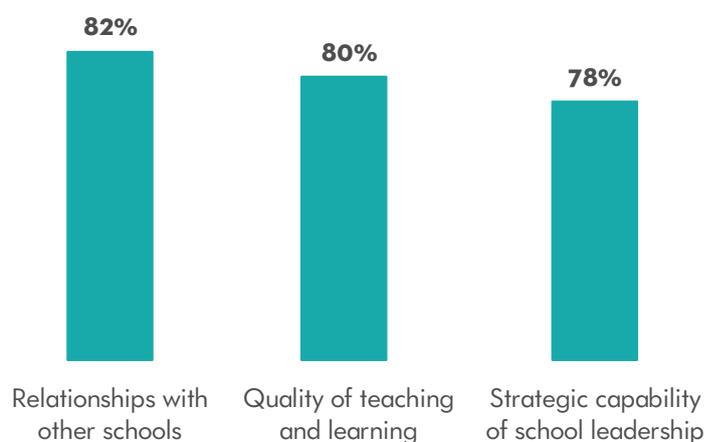


Leadership capability

As well as providing financial support over three years for schools' projects, a key component of the program is coaching. Coaching was viewed by nearly all school leaders as critical to their projects' success and the development of leadership capability.

"The money was really great to resource our school but the coaching is what gave us the time and the space to think about what was important and to keep us working towards that vision. To re-energise us as well." NSW principal

Participating schools' perceived impact of Fair Education coaching program on leadership capability



Knowledge sharing

We connect the schools that participate in the **Fair Education program** with each other, so they can share their learnings and experiences.



60% of school leaders said they had taken on board ideas from other Fair Education schools.

Commonwealth Bank Teaching Awards



The **Commonwealth Bank Teaching Awards** have been delivered with the support of the Pioneers in Philanthropy and the Commonwealth Bank of Australia since 2017. The Awards are our key initiative to recognise and reward Australian educators who are transforming the futures of their students.

The annual Awards ceremony and subsequent Teaching Fellowships are designed to **celebrate and build a community of education change-makers who are inspiring and influencing practice in schools** around Australia. Since 2017, four cohorts of 12 Fellows have received this accolade.

Each Fellowship year includes a range of leadership experiences and professional development opportunities so the Fellows can share their expertise and scale their impact in achieving better school outcomes to help **reduce the education gap**.



Sharing knowledge and best practice

John Townley, WA. 2019 Teaching Fellow

John Townley of Cecil Andrews College has hosted forums and workshops with over 200 teachers on his design of effective STEM programs for Indigenous students. The program design has been recognised as impactful and innovative by the WA Department of Education.

96% of Fellows said the program enhanced their knowledge, professional skills and leadership capabilities



Enhanced professional opportunities

Yasodai Selvakumaran, NSW. 2018 Teaching Fellow

Following her recognition at the Teaching Awards, Yasodai of Rooty Hill High School was selected as a Top 10 finalist for the prestigious Global Teacher Prize. She has since taken on a role within the NSW Department of Education as a teaching ambassador and mentor.

52% had moved on to new leadership roles after one year

74% had taken on new leadership responsibilities after one year



Increased influence in the education system

John Cleary, NT. 2018 Teaching Fellow

Leaving his role as Principal at Casuarina Street Primary School in Katherine, John Cleary moved to a leadership role within the NT Department of Education. In 2018, John established the School and System Improvement Unit and as general manager, continues his work towards systemic change in NT Schools.

96% said they felt more empowered to contribute to improving the education system

100% said the Fellowship has broadened their professional perspectives and aspiration to work towards system change

Together, we can help close the education gap.



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