



Impact Report 2022

**TOGETHER,  
WE CAN HELP  
CLOSE THE  
EDUCATION  
GAP**





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## A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

There’s no doubt that the past few years have been some of the toughest ever faced by our schools.

As we release this report, many of the teachers we work with describe this period of learning as the longest and most difficult they can recall. It’s clear that in the classroom, the impacts of the pandemic are still ongoing, and teachers are working harder than ever to ensure their students are well, engaged in learning and achieving.

At Lawnton State School in Queensland, we’ve been fortunate to support just one of many incredible examples of teachers’ dedication. Nikki Brown is Lawnton’s Engagement Officer. Her efforts to support families and encourage kids back to class have paid off with higher attendance, and her model of support expanded to neighbouring schools. Nikki’s work is a heart-warming display of how Schools Plus and educators work together to help students succeed, not only academically but through improved wellbeing and engagement too. You can read more about Nikki’s work and the impact she’s having later in this report.

I’m thrilled to say that despite the ongoing disruption and adversity, teachers and school leaders like Nikki have managed to create real change for their students and communities. In over 80% of the projects we supported in the past year, teachers described the change generated in their school as major or transformational.

With our national grant round around the corner, we’re anticipating schools will look to us for support for initiatives to re-engage students, strengthen their wellbeing and address any learning delays that may have emerged.

We have now supported over 430,000 students across 1,200 schools since our inception. This figure represents over 25% of the total schools that are eligible for our support, a milestone we are immensely proud of reaching within our first seven years of raising funds. This incredible achievement would not have been possible without the generous support of our donors, who have enabled us to raise over \$36 million for schools in communities facing disadvantage.

I really hope you enjoy reading our Impact Report as much as we have enjoyed working with the inspiring teachers and school leaders who brought about change in their school communities. It is with the support of them, and of our generous donors, that we move one step closer to closing the education gap caused by disadvantage.

CEO, Schools Plus

# How we drive change

Schools Plus is a national not-for-profit that exists to help close the education gap caused by disadvantage. Since 2015, we have:

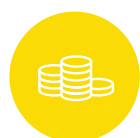
**Raised  
\$36m for  
schools**

**Supported  
1200+  
schools**

**Benefited  
430,000+  
students**

**Benefited  
36,000+  
teachers**

## WE SUPPORT SCHOOLS IN COMMUNITIES FACING DISADVANTAGE



Low socio-economic backgrounds



First Nations background



Regional, rural and remote areas



Language backgrounds other than English



With additional needs

## BUILDING CAPACITY IN



School leadership



Teaching and learning practice



Family and community engagement

## TO IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES



Achievement



Wellbeing



Learning dispositions



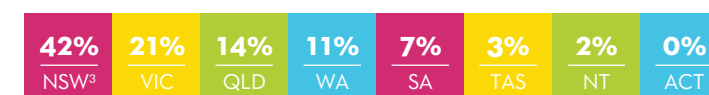
**TO HELP CLOSE THE EDUCATION GAP**

# Our Impact

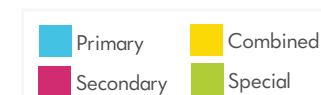
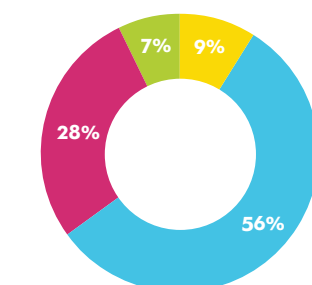
We work with schools that need our support.

During the period of this report<sup>1</sup>, we worked with over 600 schools whose projects are either complete or still in progress. Over 4,700 schools across Australia are eligible for our support<sup>2</sup>.

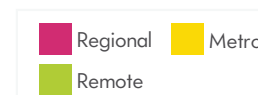
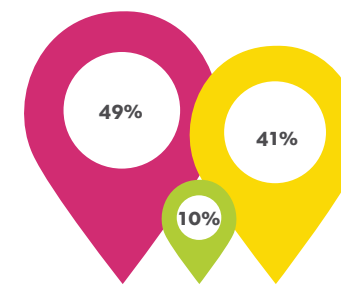
## Schools by state



## Schools by type



## Schools by location



## Project focus by location

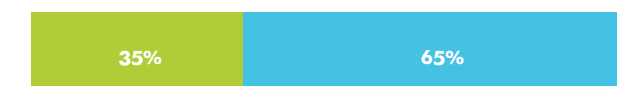
### Achievement



### Wellbeing



### Learning dispositions



We empower teachers in disadvantaged communities to create lasting change in their schools and beyond. Schools are asked to report on the success of their projects.

**80%**

of teachers said they achieved their project goals

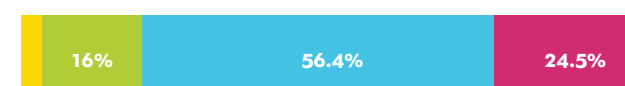
**12%**

of teachers said the project exceeded their original goals

**81%**

of teachers say the change in their school has been major or transformational

## Significance of change



## Goal Achievement



<sup>1</sup> 01.04.2021 – 31.03.2022 <sup>2</sup> To be eligible, schools must have an ICSEA value below 1000. <sup>3</sup> With funds raised from our 2020 Crisis Appeal, 50 schools in bushfire impacted areas of NSW were supported through a partnership with the NSW Department of Education, leading to an increased presence in NSW during this reporting period.



# Our support of schools and teachers

We empower teachers with funding, coaching and resources to maximise the impact of their work.



## BUILDING SCHOOL CAPACITY WITH COACHING

Schools Plus has a team of over 25 experienced coaches who support schools to plan, deliver and evaluate their projects. Our coaches draw on their expertise to support schools to design and implement the project, measure impact, build leadership capacity and encourage knowledge sharing within and between schools.

In the past 12 months, we have delivered 1500 hours of coaching to teachers and school leaders across 130 schools.

82% of teachers said coaching helped them achieve their project goal

82% of teachers said coaching helped them design and implement their projects

77% of teachers said coaching helped them develop their leadership capacity.

## SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND RESOURCES

Our knowledge sharing program aims to promote a culture of collaboration and professional development amid the broader education community. We do this through events such as webinars and forums, and resources that share expertise, insights and learnings from school initiatives. In the past 12 months, we have:

Hosted 17 knowledge sharing events

With over 1000 registrations

94% of attendees said learnings from our events will be used to inform their practice

## RAISING THE PROFILE OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION WITH THE COMMONWEALTH BANK TEACHING AWARDS

It is only with great teachers working tirelessly that we are able to help students succeed. Through the Commonwealth Bank Teaching Awards, we aim to recognise exceptional teachers, showcase their achievements and raise the reputation of the teaching profession.

Each year, the Teaching Awards recognise 12 outstanding teachers and school leaders who are making an impact on their students and the teaching profession. Award recipients receive funding for a strategic project at their school plus a range of professional learning experiences designed to enhance leadership skills and professional opportunities so they can continue to hone their skills, share expertise and grow their influence in the sector.

In a bid to acknowledge teachers starting out in the profession, the 2022 Awards will also recognise the work of 10 early career teachers and award them with professional learning including coaching and mentoring.

**2000**  
teachers nominated

**250**  
teachers applied

**22**  
teachers rewarded



Pictured: Hayley Dureau

The Federal Department of Education, Skills and Employment **Review on Quality Initial Teacher Education** suggests that high performing teachers, like the Teaching Fellows, should be used to raise the status of the profession and inspire others to become teachers.

**Wendy Bode's Virtual STEM Academy** pioneered a new way to teach STEM to Queensland's most remote students. Since her Award, the Virtual STEM Academy has expanded into NSW and NT, ensuring more students have access to top-tier STEM learning.

**Rebecca West** was recognised on the world stage, reaching the Top 10 finalists for Varkey Foundation's Global Teacher Prize.

**Hayley Dureau** was selected as a Master Teacher (Mathematics) in the newly established Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership's inaugural Teaching Excellence Program, to deliver innovative, evidence-based professional learning to educators across Victoria.



Together with schools in disadvantaged communities, we are working to close the education gap and support students in three broad areas of learning - **achievement**, **wellbeing** and **learning dispositions**.



#### Student Outcome 1

## Helping students achieve

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to have the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to achieve in their education and their lives beyond school. Literacy, numeracy and STEAM are foundational learning areas, and include general capabilities such as creative and critical thinking and digital literacy skills.

15% of children start school without the language skills needed to learn.<sup>4</sup>

By Year 7, 1 in 4 children do not have the expected literacy and numeracy skills needed for high school.<sup>5</sup>

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are three years behind their peers in science at 15 years old.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2018 <sup>5</sup> The Conversation, 2020 <sup>6</sup> PISA, 2018

Our work to help students achieve in the last 12 months:

**43**

schools supported

**9,500**

students supported

**1,100**

teachers supported



**"The Makerspace has given me a reason to come to school."** - Student

### MAKING SPACE FOR STEM

Students at Montello Primary School (TAS) were falling behind in science, technology, engineering and maths. In an effort to rejuvenate student engagement and improve academic performance, the school established a dedicated STEM Makerspace where students could work with resources like 3D printers, robots, and cameras.

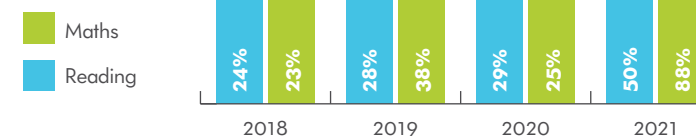
Since commencing the project, students are more engaged in STEM than ever before, with 100% of students using the Makerspace at school and 45% of students taking part in extracurricular STEM activities. Teachers observed increases in attendance, a drop in behavioural issues and suspensions, and some of the school's most at-risk students re-engaged in learning.

The Makerspace has fostered valuable partnerships with members of the community including parents, STEM organisations and neighbouring schools – who are now exploring a possible cluster program so more children can access the Makerspace.



**"I like working in a group. I don't feel scared to make a mistake. It's okay to make mistakes because I learn from them."** - Student

Percentage of students at or above expected learning level



### CATCHING UP AT CARLTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

With 95% of students from language backgrounds other than English and 85% living in public housing, students at Carlton Primary School (VIC) struggled to keep up through the near-constant learning-from-home periods in 2020. Teachers knew their students were falling behind, with those already at-risk hit the hardest.

The school ran targeted, small-group interventions to accelerate learning growth for its most disadvantaged students. Staff and volunteers were brought on to assist students in reading, writing and maths, while a team of teachers, wellbeing officers and speech therapists oversaw the project and worked together with families to ensure learning goals were known and shared.

In the first 10 weeks, students displayed over 12 weeks of learning and by the 6-month mark, the number of students at or above their expected level in maths grew by 63%.

### READING SPARKS NEWFOUND CONFIDENCE

At Toogoolawa School (QLD), a special assistance school for boys with additional needs, 20% of its students were reading at or below Year 2 level, despite half being of high-school age.

The school created a simple, engaging literacy program that used sounds and one-to-one teaching to improve reading. Student progress was monitored daily to ensure they stayed on track and the smallest successes were celebrated, boosting confidence and self-esteem.

The initiative had an enormous impact not only academically but also on the boys' emotional, social and behavioural development. For many, this was their first ever experience of success in the classroom. After experiencing some initial progress, the boys became more comfortable in a learning environment and the number of behavioural incidents dropped significantly. In the last 12 months of the project, students averaged 3 years of reading progress. The project is now broadening to include aspects of writing and spelling.



**"These boys have gone from genuinely feeling that they can't read, that they're stupid, that there's something wrong with them, to a feeling of confidence in themselves, in their ability to learn, and in their ability to overcome obstacles in life. The difference in them is an inspiration to us daily."** - Teacher





Student Outcome 2

# Supporting student wellbeing

Schools are not just for academic learning – they are where children develop personal and social knowledge, skills and attitudes that help them to succeed later in life. A child’s wellbeing underpins their ability to understand themselves and others, and to manage their relationships, learning and lives in a safe and effective manner.

Children facing disadvantage are twice as likely to experience poor mental wellbeing.<sup>7</sup>

By Year 3, students with poor mental health are 9 months behind their peers.<sup>8</sup>

Half of all mental health issues emerge during school or early adult years.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Australian Government Department of Health, 2022   <sup>8</sup> Grattan Institute, 2019   <sup>9</sup> Australian Government Department of Health, 2022

Our work to support student wellbeing in the last 12 months:

**26**  
schools supported

**6,600**  
students supported

**870**  
teachers supported



“This has been an outstanding reflection of Noongar science in action in our school. We are so proud this [is] now established on the school grounds.” - Teacher

## SUSTAINABILITY MERGES SCIENCE AND CULTURE

To unite science, culture and community, Clontarf Aboriginal College (WA), a secondary school that reengages young Indigenous people at risk, launched a whole-school sustainability project based on the concept of leaving the land better than it was found.

Students overhauled the school’s waste management, establishing a composting area and painting Indigenous motifs on recycling bins, while the school worked with local Elders to build Noongar Boonar Niran, a conversation garden based on the 6 seasons observed by the Noongar people.

The whole school community became more conscious of living and behaving sustainably. Students regularly discussed the importance of caring for the land and are often seen picking up rubbish around campus. The Noongar Boonar Niran Garden became a central meeting place for students, providing a positive space for reflection and reconnecting to country and culture. The school is now looking to reinvest funds made through bottle collection back into the project.

## BUILDING RESILIENCE WITH A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

Burdened by trauma-backgrounds and severe disadvantage, many students at Hill Top Public School (NSW) were disengaged from learning. As a support hub for the community, the school knew it was essential to improve outcomes not only for students but for families and the wider community.

Teachers were upskilled on trauma-informed practice and a community liaison officer helped families with access to counselling and support services. Wellbeing was made a priority – with daily mindfulness sessions at school and wellbeing packages sent into the community.

The whole-school shift has been hugely valued by students and the community, attracting new enrolments at the school. Students now use their new skills to build resilience and manage daily challenges. In a survey, 80% of students reported knowing how to self-regulate their emotions and 50% of older students felt they could solve conflict as it arises. Student culture was transformed - with a decline in negative behaviours, fewer suspensions, and improved engagement in learning.



# Overcoming absenteeism at Lawnton State School

Only a few years into their journeys at Lawnton State School in QLD, siblings Max and Grace were missing at least one day of school per week and their learning was falling behind.

Complex trauma, behavioural issues and developmental delays were impacting their ability to get to school on time and although their mum Libby was committed to her children’s education, she was experiencing considerable stress as she navigated these issues with little additional support. Max and Grace resisted positive bedtime routines, slept in and refused to get ready for school.

Libby’s story is one of the hundreds of families struggling with attendance who were supported by Nikki Brown and her team of Student Engagement Officers. After huge success as Engagement Officer at Lawnton State School in 2018 and 2019, Nikki’s work expanded to help Engagement Officers at four neighbouring primary schools, offering mentoring, advice and support as they worked between schools and families to tackle early years absenteeism. In most cases, poor attendance indicated underlying struggles within families, as they dealt with issues like mental health, homelessness and generational trauma.

For Libby’s family, Nikki developed a multipronged approach to get Max and Grace back to school more regularly. She would assist at home as they got ready in the morning and supplied interactive “Get-Ready” charts that encouraged positive routines at bedtime and before school.

Together with the school chaplain, guidance officers and teachers, the school strengthened relationships with the children and increased their desire to come to school with attendance rewards.

Libby was offered counselling, connected with support services and provided with uniforms, shoes and food parcels donated by the local community.

**In 2021, Max and Grace’s attendance reached 92%.** As Libby grew more confident in upholding positive routines, her children’s behaviour improved, and they became more willing to come to school.

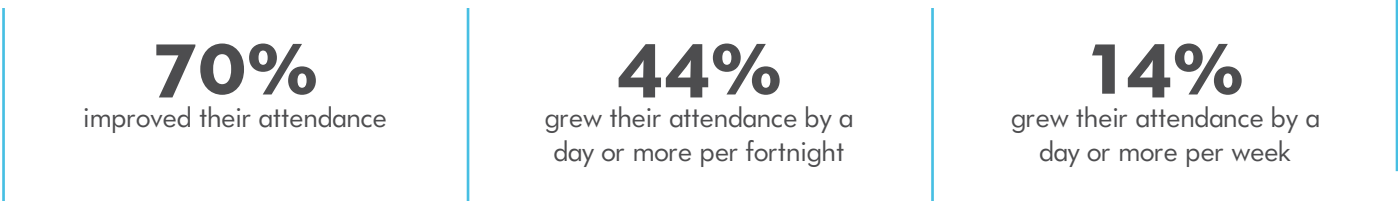
“We were helped in so many ways. I had back up from the school with getting my kids ready in the mornings. They now listen to me more. The school did anything they could do to help me. The school accepted my kids with all their problems, and I have less household stress now. They made reward charts which my kids loved and backed me up with better school routines.” - Libby



With more time spent in the classroom, Max and Grace’s reading levels increased, they grew more confident in learning and deepened their connections with teachers and other students.

With early intervention, the whole family has benefited. **Their youngest sibling, 5-year-old Sofie, started Prep in 2022. From the get-go, she is attending school 90% of the time.**

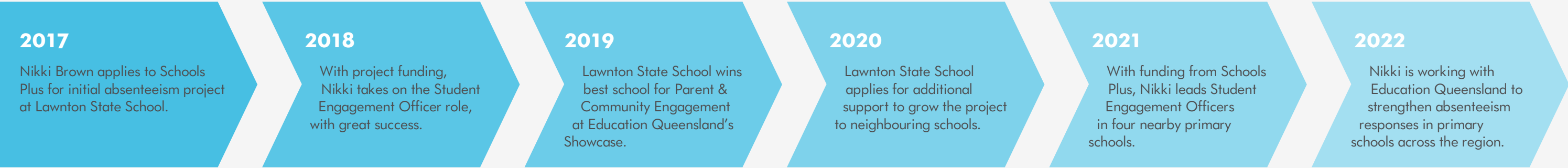
The impact of the project was transformational. Of the almost 200 students supported:



As students reengaged at school and regained confidence in their learning, their academic outcomes began to improve. Within 6 months, **24% of students supported improved in English and 17% improved in maths.**

Nikki is now working with Education Queensland to strengthen primary school absenteeism responses, working with teachers in the region to create a sustainable model to tackle early-years absenteeism.

## 6 Years of Improving Absenteeism







Student Outcome 3

# Developing learning dispositions

To reach their full potential, children need to develop strong learning dispositions; to have the capability and confidence to actively engage in learning throughout life and in doing so, succeed in and beyond school.

“Students need to be engaged, motivated, willing to learn new things and feel they can succeed; without those dispositions, they will be unable to translate their raw potential into high-level skills, no matter how intelligent and gifted they are, no matter how much effort and professionalism teachers put into their jobs, and no matter how many resources countries devote to education. Unless you show up to play, you cannot win; unless you try, you cannot succeed.”<sup>10</sup>

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds have less belief in their own capacities than those from advantaged backgrounds.<sup>11</sup>

25% of students from disadvantaged backgrounds do not expect to complete tertiary education, compared to only 6% of advantaged students.<sup>12</sup>

By adulthood, only 51% of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are engaged in education, training or work, compared to over 80% from advantaged backgrounds.

<sup>10</sup> PISA, 2012 <sup>11</sup> PISA, 2000 <sup>12</sup> PISA, 2018

Our work to develop learning dispositions in the last 12 months:



## CERTIFIED SUCCESS AT THE GATEWAY SCHOOL

Many students at The Gateway School, a flexible learning school for disengaged youth in Victoria, struggled to find work due to generational unemployment, mental health challenges and a lack of qualifications.

Students were given opportunities to develop their employability skills by obtaining certificates in food handling, driving, traffic control and first aid, while the project’s donors, a local law firm, offered mentoring to the students.

Not only did the project populate students’ resumes, but it re-ignited their self-belief and mended their faith in society. Quickly after the training, many students found jobs or lined up interviews, breaking the cycle of unemployment.



“The Gateway students were given opportunities that could change the course of their lives. Some may think that’s an exaggeration, but when you come from a low socio-economic area, and the world has not been very kind to you, a group of people who you don’t even know, believing in you is life changing.” – Teacher



## DIVERSE COMMUNITIES FIND CONNECTION

With over half of its students from non-English speaking backgrounds, Elizabeth Vale Primary School (SA) launched a whole-school Community Connections program to engage its vibrant, diverse community.

The school ran workshops for parents to learn English, involved Indigenous families in craft projects and created a multicultural playgroup where parents and their young children could get familiar with the school. Housing support, NDIS and allied health provided wrap-around support and all staff received training in cultural competency. Their physical health was looked after through a nutrition program and breakfast club and a community Facebook page was set up to regularly update families in their first languages.

The program invigorated the community, with many families becoming more confident in engaging with the school. The number of families accessing community initiatives doubled and participation in parent teacher interviews substantially increased, with 100% of Indigenous families taking part. The early years playgroup was regularly accessed by migrant and refugee parents, boosting confidence and easing their child’s transition into school.





On behalf of the students and teachers across Australia, Schools Plus would like to thank all of our supporters, without whom none of these projects would have been made possible. This is just a snapshot of the tremendous work being done in schools across the country each year. Please visit **[schoolsplus.org.au](https://schoolsplus.org.au)** or get in touch to learn more about our work.

## Contact Us

**T** 02 8880 0296

**E** [info@schoolsplus.org.au](mailto:info@schoolsplus.org.au)