School context

At the beginning of 2013 there were 561 students enrolled at Cessnock High School, 34 fewer than in 2012. There were 96 students in Year 7, 103 students in Year 8, 117 students in Year 9, 91 students in Year 10, 82 students in Year 11 and 49 students in Year 12. Included in these numbers were 23 students in two support classes. There were 85 students of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background.

Cessnock High School received Transition Funding (formerly the Priority Schools Program) and National Partnerships (low socio-economic status) funding. Much of this support is focused on literacy, numeracy and technology. In 2012 our school joined the National Partnership Improving Literacy and Numeracy Program.

Cessnock High School is a proud member of the Cessnock Community of Great Public Schools (CCGPS). CCGPS includes two high schools and 14 partner primary schools within the local government area, striving collectively to provide the best possible educational opportunities for students from pre-school to Year 12 through a collaboratively developed strategic plan. In 2011 CCGPS was recognised with a Director General’s Achievement Award for “A K-12 approach to improving student learning outcomes”. The core values of the group, Collaborate, Inspire and Achieve, support the collective goals and align strongly with those of the individual schools within the local management group.

Students attending Cessnock High School largely enrolled from our partner public schools, Cessnock Public School, Cessnock East Public School, Abermain Public School, Kearsley Public School and Kitchener Public School. A small number of students enrolled from public schools outside our zone, such as Weston, Cessnock West and Ellalong. Approximately 40 students enrolled during 2013 coming from outside Cessnock to live in our city.

Principal’s message

Welcome to the Annual School Report 2013. As I am retiring mid-year, this is my 14th and final Annual School Report. I am particularly proud of the achievements of Cessnock High School. It is an innovative school that puts student learning at the forefront of all of our endeavours. We believe that our school provides all students with the opportunities to excel at their level and in their chosen areas of expertise.

I certify that the information in this report is the result of a rigorous school self-evaluation process and is a balanced and genuine account of the school’s achievements and areas for development.

Ian Scanlon
Principal

Parents’ and Citizens (P&C) Message

2013 was yet another active year at Cessnock High School. My time acting as parent and community representative on the Positive Behaviour Learning (PBL) committee has been a full and rewarding experience. The philosophy of PBL is well entrenched within the school, its culture and language, and our data shows that this system is working. To be able to put forward the parent opinion at these weekly meetings, helping to establish expectations, systems and an ethos that helps promote Cessnock High School and create a better community within the school, is a privilege I am lucky enough to enjoy. With our local schools working together as a team, including local businesses, the impact on Cessnock schools in general is a positive one.

The canteen is running smoothly under the adept care of Vicki Slusher and Sue Giles along with our volunteers. Uniform orders and sales are also going smoothly under this umbrella. Our major purchase remains the co-purchase of our bus and our 50% fare subsidy for our students.

Cessnock High School P&C became custodians overseeing the administration of a donation from Hunter Music Academy this year. These funds saw the purchase and installation of screens in the Multi Purpose Centre (MPC) to serve as visual display units for assemblies, presentation days, classwork and other occasions which also gave us the opportunity to bring our stage curtains up to fire standards.

Our core group of P&C members has increased over time and my thanks go to each of these ladies for their time, support, interest, attention and motivation.
during 2013, so to the Executive and staff of our school. Together we will have a fantastic 2014.

Jenny Megson
President

Student Representatives’ message
2013 was a huge year for Cessnock High School. In May, Cessnock High School celebrated 75 years on the Aberdare Road site. It was a huge honour to play such a big role in this celebration. Our senior student Guard of Honour at the gate was such a moving tribute for the ex-students attending. We had an assembly and all of our school leaders spoke about a particular era over the last 75 years. This information came from the Black Diamond magazines, stored in our library. The assembly during the day was followed in the evening by the gala dinner. It was magical. Everyone in their best dress, for a night of remembering and catching up. Once again we heard from a guest speaker of each era. It was a very special moment for me, sharing this experience with Bethany Dwyer our School Vice Captain to join Mr Neville Bothwell (from the first year to attend Cessnock High School in 1937) and Marie Swan (ex-student 1940s) to cut the anniversary cake. A memorable event in our school year, one I will never forget and was proud to be part of.

The next huge event for our school in 2013 was the visit by the Japanese students. We had the privilege of hosting 16 students and their teacher from Japan. It was great to see these students in classes with us, learning our way of life and wanting to be part of Cessnock High School for the time that they were here.

I attended the Parliamentary School Leaders’ conference at Parliament House along with Elisebeth Boulton our school leader and the leaders from Mt View High School. It was a great day, seeing what our local member of parliament does and meeting Marie Bashir, the NSW Governor, was a real highlight. I was also fortunate to attend Parliament House as a representative of Cessnock High School for the NSW Schools State Constitutional Convention. It was another great day having the opportunity to first learn about and then debate whether Australia should become a republic.

College 2 at Cessnock High School was a memorable year. We had lots of fun especially with the History excursion to the Quarantine Station – one that our teacher won’t forget in a while.

Over the six years at Cessnock High School we certainly witnessed some changes take place, for example, the laboratories were upgraded, the new commercial kitchen is “State of the the Art” and the addition of Smartboards in the classroom move the school into a new era of learning with technology.

The College, what a great way of doing the Higher School Certificate (HSC)! Cessnock High School, ahead on the ideas for sure! Our formal was also a very memorable night and a special way to end our years of high school.

Finally, as my favourite teacher of all time says “It’s your school, It’s my school, It’s our school”. Thank you to everyone for my six years at Cessnock High School.

Joel Troy
School Captain 2013
initiative was funded through Transition Funding (formerly Priority Schools Program). In Term 4 the school moved to electronic roll marking using the Millennium system. Rolls were marked at the beginning of every lesson and any truancy closely monitored and managed. If a student truants a class their parents are called within the hour.

**Post-school destinations**

Of last year’s 46 HSC students, 28% are at university compared with 32% in 2012, 20% in 2011, 19% in 2010, 31% in 2009, 22% in 2008 and 2007, 24% in 2006, 15% in 2005 and 6% in 2004. Of last year’s 46 HSC students, 39% are in employment compared with 24% in 2012, 51% in 2011, 53% in 2010, 39% in 2009, 42% in 2008, 31% in 2007, 34% in 2006, 47% in 2005 and 62% in 2004. Of last year’s 46 HSC 9% of students are at TAFE or further education compared with 15% in 2012, 13% in 2011, 14% in 2010 and 2009, 24% in 2008, 40% in 2007, 32% in 2006, 36% in 2005, and 14% in 2004. Of last year’s 46 students 11% are unemployed and 13% could not be contacted.

In 2013 there was growth in university admissions of our College 2 students with 28% enrolling compared with the four year rolling average of 25%. There is also a strong link between studying Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses and students securing employment.

**Year 12 students undertaking vocational or trade training**

Of the 46 students completing College 2 in 2013, 90% were awarded the Higher School Certificate. 10% were pathways students who were awarded a record of attainment. 48% of students had VET or trade training in their HSC record of attainment.

**Year 12 students attaining HSC or equivalent Vocational educational qualification**

Of the 46 students completing College 2 in 2013, 85% were awarded the Higher School Certificate. 15% were pathways students who were awarded a record of attainment.
Workforce information

Workforce composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Principal(s)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal(s)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Teachers</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Teacher(s)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher of Reading Recovery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning and Support Teacher(s)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Librarian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher of ESL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Counsellor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Administrative &amp; Support Staff</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Australian Education Regulation, 2013 requires schools to report on Aboriginal composition of their workforce.

In 2013 three of our teachers were of Aboriginal descent. Three Aboriginal support staff were also employed.

Teacher qualifications

All teaching staff meet the professional requirements for teaching in NSW public schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>% of staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree or Diploma</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Institute of Teachers Accreditation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Financial summary

This summary covers funds for operating costs and does not involve expenditure areas such as permanent salaries, building and major maintenance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of financial summary</th>
<th>30/11/2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance brought forward</td>
<td>352,785.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global funds</td>
<td>567,838.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tied funds</td>
<td>1,165,685.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School &amp; community sources</td>
<td>219,935.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>19,199.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust receipts</td>
<td>82,151.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canteen</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total income</td>
<td>2,054,810.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expenditure

| Teaching & learning                         | 62,284.49  |
| **Key learning areas**                     |            |
| Excursions                                  | 52,854.77  |
| Extracurricular dissections                 | 79,163.35  |
| Library                                     | 500.00     |
| Training & development                      | 5,593.54   |
| Tied funds                                  | 787,399.03 |
| Casual relief teachers                      | 164,869.15 |
| Administration & office                     | 107,488.13 |
| School-operated canteen                     | 0.00       |
| Utilities                                   | 142,644.71 |
| Maintenance                                 | 64,974.84  |
| Trust accounts                              | 70,885.53  |
| Capital programs                            | 8,181.82   |
| Total expenditure                           | 1,546,839.36|

Balance carried forward                      | 860,756.31 |

A full copy of the school’s 2013 financial statement is tabled at the annual general meetings of the School Council and/or the parent body. Further details concerning the statement can be obtained by contacting the school.

School performance 2013

In NAPLAN Year 7 students generally performed below the state average and similar schools and communities as our Statistically Similar Groups (SSGs) in the higher performance bands. Our Year 7 students were above SSGs in Bands 8 grammar and punctuation, Band 9 spelling and Band 8 numeracy.

In NAPLAN Year 9 students generally performed below the state average, but above SSGs in Bands 8 and 9 reading, Bands 7 and 9 writing and Band 9 numeracy.

In NAPLAN, student growth from Year 7 (2011) to Year 9 (2013) was significantly above state and SSG average for Aboriginal students, QuickSmart students and Peer Tutor students.
In the Higher School Certificate student performance was generally below state average. 4 students gained Band 6 in the 2013 HSC. Students in Community and Family Studies, Music 1 and PDHPE exceeded the achievements of SSGs. 28% of our HSC students enrolled at university after completing the 2013 HSC compared with the rolling four year average of 25%.

**Academic achievements**

**NAPLAN**

In the National Assessment Program, the results across the Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 literacy and numeracy assessments are reported on a scale from Band 1 to Band 10.

The achievement scale represents increasing levels of skills and understandings demonstrated in these assessments.

Year 7: from Band 4 (lowest) to Band 9 (highest)

Year 9: from Band 5 (lowest) to Band 10 (highest)

The *My School* website provides detailed information and data for national literacy and numeracy testing (NAPLAN).

Click on the link [http://www.myschool.edu.au](http://www.myschool.edu.au) and enter the school name in the *Find a school* and select **GO** to access the school data.

**NAPLAN Year 7 - Literacy** (including Reading, Writing, Spelling and Grammar and Punctuation)
NAPLAN Year 9 - Numeracy

National Minimum Standards Data

Percentage of Year 7 students achieving at or above minimum standard (exempt students included)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>88.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar &amp; Punctuation</td>
<td>71.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>90.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of Year 9 students achieving at or above minimum standard (exempt students included)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>91.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>61.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>86.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar &amp; Punctuation</td>
<td>81.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>83.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Higher School Certificate (HSC)

In the Higher School Certificate, the performance of students is reported in performance bands ranging from Performance Band 1 (lowest) to Performance Band 6 (highest).

Significant programs and initiatives

Arts

The Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) Department had a very active year during 2013. We continued with our weekly performances at the Principal’s assembly. We also held an Elective Music Recital which included 22 items, while senior students presented their HSC pieces for family and friends. College students Mikayla Sheehan and Yasmin Williams both received a Band 6 for their HSC Music Examinations. Outstanding performances were highlighted at an evening concert which was held to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of Cessnock High School.

Visual Arts students attended “Sculpture in the Vineyards” to experience work of local artists. There were two exhibitions of student artwork throughout the year, the first being a display for the 75th Anniversary celebrations, with the second being a collection of work by Years 7 and 8 students held at Cessnock Library.

Sport

2013 was another exciting and successful year for Cessnock High School sport. The year saw the start of a new era for sport with the successful implementation of an integrated sports model and was accented by outstanding individual and team performances. The coalfields zone continues to provide ample opportunities for our students to compete and have fun in organised days such as the Year 7 Gala Day, Year 7 and 8 Cricket Gala Days and Year 7 and 8 Netball Gala Days. Participation from our
Stage 4 students at these gala days continued to rise from 2012. Teams also competed in a number of Combined High School State Knockout competitions with a rise in participation recorded across the year. Stand out individual performances from 2013 included Zoe Ford being named “Runner of the Meet” at the Coalfields Zone Cross Country carnival and Maddison King’s outstanding performances in shot put and javelin at the zone athletics carnival. As we look towards 2014 and the continuations of the integrated sports model we can look forward to a myriad of new sporting opportunities and experiences being afforded to our students. The new model will allow greater community participation and makes calling on the expertise of outside agencies and individual staff members much easier.

Aboriginal Education

During 2013 we saw another improvement in NAPLAN results by our Aboriginal students. Students continued to work closely with NORTA NORTA Tutors, Rebecca Bell and Jiya Reardon. Tutors focused on the key learning areas of literacy and numeracy, through one on one tutoring and utilisation of the QuickSmart program.

Sistaspeak and Brospeak continued to run successfully throughout the year, as did the newly introduced Boys at Risk initiative.

Students, staff and the wider community participated in a number of Aboriginal Days of Celebration, including Pathways, Close the Gap, NAIDOC and Harmony Day.

Multicultural education

Multicultural awareness and study is incorporated into each key Learning Area (KLA) within the school. Multiculturalism was also celebrated on Harmony Day, with a whole school expo.

Any issues of a racist nature were resolved promptly and effectively in conjunction with the ARCO, Deborah Falconer.

Transitional Equity Funding

Transition Equity Funding allocated in 2013 was $73,200. Additionally a Deputy Principal and 1.5 additional teachers were employed. It was utilized to enhance student learning outcomes by:

- Employing two QuickSmart tutors
- Encouraging attendance through daily contact with the parents of absent students
- Purchasing contextual Stage 4 and 5 resources in all KLAs
- Purchasing ‘timetabler’ to more effectively create a timetable that supports learning
- Entering students in competitions such as debating, public speaking and the Maths Science Challenge.

National partnerships and significant Commonwealth initiatives (participating schools only)

Our school was allocated $773 652 under national Partnerships (low SES) in 2013. There were significant
National Partnership’s Programs running in our school in 2013. These funds were used to:

- Employ a Head Teacher Literacy/Numeracy to enhance teacher professional learning in Stage 4 (Years 7 and 8)
- Employ a Head Teacher Technology to enhance teacher professional learning in Stage 5 (Years 9 and 10)
- Employ an Aboriginal Education Worker (AEW) to engage Aboriginal students, their families, and their communities
- Employ a Community Liaison Officer to promote the school’s achievements within the community
- Work closely with the University of Sydney in a four year longitudinal study of Year 6 transition, literacy, numeracy, technology, and The College
- Implement action research projects in each KLA with the University of Sydney
- Implement QuickSmart literacy and numeracy in association with the University of New England
- Implement Quality Teaching in association with the University of Newcastle
- Purchase computing hardware including SmartBoards
- Organize a cultural camp for Aboriginal students
- Resource the Australian Curriculum and
- Facilitate educational initiatives across CCGPS.

School planning and evaluation 2012—2014

School evaluation processes

NSW public schools conduct evaluations to support the effective implementation of the school plan. The processes used include:

- Establishing six teams to lead in six focus areas
- Engaging the University of Sydney in a four year longitudinal study
- Completing a comprehensive National Partnership evaluation.

School planning 2012—2014: progress in 2013

School priority 1

Literacy: Improving student literacy has been an on going priority at our school. With NAPLAN this has been informed by striving to maximize the number of students about the National Mean Score (NMS), achieving growth from Year 7 – Year 9 and moving student achievement to the higher performance bands. The focus of National Partnerships improving literacy (and numeracy) has been to focus on moving the students through the literacy continuum consistent with their cohort group.

Outcomes from 2012–2014

- To increase the percentage of Year 9 students achieving the NMS and above in reading from 87% in NAPLAN 2011 to 90% in 2013
- To increase the percentage of Year 9 students achieving the NMS and above in writing from 81% in NAPLAN 2011 to 84% in 2013
- To increase the percentage of Year 9 students achieving expected growth in NAPLAN reading from 40% in 2011 to 45% in 2013
- To increase the number of Year 9 students in NAPLAN reading 2013 achieving Bands 7 and 8 to equal or exceed SSGs
- To increase the number of Year 9 students in NAPLAN writing 2013 achieving Bands 7 and 8 to equal or exceed SSGs
- To increase the percentage of Year 9 students achieving expected growth in NAPLAN writing from 49% in 2010 to 55% in 2013.

Evidence of progress towards outcomes in 2013:

- The percentage of students achieving the NMS and above in reading was 92%
- The percentage of students achieving the NMS and above in reading was 61%
- The percentage of Year 9 students achieving greater than expected growth in reading was 52%. Average growth of Year 9 students in reading was 50.2% compared to the state average growth of 40.4%. Average growth of the 12 Year QuickSmart students was 46.8% compared to the average state growth of 46.8%
- The number of students achieving Bands 7, 8 and 9 in NAPLAN reading exceeded those of SSGs
• The number of students achieving Bands 7 and 9 (but not Band 8) in NAPLAN writing exceeded those of SSGs.

• The number of students achieving Bands 7 and 9 (but not Band 8) exceeded those of SSGs.

Strategies to achieve these outcomes in 2014

• The NPILNP initiative focuses on reading and writing. Year 8 students in English, Mathematics, Science and HSIE meet with specialist teachers once each timetable cycle. Key personnel are the HT Literacy, LASTs, Principal, Deputy Principals, Librarian and the class teacher. Students work within the KLA context by reading for 30 minutes, engaging in higher order questioning for 15 minutes and writing for 15 minutes.

• QuickSmart in literacy and numeracy will continue with two full-time SLSOs and consideration given for inclusion in a pilot of the Quicker Smarter Program in 2014 and 2015.

• Continuation of the numeracy intervention program in late Year 7 and Year 8 through the LASTs.

Evidence of progress towards outcomes in 2013:

• The percentage of students achieving the NMS and above in reading was 83%.

• The percentage of students achieving greater than expected growth in numeracy was 56.3%. Average growth of Year 9 students in numeracy was 39.8% compared to the state average growth of 43.7%. Average growth of the Year 12 QuickSmart students was 44.75% compared to the average state growth of 43.7%.

• The number of students achieving Bands 7 and 9 (but not Band 8) in NAPLAN numeracy exceeded those of SSGs.

Strategies to achieve these outcomes in 2014:

• The NPILNP initiative focuses on reading and writing. Year 8 students in English, Mathematics, Science and HSIE meet with specialist teachers once each timetable cycle. Key personnel are the HT Literacy, LASTs, Principal, Deputy Principals, Librarian and the class teacher. Students work within the KLA context by reading for 30 minutes, engaging in higher order questioning for 15 minutes and writing for 15 minutes.

• QuickSmart in literacy and numeracy will continue with two full-time SLSOs and consideration given for inclusion in a pilot of the Quicker Smarter Program in 2014 and 2015.

• Continuation of the numeracy intervention program in late Year 7 and Year 8 through the LASTs.

School Priority 2

Numeracy: Improving student numeracy has been an on-going priority at our school. With NAPLAN this has been informed by striving to maximize the number of students about the NMS, achieving growth from Year 7 – Year 9 and moving student achievement to the higher performance bands.

Outcomes from 2012–2014

• To increase the percentage of Year 9 students achieving the NMS and above in numeracy from 87% in NAPLAN 2011 to 90% in 2013.

• To increase the percentage of students achieving expected growth in NAPLAN numeracy from 53% in 2011, to 58% in 2013.

• To increase the number of Year 9 students in NAPLAN numeracy 2013 achieving Bands 7 and 8 to equal or exceed SSGs.

School Priority 3

Retention and Attendance: Student retention and attendance in the Hunter Central Coast has been below the state average. Our school has been slightly below the Hunter Central Coast average. As a result significant efforts have been put in place to manage and lead in retention of students to the HSC and attendance every day.

Outcomes from 2012–2014

• To increase retention Year 7-12 from 44% in 2012 to 48% in 2013.
To increase the school’s attendance rate from 81.7% in 2012 to 85% in 2013.

To increase the attendance of Aboriginal students from 79% in 2012 to 85% (the same as the school population) in 2013.

**Evidence of progress towards outcomes in 2013:**

- The retention rate from Year 7 2008 to Year 12 2013 was 43%.
- The school’s attendance rate for Semester 1 was 81.9%. For boys it was 83.7% and girls 80.1%. The target was exceeded by Year 7 boys and girls, and boys in Year 8 and College 2.
- The school’s attendance rate for Aboriginal students in Semester 1 was 79.33%. For boys it was 74.9% and girls 83.8%.

**Strategies to achieve these outcomes in 2014:**

- Additional to numerous curriculum initiatives that make Cessnock High School such an innovative school, two new initiatives will be applied to Year 7 in 2014. Firstly, 2 electives will be available for incoming students and secondly an extension class (ACE) formed where students are nominated by their primary schools and are invited to apply. Retain the Community Liaison Officer (CLO) Position funded through LSLD/RAM (Equity).
- SAS staff member will be funded from LSLD/RAM (Equity).
- Retain the AEW position funded through LSLD/Ram (Aboriginal Funding).

**Professional learning**

Significant investment has been undertaken in Teacher Professional Learning (TPL). This has involved links with three universities. Teachers have worked intensively with the Quality Teaching (QT) Team at the University of Newcastle to embed QT in their teaching. 16 teachers have worked together in an action research project to enhance engagement through technology and in College classes. Student Learning Support Officers have worked with the University of New England with the QuickSmart Program to improve student skills in literacy and numeracy.

Our school aimed to increase the percentage of students surveyed who state that the dimensions and elements of QT apply “always/mostly/occasionally” to their lessons, from 92% in 2012 to 95% in 2013. The results showed that 88.1% of students indicated that teachers used the dimensions and elements of QT in their lessons always/mostly/occasionally. 99.6% of teachers indicated that teachers used the dimensions and elements of QT in their lessons always/mostly/occasionally.

Our school aimed to achieve at least two teachers from each KLA who engage in effective action research in the integration of technology through QT. In 2013, 16 teachers (two from each KLA/faculty) engaged in and completed the action research project.

Our school aimed to increase the percentage of students who state that computers make their school work more interesting, from 85% in 2012 to 90% in 2013. Results showed that 94.7% of students stated that computers make their school work more interesting.

**Parent/caregiver, student, and teacher satisfaction**

In 2013, the school sought the opinions of students about their school. 99 students (17% of our enrolment) were surveyed from all years. Students were generally appreciative of the educational (teaching and learning) programs offered. Certainly, they were very positive about The College and the benefits this had for their HSC completion. Students understood their classwork, what was required of them and how their schooling was related to the real world and would help them in the future.

Students were not as comfortable or satisfied with their own well-being in the school. 23% did not feel proud to be a student at our school, 27% had difficulty getting to know people, 29% do not enjoy school, 31% do not feel proud of themselves, 33% get upset at school, 35% feel worried at school, 39% felt depressed at school, 39% believe others do not care what they think. 39% are not treated respectfully by other students, 42% find other students unfriendly, 43% do not feel important, 44% felt others do not look up to them and 54% feel restless at school.

Cessnock High School has a broad range support services for students. We have a Student Support Officer (Stacy Jacobs) and an Aboriginal Educational Worker (Kerrie Roberts). Our Deputy Principals, Head Teachers Welfare and our Year Advisers manage many interventions that aid and assist student health and well-being. The data derived from this survey will give a finer focus to our student support services.
Program evaluations
Change: Changes in whole-school evaluation and planning.

Background:

From the inception of the National Partnerships Initiative in 2010 it was envisaged that there was an opportunity to partner with a university to analyse the outcomes of school initiatives. It was also seen as an opportunity to contribute to the body of research into school change in an area where the literature is somewhat scant – school change in a socio-economically disadvantaged community. Tenders were called for from the four closest universities with Sydney University being the most cost effective.

The research project began in mid 2010 and concluded at the end of 2013. Data was collected from over 500 semi-structured interviews with parents, students and teachers over these four years. This number represents 60% of the teaching staff, 40% of students and 10% of parents, some 400 hours of interview recordings and 9000 pages of transcription material. The project examined the findings of each of the research areas separately – The College Model, DER Laptops, Literacy and Numeracy, and Transition Year 6-7. However, the initiatives were interconnected each aiming to increase student engagement, attendance and retention.

Findings and conclusions:

The University of Sydney has provided two reports to the school. An interim report and staff briefing was provided in early 2012 and a final report late in 2013. These reports published findings, conclusions and recommendations in the four research areas – The College Model, DER Laptops, Literacy and Numeracy, and Transition Year 6-7. However, the initiatives were interconnected each aiming to increase student engagement, attendance and retention.

Recommendations:

The recommendations of this highly significant research project are presented below.

Change: Changes in Stage 6 Curriculum – The College

Background:

The College Model represents the first major change in the delivery of the HSC at Cessnock since the first post Wyndham Report HSC in 1967. The College Model offers a two-step approach to the HSC with students completing examinations in three subjects in College Year 1 and three subjects in College Year 2. This reduced yearly subject load was intended to make the HSC more attractive to more students.

Students receive the same number of in class teaching hours as the traditional model and this has been achieved by significant rescheduling of the school day with senior lessons extended to two hour blocks. Another feature of The College Model is the ‘rollover’ where students begin their senior studies in the last five weeks of Year 10.

Findings and Conclusions: Student Perspectives

In the final year of the evaluation there was very strong evidence that students accepted the College.

‘I wouldn’t say it is normal it is just kind of what our school does. People just kind of accept that our school does this now.’

Not only was the College now perceived by students as what Cessnock High School ‘does’ but was seen by the majority of students as ‘good for Cessnock’.

‘It’s 100% good for the school … it’s producing really good results … it is stressful but if it’s giving the results, you know, people will cope…. It’s not so overwhelming.’

In the final evaluation year students expressed high levels of satisfaction with The College evidenced by the fact that of the students interviewed only one student favoured a return to the traditional model HSC. What was particularly striking was the degree to which students acknowledged that they, along with teachers, were also responsible for creating a positive learning environment within this new structure.

‘It depends on the kind of student you are to be honest and the relationship that you have with the teacher whether it’s a positive or negative influence on your learning.’
Throughout the evaluation students also remarked on teachers’ pedagogical approaches to The College, for example, some students commented on teachers explaining that ‘there was no time for fun activities now they just have to cram it in.’ However, other students reported that teachers engaged in multiple pedagogical strategies and fun activities to ensure students’ engagement over the two hour classes. Every student interviewed in the four years of the evaluation indicated that studying three subjects instead of the traditional six each year was a major advantage of The College because it was ‘less stressed … you learn the same subjects every day, so you won’t tend to forget things over a day’. Students commented on recognition of their transition to senior status with the introduction of the Welcome to College function. A ‘gala event’ held at a resort in Hunter Valley Wine Country where Year 10 students are officially welcomed to The College by the outgoing captains. In all, there was overwhelming support for a continuation of The College amongst the students interviewed.

Findings: Teachers’ Perspectives
In the final evaluative interviews in 2013, of the 18 teachers who taught in The College seven said they would prefer a return to the traditional HSC model. Of these teachers two were permanent teachers in the English faculty and four were employed in different faculties on a part-time basis. All of the eleven teachers who were supportive of The College were members of the permanent teaching staff across a range of faculties including the English faculty.

When we look at faculties rather than individuals the English faculty still remains the most opposed to The College, however, not all English teachers felt this way. Underpinning the objections of some of the English staff was their perception that students in College Year 1 were not sufficiently mature to understand some of the ‘emotional issues’ covered in English texts. However, interviews with students indicated the complexity of many of their lives and the range of responsibilities they have outside of school. These responsibilities often meant that in their everyday lives students encountered just those ‘life and death’ issues that teachers referred to in subject texts. English teachers continued to refer to the lack of outside time for students to complete tasks and to ‘mature in their writing.’ However, on HSC results alone there is no evidence that students were achieving better results under the traditional system.

Teachers tended to focus on ‘syllabus delivery’ - a not unexpected finding in the high stakes testing environment of the HSC. This emphasis indicates a teacher centred pedagogy, also identified by students, and research continually emphasises the need for student centred rather than teacher-centred pedagogy to engage students. We also know from research that school improvement is located in pedagogy not in structural change.

A new finding in the final year of the evaluation was the impact of The College on community perceptions of Cessnock High School. Throughout the interview process we heard constantly from teachers that a community view of Cessnock High School was of a ‘poor cousin’ to Mount View High School. However, teachers who were supportive of The College saw The College as a positive way of differentiating Cessnock High School from other schools in the region. Teachers noted a significant shift in community attitudes to the school and with this in mind one teacher commented that to discontinue The College was saying to the community, ‘Oh, we tried it but we couldn’t be bothered working through the problems.’ The following comment reflects the opinion of teachers who supported The College.

‘I think it’s great; I think it is good for small schools. It offers kids more subject choices, it works, it doesn’t detract from the HSC results. I think it is going to get more and more popular.’

Future Directions:
- Develop a second round of Action Research projects to target student engagement in two hour classes. These projects would benefit from incorporating research on the principles of adult learning and the Quality Teaching Framework
- Implement formal College transition mentoring programme for Year 10 students with a focus on study skills and examination preparation and techniques. The need for this transition is evident in a comment from the PE Action Research Report, ‘I don’t know, I don’t feel like we prepare our kids very well for the transition to College and
some of them don’t even know how to study, some of them don’t know how to make study notes.’ This PE Action Research Project could be used to inform the transition programme. The cross curricula application of transition skills should be emphasised

- To assist teachers who find learning and teaching HSC subjects in one year problematic Cessnock High School might consider extending its already strong links with TAFE to include collaboration with TAFE teachers who have extensive experience of teaching HSC subjects in one year
- To alleviate the concerns of some of the English faculty regarding student maturity in College Year 1 consideration should be given to offering English in College Year 2 only.

**Change: Changes in transitioning to high school from Year 6**

**Background:**

The transition from primary school to high school is one of the most difficult transitions that students encounter in their educational careers.

Research indicates that almost all students express some anxiety in making the transition to high school, and students from low SES backgrounds are particularly vulnerable. Getting the transition right is important because as the research indicates transition can result in poor academic achievement, increased classroom behavioural problems, heightened anxiety over gaining peer acceptance and meeting school expectations. The research also indicates that students who make a successful primary to high school transition are also more likely to make other transitions more successfully.

**Findings and conclusions:**

All students and teachers interviewed supported the transition programme and the orientation activities, such as demonstration lessons, gifted and talented sessions, school orientation and BBQs and the ‘rollover’ of Year 6 students to the high school in the last two weeks of the academic year. The success of this ‘rollover’ is a result of the extensive liaison work between the primary schools and the high school.

**Student Perspectives**

The majority of students said they looked forward to high school and had the following ‘hopes’ and also ‘fears’ connected with this transition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student ‘hopes’</th>
<th>Student ‘fears’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ greater choice of subjects</td>
<td>➢ starting from the beginning again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ variety of specialist subject teachers</td>
<td>➢ getting lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ making new friends</td>
<td>➢ being bullied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ a new beginning</td>
<td>➢ leaving friends behind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students’ ‘hopes’ and ‘fears’ of transition.

Students were very positive about the orientation activities and the rollover because they said they ‘were not worried about high school all the holidays and were ‘not scared the first day’ because they had, ‘got used to the surroundings’, ‘found out the type of work’, ‘met teachers’ and ‘got your books.’

**Teachers’ Perspectives**

The majority of teachers were very positive about the transition programme and the early rollover because these ensured:

- a productive end of year which improved student attendance
- a positive beginning of the next year because students had books, classes and had already commenced work
- students were less anxious and more comfortable
- the opportunity to target vulnerable students.

Some high school teachers, however, acknowledged a degree of disruption to primary schools because students ‘missed out on their formals’ unless they absented themselves from the high school. Other high school teachers were disappointed that traditional end
of year activities, such as swimming, were discontinued. Other teachers felt that students became accustomed to high school too early and this made them, ‘a little too big for their boots … far too cocky … they’re far too comfortable’ and ‘they no longer have wide eyed wonder.’

To introduce an element of choice to students in Year 7 from 2014 Year 6 students will choose two electives which they will study in Year 7. This is another way Cessnock High School stands out in the local area as no other school is known to offer electives in Year 7.

Final recommendations

- Develop links with primary schools to target better understanding of primary school topics and pedagogies in maths, literacy and HSIE to avoid repetition in Year 7 and the subsequent disengagement reported by students.

Change: Changes in Technology Pedagogies.

Background:
The Federal Labor Government’s Digital Revolution has seen the distribution of laptops to all Year 9 students. This distribution was part of the Federal Labor Government’s social justice agenda to provide access to digital technology for low SES students. However, an OECD report in 2006 estimated that 95% of Australian students already had access to a computer for school use and 91% had access to the Internet at home. Only one student interviewed at Cessnock did not have computer access at home prior to the distribution of the laptops.

Findings and conclusions:
There is substantial evidence from the past 100 years of research that effective integration of technology in the classroom has proved difficult.

A Head Teacher Technology (HTT) was appointed to complement the Federal Government ‘digital revolution’ the Principal created the position of Head Teacher Technology. This position, and the parallel Head Teacher Literacy and Numeracy position, was possible through National Partnership funds which enabled the Principal to ‘respond creatively to professional development and in the employment of specialist teachers.’ The Principal explained that these Head Teachers were to support ‘sustainable professional learning.’

‘The understanding in professional learning at Cessnock High School has always been that teachers incorporate professional learning into their repertoire … and train up other staff.’

The HTT extended the initial work by streamlining the laptop maintenance process, ensuring student familiarity with the rules and responsibilities related to laptops and updating and maintaining the school website. A Facebook page has also been created and is used to inform parents and the broader community of the work of students and teachers at Cessnock High School. There was also an attempt to conduct lunch time mini professional learning workshops, however, these were not taken up by staff.

Students’ Perspectives
Some students were incredulous while others were excited upon hearing of the government laptop policy: ‘I was excited for about two weeks but they got old pretty quick’. Overall, students were disappointed with the capacity of the laptops, and reported under use by teachers in the classroom and over use by themselves for games and music in class. The poor quality of the initial hardware was constantly commented on by students and by teachers. Table 2 below shows students’ anticipated usage of laptops compared with the reality.
Students reported a wide variety of reactions from teachers to the introduction of laptops and offered a number of reasons why they felt some teachers were opposed to laptops. These reasons include:

- teachers preferred text books to internet searches
- laptops prevented students developing handwriting skills because ‘in real life you have to write things down’
- technical problems
- and students playing games.

### In class usage – teacher and student perspectives.

#### Teachers’ Perspectives

In the final year of the evaluation the Federal Labor Government announced the cessation of the distribution of laptops. Even prior to this announcement teachers expressed their concerns about the impact of a cessation of the laptop distribution. This is evidence that teachers had become increasingly reliant on laptops in their classroom practice. Increased usage was not only the result of teacher familiarity with laptops but also the result of the installation of Smart Boards in each classroom which increased teachers’ use of laptops as complementary technology. Moreover, teachers anticipated difficulties when few Year 9 students from 2014 would have a personal laptop to use in class. Teachers anticipated this would again necessitate changing programmes and lessons. If cessation of the laptop policy means that students in low SES schools are deprived of the latest technology then this becomes a serious equity issue as one teacher pointed out.
‘It is the 21st century! It doesn’t matter what you believe, the point is students need to use technology at school ... because they are coming out to a multimedia society.’

There was evidence that many teachers rather than integrate laptops continued to use them as ‘a typing tool.’ This tendency is also noted in the research literature found widespread use of computers as word processors, particularly in secondary academic subjects and argues that with increased accountability measures in schools it is too hard for most teachers to incorporate student computer use as a regular part of their teaching practice and for this reason computers are not transforming teaching. With time and support it takes five to six years to gain competence at integrating technology. Continual changes in technology may result in teachers remaining perpetual novices. One teacher at Cessnock High School iterated this concern when commenting on investing time learning a range of pedagogical strategies and relevant supporting technological resources: ‘I wondered if it was really worth all the time and effort.’ Ultimately the effective use of technology requires a focus on the learner not the teacher and an understanding of the way technology changes the way subjects are represented.

One of the HTT appointees made a very significant observation regarding teachers and technology by making the distinction between teachers who are ‘technologically savvy’ and those who are ‘technologically, pedagogically savvy’. Teachers in the first category still teach from the front of the class, ‘they’re still teaching like it’s a chalk board, chalk and talk ... they’re not actually getting the kids to experience it, to develop their skills.’ The ‘pedagogically savvy teachers’ are those with technological pedagogical content knowledge who understand the way technology and content are reciprocally related.

Final recommendations

- Develop faculty based and whole school response to the cessation of the laptop distribution to Year 9 students
- Employ strategies from the Art Faculty, Action Research Project to encourage student interaction with Smart Board technology.

Change: Changes in the teaching of literacy and numeracy.

Background:

A Head Teacher Literacy and Numeracy was appointed under the Partnership Scheme and interviewed in early 2013. The Principal’s vision was for this Head Teacher to undertake:

- broad brush classroom interventions, based on NAPLAN data
- strategic interventions with small groups
- strategic interventions with individual teachers.

Head Teacher’s Perspectives:

The Head Teacher spoke about engaging in programme development, integrating technology and literacy, team teaching, working with students in the Quick Smart numeracy programme and supporting NAPLAN preparation. They did, however, remark on the difficulties of being accepted within faculties as did the HTTs.

At Cessnock High School there were subject teachers who reported that they were better equipped to teach subject specific literacy than was a generic expert, ‘as a teacher you should know what to do. I know what to do.’ Other teachers suggested that teachers should continue to engage in proactive, self-directed professional learning to improve their teaching of literacy. A small number of teachers commented that they had worked with the Head Teacher on embedding numeracy strategies in their subject area.

Students’ Perspectives

The word ‘literacy’ was only used in initial student interviews as it became evident that students were unfamiliar with the term. As one student commented ‘kids don’t know what that is.’ In later interviews students were asked about their reading and writing practices both in and out of class. The term ‘writing’ also proved initially problematic as students interpreted ‘writing’ as ‘handwriting’ and again interview questions were modified to explain the broad use of the term to include, texting, Facebook and word processing as well as writing by hand.

In terms of numeracy students most frequently referred to maths as ‘their least favourite subject’ while at the same time acknowledging that numeracy was an essential skill for life after school. The turning
point for students in their attitude to maths was the introduction of algebra in Year 8. Students referred to algebra as ‘not normal maths’ which complicated an already ‘difficult and boring subject’. Students provided substantial evidence that teachers, not only maths teachers, related numeracy to the world outside school and students understood ‘if you don’t have maths you will have trouble in later life .... and not get a decent job and live like people in poor countries.’ Students gave examples of teachers across faculties including numeracy in music, HSIE, TAS and sport. Students also talked about numeracy outside of school when working with parents at home: ‘measuring things up in the shed with dad’ or ‘making cakes and measuring’ and ‘not being ripped off’ in their part time jobs.

**Teachers’ Perspectives**

All of the teachers interviewed agreed that ‘kids can’t do your subject if they don't have the literacy in your subject’ and for this reason literacy was seen as ‘a huge issue’. The main findings from the initial and later teacher interviews include:

- **change in entry level literacy** – experienced teachers spoke about the decline in literacy standards of students entering high school
- **literacy as core English faculty responsibility** – teachers in the English faculty regard ‘everything we do is about literacy’
- **interpretations of literacy** – teachers have a traditional interpretation of literacy as reading, writing and understanding
- **digital literacy** – not specified as a core literacy
- **NAPLAN influence** – literacy also defined within the terms of reference of NAPLAN testing though teachers reported that NAPLAN testing had not overly affected their classroom teaching.

Below is a comparison of teacher and student reported literacy activities. It is evident that there is a significant disjunction between students’ in class and out of class literacy activities. One activity most frequently reported by students as an in class activity was ‘copying’. All of the literacy research highlights copying as the least demanding of literacy practices and the least likely to enhance student literacy skills. This practice can be included in what is referred to as ‘the pedagogy of poverty’ – teacher centred pedagogies in which students are complicit because such practices absolve them from any responsibility and places the responsibility for learning on the teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher in class literacy activities</th>
<th>Student in class literacy activities</th>
<th>Student out of class literacy activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>glossaries</td>
<td>copying</td>
<td>Facebook, texting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>word games</td>
<td>summaries</td>
<td>writing stories, ‘saying’ stories with friends about friends, fantasy stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammar, punctuation, cloze passages, spelling tests, comprehension</td>
<td>grammar</td>
<td>reading – teen magazines, teen and fantasy fiction, special interest magazines (bikes, mechanics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identifying text types</td>
<td>identifying text types</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSC, NAPLAN preparation</td>
<td>worksheets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reading notes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>textual analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modelling (speaking), scaffolding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comparison of literacy practices.

Researchers suggest that some literacy practices are more engaging for students than others. For example, out of school traditional texts which target adolescents ‘engage their subjective experiences’ in ways that school texts do not. Adults frequently assume that young people do not read or write out of school, however, this report has found that young people do read but may not engage with the kinds of texts valued by adults. Young people like to read about people like themselves, who overcome adversity and who are working through relationships. They also read for ‘cultural capital’ about identity formation and relationships. Student reading outside of class may not, however, improve their literacy in subjects other than English because of the subject specificity of English.
An important finding from the evaluation is that with only one exception all of the teachers we interviewed agreed that literacy is ‘everybody’s role’. Research has found that accepting that all teachers have a role to play in literacy was not necessarily reflected in practice. Traces of this were also found at Cessnock High School with comments such as, ‘All staff teach numeracy and literacy within their lessons, however, predominantly it should be tackled in the primary system and by English and Maths at high school.’

It is important to note that over the four years of the evaluation there have been some significant achievements in NAPLAN. These include the performance of Year 9 Aboriginal students in writing which showed an improvement of 49 scale scores over their Year 7 results in 2011. The performance of Year 9 Aboriginal students in reading was 28 scale scores above state average growth. In the school strategic plan for 2013 three NAPLAN targets were exceeded: 92% of Year 9 students attained the National Mean Score in reading; 52% of Year 9 students achieved expected growth or above in reading and students in Year 9 reading exceeded the numbers in Bands 7, 8 and 9 of statistically similar groups (like schools).

**Final recommendations**

- Develop Action Research projects which link students’ in class and out of class literacy activities.

**About this report**

In preparing this report, the self-evaluation committee has gathered information from evaluations conducted during the year and analysed other information about the school’s practices and student learning outcomes. The self-evaluation committee and school planning committee have determined targets for the school’s future development.

Ian Scanlon: Principal
Alan Lane: Head Teacher English
Julie Stewart: Head Teacher Literacy/Numeracy
Ian Atkinson: Head Teacher Mathematics
Deborah Falconer: Head Teacher CAPA
Jeremy Rennex: Head Teacher Technology
Tim Goodwin: Sports Co-Ordinator
Natalie Sweetman: School Admin Manager
Sharon Troy: Community Liaison Officer
Jenny Megson: P&C President
Joel Troy: School Captain 2013

**School contact information**

Cessnock High School
Aberdare Road, Cessnock, 2325.
Ph: 02 49901977
Fax: 02 49911815
Email: cessnock-h.school@det.nsw.edu.au
Web: www.cessnock-h.schools.nsw.edu.au
School Code: 8108

Parents can find more information about Annual School Reports, how to interpret information in the report and have the opportunity to provide feedback about the report at: