



# Connected Communities Strategy Final Evaluation Report

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

## Background

The Connected Communities Strategy commenced implementation in schools in 2013. The Strategy aims to improve outcomes for students in 15 schools in some of the most complex and vulnerable communities in NSW. The Strategy is underpinned by a commitment to ongoing partnership with Aboriginal communities, supporting Aboriginal people to actively influence and fully participate in social, economic and cultural life, consistent with the NSW Government's plan for Aboriginal affairs, OCHRE (Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment). Connected Communities is one initiative under OCHRE.

## Evaluation

This evaluation assesses the implementation and impact of the Strategy, and aims to answer the following questions:

1. How well has the model of the Strategy been formed and implemented, and what variation exists across schools?
2. What are the outcomes and impact of the Connected Communities Strategy?

The evaluation of Connected Communities commenced in 2014. The focus of this final evaluation report is on the outcomes and impacts of the Strategy.

## Main findings

Overall, Connected Communities is showing promising results. This evaluation has shown that Connected Communities has had a positive impact in schools, particularly in outcomes for students in their early years. Connected Communities represents a sound policy approach that has the potential to provide further positive outcomes for students and communities, given more time.

The Strategy appears to be more effective at the primary level than the secondary level. The primary school cohort of students who have been 'fully exposed' to Connected Communities for their entire time at school appear to be showing the greatest benefit from the Strategy in terms of NAPLAN results, and appear to be more developmentally ready for school than earlier cohorts.

Further time will be required to see if the results in later years improve as this cohort of students continues through its schooling.

Both implementation and outcomes have varied across individual schools. The buy-in of all staff remains key to the successful implementation of Connected Communities, and it is critical that Executive Principals continue to articulate a clear vision of the Strategy, ensure staff support, and prioritise high expectations for all students.

## Related reports

The Connected Communities interim evaluation report<sup>1</sup>, published in 2016, primarily addressed the implementation of the Strategy.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/publications-filter/connected-communities-strategy-interim-evaluation-report>