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Low Socio-economic Status School
Communities National Partnership
(Low SES NP)

**School External Partnerships
Evaluation**

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Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIS	Association of Independent Schools
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
CEC	Catholic Education Commission
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CRES	Centre for Research on Education Systems
DEC	Department of Education and Communities
ESL	English as a Second Language
ICSEA	Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage
LBOTE	Language Background Other Than English
NP	National Partnership
NSW	New South Wales
PDHPE	Personal Development, Health and Physical Education
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SSNP	Smarter Schools National Partnerships
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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Executive Summary

This is the third report in a series evaluating School External Partnerships supported by the Low-Socio-economic Status School Communities National Partnership (Low SES NP) in New South Wales. The Low SES NP aims to improve the education and life opportunities of students from low SES backgrounds through six reform areas, one of which focuses on strengthening partnership arrangements between schools and external groups, such as parents, local communities and the higher education sector (NSW 2010: 89-90). The evaluation is collecting and analysing data on school external partnership activities implemented by the 636 schools funded under the Low SES NP in both the government and non-government sectors in New South Wales (NSW 2010: 71-73).

This report examines the types of external partnerships undertaken by these schools and explores principals' perceptions of their effectiveness. The authors analyse data from a survey of principals in a sub-set of Low SES NP schools conducted in September and October 2012. Of the 556 Low SES NP school principals contacted, 51.4 per cent responded with valid data on school external partnerships. These 285 'respondent schools' were found to be statistically comparable to all Low SES NP schools in terms of regional location, school category, funding cohort, ICSEA mean and student characteristics (for further details, see Appendix A).

School external partnerships

External partnerships form part of a school's multi-dimensional approach to address the various factors associated with low socio-economic status that impact on student outcomes. Partnerships between schools and their communities are diverse, so for the purposes of this study, school external partnerships were grouped into broad categories: parent/carer; ATSI communities; English as a Second Language [ESL] communities; employers; Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers; universities; secondary

schools; primary schools; prior-to-school (eg. preschools, early childhood providers, playgroups); and partnerships with other education and training providers.

The most common type of school external partnerships reported are with parents and carers (96% of schools) followed by partnerships with ATSI parents and communities (83%) and partnerships with employers and the wider community (71%). The least common types of partnerships reported are school-university partnerships (34%) and partnerships with VET providers (25%). Over two-thirds of schools report partnerships with primary schools (68%) and secondary schools (66%). Just under half of all schools report partnerships with ESL parents and communities (48%) and prior-to-school providers (45%).

The Low SES NP initiative has supported the expansion of external partnerships in Low SES NP schools. For each broad category of partnership activity, a higher proportion of schools are now engaged in partnerships than the proportion of schools with existing partnerships prior to the Low SES NP.

Both existing and new partnership activities are being supported with Low SES NP funding. Seventy-nine per cent of principals reported existing partnerships now supported with Low SES NP funding and 50 per cent of principal reported new partnerships supported by the Low SES NP. Overall, 97 per cent of schools surveyed are engaged in existing partnership activities and 92 per cent of schools are undertaking new partnership activities.

Schools' engagement in different types of external partnerships is influenced by their context and the characteristics of their students.

Schools with a high proportion of students who are Aboriginal (11 per cent or more) are more likely to have partnerships with ATSI parents and communities (92%) than schools with no Aboriginal students (41%).

Principals of schools where more than 25 per cent of students have a language background other than English (LBOTE) report partnerships with ESL parents and communities at more than twice the rate (90%) of principals of other schools

Partnerships with parents and carers

Almost all principals (96%) reported school external partnerships with parents or carers. Schools with Aboriginal students and schools with a relatively high proportion (25% or more) of students with a language background other than English (LBOTE) were as likely to report having partnerships with parents or carers as other schools.

Over 90 per cent of principals of primary, secondary and combined schools reported that they felt supported by the parents of students at their school and connected to their broader local community.

All principals reported some level of parent/carers participation in ten nominated areas of engagement activity. The four most common types of activity (ie. in which the highest proportion of school principals indicated some parents are engaged) are: parent/teacher

interviews; festivals/fetes and cultural events; parent organisations; and fundraising. The proportion of principals reporting some parent and carer engagement in seven of the ten nominated activities was significantly lower in secondary and combined schools than in primary and special schools.

Over 50 per cent of principals reported that less than one quarter (1-24%) of parents and carers participated in nine of the ten types of activity. The exception is parent/teacher interviews, where two-thirds of principals reported that more than half (50-74%) of all parents and carers participate.

Principals of Low SES NP schools indicated their school's involvement in 13 types of activities to help build parent and carer engagement in the school. The seven most common strategies, implemented in over 50 per cent of schools are:

- Providing orientation activities for cohorts of students in the year prior to entry (70%);
- Holding regular parent/teacher interviews about students' progress (68%);
- Providing sessions for parents/carers on how to support student learning at home (67%);
- Inviting parents/carers to help out with excursions, carnivals, canteen duty, fundraising etc. (62%);
- Providing extended transition to school programs for potential future cohorts of students (60%);
- Inviting parents/carers to help out in the classroom (60%); and
- Dedicating resources/staff to the parent/carers and community engagement role (59%).

Over a third (34%) of principals indicated that they undertake "other" activities to engage with parents and carers. These activities included programs to support parents in their own learning, activities to support families' engagement in the life of the school and activities to support parents and carers' engagement in the community.

Principals were asked to indicate how effective each of the 13 strategies was in building parent and carer engagement in the school. They were also given the option of indicating it was "too early to tell" if the strategy was effective. Providing orientation activities for cohorts of students in the year prior to entry was rated effective/highly effective in building parent and carer engagement by 88 per cent of principals – a higher rate than the average for all types of parent/carers partnership activities (69%).

Eighty per cent of principals rated holding regular parent/teacher interviews about student's progress as effective or highly effective. Providing extended transition to school programs for future cohorts of students was also considered effective or highly effective by 83 per cent of principals who responded to the survey.

Only 50% of principals ranked providing sessions for parents/carers on how to support student learning at home as effective/highly effective, well below the average for all types of partnership activities (69%).

Some 12 per cent of principals said it was “too early to tell” if having a documented strategy to lift parents/carers expectations of their children’s education, or “other” types of engagement activities, were effective in building parent and carer engagement.

Partnerships with the ATSI community

External partnerships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) community are widespread among Low SES NP schools. Eighty-three per cent of all school principals responding to the survey reported engaging in partnerships with Aboriginal parents and carers and the ATSI community.

The school principals surveyed indicated the extent to which their schools are engaged in strategies to build partnerships with the ATSI community, in six categories:

- Dedicating resources or staff to engage the ATSI community (52%);
- Inviting ATSI community members to speak to students about their culture, work or life experiences (52%);
- Inviting ATSI community members to provide support in classrooms (50%);
- Ensuring that the principal or other members of the school executive attend ATSI community meetings to share information about the school (45%);
- Having a documented strategy to engage the ATSI community (42%); and
- Undertaking other activities to engage with the ATSI community (34%).

The most commonly reported activity was dedicating resources and staff to engage the ATSI community and inviting ATSI community members to speak to students about their culture, work and life experiences. Principals of schools with a high proportion of students who are Aboriginal (11% and over) are significantly more likely to report undertaking the four most common activities than other schools.

According to survey respondents, 63 per cent of partnership activities to engage the ATSI community are effective or highly effective in terms of building ATSI parent and community engagement with the school.

In terms of supporting student learning, principals rated 64 per cent of all partnership activities to engage with the ATSI community as effective or highly effective.

A common theme in principals’ qualitative responses, was the time involved in building ATSI parent and community engagement, and the years before the fruits of the partnerships are realised in terms of engagement and student learning.

In their qualitative responses, many principals indicated that a key “lever” for fostering their school’s engagement with the ATSI community was the employment of ATSI staff in

their school, in roles such as administration, teaching support, community liaison, teaching and leadership. Establishing advisory and consultative mechanisms that involve ATSI parents and carers in discussions about education were also cited as important, with the long-term nature of building these partnerships emphasised.

Engaging ESL parents and communities

Over two-thirds of Low SES NP schools enrol students from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE) and many schools have students from more than one language group. In schools where a high proportion (25% and over) of LBOTE students, a significantly lower proportion of principals (61%) report that the majority of parents and carers have the confidence to engage with school staff. In schools where there are no LBOTE students enrolled, 85 per cent of principals reported that the majority of parents and carers have the confidence to engage with school staff.

Language is considered a major barrier to engaging with ESL parents and communities, particularly in schools where multiple language groups are represented. Schools therefore implement a range of innovative strategies to engage with ESL parents and communities, such as:

- Dedicating specific resources/staff to engage with ESL parents and communities (27%);
- Inviting ESL parents or community members to provide support in classrooms (22%);
- Inviting ESL parents or community members to speak to students about their culture, work and life experiences (17%);
- Having a documented strategy to engage ESL parents and communities (17%);
- Undertaking other activities to engage with ESL parents and communities (16%); and
- Ensuring that the principal or members of the school executive regularly attend ESL community meetings to share information about school activities (14%).

The strategy most commonly employed by principals is “Dedicating specific resources and or staff to engage with ESL parents and communities. This strategy is implemented by the 27 per cent of all principals, and 69 per cent of principals of schools with a high proportion (25% and over) of LBOTE students.

Overall, 69 per cent of strategies to engage ESL parents and communities were rated effective or highly effective by principals in: building ESL parent and community engagement in the school; and supporting students learning.

Some 16 per cent of principals reported that they were undertaking “other” activities to engage with ESL parents and carers and over 80 per cent indicated that these strategies were effective or highly effective in building engagement and supporting student learning. Qualitative responses indicate these activities include participating in cultural festivals and

celebrations, providing interpreters for staff/parent interviews, inviting parents to a school cafe, parent excursions and multicultural story times.

In organising these diverse types of partnership activities with ESL parents and communities, staff members dedicated to the task of building engagement with ESL parent and community engagement appear to play a central role.

Partnerships with schools and prior-to-school providers

Schools engage in many types of partnerships with other schools and with prior-to-school providers to serve a range of purposes, including supporting student learning and facilitating students' transitions between levels of education.

Orientation activities and visits remain a major partnership activity between Low SES NP schools and other schools and prior-to-school providers. Seventy per cent of all schools surveyed host orientation activities and 60 per cent of schools – at both primary and secondary level – have extended transition programs for prospective cohorts of students. In primary schools, these programs usually involve partnerships with prior-to-school providers. In secondary schools, they are based on partnerships with primary schools.

Primary schools and special schools engage in an array of activities with prior-to-school providers including early childhood providers, and pre-schools, playgroups, community hubs and child welfare services. The activities are not limited to orientation and transition-to-school programs. Fifteen per cent of principals reported sharing staff with prior-to-school providers and 23 per cent reported undertaking "other" partnership activities with prior-to-school providers. These included joint staff development activities, and hosting of pre-schools and playgroups on school premises.

Eighty-four per cent of partnerships with prior-to-school providers were rated effective or highly effective in supporting students' transitions. Hosting orientation visits including parent events was rated as effective or highly effective in supporting students' transitions by 87 per cent of principals.

All types of schools have partnerships with primary schools. The main type of partnership activity with primary schools involves sharing professional learning for teachers (50%) often based on a Learning Community. Thirty-eight per cent of principals reported being engaged in "other" types of activities with primary schools, such as collaboration with festivals, sport and cultural events. According to survey respondents, 78 per cent of partnerships with primary schools were judged effective or highly effective in supporting student transitions and 85 per cent were perceived as effective/highly effective in supporting student learning.

Principals from all types of schools also reported partnerships with secondary schools, indicating that many partnerships with secondary schools are designed not only to support student transitions, but to support student learning in other ways. Nevertheless, the two most common types of partnership activities with secondary schools relate to student transitions: arranging visits to the partner secondary school (51%) and inviting partner

secondary school staff to talk to students (41%). These two types of activities are undertaken by a significantly higher proportion of primary schools.

Thirty-three per cent of respondents said that they engaged in “other” types of partnership activities with secondary schools, not specified in the survey. Primary school principals described an extensive array of partnership activities such as: joint curricular and extra-curricular programs (eg. bands, sport, debating, public speaking, bike education, maths and science programs); extension programs for primary school students in specialised areas; peer tutoring; co-ordinated professional learning activities for staff; and collaboration in organising community and cultural events. Secondary school principals indicated partnerships with other secondary schools that emphasised sharing facilities, and sharing subject teaching, particularly in Years 11 and 12. In some responses, principals indicated that these partnerships occurred between secondary schools from the government and non-government sectors.

Overall, 70 per cent of partnerships with secondary schools were perceived as effective or highly effective in supporting student transitions, and 68 per cent were seen as effective or highly effective in supporting student learning, by survey respondents.

Partnerships with post-school providers, employers and the wider community

School’s external partnerships with post-school providers and institutions include partnerships with vocational education and training (VET) providers such as TAFE institutes; higher education providers, such as universities; and employers and other members of the community. These partnerships aim to support students’ transitions between levels of education, support students’ transition into the labour market, support student learning and help to raise students’ expectations and aspirations regarding opportunities beyond school.

Principals of all types of schools indicated participation in partnerships with TAFE institutes and other training providers, however secondary, combined and special schools report significantly higher rates of engagement with TAFE and training providers than primary schools. The most common activity undertaken in partnership with a VET provider is offering VET Certificate courses to students while at school. Over 40 per cent of secondary, combined and special schools participate in this type of activity, as well the associated activity of arranging for students to receive teaching at the training providers’ facilities. Principals of combined schools (40%) and special schools (50%) are more likely to invite teachers from the training provider to teach students at their school, than principals of secondary schools (15%).

In all, 71 per cent of principals considered partnership activities with TAFE or training providers to be effective or highly effective in raising students’ career aspirations and 70 per cent of principals said that these partnerships were effective or highly effective in supporting student learning. The most common type of partnership – offering VET certificate courses to students while at school was considered effective in supporting student learning by 88 per cent of principals.

The two most common types of school-university partnerships activities are arranging orientation visits with the university (16%) and inviting university staff to talk to students (15%). While school-university partnership activities were reported by principals of all types of schools, a higher proportion (38-39%) of principals of secondary and combined schools reported participating in these two types of activities than principals of primary and special schools (less than 10%).

Ten per cent of school principals said they were involved in other types of partnership activities with universities, such as mentoring and leadership programs for students, as well as programs focusing on students' career aspirations. School principals also mentioned participating in university research projects as a form of school-university partnership.

Overall, 57 per cent of principals undertaking partnership activities with universities consider them to be effective or highly effective in raising students' career aspirations and 69 per cent said they were effective/ highly effective in supporting student learning.

Principals from all types of school reported participating in activities with employers and the wider community, with 41 per cent indicating that they invited community members to talk to students about their life experiences.

Overall, 74 per cent of principals said that the activities were effective or highly effective in building engagement with employers and the wider community. Seventy-one per cent of principals said the partnerships were effective or highly effective in supporting student learning. A high proportion of principals (34%) said that it was too early to tell if inviting employers and community members to help with fundraising was effective in building engagement.

Principals of secondary and combined schools were more likely to report undertaking work-related activities with employers and community members, than principals of primary and special schools. Sixty-five per cent of secondary and combined school principals indicated they collaborated with employers to provide work experience opportunities for students, and 64 per cent invited employers and/or community members to talk to students about work and careers. Principals of secondary and combined schools also described other types of mentoring and work placement activities with employer organisations and local businesses.

Nineteen per cent of principals engaged in "other" types of activities in partnership with employers and/or the wider community, including participation in community events and festivals, kitchen gardens, scientists in schools programs, financial literacy programs and the use of council facilities for swimming and sport.

Key Findings

Key findings to highlight from this study are:

- The Low SES NP has supported the expansion of external partnerships in Low SES NP schools. A higher proportion of schools is now engaged in partnerships than prior to the Low SES NP. The proportion of schools undertaking partnership activities with the ATSI community has increased from 68 per cent to 83 per cent since the Low SES NP.
- Partnerships with parents and carers are the most common type of partnership activity undertaken by 96 per cent of Low SES NP schools. These activities are rated effective or highly effective in building parent and carer engagement by 69 per cent of the principals who implement them. The activity that appears to engage the highest proportion of parents and carers is regular parent/teacher interviews about students' progress, which 80 per cent of principals rate as effective or highly effective.
- In schools with a high proportion (25% and over) of LBOTE students, a significantly lower proportion of principals (61%) report that the majority of parents and carers have the confidence to engage with school staff.
- Dedicating specific staff and resources to a community engagement role is the most common strategy used by schools to engage with the ATSI community and to engage with ESL parents and communities. Qualitative responses from principals emphasised the role of dedicated community liaison officers in facilitating engagement. Over two-thirds of principals rated the strategy as effective or highly effective in supporting student learning.
- Partnerships between schools both within and across levels and sectors are extensive and diverse. They serve a range of purposes, and appear to play an important role in supporting student learning as well as supporting professional learning among teaching staff.

Future Directions

As the third report in a set of 13 reports on school external partnerships, this report provides baseline data that should be useful in future reports. While it remains a challenge to draw firm conclusions about the impact of particular types of partnerships, the systematic collection of qualitative as well as quantitative data over the five years of this evaluation will contribute to a growing body of evidence for analysis and synthesis in future reports. As school external partnerships can be expected to have long-term, rather than short-term effects, the information collected in this first survey of school principals will assist in monitoring changes over time.

This report reveals some gaps in our knowledge of "other" partnership activities which schools are undertaking that could be explored in future surveys.

Future reports could also examine in more detail the relationships between the geographical context of the school and its external partnerships.

Introduction

This is the third report in a series for the Low Socio-economic Status School Communities National Partnership (Low SES NP) School External Partnerships Evaluation undertaken on behalf of the NSW Minister for Education. This evaluation, conducted over five years, studies the external partnership activities of 636 schools across the government, Catholic and independent sectors and will produce 13 reports. The purpose of the evaluation is to explore the effectiveness of schools in building external partnerships with the aim of contributing to improved student learning and post-school outcomes. The evaluation aims to analyse the range of initiatives undertaken by schools in building external partnerships and gain insights into the types of partnerships that appear to be most successful, over the long term.

The purpose of the Low SES NP is to improve the education and life opportunities of students from low SES backgrounds through six reform areas, one of which focuses on strengthening partnership arrangements between schools and external groups, such as parents, local communities and the higher education sector (NSW 2010: 89-90). Low SES NP schools were identified using a national methodology based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD), constructed from the 2006 Census and additional criteria relevant to the government and non-government school sectors in New South Wales (NSW 2010: 71-73). The process for the selection of Low SES NP schools resulted in the over-representation of students living in remote areas, students on refugee visas and students who have LBOTE¹. Primary schools, combined primary and secondary schools, small schools, remote schools and government schools were also more likely to be selected. The characteristics of students and schools are mostly correlates of disadvantage, although the over-representation of primary and combined schools partly reflects the greater social heterogeneity in secondary schools because of their often larger size and broader catchment areas.

The Survey

This report draws on a survey of Low SES NP school principals conducted in late 2012 which provided data on the types of external partnerships being undertaken by Low SES NP Schools and school principals' perceptions of the effectiveness of the different types of external partnerships.

This evaluation of School External Partnerships is being conducted by a consortium involving the Education Institute at the University of Canberra (UC) and the Centre for

¹ It is important to note the difference between the terms, Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE) and English as a Second Language (ESL), which are not the same measure and are not interchangeable. For instance, a person may have a language background other than English, but use English as first language – thus, an ESL student is also generally a LBOTE student, but a LBOTE student is not necessarily an ESL student. The term 'LBOTE' is therefore the broader definition. In this report, students with a language background other than English are consistently referred to as 'LBOTE students', regardless of whether they are also ESL students. However relevant parent and community groups, whose members are more likely to speak English as a Second Language, are described consistently as 'ESL parents and community'.

Research on Education Systems (CRES) at the University of Melbourne. The Centre for Research on Education Systems at the University of Melbourne is also conducting a Low SES NP evaluation of Staffing, Management and Accountability Initiatives. To minimise the survey burden on Low SES NP schools, the Education Institute at the University of Canberra and the CRES at the University of Melbourne are administering one survey that serves both evaluations. By working together, the CRES team and the UC/CRES consortium aim to maximise the value of the data collection activities required for both evaluations while not placing an undue burden on the functioning of low SES schools and their communities.

This approach was agreed following consultations with representatives of the NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC), the Catholic Education Commission NSW (CEC) and the Association of Independent Schools of NSW (AIS). The Education Institute and CRES have therefore collaborated in designing a data collection strategy to serve both evaluations. To reduce the burden on low SES school communities, the Education Institute and CRES are collecting data for both evaluations through one survey instrument, thus minimising the overall burden on survey respondents.

School External Partnerships

The DEC *Connecting Agencies: Meeting Priorities Together* notes that strengthening of home, school and community partnerships and building of community capacity in low SES communities “have long been acknowledged as critical elements in supporting improved student learning outcomes and satisfaction in schools” (NSW Department of Education and Communities 2011a: 2). The report finds that the improvement of collaborative relationships between schools and external agencies contributes to ‘measurable improvements in literacy and numeracy achievement’, but that there also can be broader or more diffuse benefits including ‘improving community wellbeing’ (NSW Department of Education and Communities 2011a: 4).

Partnerships provide a greater support net for school students, extending experiences and broadening resource bases, to ensure that they are better able to succeed academically, while also enhancing their wellbeing (Hiatt-Michael and Hands 2010). Researchers and policymakers agree that schools cannot do this alone, and partnerships represent a multi-pronged approach that can tackle the various factors that impact on student outcomes (Wilkin et al. 2003). Evidence clearly suggests that at a school-based level initiatives in relation to curriculum, instruction, assessment and school management and classroom organisation are ‘more likely to succeed if families and communities are effectively involved’ (Simon and Epstein 2001: 1). Furthermore, as stated by the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA 2008), partnerships are beneficial for all parties involved and this mutuality is important in building sustainable relationships, links and networks within and between extended school communities.

Previous research has shown that that ‘connections and shared responsibilities are important between social institutions, and that schools and families will be more effective organisations if they work together to identify and achieve common goals’ (Epstein 1987: 134). Henderson and Mapp (2002: 61-62) found that in high-performing schools in low-income areas parents, carers and communities were typically highly engaged within the

school and most low-income families were 'willing and able, with training, to implement practices linked to improved achievement'. Parental, carer and community involvement in education is 'multidimensional' encompassing a range of formal and informal activities (Harris and Goodall 2007). Barriers between schools and Low SES families and communities may seem entrenched but can be breached by forms of targeted support offered to parents that meet their needs, such as literacy classes or parental skill support (Kendall et al. 2008: 13). Targeted support to increase the engagement of parents, carers and families is encouraged by National Partnership activity, evidenced by the reported strategies used including parent education classes, parent sessions, and Aboriginal Elders and community members providing classroom support.

Joyce Epstein et al. (2002) define four key enabling factors that promote community involvement within schools: high commitment to learning; principal support for community involvement; a welcoming school climate; and two-way communication. These four factors contribute to school partnerships that engage parents, families and communities based on mutual and reciprocal trust, with communication at the core. A communication strategy that actively and effectively consults and engages with parent and community perspectives and input enables stronger outreach into communities that are hard-to-reach. Effective communication needs to be actively promoted and two-way in its focus, with a level of frequency and positive reinforcement that supports the establishment of relationships of trust that support, in turn, more open and frank communication.

Low SES NP schools in New South Wales work in various ways to build external partnerships. They host community activities and act as a link for community services. They work to engage parents, community members and community organisations to participate in the development and implementation of the school plan and other initiatives. They engage parents and others in teaching and learning within the school and outside the school so that they can better support their children and the school. They also facilitate the engagement of members of the ATSI community in school activities. Schools with high proportions of students with a language background other than English (LBOTE) implement an array of strategies and programs to engage parents who speak English as a Second Language (ESL) and members of ESL communities. Secondary schools develop partnerships with post-school providers in the higher education and vocational education and training (VET) sectors, as well as employers, to support student learning and help raise student aspirations regarding their post-school options. Primary schools engage in partnerships with prior-to-school providers such as pre-schools, playgroups and childcare, as well as health and welfare providers to support the successful transition of children into primary school. Schools also engage in extensive partnerships with other schools at all levels to support staff and student learning, as well as students' transitions.

This report

This report explores school external partnerships in Low SES NP schools, recognising that such partnerships comprise only one element of a school's multi-dimensional approach to addressing the various factors associated with low socio-economic status that impact on student outcomes. The discussion draws on research evidence and data collected from a

survey of school principals conducted in 2012. Principals of 556 Low SES NP Schools were invited to participate in the online survey which had an overall response rate of 64 per cent. Fifty-one per cent of respondents provided valid data on school external partnerships. Further detail on the survey method and the characteristics of respondent schools is provided in Appendix A.

The first section describes the types of partnerships in which schools are involved. Partnerships between schools and their communities take various forms, and for the purposes of this study, we have grouped the partnerships into 10 broad categories: parent/carer; ATSI communities; ESL communities; employers; VET providers; universities; secondary schools; primary schools; preschool and early childhood educators; and other partnerships.

Subsequent sections discuss the activities that schools undertake in the context of these partnerships, under the headings of: partnerships with parents and carers; partnerships with the ATSI community; engagement with the ESL communities; partnerships with post-school education providers; and partnerships with employers and the wider community. Principals' perceptions about the effectiveness of the various types of partnership activities are discussed in each section of the report. The final section discusses future directions for the evaluation.

1 School external partnerships

In this section, we examine the types of external partnerships in which the respondent schools are engaged and how this relates to the characteristics and context of the school. Funding for new and existing partnerships under the Low SES NP is also discussed.

The Low SES National Partnerships have encouraged involvement from parents and communities in the development of external partnerships to not only inspire parental participation in schooling, but also to assist in conveying the importance and value of school attendance and higher educational achievement to students (NSW Department of Education and Communities 2010: 2 – 3). Research shows that there is a correlation between having good working relationships between schools and families and higher levels of literacy and numeracy in students (DEEWR 2008a). Furthermore, mutual and productive ‘collaborative learning partnerships’ between teachers and parents can lessen the impact of barriers to learning entrenched within varying socio-economic and cultural groups thus leading to more effective delivery of classroom syllabus (Ludicke and Kortman 2012: 156).

1.1 Engagement in external partnerships

Within the questionnaire, school external partnerships were grouped into the following broad categories: parents and carers; ATSI parents and communities; English as a Second Language (ESL) parents and communities; employers and the wider community; TAFE and other training providers; universities; secondary schools; primary schools; prior-to-school providers; and partnerships with other education and training providers. The proportion of schools reporting that they were engaged in the main types of external partnerships within each group of schools (primary; secondary; combined; and special) is listed in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Broad categories of external partnerships by type of school

	All schools n=285	Primary schools n=205	Secondary schools n=46	Combined schools n=20	Special schools n=14
Partnerships with:	%	%	%	%	%
Parents and carers	96	97	96	95	79*
ATSI community	83	83	83	70	100
Employers & wider community	71	67	85	75	71
Primary schools	68	70	78	40	43
Secondary schools	66	73*	43*	50	64
ESL parents & communities	48	48	59	30	29
Prior-to-school providers	45	57*	0	55	7
Universities	34	29	52	50	21
TAFE and other training providers	25	8*	70*	65*	71*
Other providers	13	10	17	10	43*

Notes: *Significantly different from the average of other school groups (ie. Primary, Secondary, Combined, Special) at the 5% level

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

The most common type of school external partnerships reported are with parents and carers. As shown in Table 1.1, high proportions of principals from all school groups reported having partnerships with parents/carers, with a significantly lower proportion of principals of special schools. Overall, 96 per cent of all principals reported having partnerships with parents/carers. External partnerships with ATSI communities are the second most common type of partnership in Low SES NP schools, with 83 per cent of primary and secondary schools, 70 per cent of combined schools and 100 per cent of special schools engaging in this type of partnership.

Seventy-one per cent of school principals indicated they were engaged in partnerships with employers and the wider community. Over two-thirds of principals of all school types (including primary schools) are engaged in partnerships with employers and the wider community.

Seventy per cent of principals reported partnerships with primary schools and 66 per cent of principals reported partnerships with secondary schools. A significantly higher proportion of primary school principals (73%) reported partnerships with secondary schools.

Partnerships with ESL communities were reported less often (48%) but by principals of all types of schools.

Forty-five per cent of principals reported partnerships with prior-to-school providers (eg. pre-schools/ early childhood service providers/ playgroups) and no secondary principals reported this type of activity. Over half of all primary school principals (57%) and 55 per cent of principals of combined schools reported engagement in these types of partnerships.

Thirty-four per cent of school principals report partnerships with universities. School-university partnerships were reported by principals from types of schools, including 29 per cent of primary school principals.

Twenty-five per cent of school principals reported partnerships with TAFE or other training providers, although these partnerships were reported by a significantly lower proportion of primary school principals (8%), compared to principals of secondary schools (70%), special schools (71%) and combined schools (65%).

Some school external partnerships do not fall within the nominated categories and 13 per cent of principals reported engagement in partnerships “with other education and training providers”. These other types of partnerships were most commonly reported by principals of special schools (43%) and included partnerships with adult and community education providers, educational consultants and health and welfare agencies.

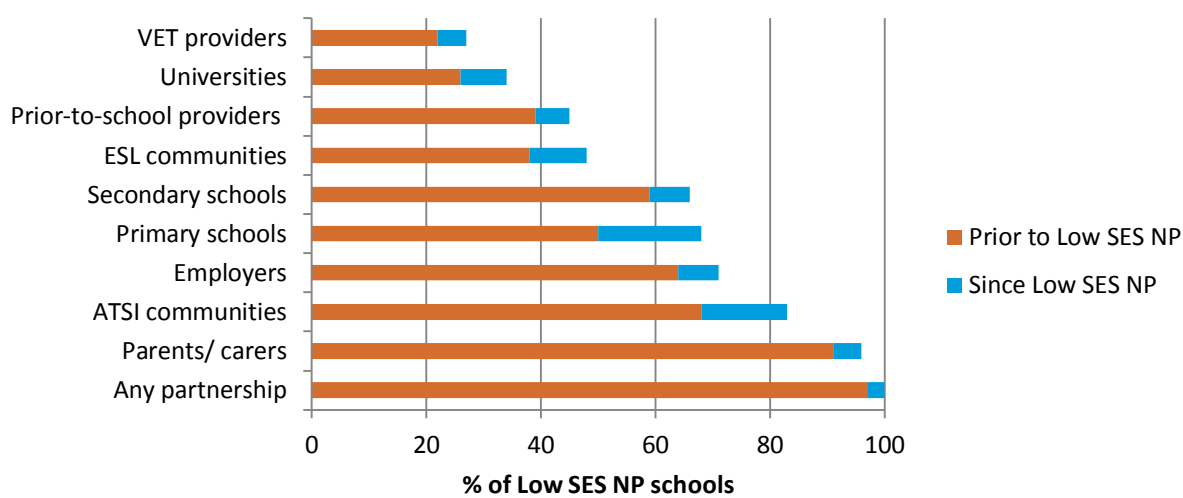
No one type of partnership appears exclusive to any particular level of schooling, with the exception of partnerships with prior-to-school providers (where secondary schools did not report any activity). Primary schools, secondary schools, combined schools and special

schools all report activities across the broad categories. This diversity of school external partnerships is illustrated visually in Appendices B and C.

Growth in partnership activity

Almost all schools serving low socio-economic communities were engaged in external partnerships prior to the Low SES NP. The increase in the proportion of respondent schools engaged in the different categories of partnerships since the Low SES NP is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Proportion of schools engaged in partnerships since the Low SES NP



Notes: The value for “Since the Low SES NP” is calculated by deducting the proportion of schools which reported existing partnerships from the proportion of schools now engaged in each category of partnership.
Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

Figure 1.1 shows the proportion of Low SES NP schools engaged in each category of partnerships prior to the Low SES NP compared to the proportion now engaged in the category of partnership. The chart indicates that 100 per cent of Low SES NP schools are now engaged in some partnership activity, compared to 97 per cent prior to the Low SES NP.

Since the Low SES NP funding, the proportion of Low SES NP schools engaged in each category of partnership has increased. Ninety-six per cent of Low SES NP schools now have partnerships with parents and carers compared to 91 per cent with existing partnerships prior to the Low SES NP. Only 68 per cent of school principals reported having existing partnerships with ATSI parents and communities prior to the Low SES NP, whereas 83 per cent of principals now report having partnerships with ATSI parents and communities. The proportion of schools working in partnership with employers and the wider community has increased from 64 per cent to 71 per cent since the Low SES NP.

Some 68 per cent of principals now report having partnerships with primary schools compared to 50 per cent with existing partnerships prior to the Low SES NP. Partnerships with secondary schools have increased from 59 per cent of schools to 66 per cent of schools since the Low SES NP. The proportion of school principals reporting partnerships

with ESL parents and communities has increased to 48 per cent from 38 per cent prior to the Low SES NP.

Forty-five per cent of schools now have partnerships with prior-to-school providers compared to 39 per cent prior to the Low SES NP. School-university partnerships are now occurring in 34 per cent of Low SES NP schools compared to 26 per cent having school-university partnerships prior to the Low SES NP. Some 25 per cent of schools now have partnerships with TAFE institutes and other training providers compared to 22 per cent prior to the Low SES NP.

New and Existing Partnerships

Principals were asked to indicate the extent to which partnerships existed prior to the Low SES NP, if they had implemented new partnerships since the Low SES NP, and the extent to which both types of partnerships (new and existing) were funded under the Low SES NP. The proportion of schools with existing and new partnerships and the proportion of each existing and new partnerships funded under the Low SES NP is shown in Table 1.3

Table 1.3 New and existing partnerships funded by Low SES NP

Partnerships with:	All %	Partnerships		Funded under Low SES NP	
		Existing %	New %	Existing %	New %
Parents and carers	96	91	59	61	36
ATSI communities	83	68	39	38	24
Employers	71	64	64	21	8
Primary schools	68	50	28	34	16
Secondary schools	66	59	23	25	9
ESL communities	48	38	26	22	9
Prior-to-school providers	45	39	20	15	9
Universities	34	26	26	11	9
VET providers	25	22	12	7	5
Any partnership activity	100	97	92	79	50

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As shown in Table 1.3, all principals reported that their school now had at least one external partnership. Ninety-seven per cent of principals indicated that they had existing partnerships when the Low SES NP commenced and 79 per cent indicated that they had existing partnerships that were now funded by the Low SES NP.

In regard to new partnerships, 92 per cent of principals indicated that they had initiated new partnerships since the commencement of the Low SES NP and 50 per cent indicated that they had new partnerships funded under the Low SES NP. These categories are not mutually exclusive, in that a principal could report multiple new or existing partnerships in each broad category, any of which could be funded or not funded under the Low SES NP.

The proportion of principals reporting new partnerships funded by the Low SES NP in each category by type of school is indicated in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4 New external partnerships funded by the Low SES NP by type of school

	All schools n=285	Primary n=205	Secondary n=46	Combined n=20	Special n=14
Partnerships with:	%	%	%	%	%
Parents/ carers	36	37	41	15	29
ATSI communities	24	25	22	15	36
Employers	8	7	11	5	21
Primary schools	16	18	20	0	7
Secondary schools	9	8	13	0	14
Primary schools	16	18	20	0	7
ESL communities	9	10	13	0	0
Prior-to-school providers	9	12	0	5	0
Universities	11	9	24	0	14
VET providers	5	3	11	5	14

Notes: No values are significantly different from the average of other school groups at the 5% level
Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As shown in Table 1.4, 41 per cent of secondary schools and 37 per cent of primary schools had developed new partnerships with parents/carers since receiving the Low SES NP funding. Thirty-six per cent of special schools, 15 per cent of combined schools, 22 per cent of secondary schools and 25 per cent of primary schools had developed new partnerships with ATSI communities. New partnerships with ESL communities were developed by 13 per cent of secondary schools and ten per cent of primary schools.

New partnerships with employers were developed by 21 per cent of special schools, 11 per cent of secondary schools and 7 per cent of primary schools. Special schools were also more likely to develop new partnerships with VET providers (14%) than the other types of schools. Secondary schools were more likely to develop new partnerships with universities than special schools and primary schools. Primary schools and combined schools were the only schools which developed new partnerships with pre-schools.

There are many types of partnership activities in which schools can engage within each broad category. To indicate this, we show the number of partnerships (up to five) that Principals indicated were funded by the Low SES NP within each broad category – for both existing and new partnerships. The number of existing partnerships funded by the Low SES NP is shown in Table 1.5.

Table 1.5 Schools with existing partnerships funded under the Low SES NP, by number of partnerships

<i>Partnerships with:</i>	Number of existing NP-funded partnerships per school					Total	%
	1	2	3	4	5+		
Parents and carers	69	39	18	12	35	173	61
ATSI communities	32	27	17	16	15	107	38
Employers	29	15	6	8	3	61	21
Primary schools	54	34	9	0	0	97	34
Secondary schools	32	7	15	11	5	70	25
ESL communities	27	15	8	5	8	63	22
Prior-to-school providers	20	11	8	3	0	42	15
Universities	21	7	1	1	1	31	11
VET providers	8	6	2	2	1	19	7
Any partnership activity	1	31	13	22	159	226	79

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

Principals of 173 schools (61% of all respondents) reported using Low SES NP funding for existing partnerships with parents/carers and 107 reported using Low SES NP funding for existing partnerships with ATSI communities. As indicated in Table 1.5, many schools are using the Low SES NP funding to support multiple existing partnerships. For example, 35 schools are supporting five or more partnerships with parents and carers with Low SES NP funding.

A similar level of activity was indicated in the number of new external partnerships supported by Low SES NP funding, as indicated in Table 1.6.

Table 1.6 Schools with new partnerships funded under the Low SES NP, by number of partnerships

<i>Partnerships with:</i>	Number of new NP – funded partnerships per school					Total	%
	1	2	3	4	5+		
Parents and carers	48	28	15	7	4	102	36
ATSI communities	28	15	14	5	7	69	24
Employers	8	6	3	5	1	23	8
Primary schools	24	18	5	0	0	47	16
Secondary schools	11	5	4	5	0	25	9
ESL communities	12	8	2	3	1	26	9
Prior-to-school providers	8	12	6	0	0	26	9
Universities	8	7	5	5	2	27	9
VET providers	7	2	2	1	2	14	5
Any partnership activity	1	34	9	13	86	143	50

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As shown in Table 1.6, 86 schools had initiated at least five new external partnerships with the support of Low SES NP funding. New partnerships with parents/ carers were developed by 102 schools; new partnerships with ATSI communities were developed by 69 schools; and new partnerships with primary schools were developed by 47 schools.

1.2 Schools with Aboriginal students

Data from the *MySchool* website were used to identify the proportion of Aboriginal students in each survey respondent's school. Some 88 per cent of schools surveyed have Aboriginal students. In one in five schools, Aboriginal students comprise over 25 per cent of the student population. For the purpose of analysis, respondent schools were divided into three groups: schools with no Aboriginal students; schools where 1-10 per cent of students are Aboriginal; and schools where 11 per cent or more students are Aboriginal. The extent to which schools with Aboriginal students are engaged each category of partnerships, is shown in Table 1.7.

Table 1.7 Types of external partnerships in schools with Aboriginal students

Proportion of students who are Aboriginal	All schools n=285	0% n=34	1 – 10% n=108	11%+ n=143
Partnerships with:	%	%	%	%
Parents and carers	96	97	95	94
ATSI communities	83	41*	85	92*
Employers	71	65	77	66
Primary schools	68	91*	73	57*
Secondary schools	66	59	71	62
ESL communities	48	71*	56	34*
Prior-to-school providers	45	35	44	48
Universities	34	24	28	23
VET providers	25	35	39	29
Other	13	29	19	13

Notes: *Significantly different from the average of other school groups at the 5% level.

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As shown in Table 1.7, there is no significant difference in reported levels of partnerships with parents and carers between schools with Aboriginal students and schools with no Aboriginal students. Ninety-four per cent of schools with a high proportion of Aboriginal students (11% or more) have partnerships with parents and carers, compared to 95 per cent of schools with a lower proportion (1-10%) of Aboriginal students and 97 per cent of schools which have no Aboriginal students.

Schools with a relatively high proportion of Aboriginal students (11% or more) were significantly more likely to report partnership activities with ATSI communities than schools with a lower proportion of Aboriginal students. Ninety-two per cent of schools with a high proportion of Aboriginal students (11% or more) reported partnerships with ATSI communities, compared to 85 per cent of schools with a lower proportion (1-10%) of Aboriginal students and 41 per cent of schools which had no Aboriginal students.

1.3 Schools with LBOTE students

Seventy per cent of schools responding to the survey enrol LBOTE students according to data from the *MySchool* website. In almost one-third (32%) of schools, over 25 per cent of students have LBOTE and in 37 per cent of schools, LBOTE students make up 1 – 24 per cent of enrolments.² The types of partnerships undertaken by schools in each group are indicated in Table 1.8.

Table 1.8 Types of external partnerships in schools with students with LBOTE

Proportion of students who have LBOTE	All schools n=285	0% n=86	1 – 24% n=106	25%+ n=93
Partnerships with:	%	%	%	%
Parents and carers	96	99	94	98
ATSI communities	83	85	86	79
Employers	71	68	76	72
Primary schools	68	62	69	79
Secondary schools	66	67	71	67
ESL communities	48	24*	33*	90*
Prior-to-school providers	45	52	55	35
Universities	34	22	38	44
VET providers	25	12	25	33
Other	13	19	12	21

Notes: *Significantly different from the average of other school groups at the 5% level.

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As shown in Table 1.8, principals of schools with a relatively high proportion of LBOTE students (25% or more), less than one in four LBOTE students (1-24%) or no LBOTE students reported similar levels of activity in all broad categories of partnerships with one exception – 90 per cent of principals of schools with 25 per cent or more LBOTE students said they had partnerships with ESL communities. This was more than twice the rate of the other two groups of schools, where a significantly lower proportion of principals (24% and 33%) reported partnerships with ESL communities.

Summary

External partnerships form part of a school's multi-dimensional approach to address the various factors associated with low socio-economic status that impact on student outcomes. Partnerships between schools and their communities are diverse. For the purposes of this study, school external partnerships were grouped into broad categories: parent/carer; ATSI communities; English as a Second Language [ESL] communities; employers; Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers; universities; secondary

² An LBOTE student population of 25 per cent or higher was more common in secondary schools (56%) than in primary schools (28%)

schools; primary schools; prior-to-school (eg. preschools, early childhood providers, playgroups); and partnerships with other education and training providers.

The most common type of school external partnerships reported are with parents and carers (96% of schools) followed by partnerships with ATSI parents and communities (83%) and partnerships with employers and the wider community (71%). The least common types of partnerships reported are school-university partnerships (34%) and partnerships with VET providers (25%). Over two-thirds of schools report partnerships with primary schools (68%) and secondary schools (66%). Just under half of all schools report partnerships with ESL parents and communities (48%) and prior-to-school providers (45%).

The Low SES NP initiative has supported the expansion of external partnerships in Low SES NP schools. For each broad category of partnership activity, a higher proportion of schools are now engaged in partnerships than the proportion of schools with existing partnerships prior to the Low SES NP.

Both existing and new partnership activities are being supported with Low SES NP funding. Seventy-nine per cent of principals reported existing partnerships now supported with Low SES NP funding and 50 per cent of principal reported new partnerships supported by the Low SES NP. Overall, 97 per cent of schools surveyed are engaged in existing partnership activities and 92 per cent of schools are undertaking new partnership activities.

Schools' engagement in different types of external partnerships is influenced by their context and the characteristics of their students.

Schools with a high proportion of students who are Aboriginal (11 per cent or more) are more likely to have partnerships with ATSI parents and communities (92%) than schools with no Aboriginal students (41%).

Principals of schools with more than 25 per cent LBOTE students report partnerships with ESL parents and communities at more than twice the rate (90%) of principals of other schools.

2 Partnerships with parents and carers

As discussed in the previous section, almost all school principals who responded to the survey reported that their school was engaged in partnerships with parents and carers. This is consistent with research evidence suggesting that parent and carer engagement is a feature of high-performing schools in low-income areas (Henderson and Mapp 2002: 61-62).

Joyce Epstein et al. (2002) define four key enabling factors for schools that promote parent and community involvement in schooling: a high commitment to learning; principal support for community involvement; a welcoming school climate; and two-way communication. These dimensions were explored in the survey of principals and their responses are examined in this section, beginning with a discussion of the extent to which the principals feel supported by the parents and carers of their students.

2.1 Level of support from parents and carers

In the survey, principals were asked if they felt supported by the parents of students at their school and how connected they felt to their school's broader community. The overall response to these questions was very positive, with over 90 per cent of all respondents agreeing with these two statements.

Table 2.1 Principals' perception of the level of support they receive from parents and carers and how connected they feel to their school's broader community, by level of schooling

	All n=285	Primary n=205	Secondary n=46	Combined n=20	Special n=14
<i>% agree and strongly agree:</i>	%	%	%	%	%
I feel supported by the parents of students at this school	96	96*	95	95	72*
I feel connected to the broader community that this school is part of	90	89	92	100	86

Notes: *Significantly different to the average response for all other school groups at the 5% level

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As shown in Table 2.1, there was very little difference in the responses by type of school. Principals of primary schools, secondary schools and combined schools overwhelmingly agreed with the statements that they felt supported by the parents of students at their school. However, a significantly higher proportion of principals of primary schools (96%) said they felt supported by the parents of students at their school and only 72 per cent of principals of special schools agreed with this statement.

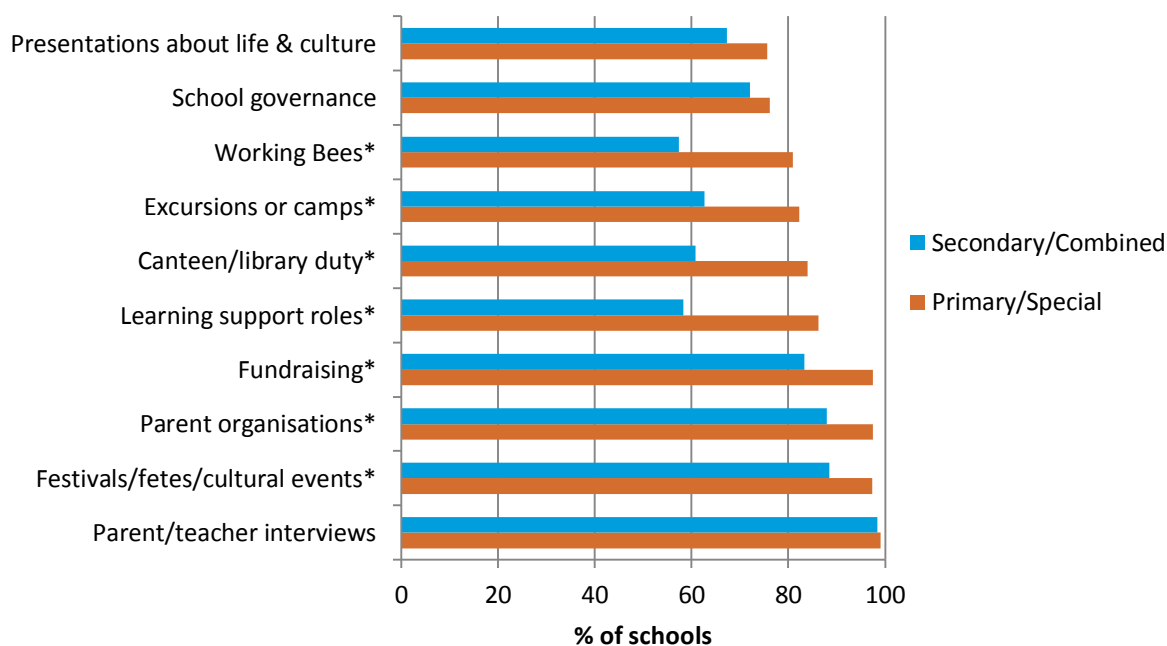
There was no significant difference in the extent to which principals reported feeling connected to the broader community that their school was part of, between school levels. Overall, these baseline rates are high and stable.

2.2 Participation levels of parents and carers

Within any school, there are many potential activities that may engage parents and carers. As Harris and Goodall note, parental, carer and community involvement in education is ‘multidimensional’ encompassing a range of formal and informal activities (Harris and Goodall 2007).

In the survey, ten types of activities were identified that can support the engagement of parents and carers. Principals were asked to estimate the proportion of students whose parents and carers participate in each of the ten categories of activities. Respondents were also given the option to indicate that parents and carers participate in “other” activities that were not on the list. The proportion of principals who indicated that some parents and carers participated in each of the activities (ie. principals who responded other than “0%”) is shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 Activities involving parents and carers, by level of schooling



Notes: *Significantly different responses between the identified two groups at the 5% level
Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

The four categories of activity nominated most often by principals as engaging some parents or carers in their school are: parent/teacher interviews; festivals/ fetes and cultural events; parent organisations; and fundraising. Yet the extent to which schools engage some parents and carers in these activities varies by type of schooling.

Across all categories of activity, principals of primary/ special schools are on average ten percentage points more likely to report parent and carer engagement than principals of secondary/combined schools. The difference in parent and carer engagement between these two groups is statistically significant in all except three categories: giving

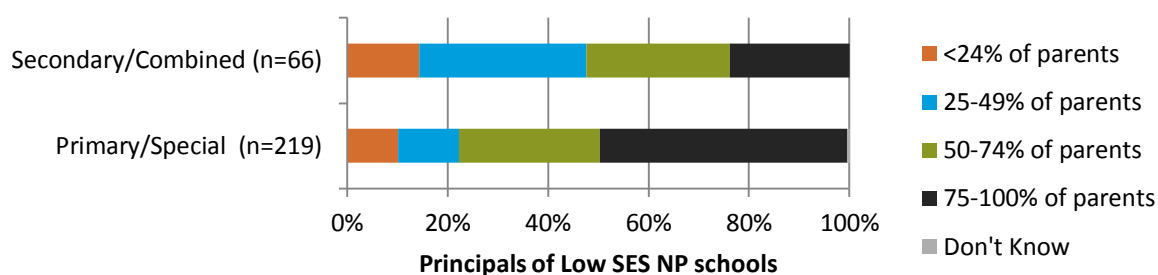
presentations to students about their culture, work or life experiences; school governance; and parent/teacher interviews, as shown in Figure 2.1.

Principals were asked to nominate roughly what proportion of students' parents and carers participated in each type of activity from five options: 0%; 1-24%; 25-49%; 50-74%; and 75-100%. They were also offered the option of saying they did not know.

For all types of activities other than parent/teacher interviews, the most commonly reported level of parent and carer participation was between 1 and 24 per cent. Over half of principals estimated that between 1 and 24 per cent of students' parents or carers participated in the activities listed in Figure 2.1.

An exception was parent/teacher interviews, where more principals reported higher parent participation rates. Twenty-seven per cent of principals estimated the participation rate in parent/teacher interviews was 50 to 74 per cent and 41 per cent of principals estimated 75 to 100 per cent of parents and carers participated in parent/teacher interviews. Principals' perception of the rate of participation in parent/teacher interviews differed by level of schooling, as illustrated in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 Principals' perception of the proportion of students whose parents and carers participate in parent/teacher interviews, by level of schooling



Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As indicated in Figure 2.2, principals of primary and special schools are twice as likely as principals of secondary and combined schools to report that over three-quarters of their students' parents and carers participated in parent/teacher interviews. Some 49 per cent of primary and special school principals reported a parent participation rate of 75 per cent or more in parent/teacher interviews, compared to only 24 per cent of principals of secondary and combined schools.³

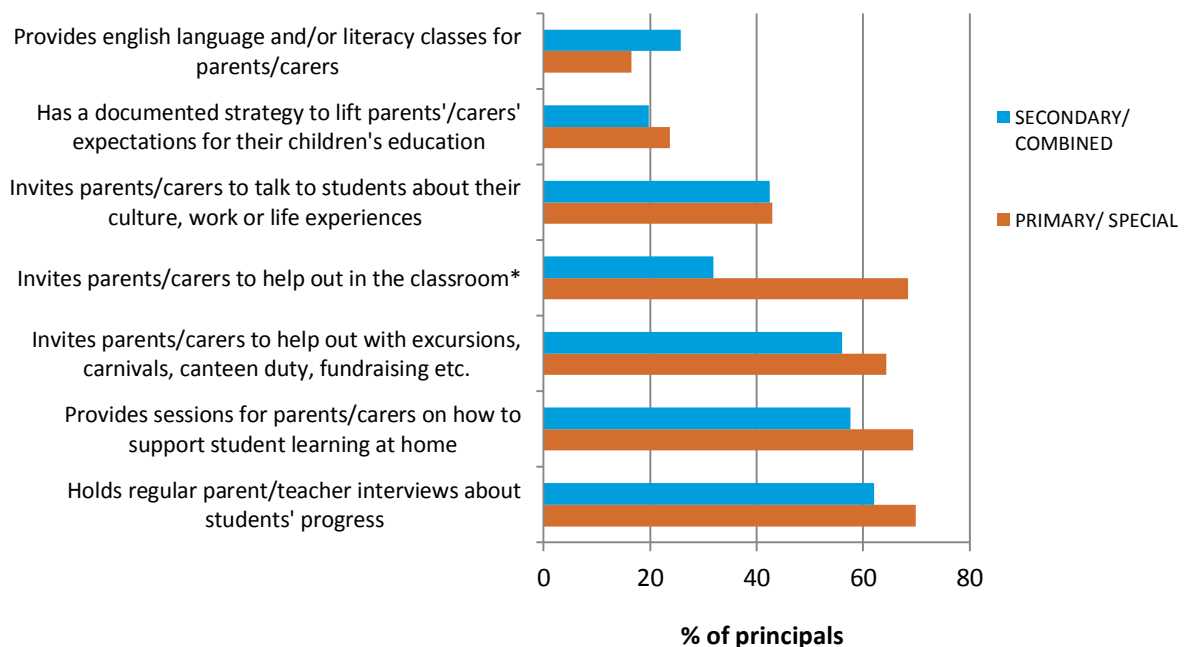
³ As the survey was confined to principals of Low SES NP schools, we cannot evaluate the extent to which these patterns of participation differ from other schools in New South Wales. However, by asking the same questions in subsequent surveys of Low SES NP school principals, we will have data to monitor potential changes over time in future reports for this evaluation.

2.3 Strategies to engage parents and carers in children’s learning

As Epstein et al. (2002) point out, a high commitment to learning – shared by both parents and school staff – is one of the key enabling factors that facilitates community involvement within schools. In the survey, principals were asked about the types of activities they use to engage with parents and carers in student learning. They were also asked how effective they considered these strategies were in building parent/carer engagement with the school.

There are a range of strategies that schools can undertake to foster engagement in children’s learning among parents and carers in Low SES communities. Some strategies focus on meeting the educational needs of parents and carers, such as literacy classes or parental skill support (Kendall et al. 2008: 13). Such activities may then become a bridge to engaging parents and carers in their children’s learning and may help to raise expectations regarding the long-term outcomes of children’s education. Other strategies include providing sessions for parents and carers on how to support student learning at home, regular parent-teacher interviews and inviting parents into the school to help to contribute to student learning in different roles (eg. giving talks or assisting in the classroom), as shown in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3 Strategies to engage parents and carers in children’s learning, by level of schooling



Notes: *Significantly different responses between the identified two groups at the 5% level.
Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As shown in Figure 2.3, principals indicated that some strategies are more common in some schools. The four most common strategies are: holding parent/teacher interviews about children’s progress; providing sessions for parents/carers on how to support student

learning at home; inviting parents to help out with excursions, carnivals, canteen duty, fundraising etc; and inviting parents/carers to help out in the classroom. Over 60 per cent of principals reported that they implemented these four types of activities.

Other strategies were less commonly reported by principals. Forty-three per cent of all principals indicated that they invited parents/carers to talk to students about their culture, work or life experiences. Only 20 per cent of principals indicated that they had a documented strategy to lift parents’/ carers’ expectations of their children’s education. A similar proportion indicated that they provided English language and/or literacy classes for parents/carers (26%).

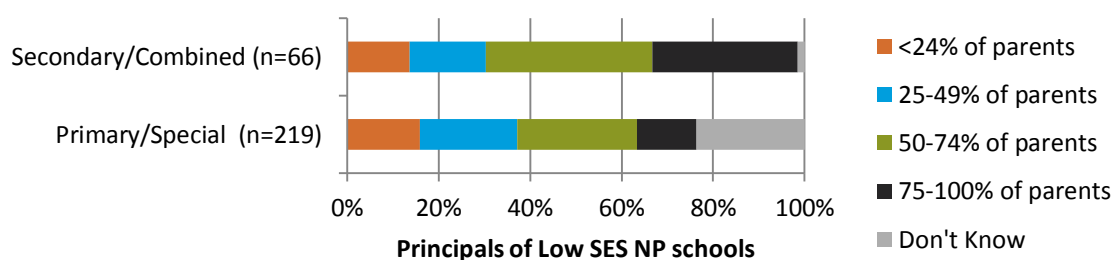
In the main, there were no significant differences in the proportion of principals reporting that they employed each strategy, by level of schooling, with one exception – the extent to which parents and carers were invited to help out in the classroom. Over two-thirds of primary and special school principals (68%) indicated that they invited parents and carers to help out in the classroom, compared to only 32 per cent of principals in secondary and combined schools (32%), as indicated in Figure 2.3.

2.4 Parents’ aspirations for their children’s education

Research indicates that young people’s decisions about their post-school options are formed during the early years of secondary school and are influenced by their parents’ level of education (Cardak and Ryan, 2009; Tieben and Wolbers, 2009). Therefore, raising aspirations for their child’s education is a desired outcome of strategies to engage parents in their children’s learning in Low SES NP schools.

In the survey, principals were asked to indicate roughly what proportion of students’ parents/carers expected their child to complete Year 12; and expected their child to do further study or training beyond school. Principals of primary schools and special schools were less likely to know the answer to these two questions – around one in five principals of these schools responded that they “don’t know”. In contrast, less than 1.5 per cent of principals of secondary and combined schools said they did not know the answer to these two questions about families’ post-school aspirations for their children, as shown in Figure 2.5 and Figure 2.6.

Figure 2.5 Principals’ perception of the proportion of students whose parents and carers expect their child to complete Year 12, by level of schooling

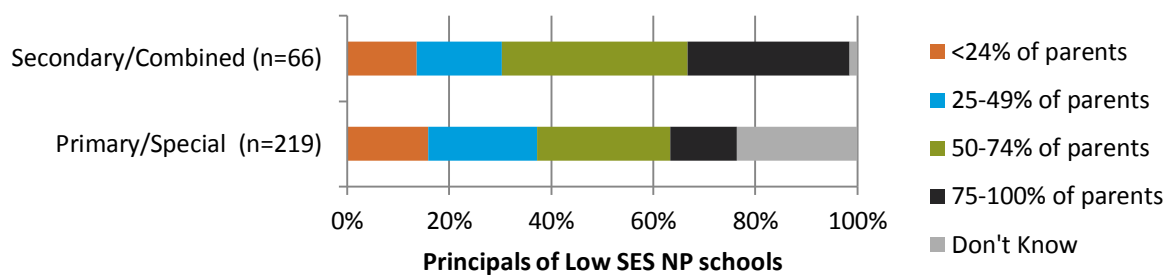


Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As shown in Figure 2.5, principals of secondary and combined schools were more likely to report that a high proportion of parents and carers would expect their child to complete Year 12, than principals of primary and special schools. Forty-nine per cent of principals of secondary and combined schools estimated that between 75 – 100% their students’ families expected them to complete year 12 compared to only 24 per cent of principals of primary and special schools.

Principals’ perceptions about parents’ expectations of their child’s post-school options regarding further study suggest an even lower proportion of parents and carers expect their child to do further study in either vocational or higher education when they complete school, as shown in Figure 2.6.

Figure 2.6 Principals’ perception of the proportion of students whose parents and carers expect their child to do further study (such as university or TAFE) after they complete school, by level of schooling



Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As shown in Figure 2.6, only 32 per cent of principals of Low SES NP schools at the secondary or combined level (and 13 per cent of primary/special school principals) estimated that 75 per cent or more of their students’ families expected their child to do further study (such as university or TAFE) after they complete school.

2.5 Building effective partnerships with parents and carers

The actions and attitudes of school staff as well as parents and carers of students contribute to the effectiveness of school external partnerships.

As indicated in Table 2.2, principals were asked about the way in which their schools sought to engage parents and carers, as well as questions about parents and carers’ perceived level of engagement. Four out of five principals agreed or strongly agreed with all five statements, with some differences between levels of schooling. In regard to the statement that their school “makes parents/carers feel welcome and valued” a significantly higher proportion of primary school principals (100%) agreed with this statement. A significantly lower proportion of principals of combined schools agreed with this statement (95%).

Table 2.2 Principals’ perceptions of school climate, by level of schooling

	All n=285	Primary n=205	Secondary n=46	Comb’d n=20	Special n=14
% agree or strongly agree:	%	%	%	%	%
This school makes parents/carers feel welcome and valued	99	100*	98	95*	100
In this school, parents/carers are encouraged to be partners with the school in the education of their child	99	100*	98	95*	85*
I make it a priority to engage with the parents/carers of students and/or to delegate this responsibility to others staff	99	100*	98	95	100
Parents can access school/teachers at a time that is convenient	99	99	98	100	100
Teachers make it a priority to engage with parents/carers	95	97*	85*	95	92

Notes: *Significantly different to the average response for all other school groups at the 5% level.

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

When asked if parents and carers were encouraged to be partners with the school in the education of their child, principals of primary schools reported the highest level of agreement (100%) and principals of special schools the lowest (85%).

Most principals agreed with the two statements:

- “I make it a priority to engage with the parents/carers of students and/or to delegate this responsibility to other staff”; and
- “Teachers make it a priority to engage with parents/carers”.

However a higher proportion of primary schools principals agreed with the first statement (100%) and a lower proportion of principals of combined schools agreed that they made it a priority to engage with parents and carers (95%).

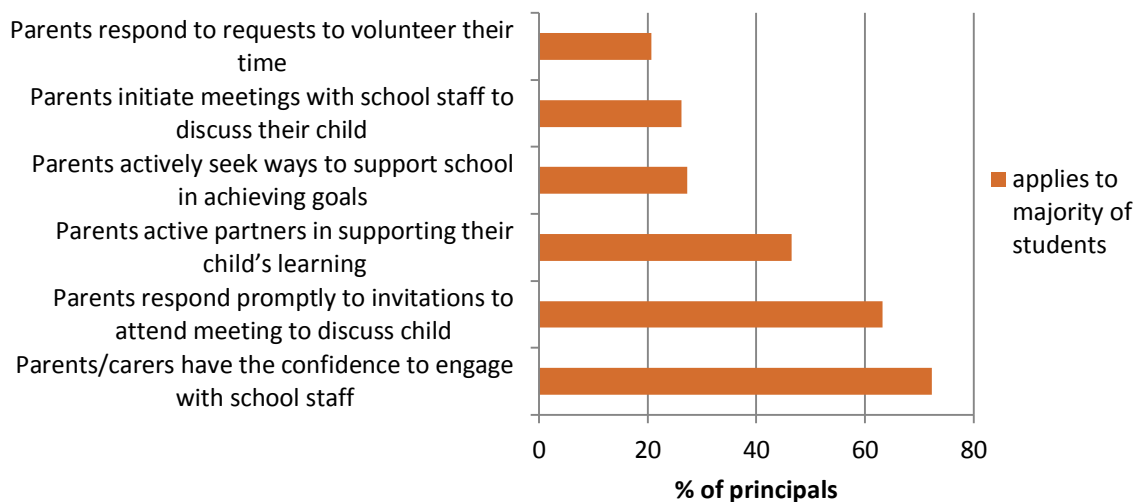
A lower proportion of all principals agreed that teachers made it a priority to engage with parents and carers. While 97 per cent of primary school principals agreed with this statement, a significantly lower proportion (85%) of secondary school principals agreed that teachers at their schools made it a priority to engage with parents and carers.

Parent and carer engagement

Principals were asked their opinion of the extent to which parents and carers engaged in the school both in relation to their own child and the school as a whole. They were asked to indicate the proportion of students’ parents and carers to whom six statements would apply. Principals were given six options in answering the question for each statement: 0%; 1-24%; 25-49%; 50-74%; 75-100%; and “Don’t know”. The proportion of principals who indicated that the statement applied to over 50 per cent of their students’ parents or carers (ie. responses in the 50-74% and 75-100% range) is indicated in Figure 2.7.

As illustrated in Figure 2.7, over two-thirds (72%) of principals of Low SES NP schools thought that the majority of their students' parents and carers had the confidence to engage with school staff. Sixty-three per cent of principals said that the majority of parents responded promptly to invitations to attend meetings to discuss their child and 47 per cent said that the majority of parents were active partners in supporting their child's learning.

Figure 2.7 Principals' perception of parents' engagement in their child's learning



Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

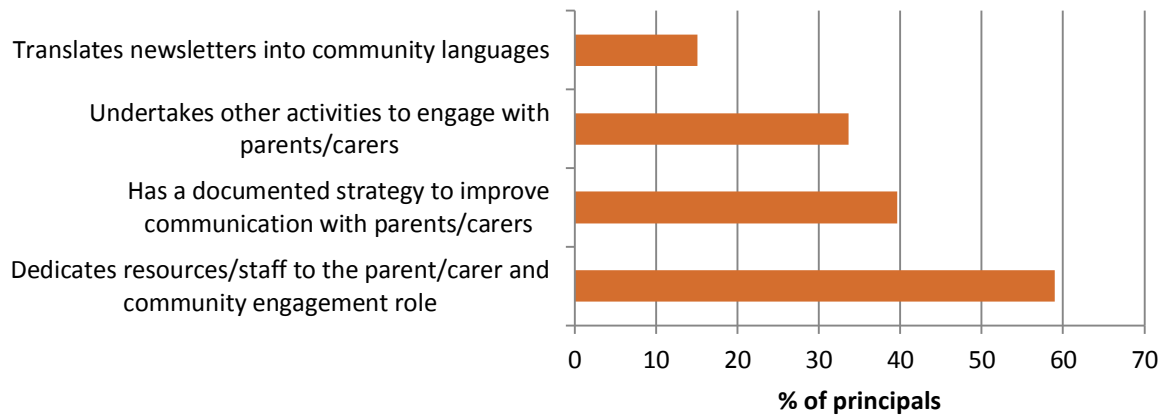
Principals were less likely to report that the majority of parents and carers of students in their school actively sought ways to support the school in achieving its goals (27%), or that the majority of parents and carers initiate meetings with school staff to discuss their child. Only one in five principals (21%) said that the majority of parents and carers responded to requests to volunteer their time in any role, such as fundraising, canteen etc. There were no significant differences in responses from principals by type of school (eg. primary/special schools compared to secondary/combined schools).

2.6 Communication with parents and carers

Epstein's four key enabling factors that facilitate the engagement of parents, families and communities in schooling in Low SES communities are based on mutual and reciprocal trust, with communication at the core (Epstein 2002). A communication strategy that actively and effectively consults and engages parents and their communities is critical to effective partnerships with parents and carers. Effective communication needs to be active and two-way in its focus, with a level of frequency and positive reinforcement that supports the establishment of relationships of trust. Such relationships of trust, in turn, support and facilitate more open and frank communication.

Schools use a range of strategies to help build communication with parents and carers in Low SES communities. In the survey, principals were asked whether they dedicated resources or staff to the parent/carer and community engagement role; if they had a documented strategy to improve communication; and if they translated newsletters into community languages. Their responses are shown in Figure 2.8.

Figure 2.8 Strategies to build communication with parents and carers



Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As illustrated in Figure 2.8, 59 per cent of principals of Low SES NP schools dedicated resources or staff to the parent/carer and community engagement role in their schools.

Forty per cent of principals had a documented strategy to improve communication with parents and carers and 34 per cent said they undertook other activities to engage with parents and carers. Some 15 per cent of principals translated newsletters into community languages. There were no significant differences in responses from principals by type of school (eg. primary/special schools compared to secondary/combined schools).

Over a third of principals said they undertook other activities to engage with parents and carers and many provided a short description in their responses. They included a range of programs to support parents in their own learning, to support families' engagement in the life of the school, or to support parents and carers' engagement in the community, as illustrated in the following comments by respondents:

Expanded community involvement through Parents Cafe (a learning organisation within the school) and links to community organisations and formation of initiatives such as Community Garden; Community Kitchen and Social Enterprise – Principal, Secondary School.

The school holds regular monthly luncheons and offered quit smoking programs to parents – Principal, Secondary School.

2.7 Effectiveness of strategies to engage parents and carers

Principals were asked to indicate the extent to which their schools were involved in 13 categories of activity that aimed to build parent and carer engagement in the school.

Table 2.3 Effectiveness of strategies in building parent/carers engagement

	Partnership activities to engage parents and carers	No. of Schools		Principals' rating (%)	
		n=	%	Effective/Highly Effective	Too early to tell
1	Provides orientation activities for cohorts of students in the year prior to entry	200	70	88	4
2	Holds regular parent/teacher interviews about students' progress	194	68	80	0
3	Provides sessions for parents/carers on how to support student learning at home	190	67	50	6
4	Invites parents/carers to help out with excursions, carnivals, canteen duty, fundraising etc.	178	62	70	1
5	Provides extended transition to school programs for potential future cohorts of students	172	60	83	6
6	Invites parents/carers to help out in the classroom	171	60	53	3
7	Dedicates resources/staff to the parent/carers and community engagement role	168	59	75	4
8	Invites parents/carers to talk to students about their culture, work or life experiences	122	43	55	3
9	Has a documented strategy to improve communication with parents/carers	113	40	69	9
10	Undertakes other activities to engage with parents/carers	96	34	70	12
11	Has a documented strategy to lift parents'/carers' expectations for their children's education	65	23	49	12
12	Provides English language and/or literacy classes for parents/carers	53	19	64	6
13	Translates newsletters into community languages	43	15	51	2
	All	274	96	69	4

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As shown in Table 2.3, the seven most common types of strategies implemented in over 50 per cent of schools are:

- Providing orientation activities for cohorts of students in the year prior to entry (70%);
- Holding regular parent/teacher interviews about students' progress (68%);
- Providing sessions for parents/carers on how to support student learning at home (67%);
- Inviting parents/carers to help out with excursions, carnivals, canteen duty or fundraising (62%);
- Providing extended transition to school programs for potential future cohorts of students (60%);

- Inviting parents/carers to help out in the classroom (60%); and
- Dedicating resources/staff to the parent/carer and community engagement role (59%).

Principals were also asked to indicate how effective each type of activity was in building parent/carer engagement in the school. They were also given the option of indicating it was “too early to tell” if the strategy was effective in building engagement. In total, over two thirds (69%) of principals said that their strategies to engage parents and carers were effective or highly effective in building parent/carer engagement in the school, as shown in Table 2.3.

The most common strategy – implemented in over 200 schools – of providing orientation activities for cohorts of students in the year prior to entry was rated effective/highly effective in building parent and carer engagement by 88 per cent of principals – a higher rate than the average for all types of partnership activities designed to engage parents and carers.

Eighty per cent of principals rated holding regular parent/teacher interviews about student’s progress as effective or highly effective. Providing extended transition to school programs for future cohorts of students – while implemented by only 60 per cent of Low SES NP schools – was also considered effective or highly effective by 83 per cent of principals who responded to the survey.

The strategy providing sessions for parents/carers on how to support student learning at home was ranked effective/highly effective by a much lower proportion (50%) of principals than the average for all other types of partnerships activities.

Overall, strategies to build parent and carer engagement were rated effective or highly effective in building parent and carer engagement by 69 per cent of the principals who implemented them.

Some of the strategies in Table 2.3 attracted a relatively high response of “too early to tell” reflecting the extent to which many principals are trying out new strategies with funding under the Low SES NP. For example, 12 per cent of principals who said “too early to tell” if having a documented strategy to lift parents/carers expectations of their children’s education, or other types of engagement activities, were effective in building parent and carer engagement.

Summary

Almost all principals (96%) reported school external partnerships with parents or carers. Schools with Aboriginal students and schools with a relatively high proportion (25% or more) of students with a language background other than English (LBOTE) were as likely to report having partnerships with parents or carers as other schools.

Over 90 per cent of principals of primary, secondary and combined schools reported that they felt supported by the parents of students at their school and connected to their broader local community.

All principals reported some level of parent/carer participation in ten nominated areas of engagement activity. The four most common types of activity (ie. in which the highest proportion of school principals indicated some parents are engaged) are: parent/teacher interviews; festivals/fetes and cultural events; parent organisations; and fundraising. The proportion of principals reporting some parent and carer engagement in seven of the ten nominated activities was significantly lower in secondary and combined schools than in primary and special schools.

Over 50 per cent of principals reported that less than one quarter (1-24%) of parents and carers participated in nine of the ten types of activity. The exception is parent/teacher interviews, where two-thirds of principals reported that more than half (50-74%) of all parents and carers participate.

Principals of Low SES NP indicated their school's involvement in 13 types of activities to help build parent and carer engagement in the school. The seven most common strategies, implemented in over 50 per cent of schools are:

- Providing orientation activities for cohorts of students in the year prior to entry (70%);
- Holding regular parent/teacher interviews about students' progress (68%);
- Providing sessions for parents/carers on how to support student learning at home (67%);
- Inviting parents/carers to help out with excursions, carnivals, canteen duty, fundraising etc. (62%);
- Providing extended transition to school programs for potential future cohorts of students (60%);
- Inviting parents/carers to help out in the classroom (60%); and
- Dedicating resources/staff to the parent/carer and community engagement role (59%).

Over a third (34%) of principals indicated that they undertake "other" activities to engage with parents and carers. These activities included programs to support parents in their own learning, activities to support families' engagement in the life of the school and activities to support parents and carers' engagement in the community.

Principals were asked to indicate how effective each of the 13 strategies was in building parent and carer engagement in the school. They were also given the option of indicating it was "too early to tell" if the strategy was effective. Providing orientation activities for cohorts of students in the year prior to entry was rated effective/highly effective in building parent and carer engagement by 88 per cent of principals – a higher rate than the average for all types of parent/carer partnership activities (69%).

Eighty per cent of principals rated holding regular parent/teacher interviews about student's progress as effective or highly effective. Providing extended transition to school programs for future cohorts of students was also considered effective or highly effective by 83 per cent of principals who responded to the survey.

Only 50% of principals ranked providing sessions for parents/carers on how to support student learning at home as effective/highly effective, well below the average for all types of partnerships activities (69%).

Some 12 per cent of principals said it was "too early to tell" if having a documented strategy to lift parents/carers expectations of their children's education, or "other" types of engagement activities, were effective in building parent and carer engagement.

3 Partnerships with the ATSI community

All schools are encouraged to pursue partnerships with ATSI communities to help provide teachers and community members with the knowledge and confidence required to successfully engage with one another (DEEWR 2008b). Developing collaborations between schools and ATSI communities introduces both credibility and integrity to the content of the syllabus and facilitates the teaching of Aboriginal students (Board of Studies NSW 2008: 9).

Acknowledging that cultural differences can be a barrier to families' engagement with their child's school, Epstein emphasises the importance of building "connections and shared responsibilities" arguing that "schools and families will be more effective organisations if they work together to identify and achieve common goals" (Epstein 1987: 134).

The vast majority of schools surveyed (88%) enrolled Aboriginal students and their responses are discussed below. To inform the analysis, data on schools enrolling Aboriginal students were aggregated into two groups of similar size: schools where 1-10 per cent of students are Aboriginal; and schools where 11 per cent or more of the student population are Aboriginal.

3.1 Context

While having an Aboriginal student population is not the only reason for schools to engage with the ATSI community, these characteristics are likely to influence the context of schooling and may inform the school's strategic approach to build external partnerships.

Many of the qualitative responses to the survey indicated ongoing difficulties with communication with Aboriginal parents and carers that posed a barrier to engagement.

the ongoing need to overcome barriers that prevent some families from engaging with staff - anxiety; distrust; lack of understanding and support - both staff and families— Principal, Primary School.

At least nine out of ten principals responding to the survey "agreed or strongly agreed" that they felt supported by the parents and carers of their students and connected to the broader community that their school was part of (except for principals of special schools where the proportion was lower). When the data are disaggregated by the proportion of students who are Aboriginal, the responses are not significantly different between groups of schools, as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Principals’ perceptions of parents’ support and connection to the broader community, by proportion of school student population who is Aboriginal

	Schools	Proportion of students who are Aboriginal		
		All	0%	1-10%
	n=285	n=34	n=108	n=143
<i>% agree and strongly agree:</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
I feel supported by the parents of students at this school	96	100	94	94
I feel connected to the broader community that this school is part of	90	97	92	87

Notes: No values are significantly different the average response for all other school groups at the 5% level
Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As illustrated in Table 3.1, while principals of schools with Aboriginal students are slightly less likely to agree strongly that they feel supported by the parents and connected to the broader community that the school is part of, their responses are not significantly different to other Low SES NP schools.

3.2 School’s relationship with ATSI community

Building trust among ATSI parents and community members involves ongoing efforts on the part of school staff. Several principals indicated that some of their staff members posed obstacles to effective communication with ATSI families. However most of the comments by principals cited difficulties relating to parents working shift work, phone numbers changing and families re-locating, or living remotely. Many primary school principals also mentioned parents’ negative experiences of their own schooling as a barrier to engagement.

Our major barrier is the school experiences that our parents had as students as they moved through the education system – Principal, Primary School.

This principal also said that their school had “a policy of extending personal invitations to parents for particular events; this may take the form of a personally delivered written or verbal invitation; a child-made invitation or a phone call”. However another primary school principal commented that “direct approaches (to ATSI community members) are viewed with suspicion (due to) lack of familiarity with the school”.

In the survey, principals were asked about their school’s relationship with the ATSI community in a question that sought their level of agreement about three statements:

- Members of the ATSI community are often present at this school;
- Members of the ATSI community provide support in some classrooms; and
- This school has an effective partnership with the ATSI community to support student learning.

The extent to which principals agreed with these statements differed by level of schooling but the differences were not significant, with one exception.

Table 3.2 Principals’ perceptions of aspects of the school’s relationship with the ATSI community, by level of schooling

	All n=285	Primary n=205	Sec. n=46	Comb’d n=20	Special n=14
% agree /strongly agree:	%	%	%	%	%
This school has an effective partnership with the ATSI community to support student learning	70	68	69	86	71
Members of ATSI community provide support in some classrooms	48	47	36	79*	57
Members of ATSI community are often present at this school	67	67	55	86	79

Notes: *Significantly different from the average of other school groups (ie. Primary, Secondary, Combined, Special) at the 5% level

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As shown in Table 3.2, overall, 70 per cent of principals said they had an effective partnership with the ATSI community to support student learning. Only 48 per cent of principals said that members of the ATSI community provided support in some classrooms however a significantly higher proportion of principals of combined schools (79%) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Finally, 67 per cent of all principals reported that members of the ATSI community are often present at their school.

To explore any differences in the level of reported ATSI community engagement in a school by the proportion of students who are Aboriginal, we grouped the responses into three sub-groups.

Table 3.3 Principals’ perceptions of aspects of the school’s relationship with the ATSI community, by proportion of students who are Aboriginal

	Schools	Proportion of students who are Aboriginal		
		All n=285	0% n=34	1-10% n=108
	%	%	%	%
This school has an effective partnership with the ATSI community to support student learning	70	25*	62	73*
Members of ATSI community provide support in some classrooms	48	0	24*	65*
Members of ATSI community are often present at this school	67	0	59	62*

Notes: *Significantly different to the average of other school groups at the 5% level.

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

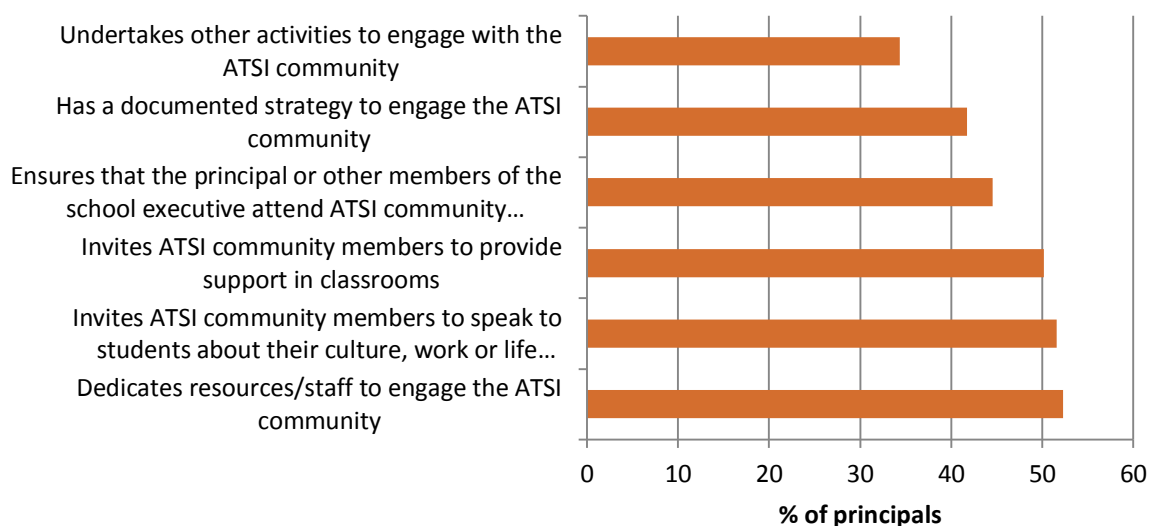
As shown in Table 3.3, a significantly higher proportion of principals of schools where over 11 per cent of students are Aboriginal report that: their school has an effective partnership

with the ATSI community; members of the ATSI community provide support in some classrooms; and members of the ATSI community are often present in their school.

3.3 Effectiveness of strategies to engage the ATSI community

Schools are engaged in a range of activities to build partnerships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The most commonly reported strategies were dedicating resources and staff to engage the ATSI community and inviting ATSI community members to speak to students about their culture, work and life experiences. Over 52 per cent of all principals reported that their school implemented these two strategies, as shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Strategies to engage with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community



Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

Fifty per cent of principals indicated that they invited ATSI community members to provide support in classrooms and 45 per cent ensured that the principal or other members of the school executive attended ATSI community meetings to share information about school activities.

Forty-two per cent of principals indicated that they had a documented strategy to engage the ATSI community and 34 per cent said they undertook other activities to engage with the ATSI community. There was no significant difference in the responses by level of school, although this was more common in secondary and combined schools (48%) than in primary and special schools (40%).

Principals of schools with a higher proportion of students who are Aboriginal are more likely to report undertaking strategies to engage with the ATSI community.

As shown in Table 3.4, a significantly higher proportion of principals of schools where over 11 per cent of students are Aboriginal, report undertaking four key activities to engage

with the ATSI community: dedicating resources and staff to engagement; inviting ATSI community members to speak to students and to provide support in classrooms; and ensuring that the principal or other members of the school executive attend ATSI community meetings to share information about school activities. A significantly smaller proportion of principals of schools where between one and ten per cent of students are Aboriginal, report that they attend ATSI community meetings to share information about school activities.

A third of respondents indicated that they undertook other types of activities to engage with the ATSI community. These included involvement in cultural celebrations, such as NAIDOC week and reconciliation activities, community barbeques and festivals, activities around connecting students to country, and Aboriginal language programs.

Table 3.4 Types of activities undertaken to engage with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, by proportion of students who are Aboriginal

	Schools	Proportion of students who are Aboriginal		
		All n=285	0% n=34	1-10% n=108
	%	%	%	%
Dedicates resources/staff to engage the ATSI community	52	9	51	65*
Invites ATSI community members to speak to students about their culture, work or life experiences	52	9	52	63*
Invites ATSI community members to provide support in classrooms	50	12	45	65*
Ensures that the principal or other members of the school executive attend ATSI community meetings to share information about school activities	45	9	32*	63*
Has a documented strategy to engage the ATSI community	42	15	41	50
Undertakes other activities to engage with the ATSI community	34	3	34	43

Notes: *Significantly different from the average of other school groups at the 5% level.
Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

Over half of the principals who implemented strategies to engage with Aboriginal parents and the ATSI community considered the strategies to be effective. The proportion of principals who indicated each strategy was effective or highly effective in building ATSI parent and community engagement and in supporting student learning, is indicated in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 Effectiveness of strategies in building ATSI parent and community engagement with the school and supporting student learning

Strategies	No. of Schools		Principals' rating (%)	
	n=	%	Effective/Highly Effective	Too early to tell
<i>In building parent and community engagement:</i>				
1 Dedicates resources/staff to engage the ATSI community	149	52	62	3
2 Invites ATSI community members to speak to students about their culture, work or life experiences	147	52	71	3
3 Invites ATSI community members to provide support in classrooms	143	50	56	3
4 Ensures that the principal or other members of the school executive attend ATSI community meetings to share information about school activities	127	45	64	2
5 Has a documented strategy to engage the ATSI community	119	42	60	6
6 Undertakes other activities to engage with the ATSI community	98	34	61	8
All	237	83	63	4
<i>In supporting student learning:</i>				
1 Dedicates resources/staff to engage the ATSI community	149	52	69	5
2 Invites ATSI community members to speak to students about their culture, work or life experiences	147	52	66	4
3 Invites ATSI community members to provide support in classrooms	143	50	62	1
4 Ensures that the principal or other members of the school executive attend ATSI community meetings to share information about school activities	127	45	60	2
5 Has a documented strategy to engage the ATSI community	119	42	59	6
6 Undertakes other activities to engage with the ATSI community	98	34	65	5
All	237	83	64	4

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As shown in the top section of Table 3.5, 63 per cent of partnership activities to engage the ATSI community were rated effective or highly effective by principals in terms of building ATSI parent and community engagement with the school.

In terms of supporting student learning (bottom section of Table 3.5), 64 per cent of all partnership activities to engage with the ATSI community were rated as effective or highly effective by principals undertaking them.

In their qualitative responses, many principals noted the time involved in building ATSI parent and community engagement, and the years before the fruits of the partnerships are realised in terms of engagement and student learning.

NP funding enabled me to allocate time to brokering a partnership agreement between the local AECG and the DEC schools in our (region) – Principal, Primary School.

An AECG has been established; building on 5 years' work in establishing an Aboriginal Parent Advisory Group (APAG) and negotiating TAFE training for them as Teachers' Aides. Both programs are ongoing – Principal, Secondary School.

This principal's response indicated the range of positive educational activities that had emerged from the school's "five years work" in partnership with the Aboriginal Parents Advisory Group (APAG) as well as its partnership with the TAFE institute to train Aboriginal Teachers' Aides.

The APAG Group welcomes Aboriginal families into the school and the TAFE partnership has been successful as a confidence building and training course for Teachers' Aides. The (Aboriginal cultural group) and (Girls) and Boys' camps have been strongly supported by Aboriginal parents and elders and appear to be breaking down barriers also due to the strong support of an Aboriginal Deputy Principal who was funded from National Partnerships. The school is seen as increasingly open to; and valuing; the community and its leaders and its aspirations – Principal, Secondary School (names changed to protect anonymity).

3.4 Levers and barriers to ATSI community engagement

Principals were asked to elaborate on the main levers and / or barriers they experienced in fostering their schools' engagement with ATSI parents and /or community (Q27). This question yielded a set of detailed qualitative responses.

Engagement with parents

A strategy or "lever" described as a positive influence on building ATSI parent and carer engagement by most principals at all levels of schooling was the employment of Aboriginal staff in the school. As two principals summarised:

Levers – (Aboriginal) Language Program; Aboriginal Learning Team; SLSO with community engagement role. Barriers - drug & alcohol issues – Principal, Primary School.

Leverage: DP Aboriginal education; plus school based AEO and Aboriginal staff employed as SLSOs. Barriers: Conflict within the Aboriginal community – Principal, Secondary School.

A more detailed response from a primary school principal highlighted the importance of employing Aboriginal staff among a range of other engagement activities, yet admitted that this was still not sufficient to engage *all* ATSI families.

The main lever has been the employment of additional ATSI staff members especially in the front office of the school and by making a place for the ATSI staff to meet with the families of our students. The (Aboriginal name) Play & Chat playgroup for preschool ATSI children has been very effective in transitioning the children to school. The 'wrap around' Personalised Learning Plan' (PLP) meetings are also very effective with a high rate of attendance by family members. For just a few of our ATSI families valuing the educational opportunities available to their children through improved attendance, remains a concern in spite of the many strategies that have been put in place to support them – Principal, Primary School.

Some primary school principals said that their school only enrolled a small number of Aboriginal students and that these students' families did not wish to be identified as Aboriginal.

A very small proportion of students identify as ASTI (around 4%). Parents desire not to identify and be treated as part of the general school body – Principal, Primary School.

Engagement with community

A common barrier to community engagement described by principals was conflict or “power games” within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community that made it difficult for the school to engage with the community effectively. However one of the “levers” described by several principals as effective in engaging the community was the establishment of groups specifically focused on education, such as an Aboriginal Parent Advisory Group to provide a mechanism for consultation with members of the community on educational issues. While some principals spoke positively about working in partnership with an Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG), several others cited conflicts associated with an AECG as a barrier to engagement.

At AECG meetings the parent voice is strong and positive and the relationship with active members of the AECG is also strong – Principal, Secondary School.

Summary

External partnerships with the ATSI community are widespread among Low SES NP schools. Eighty-three per cent of all school principals responding to the survey reported engaging in partnerships with Aboriginal parents and carers and the ATSI community.

The school principals surveyed indicated the extent to which their schools are engaged in strategies to build partnerships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, in six categories:

- Dedicating resources or staff to engage the ATSI community (52%);
- Inviting ATSI community members to speak to students about their culture, work or life experiences (52%);

- Inviting ATSI community members to provide support in classrooms (50%);
- Ensuring that the principal or other members of the school executive attend ATSI community meetings to share information about the school (45%);
- Having a documented strategy to engage the ATSI community (42%); and
- Undertakes other activities to engage with the ATSI community (34%).

The most commonly reported activity was dedicating resources and staff to engage the ATSI community and inviting ATSI community members to speak to students about their culture, work and life experiences. Principals of schools with a high proportion of students who are Aboriginal (11% and over) are significantly more likely to report undertaking the four most common activities than other schools.

According to survey respondents, 63 per cent of partnership activities to engage the ATSI community are effective or highly effective in terms of building ATSI parent and community engagement with the school.

In terms of supporting student learning, principals rated 64 per cent of all partnership activities to engage with the ATSI community as effective or highly effective.

A common theme in principals' qualitative responses, was the time involved in building ATSI parent and community engagement, and the years before the fruits of the partnerships are realised in terms of engagement and student learning.

In their qualitative responses, many principals indicated that a key "lever" for fostering their school's engagement with the ATSI community was the employment of ATSI staff in their school, in roles such as administration, teaching support, community liaison, teaching and leadership. Establishing advisory and consultative mechanisms that involve ATSI parents and carers in discussions about education were also cited as important, with the long-term nature of building these partnerships emphasised.

4 Engaging ESL parents and communities

According to the *MySchool* website, over two-thirds of the Low SES NP schools surveyed enrol students from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE). These schools are likely to have a high proportion of students whose parents and communities speak English as a second language (ESL).

4.1 Context

Having a high proportion of LBOTE students can pose unique challenges for schools and their executives, particularly in terms of building communication with students’ families and communities. These difficulties can be compounded by the multiplicity of language backgrounds other than English that often exist within a school’s community.

We have 30 different nationalities represented in this school...creating links with the many different nationalities is challenging – Principal, Primary School.

Support from parents and carers

At least nine out of ten principals responding to the survey “agreed or strongly agreed” that they felt supported by the parents and carers of their students and connected to the broader community that their school was part of (except for principals of special schools where the proportion was lower). When the data are disaggregated by the proportion of a school’s students who are LBOTE students (derived from the *MySchool* website), the responses are not significantly different between groups of schools, as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Principals’ perceptions of parents’ support and connection to the broader community, by proportion of school student population with a language background other than English (LBOTE)

	Schools	Students with LBOTE		
	All n=285	0% n=86	1-24% n=106	25%+ n=93
<i>% agree and strongly agree:</i>	%	%	%	%
I feel supported by the parents of students at this school	96	95	95	95
I feel connected to the broader community that this school is part of	90	91	88	93

Notes: No values are significantly different from the average response of other school groups at the 5% level
Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

The results in Table 4.1 are consistent with the qualitative responses from principals, which indicated parents’ willingness to support the school in spite of barriers such as language and work commitments.

*All ESL parents work. ESL parents very supportive and involved with school activities in regards to transport; fundraising and attending reporting interviews.
– Principal, Primary School.*

All principals were asked about the extent to which the parents and carers of students could be expected to engage with the school and their educational aspirations for their children. Principals were given six options in answering the question for each statement: 0%; 1-24%; 25-49%; 50-74%; 75-100%; and “Don’t know”. The proportion of principals who indicated that the statement applied to over 50 per cent of their students’ parents or carers (ie. responses in the 50-74% and 75-100% range) is indicated Table 4.2. The data are also disaggregated by the proportion of schools’ students with a language background other than English (LBOTE).

Table 4.2 Principals’ perception of parents’ engagement and educational aspirations for their children, by proportion of student population with LBOTE

	Students with LBOTE			
	All n=285	0% n=86	1-24% n=106	25%+ n=93
<i>applies to the majority (50%+) of students:</i>	%	%	%	%
Parents/carers have the confidence to engage with school staff	74	85*	76	61*
Parents active partners in supporting their child’s learning	47	57	45	39
Parents respond to requests to volunteer their time	21	35	19	10
Parents/carers expect their child to complete Year 12	57	49	55	66
Parents/carers expect their child to do tertiary study or training beyond school	47	44	40	57
Parents respond promptly to invitations to attend meeting to discuss child	64	65	68	59
Parents actively seek ways to support school in achieving goals	27	29	29	22
Parents initiate meetings with school staff to discuss their child	27	37	26	18

Notes: *Significantly different from the average of the other school groups at the 5% level

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

A significantly lower proportion (61%) of principals of schools with a high proportion of LBOTE students (25% or more) reported that the majority of their students’ parents and carers had the confidence to engage with school staff. In contrast, a significantly higher proportion of principals (85%) of schools with no LBOTE students reported that the majority of their students’ parents and carers had the confidence to engage with school staff.

On all other measures of parent engagement and aspirations in Table 4.2, the differences between the three groups of schools are not statistically significant, suggesting that the engagement and aspirations of parents in schools with different proportions of students who are LBOTE are not significantly different to those of parents in Low SES NP schools with no LBOTE students (except in terms of having the confidence to engage with school staff).

It is possible that the confidence of parents to engage with school staff in schools with a high proportion of LBOTE students is related to language barriers, which was a dominant theme in principal’s qualitative responses to the survey.

The main . . . barriers for ESL parents is language and communicating with the school on their child's needs and concerns. Many families have no family support and therefore feel isolated and have no knowledge of the support they can access. Many tend to stay at home and it’s catching them to make the connection with the school so support can be offered. Developing the relationship between the family and school only happens after trust is established – Principal, Primary School.

Language barriers are more easily addressed when there is a dominant cultural group.

Majority of our parents are (community language) speakers and can comfortably communicate with staff as majority of staff are bilingual. The school is a community based school which offers (community language) as part of the LOTE program – Principal, Primary School.

School climate

An effective system of communication involves an effort on the part of both schools and parents, and must be active and two-way in its focus (Epstein et al. 2002). The actions and attitudes of school staff as well as parents and carers of students contribute to the effectiveness of school external partnerships. Principals were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with five statements about their school climate. The proportion of principals agreeing and strongly agreeing with each statement is provided in Table 4.3, disaggregated by the proportion of students with LBOTE.

Table 4.3 Principals’ perceptions of school climate, by proportion of students with LBOTE

	Students with LBOTE			
	All n=285	0% n=86	1-24% n=106	25%+ n=93
% agree and strongly agree:	%	%	%	%
This school makes parents/carers feel welcome and valued	99	99	100	100
In this school, parents/carers are encouraged to be partners with the school in the education of their child	99	100	99	99
I make it a priority to engage with the parents/carers of students and/or to delegate this responsibility to other staff	99	98*	100	100
Parents can access school/teachers at a time that is convenient	99	100	100	96*
Teachers make it a priority to engage with parents/carers	95	96	98	92*

Notes: *Significantly different from the average response of the other school groups at the 5% level.
Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

Principals of schools with a high proportion of students with LBOTE (25 per cent or more) were significantly less likely to agree that “Parents can access school/teachers at a time

that is convenient” (96%) and “Teachers make it a priority to engage with parents/carers” (92%), as shown in Table 4.3.

However, principals of schools with LBOTE students were more likely to report that they “make it priority to engage with the parents/carers of students and/or to delegate this responsibility to other staff”, than principals of schools with no LBOTE students.

The proportion of principals who agreed that their school “makes parents/ carers feel welcome and valued” and that “parents/ carers are encouraged to be partners with the school in the education of their child” was not significantly different between groups of schools.

Communication with parents and carers

Schools can employ a range of strategies to help build communication with parents and carers. In the survey, principals were asked about the extent to which they implemented strategies for parents of carers, three of which are particularly relevant to parents who speak English as a second language. The relevant strategies were: having a documented strategy to improve communication; providing English language or literacy classes for parents/carers; and translating newsletters into community languages. The principals’ responses indicating that they implemented these strategies varied according to the proportion of students who are LBOTE.

Figure 4.4 Strategies to build communication with parents and carers, by proportion of student population with LBOTE

	Students with LBOTE			
	All n=285	0% n=86	1-24% n=106	25%+ n=93
<i>applies to the majority (50%+) of students:</i>	%	%	%	%
Has a documented strategy to improve communication with parents and carers	40	34	38	51
Provides English language and/or literacy classes for parents and carers	19	11	13	36*
Translates newsletters into community languages	15	11	9	29

Notes: *Significantly different from the average of the other school groups at the 5% level

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

A significantly higher proportion (36%) of schools where 25 per cent or more students have LBOTE provide English language and/or literacy classes for parents and carers compared to schools with a smaller proportion of LBOTE students or none, as indicated in Figure 4.4.

These three strategies are all considered effective or highly effective in building parent and carer engagement by over half of the principals who implement them, although translation of newsletters into community languages was endorsed by a significantly lower proportion of principals as effective or highly effective than other strategies (see Table 2.3 in previous section of this report).

Capacity of parents and carers to participate

In the survey, ten types of activities were identified that indicated the engagement of parents and carers. Principals were asked to estimate the proportion of students whose parents and carers participate in each of the ten categories of activities. Respondents were also given the option to indicate that parents and carers participate in “other” activities that were not on the list. The proportion of principals who indicated that some parents and carers participated in each of the activities (ie. principals who responded other than “0%”) is shown in Table 4.5, and disaggregated by the proportion of a school’s students with LBOTE.

Table 4.5 Activities involving parents and carers, by proportion of school student population with LBOTE

		Students with LBOTE			
		All n=285	0% n=86	1-24% n=106	25%+ n=93
		%	%	%	%
1	Parent/teacher interviews	99	100	100	98*
2	Parent organisations	96	97	99	92*
3	Festivals/fetes/cultural events	96	96	99	93
4	Fundraising	96	96	98	94
5	Other activities	87	87	88	86
6	Learning support roles	82	80	87	80
7	Canteen/library duty	80	82	93*	62*
8	Excursion and camps	78	85	85*	64*
9	School governance	77	79	78	73
10	Working Bees	77	84	82	66*
11	Presentations to students about culture, work, life etc.	74	72	83*	66

Notes: *Significantly different from the average of the other school groups at the 5% level

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As shown in Table 4.5, a significantly smaller proportion of principals of schools where 25 per cent or more of the students have LBOTE report parents participating in parent/teacher interviews (98%) or parent organisations (92%). The other activities where the proportion of principals from schools with 25% or more LBOTE students reporting participation is low are: canteen/library duties (62%); excursions and camps (64%); and working bees (66%)

In schools where between 1 and 10 per cent of the students have LBOTE, a higher proportion of principals report parent/carer participation in most of the activities. The proportion of principals is significantly higher in three activities: canteen/library duties (93%); excursions and camps (85%); and giving presentations to students about their culture, work or life experiences (83%).

Factors contributing to lower levels of parent participation in schools where a high proportion of students have LBOTE could include language barriers as well as lack of time, both of which were emphasised by principals in their qualitative responses.

These (ESL) parents are very keen to participate in school life but are unable to assist on a regular basis due to work commitments; they assist at weekends if asked and when required – Principal, Primary School.

4.2 Partnerships with ESL parents and communities

Schools are engaged in a range of activities to build partnerships with ESL parents and communities and principals of schools with a higher proportion of students with LBOTE (25 per cent or higher) are more likely to report undertaking strategies to engage with ESL parents and communities than other schools, as shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Types of activities undertaken to engage with ESL parents and communities, by proportion of students with LBOTE

	Students with LBOTE			
	All n=285	0% n=86	1-24% n=106	25%+ n=93
	%	%	%	%
Dedicates specific resources/staff to engage with ESL parents and communities	27	3	13	69*
Invites ESL parents or community members to provide support in classrooms	22	9	11	51*
Invites ESL parents or community members to speak to students about their culture, work and life experiences	17	6	11	39*
Has a documented strategy to engage ESL parents and communities	17	4	4	45*
Undertakes other activities to engage with ESL parents and communities	16	3	5	42*
Ensures that I or members of the school executive regularly attend ESL community meetings to share information about school activities	14	4	6	34*

Notes: *Significantly different from the average of the other school groups at the 5% level.

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As shown in Table 4.6, a significantly higher proportion of principals of schools where over 25 per cent of students have LBOTE report undertaking all of the six strategies identified to engage with parents and communities that speak English as a second language (ESL). Sixty-nine per cent of principals in school with a high proportion of students with LBOTE report dedicating specific staff and resources to engage with ESL parents and communities, compared to only 13 per cent of principals in schools where less than one in four students have LBOTE. As similar pattern is observed in responses to all six questions, where principals of schools where 25 per cent or more students have LBOTE are up to 10 times

more likely than to report using the strategies than principals with a lower proportion of LBOTE students or none.

The most commonly reported strategy is dedicating resources and staff to engage with ESL parents and communities. As shown in Table 4.6, 27 per cent of all principals – and 69 per cent of principals of schools where 25 per cent or more students have LBOTE – report dedicating specific resources and staff to engage with ESL parents and communities. The importance of dedicating staff resources to the community liaison role was emphasised by principals in their qualitative responses.

The main lever (to engagement) has been the employment of a (cultural group) officer in 2012 as the increase in Non-English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB) enrolments has come from the (country). Engaging the families in their children's learning has been enhanced by our officer of (cultural group) background. Links with TAFE has assisted in setting up some ESL classes which were very effective – Principal, Primary School.

A secondary school principal also indicated an array of programs organised by an ESL community liaison officer.

Certificate 1 in Business service provided for new arrival parents. (Cultural group) Liaison Officer and employed English teacher run classes in English for (cultural group) and (cultural group) parents. Grandparents' week is very successful. Rapidly growing numbers of parents involved in all aspects; including enculturation excursions – Principal, Secondary School.

The least commonly reported strategy is ensuring that the principal or members of the school executive regularly attend ESL community meetings to share information about school activities, with only 14 per cent of all principals – and 34 per cent of principals of schools where 25 per cent or more students have LBOTE – implementing this strategy.

Other activities to engage with ESL parents and communities

Sixteen per cent of principals said they undertook “other” activities to engage with ESL parents and communities. These included participating in multicultural festivals and celebrations, providing interpreters for staff/parent interviews, parent excursions, multicultural cafe and multicultural story times and community languages programs. Many types of innovative programs and partnerships were identified in the qualitative responses to this section of the survey, as illustrated in the response below.

A playgroup is held one morning each week to encourage parent interaction and communication. This playgroup is organised by a (Cultural Group) Learning Support Officer who provides support for pre-school parents in the community. Numbers attending are in the range 6-12 each week. Parents attending have diverse cultural backgrounds. The (Cultural Group) LSO also attends the fortnightly “(dedicated morning tea session)” encouraging parents to interact with the School Leaders and each other – Principal, Primary School.

The relatively high proportion of principals (16%) who indicated that they implement “other” strategies to engage ESL parents and communities, together with the details of these activities provided in the qualitative responses, suggests that many types of partnerships with ESL parents and communities fall outside the categories specified in this survey. It would be useful to collect more information on these activities in future surveys.

Effectiveness of partnerships with ESL parents and communities

Principals were asked to comment on the effectiveness of their partnership strategies, both in terms of: building ESL parent and community engagement in the school; and supporting student learning. Principals were also given the option of indicating it was “too early to tell” if the initiatives were effective.

Table 4.7 Effectiveness of strategies in building ESL parent and community engagement with the school and in supporting student learning

Strategies	No. of Schools		Principals' rating (%)	
	n=	%	Effective/Highly Effective	Too early to tell
<i>In building parent and community engagement:</i>				
1 Dedicates specific resources/staff to engage with ESL parents and communities	76	27	68	3
2 Invites ESL parents or community members to provide support in classrooms	64	22	53	2
3 Invites ESL parents or community members to speak to students about their culture, work and life experiences	49	17	67	2
4 Has a documented strategy to engage ESL parents and communities	48	17	60	15
5 Undertakes other activities to engage with ESL parents and communities	45	16	82	4
6 Ensures that I or members of the school executive regularly attend ESL community meetings to share information about school activities	39	14	80	0
All	137	48	69	4
<i>In supporting student learning:</i>				
1 Dedicates specific resources/staff to engage with ESL parents and communities	76	27	66	5
2 Invites ESL parents or community members to provide support in classrooms	64	22	56	1
3 Invites ESL parents or community members to speak to students about their culture, work and life experiences	49	17	71	4
4 Has a documented strategy to engage ESL parents and communities	48	17	58	6
5 Undertakes other activities to engage with ESL parents and communities	45	16	84	5
6 Ensures that I or members of the school executive regularly attend ESL community meetings to share information about school activities	39	14	74	2
All	137	48	69	4

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As shown in Table 4.7, 69 per cent of all strategies to engage ESL parents and communities were rated effective or highly effective by principals in terms of: building ESL parent and community engagement in the school; and supporting students learning.

The category of activity rated effective or highly effective by the highest proportion of principals was “other” activities to engage with ESL parents and communities. These activities were rated effective or highly effective in building engagement by 82 per cent of principals, and rated effective/highly effective in supporting students learning by 84 per cent of principals. Given that 16 per cent of all principals – and 42 per cent of principals in schools with a high proportion of students with LBOTE – indicate that they implement “other” activities, it would be useful to know more about the nature and scope of “other” activities. Building on the qualitative responses to this survey, future surveys should investigate this issue.

4.4 Levers and barriers to engaging with ESL communities

Principals were asked to elaborate on the main levers and or barriers they experienced in fostering their schools’ engagement with English as a Second Language (ESL) parents and/or community.

Language

A dominant theme in the responses was the barrier to effective communication posed by languages other than English. Many principals said they did not have the capacity to translate communication materials into all the languages represented at the school.

Parents are mostly willing to talk to the school about their children. Language is a barrier; we have a large number of different languages; beyond our ability to get interpreters for – Principal, Primary School.

No translators within the community; parents have very little to no English; make things very hard to communicate – Principal, Secondary School.

While having multiple language groups makes it difficult for schools to address language barriers, several principals indicated that employing staff who spoke community languages was an effective strategy to address language barriers, as well as engage ESL parents.

Having staff members who speak the community language has been very helpful. The CLO role has been very successful – Principal, Primary School.

Levers - Community Liaison Officers working with parents/staff/students; student CAPA activities. Barriers - Parents’ lack of confidence to engage with the school - social reasons; cultural reasons and financial reasons – Principal, Secondary School.

Other barriers to engagement

Principals' views on barriers to ESL parents' engagement with school conveyed how the different circumstances of ESL parents influence their capacity for engagement.

Some ESL parents feel unwelcomed by other parents but feel welcomed by staff. Not literate in first language as well as English. Many parents do not understand "school" and feel anxious – Principal, Primary School.

Parents' inability to communicate in English. Participation in school activities not part of parents' cultural experience. Parents' working hours and patterns not compatible with those of the school – Principal, Primary School.

Language itself; cultural perceptions; time; culture understandings of the role of the school – Principal, Primary School.

Barriers: different cultural expectations of parent involvement in school. Levers: ESL additional staff appointed; Community Liaison Officer appointed – Principal, Primary School.

While some principals said that ESL parents were anxious or lacked confidence to approach the school or had "cultural expectations" that discouraged engagement, others saw difficulties with working hours as the main barrier to engagement.

Many of the parents are not available to attend school events as they work during school hours. Some of our new arrivals don't know what we are asking of them and we aren't always able to communicate effectively – Principal, Primary School.

The responses from principals illustrate the different characteristics of various ESL communities. It was apparent in the qualitative responses that some ESL communities are well-established migrant groups with extensive community networks, whereas other ESL communities are comprised mainly of recently arrived refugees from war-torn countries. Thus schools need different strategies for engaging different ESL groups.

Levers = many NESB staff; strong policies and programs; strong experience. Barriers = refugee families (50% of whole school) often victims of trauma; torture; violence; disrupted schooling; long periods in refugee camps; divided families. – Principal, Secondary School.

Summary

Over two-thirds of Low SES NP schools enrol students from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE) and many schools have students from more than one language group. In schools where a high proportion (25%+) of students have LBOTE, a significantly lower proportion of principals (61%) report that the majority of parents and carers have the confidence to engage with school staff. In schools where there are no LBOTE students

enrolled, 85 per cent of principals reported that the majority of parents and carers have the confidence to engage with school staff.

Language is considered a major barrier to engaging with ESL parents and communities, particularly in schools where multiple language groups are represented. Schools therefore implement a range of innovative strategies to engage with ESL parents and communities, such as:

- Dedicating specific resources/staff to engage with ESL parents and communities (27%);
- Inviting ESL parents or community members to provide support in classrooms (22%);
- Inviting ESL parents or community members to speak to students about their culture, work and life experiences (17%);
- Having a documented strategy to engage ESL parents and communities (17%);
- Undertaking other activities to engage with ESL parents and communities (16%); and
- Ensuring that the principal or members of the school executive regularly attend ESL community meetings to share information about school activities (14%).

The strategy most commonly employed by principals is “Dedicating specific resources and or staff to engage with ESL parents and communities. This strategy is implemented by the 27 per cent of all principals, and 69 per cent of principals of schools with a high proportion (25%+) of students with LBOTE.

Overall, 69 per cent of strategies to engage ESL parents and communities were rated effective or highly effective by principals in: building ESL parent and community engagement in the school; and supporting students learning.

Some 16 per cent of principals reported that they were undertaking “other” activities to engage with ESL parents and carers and over 80 per cent indicated that these strategies were effective or highly effective in building engagement and supporting student learning. Qualitative responses indicate these activities include participating in cultural festivals and celebrations, providing interpreters for staff/parent interviews, inviting parents to a school cafe, parent excursions and multicultural story times.

In organising these diverse types of partnership activities with ESL parents and communities, staff members dedicated to the task of building engagement ESL parent and community engagement appear to play a central role.

5 Partnerships with schools and prior-to-school providers

The Low SES NP supports school external partnerships with other schools as well as prior-to-school providers, such as early childhood providers and pre-schools, play-groups, community hubs, and child health and welfare services. These partnerships serve key roles in supporting students' transitions between levels of education as well as supporting student learning. The range of partnerships between: schools and other schools; and schools and prior-to-school providers; are explored below.

5.1 Orientation and transition activities

A long-standing method of supporting students' transitions into a new institution is to provide orientation activities, where prospective students are invited to the school to become familiarised with its facilities and staff. Seventy per cent of all principals reported that their school provided orientation activities for cohorts of students in the year prior to entry. Orientation activities are the most commonly reported partnership activity by principals in this survey with 70 per cent of principals indicating they provided orientation activities for cohorts of students in the year prior to entry. A significant proportion of principals (88%) rate this activity as effective or highly effective (see Table 2.3 earlier in this report).

Sixty per cent of Low SES NP schools are also involved in providing extended transition-to-schools programs for potential future cohorts of students. These activities are also rated effective and highly effective by a significantly high proportion of principals (83%), compared to other engagement strategies (see Table 2.3). Extended transition-to-school programs are often built on partnerships with other providers, such as prior-to-school providers for transitions into primary school, and primary schools for transitions into secondary school. They involve a commitment to participation by both parties, and support student transitions through activities such as learning projects, and co-teaching⁴.

However supporting student transitions is not the only purpose of partnerships with other schools and prior-to-school providers. These partnerships can also be focused on professional learning for teachers and other types of collaboration to support student learning between institutions, as discussed below.

5.2 Partnerships with prior-to-school providers

At the primary school level, students' transition to schooling can be facilitated through partnerships with a diverse range of prior-to-school providers, such as early childhood providers and pre-schools, as well as play-groups, community hubs, and child health and welfare services.

⁴ This model is also used by universities to support student transitions from school to higher education.

Principals were asked if their school worked in partnership with one or more prior-to-school providers, such as pre-schools, early childhood services or playgroups. While no principals of secondary schools or special schools responded yes to this question, 45 per cent of primary school principals and 50 per cent of combined school principals said that they worked in partnership with prior-to-school providers. The types of activities in which they are engaged and the proportion of principals rating them as effective is shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Effectiveness of partnerships with prior-to-school providers

	No. of Schools		Principals' rating (%)	
	n=	%	Effective/Highly Effective	Too early to tell
<i>In supporting student transitions:</i>				
1 Hosts orientation visits including parent events	93	33	88	3
2 Engages in other partnership activities with pre-schools, early childhood service providers or playgroups	65	23	77	4
3 Offers literacy learning to preschool students where appropriate	52	18	85	3
4 Supports sharing of staff, with staff from this school conducting some teaching at pre-schools, early childhood service providers or playgroups.	42	15	86	4
All	128	45	84	3
<i>In supporting student learning:</i>				
1 Hosts orientation visits including parent events	93	33	87	5
2 Engages in other partnership activities with pre-schools, early childhood service providers or playgroups	65	23	48	5
3 Offers literacy learning to preschool students where appropriate	52	18	42	3
4 Supports sharing of staff, with staff from this school conducting some teaching at pre-schools, early childhood service providers or playgroups.	42	15	35	4
All	128	45	59	4

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As indicated in Table 5.1, the most common activity undertaken by schools in partnership with prior-to-school providers is the hosting of orientation visits to the school, with 33 per cent of respondents indicating that they host orientation visits in partnership with prior-to-school providers. The least common types of partnership with prior-to-school providers are the sharing of staff (15%), followed by offering literacy learning (18%).

Principals were asked how effective these partnerships were in terms of supporting students' transitions and supporting student learning. As shown in Table 5.1, 84 per cent of partnerships with prior-to-school providers were rated effective or highly effective in supporting students' transitions. However only 59 per cent of principals rated partnerships with prior-to-school providers as effective/ highly effective in supporting student learning.

Eighty-seven per cent of principals rated hosting orientation activities as effective/ highly effective in supporting student learning, twice the average of all types of activities (59%), as shown in the lower half of Table 5.1. The sharing of staff with prior-to-school providers

was rated effective or highly effective in supporting student learning by only 35 per cent of principals. However this activity was rated effective by 86 per cent of principals in terms of supporting student transitions.

Other types of partnerships with prior-to-school providers

Almost one in four principals (23%) indicated that they engage in “other” types of partnership activities with preschools, early childhood service providers or playgroups. Information about these activities was provided in qualitative responses. Other activities include: facilitating joint staff development days with pre-school teachers; inviting pre-school families to school events as well as orientation days; and a range of extended transition to schooling programs, which could be up to a year in duration. Many primary and combined schools are also involved in hosting and delivering pre-schools and playgroups on school premises.

We have a DEC preschool; early intervention unit; and community playgroup. They are included in all whole school events and other special days as appropriate. Staff are involved in all relevant professional learning – Principal, Primary School.

Started playgroup and supports with equipment and literacy program to encourage language development from birth – Principal, Primary School.

We run our own school readiness program; plus we have 3yr olds come 2 days a week. We also have a playgroup sit within our school one day a week – Principal, Primary School.

Play group is based at the school and runs each week. Builds a strong foundation for students who attend; supported by the CLO and is linked to our parent program – Principal, Primary School.

School has a partnership with a local pre-school; offering two days per week pre-school provision on school site – Principal, Combined School

The relatively high proportion of principals (23%) who indicated that they implement “other” strategies in partnership with prior-to-school providers, and the details of these activities provided in the qualitative responses, suggests that many types of partnerships with prior-to-school providers are not captured by the survey. Future surveys could potentially collect more information on these activities.

5.3 Partnerships with Primary Schools

Principals were asked if their school worked in partnership with one or more primary schools. Principals from all levels of schooling indicated they had partnerships with primary schools, as shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Activities undertaken in partnership with primary schools, by level of schooling

	All n=285 %	Primary n=205 %	Secondary n=46 %	Combined n=20 %	Special n=14 %
Shares professional learning for teachers with a partner school	50	49	65	35	36
Engages in other partnership activities with primary schools	38	37	54	30	21
Provides some teaching in a partner school	17	12	43*	5	14

Notes: *Significantly different from the average of the other school groups at the 5% level

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As shown in Table 5. 2, the most common type of partnership with primary schools was to share professional learning for teachers – 50 per cent of all principals reported they undertook this activity. With one exception, there was no significant difference between the proportion of principals who reported engaging in the partnership activities with primary schools by level of school. A significantly higher proportion of secondary school principals (43%) reported engaging in some teaching in a partner primary school.

Thirty-eight per cent of principals indicated that they were engaged in other types of partnership activities with primary schools. When asked to specify the other types of partnership activities involving primary schools, principals mentioned festivals, sport and cultural events, teaching primary school students on site at the secondary school in areas such as music, science and Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE), and engaging in a range of professional development activities, often based around Learning Communities.

Provide on-site teaching of primary students in Science – Principal, Secondary School

Joint Lifer skills days; swimming training; some PDHPE lessons; Generation One film competition; Bike Skills Day and travel together to area cultural and sporting activities – Principal, Primary School

Primary partnerships are learning community and student leadership connections - not related to transitioning students – Principal, Secondary School

Our school funded the two non-partnership schools in the learning community so they could participate in expanded professional learning. Transition programs based on welfare are increasingly about curriculum. Annual conferences and other shared professional learning occur across our schools – Principal, Secondary School

As 36 per cent of principals reported undertaking “other” activities with primary schools, more details on these activities could be collected in future surveys.

Principals were asked about the effectiveness of their partnership activities with primary schools in terms of supporting students' transitions and supporting student learning.

Table 5.3 Effectiveness of partnerships with primary schools

	Schools		Principals' rating (%)	
	n=	%	Effective/Highly Effective	Too early to tell
<i>In supporting student transitions:</i>				
1 Shares professional learning for teachers with a partner school	143	50	79	0
2 Engages in other partnership activities with primary schools	109	38	76	6
3 Provides some teaching in a partner school	48	17	82	4
All	194	68	78	4
<i>In supporting student learning:</i>				
1 Shares professional learning for teachers with a partner school	143	50	84	0
2 Engages in other partnership activities with primary schools	109	38	85	6
3 Provides some teaching in a partner school	48	17	87	5
All	194	68	85	5

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As shown in Table 5.3, 78 per cent of partnerships with primary schools were judged effective or highly effective, in supporting student transitions and 85 per cent were perceived as effective/highly effective in supporting student learning.

5.4 Partnerships with Secondary Schools

Partnerships with secondary schools serve a range of purposes, including supporting students' transitions from one level of schooling to another. The survey explored partnerships with secondary schools and asked principals how effective they considered these partnerships to be in terms of supporting students' transitions and supporting student learning, illustrated in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Types of activities undertaken in partnership with secondary schools by level of schooling

	All n=285	Prim. n=205	Sec. n=46	Comb'd n=20	Special n=14
	%	%	%	%	%
Arranges student visits to partner school	51	59*	22*	45	36
Invites partner school staff to talk to students	41	51*	9	25	21
Engages in other partnership activities with secondary schools	33	35	22	30	57
Invites partner school staff to talk to parents of students	25	31	7	20	7
Arranges for partner school staff to teach at this school	24	24	15	35	21

Notes: *Significantly different from the average of the other school groups at the 5% level

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As shown in Table 5.4, a significantly higher proportion of principals of primary schools engaged in the two most common types of partnership activities: arranging visits to a partner school (51%); and inviting partner school staff to talk to students (41%). Rates of participation in the remaining three categories of partnership activities did not vary significantly by type of school. About one in four principals invited partner (secondary) school staff to teach in their school or talk to parents of students.

Thirty-three per cent of respondents said that they engaged in “other” types of partnership activities with secondary schools, not specified in the survey. Primary school principals described an extensive array of partnership activities with secondary schools in addition to orientation and transition to school activities. The activities included: joint curricular and extra-curricular programs (eg. bands, sport, debating, public speaking, bike education, maths and science programs); extension programs for primary school students in specialised areas; peer tutoring; co-ordinated professional learning activities for staff; and collaboration in organising community and cultural events.

Student leadership conferences; collaboration on planning units; sharing resources – Principal, Primary School.

Boys on the Move program. A group of high school students mentor a group of Stage Three boys – Principal, Primary School.

The qualitative responses from secondary school principals indicated partnerships with other secondary schools that emphasised sharing facilities, and sharing subject teaching, particularly in Years 11 and 12. In some responses, principals indicated that these partnerships occurred between secondary schools from the government and non-government sectors. The range of partnership activities is indicated in this response from one regional secondary school:

Annual Study Days for senior students; SRC conferences and an annual conference of all partner schools in the (Regional) learning community. Regular principals' meetings include this school and (other secondary) school. The learning community is assessed to be one of the strongest in the region because our focus is on professional learning; data sharing and transition. This school funded the two non-partnerships schools to ensure their inclusion in extended professional learning. 10% of our Partnerships funding contributed to funding mentor positions across the (Region) which have been highly successful – Principal, Secondary School.

The diversity of partnerships with and between secondary schools could be explored in more detail in future surveys.

Principals were asked about the effectiveness of their partnership activities with secondary schools in terms of supporting students' transitions and supporting student learning, as illustrated in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5 Effectiveness of activities undertaken in partnership with secondary schools in supporting students’ transitions and supporting student learning

	n=	%	Principals’ rating (%)	
			Effective/Highly Effective	Too early to tell
<i>In supporting student transitions:</i>				
1 Arranges student visits to partner school	144	51	75	2
2 Invites partner school staff to talk to students	21	41	68	3
3 Engages in other partnership activities with secondary schools	14	33	72	4
4 Invites partner school staff to talk to parents of students	8	25	64	3
5 Arranges for partner school staff to teach at this school	6	24	67	7
All	188	66	70	13
<i>In supporting student learning:</i>				
1 Arranges student visits to partner school	144	51	70	4
2 Invites partner school staff to talk to students	21	41	65	5
3 Engages in other partnership activities with secondary schools	14	33	71	6
4 Invites partner school staff to talk to parents of students	8	25	67	3
5 Arranges for partner school staff to teach at this school	6	24	65	8
All	188	66	68	16

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As shown in Table 5.5, 70 per cent of principals reported their partnerships with secondary schools to be effective or highly effective, in supporting student transitions, and 68 per cent considered these partnership activities to be effective or highly effective in supporting student learning.

Summary

Schools engage in many types of partnerships with other schools and with prior-to-school providers to serve a range of purposes, including supporting student learning and facilitating students’ transitions between levels of education.

Orientation activities and visits remain a major partnership activity between Low SES NP schools and other schools and prior-to-school providers, Seventy per cent of all schools surveyed host orientation activities and 60 per cent of schools – at both primary and secondary level – have extended transition programs for prospective cohorts of students. In primary schools, these programs usually involve partnerships with prior-to-school providers. In secondary schools, they are based on partnerships with primary schools.

Primary schools and special schools engage in an array of activities with prior-to-school providers including early childhood providers, and pre-schools, playgroups, community hubs and child welfare services. The activities are not limited to orientation and transition-to-school programs. Fifteen per cent of principals reported sharing staff with prior-to-school providers and 23 per cent reported undertaking “other” partnership activities with prior-to-school providers. These included joint staff development activities, and hosting of pre-schools and playgroups on school premises.

Eighty-four per cent of partnerships with prior-to-school providers were rated effective or highly effective in supporting students' transitions. Hosting orientation visits including parent events was rated as effective or highly effective in supporting students' transitions by 87 per cent of principals.

All types of schools have partnerships with primary schools. The main type of partnership activity with primary schools involves sharing professional learning for teachers (50%), often based on a Learning Community. Thirty-eight per cent of principals reported being engaged in "other" types of activities with primary schools, such as collaboration with festivals, sport and cultural events. According to survey respondents, 78 per cent of partnerships with primary schools were judged effective or highly effective in supporting student transitions and 85 per cent were perceived as effective/highly effective in supporting student learning.

Principals from all types of schools also reported partnerships with secondary schools, indicating that many partnerships with secondary schools are designed not only to support student transitions, but to support student learning in other ways. Nevertheless, the two most common types of partnership activities with secondary schools relate to student transitions: arranging visits to the partner secondary school (51%) and inviting partner secondary school staff to talk to students (41%). These two types of activities are undertaken by a significantly higher proportion of primary schools.

Thirty-three per cent of respondents said that they engaged in "other" types of partnership activities with secondary schools, not specified in the survey. Primary school principals described an extensive array of partnership activities such as: joint curricular and extra-curricular programs (eg. bands, sport, debating, public speaking, bike education, maths and science programs); extension programs for primary school students in specialised areas; peer tutoring; co-ordinated professional learning activities for staff; and collaboration in organising community and cultural events. Secondary school principals indicated partnerships with other secondary schools that emphasised sharing facilities, and sharing subject teaching, particularly in Years 11 and 12. In some responses, principals indicated that these partnerships occurred between secondary schools from the government and non-government sectors.

Overall, 70 per cent of partnerships with secondary schools were perceived as effective or highly effective in supporting student transitions, and 68 per cent were seen as effective or highly effective in supporting student learning, by survey respondents.

6 Partnerships with post-school providers, employers and the wider community

School's external partnerships include partnerships with vocational education and training (VET) providers such as TAFE institutes; higher education providers, such as universities; and employers and other members of the community. These partnerships serve a range of purposes, including supporting students' transitions between levels of education, supporting their transition into the labour market, supporting student learning and helping to raise students' expectations and aspirations regarding opportunities beyond school. The partnerships between schools and post-school providers as well as employers and the wider community are explored below.

Partnerships with post-school providers, employers and the wider community can support student transitions into further study and employment. They can also help to raise students' career aspirations, which are usually formed by Year 9 (Cardak and Ryan 2009). Students' aspirations regarding post-school education and training are influenced by their socio-economic status as well as levels of achievement (Gonski et al 2011).

6.1 Partnerships with TAFE or training providers

Partnerships with TAFE or training providers are predominantly undertaken by secondary and combined schools, as shown in Table 6.1

Table 6.1 Types of activities undertaken in partnership with one or more TAFE or training providers, by level of schooling

	All n=285	Prim. n=205	Sec. n=46	Comb'd n=20	Special n=14
	%	%	%	%	%
Offers VET Certificate courses to students while at school	14	1*	46*	45*	57*
Arranges for students from this school to receive teaching at the training providers' facilities	12	0	41*	60*	21
Arranges orientation visits to the training provider's facilities	12	2*	35*	50*	21
Invites teachers from the training provider to talk to students	10	2	26	45*	29
Arranges for teachers from the training provider to teach students at this school	9	1	15	40*	50*
Invites teachers from the training provider to talk to parents	8	3	24	20	21
Engages in other partnership activities with training providers	7	3	15	15	21

Notes: *Significantly different from the average of the other school groups at the 5% level

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

A significantly higher proportion of principals of combined schools report engagement in the first four activities listed in Table 6.1. Forty-five per cent of combined schools offer VET certificate courses to students, 60 per cent arrange for their students to receive teaching in

a training providers' facilities, 50 per cent arrange orientation visits to training facilities and 45 per cent invite teachers from training providers to talk to the students.

Secondary schools report a significant level of involvement in the first three activities listed in Table 6.1. Forty-six per cent of secondary schools offer VET certificate courses, 41 per cent arrange for students to receive teaching a training facility and 35 per cent arrange orientation visits to training facilities.

Special schools are also significantly involved in offering VET Certificate courses to students while at school. Fifty-seven per cent of Principals of Special schools indicated they were involved in this type of partnership.

Seven per cent of principals said they engaged in "other" types of partnerships with TAFE or training providers. In secondary and combined schools, these other types of partnerships included programs to engage students "at risk" of leaving school, and student traineeship programs. One school described a close relationship with a TAFE institute in providing alternative pathways for senior secondary school students.

Post school pathways for students 15-17 if appropriate. . . Students transition from school to TAFE along negotiated and accountable Pathways. TAFE staff worked with school to restructure school days and to offer . . . trial VET courses – Principal, Secondary School.

Principals of primary and special schools described a range of "other" partnerships with TAFE providers associated with provision for parents and carers of their students. These partnerships included the provision of training courses for parents in areas such as computer skills, first aid, horticulture and English language. Some schools also highlighted partnerships with TAFE institutes in the training of Aboriginal liaison officers.

Principals were asked how effective they considered their partnerships with TAFE and training providers to be in terms of two policy goals: raising students' career aspirations; and supporting student learning.

As shown in Table 6.2, 71 per cent of principals considered partnership activities with TAFE or training providers to be effective or highly effective in raising students' career aspirations and 70 per cent of principals said that these partnerships were effective or highly effective in supporting student learning. The most common type of partnership – offering VET certificate courses to students while at school was considered effective in supporting student learning by 88 per cent of principals.

Table 6.2 Effectiveness of activities undertaken in partnership with one or more TAFE or training providers

	n=	%	Principals' rating (%)	
			Effective/Highly Effective	Too early to tell
<i>In raising students' career aspirations:</i>				
1 Offers VET Certificate courses to students while at school	41	14	83	2
2 Arranges for students from this school to receive teaching at the training providers' facilities	35	12	74	3
3 Arranges orientation visits to the training provider's facilities	33	12	70	0
4 Invites teachers from the training provider to talk to students	29	10	76	0
5 Arranges for teachers from the training provider to teach students at this school	25	9	72	0
6 Invites teachers from the training provider to talk to parents	24	8	58	8
7 Engages in other partnership activities with training providers	19	7	47	5
All	71	25	71	2
<i>In supporting student learning:</i>				
1 Offers VET Certificate courses to students while at school	41	14	88	2
2 Arranges for students from this school to receive teaching at the training providers' facilities	35	12	76	0
3 Arranges orientation visits to the training provider's facilities	33	12	58	0
4 Invites teachers from the training provider to talk to students	29	10	71	0
5 Arranges for teachers from the training provider to teach students at this school	25	9	76	0
6 Invites teachers from the training provider to talk to parents	24	8	56	8
7 Engages in other partnership activities with training providers	19	7	50	5
All	71	25	70	2

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

6.3 Partnerships with universities

Students from low socio-economic backgrounds are under-represented in Australian higher education. The proportion of higher education students from the bottom socio-economic quartile (i.e. the bottom 25%) has remained, since 1989, at 15 per cent (Bradley et al. 2008: 12). In 2007, Australian men with a university-educated father were 2.8 times more likely to have graduated from university than other men while Australian women with a university-educated father were 3.7 times more likely to have graduated than other women (Chesters and Watson, 2012).

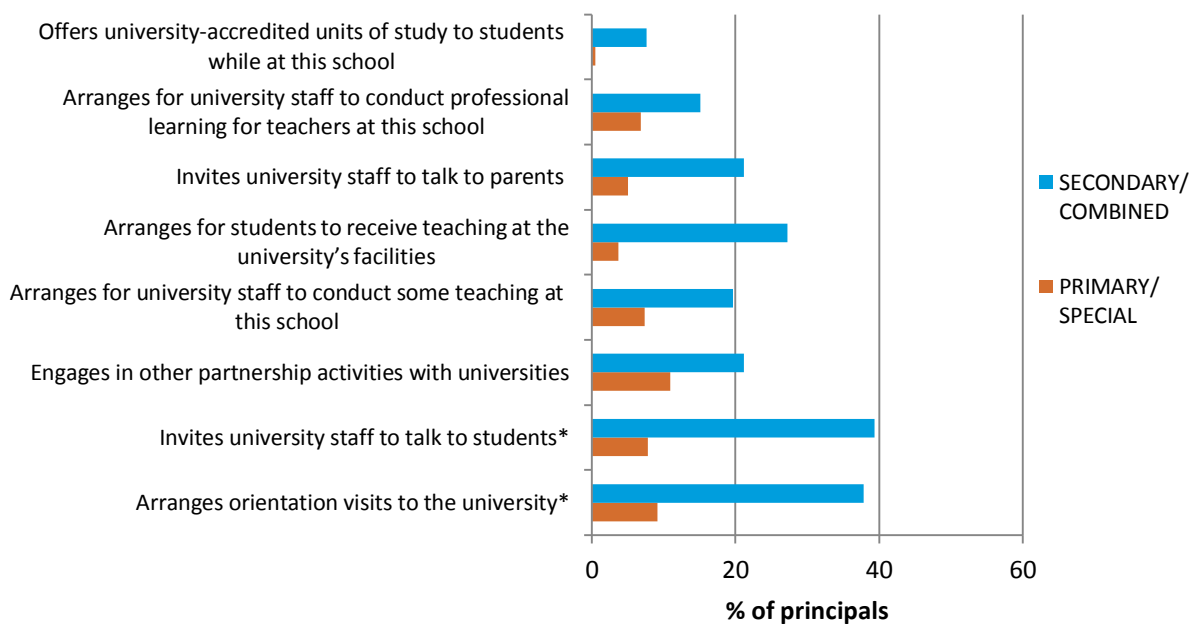
University partnerships are supported by the Low SES Schools National Partnerships with the aim of raising student transition rates to university through a range of programs and activities. These include building supportive relationships with university students and staff, tutoring, mentoring programs and parental involvement (NSW Department of Education and Communities 2011b: 21).

There are many ways in which universities can partner with schools in supporting student transitions to help break the patterns of socio-economic disadvantage. For students from

low SES school communities with low levels of transition to higher education, a managed transition in partnership with a university is a vital ingredient for a successful transition to higher education. Factors which can aid the construction of ‘solid bridges’ enabling young people from low income backgrounds to make the transition from school into higher learning include early and ongoing advisement, greater higher education affordability and supports that continue well into their enrolment (Dean and Levine 2007: 24).

The most common types of school-university partnership activities reported by principals are in the areas of orientation visits to the university (16%) and inviting university staff to talk to students (15%). The least common types of partnerships are offering university-accredited units of study at the school (2%). Nine per cent of principals reported that their schools arrange for university staff to conduct professional learning for teachers, invite university staff to talk to parents and arrange for students to receive teaching at the university’s facilities. Partnership activities with universities were reported by principals of all types of schools but were more common in secondary and combined schools than in primary and special schools, as shown in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1 Types of activities undertaken in partnership with one or more universities, by level of schooling



Notes: *Significantly different responses between the identified two groups at the 5% level

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

Both primary and special schools and secondary and combined schools participate in school-university partnerships. However in regard to the two most common types of school-university partnerships activities – arranging orientation visits with the university and inviting university staff to talk to students– a higher proportion of principals of secondary and combined schools (38 – 39%) report participating in these two types of activities than principals of primary and special schools (8 – 9%) as shown in Figure 6.1.

Ten per cent of school principals said they were involved in other types of partnership activities with universities. In secondary and combined schools, these activities included mentoring and leadership programs for students, as well as programs focusing on students' career aspirations. A few secondary schools mentioned research partnerships and one principal mentioned using Low SES NP funding to support research.

(University) conducts annual focus groups for parents on school satisfaction. Data has been critical in fine tuning behaviour, attendance and learning programs. Will also work with students and staff this term. Girls and Maths qualitative and quantitative research is being conducted by the same team across several schools; largely funded from Low SES NP by this school – Principal, Secondary School

Among primary schools and special schools, the main other types of partnerships with universities appeared to be participating in research projects.

Table 6.3 Effectiveness of activities undertaken in partnership with one or more universities

	Schools		Principals' rating (%)	
	n=	%	Effective/Highly Effective	Too early to tell
<i>In raising students' career aspirations:</i>				
1 Arranges orientation visits to the university	45	16	76	7
2 Invites university staff to talk to students	43	15	67	5
3 Engages in other partnership activities with universities	38	13	76	13
4 Arranges for university staff to conduct some teaching at this school	29	10	69	10
5 Arranges for students to receive teaching at the university's facilities	26	9	69	4
6 Invites university staff to talk to parents	25	9	40	12
7 Arranges for university staff to conduct professional learning for teachers at this school	25	9	68	0
8 Offers university-accredited units of study to students while at this school	6	2	67	0
All	97	34	57	6
<i>In supporting student learning:</i>				
1 Arranges orientation visits to the university	45	16	76	7
2 Invites university staff to talk to students	43	15	67	5
3 Engages in other partnership activities with universities	38	13	76	13
4 Arranges for university staff to conduct some teaching at this school	29	10	69	10
5 Arranges for students to receive teaching at the university's facilities	26	9	69	4
6 Invites university staff to talk to parents	25	9	40	12
7 Arranges for university staff to conduct professional learning for teachers at this school	25	9	68	0
All	97	34	69	8

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

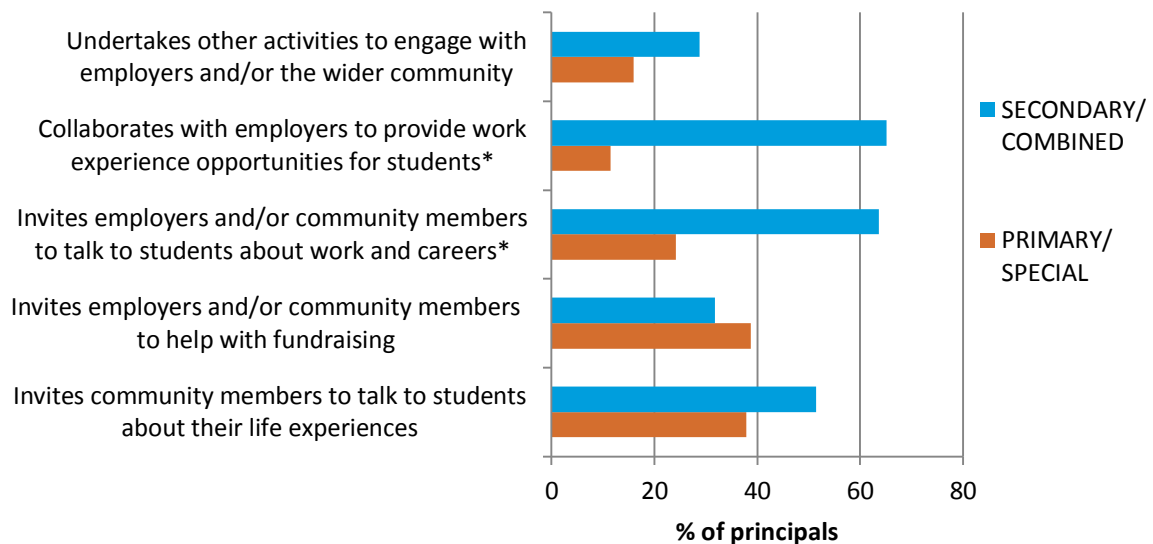
Table 6.3 indicates survey responses when Principals were asked about the effectiveness of their partnership activities with universities in terms of: raising students' career aspirations; and supporting student learning.

As shown in Table 6.3, 57 per cent of principals undertaking partnership activities with universities consider them to be effective or highly effective in raising students' career aspirations and 69 per cent said they were effective/ highly effective in supporting student learning.

6.4 Partnerships with employers

There are benefits to secondary schools in developing external partnerships with employers to promote student vocational and industry knowledge (Lonsdale 2010: 10). Through these partnerships, employers are able to provide opportunities for students to experience the specifics of particular trades and professions without leaving secondary school. As there are multiple pathways between school and employment, providing students with an insight into the workings of the labour market and the importance of completing Year 12 may assist in raising their aspirations as well as transitioning to work or further study beyond school.

Figure 6.2 Types of activities undertaken to engage employers and the wider community, by level of schooling



Notes: *significantly different responses between the identified two groups at the 5% level

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

Principals from all school types reported participating in activities with employers and the wider community, with 41 per cent of principals indicating that they invited community members to talk to students about their life experiences. Thirty-seven per cent of principals said they invited employers and community members to assist with fundraising and 33 per cent invited employers and community members to talk to students about work and careers. Twenty-four per cent collaborated with employers to provide work

experience opportunities for students and 19 per cent undertook other activities to engage with employers and or the wider community. A significantly higher proportion of principals of secondary and combined schools reported undertaking work-related activities with employers and community members, than principals of primary and special schools. As shown in Figure 6.2, 65 per cent of secondary and combined school principals indicated they collaborated with employers to provide work experience opportunities for students, and 64 per cent invited employers and/or community members to talk to students about work and careers.

The “other” types of activities that primary and special school principals indicated they undertook in partnership with employers and/or the wider community focused on participation in community events and festivals, kitchen gardens, scientists in schools programs, financial literacy programs and the use of council facilities for swimming and sport. Among secondary and combined schools, the focus of other types of partnerships with employers and community was primarily on mentoring and work placement activities with employer organisations and local businesses.

Table 6.4 Effectiveness of partnership activities with employers and the wider community

	n=	%	Principals' rating (%)	
			Effective/Highly Effective	Too early to tell
<i>In building engagement with employers and community:</i>				
1 Invites community members to talk to students about their life experiences	117	41	73	2
2 Invites employers and/or community members to help with fundraising	106	37	66	34
3 Invites employers and/or community members to talk to students about work and careers	95	33	73	2
4 Collaborates with employers to provide work experience opportunities for students	68	24	84	16
5 Undertakes other activities to engage with employers and/or the wider community	54	19	80	6
All	202	71	74	12
<i>In supporting student learning:</i>				
1 Invites community members to talk to students about their life experiences	117	41	74	3
2 Invites employers and/or community members to help with fundraising	106	37	56	3
3 Invites employers and/or community members to talk to students about work and careers	95	33	70	3
4 Collaborates with employers to provide work experience opportunities for students	68	24	85	0
5 Undertakes other activities to engage with employers and/or the wider community	54	19	76	9
All	202	71	71	3

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

As shown in Table 6.4, Principals were asked to comment on the effectiveness of these partnership activities in terms of building engagement with employers and the wider community, and supporting student learning.

Seventy-four per cent of principals said that the activities were effective or highly effective in building engagement with employers and the wider community. Seventy-one per cent of principals said the partnerships were effective or highly effective in supporting student learning. A high proportion of principals (34%) said that it was too early to tell if inviting employers and community members to help with fundraising was effective in building engagement.

Summary

School's external partnerships with post-school providers and institutions include partnerships with vocational education and training (VET) providers such as TAFE institutes; higher education providers, such as universities; and employers and other members of the community. These partnerships aim to support students' transitions between levels of education, support students' transition into the labour market, support student learning and help to raise students' expectations and aspirations regarding opportunities beyond school.

Principals of all types of schools indicated participation in partnerships with TAFE institutes and other training providers, however secondary, combined and special schools report significantly higher rates of engagement with TAFE and training providers than primary schools. The most common activity undertaken in partnership with a VET provider is offering VET Certificate courses to students while at school. Over 40 per cent of secondary, combined and special schools participate in this type of activity, as well the associated activity of arranging for students to receive teaching at the training providers' facilities. Principals of combined schools (40%) and special schools (50%) are more likely to invite teachers from the training provider to teach students at their school, than principals of secondary schools (15%).

In all, 71 per cent of principals considered partnership activities with TAFE or training providers to be effective or highly effective in raising students' career aspirations and 70 per cent of principals said that these partnerships were effective or highly effective in supporting student learning. The most common type of partnership – offering VET certificate courses to students while at school was considered effective in supporting student learning by 88 per cent of principals.

The two most common types of school-university partnerships activities are arranging orientation visits with the university (16%) and inviting university staff to talk to students (15%). While school-university partnership activities were reported by principals of all types of schools, a higher proportion (38-39%) of principals of secondary and combined schools reported participating in these two types of activities than principals of primary and special schools (less than 10%).

Ten per cent of school principals said they were involved in other types of partnership activities with universities, such as mentoring and leadership programs for students, as well as programs focusing on students' career aspirations. School principals also mentioned participating in university research projects as a form of school-university partnership.

Overall, 57 per cent of principals undertaking partnership activities with universities consider them to be effective or highly effective in raising students' career aspirations and 69 per cent said they were effective/ highly effective in supporting student learning.

Principals from all types of school reported participating in activities with employers and the wider community, with 41 per cent indicating that they invited community members to talk to students about their life experiences.

Overall, 74 per cent of principals said that the activities were effective or highly effective in building engagement with employers and the wider community. Seventy-one per cent of principals said the partnerships were effective or highly effective in supporting student learning. A high proportion of principals (34%) said that it was too early to tell if inviting employers and community members to help with fundraising was effective in building engagement.

Principals of secondary and combined schools were more likely to report undertaking work-related activities with employers and community members, than principals of primary and special schools. Sixty-five per cent of secondary and combined school principals indicated they collaborated with employers to provide work experience opportunities for students, and 64 per cent invited employers and/or community members to talk to students about work and careers. Principals of secondary and combined schools also described other types of mentoring and work placement activities with employer organisations and local businesses.

Nineteen per cent of principals engaged in "other" types of activities in partnership with employers and/or the wider community, including participation in community events and festivals, kitchen gardens, scientists in schools programs, financial literacy programs and the use of council facilities for swimming and sport.

7 Summary

A summary of principals' perceptions of the effectiveness of each broad category of school external partnerships is provided in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Effectiveness of partnerships in supporting policy goals

	All schools n=285	Building engagement	Supporting student learning	Supporting students' transitions	Raising students' career aspirations
Partnerships with:	%	%	%	%	%
Parents and carers	96	69	-	-	-
ATSI community	83	63	64	-	-
Employers & wider community	71	74	71	-	-
Primary schools	68	-	85	78	-
Secondary schools	66	-	68	70	-
ESL parents & communities	48	69	69	-	-
Prior-to-school providers	45	-	59	84	-
Universities	34	-	69	-	57
TAFE & other training providers	25	-	69	-	71

Notes: "-" indicates that principals were not asked about the effectiveness of the partnership in terms of this policy goal. "%" indicates proportion of principals indicating that each category of partnership was "effective" or "highly effective in terms of the stated policy goal"

Source: Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

Key findings to highlight from this study are:

- The Low SES NP has supported the expansion of external partnerships in Low SES NP schools. A higher proportion of schools is now engaged in partnerships than prior to the Low SES NP. The proportion of schools undertaking partnership activities with ATSI communities has increased from 68 per cent to 83 per cent since the Low SES NP
- Partnerships with parents and carers are the most common type of partnership activity undertaken by 96 per cent of Low SES NP schools. These activities are rated effective or highly effective in building parent and carer engagement by 69 per cent of the principals who implement them. The activity that appears to engage the highest proportion of parents and carers is regular parent/teacher interviews about students' progress, which 80 per cent of principals rate as effective or highly effective.
- In schools where a high proportion (25%+) of students have LBOTE, a significantly lower proportion of principals (61%) report that the majority of parents and carers have the confidence to engage with school staff.
- Dedicating specific staff and resources to a community engagement role is the most common strategy used by schools to engage with the ATSI community and to

engage with ESL parents and communities. Qualitative responses from principals emphasised the role of dedicated community liaison officers in facilitating engagement. Over two-thirds of principals rated the strategy as effective or highly effective in supporting student learning.

- Partnerships between schools both within and across levels and sectors are extensive and diverse. They serve a range of purposes, and appear to play an important role in supporting student learning as well as supporting professional learning among teaching staff.

8 Future Directions

This is the third in a series of 13 reports, to be conducted over five years to explore the impact of the Low SES NP on School External Partnerships in New South Wales. Four of the 13 reports are qualitative case studies of specific categories of partnerships in Low SES Schools. To date, case studies have been completed on partnerships with parents and carers (report no. 2) and school-university partnerships (report no. 4). The next report to be drafted for this evaluation will analyse data collected from teachers in a recent survey of Low SES NP schools (report no. 5).

Given the detail, complexity and scope of the partnership activities in which schools are engaged, it remains a challenge to draw firm conclusions about the impact of particular types of partnerships. However the collection of qualitative as well as quantitative data over five years will contribute to a wealth of evidence for analysis and synthesis as the evaluation progresses. As school external partnerships can be expected to have long-term, rather than short-term effects, data collected over the next few years will be invaluable in examining the long-term impact of the Low SES NP initiatives. The information collected in this first survey of school principals provides a ‘baseline’ dataset that will assist in monitoring changes over time.

This report provides insights into the types of external partnership activities in which Low SES NP schools are engaged for the purpose of improving student learning outcomes. It also reveals some gaps in our knowledge of “other” partnership activities which schools are undertaking that could be explored in future surveys.

Future reports could examine in more detail the relationships between the geographical context of the school and its external partnerships. These factors may have an impact on schools’ engagement in, and the effectiveness of, its external partnerships.

This collection of data for analysis in this report is occurring in parallel with a range of other activities which are also evaluating the impact of the Low SES NP activities, such as the Cross-Sectoral Impact Survey (CSIS). The authors of this report have endeavoured to complement rather than duplicate the findings of other evaluation activities, to add to the growing body of knowledge about external partnerships in Low SES NP schools.

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Appendix A The survey of school principals

In this section, we provide an overview of the survey instrument and its administration and discuss the representativeness of the schools which participated in the survey.

A.1 Data collection

The questionnaire was designed to collect data for two projects: the evaluation of school external partnerships; and the evaluation of school staffing, management and accountability initiatives. Rather than burden schools with two separate questionnaires, CRES and the Education Institute developed a joint questionnaire, for reasons outlined in the main body of the report. The sections of the questionnaire relevant to the School External Partnerships Evaluation are provided in Appendix B. The questionnaire collected information from principals about the nature of the programs being run at their school, the relationship of those programs to the Low SES NP, as well as whether those programs preceded the Low SES NP.

The questionnaire was administered on-line. Principals were advised by sector representatives about the survey and to expect to be contacted. The researchers sent an email to principals on 5 September 2012 requesting their participation and providing a URL for the questionnaire. Reminders were sent on 20 September 2012 and 9 October 2012. This report is based on responses received by 19 October 2012.

The email address lists were provided by sector representatives. The addresses were in the name of the principal for the government and independent sectors and generic for the Catholic sector. Any undeliverable emails were investigated, addresses corrected and emails re-sent.

As far as could be ascertained, questionnaires were completed by school principals. In a few instances the respondents were relieving principals, but these appeared to be replacements from within the school and to be knowledgeable about the school's involvement in the Low SES NP.

Table A.1 Responses to the Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals

	% of population	N
Schools in the Low SES NP	---	636
School contacted (<i>target population</i>)	100%	556
All responses	64.0%	356
Responses with valid data on external partnerships	51.3%	285

As shown in Table A.1, there were 636 schools in the Low SES NP—one of these schools is no longer participating in the partnership. Principals from 556 schools were approached as part of the survey—the remaining 80 schools were involved in the survey for an evaluation of another NP at the time of the survey and were, therefore, not included. Although the principals from 356 schools participated in the survey, only 285 had valid answers on the

variables relating to Reform Area 6: School External Partnerships. In other words, the principals from 285 of the 636 schools involved in the Low SES NP completed the 'External Partnerships' section of the on-line questionnaire. These schools are referred to as 'respondent schools' throughout this report.

A.2 Characteristics of respondent schools

To assess the representativeness of the respondent schools, we compare the characteristics of the schools involved in Low SES NP and the respondent schools. The distribution of respondent schools by region is similar to that of all schools participating in the Low SES NP. As shown in Table A.2, the proportion of respondent schools located in each region is similar to the proportion of all Low SES NP schools located in each region. For example, 20 per cent of the 637 schools involved in the Low SES NP are located in the South Western Sydney region as are 20 per cent of the respondent schools.

Table A.2 Low SES NP schools and respondent schools by location

Region/Diocese	Low SES NP schools		Respondent schools	
	n=	%	n=	%
Hunter/Central Coast	47	7	20	7
Illawarra and South East	43	7	14	5
New England	64	10	25	9
North Coast	102	16	42	15
Riverina	47	7	20	7
South Western Sydney	129	20	57	20
Sydney	7	1	4	1
Western NSW	101	16	47	16
Western Sydney	35	5	17	6
Diocese of Armidale	3	0	1	0.4
Diocese of Bathurst	4	1	4	1
Diocese of Broken Bay	1	0
Diocese of Canberra and Goulbourn	4	1	2	1
Diocese of Lismore	6	1	3	1
Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle	7	1	3	1
Diocese of Parramatta	4	1	4	1
Diocese of Sydney	19	3	15	5
Diocese of Wagga Wagga	5	1	5	2
Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes	6	1	1	0.4
Diocese of Wollongong	3	0	2	1
Total	637	100	285	100

Note: n= refers to the number of schools in each region. Proportions are rounded to the nearest whole number

Source: Low SES NP data supplied by DEC

Respondent schools are also broadly representative of the schools involved in the Low SES NP in regards to level of school. As shown in Table A.3, primary schools are slightly over-represented: 72 per cent of respondents schools compared to 68 per cent of all Low SES

NP schools; and combined schools are slightly under-represented: 7 per cent of respondents schools compared to 9 per cent of all Low SES NP schools.

Table A.3 Low SES NP schools and respondent schools by school category

School category	Low SES NP schools		Respondent schools	
	n=	%	n=	%
Primary	436	68	205	72
Secondary	111	17	46	16
Combined	60	9	20	7
Special	30	5	14	5
Total	637	100	285	100

Note: n= refers to the number of schools categorised in each school category. Proportions are rounded to the nearest whole number

Source: Low SES NP schools data supplied by DEC

Funding for the Low SES NP was rolled out over a period of four years beginning in 2009. Consequently, Low SES NP schools are divided into four cohorts: 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012. As shown in Table A.4, the proportions of Low SES NP schools and respondent schools in each of the four funding cohorts are similar with the proportions of primary schools differing by just 1 per cent for the 2009 cohort and 2012 cohort and are the same for the 2011 cohort. The differences are larger in secondary school cohorts but still indicate that respondent schools are broadly representative of all Low SES NP schools on this indicator. Secondary schools in the 2010 cohort are under-represented in respondent schools and secondary schools in the 2011 cohort are over-represented.

Table A.4 Low SES NP schools and respondent schools by funding cohort

	2009		2010		2011		2012	
	Low SES NP schools n=138 %	Respondent schools n=59 %	LOW SES NP schools n=193 %	Respondent schools n=84 %	LOW SES NP schools n=191 %	Respondent schools n=90 %	LOW SES NP schools n=115 %	Respondent schools n=52 %
Primary	20	21	31	30	34	34	15	16
Secondary	21	17	33	26	25	35	21	22
Combined	42	30	25	35	7	5	27	30
Special	10	14	27	29	30	29	33	29

Note: n= refers to the number of schools in each funding cohort. Proportions are rounded to the nearest whole number

Source: data supplied by DEC

We also compared respondent schools with Low SES NP schools on a key measure of educational advantage/disadvantage: the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA). ICSEA is a scale that represents levels of educational advantage averaged across all students in a particular school. Although ICSEA does not describe or reflect the wealth of parents/carers of students in a particular school or the wealth or resources of that school, it does provide an indication of the average level of educational

disadvantage of students in individual schools. The ICSEA scale ranges from 500 (representing schools with students from extremely disadvantaged backgrounds) and 1300 (representing schools with students from very advantaged backgrounds). For schools engaging in the Low SES NP, the ICSEA mean value of 904.19 is almost one standard deviation (100) below the mean (1000) across all schools in the state. Another measure of the level of educational advantage/ disadvantage is the proportion of students located in the lowest ICSEA quartile. Schools with higher proportions of students in the lowest quartile of the ICSEA have higher concentrations of the most educationally disadvantaged students than schools in the other quartiles.

As shown in Table A.5, the ICSEA mean for respondent primary schools was slightly higher than the ICSEA mean for all Low SES NP primary schools (915 compared to 905). The ICSEA mean for respondent secondary schools and combined schools were also slightly higher than the ICSEA mean for all Low SES NP secondary and combined schools. On the other hand, the ICSEA mean for the Special schools which participated in the survey is slightly lower than the ICSEA mean for all Low SES NP special schools (850 compared to 857).

Using another measure of educational disadvantage – the proportion of students located in the lowest ICSEA quartile (bottom 25%) – respondent primary schools had a similar proportion of educationally disadvantaged students compared to all Partnership primary schools (48% compared to 47%). Respondent secondary schools, combined schools and special schools had smaller proportions of students located in the lowest ICSEA quartile compared to all Low SES NP secondary schools, combined schools and special schools.

Table A.5 Low SES NP schools and respondent schools by ICSEA measures

School category	ICSEA mean		Average % of students in ICSEA 1	
	Low SES NP schools	Respondent schools	Low SES NP schools	Respondent schools
	mean	mean	%	%
Primary	905	915	47	48
Secondary	915	918	49	44
Combined	892	915	55	42
Special	857	850	33	24

Source: data collated from *MySchool* website by The Education Institute

Other characteristics of students were also of interest, so we compared the proportions of Aboriginal students and Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE) students in the Low SES NP schools and the respondent schools. Although there is some debate about the validity of the LBOTE measure, with some arguing that not all LBOTE students are disadvantaged and that English as a Second Language (ESL) is a better indicator of disadvantage (Gonski et al 2011), the *MySchool* website reports the LBOTE proportion rather than the ESL proportion. As shown in Table A.6, the proportions of Aboriginal students and LBOTE students in the two groups of schools differ by level of schooling. On average, 19 per cent of the student populations of Low SES NP primary schools were Aboriginal whereas, on average, 17 per cent of the student populations of respondent primary schools were Aboriginal. Similar differences were reported in secondary schools

and combined schools. However, this pattern was reversed in special schools, where Aboriginal students accounted for 39 per cent of students in Low SES NP special schools and 46 per cent of students in respondent special schools.

Although the proportions of students from LBOTE backgrounds were similar for Low SES NP schools and respondent primary schools, respondent secondary schools had higher, on average, concentrations of LBOTE students than all Low SES NP secondary schools (39% compared to 31%). The average proportion of LBOTE students in respondent combined schools was double that of the average for all LOW SES NP combined schools: 30 per cent compared to 16 per cent.

Table A.6 Low SES NP schools and respondent schools by proportions of minority students

School Category	Average % Aboriginal students		Average % LBOTE students	
	LOW SES NP schools	Respondent schools	LOW SES NP schools	Respondent schools
	%	%	%	%
Primary	19	17	21	22
Secondary	13	10	31	39
Combined	28	26	16	30
Special	39	46	11	9

Source: data collated from *MySchool* website by The Education Institute

Summary

The data used for this report were derived from the Low SES National Partnerships Survey for Principals. Based on a range of indicators including the regional distribution, the level of school, year that the Low SES NP funding was allocated, levels of educational advantage/disadvantage, and characteristics of the student populations, we found that although less than half of the Low SES NP schools participated in the survey, those that did were broadly representative of all Low SES NP schools. However one notable variation was the overrepresentation of secondary and combined schools with a higher average proportion of LBOTE students in the survey.

Appendix B Survey questions relevant to this report

The survey instrument included multiple questions in a matrix format to collect information on specific types of external partnerships including whether the partnerships existed prior to the Low SES NP funding; whether the partnerships were funded by the Low SES NP and perceptions of the effectiveness of each partnership.

Q17 Please indicate if this school undertakes any of the following activities to engage with parents/carers:

- 17a Provides English language and/or literacy classes for parents/carers
- 17b Provides sessions for parents/carers on how to support student learning at home
- 17c Invites parents/carers to help out in the classroom
- 17d Invites parents/carers to talk to students about their culture, work or life experiences
- 17e Invites parents/carers to help out with excursions, carnivals, canteen duty, fundraising etc.
- 17f Holds regular parent/teacher interviews about students' progress
- 17g Has a documented strategy to lift parents'/carers' expectations of their children's education
- 17h Provides extended transition to school programs for potential future cohorts of students
- 17i Provides orientation activities for cohorts of students in the year prior to entry
- 17j Dedicates resources/staff to the parent/carer and community engagement role
- 17k Has a documented strategy to improve communication with parents/carers
- 17l Translates newsletters into community languages
- 17m Undertakes other activities to engage with parents/carers (Please specify)

Q18 Thinking of all the ways in which parents and carers can engage with this school, roughly what proportion of this school's students have parents or carers who participate in the following activities?

- 18a Parent/teacher interviews
- 18b Canteen duty and administrative roles (eg, library duty)
- 18c Working bees
- 18d Excursions and camps
- 18e Learning support roles (eg. Reading)
- 18f Giving presentations to students about their culture, work or life experiences
- 18g Fundraising
- 18h School governance
- 18i Parent organisations
- 18j Festivals, fetes and cultural events
- 18k Other activities that involve parent or carer participation (Please specify)

Q20 Generally speaking, to roughly what proportion of the students in this school do the following statements apply:

- 20d Parents/carers expect their child to complete Year 12
- 20e Parents/carers expect their child to do further study or training [such as university or TAFE] after they complete school.

Q24 Please indicate If this school undertakes any of the following activities to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander(ATSI)parents and/or community:

- 24a Invites ATSI community members to provide support in classrooms
- 24b Invites ATSI community members to speak to students about their culture, work or life experiences
- 24c Has a documented strategy to engage the ATSI community
- 24d Dedicates resources/staff to engage with the ATSI community
- 24e Ensures that I or other members of the school executive attend ATSI community meetings to share information about school activities
- 24f Undertakes other activities to engage with the ATSI community (Please specify)

Q28 Please indicate if this school undertakes any of the following activities to engage with parents and communities that speak English as a second language:

- 28a Invites ESL parents or community members to provide support in classrooms
- 28b Invites ESL parents or community members to speak to students about their culture, work and life experiences
- 28c Has a documented strategy to engage ESL parents and communities
- 28d Dedicates specific resources/staff to engage with ESL parents and communities
- 28e Ensures that I or members of the school executive regularly attend ESL community meetings to share information about school activities
- 28f Undertakes other activities to engage with ESL parents and communities (Please specify)

Q31 Please indicate if this school undertakes any of the following activities to engage with employers and the wider community:

- 31a Invites community members to talk to students about their life experiences
- 31b Invites employers and/or community members to talk to students about work and careers
- 31c Invites employers and/or community members to help with fundraising
- 31d Collaborates with employers to provide work experience opportunities for students
- 31e Undertakes other activities to engage with employers and/or the wider community (Please specify)

Q34 From your experience of this school's partnership with one or more TAFE or training providers, please indicate if this involves any of the following activities:

- 34a Arranges orientation visits to the training provider's facilities
- 34b Arranges for students from this school to receive teaching at the training providers' facilities
- 34c Arranges for teachers from the training provider to teach students at this school

- 34d Invites teachers from the training provider to talk to students
- 34e Invites teachers from the training provider to talk to parents
- 34f Offers VET Certificate courses to students while at school
- 34g Engages in other partnership activities with training providers (Please specify)

Q36 From your experience of this school's partnership with one or more universities, please indicate if this involves any of the following activities:

- 36a Arranges orientation visits to the university
- 36b Arranges for students to receive teaching at the university's facilities
- 36c Arranges for university staff to conduct some teaching at this school
- 36d Arranges for university staff to conduct professional learning for teachers at this school
- 36e Invites university staff to talk to students
- 36f Invites university staff to talk to parents
- 36g Offers university-accredited units of study to students while at this school
- 36h Engages in other partnership activities with universities (Please specify)

Q38 From your experience of this school's partnership with one or more secondary schools, please indicate if this involves any of the following activities:

- 38a Arranges student visits to a partner school
- 38b Arranges for partner school staff to teach at this school
- 38c Invites partner school staff to talk to students
- 38d Invites partner school staff to talk to parents of students
- 38e Engages in other partnership activities with secondary schools (Please specify)

Q40 From your experience of this school's partnership with one or more primary schools, please indicate if this involves any of the following activities:

- 40a Provides some teaching in a partner school
- 40b Shares professional learning for teachers with a partner school
- 40c Engages in other partnership activities with primary schools (Please specify)

Q42 From your experience of this school's partnership with one or more preschools, early childhood providers or play groups, please indicate if this involves any of the following activities:

- 42a Hosts orientation visits including parent events
- 42b Supports sharing of staff, with staff from this school conducting some teaching at preschools, early childhood providers or playgroups
- 42c Offers literacy learning to preschool students where appropriate
- 42d Engages in other partnership activities with preschools, early childhood providers or play groups (Please specify)

Q44 Please indicate if your school engages in partnership activities with other education and training providers (e.g., pre-schools, other schools, early childhood providers, TAFEs, RTOs or universities):

Q45 Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement:

Q45a I feel supported by the parents of students at this school

Q45b I feel connected to the broader community that this school is part of

Q45c I feel supported professionally at this school

Q45d There is a school wide student behaviour policy that is understood by all members of the school community and consistently applied

Q45e Classroom teachers are effective in identifying and managing students with challenging behaviours

Q45f Negotiating and planning a phased program of support for students with challenging behaviours is a feature of this school

Q45g Student behaviour management has been a key focus of this school in the implementation of the Low SES NP initiatives.

Appendix C
partnerships

Primary school and secondary school

