

SCHOOL POLICY AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT UNIT
LEARNING AND BUSINESS SYSTEMS DIRECTORATE

RIVERINA ACCESS PARTNERSHIP **EVALUATION REPORT**



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The Program Evaluation Reference Group (PERG) members:

Cheryl Ballantyne, Director, Policy Planning and Reporting (2015)

Sandi Simpkins, Director, School Policy & Information Management (2016)

Dr Susan Harriman, Leader, Quality Assurance (2015); Leader, IMS (2016)

Eva Mazurski, Senior Evaluator, Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

Shelly Riddell, Northern Borders Senior Access Coordinator

Chris Robertson, Principal, Aurora College

Mike Tom, Leader, Rural & Distance Education

Ex-officio members

David Foley, Distance Education Technology Infrastructure Advisor

Kym Knight, Distance Education Advisor, Rural & Distance Education (Team 1)

Dr Ann Daly, R/Evaluation Practice Coordinator, School Policy & Information Management (2015-16)

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Ardlethan Central School

Hillston Central School

Ariah Park Central School

Lockhart Central School

Barellan Central School

Oaklands Central School

Evaluation team

Dr Susan Harriman Evaluation Practice Coordinator, School Policy & Information Management (2016)

Dr Ann Daly R/Evaluation Practice Coordinator, School Policy & Information Management

Meg Dione-Rodgers Evaluation Advisor, School Policy & Information Management

Perry Wong Evaluation Advisor, School Policy & Information Management

Kym Knight Distance Education Advisor, Rural & Distance Education (Team 1)

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Executive summary

The Rural and Distance Education Unit administer the Access Program, which provides a shared curriculum for senior secondary students across five clusters of schools in NSW. Each school in an Access cluster has video conferencing studios known as ‘link rooms’ and a range of collaborative equipment specifically designated for Access purposes. The sharing of curriculum delivery enables rural students to complete their secondary education at their local school without having to live away from home.

The Riverina Access Partnership (RAP) has been identified as providing effective Access Program services to its community of schools. The RAP cluster comprises four core schools and two partner schools:

Core schools	Partner schools
Ardlethan Central School – hub school for RAP	Lockhart Central School
Ariah Park Central School	Oaklands Central School
Barellan Central School	
Hillston Central School	

The evaluation of RAP provides insight into effective strategies and practices developed through the partnership that may enhance the ongoing operation of the Access Program as a whole.

Quantitative and qualitative data obtained throughout the course of the evaluation was analysed and findings have been drawn together to address each of the Terms of Reference. The charts and graphs used throughout this report present survey responses. Quotes are drawn from both survey comments and interviews with participants and provide valuable insights into the experiences of students, teachers and principals across the schools of the partnership.

Key findings

The key findings have been directly linked to the Terms of Reference for the evaluation. They highlight features that have assisted the partnership and provide recommendations for schools and cluster teams throughout the Access Program.

Subject availability (ToR 1)

Participants in RAP agreed that the partnership offers a greater range of subjects to students than can be achieved at each school individually, or at some nearby high schools. In 2016, the partnership delivered 20 preliminary (Year 11) and 21 HSC (Year 12) subjects.

Key factors in enabling as broad a range of subject offerings as possible, include:

- offering subjects at range of levels, including VET and non-ATAR courses
- initiating planning well in advance of subject selection, enabling students’ subject selection to determine the timetable
- encouraging students to identify goals and interests, and engage with sample courses at Year 10 study days
- prioritising joint timetabling across the partnership.

Collaboration between teachers across the cluster and ongoing practice-based professional learning has increased the capacity of teachers to deliver the range of Stage 6 courses.

Impacts for students and school communities (ToR 2)

The broad range of subjects offered through RAP enables students to continue their senior studies without having to move away from the school and community. Benefits flow to teachers, who value the opportunity to teach Stage 6 subjects and to the wider community. Families are more likely to stay in the area, maintaining support for businesses and other schools.

Learning through the Access Program provides added benefits, with students and teachers reporting evidence of:

- increased depth of study and personalisation due to small class groups
- greater levels of support for students, provided through the combination of (expert) coordinating teachers and local co-teachers
- enhanced independent learning, ICT skills, social skills and team work, equipping students well for future study and the workplace.

Use of the *Moodle* Learning Management System (LMS) has increased the methods of sharing learning materials and communicating with students. However, further efforts are needed to improve communication between teachers and students to provide specific student support and opportunities for one-on-one questions and responses.

Establishing and maintaining the networks (ToR 3)

Drawing from the full range of evidence gathered in the evaluation, the following factors and strategies are suggested as underpinning the effective operation of the partnership:

Clear structures, role and processes

Clearly defined roles and responsibilities formalise the partnership and underpin relationships between all participants, and especially between core and partner schools:

- at management level: Principal steering group; Management team
- across the cluster: Head Teacher Access (HT Access); RAP School Administrative Officer
- within each school, across courses: In-school Access Coordinators (ISACs)
- for each course: coordinating teachers and co-teachers.

The RAP Staff Induction Booklet documents responsibilities, lines of communication and expectations for each role. The evaluation recommends specific induction courses for coordinators and co-teachers, especially at the beginning of each year and with new teachers.

Building relationships and an identity for the partnership as a whole

Creation of a shared identity for the partnership builds individual relationships and a sense of community across schools, each of which enhances online interactions.

- Face-to-face meetings and activities are organised to allow students to get to know each other and their teachers, and build relationships as a group.
- Getting together in one place makes connections tangible.
- For students, activities include: Year 10 Open Day, induction camps at the beginning of Stage 6, regular study days, RAP combined sporting teams and social activities.
- For teachers: combined school development days, regular planning meetings at all levels, school visits and marking days, each offering professional learning opportunities as well as building relationships between teachers.

Structures, resources and practices

Classes operate best across the six remote sites when structures and practices are aligned as closely as possible across the cluster schools:

- Regular meetings, in person or by video conferencing, at each level of operation, are critical to strong communication, planning and monitoring.
- The RAP School Administrative Officer manages the common calendar, lesson and timetable organisation, assisted by the shared use of calendar and timetabling software.
- Distribution and rotation of roles: with the exception of the HT Access and RAP School Administrative Officer, responsibilities are spread across schools with opportunities to rotate between coordinator and co-teacher positions.
- Future plans include building shared Vocational Education Training (VET) facilities so VET courses will meet all requirements of the Registered Training Organisations (RTOs).

Addition of the partner schools

The addition of the two partner schools is a greater advantage to the partnership than a disadvantage. While they are not centrally funded, nor are their students counted in funding allocations, they contribute students to the Stage 6 cohort and additional experienced teachers, extending the capacity of the cluster as a whole.

Supporting teacher collaboration (ToR 4)

Promoting collaborative activities has benefits for both teachers and students. Sharing of expertise, resources and different viewpoints results in improved teaching and learning programs. Shared planning and organisation reduces the workload of individual teachers and promotes good communication across the cluster.

- The combination of face-to-face and remote strategies enhances collaboration. Executive or cluster meetings, school development days, planning and marking days all promote personal relationships between teachers as well as providing the time and proximity to work together.
- Virtual faculties bridge the physical distances and remove feelings of isolation so teachers can regularly plan, collaborate and work together as one extended group. To grow in operation, virtual faculties need to demonstrate their effectiveness and be resourced to enable coordination.
- Video conferencing and *Bridgit* continue to be the main technologies used to support collaboration. Support and encouragement are needed to stimulate exploration of newly introduced *Microsoft 365* and *Google Apps*.
- Collaboration across other stages of the cluster schools (K-10) is being encouraged through dedicated *Moodle* environments to become a familiar part of whole-school operations.

Continuation of program/subject delivery (ToR 5)

Strategies and structures are needed to promote continuity as well as change. Student success in every course delivered through the partnership relies on commitment to the roles of participants, operational structures and processes:

- Preparing and supporting students includes introductory activities, matching students with a co-teacher, building relationship between students and between teachers and students.
- The HT Access and RAP School Administrative Officer provide essential support for teachers, freeing them to focus on teaching.
- Regular review, revision and updating of strategies are essential to respond to changing circumstances and assist in ensuring the program is sustainable.
- The structural model is effective as long as there is open communication at all levels.
- Keeping parents informed about and comfortable with the systems is achieved through letting them experience how the program operates.

Technology requirements to support quality teaching (ToR 6)

The establishment of the virtual framework provides the structure for ongoing provision and future development. The essential components of the framework comprise: technical infrastructure and integrated systems, coordination and management, and ongoing support for users.

Technical requirements

- Consistent provision of reliable hardware, software and shared systems across the cluster that promotes flexibility in delivery both asynchronously and synchronously, for students and for teacher professional learning.
- Integrated systems for management of students, learning materials and assessment and record keeping enable efficient coordination of teaching and learning, and monitoring of students' participation and performance.
- Technical systems need to be adaptable and regularly updated, fit for the addition of new technologies, applications and options as they become available and applied across all partner schools.

Coordination and management

- Dedicated personnel are required to establish and maintain systems, provide support and troubleshoot as needed.
- Close liaison and integration with systems beyond the cluster, including whole-of-department upgrades, ensure compliance and continued performance, and reduce disruption when changes occur.

User requirements

- Teachers need to maintain their technology knowledge and skills through ongoing professional development, including how to provide practical learning experiences and new ways of teaching across the cluster.
- Teachers require time, funding and support, provided jointly by partnership schools, to become familiar with new technologies, including software.

Teacher capacity to deliver Stage 6 curriculum (ToR 7)

Capacity building occurs through participation in partnership activities as well as through structured professional learning activities.

- Being able to rotate between the coordinator and co-teacher positions gives teachers a sense of ownership within the program, as well as providing ongoing professional learning.
- Working with colleagues through virtual faculties and as a co-teacher promotes opportunities for teachers to learn. The partnership has set the requirement that teachers must have experience as a co-teacher before taking on the role of course coordinator.
- Formal induction processes are mandatory for all new teachers and for teachers taking on roles of coordinator, co-teacher and ISAC.
- Induction modules are available at all times, as required by all teachers.
- A range of formal and informal professional learning opportunities that target the use of technologies promotes ongoing effective operation. There is always a demand for more professional learning.
- Support for HSC teaching and assessment is especially valued.
- Time and effort is required to have courses approved as QTC registered professional learning. Registered courses are valued highly by teachers.

Part 1 Introduction

This report is presented in two parts:

- **Part 1** provides an overview of the Riverina Access Partnership (RAP) and the methodology used in the evaluation.
- **Part 2** details the findings and conclusions of the evaluation.

1. Evaluating the Riverina Access Partnership

The Rural and Distance Education unit has identified the RAP as providing effective Access Program services to its community of schools. Systematic evaluation of RAP provides insight into strategies and practices that may enhance the ongoing operation of the program.

1.1. NSW Access Program and the Riverina Access Partnership

The NSW Access Program provides senior students with the opportunity to continue their studies to Year 12 at their local school without the need to travel away from the support of their community. Different subjects are taught by different schools, to a class of students aggregated from all cluster schools.

There are five Access Clusters across the state, each providing a shared curriculum for senior secondary students in the cluster schools. The program is supported by supplementary staffing, funding, technology support and infrastructure. Each school in an Access Cluster uses video conferencing studios known as 'link rooms' and a range of equipment specifically designated for Access purposes.

The partnership builds on the standard Access Program model of a cluster of funded 'core' schools by including two additional 'partner' schools that have small cohorts of senior students. Partner schools contribute to the network but do not receive additional funding. Tables 1.1 and 1.2 provide an overview of the cluster schools and their involvement.

Table 1.1: Riverina Access Partnership evolution of participating schools

Year	Action	Core schools	Partner schools
1990-1993	Pilot program	Ardlethan Central School (ACS) Ariah Park Central School (APCS)	
1994	Access Program Year 1	Barellan Central School (BCS)	
2000	Cluster expands	Hillston Central School (HCS)	
2009	Partner schools join the cluster		Urana Central School (UCS) Oaklands Central School (OCS)
2011	Renamed: Riverina Access Partnership		Lockhart Central School (LCS)
2014	Urana senior classes close		

Table 1.2: RAP schools - 2016; total number of students in Stage 6 (Year 11 Preliminary and Year 12 HSC)

Core schools	Stage 6 students	Partner schools	Stage 6 students
Ardlethan Central School (ACS)	10	Lockhart Central School (LCS)	14
Ariah Park Central School (APCS)	9	Oaklands Central School (OCS)	4
Barellan Central School (BCS)	7		
Hillston Central School (HCS)	14		

Key personnel

- **Principal steering group:** principals of each school; sets overall directions for the cluster
- **Head Teacher Access (HT Access):** located in hub school; coordinates teaching and learning across cluster
- **In-school Access Coordinator (ISAC):** located in each cluster school; supports students across all subjects
- **Coordinating teacher:** delivers courses to students in several schools; supports students in Coordinating teacher's home school
- **Co-teacher:** located in each school; supports home students in particular subject
- **RAP School Administrative Officer:** also located in the hub school; supports the program across all cluster schools.

Subjects shared

In 2016, there are 32 preliminary (Year 11) and 26 HSC (Year 12) students participating in RAP courses across the cluster. Table 1.3 shows the number of students enrolled in each subject.

Table 1.3: Number of students enrolled in each subject, across the cluster in 2016

Subject	Yr 11	Yr 12	Subject	Yr 11	Yr 12
Advanced English	6	7	Hospitality	4	
Agriculture	6	2	Industrial Technology	10	7
Ancient History	5		Information processes & technology (IPT)		1
Biology	4	7	Legal Studies	3	2
Business Studies	6	6	Mathematics	6	6
Chemistry		4	Modern History		7
Community and Family Studies	10		Music		3
Construction	3		PDHPE	5	4
Exploring Early Childhood	10	4	Photography	11	
Extension Maths		2	Physics		4
Food Technology	15	1	Senior Science	6	11
General Maths	24	13	Standard English	26	16
Geography	2	2	Visual Arts	12	4

Extending the scope of the Riverina Access Partnership

While the NSW Access Program specifically targets students in Stage 6, the benefits of collaboration across schools has been recognised as offering opportunities for students in earlier stages of schooling. The RAP now also includes shared learning materials and use of the *Moodle* learning management platform in the form of *RAP 7-10* for stages 4 and 5, and *Junior Riverina Access Partnership (JRAP)* enabling collaboration across the schools from the primary years onward.

Further information about the partnership is provided in Appendix 1.

1.2. The purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to identify the successful characteristics of RAP and share effective practices with other Access Program schools and their school communities.

The evaluation findings will be used to foster an evidence-seeking culture within the Access Cluster network, and encourage an evidence-based approach to future initiatives.

The main audience for the evaluation is the Rural and Distance Education Unit and Access Program clusters: Riverina, Western, Lachlan, Wilvandee and Norther Borders Senior Access.

Resourcing of and resourcing implications for the Riverina Access Program or are not in scope for this evaluation.

1.3. Terms of Reference of the evaluation

The Terms of Reference for the evaluation are to:

1. Identify the range of subjects offered to/selected by students in Stage 6.
2. Assess the contribution of the Riverina Access Partnership to student educational outcomes (retention, aspirations, intention for further study).
3. Identify strategies and the factors that assist or hinder the establishment and maintenance of networks (role of core and partner schools) within the Riverina cluster.
4. Identify successful strategies for school and teacher collaboration in the Riverina Access Partnership that can be adopted by other clusters and learning communities.
5. Identify effective processes that support continuation of the program/subject delivery.
6. Consider the nature and requirements for technology use necessary to support quality teaching and learning to rural and remote students.
7. Assess the impact of the Riverina Access Partnership on staff capacity to deliver Stage 6 curriculum in core and partner schools.
8. Make recommendations of effective practice to share with other clusters of the Access Program and their learning communities.

1.4. Methodology

The RAP evaluation employed a mixed method design drawing on both qualitative and quantitative components, as described in the following sections. The methodology was approved by the RAP Program Evaluation Reference Group (PERG). The interview schedules and surveys were developed in consultation with the members of the PERG.

1.4.1. Background document review

Prior to the commencement of the evaluation, team members undertook a review of program materials to inform their understanding of the program and to assist in their interpretation of the evaluation data, especially data drawn from conversations with school staff.

1.4.2. Qualitative component

The qualitative component of the evaluation comprised interviews with key personnel:

- principals
- teachers who coordinate and co-teach courses in Stage 6 across the cluster
- HT Access
- the RAP School Administrative Officer.

Interviews were held in video conference rooms (link rooms) at Barellan CS and Ardlethan CS to connect with staff across the cluster. Semi-structured interview schedules were provided prior to the interviews.

Table1.4: Summary of participation in interviews

Interviews	No of interviews	No. of participants
Principal interviews	4	5
Teacher interviews	5	14
Head Teacher Access	1	1
School Admin Officer	1	1

Interview schedules are included in Appendix 2.

Quotes included in the report are drawn from both survey comments and interviews with participants and provide valuable insights into the experiences of students, teachers and principals across the schools of the partnership.

1.4.3. Quantitative component

Data was provided by the RAP School Administrative Officer, Ardlethan Central School, regarding retention numbers, HSC completion numbers and senior student subject selection across the cluster schools. Historical data has been provided for 2005 onwards. There is no accurate information on participation in the program prior to this time.

The other quantitative component of the evaluation included data from surveys of teachers and students.

Teacher survey

Online surveys were completed by a total of 29 school staff from the six schools. Of the 39 coordinating teachers in 2016, 52% completed the survey. Other respondents included principals, ISACs, co-teachers and the HT Access.

Student survey

The student survey was administered in Term 1, 2016 and was completed by students across the cluster as shown in Table 1.5:

Table 1.5: Student survey respondents by school (n=14)

School	Preliminary students	HSC students
1	1	2
2	2	4
3	0	1
4	0	3
5	0	1
6	0	0
Total	3	11

While the sample size of 14 students is small, the survey targeted students who had participated in the program for over a year to provide more comprehensive feedback on the program. Respondents include 11 HSC students and 3 preliminary students (as per Table 1.5), indicating that 38% of the HSC students responded.

The charts and graphs used throughout this report present survey responses. Survey schedules with summaries of responses are included in Appendix 3.

1.4.4. Data recording and analysis

All interviews were recorded using audio recording. Recordings were transcribed and consolidated into a single record of interview. Responses to open-ended survey questions were added to the qualitative data set for analysis.

Systematic coding commenced on QSR NVivo software with an initial set of categories generated from the Terms of Reference and the background document review. Original categories were soon expanded and refined based on common issues and themes emerging from participants’ responses.

1.4.5. Limitations of the methodology

The use of qualitative methods allows teachers', principals' and students' accounts of their experiences with the program to be presented for interpretation by others.

Qualitative methods do not seek to identify a simple consensus or give extra weight to frequent comments or repeated evidence of similar experiences. It is the 'atypical' that also provides insight into the educational situation, especially if events are experienced differently in different contexts, or by a variety of participants. While this may suggest a limitation in the ability to provide general conclusions, what it does offer is recognition of the diversity of experiences within and between school situations.

Specific issues arose in the process of undertaking the visits to RAP schools:

- The recording of interviews over video links resulted in some words being difficult to hear and transcribe.
- One principal interview was conducted by mobile telephone making some dialogue difficult to hear and transcribe.

1.4.6. Attribution

The Access Program has been operating in the Riverina since 1990. Comparisons to student participation and results before and since implementation would not be meaningful given the time that has elapsed and the range of changes over this period.

The evaluation has sought to identify features of the RAP program which may be transferable to other Access Programs.

1.5. Previous evaluations

The original Riverina Telematics Access pilot program was evaluated in 1990. At this time each school was linked by teleconference, fax and electronic blackboard computer facilities (Walker & Boylan, 1992; Squires, Sinclair & Bell, 1993).

Part 2 Evaluation findings

Part 2 presents the findings of the program evaluation, organised in terms of priority areas identified in the evaluation Terms of Reference and in response to issues that emerged through the data collection.

Section 2: Stage 6 subjects, student choice and educational outcomes (ToR 1-2)

Section 3: Processes and strategies for program sustainability (ToR 3-5)

Section 4: Requirements for technology to support quality teaching (ToR 6)

Section 6: Staff capacity to deliver Stage 6 curriculum (ToR 7).

2. Stage 6 subjects, student choice and educational outcomes (ToR 1-2)

This section presents the experiences of students, in selecting subjects and participating in Stage 6 learning activities through the Riverina Access Partnership (RAP). Findings are specifically related to the Terms of Reference:

1. Identify the range of subjects offered to/selected by students in Stage 6.
2. Assess the contribution of the Riverina Access Partnership to student educational outcomes (retention, aspirations, intention for further study).

2.1. Subject availability

The major goal of NSW Access Program is to provide *'...a shared curriculum for senior secondary students... This enables rural students to complete their secondary education at their local school without having to live away from home.'* (Distance Education, 2004, p. 3).

Throughout the evaluation, participants have acknowledged that the partnership enables a greater range of subjects to be offered to students than could be achieved at each school individually. This contributes to students' increased likelihood of staying at their local school and promotes wider options in their pathways from Stage 6 to future studies and work.

2.1.1. Subject offerings

In 2016, the partnership delivered 20 preliminary (Year 11) and 21 HSC (Year 12) subjects, as shown previously in Table 1.3 on p.6.

Subjects offered include various level options in both preliminary and HSC years, including:

- English Standard and Advanced
- Mathematics General, Mathematics and Mathematics Extension 1
- Senior Science, Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

The range of subjects caters both for students aiming to study at university and for those choosing Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses or school-based apprenticeships and training (SBAT) and who still want to complete the Higher School Certificate.

Similarly, flexibility of the partnership has increased access to a greater number of non-ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank) pathways including provision of courses through partnerships with local Technical And Further Education (TAFE) and trade skills centres.

"...I think the subjects that we have been able to put in for... have allowed those students to stay on [at] school... We've looked at how we can offer their VET courses more successfully..."

Principal interview

The ability to maintain and build the range of subject offerings relates to the partnership's approach to planning for Stage 6. Most obviously, as Access Programs bring together the student populations and the teaching pool from across the cluster schools, there is both greater demand for subjects and greater potential to meet the demand. As suggested, there may be greater numbers of subjects offered than at larger, nearby high schools:

"...in partner schools - it provides opportunities for both teachers and students to be open to a lot more different choices... we have more opportunities for subjects than [other school] will. That's a school with about 400 kids and we have got more subjects... We also have more expertise a lot of the times."

Teacher interview

By comparison, a similar (non-Access Program) central school reported a total of 45+ Stage 6 students, with 12 subjects offered at school, plus several TVET (TAFE VET) courses and four subjects only available by (individual) Distance Education.

Additional strategies employed in the cluster focus on each student's ability to make well-considered decisions around subject choice and on preparing teachers to provide the best support possible, through changes made to timetabling, planning student pathways and building teacher capacity.

Willingness to offer and timetable subjects in response to student preferences

The partnership does not limit the subject choice for timetabling purposes. Instead of the timetable determining student choices, student choices come first and determine the timetable, even though it may complicate the timetabling process, as teachers explained:

"We offer them basically the full range. So it's not offered in lines. Not offered in that you must choose one subject from this line, which does play havoc with our timetabling."

Teacher interview

Students are asked to make a preliminary choice of subjects; forming a 'wish list' of Stage 6 subjects. The full list is reviewed by teachers and the HT Access to ensure that subjects are viable. As many as 11 subject lines can result, based on teachers' skills and timetable availability. Students then choose from the final offering of subjects. Sometimes as many as 26+ subjects are available. In 2016, students were enrolled in 21 subjects at HSC level.

Advance planning and focus on student learning pathways

Three interviewed principals emphasised the importance of the processes engaged in with students to assist in identifying their goals and plan their learning pathway. Others confirmed that planning from Stage 5 is a key strategy for ensuring the best possible understanding of students' needs, capabilities and general circumstances.

"Pathway planning is the key right from the start - knowing where the kids want to be and being able to match that to them. We have the ability to tailor it... we start through from Stage 5, they are already pretty well established before we move into that area."

Principal interview

Well in advance of subject selection the partnership:

- conducts comprehensive surveys of teachers, parents and the students themselves to determine student aspirations, interests, strengths, learning styles and home commitments
- provides individual support and encouragement for students in discussion of future intentions and subject choices with a focus on a student's strengths and weaknesses
- provides explanations of and practice in advanced courses at Year 10 study days, to help students choose the appropriate levels of study
- encourages coordinating teachers and co-teachers to review student subject choices.

Student self-awareness and teacher understanding of each student are paramount at each step.

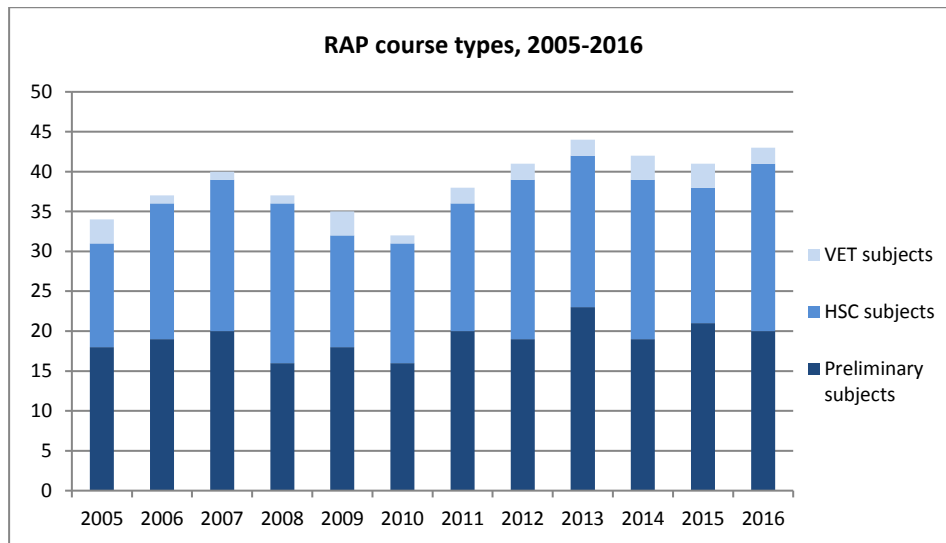
Building teacher expertise to deliver Stage 6 curriculum

Collaboration between staff in delivery of each course/subject has increased the capacity of teachers to deliver the Stage 6 curriculum. The combination of coordinating teachers and co-teachers extends professional learning for both teacher groups.

2.1.2. Change over time

The number of Stage 6 subjects offered since 2005 has remained fairly steady, with minor fluctuations as expected in any school, based on changing student numbers and interests, and teacher availability, as shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Number of subjects offered by the Riverina Access Partnership (2005-2016)



The small increase, which appears to have been sustained since 2012 may reflect the influence of the raised school leaving age, effective from 2010, and the addition of partner schools from 2009. Both factors would have increased the number of students.

There has been no noticeable drop in the partnership's ability to offer around 40 subjects since Urana CS senior classes left the partnership at the end of 2013.

2.2. Impacts for students and school communities

By offering a broad range of subjects, the program opens up opportunities for students in Year 10 to continue their senior studies without having to move away from the school and community.

Benefits flow beyond the Stage 6 students themselves, throughout each school and to their wider communities.

2.2.1. Benefits to students of staying at their local school

The obvious benefits of students staying at their local school include:

- reduced dislocation
- familiarity with school procedures, expectations and teachers
- maintenance of friendships and social support
- maintenance of family support.

Some teacher respondents explained, by using past examples, that students who remained in their local area develop a greater sense of responsibility to their communities. This responsibility instilled a

commitment to support small communities and, as a result, some students have decided to pursue their careers back in the local community.

Support for students

Two teachers suggested that the support structures for students and their families would be lost if students leave the community to attend larger schools. They made the following predictions:

- student stress could increase as students would no longer have direct support from their families and community. This could affect their wellbeing and abilities in their studies
- reciprocally, students could not directly support their families. For example, they would not be able to assist in the family’s farm work or other duties.

2.2.2. Effects for schools and the community

A number of potential risks emerge in the event of senior students leaving school communities:

- parents may choose to leave with senior students, resulting in siblings and junior students leaving the school
- departure of families may result in loss of jobs in communities
- total staffing allocations and school funding will fall, reducing future opportunities for the school
- range of teacher expertise available in the schools would be reduced
- effects might start earlier, with parents looking to bigger schools after Year 6
- schools lose student leaders, essential in supporting school programs and younger students.

Two principals noted that teachers’ aspirations often include the opportunity to teach Stage 6 curriculum. When fewer senior students attend the school, fewer opportunities are available to teach Stage 6.

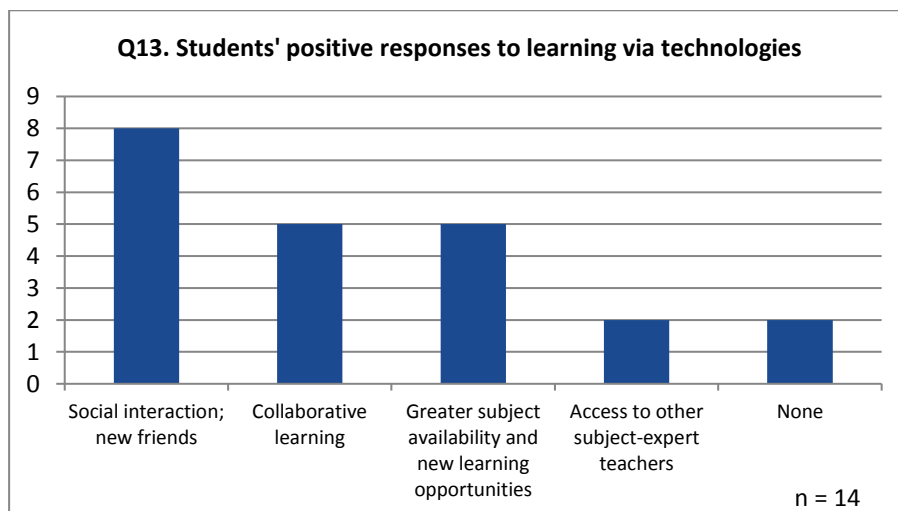
“...[may affect]staff wanting to come here or maybe wanting to stay if they didn’t have that [opportunities to teach Stage 6].”

Principal interview

2.2.3. Student satisfaction

Overall, learning through remote or link lessons is perceived positively by both teachers and students. In addition to increased subject choices and greater access to teacher expertise, students’ survey responses indicated that they appreciated the social aspects of the program and opportunities for collaborative learning (see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: Benefits to students of participating in RAP courses - Student survey



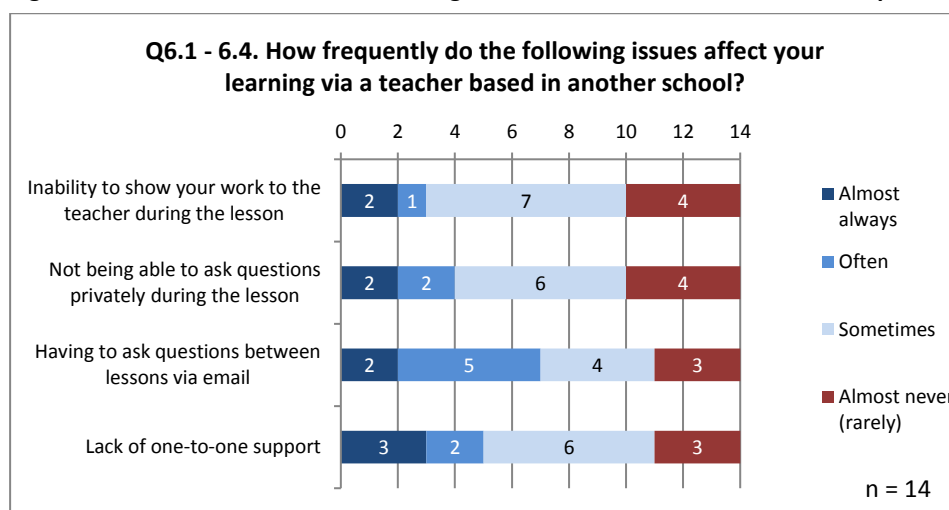
“It’s not just about the technology or the tools. It’s about learning at the end of the day and making sure we don’t use the video conferencing for the sake of it. We use it for how best we can bring our students forward.”

Principal interview

Similarly, several participants reminded the evaluation team that the aim of the program is to promote the best possible learning environments for students. Over time the changes in technologies have improved the delivery of the curriculum to Access students. For some teachers, teaching students in link lessons is described as *“just like having them in a classroom.”*

However, as shown in Figure 2.3, student survey responses indicated that the lack of personal interaction still presents an issue in many instances. Seven of 14 respondents indicated that asking questions by email was often or almost always a problem.

Figure 2.3: Students’ issues with learning across the Riverina Access Partnership - Student survey



The follow up question allowed students to identify other problems experienced in link lessons. Seven respondents (50%) had no other problems. While the remaining responses were largely concerned with equipment or technical issues, personal interactions were again mentioned, as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Additional issues experienced by students - Student survey

Identified issues	Responses
None	7
Quality of connection/sound/vision	4
Connection/ <i>Bridgit</i>	3
Access to VC classes [most useful]	2
Inability to access/understand explanations/ask questions of Coordinating teacher [at remote school]	3
Lack of support from co-teacher [in own school]	3

Later in the survey students were again asked about any difficulties they experienced. Once again communication with teachers was the most frequent issue raised, including students’ feelings that:

“You do not feel that your ideas are getting through to [teachers].”

“Asking about a question is also hard because the teacher has to explain it over a video instead of showing you in person.”

“Sometimes takes a few days for a teacher to get back via email.”

Student survey responses

2.3. Educational outcomes

The evaluation focused on the effects of the RAP on general educational outcomes in terms of retention, students' aspirations and intention for further study.

2.3.1. Retention rates

As for the discussion of growth in numbers of subjects being offered within the cluster, data on retention rates is available from 2005 to the present. Enrolment of students in Year 11 was largely stable from 2005 to 2010, with equally consistent numbers staying on to complete their HSC.

Any boost in the Year 11 enrolments, attributable to the increase in school leaving age, have not necessarily been sustained into Year 12 in each subsequent year, suggesting that a number of students returned to school only until they turned 17.

Since 2011 enrolments in both cohorts have remained steady, with the exception of 2013-2014 when Urana Central School Stage 6 classes closed.

2.3.2. Student outcomes

The learning achieved through participation in the Access Program extends beyond academic achievement and the completion of the HSC. Whilst HSC results are not part of the scope for this evaluation, the evaluation revealed areas of improved outcomes for students, related in particular to independent learning, ICT skills and social and team work skills.

Independent learning

The Access Program model of teaching and learning relies on students being able to operate in a non-conventional class setting, combining direct teaching with self-directed study.

Principals and teachers emphasised that in order to succeed, students need to take responsibility for their learning. They report that students develop self-reliance and organisational skills and learn to be self-directed, self-motivated and independent learners - all of which are needed in future studies and the workplace.

A few students mentioned particularly liking the link lesson model because it: *“teaches you how to become an independent learner”* and *“makes you more proactive.”*

ICT skills

Since its earliest days, the Access model has extended the range of computer-based technologies that students learn to use. They are described as having strong digital literacy skills and understanding about the appropriate use of technology.

Teachers commented that students were leaving school better equipped to enter the workforce with both independent learning skills and the ability to use and adapt to new and emerging technologies.

Social skills and team work

The requirement to work with an expanded and changing set of students in different courses across the cluster, leads to enhancement of students' social skills, as demonstrated through the rapport developed between students and teachers, and the ease shown in cross-school discussion and collaboration.

Teachers described how students would, in their spare time, collaborate to discuss their learning or communicate about upcoming social events. The face-to-face activities such as study days and sports program are seen to be successful in helping develop appropriate social skills and build relationships.

In class contexts, this translates into a greater level of discussion and sharing of ideas. As students show more respect for the use of connected learning spaces, teachers describe many as demonstrating improved attitudes to working as a team and acknowledging the value of each other’s work.

2.3.3. Aspirations and post-school intentions

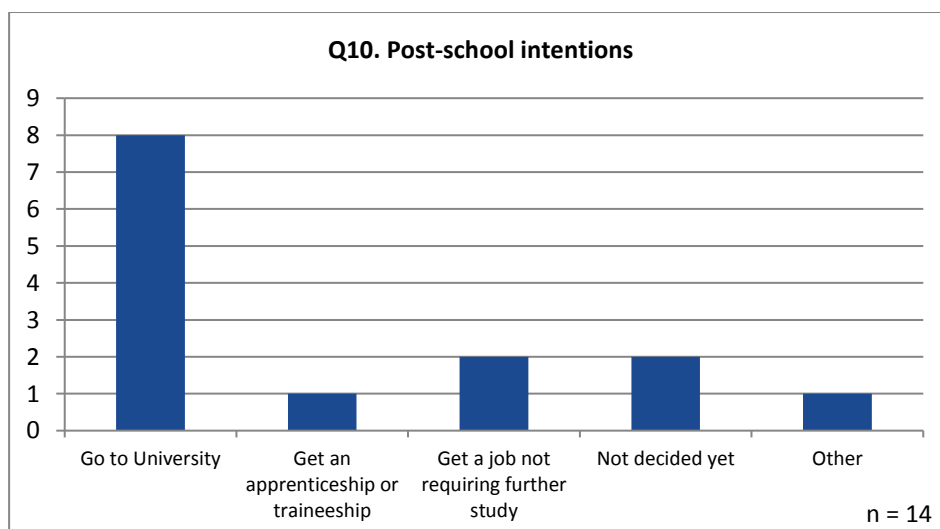
Each student’s responses to survey questions 8, 9 and 10 were analysed together, to identify how well subject choices may align to the student’s stated intentions. A sample of responses is shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Subject choice related to post-school intentions and work interests (n= 5/14)

Student	Q8 Type of job interested in at age thirty	Q9 Work or study intentions, post school	Q10 Subject choice related to post-school intentions
A	Music Producer, Performer or Piano Teacher	not decided yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • similar area of interest to the work I want to do
B	A career in law or accounting	go to University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • required for further studies or work • might provide the ATAR needed for a university course
C	Firefighter and Army	get a job not requiring further study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • studied for another reason [not provided]
D	Engineering/surveying or sport job e.g. physiotherapy	go to University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • required for further studies or work • similar area of interest to the work I want to do • might provide the ATAR needed for a university course
E	Doing a trade in the metal or wood industry	get an apprenticeship or traineeship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • similar area of interest to the work I want to do

Surveyed students appear to be confident in their subject choices and intended pathways after completing school. They appear to be well-informed. Each respondent selected answers regarding study intentions (shown in Figure 2.4) appropriate to the job type they suggested they might be in at age 30, even if they reported being unsure of future jobs, or not yet decided about their immediate post-school destination. Without exception, the pattern of responses is both appropriate and thoughtful.

Figure 2.4: Post-school intentions - Student survey



3. Processes and strategies for program sustainability (ToR 3-5)

The evaluation has identified a range of strategies employed across the partnership that support its successful operation.

3.1. Establishment and maintenance of networks (ToR 3)

Drawing from the full range of evidence gathered in the evaluation the following factors and strategies are identified as underpinning the effective operation of the partnership:

- Governance and management structures
- Clearly articulated roles and responsibilities
- Addition of partner schools
- Equal participation of cluster schools
- Building the cluster identity
- Shared structures, distributed resources and support
- Open communication
- Extending the partnership
- Technology that enables the network.

A breakdown in effectiveness is associated with:

- unequal distribution of resources and participation
- lack of information or sharing
- lack of commitment.

3.1.1. Governance and management

Management structures built on a clear Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) formalise the partnership and underpin relationships between core and partner schools. The MoU clearly states what the partner schools and core schools agree to do, and establishes clear rules and minimum standards for the infrastructure shared across the cluster. The management structure comprises:

Principal steering group

The group includes principals of both core and partner schools and is essential in setting directions and establishing strategies agreed on by all. The steering group meets once a fortnight via video conference, providing a forum for issues and a focus on sustaining and growing the program to meet their common purpose.

“We VC [video conference] in regularly, put our issues on the table. We do go into that meeting knowing what our common purpose is and that we are still rowing this boat in the same direction. So it’s productive for us to do it that way.”

Principal interview

Management team

The next layer of organisation is the management team, which includes the Head Teacher Access (HT Access), In-school Access Coordinators (ISACs) and the RAP School Administrative Officer. The management team monitors aspects of the partnership operation, coordinates planning and works out strategies to implement the directions set by principals. For example:

“...the steering group... we met the other day, [new software program] is going to be our big driving force for professional development in 2016... now and the management team will be working out all the strategies we have to be using.”

Principal interview

The HT Access leads the management team. Every Monday at lunchtime, the ISACs and the HT Access have a video conference meeting where they share information about the students and their welfare and variations to routines, such as proposing excursions and getting approval. Once a term the ISACs have a face-to-face meeting with the principals for a planning day.

Key features at each level include clear roles and management structures, regular communication, planning and monitoring.

3.1.2. Roles and responsibilities

The RAP Induction Booklet (see Appendix 4) details:

- roles and expectations for key personnel: HT Access; coordinating teachers and co-teachers; RAP School Administrative Officer
- relationships between participants; lines of communication and responsibility.

Most important are the HT Access and the ISACs.

Head Teacher Access (HT Access)

'The HT Access has responsibility for ensuring the smooth operation of the Access Program within the cluster' (Distance Education, 2004, p. 11). The role oversees all aspects of the program's operation and supports all teachers and other officers involved. The principal put it succinctly:

"Essentially that person ties together all of our policies."

Principal interview

Most frequently, comments from teachers highlighted the HT Access' role in overseeing:

- the equipment and systems used daily across all cluster schools
- organisation of resources, teaching and learning units, professional learning modules
- all of the data collection, all of the reporting
- the match of students, courses and teachers.

Principals talked about having employed the current HT Access because *"he is very technology driven and ...could drive the implementation of Sentral, drive the Moodle going further"*. Another principal stressed the need for any new HT Access to also have strong technical skills.

In-school Access Coordinators (ISACs)

Located in each cluster school, the ISACs manage the Access Program in their own school. They are the first stop in a school for any RAP issues.

"So principals may make many of the decisions but the first port of call is the ISAC."

Teacher interview

The ISACs manage and support the coordinating teachers, co-teachers and students in the school and work directly with the HT Access for anything relating to other schools or the cluster as a whole.

Supporting all teachers

Teachers' knowledge of their roles and responsibilities was seen by partnership leaders as critical. The HT Access has developed specific induction courses for coordinators and co-teachers. He stated that the induction program had been instrumental in highlighting the importance of roles and responsibilities, especially at the beginning of each year with new teachers.

"...this is an important role, this is what you're here to do. If we're not there, we might as well enrol the kids into Distance Education because that's the difference between us and them - these are the benefits of having a co-teacher there and this is your job."

Head Teacher Access interview

3.1.3. Addition of partner schools

All principals and teachers commented on the value of including the partner schools in the Access Program. Benefits of the increase in critical mass and expertise include:

- increased cohort and broader range of students
- additional experienced teachers and ability to offer more Stage 6 courses
- increased opportunities for co-teacher informal professional learning through working with coordinating teachers
- increased pool for sharing organisational ideas and collaboration across the schools
- additional shared resources, programs and online text books.

Principals commented on the need to keep the cluster well defined and limited to *“a critical distance”*. Too many schools over too great a distance would reduce the personalised aspect of knowing students as individuals. One principal stated, *“...then it becomes Distance Education, not an Access Program”*.

However, principals also mentioned they had managed to accommodate one-off students from a nearby high school and another Access Cluster.

Equal participation of all schools in the cluster

Strong relationships between core and partner schools are maintained through ensuring that all schools operate on an equal footing, with a shared commitment to the cluster. Principals referred to successful practices such as equal contributions to decision making and staffing allocation, as suggested:

“Within subject areas coordinators and co-teachers don’t think about whether it’s a core school or a partner school. It’s just the Access Program... the only time probably it gets brought up as a partner school is when it comes to funding.” Principal interview

“If they’ve got the best coordinating, the best qualified teacher to coordinate a subject we will give staff into that [partner] school, ...way of giving some of my school staffing to another school ... but we are sort of under the agreement that if that is the best qualified person for that class than we are happy to wear that.” Principal interview

The combined issues of funding determination and allocation present the greatest obstacle within the partnership. Funding allocations are determined by the student numbers in the core cluster schools only. The inability to count partner schools’ students means that resources from the core schools need to be stretched across both core and partner schools.

“It is a sore point that our partner schools can’t contribute to our numbers in the allocation of resources but certainly we spread it out... it would be good if they were included in the resourcing as well because then we wouldn’t have to spread it so thin!” Principal interview

As suggested above, where possible, RAP resources are shared across the cluster according to program needs. However, to a large extent the partner schools are asked to fund their own involvement in the partnership. Costs may include: co-teachers as appropriate; an ISAC allowance; travel to and attendance at meetings as requested; equipment to meet the minimum furniture and infrastructure requirements; and support for students to attend organised study or other event days.

3.1.4. Building the cluster identity - complementary activities

While the day-to-day operation of the partnership relies on communications technologies, the HT Access was quick to highlight that *“the face-to-face part of RAP is really important”*.

A variety of face-to-face meetings and activities are organised to allow students to get to know each other and their teachers, and build relationships as a group. Getting together in one place makes the connections tangible and a sense of the cluster as a whole can grow.

Events are organised for the benefit of both students and teachers. Where feasible, these are combined.

For students

Year 10 Open Day: The Year 10 students come together for an Open Day where they learn about the partnership and how it works. They meet the teachers and get to know other students prior to the establishment of the remote classes.

“... [we] rotate them around in five separate sessions for those students. They plan their time for the following year; getting ready for what access holds; practice with the machine, technologies and they will start with their Moodle and have a go at that. They meet their teachers and find out what they need and what sort of work... and [they] get to know their cohort to see who they will be going through with.”

Teacher interview

Year 11 Induction Camp: The camp, held at the beginning of Year 11, provides further introduction to the program, with a focus on curriculum, careers planning, and students getting to know each other and teachers in person.

“I think the camp’s important and the study days are important... once you build those relationships, that rapport with the students and they start to be more comfortable with each other, it does feel a little more like a classroom.”

Teacher interview

Even getting to know what students look like makes a difference in the Access setting:

“...kids get to know each other. And from a teacher perspective, that’s really valuable too because the kids look different in person as they do on the video, especially if it’s a larger class.”

Teacher interview

Study days: All participants (teachers and students) talked about the benefits of study days that are held once a term and hosted by the schools in turn. Study days are organised to promote:

- stronger relationships between students
- opportunities for practical curriculum activities as required
- building relationships between students and teachers.

A principal commented that it may be easier to hold study days at a central location [place] such as Griffith or Leeton but it is more important for students in Years 7 to 10 to become familiar with the schools other students come from. For students from the farthest schools:

“They’re leaving about 5.30am/6 o’clock at the start but our attendance rate at those study days is really good and so I think that shows that the kids value them and the staff value them.”

Principal interview

In addition to the Year 10 Open Day held at the end of Stage 5, Year 10 students are invited to the Stage 6 study day in term 4, allowing them to see how the program operates and get to know prospective classmates for the next two years. A principal explained the value of this activity:

“We are building those relationships earlier and they are getting a taste. We are hoping that sends the message through - also in the communities - that people who would have been traditionally slipping away, that they don’t have to.”

Principal interview

RAP Sports enables the small schools to participate in team sports even though the individual schools do not have sufficient numbers for a team. The sports teams span Years 7 to 12, allowing junior students to establish relationships prior to their entry in the Access Program.

The RAP Sports Trials are held in February each year and the sports calendar is set so all of the schools have common sports days. The sports calendar is put in place prior to the main RAP calendar.

Other social activities: outside structured school activities, students are able to build relationships through after school events such as discos and formals. Through these activities, the students build a joint sense of the cluster group and see themselves as coming from a larger community than their *“little individual schools”*.

For teachers

School Development Days: A combined school development day, which includes primary teachers, is held on the first day of Term 3 to plan and share ideas for the following year.

Planning meetings: Teachers get together for planning and marking days. Extra sessions are held over video conference to save on travel.

Marking days: Teachers also get together for marking days which are seen as important professional development.

School visits: Coordinating teachers are encouraged to visit remote schools to assess students, particularly in practical subjects like art, music and primary industries. This can involve a lot of travel. For example, the art teacher is three and a half hours away from one school she visits.

“I just know if I need to go down and see the boys, I’ll approach the principals say I need to go and assess these boys, and we will liaise with the co-teacher down there. We work out a time that suits.”

Teacher interview

Executive meetings: also called cluster meetings, are held once a term. All principals and ISACs come together at a central location such as Griffith for discussion around budgets, planning and subject selection. The cluster meetings take ISACs out of the school for a day.

The issue of distance

Access Programs exist to assist in overcoming the difficulties created by distance. While RAP is largely successful in countering the problem, the long distances still hamper attempts to build a sense of community across the schools. The HT Access spoke about the disappointment of inviting all the schools to event days but only the three core schools in closest proximity attended. The distance for the fourth core school and the two partner schools was often too great.

Teachers commented that the only drawback of including the partner schools related to the logistics of extra travel and the ongoing difficulty of trying to make them feel part of the group.

3.1.5. Shared structures, distributed resources and support

In order for classes to operate across the six remote sites, structures and practices need to be aligned as closely as possible.

One principal noted that *“having procedures in place is really important.”* Another commented that the HT Access *“has been a strong force”* in setting up systems that can take the load off coordinating teachers.

Regular meetings

Keeping up-to-date with what's happening both within each school and between sites is crucial to the running of the partnership. Teachers referred to the importance of individual school staff meetings as well as the Management Team's Monday lunchtime video conferences, which ensured weekly monitoring of: *"...timelines, deadlines, notes that have gone out for study days. Also assessment tasks due, upcoming excursions to make sure that they don't clash with other events going on with other schools, daily variation of routine for the week..."*.

Common calendar

Each year the principals create a common calendar establishing shared dates for sports days, Open Day in Education Week and other events, as required. Once the calendar is ratified the RAP School Administrative Officer puts it on the RAP *Sentral*¹ calendar.

Lesson and timetable organisation

All of the schools have the same lesson length and same number of periods in a day to facilitate timetabling of lessons across the multiple sites. One teacher described the priority given to the Access classes:

"RAP is a big part of our school. It runs the timetable for us."

Teacher interview

Principals talked about how Stage 6 students get their first choice of subjects most of the time because all six schools start from a single framework.

"Every student gets their first choice 90% of the time, because we don't run lines anymore... So there is none of this 6 lines, 6 subjects, type of mentality."

Principal interview

Timetabling is assisted by the use of *TimeChart* and *Sentral* software.

Distribution and rotation of roles

The only fixed position is that of HT Access. Teachers across the cluster take on the various other roles which are rotated over time.

Each year staff members in the partnership schools are asked to nominate preferences for teaching Years 11 and 12, and indicate their interest in taking on a coordinating teacher role. Table 3.1 shows the 2016 distribution of coordinator/co-teacher roles across the cluster schools.

¹ *Sentral* is the online management system used across the cluster of schools.

Table 3.1: Teacher roles by school - 2016

School	Role	Number		
		Preliminary	HSC	Total
School A <i>Core School</i>	Coordinating teachers	3	5	8
	Co-teachers	7	4	11
School B <i>Partner School</i>	Coordinating teachers	2	4	6
	Co-teachers	7	8	15
School C <i>Core School</i>	Coordinating teachers	6	6	12
	Co-teachers	8	8	16
School D <i>Core School</i>	Coordinating teachers	5	3	8
	Co-teachers	6	9	15
School E <i>Core School</i>	Coordinating teachers	3	2	5
	Co-teachers	5	9	14
School F <i>Partner School</i>	Coordinating teachers	0	0	0
	Co-teachers	7	10	17

Several teachers acknowledged that being able to rotate between the coordinator and co-teacher positions gave them a better sense of ownership within the program, as well as providing ongoing professional learning.

As one teacher noted, *“You are all on the same level. The coordinator may send out the work, but that is with feedback from co-teachers.”* This collaboration and communication is seen as important not only for the rotation of staff, but also for achieving the best results for students.

Shared Vocational Education Training facilities

A plan for the future of the partnership is to build shared Vocational Education Training (VET) facilities so that students get more face-to-face time and VET courses will meet all requirements of the Registered Training Organisations (RTOs).

This will be achieved through distribution of specialist facilities across the cluster and supporting organisational practices. One school is building a Primary Industries Training Centre. Another has a VET Metals Construction Training Centre and a third has a VET Hospitality Training Centre. The aim is to provide the latest equipment and facilities, with teacher expertise and location influencing decisions about where VET Trade Centres are located. The RAP School Administrative Officer suggested:

“[To get the shared VET Trade Centres] they did their application within the team and [it was] a collaborative effort... I think too, you’ve got more students coming through with the raised leaving age who just want to do something like that. It gets them to school and enjoying school a bit more as well if they can do a practical course.” RAP School Administrative Officer interview

The partnership will block out lesson days and run buses between three schools (up to 7 hours round trip). The remaining schools in the partnership could not be included because of the distances to be covered. One school has its own training centre and another has students going to TAFE. It was hoped that the TAFE days can also be aligned.

3.1.6. Open communication

Teachers indicated that this structural model is effective as long as there is open communication at all levels. The communication between co-teachers and coordinating teachers is seen as a critical element

for student success. Co-teachers work very closely with their students. Coordinators rely on co-teachers to provide vital background information on students.

A coordinator stressed the importance of these discussions in order to improve her understanding of what occurs in the remote classes. An example was given of a student who had difficulty participating during lessons. Discussion with the co-teacher provided key information about the student, who was unable to focus due to hearing issues. Together the teachers worked on tailoring assessments to better suit the needs of the student.

One principal put it plainly, suggesting that if there are issues with students not coping with the work:

“...it’s because there’s not that communication between co-teacher and coordinator.”

Principal interview

Coordinators and co-teachers make extensive use of the *Moodle* system to communicate with students and each other.

3.1.7. Extending the partnership

The success of the partnership, and its use of communications technologies to build the Access cluster, is clearly demonstrated through the adoption of similar sharing strategies by other stage levels within the partnership schools.

RAP activities extend to Stages 4 and 5 and into the primary classes. *Moodle* provides the learning management system (LMS) which is now divided into four sections:

- Junior Riverina Access Partnership (JRAP) - primary classes
- RAP 7-10
- RAP Stage 6
- Teachers.

The intention is to develop familiarity and skills in the use of the technologies and to promote teacher and student interaction from early in schooling.

3.2. Supporting teacher collaboration (ToR 4)

Collaboration is at the centre of all Access Program clusters. It may appear self-evident that remote teaching relies, at the very least, on the joint efforts of the coordinating teacher and co-teacher. However, promoting collaborative activities has benefits for both teachers and students, beyond the simple operation of the program.

3.2.1. Value of collaboration

Sharing ideas and expertise

The most obvious benefit of teacher collaboration is the sharing of expertise, resources and different viewpoints, resulting in improved teaching and learning programs. Shared planning and organisation reduces the workload of individual teachers and promotes good communication across the cluster.

Support for students

Principals have suggested that the increased collaboration and communication between teachers across the six schools has enhanced the level of support for students. Each class benefits from their co-teacher and the coordinating teacher, as well as the HT Access and ISACs monitoring their progress all the time.

Teachers indicated that they had recently moved from courses located on separate *Moodle* pages to being coordinated on one *Moodle* page setting out the work for the week. Consequently, all students across the partnership schools can talk to each other, work together, and see each other's work in one place. One teacher described the benefit:

"Everyone socialises and collaborates across whether they are in that subject or not. They are like one big cohort. They don't see each other as this little individual school. They are just one big group."

Teacher interview

An added advantage of using this structure, as mentioned by teachers, is that students still link in to *Moodle* even when the teacher is away. They all know each other and know what is expected of them.

3.2.2. Strategies that support collaboration

Strategies that build a sense of the cluster (Section 3.1.3) are also those that promote collaboration. The relationships that produce real collaboration are not so easily developed through telecommunications only. The combination of face-to-face and remote strategies has proven to be effective.

Shared and aligned activities

As mentioned previously, common timetables, shared events and common lesson structures all make it easier for teachers to contact and work with each other.

Working together in-person

Executive or cluster meetings, school development days, planning and marking days all promote personal relationships between teachers as well as providing the time and proximity to work together. Even if face-to-face opportunities are limited, they provide a powerful boost to teachers' ability to continue the collaboration through remote means.

Online collaborative structures

In order to maximise student learning as well as teachers' planning, online collaborative structures have been put in place to facilitate open communication between staff at all levels.

Virtual faculties

Virtual faculties have been established in *Moodle* LMS to bring together key learning area teachers from across the cluster. According to teachers, the virtual faculties bridge the physical distances and remove feelings of isolation so they can regularly plan, collaborate and work together as one extended group. Until recently, many tasks such as planning, scheduling and assessment were coordinated through email. The virtual faculties make these processes faster and easier.

As explained by the HT Access, coordination of virtual faculties relies on an individual who is willing to take on this responsibility. Some schools provide time to release the teacher, e.g. to coordinate the virtual English faculty, while someone at another school volunteered their time for the virtual Mathematics faculty.

So far virtual faculties are firmly established in English and Mathematics faculties, and beginning to work in Science.

"We also have the virtual faculties. Maths, Science and English, they need to get together as a group... and there is quite a degree of conversation between the members of that virtual faculty about resourcing things, about different teaching ideas."

Teacher interview

Not all teachers are yet participating in the virtual faculties. It is expected that new ways of working may take time to gain acceptance and become standard practice.

Online collaboration at the course/subject level

Teachers described “*joint Moodles*” for subjects with several classes, which allow them to more easily deliver the same course content while sharing the responsibilities for planning and assessments.

“We have moved from being on separate Moodle pages to being coordinated on one Moodle page. So [teacher] and I are actually running it together and we take turns setting out the weekly work and planning everything together...” *Teacher*

3.2.3. Technology that enables collaboration

ICT infrastructure provides the backbone for collaboration across the partnership, from shared teacher preparation, delivery, student monitoring and daily class-based use. The following hardware and software are commonly used both alone and in combination.

Video conferencing and *Bridgit*

Bridgit software allows the presenter’s desktop to be shared with remote participants via a web link. The combined use of video conferencing and *Bridgit* is common, allowing for the display of learning materials or similar at the same time as visual contact between teacher and students, or between teachers.

Moodle

Moodle is a learning management system combining different applications catering to schools’ and individual needs. The HT Access explained that *Moodle* is used to manage a variety of collaborative tools. Use has ranged from sharing resources and simple communication to longer term collaboration, allocating tasks and planning across sites.

Edmodo

Similar to *Moodle*, *Edmodo* is an online educational website that allows collaboration, administrative and learning modules to be delivered between teachers and students.

Microsoft Office 365 and Google Apps for Education

Respondents to the teacher survey and interviews indicated some use of the *Microsoft Office 365* suite and *Google Apps for Education*, both of which were rolled out to schools in 2015.

Microsoft Office 365 provides students and teachers access to a suite of Microsoft Office software that can be used collaboratively in a virtual (cloud like) space (NSW Department of Education, 2015).

Similarly, *Google Apps for Education* is a suite of collaborative tools that allows teachers to work together to create websites or learning journals, create and manage assignments, provide feedback and host forums.

Adobe Connect

Adobe Connect is web conferencing software that provides a similar service to the combination of video conferencing and *Bridgit*. Features include streaming video, desktop sharing, chat and recording of conferencing sessions.

3.2.4. Collaboration K-12

The partnership has successfully extended the use of the collaborative *Moodle* environment beyond Stage 6 students and their teachers. Two additional discrete sections are provided for teachers and students across the cluster:

- RAP 7-10
- JRAP for primary students and their teachers.

“We try and get to start mixing, way back in primary. So you’ve got JRAP, 7-10, 11-12 and then we’ve got our staff. So now there are four sections [of the Moodle].”

RAP School Administrative Officer interview

3.3. Continuation of program/subject delivery (ToR 5)

Section 3.1 outlined the features of the networks that underpin the operation of the partnership. For the program to continue and grow over time, these features need to be maintained and extended. The evaluation has revealed the importance of:

- structures that outlast individuals
- continuous improvement of systems and infrastructure
- ensuring community support through meeting expectations.

3.3.1. Structures that outlast individuals

Ongoing success of any program relies on activities continuing even when key people move on. Strategies and structures are needed that promote continuity as well as change.

Management that is forward looking

The principal steering group anchors the program through a set of agreed guiding processes and principles, and a strong forward looking approach. Teachers talked about the importance of strong leadership in ensuring that structures continued and are implemented in a way that is beneficial to both teachers and students throughout the partnership.

Once processes are in place, the principals lead planning for the next year’s cohort:

“Our principal team always looks at the clientele coming up, coming forward. We talk about our Stage 5 kids and what their capacity is. What is it that we need to put on the ground for the following year... We already have a model that deals with individuals. It doesn’t matter how many kids are in the class. We match every kid with the subjects they have chosen for their curriculum path. It doesn’t really change the system we work with.”

Principal interview

Recognition of the importance of maintaining roles and responsibilities

Continuity of positions cannot be guaranteed, so ensuring that expertise is well distributed across the cluster is a priority.

Rotation of coordinator and co-teacher roles, careful selection of coordinating teachers, and ensuring they are well prepared are all important strategies. The partnership has established minimum expectations around the professional development teachers need to undertake before taking on a coordinator role (see section 5.4 Professional learning opportunities).

Building of expertise in each role is something that requires regular attention. The information packages available in *Moodle* take teachers through processes step by step. While new staff were involved in formal induction and upskilling, continuing teachers are encouraged to access online materials at any time *“just to freshen up”*. The HT Access highlighted the usefulness of the *Moodle* set up:

“It’s efficient for me to set it up this way because if a new coordinator comes in throughout the year then I don’t have to go and spend a day visiting someone to go through it.”

If I finish up teaching again then it’s there for someone else to come and start going through it.”

Head Teacher Access interview

Equally important to teachers is the need to have effective people in the key support roles: HT Access and the RAP School Administrative Officer.

Preparation and support for students

Principals and teachers acknowledge that the virtual learning environment requires particular sets of skills not only for themselves but also for students.

The preparatory Year 10 Open Day, induction camps and other shared activities help students build confidence and become familiar with the style of learning employed in the Access program. Building student skills also depends greatly on matching students with a co-teacher *“who will support them and guide them through to give them the strength.”*

Teachers agreed that communication between co-teacher and coordinator is vital to the ongoing support of students, especially if they may be the only one doing a particular course in a school.

Support for teachers

Many of the structural supports discussed in section 3.1 are implemented to ensure the program operates effectively and, as the HT Access described it, *“[to] get teachers teaching”*.

Teachers are very appreciative of the program’s allocation of the HT Access and the RAP School Administrative Officer. The complementary nature of these roles has been essential to the success of the partnership.

The HT Access was described as *“a strong force”* in setting up systems that have taken the load off coordinating teachers, most obviously the establishment and ongoing organisation of the *Moodle* environment.

Leading the management team involves data collection and reporting, monitoring staff absences and student welfare, changes to timelines, deadlines or assessment tasks, monitoring due dates and variations to routines, and ensuring everyone gets the information they need. Daily variations of routine emailed to staff include teacher and student absences, which assists coordinators to know whether to chase up students not attending a video conference lesson.

Sometimes taking the load off teachers means shifting responsibility back to principals for chasing up students in their schools:

“Just his expectations are so clear and he really works hard at insisting on those regulations I suppose, regarding N award letters and such. Before, some kids would drift through but [Head Teacher Access]’s been really good at following up and chasing up principals and getting them to take responsibility for their students.”

Teacher interview

Teachers frequently referred to the support they receive from the HT Access, saying he is *“very contactable and very quick to respond.”*

The HT Access said that he was able to plan for the future and concentrate on developing support for teaching and learning aspects, because a lot of the day-to-day organisation is handled by the RAP School Administrative Officer, who has been with the program for a long time.

“She’s just super organised and knows [it all] and she’ll come in and say look I’ve got these forms, this is the time that they go out. Are we happy to put them out Friday....”

Head Teacher Access interview

The RAP School Administrative Officer manages much of the day to day organisation, having developed and refined many administrative processes over time. Examples of assistance to teachers include:

- creating and managing templates in *Moodle*
- managing events across the cluster

- establishing and organising courses in folders, including importing previous materials as required
- archiving courses not in use, ready for future reference
- assisting with HSC monitoring
- setting up *Markbooks* in *Sentral* for coordinators, based on assessment schedules.

One area the RAP School Administrative Officer does not manage is the enrolment of students in each course. Rather, once a course is set up, teachers enrol their students and co-teachers themselves, so that they are aware and in control of any changes.

The range of assistance provided is ever-changing and highly valued, as expressed by one teacher:

“Whether it be making the reports process run smoothly or just dealing with the issues that occur when you are dealing with six different schools. I think [RAP School Administrative Officer] is particularly important.”

Teacher interview

3.3.2. Continuous improvement of systems and infrastructure

The flipside of maintaining continuity of processes is to ensure that they are regularly reviewed, revised and updated in response to changing circumstances.

During the Term 4 study day faculty groups discuss prospective students, the coming year, subject coordinators and co-teachers and *“review what is or wasn’t working”*.

“You do your best but it doesn’t always work. With the organisation I think every year the program gets reviewed and we try to get better at it.”

Teacher interview

Principals highlighted the value of the partnership being flexible and willing to change to meet the needs of individual students, especially if they appear not to be succeeding.

“...we have had students that it doesn’t quite work for but we make it work. We alter things and we change it up and go OK this subject may need to run internally because these kids are not coping with video conferencing.”

Principal interview

Sometimes groups of students may present challenges or new opportunities may arise.

“Every year, there’s little bits that appear and things that various year groups will expose and we need to address that and that keeps our processes current and it keeps our thinking current. We are just not resting on our laurels.”

Principal interview

Difficult decisions also have to be made to maintain the program. Changing demographics from cohort to cohort, for example, necessitate reorganisation such as combining classes over Years 11 and 12, deleting courses or even proposing alternative learning options.

“...as numbers drop, we have looked at some of the systems we have used, such as combining Years 11 and 12 -if that suits for the subject and the delivery pattern. Otherwise we might pull the subject internal and either we can staff it here at the local school or look at other avenues such as Distance Ed.”

Principal interview

Principals talked of introducing new teaching strategies or supporting systems that evolve with new technologies. A highlight of the partnership noted by several participants, has been the steady improvement in technologies over the life of the Access Program.

Succession planning

Just as processes and procedures need to be maintained over time, so too does the pool of expertise within the cluster. Sharing and building expertise is important in ensuring the program can continue to operate over time.

Rotation of teaching roles, sharing through virtual faculties and supports such as faculty handbooks, role descriptions and e-learning modules for teachers, all located on *Moodle*, support the sharing of knowledge in the event of staff changes.

“The faculty handbook will be part of succession planning, so if I leave then there will be someone else who knows that this is what we are thinking has worked before.” Teacher interview

3.3.3. Community support and expectations

Without the support of parents and their willingness to keep their children at the cluster schools, the program would not continue. It is as important to keep parents informed and comfortable with the systems as it is to support teachers and students. For many, the idea of a ‘virtual school’ may be new and challenging.

The HT Access runs information evenings to introduce the partnership to students and parents and to experience what Access is like. The sessions operate along the same lines as student classes, combining video conferencing and *Bridgit* to link each school. As explained by one teacher:

“We run a Bridgit and a PowerPoint at times, so that is similar to what happens in the classroom with kids. A little bit of an explanation about how that runs. What the expectations are for the kids at the prelim level. Yeah, then we log off and then you’ve got teachers at the home school to talk face to face with them.” Teacher interview

4. Technology requirements to support quality teaching (ToR 6)

In the Riverina, the Access Program has evolved from early days of teleconferencing and the very first electronic blackboards, to what can now be described as a 'virtual senior campus' making use of video conferencing, online technologies and face-to-face teaching.

This section addresses Term of Reference 6: Consider the nature and requirements for technology use necessary to support quality teaching and learning to rural and remote students.

4.1. Features of technology use in Riverina Access Partnership

Technology supporting the delivery of Access classes was described as needing to be:

- **flexible:** for variety of presentation modes; for curriculum delivery and professional development; both asynchronous and synchronous
- **consistently available:** as required across the cluster
- **reliable:** hardware; connections; to accommodate the needs of moving from lesson to lesson with minimal set up time.

Specifically, the technology has to support the preparation, storage and delivery of lessons, foster a sense of unity across classes and faculties within the cluster, promote collaboration between students and between teachers, and facilitate ease of administration including monitoring and reporting student participation and achievement.

A principal summed up the current requirement and approach:

*"No point in being involved if you don't have the tech. So from a partner and your own perspective, I expect them to put resources into it, you know, to make sure that they have certain hardware to engage with us... **The virtual framework is one of the things that we must have in place so we get continuity and subject delivery.**"*

Principal interview

4.1.1. Establishing a virtual framework

The current framework is built around the shared technical infrastructure, more recently supplemented by the development of an integrated system of virtual environments that support the work of teachers.

Shared infrastructure resulting in integrated systems

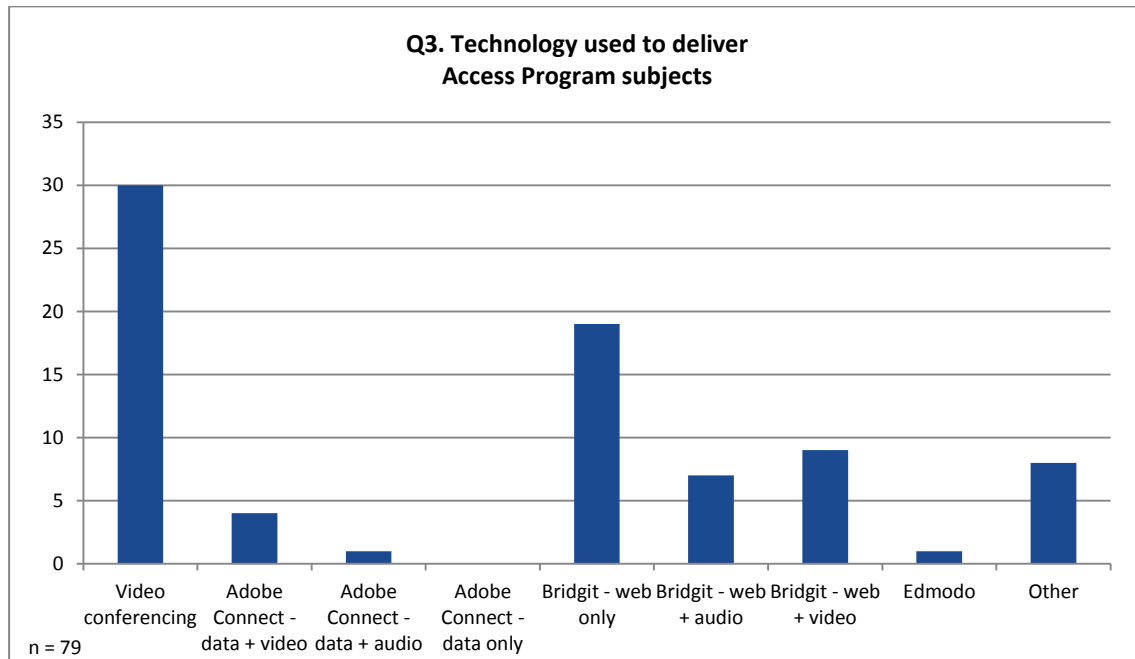
The shared infrastructure consists of:

- network connection, hardware and common software: video conferencing and *Bridgit, Adobe Connect*
- virtual environments, offering additional options for lesson delivery and participation and for administration and monitoring: *Sentral, Moodle, Edmodo*
- IT support: dedicated support provided at the program level by the Access Program Distance and Rural Technologies Team (located in Dubbo); school level through HT Access and usual school-based support resources.

Each Access Program school is equipped with dedicated facilities, located in link rooms, comprising video conferencing facilities and computer set up that allows the teacher to share on-screen materials via the department's network using *Bridgit* software.

This combination continues as the predominant means of connecting the remote classes, as shown in Figure 4.1. Similar patterns of use were reported by students with only video conferencing being used by all 14 respondents and *Bridgit* used only by 6-12 students in each form.

Figure 4.1: Teachers' use of technology to deliver learning in 2016 - Teacher survey



In 'other' teacher responses, mentions were made of *Moodle* (five occurrences), *Sentral* (three) and one each for *Microsoft Office 365* and *Google Apps*. These are recent additions to the range of tools available to the cluster.

The HT Access has led the development and evolution of the technical infrastructure that supports the partnership. His approach has been informed by Treadwell's (2009) work around 21st century teaching, in which it is argued that schools need to design a response to the changing demands of teaching and learning, rather than design ICT systems for their own sake.

The partnership has benefited from both this learning-centred approach and the development of additional means of connecting teachers and students. The result is the introduction of new tools to create a more integrated system for all aspects of planning, teaching and learning, assessment, and administration, as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Overview of the RAP shared infrastructure and integrated systems - 2016

Infrastructure		Integrated systems	
Link rooms		Student management	
Desktop computers and other devices	<i>Video conferencing</i>	- attendance	<i>Sentral</i>
Common software	<i>Bridgit</i>	- performance	<i>Markbook</i>
	<i>Adobe Connect</i>	- timetabling	<i>TimeChart</i>
Virtual environments		Learning management	<i>Moodle</i>
Increased options for delivery and participation	<i>Moodle</i>	- learning materials	JRAP
	<i>Edmodo</i>	- learning delivery	RAP 7-10
IT support		- assessment	RAP 11-12
Access Program technical support		- monitoring	Teacher
School-based support		Student work records	ePortfolio
		- storing feedback	

The HT Access explains:

“...the three systems that [Treadwell] spoke about were a student management system, which is Sentral, a learning management system, which is Moodle and then an ePortfolio, and having all those things integrated.”
Head Teacher Access interview

4.1.2. Building the integrated system

The combination of specific purpose software solutions that feed to and from each other, provides a linked system to enhance management and learning delivery within the partnership.

Sentral: student management system

The new *Sentral* enterprise version provides a set of modules for management functions, including:

- student attendance
- academic progress and wellbeing
- resources scheduling
- finances
- communications with parents and carers.

Markbook, a module of *Sentral*, was particularly noted by respondents as useful in providing class or faculty-based records using class lists drawn from the administration system.

The integrated system can grow to solve other identified issues, such as timetabling. *TimeChart*, a third-party software package, was introduced to the partnership by the HT Access to simplify what had previously been a complex, manual task, as described here:

“[previous manual process] was just a real mess. Then it was taken from that on to a Word doc, that was given to schools. Schools went back and they entered [it in] their individual pieces of software or whatever they were doing... [we] said look, if we’re going with Sentral, we need a timetable package that will talk to it.”
Head Teacher Access interview

Moodle: learning management system (LMS)

The *Moodle* LMS accommodates teaching and learning facilities for the multiple classes across the Access Program. It provides the online environment for content, learning spaces and functions and has provided a range of new ways to engage students in Access lessons.

Moodle provides the repository for information, teaching and learning materials and data of all varieties. Teachers noted that *Moodle* has increased availability of:

- organised lessons, activities, and assessment tasks for students
- support for lesson preparation, including course templates and checklists
- different media: text-based, documents, video, tutorials
- professional learning courses and materials.

In addition to information and lesson content, *Moodle* also provides a range of functions such as:

- recording of ‘link lessons’ for students who may have missed them or need clarification
- online forums and live chat, enabling students to discuss and share ideas, and teachers to collaborate and share planning
- both asynchronous and synchronous collaboration
- submission of assignments, and marking and return of assessments with feedback
- student communication through forums and lesson blogs
- communication between teachers and students.

“You have the Moodle system which is used a lot more now than it used to beSo that is communication with students -work and when due dates, assessment tasks, all that information is posted.”

Teacher interview

The value of alerts for students and for teachers was highlighted, helping students manage their work and teachers to coordinate with colleagues. For example, a co-teacher can record the date and time students have completed assessment tasks so coordinating teachers will know when to go into *Moodle* and do the marking. The HT Access described the ease of sending reminders to principals:

“...your three staff members, two of them still haven’t got a teaching program in there and now we’re in week three of term 1 . We rely on that, on the co-teachers being able to find that.”

Head Teacher Access interview

Access to *Moodle* is determined by the user’s role, allowing controlled or regulated access to materials as appropriate. Students can view only materials provided by the coordinating teachers. Coordinating teachers see all of the students in their course but co-teachers only see the students in their school. The HT Access, Administration Officer and principals have more open access allowing them to both monitor and support staff and students.

ePortfolio

The ePortfolio is the part of the system that is student controlled. It is intended for students to develop a portfolio of their work. Teachers set up the space and students manage their account to record work and other items to show parents or others.

“If they got a certificate in Sentral or they got a notification in Moodle... If they got a good mark on an essay or they did a great post or something. If [a student] wants to share that to the portfolio... and start grabbing things from there...[or] it’s a parent and teacher interview, we should then be able to see, hey, these are bits that they’re putting in their file, things that they are proud of doing.”

Head Teacher Access interview

However, the HT Access suggested it had not been widely used by students.

4.1.3. IT support

Ongoing technical support is essential to the maintenance of the infrastructure and integrated system.

The Access Program has provided many years of support to Access schools, using successive generations of virtual classroom and video conferencing facilities. The network has become increasingly robust, just as teachers’ skills have improved over time. The state-wide Access Program provides installation and maintenance of essential infrastructure components across the six RAP schools, with upgrades as available. It is managed at the program level by the technical support team located in Dubbo.

The extensive support provided by the program is supplemented at both individual cluster and school levels. The cluster may decide to provide additional technical support by pooling funds. At the school level, specific support is provided through the usual processes employed by each school, as required.

The HT Access is described as *“very good with tech support”* so is the first point of call for many teachers:

“You could ring and ask him, you could message and ask him, you could leave it on a forum, this is what I’m having issues with. He covers that, talks to you... that’s what you need to do.”

Teacher interview

Very few support issues were mentioned through the evaluation, suggesting that technical support is functioning well across the partnership.

4.1.4. Benefits of the virtual framework and integrated system

The integrated system provides a single location for most aspects of the Access courses delivered through the partnership. *Moodle* is set up as the central repository for all materials, for administration, teaching and learning, and record keeping. Data is directly linked to *Sentral* and used in reporting and communications beyond the school.

Particular benefits include ease of access to all information, monitoring student and teacher activity, and reduction in technical problems.

Ease of access to all information through the integrated system

Class tasks and lesson materials, assignments and other essential information are communicated to students through *Moodle*. Teachers explained that *Moodle* easily shows which students have received information, so they are able to support those students who have not.

For teachers and principals, information is all in one place through a single access point.

“...the information is based in the Sentral server, so there’s access to records and meetings and learning materials all through that.” Principal interview

Student attendance, achievement and welfare information is all in the system and readily accessible by any teacher across the cluster. The HT Access explained:

“...anyone in RAP that teaches [student] has every subject, even though he is in [another/core school]. They are able to see contact details and his old student data, reports, those kind of things. So it’s now like a filing cabinet...” Head Teacher Access interview

Prior to the establishment of the linked systems, it would have taken significant time and effort to collate and provide these records.

Principals can directly access the Record of School Achievement (RoSA) grades and provide the HSC monitoring requirements for NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).

Monitoring student and teacher activity

Teachers are able to login into the single system to:

- check student attendance in courses
- track student activities and review the quality of work
- see when students access assessment tasks
- track students through N-award warnings
- share confidential data.

Principals have broad access and can review student work and teacher feedback to students. They can monitor the progress of course planning and delivery, teacher professional learning and extract data for strategic planning and reporting.

The HT Access commented that since moving to *Moodle* there have been considerably fewer errors with the technology.

4.1.5. Framework PLUS

As student relationships grew they began to add ways of communicating with each other. Teachers reported students using *Skype* to help each other with assignments and *Facebook* to socialise within groups and build on their connections.

As additional solutions become available, especially through departmental provision, the virtual framework can expand. In 2015, *Microsoft Office 365* and *Google Apps For Education (GAFE)* were introduced to the partnership, providing new ways to design lessons and communicate between locations. As with all new applications, it takes time for teachers to become familiar with new software. To date, there has only been limited use of both services.

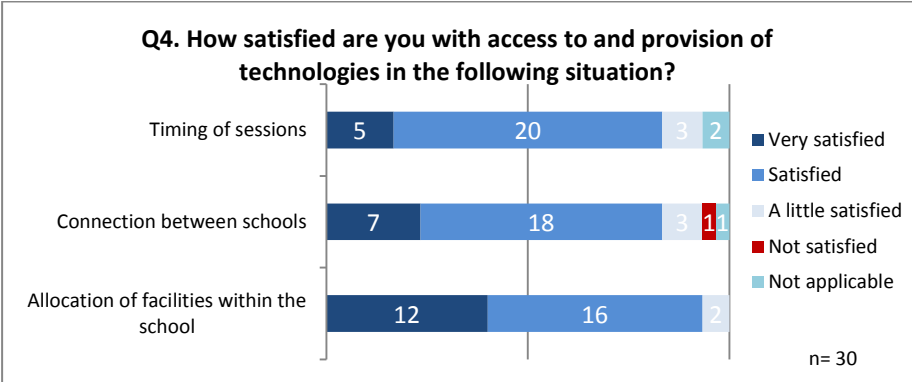
Similarly, *Adobe Connect* is available in each school and provides an option for web-based interaction. Although the HT Access is a strong supporter of the software, it is currently only being used by a small number of teachers.

4.2. How well is the virtual framework operating?

Reponses from both teachers and students are generally supportive of the current technology operation within the partnership.

Teacher survey responses, shown in Figure 4.2, indicate that most teachers are satisfied or very satisfied with the organisation of Access facilities (timing and allocation in the school) and the connection between schools.

Figure 4.2: Teacher satisfaction with access to and provision of technologies - Teacher survey



Several teachers made positive comments about the value of video conferencing arrangements to the program, particularly as they have improved over time. Examples include:

“Video conferencing facilities have improved over the years and this has meant less teaching time lost.” Teacher survey

“...we started with the old ‘cowpats’ technology [superseded phone conferencing devices] and since then we have moved on this format. The computers, the Bridgit, the whole integrated technologies, touch screen is awesome.” Teacher interview

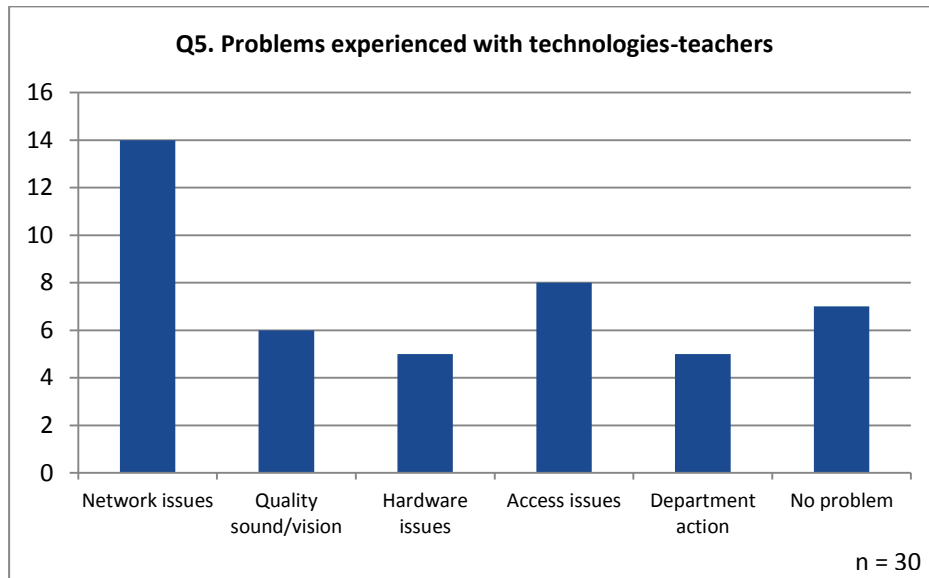
Students were asked about the technologies they enjoyed using, with the video conferencing/*Bridgit* combination reported as enjoyable, at least sometimes by all but two students.

The most frequent source of teacher dissatisfaction was interruption to lesson plans and flow when problems arose with the technology.

4.2.1. Issues experienced by teachers and students

In the teacher survey, teachers identified a range of difficulties experienced with the virtual framework. As shown in Figure 4.3, the most common problems relate to the reliability and quality of network connections between schools. This and other issues are explained below.

Figure 4.3: Common issues with technology - Teacher survey



Network issues

Disruption to internet connection was the most frequent problem identified by teachers, typified by inconsistent performance, dropouts or the Internet just being 'down'. One teacher noted that *"Thankfully this doesn't happen very often"*. Storms and general weather conditions were sometimes seen as the reason for difficulties.

Even when classes could connect, some teachers reported poor signal quality and slow connections, with sound and vision quality also variable. Several teachers were hopeful that the network would one day be *"fast enough to stream video clips over the links"*.

Students also identified network connection and quality issues as the most frequent problems experienced with the technology. Even the RAP School Administrative Officer commented that the RAP server is kept at a core school different to the hub school because of the lack of bandwidth at the hub school.

At best, network difficulties disrupt lessons making them disjointed or causing delays; at worst teachers are forced to postpone lesson components or stop using the technology altogether. One student commented, *"if the connection is bad, it's hard to understand the lesson"*.

While connectivity is still seen as a significant problem, one principal felt that the current program has come a long way and it may not be the critical issue it once was:

"The cameras are good, the bandwidth is good, the interactivity is good and instant. We don't have kids struggling with it because there is a delay anymore. I think our junior school is comfortable. The days of kids saying, 'Oh I don't really know if I want to risk my HSC on a virtual model...' I think that day is gone."

Principal interview

Access to hardware and facilities

Access issues were the second most frequently identified problem. Teachers described the following issues:

Variation in facilities, software and expertise

The goal to have a shared infrastructure across the cluster is not yet realised. Several teachers reported variations in the equipment available across classes, including:

- students not having access to individual user devices (e.g. laptops)
- fewer link rooms in some locations, so fewer video conferencing opportunities - especially in partner schools
- *“the good technology”* not accessible in all parts of the school.

Hardware and room issues appear to be most prevalent in partner schools, where funding may not be as readily available to fully equip the learning spaces.

Common software was not always available across sites, causing problems of compatibility. Substantial differences were also noted in teachers’ expertise in using the technologies.

Two teachers noted that access to reliable technologies was becoming an increasingly significant problem, as the gap widened between the levels of technological capability in the cluster schools.

Access to link rooms and set up time

Timetabling and the limited number of link rooms were described as the main reasons for restrictions in the number of link sessions. The small number of link rooms was especially problematic in partner schools. A number of teachers stated that they have no access at all to connected technologies.

Link lessons are usually timetabled back-to-back with other classes. One teacher explained that, at the start of the lesson, time is taken up with logging in and establishing the link through *Bridgit*. This together with students arriving late, reduces the actual time students and teachers spend connected and productive in link lessons.

Changing technologies and the need to update equipment

Teachers reported problems of outdated equipment, where the technologies haven’t kept up with the minimum software and infrastructure demands of the teaching and learning programs. The HT Access echoed other teachers’ comments when he stated *“...things like technology, those sort of things aren’t updated.”*

Unfortunately some updates have not been seen as improvements. Original ‘link rooms’ (where link room 1 at school X was physically connected to link room 1 at school Y) have been superseded by virtual meeting rooms, which are seen as not as good by several teachers. However, the virtual meeting room system allows greater flexibility in room use, as links can be made between any rooms (two or more) that have the equipment.

4.2.2. Central (departmental) technology issues

Some of the issues reported were not with the technologies themselves, but with departmental organisation and protocols that interfered with the operation of local Access systems. The department’s system-wide *eT4L* initiative and website filtering policy were perceived to present specific concerns. *eT4L* provides fully managed servers to schools for delivery of networking services and internet access.

Teachers in the cluster schools experienced interruptions as *eT4L* was being installed. Several expressed frustration with the outcomes, suggesting that the speed of internet and internal networking had reduced since its implementation. One teacher felt that this was only a ‘teething’ problem and that link lessons were returning back to original speed.

Similar impediments were suggested in cases where new hardware or software solutions become available. Protracted procurement processes result in new technologies being outdated or superseded by the time procurement contracts are finalised and the technologies are made available to schools. A

principal and the HT Access talked about how the department's technical standards hinder the activities of the partnership:

"The department has got their standards when it comes to technology, unfortunately they are a low standard...It might be standard for a lot of our equipment that is rolled out but by the time they get onto contracts, it's nearly out of date or it's not something we want. Like all we want at the moment, we want interactive LCD panels with computers in them but [the department] won't support them. So here we are stretching out and then getting our own. By the time they get these things worked out like the [previous] Electroboards for example, they will be getting tech that we are wanting to move past again."

Principal interview

Website filtering

Having planned lessons using particular websites or internet videos, teachers became extremely frustrated when at the time of delivering the lesson, departmental website filtering blocked access to the site. Often respondents stated that it was difficult to assess sites ahead of time as only students may be affected.

Advice from ITD suggests that all teachers can access the *Web Filter Check* facility via the department's portal [<http://filteradmin.det.nsw.edu.au/Anon/UrlReportRequest.aspx>] allowing URLs to be checked for appropriate student access prior to lessons. Regular reminders and updates on these services would assist teachers plan their work.

4.2.3. Responding to difficulties - and the need to be flexible

Teachers can be resourceful and inventive, volunteering a number of strategies used to overcome technical obstacles, including:

- always having a 'plan B'
- planning other methods to reach their students, such as email
- combining local use of *Moodle* with the video conferencing and *Brigit*.

For example, one teacher described getting around the slow network speed:

"...if you want to play a video across ... it doesn't always keep up. So sometimes you're actually better to say here's the link to the video. If you wanted to do it in a link [lesson], you know, we're going to put the mute button on. Watch it and then we'll come back. "

Teacher interview

One school's solution was to invest in a portable interactive whiteboard, improving access to this technology.

4.3. Requirements for technology necessary to support quality teaching and learning

Viewed holistically the partnership aims to establish a virtual framework comprising a shared infrastructure and management system to deliver content of substance to students and provide flexible support for teachers.

The current ICT environment is shown to support:

- lesson planning and preparation, including storage, records of lessons, and units of work that can be adapted for re-use
- delivering learning - at the class level and for faculties across schools, contributing to a sense of shared identity, reducing isolation and building capacity
- collaborative activities for students; collaborative work environments for teachers
- monitoring and assessment of student participation and achievement, and monitoring of teacher development.

The evaluation has reinforced the priority requirements of flexibility, consistency and reliability.

Mostly these have been achieved within the partnership. Although further alignment across schools, of software and solutions for shared processes such as timetabling, would still be beneficial. The RAP School Administrative Officer provided an example regarding *TimeChart*:

“Look some people really like it. I find some others are set in their ways. Some of the schools, our schools have ceded to TimeChart but there’s some who like their Edval or their other one. That’s fine, they can use that, but it would make so much sense for them all to be on the one thing, working with one timetable.”

RAP School Administrative Officer interview

4.3.1. Requirements identified through the evaluation

Review of the program suggests requirements for the use of technology that combine technical provision (hardware and software) and priority given to coordination and user skills.

The establishment of the virtual framework provides the structure for ongoing provision and future development.

Technical requirements

- **Flexibility:** allowing for a variety of presentation modes; use for curriculum delivery and professional development, both asynchronous and synchronous.
- **Consistent provision:** of hardware, software and shared systems across the cluster.
- **Reliability:** quality network connections, hardware and availability to accommodate the needs of moving from lesson to lesson with minimal set up time.
- **Adaptability:** fit for addition of new technologies, applications and options as they become available.
- **Renewal:** regular updates to equipment and systems consistently across participating schools.

It is notable that technical support issues were rarely mentioned in the evaluation responses.

Coordination and management

- Dedicated resourcing is needed for personnel to establish and maintain the framework and systems, provide support and updates, and troubleshoot as needed.
- Close liaison and integration with whole-of-department upgrades and new releases to ensure compliance and performance, and reduce disruption when these occur.

User requirements

- Teachers need to maintain their technology knowledge and skills through ongoing professional development in effective use of the technologies for remote teaching, including inclusion of practical experiences and *“ways to reinvent the way we teach”*.
- Time and support for professional learning opportunities are needed for teachers to become familiar with new technologies, including software.

A principal summed up the position of the partnership:

“...I have worked through every piece of technology in the school as it has shifted to move forward. To be honest we are in a far better place now than we have ever been when it comes to leading education forward using virtual learning.”

Principal interview

A teacher warned that while the technology provided many collaborative and other affordances, quality learning still relies on effective teaching.

5. Teacher capacity to deliver Stage 6 curriculum (ToR 7)

Term of Reference 7 asks how the Riverina Access Partnership (RAP) influences staff capacity to deliver Stage 6 curriculum in core and partner schools.

The partnership provides teachers with a variety of opportunities to build:

- subject knowledge
- experience in planning and assessment
- knowledge and skills in online learning development and delivery techniques.

Capacity building occurs through participation in partnership activities, as well as through formal professional learning activities.

5.1. Opportunities to teach Stage 6

The partnership extends teachers' opportunities to teach elective/specialist subjects, in the context of small central schools with a reduced curriculum. Without the Access Program, teachers would often be limited to teaching Years 7 to 10.

The range of Stage 6 subjects that teachers can be involved in also increased:

"If you're a science teacher you might come into a small school and might only get access to senior science, but being part of the partnership, you might be a co-teacher to physics and chemistry and build your skills that way." Teacher interview

5.2. As co-teacher

Co-teachers are strongly encouraged to be fully involved in lessons with the coordinating teacher. This provides daily opportunities to observe and take part in different teaching methods, and reflect on issues of pedagogy, remote delivery and student management.

There is a strong element of mentoring or coaching by experienced coordinating teachers who model how to present lessons using the link system. Co-teachers appreciated being able to see how different subjects are delivered, how the class is run, how practical lessons are run, and how to standardise assessments and marking. As noted by one co-teacher:

"Sometimes it can be a steep learning curve as a co-teacher but I think it's an important one as well - to get that access and to get that experience." Teacher interview

Just working in the program builds teachers' technological expertise with a range of hardware and varied applications: video conferencing, interactive whiteboards and computer software and environments; all of which are valuable to the ongoing program and for future employment opportunities.

The partnership has set the requirement that teachers must have experience as a co-teacher before taking on the role of coordinating teacher.

5.3. Virtual faculties

In addition to promoting collaboration, the virtual faculties are seen as particularly effective in supporting professional learning, especially for new or less experienced teachers. Reducing a sense of isolation builds both confidence and knowledge, as one teacher explained:

“I was the sole science teacher. I had no one else. As a beginning teacher there wasn’t a lot to bounce off. So that [virtual faculty] opened my network up as a teacher. So having more experienced people I could call on to develop programs and assessment tasks and bounce ideas off.”

Relieving principal interview

More experienced staff commented on the ease with which they could assist younger staff via extended phone calls, emails, video conferences and face-to-face events.

The larger faculty group enables exposure to expertise across the breadth of subjects in any learning area. Just as the range of science subject opportunities increases, as mentioned earlier, a legal studies teacher commented on the professional learning gained from being part of a larger network:

“It’s been very interesting learning about business studies which has a lot of parallels to legal studies. I am not trained in business but I am trained for Legal. Or in early childhood studies, it is interesting learning about lots of different subjects as well. I think it’s really useful in a small school like we are in ... to be part of the larger faculties.”

Teacher interview

A small number of teachers reported that they had access to a wider set of teaching resources as a consequence of faculty collaboration across the six schools.

5.4. Professional learning opportunities

Teacher professional learning is offered to teachers across the cluster of schools. Based on teachers who identified professional learning activities, either in survey or interview responses, a range of opportunities were seen as useful in enhancing their capacity to work in the program.

5.4.1. Induction courses

Of the activities listed by teachers, induction workshops for new teachers, coordinators, co-teachers and In-school Access Coordinators (ISACs) were all seen as very useful.

A variety of induction packages are located on *Moodle* including role descriptions, ‘how to’ materials such as working with the year course template, and video clips and tutorials that detail processes step-by-step.

In 2016, the coordinator’s induction was set as the standard for taking the role. A teacher must complete the e-learning course and have it confirmed electronically that they have read all materials, done all the tutorials, and know what the requirements are to be a coordinator. The induction courses for co-teachers and ISACs are also required for teachers in those roles.

Induction modules are available at all times for teachers experienced in Access who would like to do a refresher course. In some cases, specific faculty induction sessions are planned.

5.4.2. Formal professional development

The partnership organises at least one ‘formal’ combined school development day per year, perhaps with expert guest speakers, focusing on effective teaching and with time for faculty meetings and planning.

Other formal activities are offered both across the cluster, such as dedicated courses introducing new tools and strategies, and at the individual school level, more often targeting local requirements of teachers, particularly in subject areas or about 21st century learning.

Teachers made it clear that they prefer to take part in courses, including the joint staff development days, that are registered for teacher accreditation. The difficulty of getting courses registered was noted by several principals, for example:

“It’s a difficult thing to register a course that we might run here. We could run a number of distance courses and get it up no worries. It takes a lot of time and a lot of resources to register one - even though we might be leaders in a lot ways in collaborative learning - to get that recognised. It’s a busy place, we have a big agenda and we can still get the same results on the ground without registering.”

Principal interview

5.4.3. Informal professional development

In addition to the formal activities, teachers spoke often about the informal ways they added to their expertise. Most useful were:

- access to the *Moodle* training modules that teachers use in their own time or refer to as needed
- network meetings
- collegial activities such as sharing resources, phoning, messaging, or posting on a forum, especially to the HT Access, for the resolution of any issues they were encountering.

5.4.4. Role of Moodle

Moodle is used to manage the learning of teachers as well as students, both in the delivery of learning activities and monitoring completion.

The system provides access to all materials, organised into formal ‘courses’ or used as needed by individuals. As noted by the HT Access, it provides the best way for teachers to learn how to use the system for preparing student learning materials:

“One of the things we did with Moodle when we first brought it in was - Moodle is an e-learning package and one of the best ways to train staff in how to set their own courses up is to have them jump in to an e-learning course that we’ve developed that showcases video, all the tools that they can use in their images and stuff...”

Head Teacher Access interview

Teachers acknowledged the work done by the HT Access in continually updating the *Moodle* materials in order to build on those skills they had already learned.

Access leaders are able to use *Moodle* to monitor staff professional learning. Individual completion of e-learning modules is tracked through the system. A principal noted that:

“We know on our register whether or not [teachers] have been through the tutorials or whether they haven’t. We also check that against the log so there is an expectation that everyone goes through that as part of their... induction process ...

Moodle has been around for a long time. We don’t actually have too many staff coming in here as a teacher, even a new teacher, that is not aware of Moodle.”

Principal interview

The HT Access said this made it easy for him to see how teachers are progressing and arrange a period or two off class to do a tutorial, if required.

5.4.5. Subject focus of professional development

Both formal and informal activities focus on the use of technology, including updating skills, use of the *Sentral* and *Moodle* systems, and introduction of new features or processes. For example,

“Especially when we brought the new report system in, [Head Teacher Access] had videos on how to do everything. So you could go back and watch it, pause it, do it on your screen. Go, yeah, that’s where I’m up to. Yes I’m on the right track.”

Teacher interview

These are complemented by a variety of other sessions ranging from curriculum-targeted courses to NESA requirements for the Higher School Certificate (HSC) or Record of School Achievement (RoSA).

Higher School Certificate support

Teachers particularly value the professional learning around the HSC and the priority it is given by principals.

Less experienced staff noted the professional learning gained, particularly:

- Moodle tutorials and training courses, developed by the HT Access, that model how the HSC courses should be taught
- working one-on-one, marking HSC trial papers with coordinator/co-teacher or through the virtual faculties
- marking days for Year 11 and HSC across the six schools, in person where possible or linked online.

“Even [subject area] had a joint marking day this year... We see it as really important and so we do free staff.”

Principal interview

5.4.6. Ongoing needs

Despite the variety of professional development opportunities discussed through the evaluation, most teacher survey respondents reported having no professional learning (13/30) or less than 1 day (7/30) during the past 12 months.

Several final survey comments identified the importance of:

- time allocated for formal professional development
- ongoing professional learning specific to the technologies needed for teaching in the RAP program, for example:

“Training should be provided on all the different technologies that can be used. This would improve my delivery of the course and make it more interactive for my students.”

Teacher survey

Glossary

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Access Program	A program to extend the range of HSC courses to Years 11 and 12 students in clusters of central schools via information technologies.
Access cluster	A group of schools in a single Access Program.
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank: a selection rank based on a student's overall academic achievement.
Co-teacher	A teacher who attends a lesson being delivered by a coordinating teacher located at another school. The co-teacher supports students who are learning via remote technology.
Access coordinating teacher	A teacher who delivers a Stage 6 course to students in another school or schools via online technology in the Access Program.
Core school	A school in the Access Program cluster eligible to receive Access funding.
DoE	NSW Department of Education
effective	Producing a desired result.
Head Teacher Access (HT Access)	The teacher who coordinates Access Program activities across all schools in the Access cluster, including partner schools.
Hub school	The school in an Access cluster administering the Access Program.
ISAC	In-school Access Coordinator: the teacher who liaises with HT Access and coordinates Access Program activities within one school.
JRAP	Junior Riverina Access Partnership: an extension of RAP on <i>Moodle</i> to primary students and their teachers. Other sections on <i>Moodle</i> are for Years 11 and 12, Years 7 to 10 and teachers.
Link room	Originally these were rooms in a linked system whereby Link Room 1 in one school is linked to Link Room 1 in another school (originally a telephone link to a classroom). Although they are run through virtual meeting rooms, the term has been retained. A lesson is often referred to as a 'link' or a link lesson.
Partner school	A school participating in the Access cluster but not eligible to receive Access funding.
Riverina Access Partnership (RAP)	Riverina Access Partnership: the group of four core Access Program central schools (Ardlethan CS, Ariah Park CS, Barellan CS, Hillston CS) and two partner central schools (Lockhart CS and Oaklands CS).

TECHNOLOGY TERM	DESCRIPTION
<i>Adobe Connect</i>	A web conferencing software with a variety of tools that allow computer users in various locations to share events such as meetings and classes. Includes synchronous, interactive tutorials and simulations using media-rich content.
<i>Bridgit</i>	Software for data collaboration, supported by the department. It allows sharing of computer views, including multimedia elements. This is often used in conjunction with video conferencing.
<i>Edmodo</i>	A Learning Management System similar to <i>Moodle</i> where a teacher can create collaborative learning environments and assign tasks to students and groups.
<i>eT4L</i>	<i>Enhanced Technology for Learning (eT4L)</i> eT4L is the department's centralised server system that aims to improve the delivery of technology services to schools by providing a standardised platform across schools.
ePortfolio	An ePortfolio is a digital collection of work that documents achievements, resources and demonstrations to represent the learning journey of an individual or group.
e-learning modules	e-learning are specially designed learning modules, aimed to be delivered digitally.
LMS	Learning Management System: used to organise information and resources for teachers and students, communicate between participants and deliver teaching and learning materials in each subject. It allows access to personalised learning modules.
<i>Markbook</i>	This is part of the assessment module in <i>Sentral</i> that provides class or faculty-based records of student achievements.
<i>Moodle</i>	<i>Moodle</i> is a free, open-source LMS used within the Riverina Access Partnership.
<i>Sentral</i>	<i>Sentral</i> is a comprehensive platform that supports solutions for school record keeping, including attendance, assessment and wellbeing.
<i>TimeChart</i>	<i>TimeChart</i> is a software that allows schools to develop and organise school timetables.
VC	Video conference: provides live conference between two or more locations using video and audio communications.
Virtual faculty	A combined faculty that links teachers from different schools.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Riverina Access Partnership details

This section provides an overview of the Riverina Access Partnership (RAP) and has been drawn from documents provided by Rural and Distance Education and the RAP School Administrative Officer.

Aim

The Access Program was originally designed in the context of the Government's Rural Education Plan 1988-1992 which had as its overall objective "to improve access to education for all rural students and to reduce educational disadvantage caused by isolation."

The specific objectives of the Access Program trial in a small number of central schools were to:

- ensure access to schooling as near as practicable to the students' homes
- increase the retention of rural students at school
- improve the quality of education for rural students through the extension of choice of subjects, study modes and opportunities for student not currently served by rural schools
- explore the potential of available technologies to assist schools in their curriculum endeavour.

Access outcomes

The NSW State Access Program Guidelines 2004 states that the vision for Access is "Creating innovative, collaborative and technological environments which optimise educational access and outcomes for Year 11 and 12 students in remote and isolated areas of NSW" and the intended outcomes are:

- members of each school's community are partners in supporting the Access cluster
- students are effective citizens, able to participate in a wide range of public and private endeavours
- students achieve individual excellence in learning
- students are independent, lifelong learners
- teachers achieve excellence with teaching and learning strategies
- technology is used competently and effectively
- effective collaboration occurs across individual Access clusters
- effective collaboration occurs across the NSW Access Program.

The sharing of curriculum delivery enables rural students to complete their secondary education at their local school without having to live away from home. The inclusion of partner schools increases the pool of teaching expertise and the number of students wanting to do certain subjects, thus increasing the number of subjects that can be made available to students. Opportunities are provided for Access students to come together to engage in shared activities including study days, sporting events and excursions.

Background

The Access Program in the Riverina cluster started as a pilot program in 1990, with Ardlethan Central School, Aria Park Central School and Barellan Central School. The trial was deemed successful to continue in 1993. Hillston Central School became part of the Riverina Access Program in 2000. The four core schools in the Riverina Access cluster received a \$5000 grant under the NSW Government's Rural and Remote Education Blueprint for Action. This grant, managed by the hub school, Ardlethan

Central School, supported schools to explore ways to strengthen collaboration, curriculum and quality of teaching to benefit Stage 6 students.

Urana Central School and Oaklands Central School contributed coordinators to the program from 2009 and Lockhart Central School participated in subjects from 2011. However, partner schools do not receive funding. The program was rebadged as the Riverina Access Partnership in 2011. Urana Central School ceased to participate from 2014 when its secondary classes closed.

The partner schools contribute to the planning and operation of the partnership and are considered equal participants in the program. The core schools in the partnership and their partner schools have a Memorandum of Understanding outlining the operations and processes employed by the program.

Key roles

Role	Detail
Principals of each school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • overall governance of the cluster • Principal Steering Group sets directions for the cluster
Hub school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school administering the program
Core schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fully funded member of the Access Program cluster • student numbers are used as the basis for funding and staffing allocations for the cluster
Partner schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • additional school contributing to and participating in the functions of the cluster • receives no additional funding • student numbers are not included for the purposes of funding to the cluster
Head Teacher Access (HT Access)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • located in hub school • receives head teacher allowance and 0.5 staffing allocation • leads the Access management team • responsibility of ensuring the smooth operation of the program across cluster schools
In-school Access Coordinator (ISAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manages organisation of the Access Program within their home school • supports students in all Access subjects in the home school • liaises with HT Access in hub school • receives 0.1 staffing allocation
Access coordinating teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivers courses to and supports students in several schools • may be located in any of the cluster schools • visits students at remote sites, as required • supports students in their home school
Access co-teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assists the subject coordinating teacher in delivery of the subject at the home school • support students in the subject in their home school
RAP School Administrative Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • located in hub school • supports the program 4 days/week • provides administrative assistance to the Principal steering committee, the management group, HT Access and all teachers within the cluster.

The HT Access staffing allocation is 0.5 Access coordination release, 0.2 head teacher release and the remaining 0.3 is allocated to the home school to facilitate curriculum delivery as determined by the hub school principal.

Participants - 2016

Students

Preliminary: 36 (including 4 x Year 10 students who are completing at least one Preliminary Subject)

HSC: 26

Coordinators of courses

Preliminary: 20 courses, 22 coordinators.

Additional coordinators are required for the 2 x Standard English and 2 x General Maths classes,

HSC: 21 courses. There are 2 English Standard Classes, therefore total overall coordinators = 22.

Please note that the HSC and Preliminary courses in the same subject are often coordinated by the same teachers.

Appendix 2: Interview schedules

Teacher interview

1. What is your role in the Riverina Access Partnership? What do you do as...
 - HT Access
 - Coordinating teacher
 - Teacher
 - Co-teacher
2. What is your base school?
 - Ardlethan Central School
 - Aria Park Central School
 - Barellan Central School
 - Hillston Central School
 - Lockhart Central School
 - Oaklands Central School
3. What subjects are you qualified to teach?
4. What Stage 6 subjects, conveyed via technology to students in more than one school, did you teach or co-teach in 2015?
5. How many years have you been teaching in this mode? What classes have you taught (or typically taught) via this method in the past?
6. Can you tell me about how you think the subjects delivered through the Access Program have contributed to aspirations and post-school intentions for ...
 - current students?
 - previous students?

Prompt: Can you provide examples?
7. How does the Riverina Access Program determine individual student learning needs and provide learning experiences for them?

Prompt:

 - surveys or face to face to determine choice of subjects?
 - assessing level of student learning?
8. How do teachers meet different levels of need within classes?
9. What strategies do you use to support collaboration in Access Program subjects between
 - teachers?
 - schools?
 - students?
10. What are the strategies for communication across the network of the Riverina Access Program?

Prompts:

 - How often do you communicate/meet with each other?
 - How long are the communications/meetings?
 - How many teachers are involved?
 - How often do they attend these meetings?

11. What organisational procedures are followed between schools of the partnership? Why?

Prompts:

- between the core schools?
- between the core and partnership schools?
- Does the inclusion of partner schools assist or hinder the network?

12. In order to support continuity of the program, how has the Riverina Access Program adapted to changes?

Prompts: For example, changes in

- student numbers and therefore staffing
- needs of students
- technology advancements
- risk management issues associated with flexible operations.

13. Has the Access Program provided formal professional learning opportunities? If so, can you elaborate?

Prompts: For example,

- in subject knowledge or skills and strategies
- when? how frequently?

14. Has the Access Program provided informal professional learning opportunities?

Prompts:

- for co-teachers
- as support for new staff
- sharing knowledge about Stage 6 between teachers and schools
- other .

15. Is there anything else you would like to add about your participation in the Access Program?

Principal interview

1. What is your base school and how long have you been at that school?

2. Can you tell me about how you think the subjects delivered through the Access Program have contributed to the aspirations and post-school intentions for current students and for previous students?

Prompt: Can you provide examples?

3. How do you determine individual student learning needs and provide learning experiences for them through the Riverina Access Partnership?

4. How does your school support collaboration between

- Teachers?
- Schools?
- Students?

5. What are the strategies for communication across the network of the Riverina Access Partnership?

Prompts:

- Are principals involved? If so, how often do you communicate/meet with each other?
- How long are the communications/meetings?

- Which teachers are involved?
 - What is the attendance/participation rate at these meetings?
6. What organisational procedures are followed between RAP schools? And why?
 - between the core schools
 - between the core and partnership schools
 - Does the inclusion of partner schools assist or hinder the network?
 7. In order to support continuity of the program, how does the Riverina Access Partnership adapt to changes?

Prompts, for example, in:

 - Student numbers and consequently staffing
 - Needs of students
 - Technology advancements
 - Risk management issues associated with flexible operations
 8. Has the Access Program provided formal professional learning opportunities? If so, can you elaborate?

Prompts, for example, in:

 - subject knowledge?
 - skills and strategies?
 9. Has the Access Program provided informal professional learning opportunities? If so, can you elaborate?

Prompts, for example:

 - for co-teachers?
 - As support for new staff?
 - Sharing knowledge about Stage 6 between teachers and schools?
 10. Is there anything else you would like to add? For example, about what is working well in the Access Program or any suggestions for how it could work better?

Appendix 3: Surveys and responses

Student survey and responses

Respondents to the survey came from five out of the six Riverina Access Partnership schools, encompassing four core and one partner schools. The non-responding school was a partner school.

Contextual information

Q1 What school do you attend?

School	No. of responses
School A	1
School B	1
School C	3
School D	3
School E	6
School F	0
Total	14

Q2 I am...

Gender	No. of responses
Female	7
Male	7
Total	14

Q3 I am a student in...

Scholastic Year	No. of responses
Year 11	3
Year 12	11

Curriculum delivery through the Riverina Access Partnership

Q4 Which subjects are you studying with students from other schools and what technology is used to present those lessons to all schools?

Technologies used, by subject	Video conferencing	Edmodo or other web conf.	Bridgit	Adobe Connect	Other
English Standard	9		6	1	1
Mathematics	8		7	1	
Biology	6		6		
English Advanced	5		5		1
Modern History	4		4		
Music 1	4		3		1
Mathematics General	3		3		1
Senior Science	3		3		1
Chemistry	3		3		
Personal Development, Health and Physical Education	3		3		
Physics	3		3		
Industrial Technology – Timber	2		2	1	

Technologies used, by subject	Video conferencing	Edmodo or other web conf.	Bridgit	Adobe Connect	Other
Business Studies	2		2		
Visual Arts	2		2		
Aboriginal Studies	1		1		
Legal Studies	1		1		
Mathematics Extension 1	1		1		
Community and Family Studies	1				
Exploring Early Childhood	1				
Food Technology					1
Hospitality – Kitchen Operations					1
Hospitality – Food and Beverage					1
Sport, Lifestyle and Recreation Studies					1

Key point: The responses in the 'Other' column were not accompanied by text responses.

Subjects respondents did not indicate use of technology	
Agriculture	Ancient History
Business Services	Construction
English Extension 1	English Studies
Geography	Information and Digital Technology
Mathematics General 1	Mathematics General 2
Metals and Engineering	Photography, Video and Digital Imaging
Primary Industries	Retail
Visual Design	Work Studies

Key point: These options were offered to students but no responses associated with them.

Q5 How many of these subjects are taught by a teacher at another school?

Subjects taught by external teachers	No. of responses
Two	3
Three	4
Four	4
Five or more	3

Q6.1 – 6.4 How frequently do the following (issues) affect your learning via a teacher based in another school? n = 56

Question	Issue	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Almost never
6.1	Inability to show your work to the teacher during the lesson	2	1	7	4
6.2	Not being able to ask questions privately during the lesson	2	2	6	4
6.3	Having to ask questions between lessons via email	2	5	4	3

Question	Issue	Almost always	Often	Sometimes	Almost never
6.4	Lack of one-to-one support	3	2	6	3

Q6.5 Have you experienced any other problems when learning with a teacher based in another school?

Theme counts	No. of responses
None	7
Quality of connection/sound/visuals	4
Access to facilities/ <i>Bridgit</i>	3
Access to VC classes [most useful]	2
Inability to access/understand explanations/ask questions of coordinating teacher[at other school]	3
Lack of support from co-teacher (in own school)	3

Key point: This was an open question, with students suggesting more than one problem. Responses are grouped by themes.

Q7 Which of your subjects taught by a teacher in another school are most successfully delivered via electronic means?

Count by key learning area	No. of responses
English	4
Science	10
PDHPE	1
Human Society and Its Environment	1
Mathematics	1
TAS	1
None	2

Key point: This was an open question, with students suggesting more than one subject. Subjects are grouped into key learning areas. One student stated Modern History because the teacher was within the school, while it would be Senior Science if out of the school. This was categorised as Science.

Future intentions and student aspirations

Q8 What type of job are you interested in having when you are thirty years old?

Text responses	n = 14
I would like to keep my options open. My goal is to work in the hospitality industry but I have also set life goals to achieve e.g. travel.	
Music Producer, Performer or Piano Teacher	
In medical/health industry - dietician/nutritionist	
Retiree	
I'm not quite sure yet	
Sports development and management/ PDHPE Teacher /	
Firefighter and Army	
A career based in Medicine	
Engineering/surveying or sport job e.g. physiotherapy	

Text responses	n = 14
A career in law or accounting	
Not sure	
Electrician or software developer	
Doing a trade in the metal or wood industry.	
Something reliable and successful.	

Q9 What are your work or study intentions when you leave school?

Post-school intentions	No. of responses
Go to University	8
Apprenticeship or traineeship	1
Job not requiring further study	2
Not decided yet	2
Other	1

Key point: The student selecting 'Other' stated "Get a job then find studies at TAFE that could possibly get me further into a career".

Q10 How do your subject/s (studied with a teacher in another school) relate to what you intend to do when you leave school?

Subjects relationship with post-school intentions	No. of responses
Required for further studies or work	5
Might provide the ATAR needed for a university course	8
Similar area of interest to the work I want to do	8
Not related to future intentions	1
Studied for another reason - Because I enjoy them - I'm currently working in a similar business and am thinking of pursuing something similar	2

Technology in the Riverina Access Partnership

Q11 Do you enjoy learning via the following technologies?

Enjoyment of learning via technologies	Yes	Some-times	No	Not used
Video conferencing	6	6	2	
Adobe Connect for data collaboration with video	1	1	1	11
Adobe Connect for data collaboration with audio			2	12
Adobe Connect for data collaboration only	1		2	11
Bridgit for web collaboration only	8	3	1	2
Bridgit for web collaboration with audio	2	2	2	8
Bridgit for web collaboration with video	3	1	6	4
Edmodo			2	12
Other technology used	1		1	12

Key point: The student who selected 'Other technology used' stated, "Face to face".

Q12 Do you experience difficulties when learning via technologies with a teacher or students in another school?

Difficulties experienced with technologies	No. of responses
Yes	5
No	9

Key point: Those students who selected 'Yes' reasoned:

- Internet connectivity problems - Can't access *Bridgit*, *Moodle* or video conference. / Sometimes takes a few days for a teacher to get back via email.
- Sometimes it is hard to understand and learn when teachers are not at the same school and just teaching over link lessons.
- Internet difficulties as explained earlier and not able to have one on one time.
- You do not feel that your ideas are getting through to them. / It takes a long time to communicate with your teachers.
- If connection is bad, it's hard to understand the lesson and being in a video conference with other schools you can't just talk to the teacher one on one without disrupting the lesson or speaking in front of all the schools. Asking about a question is also hard because the teacher has to explain it over a video instead of showing you in person.

Q13 What do you like about learning via technologies with a teacher or students in another school?

Common themes	No. of responses
Social interaction; new friends	8
Collaborative learning	5
Greater subject availability and new learning opportunities	5
Access to other [higher standard] teachers	2
None	1

Key point: This was an open question, with students suggesting more than one area of enjoyment. Responses are grouped by themes.

Additional comments

Q15 Are there any other comments you would like to add about learning online with students in other schools?

Text responses	n = 4
Nope	
It's great	
We need teachers who are properly trained in their respective areas	
Nope	

Teacher survey and responses

Respondents to the survey came from five out of the six Riverina Access Partnership schools, four core and one partner school.

Contextual information

Q1 School name

School	No. of responses
School A	5
School B	4
School C	9
School D	6
School E	6
School F	0
Total	30

Q2 What is your role in the Riverina Access Partnership?

Roles	No. of responses
Co-teacher	5
Coordinating teacher	13
Teacher	6
Head Teacher Access	1
Other	5
Total	30

Key point: Text responses from the 'Other' responses include multiple roles. These included:

- 2 principals
- 3 In-school Access Coordinator
- 1 teacher
- 1 coordinating teacher
- 1 co-teacher

Technology use in the Riverina Access Partnership

Q3 What technologies are used at your school to deliver or receive Riverina Access Partnership subjects?

Technology used								
Video conference	Adobe Connect - data + video	Adobe Connect - data + audio	Adobe Connect - data only	Bridgit - web only	Bridgit - web + audio	Bridgit - web + video	Edmodo	Other
30	4	1	0	19	7	9	1	8

Key point: Text responses from the 'Other' responses include:

- 5 occurrences of Moodle
- 3 occurrences of Sentral
- Prezi
- Microsoft Word online (Office 365)
- Google Apps

Q4 How satisfied are you with access to and provision of technologies in the following situations?

Satisfaction	Very satisfied	Satisfied	A little satisfied	Not satisfied	Not applicable
Allocation of facilities within the school	12	16	2		
Connection between schools	7	18	3	1	1
Connections between schools and Rural Distance Education Unit	2	7	4	2	15
Connections between schools and Public Schools Networks	1	11	4	2	12
Connections between schools and State Office	1	10	4		15
Timing of sessions	5	20	3		2

Q5 Please provide details of any problems you have experienced with the technologies you use in the Riverina Access Partnership.

Theme	No. of responses
Internet/Wi-Fi/Networking issue	14
Hardware issue	5
Access to reliable technology	8
Quality sound/vision/connection	6
Department action	5
No problems	7

Key point: This was an open question, with teachers suggesting more than one problem. Responses are grouped by themes.

Q6 What is the level of experience in the use of the technologies needed by you for the Riverina Access Partnership?

Level of experience	No. of responses
High level	6
Moderate level	18
Low level	4
Novice level or no experience	2

Q7a How much professional learning related to delivering lessons through the Riverina Access Partnership have you had this year?

Amount of professional learning	No. of responses
Nil	13
Less than 1 day	7
One to two days	8
Three to four days	2
Five days or more	0

* The final survey was submitted at the beginning of Term 1, 2016.

Professional learning

Q7b What professional learning related to delivering lessons through the Riverina Access Partnership did you receive this year and last year?

Usefulness of professional learning by topic	Very useful	Useful	Partly useful	Not at all useful
<i>Sentral</i> reports	4			
<i>Sentral</i> rolls	1			
Professional learning by HT Access	1			
<i>Smartboard</i> and Panels	1			
Online videos	1			
Self-developed eLearning modules	1			
<i>Moodle</i>	3	1	1	
Coordinator induction	2			
Induction	1	1		
ISAC induction	1			
Co-teacher induction	1			
State Access Management Meetings	1			
Faculty meetings	1			
ISAC Meeting		1		
School development day (SDD) with Stuart/Robyn		1		
SDD		1		
HSC Rural Forum		1		
<i>How2Learn</i>		1		
Collegial discussion re VC		1		
<i>Prezi & Edmodo</i>		1		
21st Century learning		1		
Subject specific		1		
Art techniques			1	
SDD on technology			1	
Responses with no detail	5			6

Key point: Each response regarding usefulness was accompanied by an open text box.

Additional comments

Q8 Is there anything else you would like to add about the requirements for, and use of, technologies in the Riverina Access Partnership?

Themes based on text responses	n = 30
VC and interactive technologies improved access.	
Need for ongoing professional learning in technology.	
Need for professional learning and training for students and teachers in tech specific to RAP, including hardware, software and troubleshooting.	
Need time for professional learning.	
Need access to technologies.	
Technologies are effective and useful, e.g. VC. This has improved over the years.	
Access necessary for students to remain at school.	
Students' effective managers and users of technologies, which are transferrable skills for future.	

Key point: This was an open question, with teachers suggesting more than one problem. Responses are grouped by themes.



Staff Induction – Roles and Responsibilities

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MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

STATE ACCESS MANAGEMENT GROUP (SAMG)

Membership includes:

- Manager, Distance Education and Access Program (Executive Officer)
- One School Education Director
- One CEO Teaching and Learning
- Head Teacher Access from each Access Cluster
- One Principal from each Access Cluster
- Any other members as co-opted

The School Education Director and CEO Teaching and Learning are to be appointed for a two year tenure and should be from different clusters.

Frequency of Meetings

Meetings are to be held at least once per term.

Additional meetings or video conferences may also be called.

Terms of Reference

The SAMG will provide information and advice on the NSW Access Program to the Regional Director responsible for Distance Education.

The role of SAMG is to:

- Identify the needs of the Access Program
- Develop a State Access Management Plan
- Make recommendations about the allocation of funding
- Provide advice to the Regional Director, Distance Education as required
- Act as a forum for the sharing of experiences and resources across Access Programs
- Provide information for an annual update of the Access Program Management Manual
- Promote the NSW Access Program
- Provide a framework for Access Cluster Management Plans
- Evaluate the Access Program

CLUSTER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ROLE

The Cluster Management Committee is responsible for the general management of the Riverina Access Partnership (RAP), across all participating schools, including implementation of elements of the State Access Management Plan, and all aspects of the Cluster Management Plan.

Membership

- Principal from each school or a nominated representative who will act on behalf of the Principal. One of whom will be a member of SAMG.
- School coordinator from each school (ISAC) or a nominated representative who will act on behalf of the ISAC.
- Head Teacher Access (HTA)
- RAP School Administrative

Frequency of Meetings

One face to face meeting per term, with additional meetings as required, (this model is based on current funding)

1. Management Plans

The Cluster Management Committee will:

- a) Ensure RAP is included in school management plans and reflects State Access directions
- b) Develop a local RAP Management Plan and ensure its implementation

2. Communication

The Cluster Management Committee will:

- a) Identify and clarify processes for communication and information dissemination
- b) Provide feedback between the Cluster and the SAMG and the individual schools

3. Finances

The Cluster Management Committee will ensure that the HTA and the Principals of the school where the cluster's finances are held will:

- a) Draft a budget for the Term 4 Management Meeting
- b) Ensure the school prepares a report for each meeting
- c) Take responsibility for the management of finances

4. Curriculum

The Cluster Management Committee will:

- a) Determine course offerings
- b) Endorse reporting and assessment procedures
- c) Evaluate HSC results and participation rates and develop an improvement plan for the cluster
- d) Will oversee the conduct of a RAP agreed upon, SC Monitoring policy.

5. Staffing

The Cluster Management Committee will:

- a) Discuss Coordinating Teachers and other staffing issues annually and as they arise
- b) Discuss and determine RAP Staffing Allocations
- c) Promote collaboration between Coordinating teachers and co-teachers.

6. Conflict Resolution

The Cluster Management Committee have identified procedures for a variety of conflict resolution scenarios (with a meeting the last resort for resolutions).

7. Professional Learning and Professional Practice (PLaPP)

The Cluster Management Committee will:

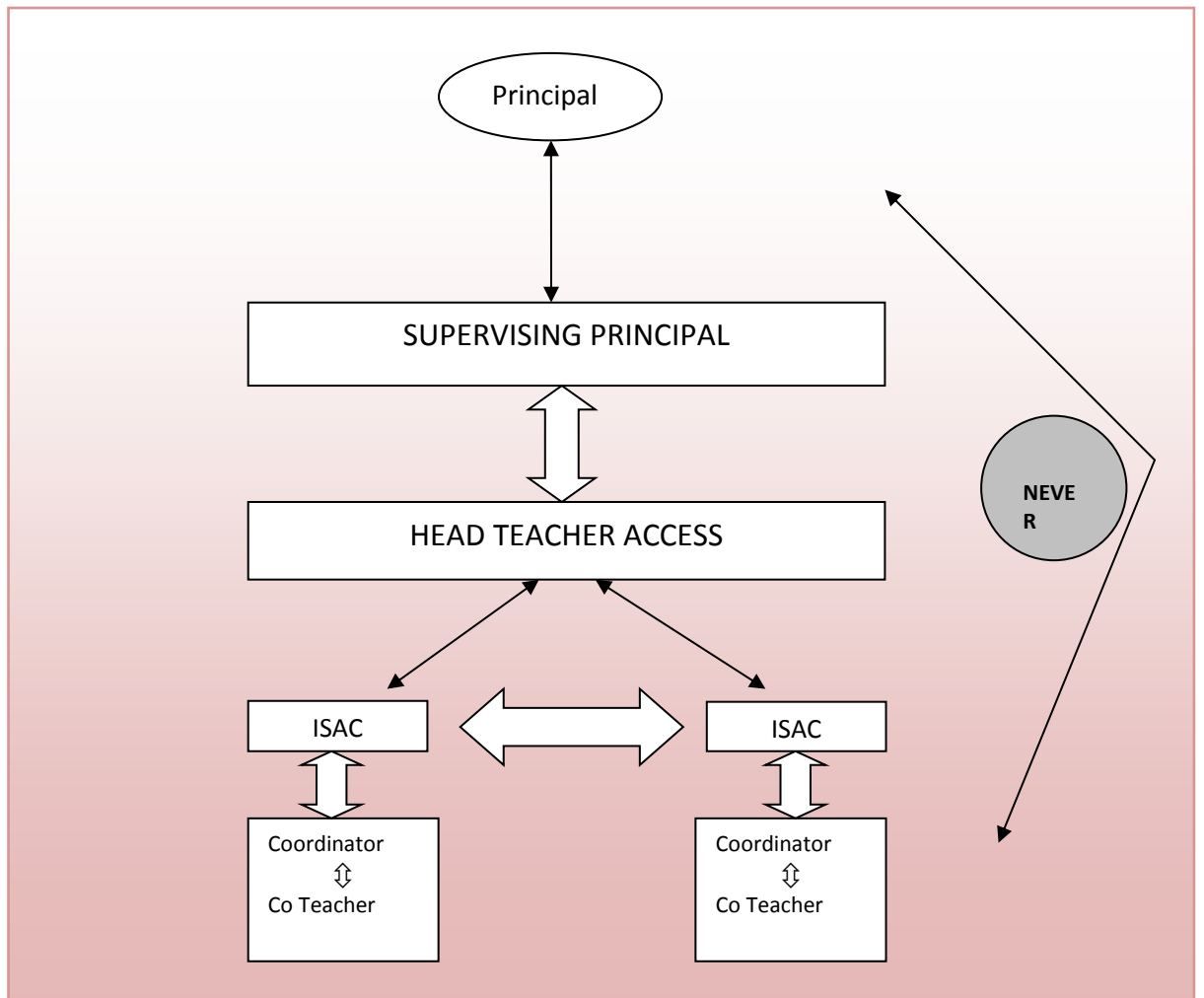
- a) Ensure new staff undertake an induction process

8. RAP Program evaluation

The Cluster Management Committee will:

- a) Ensure there is an annual evaluation process

A MODEL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT PROTOCOLS



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

SUPERVISING PRINCIPAL

- Supervision of Head Teacher Access
- Coordinate Principals meetings as and when deemed necessary
- Liaise with staffing or other State organizations on behalf of RAP

PRINCIPAL

Principals of schools that provide learning via RAP have a responsibility to actively support the success of RAP.

This role includes:

- Attending and participating in Cluster Management meetings and/or SAMG if appointed to that role
- Appointing a delegate when they are unable to attend such meetings
- Regularly overseeing and liaising with the Head Teacher Access in maintaining best practice in RAP
- Actively supporting all school staff involved in the RAP, including the provision of clear role statements and PLaPP plans and ensuring their implementation
- Providing support and direction to Stage 6 RAP students relevant to their needs
- Becoming familiar with and contributing to the RAP cluster management plan and budget
- Attending to the provision of all Stage 6 and BOSTES requirements in their school relevant to RAP e.g. HSC Monitoring and PLaPP
- Acknowledging RAP in school planning and reporting documentation
- Responsible for the management of RAP assets installed in their school
- Responsible for the management and maintenance of the Local Area Network (LAN) and Wide Area Network (WAN) connections

HEAD TEACHER ACCESS (HTA)

The Head Teacher Access has responsibility for ensuring the smooth operation of the RAP within the cluster.

Teaching and Learning

The Head Teacher Access staffing allocation is

- 0.5 Access coordination release
- 0.2 Head Teacher release

The remaining 0.3 is allocated to the home school to facilitate curriculum delivery as determined by the home school Principal.

Specific responsibilities of the Head Teacher Access include:

Administration

- Keeping records of student enrolments and course enrolments all Stage 6 students in RAP
- Keeping records of Coordinating Teachers and co-teachers for each subject
- Coordinating the formulation of the video conferencing timetable

- Coordinating cluster activities such as student camps, special meeting days, excursions and study days, this includes the provision of transport, food as required and accommodation
- Coordinating the purchase of resources from RAP funds and the management of these resources by recording and monitoring
- Providing budget recommendations to the cluster management committee
- Being responsible for the allocated RAP budget
- Maintain MOODLE site so that each school can publish documents in accordance with the HSC Monitoring Policy. Include a monitoring report to each school by term for Principals and In School Head Teachers/Supervisors.
- Preparing an annual financial report
- Providing the School Staffing Unit with requested information
- Coordinating the selection of Coordinating Teachers each year
- Providing administrative reports as appropriate and as directed
- Maintain a record of the supervision of supported and unsupported teachers

Meetings

- Preparing and distributing agendas and minutes of meetings as required by RAP
- Monitoring and undertaking action recommended by all RAP meetings

Liaison

- Liaising with Head Teachers, Coordinating Teachers, co-teachers, Systems Administrators, In School Head Teachers/Supervisors and In School Access Coordinators to disseminate information regularly, referring problems as appropriate
- Liaising with Principals and School Education directors, other Cluster Head Teachers and Distance Education personnel as required
- Liaising with RAP School Administrative, staff and students
- Liaising with each school, as negotiated or needed in RAP
- Liaising with Principals to ensure that training occurs for Coordinating Teachers, Co-teachers and Systems' Administrators in Access related areas as needed

Monitoring and Support

- Monitoring and supporting the HSC provisions in accordance with DEC HSC Monitoring guidelines. Where necessary provide advice to In School Supervisors and Principals of requirements.
- Supporting stage 6 teaching and learning programs in co-operation with Head Teachers and Principals
- Support in the supervision of supported/unsupported teachers.

Evaluation

- Coordinating the evaluation of RAP management plans and other events as directed.

Assessment

- Coordinating the development and implementation of the assessment task booklet, assessment policy and planner for both Preliminary and HSC courses
- Coordinating the formulation of guidelines to ensure that assessments are fair and equitable
- Producing an examination timetable for the exam periods during the year
- Coordinating report writing for the half yearly and yearly periods.
- Coordinating Parent/Teacher Conferences as directed.

Curriculum

- Matching the curriculum needs of students with the expertise of cluster staff, and external provisions
- Drafting the annual curriculum for approval of the management committee
- Determining policies concerning the program in co-operation with the management committee
- Liaising with the Head Teacher Access of other Clusters for the coordination of cross-cluster courses
- Organising orientation activities for students
- Developing a cluster prospectus for potential Stage 6 students.
- Coordinating the delivery of an introductory VC for prospective parents and students.

Other Areas

- Facilitating the promotion and marketing of RAP
- Cooperating with Principals to ensure appropriate accountability procedures for RAP
- Preparing the draft RAP Management Plan
- Coordinate RAP based excursions as directed
- Any other duties as directed by the Cluster Principals

RAP School Administrative OFFICER

The RAP School Administrative Officer has responsibility for ensuring the smooth operation of RAP within the cluster. The SAS Officer is employed 4 days per week.

Specific responsibilities of the RAP School Administrative Officer include:

Administration

- Keeping an up-to-date database of student enrolments, course enrolments and assessment grades for all Stage 6 students in RAP
- Keeping records of Coordinating Teachers and Co-teachers for each subject
- Assisting with the coordination of cluster activities such as student camps, special meeting days, excursions and study days, this includes the provision of transport, food as required and accommodation
- Assisting with the coordination of the purchase of resources from RAP funds and the management of these resources by recording and monitoring
- Providing budget recommendations to the cluster management committee
- Assisting with the allocated RAP budget
- Maintaining a central register of examination papers where relevant
- Assisting with the preparation of an annual financial report
- Providing administrative reports as appropriate and as directed
- Other duties as directed by Head Teacher Access

Meetings

- Preparing and distributing agendas and minutes of meetings as required by RAP

Liaison

- Liaising with Head Teachers, Coordinating Teachers, Co-teachers, Systems Administrators and In School Access Coordinators to disseminate information regularly, referring problems as appropriate

- Liaising with staff and students
- Liaising with each school, as negotiated or needed in RAP

Assessment

- Assisting with the coordination and development and implementation of the assessment task booklet, assessment policy and planner for both Preliminary and HSC courses
- Producing an examination timetable for the exam periods during the year
- Coordinating report writing for the half yearly and yearly periods.
- Coordinating Parent/Teacher Conferences as directed.

Curriculum

- Assisting with the organization of orientation activities for students
- Developing a cluster prospectus for potential Stage 6 students.

Other Areas

- Facilitating the promotion and marketing of RAP
- Cooperating with Principals to ensure appropriate accountability procedures for RAP
- Assisting with the coordination of RAP based excursions as directed

IN SCHOOL ACCESS COORDINATOR (ISAC)

The ISAC in each of the core schools, receives 0.1 staffing from the management committee to facilitate their in-school roles. In School Access Coordinators are responsible for the smooth running of RAP within their own schools.

Their role includes:

Administration

- Advising the RAP Office and school ISACs involved of any changes to student enrolments, course enrolments and assessment grades for all students in their school, using the correct RAP Proforma.
- Attendance at the weekly ISAC meeting or appointing a delegate as necessary
- Advising RAP ISAC meeting of any issues regarding students, the completion of assessment tasks, exams, staff welfare and variations of routine
- Disseminating information from other schools and from HTA to their own students and staff
- Assisting with arrangements for excursions organised from other sites
- Assisting with arrangements for excursions organised from local school
- Ensuring correct procedures are followed for assessment tasks, including exams within their own schools – Refer to Assessment Schedules
- Distributing assessment books to teachers and students
- Ensuring that Year 10 students and their parents are adequately informed about RAP
- Participating in timetable teams to negotiate common timetables
- Liaising with other Access Schools on behalf of students or teachers within their school
- Liaising with Head Teachers and Principals in their school
- Liaising with Head Teacher Access and other ISACs
- Supporting teachers to deliver RAP courses within their school, including Co-teachers

- Liaising with the in school technology coordinator in maintaining effective operation of equipment.
- Advising ITD and HTA, where necessary, of the equipment failure and line faults and reporting faults to the help desk
- Ensuring the Daily Variation of Routine sheet is completed and sent to each participating school in RAP
- Handling and administration of Misadventure/Illness applications and N Award 'Warning letter'

OTHER

- Attending cluster meetings as required or appointing a delegate to do so
- Monitoring student progress and welfare – taking issues of concern to ISAC meetings
- Assisting with the planning of combined student activities, e.g. study days, parent-teacher interviews
- Advising the Cluster Management Team on training and development needs
- Providing an opportunity for any new Co-teacher to be introduced to the rest of the staff involved in a course
- Manage the receipt and dispatch of exams into and out of each respective school during exam periods.

IN SCHOOL HEAD TEACHER/SUPERVISOR

- Ensuring that the registration of work covered, and evaluation of the program and units, are maintained in a suitable location in the local school, in accordance with HSC Monitoring procedures and policies.
- Maintaining a faculty mark book and assessment task register of all teachers within your school
- Being responsible for checking assessment notifications prior to being sent out to students and Co-teachers.

ACCESS COORDINATING TEACHER

(This should be read in conjunction the subject selection booklet and Preliminary and HSC Assessment Schedules – Attachment 1.)

Access Coordinating Teachers are responsible for the effective delivery of their course(s) to all RAP students enrolled in their course.

Their role includes:

Programming/Planning

- Being responsible for the development and implementation of the teaching and learning program and distribution of the program for the Preliminary and HSC course
- Being responsible for maintaining a monitoring folder. Part of this folder must be maintained on **MOODLE**. The items to be placed on MOODLE currently are, **at least**, the following items;
 1. a scope and sequence
 2. programs [which will contain syllabus references, assessment strategies; teaching and learning strategies; evaluation and registration]
 3. relevant syllabus
 4. assessment schedules [including any relevant updates]

5. Assessment task marks and ranks.
- The Coordinating Teacher must also have
 - A copy of all teaching programs, study guides, worksheets, assessment tasks etc. [These should be sent to your Co-teachers on a regular basis]
 - Assessment task notifications – minimum of two weeks notification to students
 - N Determination Warning letters and notifications; misadventure notifications
 - Marked attendance roll for every lesson
 - Assessment marks recorded in an appropriate format, e.g. MS Excel, at the conclusion of every assessment task.
 - Ensuring that each school is supplied with a list of required resources and materials required for practical classes at least one week in advance
 - Determine new text orders, in consultation with Co-teachers and inform Co-teachers of this choice in a timely fashion
 - Ensuring that the registration of work covered, and evaluation of the program and units, are recorded in a suitable location as determined by their In School Head Teacher/Supervisor.
 - Providing a plan or overview, that ensures students and Co-teachers are aware of work needing to be covered through both video conferencing and in-school lessons, especially in practical lessons, for example Science. Remember you do get extra time allocated for preparation (your Co-teacher does not get an extra allocation). This is to be completed by 9am Monday morning of that particular period, for example either weekly or fortnightly.
 - Monitoring student progress and informing relevant Co-teachers and/or ISACs of issues

Syllabus Requirements

- Being familiar with relevant syllabus requirements
- Being familiar with relevant assessment requirements for both the Preliminary and HSC courses including practical components
- Obtaining a copy of the current syllabus and KLA handbook pages and relevant NSW Education Standards Authority memoranda and updates.

Teaching

- Planning high quality video conference lessons that provide opportunities for all students to participate and build an effective team to deliver course content.
- Communicate with your Co-teacher to determine any student limitations
- Organising or coordinating any excursions or field work relevant to the course. You must inform your ISAC so they can notify the ISAC meeting of the date. Once the date is cleared then you must complete the excursion information such as, registration, entries, dates, lead up work etc. In consultation with your Co-teachers you then need to coordinate students transport to the excursion. It is anticipated that the Coordinating Teacher will supply a generic permission note, medical note and risk assessment for all schools to adjust.
- Maintaining personal contact with students
- Conducting sessions at study days as appropriate
- Ensuring, in practical subjects, that Co-teachers are aware of and adequately prepared to assist students to undertake practical work as required.
- Attendance at Parent/Teacher Conferences

Assessment

- Being responsible for the formation, development, marking and recording of assessment tasks and schedules for their courses. Assessment timeline: within two weeks of receipt of the task at the Coordinating Teacher's school to handing back marked assessment task and feedback to students. NOTE: Any changes to due dates of tasks must go through an Executive Meeting – you must inform your ISAC who will then bring the matter to the meeting. This must occur prior to the due date.
- When setting the schedule be aware of exams that are formal assessment tasks; long weekend dates; and tasks set for Weeks 1 and 2 at the beginning of Terms.
- Ensuring students are aware that they must (current policy) hand in a hard copy of their assessment task to their Front Office on or before 9.00am of the due date, using the proforma, <http://web1.hillston-c.schools.nsw.edu.au/moodle/course/view.php?id=24>
- Ensuring that each Assessment Task Notification is signed off by their In School Head Teacher/ Supervisor before distribution, punctually as per the assessment schedule.
- Ensuring that the students and Co-teachers have a copy of the Assessment Task Notification
- Checking that the marking of major works (where a course involves external marking) has been organised by the individual school
- Forwarding assessment marks to the Co-teachers and their in-school Head Teachers/Supervisors
- Placing the marks on MOODLE in the nominated place
- Providing feedback to students, refer also to the Assessment Schedule
- Notifying the Co-teacher of a student's failure to complete or submit an assessment task. Then issuing the appropriate N Determination 'Warning letter'. The proforma should be completed as much as possible and then forwarded to the student's ISAC for further action. Following up on due dates as per the N Determination Warning letters.
- Sending clear, consistent and unambiguous instructions to the Co-teachers for each assessment task so that supervision can be organized and be conducted in a similar manner across all schools.

Exams

- Organising the setting of Stage 6 examination papers as well as their marking and recording. Refer to <http://web1.hillston-c.schools.nsw.edu.au/moodle/course/view.php?id=55&topic=10> for further information.
- Being responsible for the delivery of any exams for their course to each school sitting their course. This includes one copy for each student and one copy per school for the Co-teacher/Supervisor. The Coordinating Teacher may organize for the exam to be emailed and printed locally but they are responsible for ensuring the appropriate numbers of papers are given to the ISAC in each school with the associated paperwork completed.
- Refer to <http://web1.hillston-c.schools.nsw.edu.au/moodle/course/view.php?id=24>.
- All schools and Coordinating Teachers are asked to encourage students to use black pens for exams. Each school is responsible for the supply of exam writing booklets or paper. Refer to <http://web1.hillston-c.schools.nsw.edu.au/moodle/course/view.php?id=24> for a copy of a HSC writing booklet.[NOTE: any subject with a HSC Examination requirement, will have an exam for each examination period – that is half yearly Preliminary, Yearly Preliminary, half yearly HSC and HSC Trials. These exams do not necessarily have to be a formal assessment task. It is asked however that all exams replicate the HSC exam format.

Reporting

- Coordinating outcomes, report comments and liaising with Co-teachers as appropriate

Liaison

- Ensuring that the Co-teacher is aware of any concerns regarding students, assessment tasks, support from other schools, etc. and undertaking any necessary communication
- Liaising with the Co-teacher, ISAC and Head Teacher Access of any student who is causing serious concern such as lack of work, inappropriate actions in assessment tasks or video conference lessons
- Ensuring that the local ISAC is kept aware of any needs, changes or problems (e.g. assessment policy changes)
- Reporting any technical difficulties to your 'In school technology coordinator/ISAC.
- Consulting with your school workplace coordinator on appropriate placement of VET students, for work placement
- Undertaking student or school visits as necessary

VET

- Teachers of VET subjects also need to meet the requirements of the TEACHERS DELIVERING VET COURSES WITHIN THE RTO role statement, as per Attachment 2.

ACCESS COURSE COORDINATOR (Situations where there is more than one class in the cohort)

(This should be read in conjunction the subject selection booklet and Preliminary and HSC Assessment Schedules – Attachment 1.)

Access Course Coordinators are responsible for the effective delivery of their course(s) to all RAP students enrolled in their course, where there is more than one class in that course, for example Standard English may have up to 3 classes.

Their role includes:

Programming/Planning

- Being responsible for the development and implementation of the teaching and learning program and distribution of the program for the Preliminary and HSC course, in consultation with other Coordinating Teachers within their course.
- Being responsible, for the development, implementation and distribution of a scope and sequence for the Preliminary and HSC course, in consultation with other Coordinating Teachers within their course.
- Being responsible, in consultation with other Coordinators and Co- Teachers, for the determination of any new text orders, in a timely fashion.

Syllabus Requirements

- Being familiar with relevant syllabus requirements
- Being familiar with relevant assessment requirements for both the Preliminary and HSC courses including practical components
- Obtaining a copy of the current syllabus and KLA handbook pages and relevant NESA memoranda and sharing this information between all Coordinating Teachers

Teaching

- Organising or coordinating any excursions or field work relevant to the course. You must inform your ISAC so they can notify the ISAC meeting of the date. Once the date is cleared then you must complete the excursion information such as, registration, entries, dates, lead up work etc.
- Conducting sessions at study days as appropriate, in consultation with other Coordinating Teachers within their course

Assessment

- Being responsible for the formation, development, marking and recording of assessment tasks and schedules for their courses. Assessment timeline: within two weeks of receipt of the task at the Coordinating Teacher's school to handing back marked assessment task and feedback to students. NOTE: Any changes to due dates of tasks must go through an Executive Meeting – you must inform your ISAC who will then bring the matter to the meeting. This must occur prior to the due date. This will done in consultation with other Coordinating Teachers within their course.
- When setting the schedule be aware of exams that are formal assessment tasks; long weekend dates; and tasks set for Weeks 1 and 2 at the beginning of Terms.
- Forwarding assessment marks to the Co-teachers and other Coordinating Teachers

Exams

- Organizing the setting of Stage 6 examination papers as well as their marking and recording. Refer to <http://web1.hillston-c.schools.nsw.edu.au/moodle/course/view.php?id=55&topic=10> for further information and in consultation with other Coordinating Teachers within their course

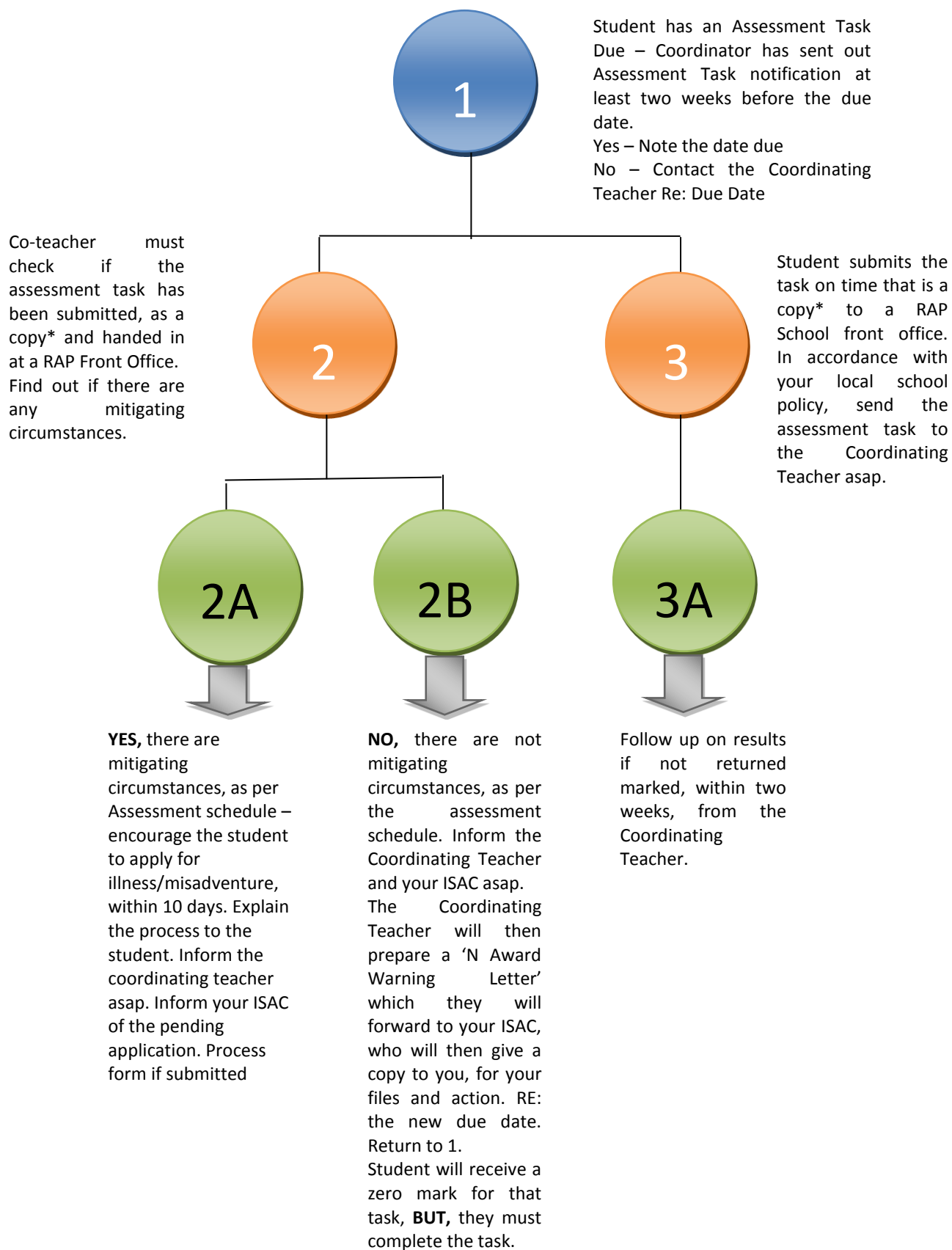
Reporting

- Coordinating outcomes, report comments and liaising with Co- Teachers as appropriate

Liaison

- Ensuring that all Coordinating Teachers are involved in course relevant decisions and activities, such as excursions, exam setting and marking and assessment task setting and marking.
- Ensuring that the other Coordinating and Co-teacher are aware of any concerns regarding students, assessment tasks, support from other schools, etc. and undertaking any necessary communication
- Ensuring that the all ISACs are kept aware of any needs, changes or problems (e.g. assessment policy changes)

SUBMISSION OF ASSESSMENT TASKS FOR CO-TEACHERS



* Copy refers to a physical copy, e.g. could be a CD/thumb drive/paper copy etc.

ACCESS CO-TEACHERS

The role of the Access Co-teacher is vital to the success of RAP. They support both the students in their course and the Coordinating Teacher.

The role of Access Co-teachers includes:

Teaching

- Implementing Coordinating Teachers program to meet the individual needs of their students in face-to-face lessons
 - Following up instructions from the Coordinating Teacher to the students, these could include setting up and supervision of practical sessions. Notify your coordinating teacher if you do not have access to necessary texts, equipment or any other issues that may impact on any work that is set.
- Ensuring that security and fairness in assessment tasks is maintained by not presenting students with any extra information concerning an assessment task other than that which has been supplied by the Coordinating Teacher. The Co-teacher is responsible for administering the Assessment Task as per the Coordinating Teachers instructions. Any issues should be clarified prior to the day of the task, if of a practical nature. Prior to an assessment task due date, any teacher may only give general informal feedback (including email) on structure and whether marking criteria has been met. Verbal feedback is acceptable on the structure of the task, but no comment should be made regarding the content of the task. Comments on a task should not be specific.
- Being responsible for maintaining a monitoring folder, that includes at least the following;
 - a scope and sequence
 - the relevant syllabus
 - programs [which will contain syllabus references, assessment strategies; teaching and learning strategies]
 - assessment schedules [including any relevant updates]
 - assessment task notifications
 - class rolls
 - A copy of all study guides, worksheets, weekly work etc.
 - N Determination Warning letters and notifications; misadventure notifications
- Coordinating the purchase of necessary resources as indicated by the Coordinating Teacher
- Monitoring student progress and informing Coordinating Teachers of any issues, especially where a student has failed to submit an Assessment task on time without submitting a misadventure/illness form. The Coordinating Teacher must be notified immediately.
- Preparing students appropriately for video conferencing lessons and make sure all resources are distributed to students prior to video conferencing lessons
- Liaise with the Coordinating Teacher so they are aware of your preferred contact details
- Assisting the course coordinator where possible with programming, assessment schedule, excursions and marking. NOTES: while it is the Coordinating Teachers role to prepare all paperwork regarding subject programs, work sheets, assessment tasks and excursions, it is your responsibility to ensure all work is completed and returned to the Coordinating Teacher. This is especially important with assessment tasks. You need to monitor task notifications, due dates and respond quickly to any issue
- Writing Co-teacher report comments, as per the RAP timeline and in line with the RAP report comment scaffold

- Assisting the Course Coordinator or Coordinating Teacher with the marking of work where appropriate
- Monitoring progress of students and maintain constructive communication with Coordinating Teacher
- Conducting assessment tasks according to the Coordinating Teacher requirements and RAP Assessment Policy
- Checking when assessment tasks are submitted
- Notifying Coordinating Teacher of students who have missed a task

Administration

- Maintaining daily class roll and communicate patterns of absences to the Coordinating Teacher as well as your ISAC for referral to Executive meeting as a welfare concern
- Implementing classroom management practices according to school discipline policy
- Attending subject team meetings (these may be video conferences)
- Attendance at Parent/Teacher Conferences if required
- Communicate with your Coordinating Teacher to determine any student limitations.

CONTACTS LIST

NAME	POSITION	SCHOOL	TELEPHONE
Helen Bray	Acting Head Teacher Access	RAP Office	69782204
Robyn Rayment	Access Administration	RAP Office	69782204
Grant Beard	Principal	ACS	69782046
Justin Dunn	Principal	APCS	69741105
Stacie Luppi	Principal	BCS	69639202
Stephan Chapman	Principal	HCS	69672277
Ruth Ernest	Principal	LCS	69205209
Matthew Jacobson	Principal	OCS	60354290
Kerrilee Logan	ISAC	ACS	69782046
Mark Englert	ISAC	APCS	69741105
Stuart Whytcross	ISAC	BCS	69639202
Mark Toohey	ISAC	HCS	69672277
Janine Dunne	ISAC	LCS	69205209
Jeremy Atkins	ISAC	OCS	60354290