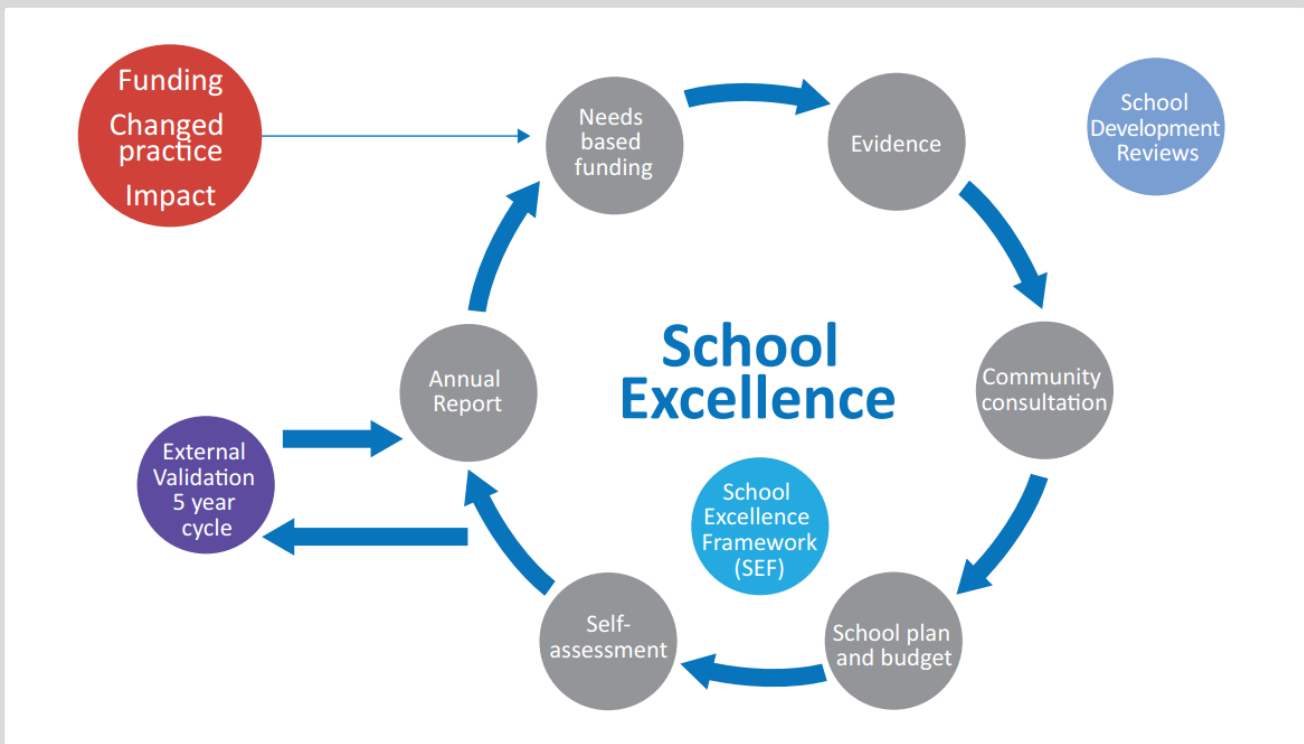# School Excellence implementation guidelines

School planning

Implementation document for School Excellence policy

Approval date: August 2017

Document history

Date	Description of update	Approved by
23/08/2017	Initial publication	Deputy Secretary, School Operations and Performance

Contents

Context

The School Excellence policy requires schools to develop:

- a three-year school plan in consultation with their community
- up to three strategic directions and associated improvement measures to form the basis of each three-year planning cycle.
- school-determined milestones each year to assist schools to implement and monitor the school plan and track progress.

These guidelines provide advice for each section of the school plan.

General information

Schools develop a comprehensive three-year school plan connected to a budget and student outcomes, in consultation with the school community and an annual report. The school plan should clearly reflect a school's priorities for improvement in line with the School Excellence Framework. Each school plan should include a commitment to improvements in literacy and numeracy, as the pivotal learning for all students.

The school planning process encourages engagement with the whole school community in contributing to the school's strategic directions. An essential component of the school plan is a shared vision, aligned with the Department of Education's priorities. The school plan also includes improvement measures, one of which must relate to literacy and numeracy, against which the impact of the strategic directions will be monitored and evaluated. Consider the NSW Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2017-2020, a four year plan to support the quality teaching of literacy and numeracy across all NSW schools. The strategy focusses on providing every teacher with the professional learning and information they need to help them continuously program and plan for student improvement. For more detailed information about the Literacy and Numeracy support for NSW Public Schools visit https://education.nsw.gov.au/curriculum/literacy-and-numeracy.

For each strategic direction, schools will identify projects and initiatives that are key to the implementation of the plan.

School plans consist of two parts, a published strategic three-year plan, and an implementation and progress monitoring section. The 'implementation and progress monitoring' section is developed on an annual basis for internal use to monitor, evaluate and then to inform discussions with Directors, Public Schools NSW.

The three-year school plan is to be published on the school's website by the end of Term 1, at the commencement of the planning cycle. During the three-year cycle, any updates required to the school plan will be published annually by the end of Term 1.

Schools will use the School Planning and Reporting Online (SPaRO) software to prepare, update and publish their school plan. The school plan is entered directly into the software. SPaRO is available to schools through the Department of Education staff portal. The software provides an online integrated process for schools to efficiently plan, self-assess and report.

Principals endorse the school planning process as an accurate representation of consultation with the community and evidence-informed decision-making.

Directors, Public Schools NSW have responsibility for endorsing the published school plan and monitoring school plan implementation.

Enquiries

Contact Leadership and High Performance
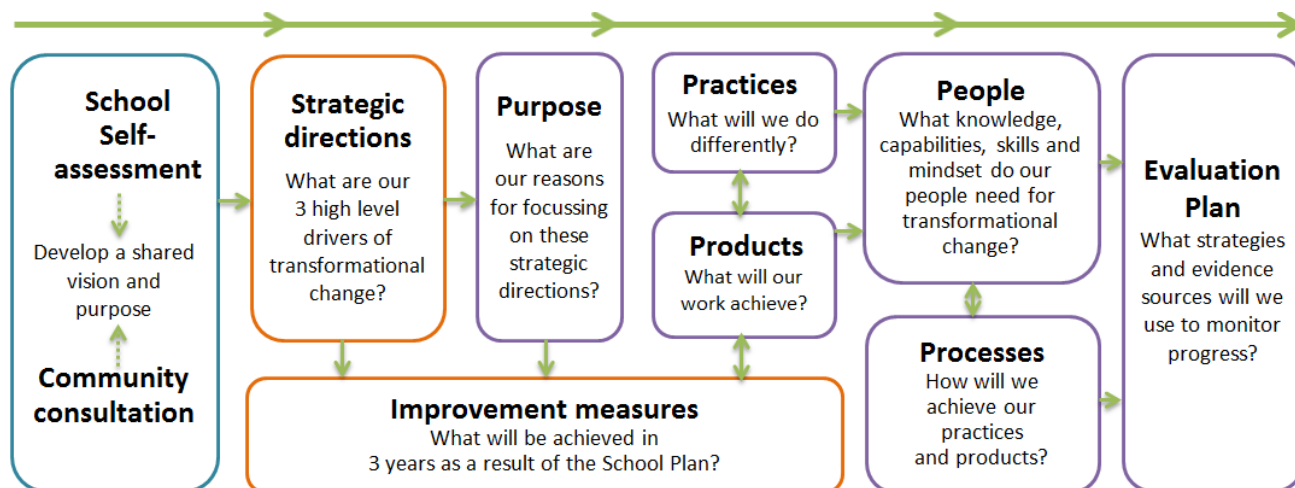
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1. Three-year school plan

The school plan assists school leaders to clearly articulate the why, how and what of their strategic directions. This part of the planning approach articulates the mindsets and capabilities that need to be developed and the processes necessary to put the ideas into action.

The development of a school plan is an iterative process connected to and dependent on all the components.
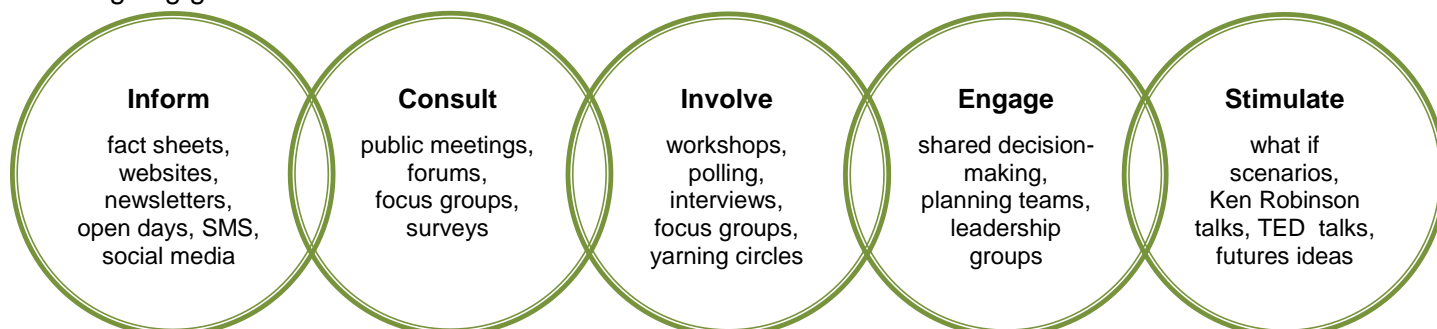

1.1 Community consultation

Strong partnerships between a school, its teachers, parents/carers and community have demonstrated positive contribution to student learning. The school planning approach offers opportunities for schools to develop planning processes that facilitate authentic, inclusive, whole school community consultation. Where appropriate, this consultation includes local Aboriginal elders and the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc. (AECG) or local land council representatives.

Ensuring that staff are actively involved in reviewing the previous school plan and contributing to the development of the school's vision and strategic directions of the new plan will assist in developing a shared understanding of the importance of a teacher's role in improving student learning in the local context.

Schools may also consider working in partnership with other schools to develop one or more common strategic directions. School settings where this approach has proved valuable include communities of schools, multi-campus colleges, Environmental Education Centres, Schools for Specific Purposes and hospital schools.

There are several aspects of building community engagement that will help develop a shared vision and common purpose, as well as assisting with planning for implementation, sustainability and ongoing growth.

(Adapted from International Association for Public Participation www.iap2.org)

Refer to the Community consultation website for additional resources.

1.2 School Background

School vision statement

An essential component to school planning is to lead a shared vision. The school vision should be evident throughout the school plan.

A school vision statement is short and precise, describing a school's high level goals for the future, its shared values and philosophy. It is a statement about student learning and achievement that is based on the department's priorities.

Note: The text entered in the school background section of SPaRO is auto-populated in the annual report.

Sample School vision statements

Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
At Rocky Glen we equip students with the tools to be successful, confident, creative individuals. This is achieved in a high performing school that is inclusive and works in partnership with our community. Our staff is innovative and dynamic, providing leadership that inspires learning.	Rocky Glen West Public School is committed to providing quality education in a nurturing, innovative learning environment so that all students can become active, confident participants within our ever-changing, challenging world.	East Rocky Glen Public School is a place where exploration, creativity, and imagination make learning exciting and where all learners aspire to reach their potential. We work together as a whole school community to prepare and inspire our students to be their best in a quickly changing global society.

School context

The school context statement includes information on the geographic, educational and social landscape of the school that shapes its education provision. It includes:

- contextual details
- characteristics of the student body
- significant student groups
- community characteristics
- extracurricular activities
- distinctive attributes of the school
- significant alliances and partnerships.

Once formulated, the school context statement may be used across a number of forums including the annual report, the school's website, the department's website and the My School website.

Note: The text entered in the school background section of SPaRO is auto-populated in the annual report.

School planning process

The school planning process, documents the engagement of the community in contributing to the plan and the school's commitment to working with the community to achieve the strategic directions.

It provides transparency and ownership for the community and supports the principal in leading the implementation of the plan.

1.3 Strategic directions

Strategic directions are high level statements, based on self-assessment and consultation, which encapsulate the school plan and drive improvement for the next three years and into the future to bring about transformational change.

School strategic directions are underpinned by the three domains of learning, teaching and leading of the School Excellence Framework and provide a strong indication of the priorities that engage school community members in a common goal. Strategic directions are evidence-informed.

They should be short, meaningful statements articulating the transformation to be achieved so that the whole school community can share in the school's purpose.

Schools are required to develop three strategic directions. However, small schools may develop two strategic directions.

Sample strategic directions

Strategic direction 1

Active, informed and creative citizens

Strategic direction 2

Quality teaching and learning

Strategic direction 3

Effective communication and connections

Purpose

The purpose statement explains why a strategic direction was chosen as a focus. It is a statement that is aspirational but also measurable and contextual. Statements should be self-evident and succinct (25 - 50 words). The purpose statement must directly relate to the school vision through the strategic direction and should drive the whole plan. Each of the components of the purpose statement should then be addressed in the improvement measures, practices, products, people and processes.

Note: The purpose statement entered in SPaRO is auto-populated in the annual report.

Sample purpose statements

Strategic direction 1: Active, informed and creative citizens	**Purpose:** To ensure a student centred learning environment that nurtures, guides, challenges and inspires all students to become skilled, effective, motivated learners and confident, creative individuals who are empowered to be successful emotionally, physically, socially and academically, contributing to a thriving community and living well.
Strategic direction 2: Quality teaching and learning	**Purpose:** To create a stimulating and engaging learning environment underpinned by high expectations and teaching practices to accelerate learning with a differentiated curriculum that is flexible, reflective, relevant and dynamic to meet the diverse needs of our students, staff and community.
Strategic direction 3: Effective communication and connections	**Purpose:** To increase community participation in school leadership, wellbeing and family partnership projects so that our students grow into confident, creative and resilient global citizens.

Improvement measures

Each school must include one improvement measure which relates to literacy and numeracy.

The development of improvement measures is an iterative process connected to and dependent on all components of the school plan.

Once developed, improvement measures are 2-3 high level statements against which the impact of the processes will be monitored and evaluated.

Improvement measures are achieved by the end of the three-year planning cycle through effective implementation of well selected processes.

To ensure progress towards the improvement measures is achievable, they must:

- be measureable
- reflect the outcomes intended by the purpose statement
- relate to the specific strategic direction.

Progress towards the improvement measures is reported in the annual report.

Sample improvement measures: By the end of the school planning cycle…

From strategic direction 1

Increase the proportion of students demonstrating active engagement with their learning.

From strategic direction 2

Increase the percentage of students demonstrating expected growth in literacy and numeracy.

At least 80% of students demonstrating expected growth per semester across Department of Education literacy and numeracy progressions relevant to expected timeframes.

From strategic direction 3

Increase parent attendance at assemblies, community days and other events from 2017 baseline.

The key questions for developing improvement measures, designed to drive the school's strategic improvement efforts are:

- What evidence have we collected to inform our reason for this improvement measure? (baseline)
- How will we measure how much we do, how well we do it and the impact of our efforts?
- Will the measure effectively capture what we set out to improve? How will we know? (monitoring, measuring, evaluation)

Practices and products

For each strategic direction, practices and products are developed to be achieved by the end of the three-year planning cycle and need to be measureable, observable and/or describable in order to facilitate monitoring and reporting. Practices and products are achieved through the implementation of the identified processes, which are monitored and evaluated through milestones.

Practice statements identify the sustained learning, teaching and leadership behaviours that indicate achievement of the strategic directions. They articulate the necessary changed practices of students, staff and leaders as the school plan is successfully implemented and embedded in the school learning culture over three years. They also outline how parents and community members can be supported to contribute to the school's improvement measures.

Sample practice statements

From Strategic Direction 2

Every teacher uses data to inform and differentiate their teaching and learning by tracking student progress on the learning progressions.

From Strategic Direction 2

Shared school-wide responsibility is evident through purposeful leadership, quality teaching and learning, and community engagement.

Product statements are either quantitative or qualitative things that would exist when a strategic direction is achieved. The purpose of the product is to collectively lead to the realisation of a school's identified improvement measures.

Sample product statements

From Strategic Direction 2

100% of Teaching / Learning programs are data based, differentiated for individual student learning needs and demonstrate syllabus content measured by program review and student work samples.

From Strategic Direction 3

Enhanced leadership capacity, reflected in greater collaboration, self-reflection, higher expectations and cohesive school teams.

People

The people statements identify the skills, knowledge, capabilities and mindsets that need to be enhanced or developed to bring about transformational change. They address capabilities the school community need to develop to ensure that the practices and products are achieved.

A school community includes students, parents/carers, teaching and non-teaching staff, leaders and community members.

Sample people statements

From Strategic Direction 2

Students: Build skills to self-assess utilising writing rubrics and literacy and numeracy progressions with a focus on resilience, capabilities and competency.

From Strategic Direction 2

Leaders: The school executive **adopts a coordinated approach** to literacy where the teaching of writing is valued and there is an expectation of improvement in literacy standards across the school.

From Strategic Direction 3

Parents/Carers: Develop an understanding of and value the theories and models of learning that underpin the school's educational philosophy. They demonstrate support for the school's position with their children and in the community and are active partners in embedding these into the school's culture.

Process

Processes are the 2-3 major projects that will be implemented to achieve the improvement measure, practices and products for each strategic direction. The processes developed by the school should include whole school practices, captured through key funding initiatives and other school focus areas. They may be particular professional learning; the establishment of particular infrastructures or protocols; or a particular project. For each process identified in the school plan, a

set of milestone activities will need to be developed in the 'implementation and progress monitoring' section of the school plan.

Processes are monitored and evaluated through milestones. The strategies for evaluating processes should be outlined in the evaluation plan.

Note: The text entered into the process annual milestone informs the 'progress towards achieving improvement measures' section of the annual report.

Sample process

From Strategic Direction 1

Implement a whole school integrated approach to student well-being in which students can connect, succeed and thrive at each stage of their schooling.

From Strategic Direction 2

Research Informed Pedagogy

Teaching: Draw on research to develop and implement high quality professional learning in literacy and numeracy teaching practices.

Evaluation plan

School leadership teams evaluate their school plan through ongoing self-assessment. This self-assessment identifies impact and growth, providing information to assist decision-making.

The evaluation plan outlines the broad strategies and types of evidence that will be used to monitor progress towards achieving improvement measures. The evaluation plan is actioned, and the findings recorded, in the 'implementation and progress monitoring' (milestones) section of the plan.

During self-assessment, schools determine their progress towards achieving their strategic directions using the School Excellence Framework. School self-assessment and evaluation, like student assessment, will vary according to the purpose, timing and degree of formality.

The evaluation plan lists the strategies that will be used to assess progress and impact. The evidence sources may include:

- observational rounds
- regular gathering of data for analysis, reflection and reporting on the impact of planned activities identified in milestones
- analysis of school-based and external assessment data
- lesson plans/teaching programs
- meeting minutes
- feedback from community of schools and other project teams
- engaging with staff from other schools to review the quality and effectiveness of the implementation approach
- focus groups
- surveys with students, parent/carers and community at regular intervals.

The School Excellence Framework evidence guide will support schools in developing their evaluation plan.

Sample evaluation plan statement

From Strategic Direction 2

Progress toward improvement measures will be evaluated through: parent and community satisfaction surveys (for example TTFM); student behaviour data analysis; evaluation of consistent use of school processes and procedures; evaluation of classroom environments; evaluation of community participation in school events data; teaching and learning program supervision.

From Strategic Direction 3

Progress toward improvement measures will be evaluated through monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of community partnerships and its effect on student engagement through focused interviews and student/parent/community self-assessment.

Publication of the three-year school plan

All schools are required to publish their school plan to the school website by the end of Term 1 at the commencement of a planning cycle. During the cycle, any updates to the plan will be published annually by the end of Term 1 each year.

On completion of the school plan, a principal is required to:

i. 'Approve' the plan in SPaRO. A dialogue box appears prompting the principal to endorse the school planning process as being an accurate representation of consultation with the community and of evidence-informed decision-making.

ii. 'Publish' the approved plan. An additional dialogue box appears for the principal to confirm that the Director, Public Schools NSW has endorsed the school plan. This follows ongoing professional conversations with the Director, Public Schools NSW.

Principals can view or generate the plan for editing and must ensure careful proof-reading before selecting 'publish'. This will upload a PDF to the 'Our school' tab of school websites supported by the School Website Service (SWS). Schools with websites not supported by SWS are required to extract a PDF of the school plan and manually load it to their school website.

2. Implementation and progress monitoring (annual)

The implementation and progress monitoring aspect of the school plan is for internal use to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of implementation and to inform discussions with Directors, Public Schools NSW.

This is where activities are planned, resources allocated and the effectiveness of activities evaluated.

There are three aspects to this section of school planning:

i. identifying and milestoning the activities for each process

ii. allocating resources

iii. monitoring and evaluating actions and impact at regular intervals.

Process :			
Milestone	Activities	Resources	Evaluation
✎ ○○○ MID TERM - 1			
✎ ○○○ END TERM - 1			
✎ ○○○ MID TERM - 2			
✎ ○○○ END TERM - 2 - Mid-Year Reflection			
✎ ○○○ MID TERM - 3			
✎ ○○○ END TERM - 3			
✎ ○○○ MID TERM - 4			
✎ ○○○ END TERM - 4 - Annual Milestone			

For each strategic direction, schools will identify projects or initiatives that are fundamental to the implementation of the plan. Progress is monitored regularly so that the impact towards the achievement of improvement measures can be reported annually.

School leadership teams develop milestones to monitor the specific processes relating to the implementation and progress toward each strategic direction and improvement measure.

Milestones have two purposes:

    i.   to provide a sustained focus on the achievement of implementation, and

    ii.   to provide a mechanism for routine and regular monitoring of impact and progress towards the strategic directions and to track funding for improved student outcomes.

School leadership teams develop milestones annually and identify the specific activities for each process. Milestone activities are only entered where appropriate across the course of the year. It is recommended that milestones are reviewed twice per term (at five-weekly reviews), but principals may decide on the time frame between 2, 3, 5 or 10 weekly periods. It is not necessary to have an activity listed in every field.

Monitoring and evaluating the quality of implementation at regular points in time is planned within the milestone to ensure progress is achieved towards the attainment of improvement measures. School leadership teams indicate whether the achievement of the milestone activity is on track through the use of the traffic-light system of green (on track) /amber (delayed) /red (off track). Use of the planned resource should be taken into consideration when determining whether the activity is on track or not (see the section on Resources below).

Milestones (activities)

The key steps toward the development of milestones are:

    i.   **Determine the annual milestone based on the improvement measure for that process**
        This is the success criteria expected by the end of each year of the three-year cycle. The annual milestones culminate in the achievement of the improvement measures in the third year of the cycle.

    ii.   **Reflect on the process**
        Identify a progression of activities that will contribute to the achievement of the annual milestone for that process. Processes, when implemented effectively, will deliver the improvement measures by the end of the three-year planning cycle.

Note: Milestone activities can be tagged to elements of the School Excellence Framework.

Resources

School leadership teams identify the human, physical or financial resources required for planned activities, budgeted for each milestone to ensure viability. They should demonstrate effective, efficient use of resources for the implementation of activities. It is important that resources including equity funding are expended in the year that they are allocated. Cumulative expenditure may also be recorded against each process.

School leadership teams need to monitor the use of the planned resources when determining whether a milestone activity is on track or otherwise, using the traffic light system [see the Implementation and progress monitoring (annual) section above].

Note: The resources entered into the annual milestone inform the 'progress towards achieving improvement measures' section of the annual report.

Evaluation

The evaluation needs to focus on the impact and effectiveness of the activities and the quality of data sources identified in the evaluation plan. Refer to the school self-assessment implementation guidelines for additional information.

School leadership teams are required to:

- action the appropriate strategies from the evaluation plan
- track and monitor at regular intervals e.g. 2, 3, 5 or 10 weekly intervals throughout the year as determined by the school
- evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the activities and implementation undertaken for each process. It is not necessary to complete this evaluation for every milestone
- monitor the impact of activities using the School Excellence Framework at the mid-year and annual milestones reflection points (as a minimum).

The following reflection questions could be considered throughout this process:

- What did we do? (Evidence of action)
- How well did we do it? (Quality of action)
- What happened as a result? (Evidence of impact)
- What adjustments need to be made to our future milestones?

Note: The annual milestone evaluations inform the 'progress towards achieving improvement measures' section of the annual report.

Key funding initiatives and other school focus areas

Schools are required to monitor and report on the implementation of activities and resources relating to key government funding initiatives.

Schools will report on the key funding initiatives* applicable to the school (for example, English language proficiency, Socio-economic background, Aboriginal background loading, Targeted student support for refugees and new arrivals) as well as 'other school focus areas' for which the school receives funding, including grants, partnerships and projects.

Key funding initiatives will generally be integrated within the strategic directions. School leadership teams may allocate resources from any of the key funding initiatives to one or more of the strategic directions. This ensures a holistic, strategic and coordinated approach to meet the needs of students at an individual and group level. When recording the evaluation it is sufficient to refer to the strategic direction in which the funds were expended.

^ Key Initiative :			
Milestone	**Activities**	**Resources ($ value)**	**Evaluation Processes and impact assessment**
✎ ○○○ MID TERM - 4			
✎ ●○○ END TERM - 4 - Annual Milestone		2 500 and 3 600	See evaluation in strategic directions 2 and 3

Schools will identify the amount of resource contribution made from the key funding source toward each milestone for each key funding initiative.

In exceptional circumstances, the school leadership team may decide it is necessary to implement a project for a key funding initiative additional to the strategic directions. School leadership teams need to ensure any projects are consistent with, and complement, the overall vision of the school. When reporting, the milestones will be independent of those developed for the strategic directions and funding will be allocated to the initiative milestones throughout the year.

It is important for schools to be able to demonstrate the purposes for which this additional funding is being used. Schools are required to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the activities and implementation and provide evidence of impact.

. *Note: Schools are expected to use the funding in the year allocated.

3. Role of the Director, Public Schools NSW

The School Excellence policy states that the Director, Public Schools NSW is responsible for endorsing the published school plan and monitoring school plan implementation for compliance with legislative and policy requirements including equity or other targeted funding, and for compliance with State and Department priorities such as the literacy and numeracy strategy.

As part of the ongoing professional conversations with the principal regarding the school's plan, the Director will provide an endorsement for the content of the published school plan, including:

- Community consultation
- The school's vision statement
- The school context statement
- The school planning process statement
- The strategic direction and purpose statements and then for each strategic direction the content and internal alignment of:
  - o Improvement measures (including the qualitative and quantitative data) that reflect the outcomes intended by the purpose statement
  - o Practices and products
  - o People
  - o Process
  - o Evaluation Plan

As part of the ongoing professional conversations with the principal regarding the school's plan, the Director will monitor the implementation of the school plan, with particular regard for compliance with legislative and policy requirements and State and Department priorities in:

- Activities
- Resources
- Evaluations
- Key Funding Initiatives and other school focus areas.

Professional conversations with principals may include:

- How an evidence-base supports the choice of activity and connects with the process identified in the school plan
- How the intended purpose of the activity will contribute to the improvement measures and lead to the identified practice and products
- How the plan contributes to State priorities and the Premier's priorities as they relate to the literacy and numeracy capability of all students
- How the school plan aligns to department priorities
- How funding sources will be utilised to deliver activities
- How needs-based funding has been embedded into the school plan
- How resource expenditure will be tracked and the impact monitored
- How the budget for the school plan sits within the school's total budget.

Key funding initiatives will generally be integrated within the strategic directions. Schools may allocate resources from any of the key funding initiatives to one or more of the strategic directions. This ensures a holistic, strategic and coordinated approach to meet the needs of students at an individual and group level. When recording the evaluation within the key funding initiatives section it is sufficient to refer to the strategic direction in which the funds were expended, however, it is important for schools to be able to demonstrate the purposes for which this additional funding is being used.

4. Further information

From 2018 new National Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions will be available for all schools K-10 supported by new software known as PLAN2.

A revised Best Start Kindergarten assessment is due to be released for all schools in 2019 and a new Year 7 assessment made available for all high schools.

Professional learning is scheduled to be available from Term 2, 2018 to support schools to build teacher capacity to help reach the literacy and numeracy aspirations in their school plan.

Information for Early Action for Success schools:

Early Action for Success (EAFS) is the Department's priority K-2 literacy and numeracy intervention. All EAFS schools will commence using the new Learning Progressions, revised Best Start and PLAN2 from the beginning of 2018.

Support for these schools is being provided as part of their ongoing professional learning and instructional leadership support.

For more detailed information about the Literacy and Numeracy support for NSW Public Schools visit https://education.nsw.gov.au/curriculum/literacy-and-numeracy. Information regarding new professional learning and resources will be updated on this site throughout 2018.

Further information to support the development of a school plan:

- School excellence and accountability website
- School Planning Frequently Asked Questions
- Evaluation Resource Hub
- Local School Local Decisions website