



Achieving an Education Revolution Through New Federalism in Australia

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Securing a higher level of performance in all schools in all settings has been a major priority of governments in Australia for nearly 40 years. With the first decade of the 21st century drawing to a close, a sense of urgency has grown. The Australian federal government is seeking an education revolution through an unprecedented partnership with state governments, known as “new federalism.” While the term “turn-around school” has not been adopted in Australia, policymakers at all levels are consistent in their determination to turn around low-performing schools. Thus, it is timely to review what has been accomplished to date through this new federal and state partnership; to assess the potential for significant, systematic, and sustained change in the years ahead; and to suggest implications for other countries.

Policy Overview

Structure

The constitution that established Australia as a nation in 1901 is, in many respects, modeled on that of the United States. It defines Australia as a federation of six states and two autonomous territories, which is governed, at the national level, by a House of Representatives and a Senate. Constitutional powers for education are ceded to the states and territories, each of which has its own government, including a legislature. Even so, the federal government plays a major role in education because it has the unfettered power to levy an income tax and the capacity to make conditional grants to the states and territories. Unlike in the United States, there is no constitutional barrier to grants being made directly to private schools, which serve about one-third of the country’s students overall and more than 50 percent of senior secondary students in the country’s larger capital cities.

Responsibility for implementing policy in education lies with a minister in the governing party at the federal level. As of mid-2009, Deputy

Prime Minister Julia Gillard serves as Minister for Education. (Editor’s note: Gillard has since become Prime Minister and has relinquished the education portfolio.) This is the first time such a senior member of the federal government has been responsible for education. Coming together through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), ministers at the federal level work with those at the state or territory level to reach agreement on education policies and strategies to be implemented across the nation. Final sign-off on these agreements comes from the Prime Minister and the Premiers (states) or Chief Ministers (territories) through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), which meets twice each year.

Editor’s Note

This is one of four case studies developed in mid-2009 for the U.S. Department of Education that focus on how countries other than the United States have been addressing the challenge of turning around their low-performing schools. The other three case studies focus on Canada, England, and New Zealand. This case study has not been updated since it was initially developed.

These bodies have agreed on several far-reaching education initiatives in the areas of technology, rebuilding schools, curriculum, assessment, and reporting. Such agreement would not have been possible under the previous federal government. Led by a right-of-center coalition that was defeated by the Labor Party in 2007, it made several attempts to win approval on testing regimes and a national curriculum, but those efforts were thwarted by state governments, all of them Labor at the time. The current political alignment, with the federal government and all state governments being controlled by the same political party, is rare in Australia, and there is no doubt that this has been a key factor in recent rapid change.

One result of new federalism is that, starting in 2011, Australia will have a national curriculum for the first time, whereas, in the past, each state or territory had developed its own. Implementation of the new national curriculum is the responsibility of the recently established Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), directed by the former head of the Education Division of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).¹ ACARA

¹The 33-member, Paris-based Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development was established in 1961 to bring together the governments of countries committed to democracy and the market economy, with the stated mission of promoting “policies

also has responsibility for designing and administering a national testing program in the areas of literacy and numeracy, the National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy (commonly referred to as NAPLAN), and reporting the results on a school-by-school basis to governments, schools, and parents, including establishing a website known as MySchool (<http://www.myschool.edu.au>).

Australian schools have varying degrees of autonomy, depending on where they are located. While all jurisdictions currently use frameworks for curriculum, standards, and accountability that are determined at the state level, jurisdictions differ in the extent to which they decentralize school-related authority and responsibility. Some jurisdictions remain relatively centralized while others — notably Victoria — are more decentralized. In Victoria, more than 90 percent of the state’s operating budget for schools goes directly to schools themselves for local decision-making within a state-determined school improvement framework that includes collective agreements related to the selection and deployment of staff.

Each state or territory’s public school system, and most of the country’s Catholic school

that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world.” (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development web site: http://www.oecd.org/pages/0,3417,en_36734052_36734103_1_1_1_1_1,00.html. Retrieved October 27, 2010.)

systems, have regional or district-level administrative mechanisms to assist in the implementation of systemwide policy and to provide support to schools. The country’s increasing number of non-state, non-Catholic schools, referred to herein as independent schools, are not organized into systems. Rather, as their name implies, they operate as autonomous private schools. Whether they are Catholic or independent, each non-public school receives grants from the public purse, mainly from the federal government but also from its state or territory. These schools may also charge student fees. Such fees range from modest, in the case of Catholic schools that are located in disadvantaged settings and receive most of their income from government, to high, in the case of what can fairly be called elite private (independent) schools. Although these latter schools still receive government grants, student fees account for the largest part of their income by far.

Demographics

The distribution of schools by sector and jurisdiction in 1998 and 2008 is summarized in table 1.

Table 1 shows that the total number of schools across all sectors and jurisdictions was relatively stable during this period, with 9,587 schools in 1998 and 9,562 schools in 2008. However, there was a shift in the types of schools: The number of public schools fell from 6,998 to 6,833 (a decrease of 2.4 percent); the number of

Table 1. Number of Schools by Sector and Jurisdiction, 1998 and 2008

SECTOR	JURISDICTION								
	New South Wales	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	Tasmania	Northern Territory	Australian Capital Territory	Total
Public Schools									
1998	2,187	1,644	1,307	630	764	220	149	97	6,998
2008	2,189	1,585	1,250	596	768	210	151	84	6,833
Non-Public Schools									
Catholic									
1998	592	492	270	108	151	37	15	29	1,694
2008	586	487	289	102	159	37	15	30	1,705
Independent									
1998	296	193	149	89	113	29	15	11	895
2008	334	216	174	97	138	30	21	14	1,024
Total									
1998	888	685	419	197	264	66	30	40	2,589
2008	920	703	463	199	297	67	36	44	2,729
Total									
1998	3,075	2,329	1,726	827	1,028	286	179	137	9,587
2008	3,109	2,288	1,713	795	1,065	277	187	128	9,562

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009.

Catholic schools increased from 1,694 to 1,705 (an increase of less than 1 percent); and there was a noteworthy increase in the number of independent schools, which rose from 895 to 1,024 (an increase of 14.4 percent).

In reviewing a study of race in an American high school (Pollock, 2004), Santoro (2005) reported that “one in four Australians has a language background other than English; that is, they have

at least one parent for whom English is a second language. Twenty percent of the population speaks a language other than English at home and there are two hundred different languages, including Indigenous languages, spoken in Australia” (p. 1). She also cites the results of a 1999 survey (Australian College of Education, 2001) showing that only 10 percent of teachers in Australia have a language background other than English (p.

1). Moreover, despite Australia’s image as a large continent with an “outback culture,” most of the population lives in its large coastal cities. In 2008, 63.9 percent of the country’s population of 21,431,781 lived in the eight capital cities of its states and territories (Santoro, Kamler, & Reid, 2001). Therefore, Australia experiences the same challenges as the United States in providing schooling for an ethnically diverse population in its largest

cities.

School Improvement in Australia

Recent History

Systematic efforts to improve schools are relatively recent in Australia. Most observers would trace them to 1973, when the report of the Interim Committee of the Australian Schools Commission, known as the Karmel Report, was published. Commissioned by the then-recently elected Labor federal government, the report was a response to lively debate about inequities in the quality of schooling, especially those affecting schools in low-socioeconomic-level settings, including rural communities. These were the times of the great “state aid” debates and the calls in some quarters for government support for all schools, both public and private.

One outcome of the Karmel Report was the establishment of the Australian Schools Commission, which disbursed federal grants to states and territories for distribution to schools. Most grants were intended to bring about school improvement. The funding was available to public schools, to independent schools, and to systems of Catholic schools. To receive the funding, schools or school systems were required to demonstrate a high degree of professional and community consultation in both their application and in project implementation and evaluation. After the commission’s successor was abolished

in the late 1980s, grants were disbursed directly to the states and territories for public school use or directly to independent schools and systems of Catholic schools.

The Karmel Report (Karmel, 1973) included some significant statements about how schools should be governed:

1. The Committee favors less rather than more centralized control over the operation of schools. Responsibility should be devolved as far as possible upon the people involved in the actual task of schooling, in consultation with the parents of the pupils whom they teach and, at senior levels, with the students themselves. Its belief in this grass-roots approach to the control of schools reflects a conviction that responsibility will be most effectively discharged where the people entrusted with making the decisions are also the people responsible for carrying them out, with an obligation to justify them, and in a position to profit from their experience. (Paragraph 2.4)
2. Many consequences follow from this basic position. In the first place, a national bureaucracy, being further removed from the schools than are State ones, should not presume to interfere with the details of their operations. Secondly, the need for overall planning of the scale and distribution of resources becomes more necessary than ever if the devolution of authority is not to result in gross inequalities of provision

between regions, whether they are States or smaller areas. (Paragraph 2.5)

In subsequent years, most states and territories implemented their own distinctive approaches to school improvement, with noteworthy differences in the extent to which authority and responsibility were decentralized to schools. Each jurisdiction developed its own curriculum and programs for the professional development of teachers and school leaders. The outcome has been a range of diverse approaches that, to some extent, reflects regional differences, but that most observers would consider to be needlessly fragmented.

“New Federalism”

Recognition of the need for a more unified approach has led to “new federalism” in education — a partnership between the federal government and state governments — and the rhetoric of an “education revolution.” The case for each of these is outlined in *Quality Education: The Case for an Education Revolution in Our Schools* (2008), by Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard, who, at the time, were Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, respectively. As noted earlier, Gillard was also the federal Minister for Education. Rudd and Gillard acknowledge that there are many excellent schools in Australia and that, in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), Australian 15-year-olds performed significantly better

than average for OECD member countries. However, they also draw attention to the decline of Australian students' PISA performance in reading literacy from 2003 to 2006, the decline in performance at the top end of achievement from 2003 to 2006, the "long tail" of underperformance linked to disadvantage, and the concentration of that "tail" among Indigenous students and students from families of low socioeconomic status. They then build the case for reform in terms of the nation's productivity, and they declare improved student outcomes to be a national priority. More specifically, they identify priorities in three "core areas": (1) raising the quality of teaching; (2) adopting strategies based on high expectations and engagement and transitions for every student, especially those in disadvantaged communities; and (3) improving transparency and accountability of schools and school systems at all levels.

In late 2008, COAG confirmed six National Agreements containing objectives, outcomes, outputs, and performance indicators to guide the federal government and Australia's states and territories in the delivery of services across various sectors and in clarifying related roles and responsibilities. One such agreement focused on education. The high — and rare — degree of accord and momentum it embodied was carried forward in 2009 with plans, discussed earlier, for a national curriculum and the establishment of ACARA.

The most contentious aspect of the new national curriculum framework concerns transparency, including the plan to publicly report on school performance starting in late 2009. The case for change was built around Australia's performance in PISA, but school performance will be determined, to a large extent, on the basis of student achievement in NAPLAN. Along with information on sources of funding and attendance, the NAPLAN performance of each school will be publicly available online. In these reports, each school will be compared to "like schools," which are schools in the same geographic area that have a similar socioeconomic profile. The format of the reports is still in the design phase at the time this case study is being written. The chief point of contention is concern that the reports will appear as "simplistic league tables" (e.g., listings of rugby scores) of school performance, used by the media and others without reference to context or other information about the school. Of particular interest for readers in the United States is that, in building the case for a high level of transparency, Rudd and Gillard drew extensively on the experience of the New York City public school system, with its A–F school report cards. Joel Klein, who was then New York City Department of Education Chancellor, traveled to Australia to make the case for this level of transparency, appearing live in a televised forum on the topic.

Policies and Processes for School Improvement in Victoria

A systematic comparison of approaches to school improvement across Australia's states and territories is beyond the scope of this short report. Instead, this section focuses on developments in Victoria, which, in 2008, had 1,585 public schools. Victoria was selected for special attention in this case study because elements of its approach can be comprehensively tracked back to proposals in the Karmel Report; because of its establishment, in recent years, of a comprehensive and coherent approach to school improvement; and because its strategies for testing and reporting are more like those proposed in the national agreement than are those in other states and territories.

Over the last three decades, Victoria has moved steadily to decentralize decision-making to the school level. This move has entailed two major shifts. The first came in the early 1980s, when elected school councils were given authority to set policies and approve budgets within a statewide framework. The second and further-reaching shift came in the early 1990s, when this decentralized decision-making authority was extended, especially with respect to budgeting and staff selection. Today, more than 90 percent of the state's operating budget for public schools is subject to allocation decisions made by individual schools through their elected ■■

school council, made up primarily parents of students who attend the school. While initially contentious, this second shift was sustained even after a change of state government in the late 1990s. The rationale for this relatively high level of decentralization — or “self-management,” as it is called in Victoria — included an expectation that it would help raise the level of student achievement. This expectation reflected a belief by policymakers that each school has a unique mix of student needs and that local decision-making would ensure the best mix of policies, programs, and resources to meet those needs. The following summarizes the major features of current approaches to school improvement in Victoria.

Blueprints

Victoria’s policy framework and broad strategies for school improvement have been set out in two documents known as “blueprints,” the first version published in 2003 (DET, 2003) and the second updated version published in 2008 (DEECD, 2008). The first blueprint outlined initiatives such as the Victorian Essential Learning Standards, the Effective Schools Model, the Performance and Development Culture, and the School Accountability and Improvement Framework. The second affirmed these developments and extended them in several ways, especially through the formal networking of schools.

School Accountability and Improvement Framework

The School Accountability and Improvement Framework lays out a systematic approach to school review that is intended to yield an expert, independent analysis of school performance and practice. There are four types of review, each reflecting a different level of involvement by an external reviewer: a negotiated review that is usually used by schools with student outcomes that are above expectations, a continuous improvement review for schools with satisfactory student outcomes but with room for improvement, a diagnostic review for schools with student outcomes that are below expectations, and an extended diagnostic review for schools whose students’ outcomes are below expectations and for which more time is required to undertake the process. Reviewers include former school and school system leaders and experts from universities. Which type of review a school must undergo is normally determined by a regional officer of the state Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), based on a school’s student achievement data or the results from surveys of parents, teachers, and students, or when a major problem or crisis occurs.

One feature of the review process is the large amount of data on which judgments can be based, including the results of opinion surveys of parents, teachers, and students; school climate surveys; and student performance on

systemwide tests administered at years 3, 6, and 9. The testing program is known as the Achievement Improvement Monitor (AIM). AIM outcomes are reported according to the percentage of students who reach or exceed certain specified standards in the areas of literacy and numeracy, and a school’s results are shown in comparison to the performance of like schools (to see how this comparison is reported, see the “School-Level Example” section on page 12). Schools are required to prepare an annual report that includes these outcomes and comparisons and that is made available to all parents. Principals and teachers are becoming highly skilled in analyzing and acting on the rich array of data that has now accumulated over several years. Details of the Performance and Development Culture, School Accountability and Improvement Framework, and school performance data may be obtained at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schoolimprovement/default.htm>.

Student Resource Package

In this decentralized approach to budgeting, the funding level — the Student Resource Package (formerly known as the School Global Budget) — is not the same for all schools. Rather, it is based on a range of indicators. The formula for funding levels, which has gone through several iterations over the last 15 years, has two components: a core student learning allocation and an equity allocation. The core student-learning component is a

per-student allocation based on the level of schooling (i.e., which grade) with an enrollment-linked base allocation, a small-school base allocation, and a rural-school adjustment factor. The equity component is based on indicators of student family occupation and related allocations for middle-school and secondary-school students, a student mobility grant, and allocations for six levels of student disability and five levels on the English as a Second Language index. The most recent iterations of the formula were based on research in schools that were judged to be effective, based on a number of indicators for groups of schools with similar student demographics. A key objective was to shift the focus of school resource allocation to student outcomes and school improvement and to move as far as possible toward the alignment of resources to individual student learning needs. A detailed account of the underlying research and illustrations of its implementation is contained in Caldwell and Spinks (2008). Details of current levels of funding in the Student Resource Package may be found at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/financial/srp.htm>.

Turnaround Policies and Strategies

Though other domains also come into play, policies and strategies to turn around low-performing schools generally address four key domains: school leadership, school climate, instructional practices, and external support.

Reform work in these areas is discussed briefly in this section.

School Leadership

Leadership is broadly accepted nationwide as a critical factor for achieving school turnaround. However, the “new federalism” that will lead to a national curriculum has yet to yield a common approach to leadership development, which is currently highly fragmented. Each state and territory has one or more leadership development programs, often delivered by or in partnership with universities. The federal government established Teaching Australia, now known as the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. Modestly funded by international standards, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership operates with a board of directors representing major stakeholders and is tapped into a network that includes most national professional organizations. Its mandate is likely to be renewed and expanded with higher levels of funding, but the details were not available at the time of this writing. Victoria’s DEECD offers a comprehensive development program for school leaders and has recently established the Bestow Institute of Educational Leadership to give a focus to its efforts in this area. It should be noted that systems of Catholic schools have their own leadership development programs, as do independent

schools, whose newly appointed principals often choose to build capacity by participation in programs of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

School Climate

There is also wide recognition of the importance of school climate in turning around low-performing schools, as illustrated in the research and examples reported below. Several states and territories survey parents, teachers, and students about school climate. In the case of Victoria, survey results have been gathered for each school for more than 15 years, so trends are easy to spot. Climate data are included in annual reports on schools and are considered in school reviews.

Instructional Practices

Attention to instructional practice is more focused now than ever before, sharpened by the improvement agenda. Results on state and nationwide tests, coupled with Australia’s performance in PISA, have led to an unrelenting scrutiny on teaching and learning, especially in literacy and numeracy (see, for example, National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy, 2005). School and system professional development for teachers and school leaders now tends to focus on instructional leadership. It is noteworthy that the terminology of “instructional practices” is relatively new in Australia, where there has generally been a preference for “learning and teaching.” This shift reflects a willingness **■**

to draw on research and practice in the United States, as evidenced, for example, in the extensive involvement of Harvard's Richard Elmore in leadership development programs in Victoria (see the summary of Elmore's report on developments in Victoria on page 14).

External Support

Public and Catholic schools are mainly supported by system personnel at the state (or, for Catholic schools, diocesan), regional, or district levels. However, individual schools may seek support from any provider, such as universities or the private sector. In Victoria, schools' ability to obtain outside support is facilitated by the fact that, as previously described, schools have their own large discretionary budgets (in addition to an operating budget). Independent schools generally seek support from private providers.

Future Changes to School Turnaround Policy in Australia

Future changes to school turnaround policy in Australia will be substantially driven by the work of ACARA as it designs and implements the national curriculum, the national testing program, and the system for reporting school performance in a more transparent way, especially in online reports for parents. One particular challenge will be how to accommodate existing state and territory arrangements in this new framework. This may be relatively

straightforward in a state like Victoria, where approaches to the review of schools and reporting performance to parents are already close to what is expected across the nation. Another particular challenge will be resistance, within the education profession, to the reporting of school performance in what many may see as "simplistic league tables."

Further developments are likely in the near future with respect to a comprehensive program for school leadership development and the introduction of standards-based performance pay for teachers (see Daniels, 2009). Arrangements have been announced for trials of performance pay in Victoria and New South Wales. There will be further changes in the areas of curriculum and assessment because Australia is a partner in the three-year Transforming Education: Assessing and Teaching 21st Century Skills project (ATC21S, n.d.), whose executive director currently chairs ACARA. The purpose of this project is to develop assessment approaches to measure such capacities as creativity, teamwork, and communication. The project, based at the University of Melbourne, has five working groups in other countries, including the United States.

Review of Research

There have been no recent national studies in Australia of turning around low-performing

schools or of efforts to scale up school improvement to successful reform at the system level. Studies in other countries have provided the research base for much of the reform effort in Australia. Case studies of successful leadership in schools have been published and, in several instances, have involved school leadership as a strategy to achieve a turnaround (for example, Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, 2005). There have been several studies of developments in Victoria that account for the turnaround of low-performing schools; two such studies are reported in this section.

Signposts to Sustained Improvement

Victoria's DEECD commissioned research to learn more about the factors that explain improvement in student outcomes and to identify strategies that might be implemented across the state system to help all schools achieve improvement regardless of context. Two studies are reported in *Signposts: Research Points to How Victorian Government Schools Have Improved Student Performance* (DEECD, 2009).

In the first study, researchers identified 28 practices in schools that were on a "strong upward trajectory" — that is, schools that had achieved sustained improvement over 10 years. A range of "high-frequency high-intensity behaviors" were evident across these schools. The extent to which these behaviors were evident in a control group of schools was then

investigated. The control group consisted of schools whose performance had been stable or was in decline.

The declining schools showed patchy implementation, and while stable schools exhibited some of the practices of improving schools, they either displayed fewer of them, or they were less focused and less strategic. (p. 2)

Further refinement resulted in the identification of 16 practices, with the practice listed first (i.e., “using data”) observed most frequently and the practice listed last (i.e., “recognizing staff and student achievement”) observed least frequently: (1) using data; (2) coaching, mentoring, and sharing expertise; (3) raising staff expectations of students; (4) establishing and aligning values, vision, and goals; (5) working in teams; (6) aligning professional learning; (7) raising students’ expectations; (8) assigning staff to key priority areas; (9) focusing on literacy and numeracy; (10) establishing partnerships; (11) personalizing through individual learning plans; (12) engaging students; (13) articulating clear staff performance expectations; (14) targeting resources to student needs; (15) releasing staff for group learning, dialogue, and planning; and (16) recognizing staff and student achievement.

The second study drew on practice in eight urban schools that had high proportions of students from disadvantaged settings and

were performing better than like schools (that is, schools with similar levels of disadvantage). Particular attention was given to the identification of strategies that could be implemented in other schools. Two sets of conditions (strategies) were identified: preconditions for improvement and conditions for sustainability. The preconditions for improvement were strong leadership, high expectations, high teacher efficacy, an orderly learning environment, and a clear focus on “what matters most.” Conditions for sustainability included building teaching and leadership capacity, providing structure and scaffolding for student learning, developing strong professional learning teams, capitalizing on DEECD initiatives, and engendering pride in the school.

International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools

The findings in the DEECD study did not draw from or result in a theory or model for school improvement. However, the findings are consistent with a model that emerged from a separate five-year international project focusing on how schools achieved transformation. In that project, “transformation” was defined as significant, systematic, and sustained success that secures success for all students in all settings.

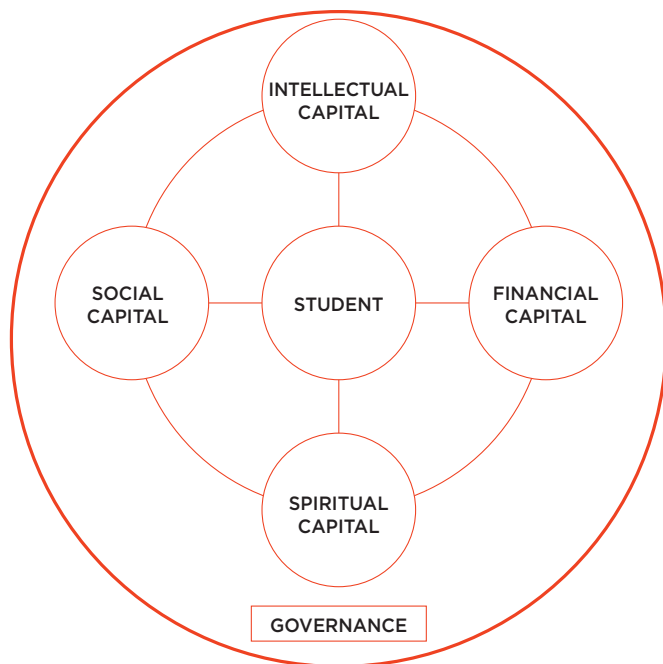
The final year of the project was designated as the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools;

its purpose was to explore how schools that had been transformed or had sustained high performance had built strength in each of four kinds of capital (intellectual, social, spiritual, and financial) and, through effective governance, aligned these different kinds of capital to secure student success.

“Intellectual capital” refers to the level of knowledge and skill of those who work in or for a school. “Social capital” refers to the strength of formal and informal partnerships and networks involving a school and all individuals, agencies, organizations, and institutions that have the potential to support and be supported by the school. “Spiritual capital” refers to the strength of moral purpose and the degree of coherence among values, beliefs, and attitudes about life and learning (for some schools, spiritual capital has a foundation in religion; in other schools, it may refer to ethics and values shared by members of the school and its community). “Financial capital” refers to the money available to support the school.

Governance is the process through which a school builds and aligns its capital in these areas to achieve its goals. This view of governance was seen as a breakthrough because governance traditionally has been perceived only in terms of roles, authorities, responsibilities, and accountabilities. In this study, these more traditional aspects of governance, along with leadership, were, ■■

Figure 1. A Model to Frame the Transformation of Schools



Source: Caldwell and Harris, 2008.

instead, seen as preconditions for sustained success, while the process of capital formation and alignment was seen as a requirement for that continued success.

The International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools was carried out in two steps. The first drew on work from the first four years of the five-year study that had resulted in identification of 10 indicators for each form of capital and governance. The second entailed development of case studies in five secondary schools in each of six countries: Australia, China, England, Finland, the United States, and Wales (the Australian

component also included a primary school and a network of primary and secondary schools). The project was framed by the model in figure 1. Project findings are reported in Caldwell and Harris (2008). In addition, there are six separate country reports, with the Australian component reported in Douglas and Harris (2008).

For illustrative purposes, the 10 indicators of intellectual capital are listed below.

1. The staff allocated to or selected by the school are at the forefront of knowledge and skill in required disciplines and pedagogies.

2. The school identifies and implements outstanding practice observed in or reported by other schools.
3. The school has built a substantial, systematic, and sustained capacity for acquiring and sharing professional knowledge.
4. Outstanding professional practice is recognized and rewarded.
5. The school supports a comprehensive and coherent plan for the professional development of all staff that reflects school needs and priorities.
6. When necessary, the school outsources to augment the professional talents of its staff.
7. The school participates in networks with other schools and individuals, organizations, institutions, and agencies, in education and in other fields, to share knowledge, solve problems, and pool resources.
8. The school ensures that adequate funds are set aside in the budget to support the acquisition and dissemination of professional knowledge.
9. The school provides opportunities for staff to innovate in their professional practice.
10. The school supports a “no-blame” culture, which accepts that innovations often fail.

The Australian component of the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools was conducted in Victoria. Three

of the five schools were public, one was Catholic, and one was independent; three of the five were “turnaround schools” because they had reversed enrollment declines, improved student outcomes, or both. Their success was readily explained in terms of the four forms of capital and the schools’ approaches to governance. The findings reported in the DEECD study (2009) are generally consistent with the model in figure 1. The one exception is that social capital does not appear in the study’s list of 16 key factors contributing to sustained improvement; however, social capital is evident to some extent in the exemplars of school turnaround approaches in the following section.

Exemplars of School Turnaround Approaches

Regional Level: Victoria’s Hume Region

Several states have moved to a different arrangement in the way their schools work together and are supported. In these states, schools are organized in clusters and networks. The intention has been to augment traditional top-down or bottom-up lines of authority, responsibility, and accountability with “horizontal” support from other schools in a local network. One example is Victoria, which is organized into nine regions. Starting in 2008,

schools in these regions were organized into one of 70 networks across the state. The intention to initiate this network approach was identified and explained in the second “blueprint” discussed on page 6 (DEECD, 2008):

We will provide support to revitalize schools and allow teachers to produce their best ... we will significantly expand the role of school networks through the employment of new regional network leaders. Under a new network strategic plan, networks will collectively support all schools to improve and achieve better outcomes for the students in a network. (p. 27)

An outstanding example of successful networks was reported by Educational Transformations (2008), which had been commissioned to study the approach described above, as implemented in Hume, a rural region of about 160 schools, located in North East Victoria. The seven elements of a “regional effectiveness model” developed by DEECD were studied: (1) professional leadership, (2) a focus on learning and teaching, (3) strategic stakeholder partnerships, (4) shared moral purpose, (5) high expectations for all learners, (6) a focus on continuous improvement, and (7) strategic use of resources. Each school network in the region includes several clusters of schools that embrace an unusual expectation: that, as a group, the principals of each school in the cluster share

responsibility for *all* students in the cluster, with the clustered schools sharing their professional knowledge, jointly addressing issues of common concern, and, to the extent possible, pooling resources.

Principals and other school leaders in the Hume Region are participating in a common professional learning program that is focused on building knowledge, skills, and a shared language on matters related to learning and teaching. This is known throughout the region as “the common curriculum.” The following information, drawn from case studies in six schools, indicates how school leaders perceived the effectiveness of clusters and networks.

All schools reported high levels of involvement in their clusters and networks. The expectations in the region for all school principals to be dedicated, focused, and professional, for example, have resulted in increased professionalism in all network and cluster meetings. Principals reported that their meetings are now more strategic and are focused on topics that can assist all schools. Representatives from each school are actively involved in professional learning communities in their cluster that target a focus area of either literacy or numeracy. Principals reported that their networks also provided resources and support for other forms of professional development.

Principals described how the regional director (that is, the administrative head for

education in the region) had made all regional-level processes more transparent. Schools in networks and clusters are more willing to share ideas, experiences, information, and even their own school data. In addition to leading the changes adopted in their own schools, principals have been extensively involved in implementing change at the regional, network, and cluster levels. They have spent more time focused on processes at these levels than ever before.

These principals' perceptions are consistent with views across the region. Each year, DEECD conducts an online survey of principals and personnel at the regional and central levels to seek their views on a range of matters. In the 2008 survey, the percentage of principals in the Hume Region giving favorable ratings was higher than that of their counterparts in other regions for 9 of the 14 themes addressed in the survey. For the other 5 themes, the percentages of principals in the Hume Region giving favorable ratings were higher than the statewide average, differing by only one or two percentage points from the region that gave the highest ratings in 4 of these 5 themes. Principals in Hume either gave or matched the highest percentage of positive ratings for 81 of 168 items (48 percent) in the survey.

The research in Victoria reported here highlights the importance of school leadership, not just at the school-site level but at a broader level; its findings suggests that

principals can successfully share leadership at the system level by working in clusters or networks of schools. School climate, which is included as part of "spiritual capital" in the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools, is a powerful factor in shaping school performance, and research in the Hume Region suggests that school climate itself can be powerfully shaped by practice at the system/regional level.

School Level: Bellfield Primary School

Bellfield Primary School is an elementary school (preparatory grade² to grade 6) serving the Melbourne suburb of West Heidelberg, a community whose population is characterized by high levels of aggression, gambling, alcohol, and drug abuse. At the time of the school's turnaround, its enrollment was about 220, but it is now about 150 and declining, largely because of demographic change in surrounding communities. Bellfield is one of Victoria's most disadvantaged schools. The 1996 Triennial Review (the approach to school review used in Victoria at the time) revealed that over 85 percent of the school's students had not met statewide benchmarks in literacy and numeracy. This exemplar covers the years from 1996 to 2005, after which there was a dramatic change in the school's leadership, with the principal and several of

2 In some other parts of Australia, referred to as kindergarten.

his leadership team moving to a different school.

Turnaround at Bellfield Primary School is evident in its students' remarkable performance on systemwide tests. Bellfield's test results in 2000 for the preparatory grade and in grades 1 and 2, summarized in table 2, illustrate what was accomplished: The data show that Bellfield came close to meeting the definition of transformation, namely success for all students in all settings, especially under challenging circumstances. Noteworthy are the comparisons with like schools (that is, schools in similar settings with similar student populations), with all schools across the state, and with Bellfield's 1998 results. Table 2, including the different data comparisons, is significant because it illustrates the proposed approach for reporting school performance for all schools in Australia under the "new federalism" agreements described above.

Bellfield achieved its turnaround by building the capacity of its staff, an effort requiring outstanding leadership. A visit to the school, post-turnaround, revealed a quiet, safe, orderly environment, making it an appealing place in which to teach and to learn. Any teaching vacancy typically drew scores of applications, and each year literally hundreds of visitors came hoping to find out how the turnaround had been achieved.

A key feature of table 2 is the comparison of Bellfield students' performance to that of students in like schools, which, in the case of

Table 2. Bellfield Primary School Results on Systemwide Tests for 2000, Compared to Like Schools in 2004, the Statewide Average in 2004, and Bellfield Results in 1998

Preparatory Grade: Percentage reading with 100 percent accuracy at Level 1			
Bellfield 2000	Like Schools 2004	Statewide 2004	Bellfield 1998
97.4	58.5	67.5	33.3
Grade 1: Percentage reading with 100 percent accuracy at Level 15			
Bellfield 2000	Like Schools 2004	Statewide 2004	Bellfield 1998
100	26.3	35.9	34.6
Grade 2: Percentage reading with 100 percent accuracy at Level 20			
Bellfield 2000	Like Schools 2004	Statewide 2004	Bellfield 1998
83.3	38.7	47	30.6

Bellfield, meant schools serving communities with challenging socioeconomic circumstances. Bellfield's success suggests that if similar schools employ the kinds of strategies Bellfield used, they, too, can turn around. A first step in that process is rejection of the common view that low socioeconomic circumstances necessarily leads to low student achievement, even if research has shown that this factor is an important predictor of such an outcome. Indeed, efforts that simply direct additional resources to schools to compensate for students' low socioeconomic circumstances may be ineffective, as they clearly have been in the case of many of the like schools whose performance is summarized in table 2. Notably, Bellfield achieved outcomes that were dramatically better than those of like schools even though they all received much the same level of funding through the Student Resource Package.

Bellfield's turnaround can be framed by the model in figure 1 on page 10 that was identified in the International Project to Frame the Transformation of Schools. The key to transformation was building the intellectual capital of staff and the spiritual capital of the school as a whole, with a focus on instructional practice.

A comprehensive account of the school's turnaround is provided by the principal who led it, John Fleming, in a book that also describes the early implementation of similar approaches in the school to which he moved after leaving Bellfield (Fleming & Kleinhenz, 2007). Fleming places the various turnaround strategies used within the five-component framework of the DEECD approach to developing an effective performance and development culture: (1) induction, (2) multiple sources of feedback for teacher effectiveness, (3) customized individual development

plans, (4) quality professional development, and (5) teacher belief that the school has a performance and development culture. He explains how each of these was evident at Bellfield and, later, at his new school.

In this exemplar, the transferability of strategies to a new setting is particularly evident in relation to instructional leadership. As noted earlier, Fleming and several of his leadership team left Bellfield and the public school system at the end of 2005. They were then employed as a team to lead one campus of one of the largest schools in Australia, the multi-campus Haileybury College, an independent, non-public school in suburban Melbourne. With more than 600 students from the preparatory grade to grade 9, Haileybury is much larger than Bellfield. On arriving, Fleming immediately conducted an assessment of student performance, using the same

statewide tests that are employed in public schools; he found that school and community expectations were not being achieved and that a turnaround was needed. The elements of a performance and development culture previously described were addressed. Within two years of his employment, student performance on statewide tests improved dramatically, leading to a noteworthy difference between performance at the campus Fleming's team led and performance at the other Haileybury campuses, which had previously had comparable performance. The approaches described in this exemplar have since been adopted at the other campuses, with improvement in outcomes achieved within a year.

Implications for Other Nations

Independent Appraisal

Harvard University's Richard Elmore has served as a valued consultant in Victoria in recent years, focusing on instructional leadership in particular. His report on what has been accomplished there (Elmore, 2007) has implications for the United States and other nations: "The good news is that Victoria, because of the thoughtful design of its improvement strategy, is on the leading edge of policy and practice in the world." Elmore identified three distinctive features of the design. The first is "its central focus [on] the creation of human

capital. The central message is simple: Schools improve by investing thoughtfully and coherently in the knowledge and skill of educators. Second, "accountability measures are seen as instrumental to the development of human capital." Elmore contrasts this with the approach in the United States, in which "accountability for performance is considered to be the leading instrument of policy, and human investment is considered to be a collateral responsibility of states and localities," which results, he writes, in "a disastrous gap between capacity and performance." What is impressive about Victoria, Elmore states, is "its emphasis on using school performance data and data on teacher, student and parent attitudes towards their schools as the basis for human investment decisions, rather than primarily as the basis for administering rewards and sanctions." Elmore identifies the way Victoria's approach to school management defines "leaders as essential carriers of the new culture of school improvement" (p. 2) as a third distinctive feature.

General Implications of the Australian Experience

This study of efforts to turn around low-performing schools in Australia demonstrates that national performance on international tests, such as PISA, can galvanize a country and that, in some circumstances, high levels of agreement can be secured among different levels of government in

a federal system in a relatively short period of time. In this case, agreement was facilitated by the fact that all levels of government were controlled by the same political party (i.e., Labor) at the time the "education revolution" was declared. The notion of "new federalism" has been broadly accepted, although, certainly, reaching agreements of the kind described in this report is easier in a federation of six states and two territories than in, for example, a federation of 50 states.

Australian governments at all levels have appreciated Australian students' generally good performance on the PISA assessments, but they have also recognized the need for a policy response to address achievement gaps between high- and low-performing students (the so-called "long tail"). There are well-established forums in which the case for taking action could be presented, notably MCEETYA and COAG, and that case has been easier to make during a global financial crisis because of the connection between the quality of education and the needs of the economy. In this context, there has been broad acceptance of the need for a national approach to curriculum, assessment, and reporting. Thus, a national curriculum and a national system of tests have been designed and implemented in a relatively short period of time, although there remains strong resistance to reporting in a form that leads to the publication of "simplistic league tables."

The implications of Victoria's policy and practice related to school turnaround are especially noteworthy with respect to well-established approaches to school improvement, school review, and the creation of what is known in Victoria as a performance and development culture, which embeds all of the practices described in this report. It has been a considerable achievement to secure a common understanding and acceptance of these approaches within the teaching profession. The use of system-wide tests with transparency in school performance through comparisons with like schools is now institutionalized. Shifts in parent, teacher, and student opinion can be readily detected from the results of the annual surveys administered to these populations.

Public schools in Victoria have a relatively high level of autonomy by international standards. Like their counterparts in non-public schools, principals and other school leaders at public schools have the capacity to set priorities and allocate resources. They are increasingly adept at analyzing and acting on a large amount of data. In general, it would seem that these successful strategies in Victoria could be adapted in comparable settings.

Despite the convergence of policy and practice across the country, an unsettling fragmentation still exists in some matters, although this shortcoming might be successfully addressed in the short

to medium term. For example, leadership development is highly fragmented; there is currently no counterpart to England's National College for School Leadership. At the time of this writing, several Australian states are moving to create new organizations to meet local needs. Teacher education is another domain that is relatively fragmented, and there is general agreement on the need to strengthen and achieve a higher degree of coherence among the different programs across the country. A priority has been declared (see Rudd & Gillard, 2008), but no national strategy has yet emerged. There is no counterpart, for example, to the requirement in Finland that all beginning teachers have a master's degree, a requirement that is generally accepted as having helped Finland achieve so well in

PISA. As is evident in this report, there is also a need to strengthen the research base on strategies for turning around low-performing schools and for scaling up successful turnaround approaches to the system level. Current research is based on a case-study approach.

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