

CENTRAL SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

A Central School provides continuous education for students from kindergarten to school leaving. More than 90% of Central Schools provide a K-12 curriculum.

Federation reaffirms the view that Central Schools are unique and require unique staffing arrangements and resource provisions.

Central Schools, perhaps more than all other types of schools, occupy an integral position in the communities they serve.

In general Central Schools service isolated and even insular communities with relatively small populations. They provide a focus for community activities and through the staff, the buildings and other physical resources and the school's activities, contribute greatly to the social, cultural and sporting life of the community.

Central Schools have a number of educational advantages that are, due to current staffing, funding and other limitations, not being fully realised.

STAFFING POLICY

This staffing policy is based upon the following needs in all Central Schools:

1. to provide adequate staffing to allow local comprehensive schooling,
2. to provide specialist qualified teachers to teach all KLA's,
3. to maintain operation of whole school staffing,
4. to guarantee the quality and widest range of curriculum,
5. to develop a common set of working conditions for all teachers,
6. to provide a full time teacher-librarian and full time library SAO on the site.

The present staffing formula, a loose hybrid of the current secondary and primary formulas, should be abolished and replaced with one specifically for Central Schools which gives due recognition to their special character and needs. In the interim, having achieved the breakthrough for PC1's, as a next step, all PC2's should also be staffed as Community Schools with a non teaching Deputy Principal Primary.

In particular, the position of Assistant Principal in Central Schools should be renamed to become Head Teacher Primary. This position should attract the equivalent release time as a Head Teacher of a secondary faculty area. The Federation's claim for release in its Primary Schools should apply in its entirety to the Primary departments of Central Schools.

The allowance of extra release time for new executive in rural schools is required for the effective management of the school as a whole. Executive staff who are inexperienced and particularly those who are the only person in the executive (only HT, only AP, teaching Principal) require extra release time to ably manage subject areas in which they are not specifically trained.

Time to be allocated in the school staffing formula for teachers who take on roles mandated by DET policy – examples are ARCO (Aboriginal Anti Racism Contact Officer), OH&S committee members.

CURRICULUM GUARANTEE

The staffing level must be sufficient to ensure:

1. the common curriculum as outlined in Federation policy,
2. a true choice of electives including access to VET courses,
3. maximum retention rates in Years 11 and 12,
4. equity provisions for all students related to socio-economic disadvantage, isolation, issues of aboriginality, NESB and gender based education strategies.

When schools experience a rapid fall in enrolments resulting in the loss of more than one teacher in a single year, a system of staffing maintenance should be employed to allow a gradual adjustment to the staff reductions to ensure the maintenance of the school curriculum.

Teachers living in isolated communities need to have access to professional services. In order to access these services, teachers may need to travel substantial distances.

Often a number of services are accessed in any one visit. This may require at least a whole day to achieve. Often school holiday time is not suitable. The number of days provided at present is not sufficient to carry out these tasks. Personal leave should be increased to 10, 8, 6 and 4 days for 8 point 2 year, 8 point 3 year, 6 point 3 year and 4 point 5 year incentive transfer benefit schools respectively.

TEACHER SUPPORT STAFF

Library Staff

All Central Schools are to have a minimum of one full time teacher librarian staff who should not be required to cover RFF.

There is an urgent need for trained teacher librarians and trained librarian SAO staff in Central Schools. A significant number of Central Schools in NSW currently have no trained teacher librarian. The DET is urged to take the measures necessary to rectify this situation.

In addition, split site Central Schools with separate library facilities should have additional teacher librarian support.

School Counsellors

In recognition of the travel time needed to adequately service Central Schools as well as the lack of community counselling expertise in school districts, all Central Schools should have one full time school counsellor.

Careers Teachers

Each Central School should be provided with a trained careers teacher. In recognition of the difficulties posed by isolation, the limited resources in the community for work placement, mandated school to work plans and the increased workloads associated with VET courses, Central Schools should be provided with a minimum of 0.4 careers teacher scaled to a full time position when the student population reaches 220.

Support Teacher Learning

There should be a minimum of one full time STL for each Central School over 220 students scaled to a minimum of 0.5 for schools with student populations below this number to ensure continuity of learning. Additional staffing should be provided to split site Central Schools.

In addition Central Schools should have specialist staff for ESL, integration and aboriginal education.

Inbuilt Relief

The geographical location of many Central Schools creates severe problems in securing casual relief teachers. To ensure curriculum continuity, Central Schools must be provided with appropriate levels of staffing for in built relief in both the primary and secondary school.

Specialist Subject Assistant

In addition to existing teacher support staff available to support science, Home Science and Agriculture teachers an additional allocation must be made for assistance in other specialist areas e.g. Industrial Arts and Art.

This is necessary to offset increased demands made on teacher's time by OH&S requirements imposed by the DET with no additional resources.

WHOLE SCHOOL STAFFING

Whole School Staffing was implemented for a three-year trial period (1988 to 1990) and has since become an established supplementary staffing procedure in Central Schools.

Whole School Staffing is a means whereby additional appropriately qualified teachers can be appointed to Central Schools.

The purpose of Whole School Staffing is to allow the voluntary interchange of K-6 and 7-12 teachers within the teaching program of these two main departments of a Central School. There is a range of sound educational reasons for which such interchange might be seen as desirable or necessary, one of which could be the use of specialist expertise (eg PE, Art, Music) in more than one school department.

Additional staffing provided to Central Schools for the implementation of Whole School Staffing has been made available to assist curriculum development in a number of ways:

- to allow travel time for those teachers moving between split sites;
- to allow lesson preparation time for teachers involved in primary/secondary interchange;
- to allow time for in school in-servicing for staff involved in the program;
- to allow for the expansion of the school's curriculum.

Permanent, permanent part-time and temporary staff up to FTE should be able to be used in calculating the staffing supplement for Whole School Staffing because all can contribute to successful Whole School Staffing programs.

Concessional Allowances

In addition to the normal concessional allowances provided in the normal staffing formula, concessional allowances should be made for sports organisers (primary and secondary), year advisers and all teachers of practical subjects responsible for substantial management of resources, maintenance and OHS compliance.

The Federation's claim of primary concessional allowance at 0.1 per 6 FTE positions, or part thereof, must be extended to all primary departments of Central Schools.

Relieving Allowance

Relieving allowances should be paid immediately for teachers in 4, 6 and 8 point rural schools.

Remote Central Schools are characterised by high staff turnover. The current DET practice of appointing temporary teachers to fill long term vacancies exacerbates this problem.

To improve continuity in staffing, long term vacancies are to be filled by appointment of teachers to permanent mobile positions.

Support Staff

Central Schools should have support staff no less than would be required to primary and secondary schools of equivalent sizes.

Split site Central Schools are to be provided with additional support staff to accommodate their greater need.

Class sizes

As per current Federation class size including Federation's PSF policy.

RESOURCES

Funding

Global budgeting has given rise to a number of problems that are specifically related to Central Schools.

The Department of Education & Training must:

1. develop an adequate funding formula specifically for Central Schools by providing a loading which takes into account higher phone charges, postage, cartage, trade work charges, and additional costs encountered because of geographical isolation.
2. provide specific consideration for funding of split-site Central Schools.

FACILITIES

Libraries

Central School libraries are seriously under-resourced. This affects research and reference sources in particular, especially in the case of materials suitable for senior students. This need has been exacerbated by the sharp increase in the cost of research and reference material, and by the fact that library resource funding is by per capita grant.

The method of resource funding for Central School libraries should be changed, and the level of funding increased to meet current educational demands as libraries attempt to fulfil the role of a resource centre in Central School communities. In particular, funds should be allocated to ensure that material is up to date and appropriate for primary and secondary students.

Central School libraries should be provided with adequate specialist annexes, audio visual and study facilities, taking into account the requirement to service the needs of primary and secondary students at the same time.

The supply of library furniture and fittings must cater for the diversity of the ages of students in K-12 schools.

Hall

Every Central School must have access to a multi purpose centre to meet school and community needs.

Facilities

All Central Schools must be provided with suitable space other than classrooms for shelter from adverse weather conditions to meet the needs of students and OH&S requirements.

All Central Schools should have separate toilet facilities for primary students, secondary students and staff.

All Central Schools should have shower facilities.

Central School facilities for secondary students should conform to high school building codes where the facility will be used by secondary students.

Central schools must be provided with a rooming formula taking into account the smaller number of students leading to some smaller class sizes needed to provide an adequate number of physical spaces for individual classes.

Split Sites

The special problems for split sites Central Schools must be considered in terms of resource allocation. These problems exist because split sites restrict communication at all levels and necessitate the duplication of resources.

Accommodation

Schools at present find it difficult to gain access to temporary and casual teachers. Central Schools should have the option of being the tenant of a Teacher Housing premise (in places that have one available). Where the shortage of housing creates an impediment to employing temporary or casual teachers, this would allow school principals to have an incentive when offering short term employment to potential staff.

Staff Rooms

All teachers in Central Schools are to have designated staff rooming where lesson preparation and marking can be undertaken.

Such designated staff rooming is to be included in a rooming formula of the Department of Education & Training which is applied to Central Schools.

Teachers' preparation areas are to be in addition to the rooming used by the whole school community during recess/lunch breaks.

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

The special needs of Central Schools must be recognised by substantial increases in the allocation of funds:

- (1) for K-12 curriculum development;
- (2) for staff development to facilitate whole school staffing programs;
- (3) to overcome isolation from support services and resources.

Professional Support

Teachers in rural and isolated communities require professional support.

This can be achieved by:

1. organisation of mentor positions
 - a. For beginning teachers
 - b. For teachers working outside subject areas
 - c. For newly appointed teachers in Executive positions

2. increased period allowance for:
 - a. Beginning teachers
 - b. Executive teachers supervising newly appointed teachers
 - c. Newly appointed teachers in executive positions
3. cooperative and collective planning networks for all teachers supported by video conferencing for teachers in isolated areas.

New Executives

Professional support for new executive to rural schools should focus on effectively leading and living in isolated communities through the establishment of local support groups.

These support groups, with appropriate resourcing (release time, travel, professional learning activities specific to executive staff etc.) should be made available for new executive in rural schools.

The present trend of teacher retirement indicates an influx of new executive over the next five years. Therefore the need for effective support groups will increase rapidly in order to ensure the success of teachers in these executive positions.

TECHNOLOGY

Due to the fact that many Central Schools are small and/or isolated, the delivery of educational programs making use of technological innovations is very important. Therefore, Central Schools welcome the opportunities for curriculum expansion made available by developments in technology. This expansion will be limited in effectiveness unless the following provisions are made:

1. continued training and development in the efficient and effective use of technology as a teaching medium.
2. continuing relevant support programs for staff.
3. administrative and other relevant support for the installation and maintenance of equipment.
4. the maintenance or improvement of staffing allocations when courses are taught on-line.
5. the implementation of technology which complies with the conditions set down in industrial agreements relating to the work of teachers.
6. increased funding to provide realistic student access to computers.
7. both primary and secondary sites in split site Central Schools should have full access to OASIS technology.
8. an appropriate base grant for maintenance funding for technology rather than the current per capita funding arrangement.
9. accommodation for technologies which allows the effective operation of existing facilities such as libraries.

Central Schools need additional accommodation for such things as computer linked classrooms and radio linked classrooms.

Classroom space is often a major factor in reducing access to technology. Adequate rooms must be provided for technology areas including additional space required to include new technology into the curriculum.

New World Technology for Central Schools

Central Schools continue to be high demand schools. Parents choose to send their children to Central Schools that are often the centre of the community.

Unfortunately, some of our students are denied access to a broader curriculum due to a lack of specialist teachers and due to the declining student numbers. The government must use its technology infrastructure to improve our students' curriculum options. This can be achieved by providing the necessary technology hardware to enable students and teachers access to curriculum through video conferencing and additional teacher time so that specialist lessons can be organised and provided to all students.

With technology in place, a broader curriculum could be offered thus retaining our students within their community.

Specialist teachers will be able to provide valuable experience and subject choices for all students in schools with declining numbers.

ACTION

That the Federation include in all relevant discussions and negotiations with the DET, issues relating to the Central Schools Policy, e.g. staffing, the new Award, building codes, budget submissions, restructure of primary executive, ICT.

The Federation will develop a "Central Schools Alliance" as part of the Public Education Campaign and will hold a Central Schools Conference in Term 2, 2008.

Central Schools will be listed as an agenda item at all meetings with the Minister and Director-General of Education and Training.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the transfers and incentives policy which deals with issues of general concern to schools in isolated areas