

INFORMATION BROCHURE 2014



# GREATSCHOOLS NETWORK

GREATER TOGETHER

Supporting  
partnerships within,  
between and  
beyond schools  
to improve  
learning outcomes

[www.greatschoolsnetwork.org](http://www.greatschoolsnetwork.org)



The Great  
Schools Network  
is an exciting new  
development

# Welcome

The Great Schools Network (GSN) is an exciting new development. The GSN as a possibility began with discussions around the idea of forming a grassroots schools network. Participants in these discussions included school principals, teachers, parents and students across the government, Catholic and independent school sectors. School council and board members, researchers, policy shapers and community organisations also took part in these discussions.

These conversations revealed enthusiastic support for creating a network, centred on the celebratory and aspirational idea of 'great' schools and the theme of 'greater together', which acknowledges the power of collaboration and partnerships to improve learning outcomes for all.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has provided funding to support the development of the GSN, with the establishment work being led by a project team comprising members from across the three school sectors.

More information will be available soon. In the interim, we hope that this brochure serves to inform and provide a sense of what may be the potential value of this network and its services and tools for your school or organisation.

## Why schools are supporting the GSN

Research and the work of schools and community stakeholders make it clear that:

- Clusters and networks of schools, through the systematic sharing of expertise and skills, provide a powerful means of school improvement and innovation in education.
- Strong learning relationships - among and between students, parents, families, teachers, principals and stakeholders such as community organisations, businesses and local government - have major effects on students' engagement with learning, options, learning outcomes and life opportunities.

## Benefits of the GSN for schools

A broadly co-owned, grassroots and sustainable network of schools can be a vehicle for:

- 01** Developing better ways and an online network to support schools to:
  - Showcase and share with each other the great things that they already do and aspire to do.
  - Co-create innovative school improvement practices, policies, plans, tools and technologies.
- 02** Supporting and promoting school improvement efforts that are 'co-owned' in strong partnerships of school leaders, educators, parents, students and community members.
- 03** Sharing relevant research among schools.
- 04** Shared professional development and training among schools including across all three school sectors.
- 05** Supporting and promoting great practices in school governance by developing a 'School Governance Network' as a partner with the Great Schools Network.

A governing board, including schools and stakeholders across the three sectors, will guide, support and oversee these developments.

## How the GSN may work

Through the GSN, various services, tools and opportunities can be created to assist schools and other organisations including:

### A social networking space and knowledge bank

An online tool will be developed to support schools in sharing their great ideas, resources, programs and strategies and co-creating school improvement practices, policies, plans, tools and technologies.

### Forums

Conversations may be supported through a series of forums, with special guest presenters/great practice leaders from around Australia and overseas.

### e-Bulletin

Regular e-Bulletins will share schools' great practices and insights into improvement.

### Resource sharing

It may be possible to access resources that would otherwise be too costly for any one school. Larger groups of schools may secure funding for projects.

### Shared professional development and training

The GSN may offer opportunities for shared PD across clusters and networks of schools. A barter model of PD is possible.

### Project teams & clusters

Easy-to-use ways will be developed to assist school leaders, teachers, school council/board members, parents and students with similar interests and priorities to collaborate directly.

## Values guiding the GSN

In advancing this work and support for schools, the network is all about being:

01

### Innovative

We're excited by new possibilities and look for new ways to address challenges.

02

### Collaborative

We seek out collaboration that will achieve the best results – being 'greater together' and building an education commons. We respect different views and value strength in diversity.

03

### Creative

No two great schools need to look absolutely alike. A network is a catalyst for conversations and flexible actions, not a straitjacket for conforming to any one idea of a great school.

04

### Strategic and Practical

We're inspired by big ideas and bold initiatives; at the same time, we want to be judged by practical results, not by plans.

05

### Equitable

All schools should have access to opportunities for improvement and innovation and providing the best possible education and learning outcomes for all students.

## The 'greater together' theme

School principals, teachers, parents, students and community members have expressed strong support for the 'greater together' theme. Schools suggested that the theme refers to ideas such as:

- **Powerful learning teams, relationships and communities**

How learners, schools, educators, families and communities work and learn together and use new technologies and tools to shape a personalised, networked, joined-up, holistic approach to student learning

- **Multi-school and cross-sectoral collaboration**

Schools sharing practices with each other and co-creating learning tools, strategies and content, including across the government, Catholic and independent school sectors

- **Joined-up services and working**

Partnerships between schools and health agencies, businesses, community organisations, local government, sporting clubs, etc.

- **The learning continuum**

Integrating the 'parts' of education such as K-12 schooling or linking a school, college, university and/or kindergarten as well as developing the seamlessness of learning between schools, families and the wider community

- **Schools across urban and rural locations**

How schools across metropolitan areas and regional and rural locations collaborate around learning opportunities for all students

- **Regional and global networking**

Collaboration across geography, culture, ethnicity and language and among schools within the Asia-Pacific region and in an online world

- **School governance**

How members of school councils and boards collaborate to make a difference as well as build networks and partnerships with community stakeholders.

## The GSN is linked to the School Governance Network

The GSN is linked to the **School Governance Network**. It is a proposed network that may support and promote for school councils and boards:

- **Training and PD** including blended and online learning that can assist with the policy, planning and partnership work (the '3Ps') of a school council/board. A list of school governance trainers will be created and include providers such as the Institute of Community Directors Australia.
- **A network of council/board presidents and chairs** within and across the government, Catholic and independent school sectors including support for local networks of school councils/boards.
- **An online self-assessment tool** to assist principals and school council/board members to explore strengths and weaknesses in governance, including the 'hidden strengths' of current practice, determine the practical steps for improvement and track progress over time.

• **A 'one-stop shop' for school principals and school councils/boards** including a:

- **School Policy, Planning and Partnerships Bank** with sample policies, plans and partnerships information for schools to share, download, use and rework.
- **School Funding Centre** with comprehensive practical information including about grants, crowd funding and resource sharing among schools.
- **School Governance Position Matching Service** that would support and promote school councils/boards that are looking for new community members with particular knowledge and skills and individuals and organisations looking to make a connection with a school and its council/board.

**The School Governance Network can be a vehicle, therefore, to enhance the effectiveness and sharing of school governance practices.**

The Great Schools Network will provide tools for schools and school councils/boards. One such tool is Talk & Action - an online tool for sharing ideas and developing joint actions and policies to improve learning.

It is free to join and use - and takes only a matter of minutes to get started. Conversations are private and protected by GeoTrust.

Online conversations can powerfully support face-to-face meetings. It can also be a great way to follow-up after a meeting. Online conversations are important because:

- They can be potentially accessed by a greater number and more diverse mix of participants.

- They can involve people who are unable to meet face-to-face.
- People can have the time to make fuller contributions than they might in face-to-face situations and overcome the anxiety that many may feel in meetings.
- People can reflect further on each other's thoughts and give feedback on ideas and suggestions that may not be fully developed in a face-to-face meeting.
- People can share files, links and documents that are not available in a face-to-face chat.

Visit [www.talkandaction.org](http://www.talkandaction.org) for more information or to sign up.

This is an online conversation tool for schools



For more  
information

If you are interested in the Great Schools Network or you have any questions or suggestions, please contact one of the following project team members:

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Coming soon: [www.greatschoolsnetwork.org](http://www.greatschoolsnetwork.org)

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