

Evaluation shows EAL/D teachers improve learning outcomes



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Intensive English Centre and Central Sydney Intensive English High School staffing entitlements for permanent staff will be maintained during 2022 and 2023.

The Department of Education seeks to “protect the specialist structures and expertise of the Intensive English Program, and to ensure that Intensive English Program sites can respond to enrolments as border restrictions are lifted”, the Intensive English Program Executive was advised on 14 September.

With the continuing global health crisis and resultant government policies closing Australia’s borders, a significant reduction in migration, international students and refugee resettlement has increasingly affected our intensive English centres (IECs) and the Central Sydney Intensive English High School. Recognising that significant changes to enrolment patterns directly affect the staffing and resourcing of schools, strong union representation secured a hold on the permanent staffing allocations in these specialist settings in 2020. Continued advocacy ensured our specialist settings and expert staff were protected within an Intensive English Program Contingency Plan, which commenced in term 3, 2020, and was successfully rolled over into 2021.



The Intensive English Program Contingency Plan ensures that the operational requirements of IECs and the Central Sydney Intensive English High School are maintained for all enrolled students. Staff not required due to reduced enrolment numbers are then deployed to provide additional expert support to English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) students and their teachers in mainstream schools.

EAL/D and transitioned IEC students are at a heightened risk of disengagement and disconnect from learning during extended periods of lockdown. Remote learning is especially difficult for those whose families are surviving on reduced or zero income support, without the capacity to access online learning.

For some, this disruption to learning may also mean that they will not develop nor acquire their English at the rate usually expected. Schools with additionally deployed Intensive English Program staff were able to target specific groups of students with additional EAL/D support needs, at a time when their academic achievement and language acquisition required this expert intervention.

An evaluation of the effect of the Intensive English Program Contingency Plan was conducted by the Department of Education. Results published in the “2021 Intensive English Program Contingency Plan Term 3 Evaluation” document include evidence that when schools are provided with specialist teachers to specifically address the needs of EAL/D students, it significantly affects student learning outcomes and student engagement, lifts student performance and facilitates success in learning.

The Department’s data shows that deployed IEC/Central Sydney Intensive English High School staff positively affected collaborative planning and co-designed teaching and learning programs. They implemented professional development in EAL/D pedagogy and modelled the differentiation of syllabus and learning activities, upskilling teachers, and partnering with them to support students who were previously unable to access specialist EAL/D support in their mainstream setting. Parent and family support was also made available, with remote operations benefiting from these expert specialists being available to support both students and their families.

The published evaluation data specifically highlighted that:

- 129 expert EAL/D teachers and support staff from Intensive English Program centres were deployed across 58 secondary and primary school settings
- The IEP staff involved supported more than 6000 students within these settings
- 476 classroom teachers were directly supported through the provision of professional development or through access to expert EAL/D support within their classes that would not usually be available under “normal circumstances”
- 100 per cent of the principals of participating schools believe that the IEP Contingency Plan is so successful that they want to see it continue in future years, due to evidence of the benefits to students, families and staff in their mainstream settings.

One participating principal stated in the Intensive English Program evaluation document that, “Since over 90 per cent of our students are of EAL/D background, the help provided by staff who have the most current knowledge of EAL/D pedagogy is invaluable”.

The results evidenced in the Department of Education’s evaluation of the Intensive English Program Contingency Plan prove that the provision and retention of expert EAL/D teachers, along with the targeted use of these specialist staff to meet identified need, is a significant, contributing factor towards improving student learning outcomes.

This important data further emphasises the key recommendations arising from the Inquiry into the Value of the Teaching Profession (The Gallop Report) as being essential to the future of public schools.

Our public school system needs permanent, systemic support and additional specialist EAL/D teachers. Investment in qualified, specialist staffing and school resourcing that meets all of the identified student and teacher need, in every school setting, will bring positive improvements to academic, social and wellbeing outcomes.