



## What is schools first?

*Schools First* is an initiative aimed at building stronger partnerships between schools and their local communities.

*Schools First* is a national awards program that provides:

- > Financial support to proposals to build stronger school-community partnerships; and
- > Financial recognition of success in establishing effective school-community partnerships.

In support of the awards and their objective, *Schools First* also:

- > Provides regional workshops to support school communities in their application for an award;
- > Showcases successful partnerships as a means of inspiring other school communities; and
- > Assists in developing a “knowledge bank” of resources on which school communities can draw.

At its heart, the program aims to bring students, teachers, parents and community members together, and support their efforts to help improve student outcomes.

*Schools First* offers regional, state and national awards with total award funding of \$5 million for the programs that achieve the best improvement in student learning, making it the largest corporate-sponsored education initiative in Australia.

### Benefits

- > **Establishes a framework** that allows schools and communities to work more closely together to support our kids
- > **\$5 million award funding** to achieve the best improvements in student learning
- > **Support** with partnership development and the application process through a series of 80 regional workshops
- > **Community and business engagement** through idea generation and programs that benefit the whole community
- > **Showcases best practice** in school and community partnerships inspiring new approaches that improve education within Australia and internationally

### features

- > Commences in March 2009 with the national workshop series, application judging in August and Schools First award ceremonies in October 2009
- > Largest corporate-sponsored education initiative in Australia, with a award funding of \$5 million
- > Up to 60 regional awards of \$50,000, up to eight State/Territory awards of \$100,000, and one national winner of \$500,000 - \$1,000,000
- > Seed funding totalling \$500,000 is available for up to 20 fledging partnerships with great potential
- > Open to all Australian primary and secondary schools, whether they're public or private, special needs, religious or independent
- > Partners include Australia Cares, the Foundation for Young Australians, and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)



## FAQs

### **How do schools get involved or register their interest?**

The Schools First program will start in 2009 and will be open to every primary and secondary school in Australia. If you'd like to receive information and updates about Schools First, please register at [www.schoolsfirst.edu.au](http://www.schoolsfirst.edu.au)

### **What kind of support will local communities and businesses be encouraged to provide for Schools First?**

The best thing about Schools First is that communities and businesses can get together with local schools and help decide what's best for their community. So it means everyone can develop a project that's right for them. Communities can provide support in many forms - financial resources, people resources, time and facility resources, skills, tools, talents and enthusiasm.

### **What kind of support is available to schools and students through the Schools First initiative?**

A range of resources and toolkits will be added to the Schools First website over time, so that schools and communities can all access the information available. The Schools First website will become a hub of information and resources about the awards program.

### **What kind of educational outcomes does Schools First hope to facilitate?**

The goal of Schools First is to help improve student outcomes. What that means is that every school will achieve something different - something that's right for them. That could be increased attendance, greater engagement, improved literacy and numeracy... the possibilities are endless.

### **How can we bring our community and school together?**

From March to June 2009, a series of public workshops will be held in 80 cities around Australia. Workshops will provide members of local communities and schools with practical guidance to creating and strengthening school and community partnerships to improve student outcomes.

### **Who should attend the workshops?**

Anyone interested in finding out how to build school and community partnerships can attend, including principals, teachers, students, parents, local government, community organisations, local businesses and citizens.

### **What will happen at the workshops?**

The workshops will be delivered over half a day by two Schools First facilitators. The facilitators will provide toolkits for participants including templates for planning partnership projects and examples of successful school-community partnerships. There will also be an opportunity for participants to break out into groups and discuss opportunities for partnership.

### **Why is NAB involved in this?**

At NAB we believe we have a responsibility to the communities where our customers and our people live and work. Schools First is a unique and large scale education initiative with enormous potential to capture the hearts and minds of NAB employees, communities and students. We wanted to help support communities' "dreams and aspirations" for education in Australia.

## Contacts

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## **An example of a school-community partnership**

After hearing about the Schools First workshops being held across Australia, a school decides that it would be interested to attend the workshop, facilitated by NAB and Australia Cares, and meet with a range of local community representatives.

The local NAB branch helps out and the NAB Regional Executive Manager invites local businesses, health and wellbeing providers, the head of the chamber of commerce, local government representatives, and a number of other interested community members to come along for the discussion.

During the workshop they identify three key ideas that could really make a difference for their kids. The idea they agree on in the end is to create a local career education program, designed by students and the local business network.

The aim of the program is to help the kids learn more about the “world of work”, and in doing so, help their learning outcomes and provide them with enthusiasm and skills to help their entry into the workforce. The community is optimistic that this program will help address high levels of unemployment amongst school leavers in their area.

They run the week long program for the first time. More than 3000 students attend 250 sessions run by local people about the jobs they do, their pathways to work and tips for making good choices at school. It takes the year 11 students four months to organise and their sense of achievement in the program is extraordinary.

Next year they plan to continue their career program and add another initiative for younger students – ‘Hug a Book Tuesdays’. The partnership will focus on the entire community supporting primary school students to engage in ‘Hug a Book Tuesdays’ for a term. Volunteers will host reading sessions at school, the municipal library and two participating cafes. Kids will be encouraged to turn off the TV on Tuesdays and read instead.

A number of local organisations and individual people will be involved in the new regular book day – and prizes will be awarded to students who have met their reading target.

The school and its community hope the program will help develop the kids’ reading skills, as well as foster a love of books and learning. They are sure it will contribute to improved learning outcomes over the course of the students’ educations.

An added benefit is that the extra reading will also expose them to new ideas they can explore – and they might even lead to a desire to work in a particular field or develop expertise in a certain area.

You never know ... their Hug A Book Tuesdays might create a future palaeontologist, a race-car mechanic, a pilot, a fashion designer, a rock star, an entrepreneur, an aid worker or a world traveller!