



# MAKE it COUNT



## Numeracy, mathematics and Indigenous learners

In mid 2008 Will Morony of the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers (AAMT) called together a Think Tank to discuss a proposal for a national strategy to improve mathematics and numeracy outcomes of Indigenous learners. At this Think Tank were various, recognised people from Indigenous education such as Cindy Berwick, Peter Buckskin, Kevin Lowe and Gavin Khan and from the world of mathematics including Peter Howard and Thelma Perso. This was quite possibly the first time Indigenous educators and mathematics educators had come together with the intention of working together strategically and nationally to 'close the gap'. The proposal is now the *Make it count: Numeracy, mathematics and Indigenous learners* initiative - a four-year project (2009–2012) funded by the Department Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and managed by the AAMT. The *Make it count* project is funded by the Australian Government as part of the Closing the Gap - expansion of intensive literacy and numeracy programs initiative.

### LATEST NEWS

#### PROJECT LAUNCH

The official launch of *Make it count: Numeracy, mathematics and Indigenous learners* will take place at the National Indigenous Education Conference in Hobart between 23–25 November.

#### PROJECT WEBSITE

A website that will be accessible through the AAMT website is currently being developed. The interactive site will be for those involved in the project plus a wider audience. The website will be launched at the NETWORK MEETING 10–11 September in Adelaide.

#### KEY SCHOOLS

##### Queensland

- Tannum Sands State High School (Gladstone)
- St Brigid's Catholic Primary School (Gold Coast)

##### New South Wales

- Orange Public School
- Hebersham Public School

##### Victoria

- Healesville High School

##### South Australia

- Alberton Primary School
- Noarlunga Downs Primary School

##### Western Australia

- Cullung Aboriginal Community School (West Swan)

### Eight clusters to Make it count

*Make it count: Numeracy, mathematics and Indigenous learners* is establishing eight clusters of schools across Australia working collaboratively and strategically to:

- Develop whole school approaches to mathematics and numeracy that result in markedly improved achievement by Indigenous students.
- Document and share effective models of teacher professional development, whole school change and community engagement that are shown to be associated with improved achievement in mathematics and numeracy.
- Build a community of practice that is committed to, and expert in, teaching and school practices proven to be effective in supporting Indigenous students' learning of mathematics and numeracy.
- Be a catalyst and support for action on mathematics, numeracy and Indigenous learners by teachers, schools and education authorities across the country.

The eight clusters are located in metropolitan and regional centres: Nerang and Gladstone in Queensland; Hebersham and Orange in New South Wales; Healesville in Victoria; Alberton and Noarlunga in South Australia and West Swan in Western Australia. Each cluster has a Key School and these key schools are now busy configuring their makeup and developing plans of action for the next 3½ years. Some of the clusters are across systems, most have primary and secondary combinations and many have common themes emerging which will

make for worthwhile and interesting connections and interconnections between clusters and states as professional learning communities and networks develop.

Clusters will undertake intensive programs of professional development in mathematics and numeracy. The professional development will lead to the cohesive implementation of effective and culturally relevant pedagogy, and community engagement designed to improve the achievement of Indigenous students attending schools in the cluster.



**Gladstone Cluster** from back, left - right: Manuel McAuley, David Manttan, Annette Rutherford, Pam McMaster, Farshid Payniou, Greg Hage, Tara King, Kevin Giles. Front: Tara Romyn, Leanne Ibell, Deidre Carey, Jodi Gibson.

The approach will focus on the school as the unit of change, with all components of the school community — students, teachers and para-professional staff, school leaders, parents and parent groups, and the wider community engaged and having roles to play. A number of academics and other experts will support them to develop powerful and successful approaches.



## Network meeting in Adelaide

The first network meeting of the *Make it count* project takes place on 10–11 September in Adelaide. This will be the first time representatives from all of the Clusters, Indigenous communities and universities get together to establish common understandings of a range of matters related to the project.

An essential element of the project is the development of networks across Australia between schools, communities, universities and other programs such as *Dare to Lead*. The work of these schools is what the project is about – consequently the schools are the core of the Network. A key purpose of the Network is to

enable people in the Clusters to communicate and collaborate in ways that support their work.

The September meeting will serve to formally establish the Network. Members of the Network will then use electronic means to communicate with each other, and there will be a dedicated website as part of the AAMT web presence.

As the *Make it count* project matures, the Network will be a key means for disseminating information, resources and findings from the work of the Clusters. To support this shift in emphasis there will be a second meeting of the Network in the first part of 2012.

## Expert advisory group drives project

The project's expert advisory group met for the first time at the end of July and will continue to meet once or twice a year for the duration of the project to provide strategic advice.

Membership of this pivotal group includes Indigenous educator Emeritus Professor Paul Hughes (chairperson); mathematics educator and academic

Professor Robyn Jorgensen; Tom Flanders representing Indigenous community organisations; Michele Low from the MCEECDYA's Reference Group on Indigenous Education; Geoff Gillman from AAMT Executive; Indigenous school principal Gavin Khan and David Tyrrell, Director Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Section in DEEWR.

## Community, school and university learn and work together

One of the most significant aspects of the *Make it count* project is the collaboration between Indigenous communities, schools and universities. A major component of the clusters' work is community engagement in the learning of mathematics within the school with an emphasis on the parents of Indigenous students and leaders in their communities.

The first meetings within clusters has seen a valuable partnership and network begin between these three groups. For example, the Hebersham Cluster meeting in late June brought together Indigenous parent Sylvia Leuthwaite, Aboriginal Education Officer Mona McFarlane, Sue Matthews and Maureen Wenzel from Aboriginal Education with Associate Professor Peter

Howard from the Australian Catholic University. School leaders Betty Papandreu and Sue Connell were firm in their commitment to working with community and academics with district and regional staff to lead the cluster to develop and undertake locally based initiatives that assist and improve the learning of their Aboriginal students.

These initiatives will be substantially locally developed and driven by the school's and school community's judgement of the needs and opportunities in the local context.

Peter's work will assist in the development of thinking about the areas for research and development, and in supporting that work over the next few years.

## STRENGTH IN NUMBERS: BUILDING A NETWORK OF LEARNERS

*Make it count* will be building networks of leaders, teachers, Indigenous educators beyond the Clusters of schools. They will mostly exist online so those who are working in numeracy, mathematics and Indigenous learners can communicate with each other as part of a professional learning community.

To register your interest please email [cmorris@aamt.edu.au](mailto:cmorris@aamt.edu.au)

## RESOURCES TO LOOK AT

### 1. Numeracy in Indigenous Contexts

Article from Australian Primary Mathematics Classroom vol. 13 no. 4 (2008) in which Bob Perry and Peter Howard discuss the development of teaching and learning strategies designed to enhance Aboriginal students' mathematical learning outcomes.

[www.aamt.edu.au/Professional-learning/Professional-reading](http://www.aamt.edu.au/Professional-learning/Professional-reading)

### 2. A Journey Just Begun

Paper by Harry Langes outlining a collaboration between several NSW schools and their local Indigenous community which resulted in a positive and productive partnership.

[www.aamt.edu.au/Professional-learning/Professional-reading](http://www.aamt.edu.au/Professional-learning/Professional-reading)

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