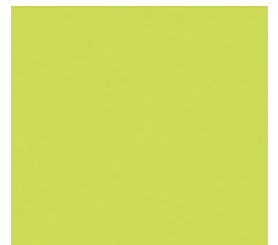
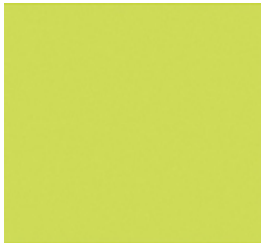


2008 Annual School Report Open High School

NSW Public Schools – Leading the way



Our school at a glance



Open High School

Students

In 2008 a total of 1987 students were enrolled in Open High School as single course enrolments. Approximately 70% of enrolments are girls with about 65% of enrolments also enrolled at government schools. 80% of enrolments study a language at Stage 6 with 20% being enrolled in a Stage 5 course. Approximately 70% of students are drawn from the Greater Metropolitan Area, Newcastle and Wollongong with the balance of students enrolling from rural and regional centres, the ACT and a small number of overseas locations.

Staff

Open High School is a specialist languages school. Approximately 80% of staff are qualified to teach a language only with the balance also qualified to teach another subject. A large proportion of teaching staff are native speakers in the language they teach. The great majority of teaching staff is multi-lingual with a number of staff fluent in more than four languages.

All teaching staff meet the professional requirements for teaching in NSW public schools.

Significant programs and initiatives

In 2008 Open High School sustained and strengthened a number of significant programs and initiatives.

These included:

- Ongoing development and redesign of the school's student administration database to take advantage of new relational database design and functionality.
- Further development of the school's website to incorporate online forums for parents and home school supervisors.

- Further development of the school's online learning management system (Moodle).
- Further development of engaging learning materials in Stage 6 Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, French, German and Italian.
- Development of online animations and interactive comics in Indonesian to strengthen learning engagement in Stage 5 students, particularly boys.

Student achievement in 2008

School Certificate

In 2008 Open High School entered 192 students for 18 School Certificate courses at both 100 and 200-hour levels as follows:

Subject	No of Students
Chinese	5
French	36
German	27
Indonesian	4
Italian	28
Japanese	39
Korean	2
Latin	10
Modern Greek	9
Russian	8
Spanish	24

Overall 74% of students were placed in the top two performance bands for both 100-hour and 200-hour courses, an improvement of 8% over the previous year.

Higher School Certificate

In 2008 Open High School entered 622 students in 27 courses over 10 languages for the Higher School Certificate Examination. The numbers of students presenting for the Higher School Certificate in particular languages is summarised below.

Subject	No of Students
French	98
German	71
Indonesian	24
Italian	60
Japanese	205
Korean	12
Modern Greek	32
Russian	21
Spanish	76
Total	599

Open High School students achieved 9 Firsts in State and in 14 of the 27 Higher School Certificate courses offered by Open High School 30 students were placed in the top five places in the state. This consisted of 9 1sts, 6 2nds, 4 3rds, 6 4ths and 5 5ths.

Other

Excursions

In 2008 Open High School conducted two overseas excursions to Italy and Argentina in September to provide 56 students with first hand experience of another culture and quality language immersion experiences. Both excursions were rated an outstanding success by staff, students and parents. It is anticipated that similar excursions will be conducted every second year with the cycle commencing in 2009.



Open High School students visiting The Colosseum in Rome

Year 9 and Year 10 students studying Japanese also attended excursions to the Tanken Centre at Kirrawee High School and, as always, found it to be a very interesting learning experience.

An excursion was also arranged to the Blackbird Café for over 100 students from Years 9, 10 and 11 studying French. Twenty five parents were also

enthusiastic participants. The restaurant provided an outstanding menu including snails, which many of the students were game enough to try.

The Indonesian Faculty also organised a number of highly successful excursions for students to nearby Indonesian restaurants.

Curriculum

A number of students participated in a variety of language competitions and events and achieved outstanding results. Two Year 10 Indonesian students who participated in the state wide *Kompetisi Siswa* (jointly organised by the Australia Indonesia Association, the Indonesian Language Teachers Association and the Indonesian Consulate) achieved 2nd and 3rd places.

Open High School students were also honoured in the Annual Italian Consular General's presentation ceremony with two students receiving recognition for their outstanding performance in the Higher School Certificate.

A number of students from Year 12 2007 were presented with prizes for their performance in Modern Greek at the HSC at both the prestigious Greek Orthodox Community *Dionysios Solomos* Awards and at the equally prestigious Modern Greek Teachers Association Awards for excellence in the study of Greek (Modern and Classical). Open High School has been well represented amongst the recipients of these awards many times in recent years.

Messages

Principal's message

Open High School is a distance education school specialising in languages and provides students from government and non-government schools, across New South Wales with the opportunity to study a language not available to them in their home school. A small number of students are enrolled from overseas locations.

Open High School offers ten modern languages (Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Indonesian, Italian, Spanish, Modern Greek, French, German, Russian) and one classical language, Latin. All students are enrolled as a single course student. Courses offered are at Stage 5 (years 9 and 10) and Stage 6 (years 11 and 12) only.

Student learning is supported through a diverse program of telephone lessons, video conferencing, online lessons, bulletin boards and email, teacher visits to the student's home school and student study days at Open High School.

Students are also supported in their learning through the provision of high quality learning

materials that include printed materials, digital audio and video resources as well as Internet based learning resources.

An important dimension of the student's learning experience through Open High School is the support of their supervisor in their home school. This support varies significantly and has emerged as a priority in strengthening the learning partnership between Open High School, the home school and parents and carers.

Open High School is a member school of Network 8, a network of schools within the Sydney Region that sustains a strong focus on the integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) in teaching and learning. In 2007 Open High School continued its Digital Migration Project through further development of its online Learning Management System, digital audio production, student administration database and school website.

I certify that the information in this report is the result of a rigorous school self-evaluation process and is a balanced and genuine account of the school's achievements and areas for development.

Stephen C Murray
Principal

Parents and Supporters Message

'Open High School provides a vital service in promoting and sustaining multiculturalism in our community by providing languages learning programs to secondary students whose school is unable to provide them with a language as part of their curriculum choice.'

The study of a language better prepares students to assume their responsibilities as global citizens and will help them make significantly richer contributions to the growth of our communities and nation – and to the broader world stage as ambassadors for world peace and cooperation. Open High school is to be commended for providing this important opportunity to our children.'

Sue Hewitt
Parent

Student Representative's Message

'Open High School is an exceptional school for learning another language, which has allowed me to develop not only language skills, but those of self-motivation, organisation and independence. Although language by distance education is hard, I found the learning materials were extremely detailed and easy to understand, and the extensively experienced teachers were incredibly

supportive, being always ready to give help or advice. I also found the flexibility of working independently to be of immense benefit, especially when juggling other subjects. If you wish to study a language, then Open High School is a great way to do it!'

Hayley Harkness

Yr 12 Student

School context

Student information

Student enrolment profile

The maximum enrolment for 2008 was 1987 students. This represents a 1.3% increase on the 2007 enrolment.

Enrolment trends for the 5-year period 2004 to 2008 is shown in the table below.

Year	Enrolment
2004	1927
2005	1941
2006	1986
2007	1960
2008	1987

All schools are allocated a quota for students enrolling in a distance education course through Open High School depending on the enrolment numbers of the home school. For example a school with 500 students can enrol up to 6 new students each year. Students also need to satisfy a number of enrolment criteria to gain admission to a particular course of study at Open High School. Factors include continuity of study, suitability to participate in a program of accelerated progression.

The following information relates to the 2008 enrolment.

- Students were drawn from 457 schools (275 government and 182 non-government).
- There were more government school students (64%) than non-government students (36%).
- There were more students from major urban areas (79%) than rural regions (21%).
- There were more girls (63%) than boys (37%). This mirrors current trends in language study in New South Wales.

Student attendance profile

In line with previous years enrolments for courses commencing in 2008 reached a peak in Term 4 2007. In addition there was a large increase in enrolments in Term 1 2008 due to many schools not making the decision to access a language by distance education until their own enrolment status and timetable organisation became clear.

Structure of classes

Class sizes in the distance education context are viewed differently to the face-to-face context. Teachers are allocated students according to staffing multiplier that varies according to Stage and course. The following multipliers are used to determine a teacher's allocation of students they may teach in a given Stage or course.

Retention to Year 12

Retention rates in 2008 were characterised by the following.

Year 10 into Year 11

Approximately 38% of Year 10 students in 2007 continued with their language studies with Open High School in a Preliminary Course in 2008. This represents a 4% increase over the 2007 figure. This figure is in line with the percentage of Year 10 students who progress to a Stage 6 Preliminary Continuers course in face-to-face schools.

Reasons for students not continuing include limited timetable options in their home school or career path planning. A student survey conducted in 2008 indicated that many students not continuing intended to pursue further post school language studies as and when the need arose.

Year 11 into Year 12

Of our Preliminary Course students in 2008 82% progressed into the Higher School Certificate course. This represents an increase of 4% since 2007 and a 21% increase since 2006. Factors that have contributed to this increase include a stronger focus on more accessible learning materials and improved learning support through telephone lessons, field service visits and study days at Open High School throughout the year.

The principal reason for Preliminary Stage 6 students not continuing into a Higher School Certificate course is the reduction of mandatory units of study from 12units to 10units or commencing an extension course in another subject.

To address the loss of students withdrawing from further language study through Open High School, faculties are developing programs of early

intervention to provide students with more effective learning support.

In 2008, approximately 30% of students enrolled in a Higher School Certificate course only, having completed their Preliminary Course elsewhere.

In terms of Higher School Certificate (HSC) Extension Courses there were 77 students enrolled, a reduction of approximately 23% on the previous year.

Following a review of extension course enrolments it was determined that major factors contributing to this steady decline is a perception that Extension courses are highly complex and beyond the intellectual reach of most students combined with an increasing number of face-to-face schools being unable to support students wishing to enrol in Extension language courses.

Post-school destinations

From a survey of students who completed their HSC in 2008, a large proportion of graduating students indicated they would pursue tertiary studies within two years of graduating (84%) Of these students, a large proportion (86%) indicated they would incorporate a language course in their degree pattern. In addition exiting students indicated a strong preference for courses in the fields of International Studies, Environmental Management, Politics and Government, Psychology and Media Studies.

A significant proportion of students (78%) indicated they would be seeking employment where they could use the language studied such as International marketing and Law, Foreign Affairs and Trade, Media and Journalism.

Staff information

Staff establishment

As a distance education school the staffing entitlement was established at the end of Term 1 2008 to more accurately reflect the variable nature of student enrolments. A significant dimension of Open High School's staffing establishment is the high proportion of permanent part time, temporary and casual staff which presents a considerable challenge in sustaining educational programs and staff management continuity within the school.

The staff entitlement for 2008 is outlined in the table below.

Position	Number
Principal	1
Deputy Principal(s)	1
Head Teachers	9
Classroom Teachers	62.6
Teacher Librarian	0.4
Total	72.0

Staff retention

Open High School sustains a high level of staff retention. During 2008 two members of staff retired. These positions were filled by transfer and three temporary teachers gained permanent full time employment status. Two members of staff won promotion positions to other schools on merit selection.

Staff attendance

Staff have access to leave entitlements such as sick leave. In 2008 the average daily attendance rate for staff, as determined by the Department of Education and Training, was 95%.

Teacher qualifications

All teaching staff meet the professional requirements for teaching in NSW public schools. A number of staff complemented their qualifications with postgraduate accreditations.

Qualifications	% Of staff
Degree or Diploma	100%
Postgraduate	28%

Financial summary

This summary covers funds for operating costs and does not involve expenditure areas such as permanent salaries, building and major maintenance.

Date of financial summary:	30/11/08
Income	\$
Balance brought forward	305 985.00
Global funds	422 019.00
Tied funds	91 946.00
School & community sources	355 030.00
Interest	46 302.00
Trust receipts	539 720.00
Canteen	0.00
Total income	1 761 002.00
Expenditure	
Teaching & learning	
Key learning areas	288 366.00
Excursions	230 889.00
Extracurricular dissections	0.00
Library	2 740.00
Training & development	1 548.00
Tied funds	65 427.00
Casual relief teachers	123 374.00
Administration & office	106 129.00
School-operated canteen	0.00
Utilities	36 487.00
Maintenance	31 457.00
Trust accounts	531 091.00
Capital programs	0.00
Total expenditure	1 417 508.00
Balance carried forward	343 494.00

In 2008 the school expended over \$90,000 to support the ongoing process of digital learning materials production.

In 2008 a higher than usual expenditure was incurred to cater for short-term teacher relief.

In addition the school incurred costs of approximately \$36,000 for CD/DVD reproduction. It is anticipated that this will be substantially reduced in 2009-2010 as learning materials are distributed via the school's content server.

In 2008 a major area of expenditure was additional Administrative support to facilitate learning materials production (\$65,000).

Further details concerning the school's Annual Financial Statement can be obtained by contacting the school.

School performance 2008

In 2008 Open High School achieved outstanding academic results that demonstrate the high order linguistic competencies developed by students and the high standard of teaching and learning that the school sustains.

Achievements

Academic

Higher School Certificate

In the Higher School Certificate, the performance of students is reported in performance bands ranging from Performance Band 1 (lowest) to Performance Band 6 (highest).

In 2008 Open High School entered 622 students in 27 courses over 10 languages for the Higher School Certificate Examination. Seventy seven of these students also sat for an Extension course examination or an additional 2U examination. Of the 622 individual examinations sat, the largest proportion was in Beginners courses (40%) followed by Continuers courses (39%). The course with the largest number of candidates was Japanese Continuers. The candidature for the various courses is outlined in the table below.

Language	Beg	Cont	Bckgrnd	Ext	TOTAL
French	35	63	-	20	108
German	15	43	-	13	71
Indonesian	8	8	-	1	17
Italian	34	19	-	7	60
Japanese	102	54	21	27	204
Korean	-	6	6	-	12
Mod Grk	17	12	-	2	31
Russian	-	-	21	-	21
Spanish	37	32	-	7	76
TOTAL	248	237	55	77	600

The 2008 NSW Higher School Certificate results for Open High School demonstrate the high standards being sustained by the school with 9 students gaining 'First in Course'. These courses included Indonesian Beginners, Indonesian Background Speakers, Korean Continuers, Indonesian Continuers, Modern Greek Continuers and Spanish Beginners.

Of the 540 students who sat for a 2U Higher School Certificate Examination 62% were placed in the top two Performance Bands with 30% of

students gaining a Band 6 result. In the majority of courses offered by Open High School the proportion of students who gained a Band 5 result or better was significantly greater than the state average.

In the Extension courses, 35% of students were placed in the top Performance Band (Band 4) with 85% of students placing in the top two Performance Bands (Band 4 and Band 3).

In 14 of the 27 Higher School Certificate courses offered by Open High School 30 students were placed in the top five places in the state. This consisted of 9 1sts, 6 2nds, 4 3rds, 6 4ths and 5 5ths. Of the 30 students who gained a top five placing 19 students were enrolled in a NSW DET home school.

Especially significant are the results in the following courses:

Indonesian Beginners, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th in the State

Indonesian Background speakers, 1st, 2nd in the State

Modern Greek Beginners, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th in the State

Spanish Beginners, 1st, 4th, 5th in the State

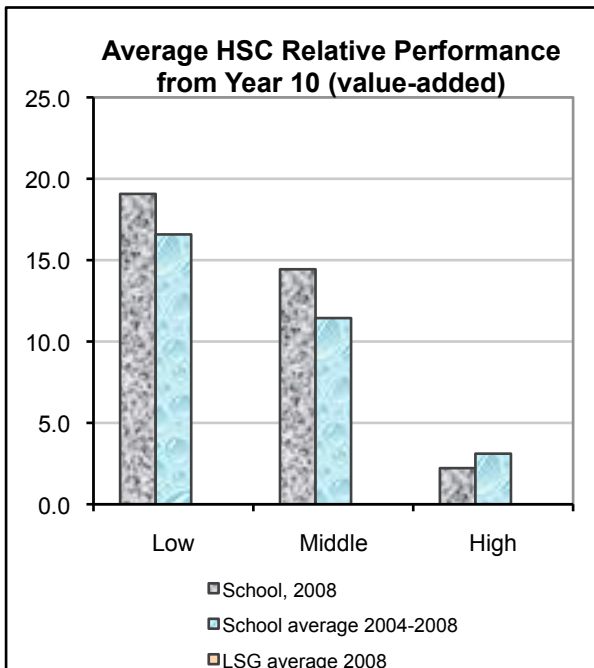
Russian Background Speakers, 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th in the State

Korean Continuers, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th in the State

Higher School Certificate relative performance comparison to School Certificate (value-adding)

The following graph indicates the relative performance of students in the Higher School Certificate compared to their School Certificate performance, ie value added performance.

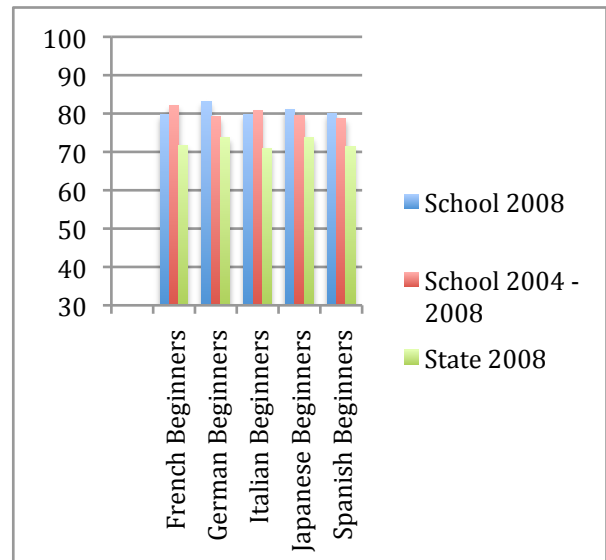
Please note that the data set supplied by DET does not include student performance from non-government schools.



This graph indicates that from the data available, students in the lower and middle performance bands gained more in overall performance compared to those students in the higher performance bands. This indicates that in response to an identified need more responsive and individualised learning support programs were implemented to achieve equivalent or higher value added when compared to students in higher performance bands. Of particular note is the general trend for lower performing students demonstrating significant improvement in their linguistic competencies when they enrol as a continuing student through Open High School for the first time, indicating an a strong and consistent standard of language instruction through Open High School.

Beginners Courses

Student performance for the 2008 Higher School Certificate Beginners languages courses for which there were more than 10 students enrolled are shown in the following graph.

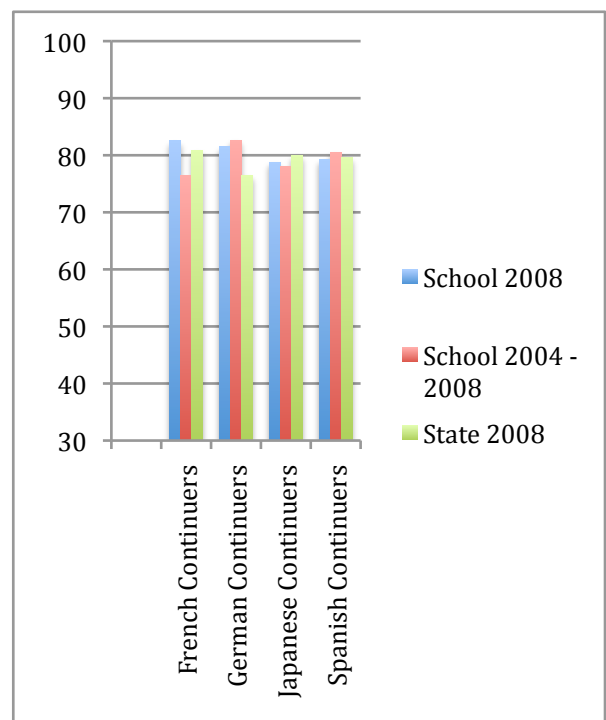


In all Beginners course, Open High School students performed above the rest of the State with the greatest gap being in French and Italian. In 2008 overall student performance was above the 2004-2008 average with the exception of French and Italian.

Further analysis of this exception revealed a number of students were enrolled late in the HSC course due to a significant disruption in their language course in their home school.

Continuers Courses

Student performance for the 2008 Higher School Certificate Continuers languages courses for which there were more than 10 students enrolled are shown in the following graph.

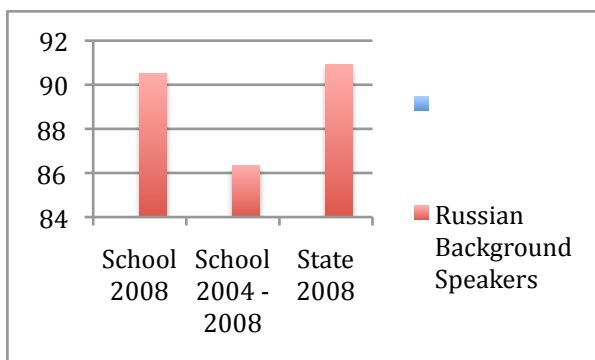


In all courses except Japanese Continuers student performance for the 2008 Continuers languages courses exceeded or were equivalent to the state average eg Spanish Continuers. The 2004-2008 performance average also demonstrated a close correlation with student performance in 2008 with the exception of French where the 2008 performance was significantly better than the 2004-2008 average.

Further analysis revealed a large number of students enrolling late or presenting with significant gaps in linguistic competency expected of the continuing student. In a number of cases continuing students were also pathways students whose most recent language learning took place 2-3 years ago.

Background Speakers

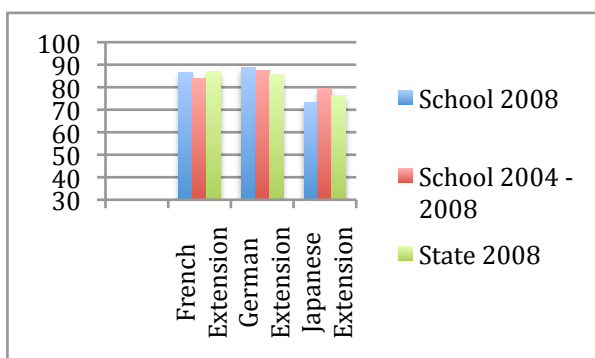
Student performance for the 2008 Higher School Certificate Background Speakers languages courses for which there were more than 10 students enrolled are shown in the following graph.



In 2008 there was only one Background Speakers course where there were 10 or more students. For Russian Background Speakers there was a significant improvement in 2008 compared to the 2004-2008 average with the students' performance equivalent to the state average.

Extension Courses

Student performance for the 2008 Higher School Certificate Extension languages courses for which there were more than 10 students enrolled are shown in the following graph.



With the exception of Japanese student performance in Extension courses exceeded the 2004-2008 school average and was also above State average.

School Certificate

In 2008 Open High School entered 192 students for 18 School Certificate courses at both 100 and 200-hour levels as follows:

Subject	No of Students
Chinese	5
French	36
German	27
Indonesian	4
Italian	28
Japanese	39
Korean	2
Latin	10
Modern Greek	9
Russian	8
Spanish	24

Overall 74% of students were placed in the top two performance bands for both 100-hour and 200-hour courses. An improvement of 8% over the previous year and a 25% improvement since 2006.

In terms of 200-hour courses the distribution of grades across languages varied significantly less so than in previous years when small class data was removed. This is largely due to a strong school focus on developing greater consistency in teacher judgement both within and between faculties.

Higher School Certificate

In 2008 Open High School sustained a number of significant programs and initiatives established in 2007.

Significant programs and initiatives

Aboriginal education

As part of the school's commitment to Aboriginal education all faculties continued to integrate aspects of Aboriginal history, culture and current Aboriginal Australia into teaching programs and resource development.

Multicultural education

Open High School sustains a strong focus on promoting intercultural awareness and understanding through its languages programs.

As part of the school's ongoing implementation of the National Statement of Languages 2005-2008, all teaching programs were audited in 2008 to assess the extent to which they emphasised languages learning as a vehicle for promoting intercultural awareness and understanding. All courses were validated with a number being selected as best practice models for use by other distance education schools.

Respect and responsibility

In 2008 Open High School further embedded the school's Code of Conduct and Languages Learning Charter that confirmed the school's core values of integrity, excellence, respect, responsibility, cooperation, participation, care, fairness and democracy.

Other programs

Field Services Visits and Study Days

As a distance education school, a unique feature of curriculum delivery is the provision of home school based lessons by visiting teachers from Open High School. The school supports student learning in over 600 schools across NSW. Students also travel from centres across NSW to visit Open High School to participate in Study Days and also sit for assessment tasks and examinations. In 2008, 204 visits to home schools were organised across all faculties, a significant decline compared with the previous year. This shortfall can be accounted for with the significant number of students visiting Open High School to participate in learning events at the school. Typical numbers of students visiting the school ranges from 10 to 200.

An important dimension of Open High School's 2008 target was to enhance student learning engagement and strengthen partnerships between students, supervisors and teachers. As a result the number of student visits to Open High School increased in 2008 to 1832, an 18% increase on the previous year.

All visiting students are required to wear their home school uniform when visiting Open High School.

Professional Standards in Languages Project

One member of staff was chosen to be one of the national trainers for this national project developed and run by the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Association. This project involving 30 selected teachers from all sectors all over NSW was designed to give

teachers the opportunity to explore this exciting new pedagogy. A number of staff at Open High School were also selected to participate in this important national initiative.

Curriculum Implementation

The Russian Faculty was successful in winning a grant of \$5,000 from the Russian Government for the production of or purchase of teaching material and resources.

To meet a demonstrated need of language support for native Maori speakers in NSW, Open High School and the New Zealand Correspondence school entered into a strategic partnership to facilitate access to elementary Maori language programs through online language programs to K-12 students in NSW. A pilot program will be developed in 2009 for students in the Sydney Region to develop access protocols and establish accreditation standards. It is anticipated that the pilot study will provide a useful framework that has applicability to the implementation of online Australian Indigenous language programs.

Visits and Delegations

Open High School also hosted overseas delegations and visits from overseas academics and researchers.

Professor Toshinobu Usuyama from the University of Tsukuba Japan visited Open High School to gain an understanding of the teaching of Russian by distance learning.

A large delegation of academics from the Shanghai TV University and senior policy advisers from the Chinese Government also visited Open High School to learn about the school's Digital Futures Program and use of interactive learning technologies.

Technology

In Term 1 2008, Open High School was one of the first group of 200 schools to be equipped with the new video conferencing and interactive whiteboard technologies as part of the NSW Government's 'Connected Classrooms Program'.

During Term 4 2008 preparations also commenced for the construction of the school's Digital Learning Centre with works due for completion early in 2009.

The process of phasing out students' use of cassettes for speaking tasks and replacement by digital recording technologies continued in 2008. This is a complex process and considered such things as audio quality, file format and naming protocols, file security, storage and distribution, backup and lost file recovery protocols etc. The clear advantage of digital technologies over analog recordings on tape is ease of file storage

and distribution as well as enabling more timely feedback to students. It is anticipated that trialling of a range of options will commence mid 2009 with the developed solution ready for implementation in Term 1 2010.

In 2008 Open High School successfully implemented the first phase of its new student administration database using FileMaker Pro. The rebuild has facilitated significant improvements in administrative processes. As a result of emerging new technologies and new directions in DET IT support, Open High School entered into a partnership with a number of other distance education schools in Term 4 2008 to jointly develop the next phase of the project - the redesign and build of the student electronic record card. Features include the ability to capture student learning data from a variety of digital sources and provide remote access to home school supervisors to assist the home school in monitoring the receipt and dispatch of learning materials and learning events. It is anticipated that this module will be completed by the end of Term 4 2009.

Progress on 2008 targets

The following targets for 2008 were determined as priority targets from Open High School's Strategic Management Plan 2006-2008.

Target 1

To further build strong communication and relationships between students, parent, community and the home school.

Strategies to achieve this target included:

- Established and refined parent forums on school's website.
- Established an online client survey tool to canvas opinions and ideas to improve Open High School's Quality of Service.
- Further developed the school promotion plan.

Our achievements included:

- Increase in the number of parent/carer registrations and level of participation in the school's website forums.
- Increase in the number of parents/carers visiting the school during Parent Week.

Target 2

Enrich students' learning through wider use of new technologies.

Strategies to achieve this target included:

- Expanded the number of courses available on the school's online Learning Management System (Moodle).
- Enhanced the functionality of Moodle through the addition of audio and visual resources.
- Enhanced the delivery of learning resources through further development of a CD/DVD 'Splash Page'.
- Increased student participation in bulletin boards and online forums through the school's website and Moodle site.

Our achievements included:

- An increase in the number of students accessing the school's online Learning Management system.
- Increase in the proportion of students using a variety of technology mediums and software packages as part of their language learning.

Target 3

Enhance staff capacity and expertise in the integration of ICT into Teaching and Learning.

Strategies to achieve this target included:

- Develop an individualised Professional Learning Plan for all staff that identifies specific ICT needs using the CLAS assessment tool.
- Established action research projects using teams based approach to address specific ICT skills and competencies.
- Further develop and implement the school's student administration database to enable recording and monitoring of student learning progress.
- Provided staff teams with access to targeted ICT professional learning opportunities.
- Establish a school Digital Learning Centre to include facilities for audio recording, videoconferencing and interactive whiteboard capabilities and train staff in their use.

Our achievements included:

- An increase in staff ICT skills and competencies.

- An increase in the depth of integration of ICT into specific sequences of learning activities within a learning unit.
- Consistent and time effective recording and monitoring of student enrolments using digital technologies.

Target 4

Enhance Stage 5 student learning outcomes and enhance the levels of participation and engagement of students in their learning.

Strategies to achieve this target included:

- Developed and strengthened student welfare support strategies for Stage 5 students.
- Established a school Learning Support Team.
- Established a School to Work Competency profile for all Stage 5 students.
- Established and administer a professional practice benchmarking tool to identify parameters of good teaching practice.
- Further developed collegial marking of assessment tasks in school based School Certificate assessment.
- Developed more consistent student assessment practices using the Board of Studies School Certificate Performance Descriptors.
- Supported faculties in the use of SMART and RAP data where applicable.

Our achievements included:

- An increase in the student participation rate.
- An increase in the number of Stage 5 students continuing into Stage 6.
- Improved academic success.
- Greater depth of integration of ICT into specific sequences of learning activities within a learning unit.
- More consistent and time effective recording and monitoring of student enrolments using digital technologies.

Key evaluations

It is a requirement for all NSW public schools to conduct at least two annual evaluations – one related to educational and management practice and the other related to curriculum. In 2008 our school carried out evaluations of communications

structures and processes within the school and the implementation of HSC Extension Courses.

Educational and management practice

Review of Distance Education

In 2008 a whole school review was conducted as part of a state wide review of distance education provision in NSW. The review encompassed a broad range of issues including:

- Enrolment profiles of distance education schools.
- Teaching and Learning processes.
- Curriculum patterns and the structure of learning programs offered by distance education schools.
- Staffing in distance education schools.
- Resources and Learning Materials production.
- Integration of ICT in teaching and learning.
- Future curriculum delivery modes through distance education.

A program of observations, interviews, surveys and consultations was undertaken by the Review Team to ensure that comprehensive and triangulated data informed the review.

Specific elements of the methodology included a literature search, interviews with senior officers from the department, electronic surveys of distance education principals, students, parents and teachers, field visits and observations, focus groups and a visioning workshop.

Additional consideration was given in the review to the school's unique status as both a specialist languages school and also as an autonomous distance education school providing learner access through single course provision only.

Findings and conclusions

The Review identified the following key recommendations that have particular significance for Open High School.

- Equity Programs and Distance Education Directorate should participate in discussions on strategic directions for languages provision in NSW and assist in positioning the role of distance education delivery of language courses.
- Development of specifications for a Collaborative Digital Learning Domain (CDLD) for distance learning.
- Examination of options for a learning management and student administration system.

- Identification of suitable standardised technologies and platforms.

A significant recommendation included the high level need for Open High School to provide a blend of learning activities to:

- Facilitate opportunities for students to interact with others.
- Place students in a variety of real and virtual groups for learning under the guidance of single teachers or groups of teachers as appropriate.
- Provide a balance of synchronous and asynchronous learning activities.
- Support and incorporate a wide range of learning activities, learning styles and capacities.
- Provide prompt feedback to the student on her or his progress and encourage the student to independently track their learning and accept appropriate levels of responsibility for the outcomes.

In addition it is recommended that a community of distance learning schools be established to facilitate more effective coordination of learning programs, sharing of learning resources and teacher expertise.

Future directions

The Review identified the great potential for the distance learner to better 'connected' to their teachers and peers by participating in interactive and collaborative technologies. It was recognised that there is an emerging demand from highly independent students in a range of settings who are seeking maximum flexibility in the time, place and pace of their learning. Some of these students wish to access whole courses, modules for acceleration, remediation or coaching.

Curriculum

Evaluation of Extension Courses

Background

Following recent revision of Extension Course Syllabi, the school conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the learning materials production needs to support students' learning. An audit of the applicability of existing materials was conducted that culminated in the development of a whole of school learning materials production brief. To support this a significant proportion of Professional Learning funding was directed to Board of Studies and Curriculum Directorate Professional Learning Workshops as well as release time for teacher teams to develop learning programs and associated learning materials.

Findings and conclusions

All faculties developed a comprehensive suite of learning materials to support students' learning. Key issues identified in the evaluation process included:

- The significance and importance of consistent digital publishing standards and protocols.
- The significance and importance of co-ordination of the project by a delegated staff member.
- A robust assessment of resourcing needs was conducted revealing that the average resource (cost) delivery required to reach completed course delivery to the requisite standard was approximately \$130,000 per course. Open High School achieved this outcome with a fraction of the requisite outlay. This was due to teachers devoting an average of 2,400 additional hours per course to achieve the completion of the writing project.

Future directions

Learning materials production has emerged as a critical component of the school's operations. As outlined to the recent Review of Distance Education Schools, there is an urgent need to reassess the resourcing model for the production of learning materials for the distance education learner.

Other evaluations

Review of communication within the school.

Background

To enable more effective communication of executive management decisions across the school a focus group was established to explore a range of alternative decision making structures and communication protocols.

Findings and conclusions

The review identified the fragmented nature of communications within the school and revealed the large amount of time expended on general administrative matters during executive meetings.

The review also identified the need for improving opportunities for whole staff collaboration and input into school administration and organisation. In addition there was limited scope for staff to participate in a number of committees due to time constraints and timetabled telephone lesson clashes. The following recommendations were adopted after broad consultation with staff.

- Establishment of Curriculum Leadership and Administrative Leadership Teams.
- Establishment of programmed meeting times for Committees and Focus Groups.
- Rotation of whole staff meetings between morning and afternoon meeting times.
- Further development of the school's intranet to provide timely and consistent communications to all staff.

Future directions

The review identified the great potential of the school's intranet to communicate the broad range of decisions and information disseminated from various directorates and DET personnel. These included the recommendations from various committees, Occupational Health and Safety, curriculum updates and general organisational information.

Of great potential is the establishment of specific blogs for staff to contribute to as a tool to maximise opportunities for all staff to contribute to and participate in decision making processes within the school.

Parent, student, and teacher satisfaction

In 2008 the school sought the opinions of parents, students and teachers about the school.

Their responses are presented below.

Parent

Open High School is the quiet achiever of public education. The quality of instruction is truly outstanding and the dedication of staff is extraordinary. Both our children have really enjoyed studying a language through Open High School and intend to further their language studies because of the very positive learning experience they had at Open High School.'

Teacher

'The excursion was an overwhelming success with students demonstrating marked improvements in speaking ability- it was amazing to see their progress.'

Student

'Languages open up new worlds of exploration, new people, places and possibilities. Throughout my studies, Open High School has consistently fostered these interests and encouraged me to excel. Languages can and do take you places – so don't miss out.'

Professional learning

School professional learning funding was used to target a number of professional learning priorities

identified by the school's Professional Learning Committee.

These included a continued focus on the integration of the NSW Quality Teaching Framework into teaching and learning programs, and a strong emphasis on the integration of ICT into teaching programs. A key focus was a targeted program of workshops to support executive and classroom teachers prepare for the implementation of Extension courses in 2009.

All staff participated in mandatory training sessions in Anaphylaxis management and child protection updates. A number of staff also participated in training programs to provide them with additional skills in the management of disabled students.

A program of technology training and support was continued in 2008 and further developed to meet changing professional learning needs.

All staff participated in three whole school development days that sustained a strong focus on quality teaching, student learning needs and technology in teaching and learning.

A number of executive staff participated in and led workshop sessions in state wide executive network meetings and conferences.

Executive staff of Open High School also presented papers and led workshops in the 2008 AADES (Australian Association of Distance Education Schools) International Conference held in Darwin.

A staff member of Open High School also presented a paper on the value of digital video compilations at New Zealand Association of Language Teachers' (NZALT) International Biennial Language Conference, held in Wellington in July 2008.

In 2008 three members of staff were recipients of the prestigious national Endeavour Languages Teachers Scholarship Program with one member of staff selected as a national program leader.

In 2008 a number of Open High School teaching staff provided student teachers from Sydney University with mentoring and professional learning support in contemporary approaches to teaching and learning.

In addition, in 2008 over 70% of the teaching staff at Open High School participated in HSC marking, membership of Board of Studies syllabua and examination committees as well as standards referencing committees.

The distribution of professional learning funds for 2008 is illustrated in the following table.

TPL BAL B/F 1/12/07	\$3402
Plus Total Grant 2008	\$42890
Total TPL Funds available	\$46292
<i>Expenditure</i>	
New Teachers	\$302
ICT in Teaching & Learning	\$5690
Literacy and Numeracy	-
Quality Teaching	\$5455
Syllabus Implementation	\$18315
Leadership and Career Development	\$11132
Welfare and Equity	\$5463
Other	-
<i>Total Expenditure</i>	<i>\$46357</i>
BAL	\$-65

School development 2009 – 2011

Open High School has developed a Strategic Management Plan for 2009-2011. Within this plan a number of key targets for 2009 have been identified.

Targets for 2009

The school has identified three key targets for 2009.

Target 1

Increased integration of information communication technologies into the teaching and learning programs

Strategies to achieve this target include:

- Renew and strengthen the school's Digital Futures Program.
- Implement and extend Interactive Classrooms Program.
- Improve student access and capacity to use ICT to enhance student learning outcomes.
- Further development and integration of Learning Management and Activity systems.
- Upgrade network and digital production capabilities.
- Structured program of teacher professional learning to enhance ICT skills and competencies.

Our success will be measured by:

- Enhanced access to digital educational resources for learning and teaching and for teacher professional learning.
- Innovation in the use of interactive technologies for learning, teaching and for teacher professional learning.
- Embedded teacher use of information communication technologies in teaching and learning.
- Student engagement and performance is enhanced through participation in connected learning events.
- Strengthening collaborative student and teacher learning within High School's community of schools.

Target 2

Enhance student learning engagement and retention

Strategies to achieve this target include:

- Explicit teaching of learning habits to empower students to become independent learners.
- Staff mentoring program targeting students at risk.
- Establish student, supervisor and parent forums to dimension, monitor and evaluate student satisfaction levels and skills acquisition.
- Identify and promote examples of quality teacher practice that enhance learner engagement through interactive technologies.

Our success will be measured by:

- 75% students completing School Certificate course of study through Open High School.
- 85% students completing Higher School Certificate course of study through Open High School.
- Student engagement is enhanced and reflected in increased attendance and decreased withdrawal from enrolment.
- Strengthening collaborative learning across Open High School's community of schools.

Target 3

Increased teacher collaboration in integration of the Quality Teaching model in student learning programs

Strategies to achieve this target include:

- Teachers develop new skills in using new technologies and communications software platforms to enhance student learning outcomes.
- Integrate Teachers Institute Framework into Open High School's Quality Practice benchmark statements.
- Further build whole school shared vision of contemporary directions in languages pedagogies and commitment to enhancing the value languages in the curriculum.

Our success will be measured by:

- Strengthened teacher capacity to improve student learning outcomes.
- Enhanced school leadership capacity for school improvement.
- Enhanced reputation of public education through quality service to the public.

About this report

In preparing this report, the self-evaluation committee has gathered information from evaluations conducted during the year and analysed other information about the school's practices and student learning outcomes. The self-evaluation committee and school planning committee have determined targets for the school's future development.

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<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/asr>