**Messages**

**Principal’s message**

Hunter River Community School prides itself as a model of best practice in the education of students with special needs. All members of the learning community are involved in a collaborative process to develop educational programs that satisfy individual needs and learning styles of students.

Our school fosters an environment in which positive learning enhances self-esteem and personal growth. Quality education programs across all curriculum areas are presented in attractive and stimulating learning environments. A wide range of opportunities for our students to participate in sport, arts and crafts, music and community based activities ensures an appropriate balance to the curriculum.

Our school has celebrated many successes this year, including the academic, social and cultural development of our students. These many successes are proudly acknowledged within the wider community.

This report highlights our achievements over the past year and targets specific areas for further development.

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.

Ian Hughes

**P & C message**

Although 2011 was a quieter year in terms of fundraising effort it was still a notable year in terms of membership, support and purchases for the school.

Fundraising efforts consisted of an Easter Raffle, Pie Drive, Market Day Collection and Christmas Raffle. The support from Staff, Parents, Carers and the wider community ensured that these fundraising endeavours were successful.

The P&C purchased additional iPads for the school, so every classroom could have their own iPad to further enhance the learning and technological experience of the students. P&C money was also used to purchase outdoor blinds for a classroom as well as the medals that students are presented with on Presentation Day.

Currently ideas of how to spend P&C money to assist the school in 2012 are being researched.

It was fantastic to see new members come on board and to witness the subsequent friendships that developed and evolved. As well as supporting the school, a key component of the Hunter River Community School P&C is supporting each other. This support strengthens every year.

Regina Murdoch – President

**Student representative’s message**

Student representatives at Hunter River Community School have once again experienced a busy and challenging year. We ensured that our school was represented at the annual Mayoral Breakfast Bash which celebrates student leadership in the Maitland area, as well as providing a positive image for the school at many district and regional events.

It was a great privilege to chair the school’s Remembrance Day activities, and to see so many students reflecting on the importance of the ceremony.

The highlight of the year was our Inaugural Senior Ball which was enjoyed by both students and parents. We would like to thank the wonderful staff at Hunter River Community School for their outstanding organisation.

We have thoroughly enjoyed the challenges involved in being a School Captain and we feel...
confident that Sophie and Caleb will continue the important work in 2012.

Jessica Brown and Todd Hickey
School Captains

School context

Student information
It is a requirement that the reporting of information for all students must be consistent with privacy and personal information policies.

Students attending Hunter River Community School range in age from 5 years to 18 years of age. All students have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Individual Transition Plan (ITP) developed in conjunction with members of the Learning Support Team.

The physical environment of the school aims to support the comprehensive delivery of educational programs in a safe, age appropriate and attractive setting. In addition to the playground areas and classrooms, the school has a number specialist areas which include the library, hydrotherapy spa, liberty swing, agricultural plot, and a lower playground area mostly used for bike riding programs. The playgrounds, classrooms and specialist rooms address the wide range of needs of students at Hunter River Community School.

Where students and families demonstrate they cannot provide transport to and from school the Department’s Special Student Transport Scheme provides transport for the child. Seventy five percent of students enrolled at the school use this service.

Student enrolment profile
In 2011 Hunter River Community School had an enrolment of 51 students identified as having a moderate to severe intellectual disability. Approximately 85% of students are diagnosed as having a severe intellectual disability.

In addition many students presented with secondary disabilities including physical disability, sensory impairment, autism and conduct disorders.

Our enrolment profile results in a very complex and diverse population, consequently a broad range of curriculum options, behaviour management programs and instructional strategies are required to maximise the engagement and learning outcomes for all students.

In terms of enrolment numbers, a trend of increasing enrolments persists. An imbalance of almost one girl to four boys remains evident.

![Enrolments chart]

Student attendance profile
State attendance data is not collected for students enrolled in Schools for a Specific Purpose; however we do have a very healthy daily attendance rate of 93.5%, a significant improvement over recent years. There is little reportable difference in attendance between boys and girls.

Despite the school’s best efforts to maintain a high daily attendance rate, a small number of students are unable to attend school on a daily basis due to complex health and medical needs.

![Joey – the morning after the formal! But still made it to school!]
A new trophy to acknowledge Outstanding Attendance. The inaugural winner being Justin Hosking with 100% attendance!

Management of non-attendance

Hunter River Community School regularly monitors the attendance of our students through the use of OASIS attendance data. Parents are reminded at the beginning of each year about the legal requirements of sending their children to school, and the fact that each absence must be explained by a parent or caregiver. Hunter River Community School also accepts telephone advice of absences. This information is recorded and kept as per departmental requirements.

The School Administration Officer follows up on any unexplained absences each week and requests an explanation of the absence from parents or carers, thus the reason for few unexplained absences.

Due to the nature of our students, truancy is not a feature of non attendance.

Class sizes

The following table shows our class sizes as reported at the 2011 Class Size Audit conducted on Monday 21 March 2011.

Structure of classes

Classes at Hunter River Community School are grouped, as closely as possible, by chronological age. The outcome of forming such class groups means that there can be a span of support needs within each class. Programming strategies allow each child to access the appropriate stage of the NSW Board of Studies curriculum.

The school runs three stages which run separately to each other with the Junior school (K-6), accessing the regular primary curriculum from Early Stage One to Stage Three, Middle School students (Yr7-Yr10) accessing stage four and five (Life Skills) and the Senior School (Yr11 –
Yr12) accessing stage 6 of the Life Skills curriculum.

Retention to Year 12

All five students who started their HSC studies in 2010 completed their HSC at Hunter River Community School in 2011.

Our “Farewell Year 12” Cake enjoyed by all our friends at the Presentation Day Assembly.

Post-school destinations

Students with significant disabilities are able to access a Commonwealth government funded program called Post School Options (PSO). Student needs are assessed and their needs matched with appropriate PSO providers and workers. In 2011 all five students accessed the “Community Participation” program offered by local providers.

Staff information

It is a requirement that the reporting of information for all staff must be consistent with privacy and personal information policies.

Hunter River Community School has a teaching allocation of 11.998 teachers supported by 9 full time School Learning Support Officers, a School Administration Manager, a part time School Administration Officer and a part time General Assistant.

Specialist support staff assisting students meet their educational needs includes; a School Counsellor allocation of one day per week, Itinerant Support Teacher – Vision, one day per week and Itinerant Support Teacher – Hearing one day per week.

Staff establishment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Principal(s)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal(s)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Teachers</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Teachers</td>
<td>7.598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher of Emotional Disabilities</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher of Mild Intellectual Disabilities</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher of Reading Recovery</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Teacher Learning Assistance</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Librarian</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher of ESL</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Administrative &amp; Support Staff</td>
<td>10.926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23.124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The National Education Agreement requires schools to report on Indigenous composition of their workforce.

On the basis of the information available to Hunter River Community School there were no Indigenous staff members employed on a full time basis in 2011.

Staff retention

All teaching staff have remained stable from 2010 to 2011. One new School Learning Support Officer was also appointed under the merit selection process, replacing a recent retirement.

Teacher qualifications

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

All teachers hold a degree in teaching. Almost half of the staff have furthered their studies to gain a post graduate degree in Special Education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications</th>
<th>% of staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree or Diploma</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Financial summary

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of financial summary:</th>
<th>30/11/2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance brought forward</td>
<td>170258.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global funds</td>
<td>129720.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tied funds</td>
<td>56289.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School &amp; community sources</td>
<td>52507.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>9832.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust receipts</td>
<td>14706.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canteen</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total income</strong></td>
<td>433315.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Expenditure**            |            |
| Teaching & learning        |            |
| Key learning areas         | 16169.51   |
| Excursions                 | 1095.75    |
| Extracurricular dissections| 9953.45    |
| Library                    | 1095.75    |
| Training & development     | 21435.22   |
| Tied funds                 | 53781.58   |
| Casual relief teachers     | 35307.70   |
| Administration & office    | 38937.29   |
| School-operated canteen    | 0.00       |
| Utilities                  | 24481.97   |
| Maintenance                | 27429.41   |
| Trust accounts             | 14706.60   |
| Capital programs           | 17782.00   |
| **Total expenditure**      | 263535.08  |
| **Balance carried forward**| 169780.57  |

A full copy of the school’s 2011 financial statement is tabled at the annual general meetings of the School Council and/or the parent body. Further details concerning the statement can be obtained by contacting the school.

School performance 2011

Student performance reflects the quality of teaching and learning programs. In a school with diverse needs and varying levels of impact of disability on learning, student performance is gauged on an individual basis. Individual learning priorities set with families during the year were reported on in the mid year and end of year reports.

Teaching programs include assessment techniques and indicators of student learning including the use of prompts required to support the achievement of outcomes.

Students at Hunter River Community School work towards the outcomes in the Board of Studies syllabuses. Students in Kindergarten to Year 6 follow the syllabuses in English, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Human Society and Its Environment, Creative Arts and Personal Development, Health and Physical Education.

Students in Years 7-10 follow Life Skills courses in Key Learning Areas and undertake a pattern of study to meet the requirements for the School Certificate. Similarly, students in years 11 – 12 follow Life Skills courses in Key Learning Areas and undertake a pattern of study to meet the requirements for the Higher School Certificate.

Achievements

Arts

Our students benefit from the opportunity to experience a range of activities in creative and performing arts. Activities relate to the individual strengths, interests and age of students. The ability to enjoy and participate in all arts related activities directly impacts on the quality of life experienced by individuals.

Live performances at assemblies and combined school days are an integral feature of our arts program. Throughout 2011 students were engaged in performances for Education Week and the combined secondary units (IOTAS) concert at Newcastle Panthers where students performed to the popular hit “The Happy Song” by Bruno Mars.

Students also experience regular art and craft sessions which compliment class themes. Our students are always very proud of their art work which is displayed throughout the school and classrooms.

Sport

Hunter River Community School continues to encourage all students in their pursuit of fitness and access to facilities that develop and, or maintain gross motor and physical skills as part of their PD/H/PE programs. In 2011, students accessed a number of facilities in the Maitland community including Rutherford Ten Pin Bowling.
Centre, Maitland PCYC for Gymnastics, Lakeside Leisure Centre for Swimming, and Maitland Park Bowling Club for Lawn Bowls.

All eligible students were once again lucky enough to participate in the Departments’ Swim Scheme. The students were given a daily 20 - 30 minute lesson with 1 to 1 instruction over a one week period. The students all made tremendous gains in water confidence and some students are now swimming arm over arm.

Throughout 2011, selected students were also able to participate in the Riding for the Disabled (RDA) program at Raymond Terrace and the Sailability program on Grahamstown Dam.

Students from Grossmann High School once again assisted in the organisation of our Combined Schools Sports Carnival held at the Maitland Hockey Centre. This event proves very popular, not only with Hunter River Community School Students, but with students as far away as Dungog, Cessnock and Newcastle.

Work Experience Program

During 2011 many senior students were involved in a variety of supported work experience programs in many diverse environments. During Term 2, Dylan Kernahan worked each Friday in Maitland High School’s “Down Under” Café. The café is extremely popular with the public and provided Dylan with the opportunity to develop many skills including waiting tables, preparing and presenting meals, and kitchen clean up duty.

Todd Hickey completed a supported work placement at BI-LO Thornton. Todd was involved in a variety of activities including packing shelves, presenting shelved items in an acceptable manner, and compacting boxes using the crushing machine. Todd also completed an OH&S workplace course.

During semester 2, we were excited to be invited to establish an Enclave work program at Mai-Wel Enterprise Centre. Students were involved in a variety of recycling tasks including industrial shredding, sorting confidential documents and preparing materials for distribution. Students enjoyed working in a different work environment and learning work rules. This program will continue in Term 2 2012.

Academic

Hunter River Community School is committed to providing a comprehensive, quality learning experience to enable each student to reach their maximum potential.

We believe that:

- Education is a shared responsibility of the school, the students, the home, and the broader school community.
- Self esteem and personal growth are directly related to successful outcomes for students.
Quality learning depends on quality teaching programs.

The school nurtures a culture where all students are accepted and valued.

Students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 were, by parental request exempted from participation in the National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing program.

Individual student data was collected in February and again in November using the P Scales. The P Scales, used extensively in the UK are a set of descriptions for recording the achievement of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) who are working towards the first level of the National Curriculum (level 1). The NSW curriculum contains no such descriptors for students with SEN in NSW schools. They are split into eight different levels with P1 being the lowest and P8 the highest. Level P8 leads into NSW Early Stage One outcomes. Levels P1 to P3 are not subject-specific, as they describe early learning and conceptual development. At these early levels, a curriculum subject offers a specific context for learning.

In 2011 Hunter River Community School trialled the use of P Scales as an assessment framework to plot student performance and progress in the areas of Literacy and Numeracy.

**Literacy / English**

It was found that at the beginning of the 2010 school year 58% of students fell within the Band 1-3 descriptors. Levels P1 to P3 are not subject-specific; they describe early learning and conceptual development. At these early levels, a curriculum subject offers a specific context for learning. This is where students encounter, experience and respond to learning experiences. Students operating at the P Scale levels 4 -6 (24%) and P Scale levels 7-8 (10%) begin to extend their knowledge of a subject and start to connect knowledge to life experiences.

**Literacy Growth**

Literacy growth was evident for 38% of the school population whilst 60% of the student population maintained their skills. Only 2% or one student, regressed one skill level.
Numeracy / Mathematics

It was found that at the beginning of the 2010 school year 64% of students fell within the Band 1-3 descriptors. Levels P1 to P3 are not subject-specific; they describe early learning and conceptual development. At these early levels, a curriculum subject offers a specific context for learning. This is where students encounter, experience and respond to learning experiences. Students operating at the P Scale levels 4 - 6 (22%) and P Scale levels 7-8 (14%) begin to extend their knowledge of a subject and start to connect knowledge to life experiences.

School Certificate

Six students were awarded their School Certificate – Life Skills at the end of the 2011 school year. Five of these six students will continue their studies at Hunter River Community School in 2012. One student has moved interstate.

Higher School Certificate

Six students were awarded their Higher School certificate – Life Skills in 2011. All students moved to enjoy their post school life with a local Post School Options provider.

Numeracy Growth

Growth in numeracy skill development was evident for 40% of the student population whilst 58% of students maintained their numeracy skills. Only 2% or one student regressed one skill level.
Significant programs and initiatives

Connected learning
Advances in technology skills and acquisitions continued at Hunter River Community School throughout 2011. Four new 60” LCD touch screens were purchased which afforded every room with a large format touch screen. Wireless networking of the school was completed in October under the Digital Education Revolution initiative; this has been especially beneficial for the iPad program which is also supported by the Digital Education Revolution initiative. Students have continued to enjoy sessions using the interactive whiteboards in all classrooms with teachers updating their skills in Boardmaker© Studio and Smart Notebook. Teachers have created some innovative resources to support teaching and learning in a variety of key learning areas.

A School Learning Support Officer (SLSO) has been identified to support our innovative iPad program in 2012 and will be available three days per week to support, students, staff and parents with iPad technology.

We look forward to further gains in our technology programs in 2012.

Aboriginal education
Aspects of Aboriginal culture were experienced across the school through a variety of interactive classroom activities this year. Primary students explored Aboriginal culture through their KLA units of work ‘Identity & Values’ and ‘Meeting Needs’ in which they looked at Aboriginal heritage and lifestyles in comparison to their own lives. Students completed artworks, listened to music, read stories and used the internet to develop and share their knowledge.

For classes learning their letter sounds, Aboriginal objects and words were incorporated into the examples (eg. “b” for boomerang) and students were also able to have the opportunity to experience a range of Aboriginal stories through participating in the Premiers Reading Challenge.

Many students across the Senior School completed units of work about Australia which allowed them to study Aboriginal culture. Students were able to explore the traditions and culture through books, music, DVD’s, artworks and artifacts. A highlight for the students was the creation of their own boomerangs and didgeridoos during art lessons.

Multicultural education.
Embracing cultural diversity is an important part of the curriculum at Hunter River Community School. In 2011, the school held a Multicultural Day aiming to showcase a variety of countries and cultures around the world. Prior to the day, students engaged in activities that looked at the flag, position in the world, maps, flora, fauna, dance, music, cuisine, language and art of their class’s chosen country as well as some of the traditions and customs. On the day, each class set up a display to share their new knowledge with their peers and with our special guests (our grandparents). Some classes dressed in traditional clothing and took part in a parade to start the proceedings before the touring of the countries commenced. Displays included foods to taste, traditional music, artefacts, artworks and examples of the language spoken.

Other programs
Senior Electives
In 2011 the senior school operated an elective program four days a week. The program was designed to mirror the timetable of a regular high school and to provide students with the flexibility to study a variety of subject electives in their senior years. During electives, students move classes, receive instruction from a variety of staff and work with a new group of peers.

During the year students have studied agriculture/horticulture, work in the community, technology and design, and food technology. The
dance, music, drama and visual arts curriculum has also been implemented during electives.

All students have responded exceptionally well to the programs and have worked exceptionally hard to achieve their outcomes. The programs have been tailored to meet individual priorities and maximise engagement for all students. The success and flexibility of the program has ensured it will continue in future years.

Senior Formal

2011 was a very exciting year for the senior students of Hunter River Community School. After several years of planning, the inaugural senior formal was held on December 1st at East Maitland Bowling Club. The evening required formal attire, and students looked amazing in their finery. The theme of black, silver and purple was reflected in the decorated auditorium that created a magical atmosphere for the students.

Students from Year 11 hosted the event and their Year 10 and Year 12 peers were presented to Mrs Nola Warby, our school patron, and to an emotional and excited audience of parents, friends and staff.

The evening concluded with a disco and all parents and students had an amazing time dancing the night away. The event was a huge success and provided families with an opportunity to celebrated their child’s abilities and success in a festive and positive environment. The 2012 formal is already being planned!!

Swimming School

During the first Term 2011, Hunter River Community School students had the opportunity to participate in the Intensive Swimming Scheme, supported by the DEC. The Intensive Swimming scheme ran for five continuous days, with 38 students participating and 20 staff assisting. Three of the staff at Hunter River Community School are qualified Austswim instructors. Each session was created and tailored to the swimming capabilities of each child, with a wide range of abilities within each group. Students thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and the improvement from day one to day five was incredible.

Activities focused on building confidence within the water, developing kicking and strokes and
safety and survival, in and around water. The benefit of working on the above skills, over a 5 day block allowed students to learn, practice and to refine skills. Staff were also able to refine their water safety skills too!

We were able to collect some valuable data from the 2011 Scheme, and we are all looking forward to Intensive Swimming in 2012.

Respect and responsibility

Hunter River Community School values and promotes the core values of the DEC. These values underpin all aspects of our school’s operation and are carried through to the students, staff and parents.

At Hunter River Community School class and school rules along with expectations of behavior are explicitly taught and displayed in a visual format throughout the school environment. We believe all students have the right to learn in a safe and happy environment.

Our school motto, “Achieving Together” is embedded in our school culture and everyday practice, for we believe that learning and achieving is a partnership between the home, school and community.

The school uses a range of significant occasions such as ANZAC Day, Education Week, Harmony Day, and Remembrance Day to promote and reinforce community values.

All students receive recognition for their academic, behaviour and social achievements throughout the year. Class awards are presented at school assemblies by their peers each week with students receiving more formal recognition through awards presented at the annual Presentation Day assembly.

Progress on 2011 targets

Target 1

To develop a tracking tool to track student growth in Literacy and Numeracy based on the P Scale model.

Considerable progress has been made towards the achievement of this target. Continues work needs to be completed in this area to redefine and refine the work completed in 2011.

Our achievements include:

- A profile of student achievement was developed for each student in the area of Literacy and Numeracy. A refinement of this tool is required in 2011.
- Literacy (38%) and Numeracy (40%) growth of one skill band fell short of the 80% school target.
Information has been shared with staff who have shown a commitment to continue the work around Literacy and Numeracy acquisition in 2012. (See Targets 2 and 3)

Target 2
To increase levels of staff competency in the use of the PODD book communication system.

Hunter River Community School continued its commitment to the use of the PODD book for communication throughout 2011. Whilst it is a very important feature of our communication programs it is only one “tool” in our “Tool Box” of communication strategies.

Our achievements include:

- All staff being trained by Gayle Porter in the use of the PODD book communication system.
- Our Communication Project Officer supported and promoted the use of the PODD across the school, parent community and post school option settings. Strong links have also been forged with local schools, in particular East Maitland Public School, with our Project Officer assisting in the implementation of PODD book communication in the support classes.
- Regular interest group meetings are held for parents after each P&C meeting.
- 65% of students (target 45%) have an individualized PODD to use across all environments.

Target 3
To increase parent and community engagement to support student learning across all learning environments.

Pleasing progress had been made towards achieving this target. Hunter River Community School remains committed enhancing student learning through involvement of family and community members.

Our achievements include:

- The development of a parent PODD and iPad interest group. This group meets to learn about new applications available for their children’s use and share successful applications and strategies.
- A 10% (target 20%) improvement at P&C meetings. Attendance at P&C meetings is problematic for some parents as Hunter River Community School serves six local government areas and parents may have to travel over 100km on a return journey to attend the meeting. Our very active P&C does an outstanding job in keeping parents informed and making parents feel welcome when they can attend a meeting.
- All staff have received training on publishing to the school website. This has resulted in a more up to date and interesting website.
- A 62% (target 25%) increase in “hits” on the school website. The website averaged 114 visitors per month in 2011 compared to 71 visitors per month in 2010. Our website has had 11 673 pages viewed since it went “live” in July 2010.

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 2011 our school carried out evaluations of the Priority Schools Program and Literacy and Numeracy programs.

Educational and management practice
Priority School Program Funding

Background
A significant proportion of the PSP funding has been used to deploy an experienced School Learning Support Officer to assist with the development, implementation and evaluation of the PODD Book communication strategy. Staff, parents and community members were surveyed using a short “Zoomerang” survey to ascertain the effectiveness of this strategy and assist with the decision to continue or discontinue this strategy. An 87% return rate was achieved.

Findings and conclusions
It was found that the Support Officer was critical to the successful implementation of the PODD Book communication strategy.

The Officer had worked across the entire school, with visits to each class. 86% of class teachers indicated they were visited on a “regular basis”,

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which equated to between two and five sessions per week. Half the staff used the support officer to demonstrate the use of the PODD Book during Release from Face to Face teaching time, whilst the other half of staff used the officer to support individual or small groups of students. 93% of respondents rated the support they received from the Officer as “useful” to “extremely useful”, with 7% rating the support “of little use”. More importantly 77% of respondents thought that their students/child/client, had made “significant” to “highly significant” improvements in their use of the PODD Book communication system.

Future directions
There was an overwhelming response to continue the position of the Support Officer (93%), as many staff and parents thought it important to keep the impetus of the POOD Book communication strategy strong.

Due to the teacher and parent demands around supporting iPad technology it was decided to split the Support Officer position, with one Officer working on the PODD Book communication strategy and the other working on the implementation of iPad technology.

Curriculum

Literacy and Numeracy Programs

Background
The student population at Hunter River Community School has changed quite dramatically over a very short space in time. Both teachers and parents felt that the literacy and numeracy framework the school once followed was no longer suiting a significant portion of the school population.

Findings and conclusions
In 2006 Hunter River Community School had a student population of 46 students, of these 46 students 91% were diagnosed as having a severe intellectual disability, and only 9% were diagnosed as having a moderate disability. In 2011 48% of students were diagnosed with a severe intellectual disability and 42% with a moderate disability.

A survey of staff revealed the following information regarding our current literacy and numeracy frameworks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Usual</th>
<th>S-times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students are provided with relevant and meaningful literacy and numeracy activities.</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teaching programs respond to student need.</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are supported in analyzing literacy and numeracy performance data.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processes and procedures exist to “track” and “monitor” student performance.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers incorporate the use of ICT into literacy and numeracy programs.</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents have a good understanding of how their child is taught literacy and numeracy.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers felt that there was little support within school and DEC structures for the teaching of literacy and numeracy to students with special education needs. They felt that syllabus documents lacked the notion of a continuum of learning and felt that the school needed to develop new literacy and numeracy frameworks for students at Hunter River Community School.

Future directions
A strategic plan for 2012-2014 will include a focus on school practices in the delivery of planned and explicit literacy and numeracy programs to meet the needs of all students.

Curriculum teams will be formed to develop a framework of critical literacy and numeracy skills for students with special education needs, along with a tracking and monitoring tool.

Parent, student, and teacher satisfaction
In 2011 the school sought the opinions of parents, students and teachers about the school. Their responses are presented below.
Overall parents were very positive about the school and the programs that are run. Parents certainly felt supported by the school.

A significant number of parents (60%) made mention of the fact that the school was still in demountable accommodation, and that that accommodation was not satisfactory for the needs of students at the school.

Other comments include;

HRCS is an asset to our community....

Teachers are friendly, approachable and wonderful with the students....

You are all wonderful and dedicated. Thank you for teaching my child.....

I find all the staff very approachable and appreciate the prompt action taken when problems have occurred.

Professional learning
All permanent and temporary teachers and School Administrative and Support Staff have participated in professional learning activities across a number of areas in 2011.

All teaching staff were given the opportunity to attend the NSW Special Education Leaders Conference in August, which was Staff Development Day three, where they listened to keynotes, attended workshops and shopfronts and networked with colleagues from other special education settings. The workshops were designed around the Office of Schools Priorities, which supported the Hunter River Community School plan and professional learning needs of individual teachers. The NSW Special Education Leaders Conference- teacher day was registered with the NSW Institute of Teachers and therefore the hours gained goes towards the hours of accreditation for the three teachers at Hunter River Community School who are New Scheme teachers, two are maintaining their accreditation at a professional competence level. On this day, the SASS members remained at school and undertook training.

The average expenditure per teacher on professional learning was $869. The total expenditure for teacher professional learning for the year was $18421.

The staff development days consisted of DET mandatory training such as Emergency Care, CPR and Child Protection Training, Anaphylaxis training. The staff conversed on PBL, which is a priority within the school plan. We undertook professional dialogue and came to consensus about positive behaviour and what this should look like at Hunter River Community School.

Professional Learning Plans at Hunter River Community School are now entrenched in Hunter River Community School practice. Professional Learning is rigorously planned to ensure that all staff, teachers and SASS, are given the opportunity to develop professionally.

Staff had the opportunity to discuss their professional learning needs within small supervision groups.

During the professional learning opportunities at Hunter River Community, the staff participated in whole staff conversations as well as sessions between primary and high school staff.

Staff member’s individual professional learning included Welfare and Equity, Career Development, Technology, Quality Teaching, Curriculum and Capacity Building and Leadership.

School planning 2012—2014

The school planning policy provides direction for the preparation and implementation of school plans including the identification of priority areas, intended outcomes and targets that are consistent with the NSW State Plan and the Department’s planning documents.

School priority 1

Outcome for 2012–2014
To improve communication programs across the school and surrounding support classes.

2012 Targets to achieve this outcome include:
- By the end of 2012 75% of students will achieve their identified communication goal in their Individual Education Plan.
- By the end of 2012 80% of students will have a PODD Book developed for individual use.

Strategies to achieve these targets include:
- Implementation of a whole school approach to communication skill development in conjunction with Newcastle Schools.
- Identified staff mentor local support classes to assist in the development of communication skills.
- A network of schools using PODD Books meet on a term basis.
- Strong links with Newcastle University developed.

School priority 2

Outcome for 2012–2014
To improve school practices in the delivery of planned and explicit literacy programs to meet the needs of all students.

2012 Targets to achieve this outcome include:
- By the end of 2012 60% of students will have increased one skill band on the P Scales assessment tool.

Strategies to achieve these targets include:
- Literacy curriculum committee formed to investigate best practice.
- Tracking system developed to track literacy skills mastery.
- Visit to Willans Hill SSP to investigate the Four Blocks approach to literacy acquisition.

School priority 3

Outcome for 2012–2014
To improve school practices in the delivery of planned and explicit numeracy programs to meet the needs of all students.

2012 Targets to achieve this outcome include:
- By the end of 2012 70% of students will have increased one skill band on the P Scales assessment tool.

Strategies to achieve these targets include:
- Numeracy curriculum committee formed to investigate best practice.
- Tracking system developed to track numeracy skills mastery.
- A numeracy goal a feature of all Individual Education Plans from 2013 onwards.

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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