

Briefings

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From the Executive Director

Economic Significance of Independent Schools to the Queensland Economy

The contribution of independent schools to Queensland's school system in terms of educational outcomes is well recognised including their commitment to excellence in all areas of teaching and learning. Independent schools educate nearly 120,000 students across the state.

However, the contribution of independent schools to the Queensland economy and the local economies in which they operate is less well known. Independent Schools Queensland commissioned the AEC Group – a global consultancy firm with expertise in economic modelling – to address this knowledge gap. Their report *Economic Significance of Independent Schools to the Queensland Economy* (available at www.isq.qld.edu.au) provides an Australian-first analysis of the economic significance of independent schools.



The findings from the report are impressive and clearly demonstrate the \$1 billion in Government funding provided to independent schools in 2015 is value for money with the sector contributing \$4.1 billion to Queensland Gross State Product (GSP) in 2013/14. Independent schools also supported 31,000 full time jobs through their operations and activities with the payment of \$2.4 billion in salaries and wages.

The data provides a compelling case for continued government support for independent schools, not only through funding but also in providing a regulatory environment where choice in schooling is available to parents.

For the first time in Australia, attributing a dollar value to the economic benefits which flow from the academic performance of independent school students is estimated. The report draws on OECD research that indicates the enhanced education outcomes achieved by independent school students can be linked to a growth in GSP of \$263 million.

At a regional and local level, modelling by AEC illustrates the important economic contribution independent schools make to their local communities. In dollar terms independent schools made the highest total contributions (outside Brisbane - \$1.2 billion) to the local economies of the Gold Coast (\$642 million) and the Sunshine Coast (\$399 million).

Economic Significance of Independent Schools to the Queensland Economy

However as a percentage of total local economic activity, the contribution of independent schools to Ipswich, Logan and Redland (over 2.5 percent) was proportionally more than to Queensland as a whole (1.4 percent).

The report also independently confirms data in relation to the savings to taxpayers as a result of independent schools. These savings totalled \$1.02 billion in 2013/14 (\$804 million in recurrent savings and \$218 million in capital savings). These are substantial financial contributions, particularly in a tight fiscal environment.

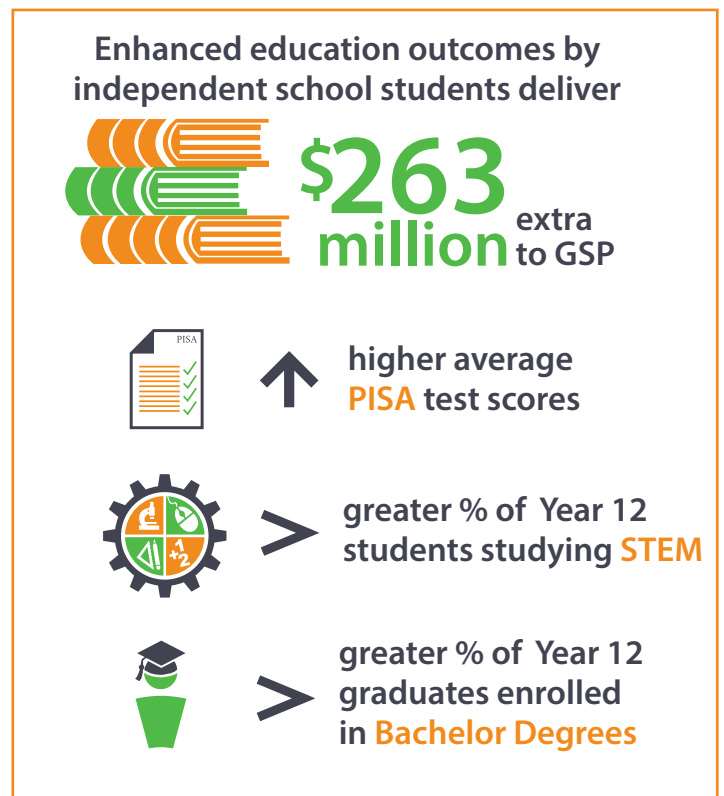
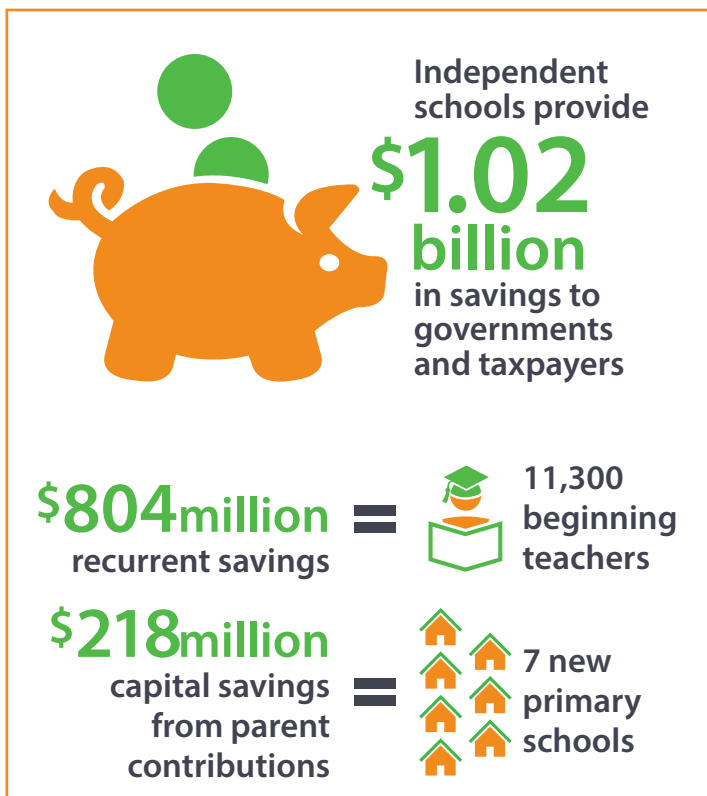
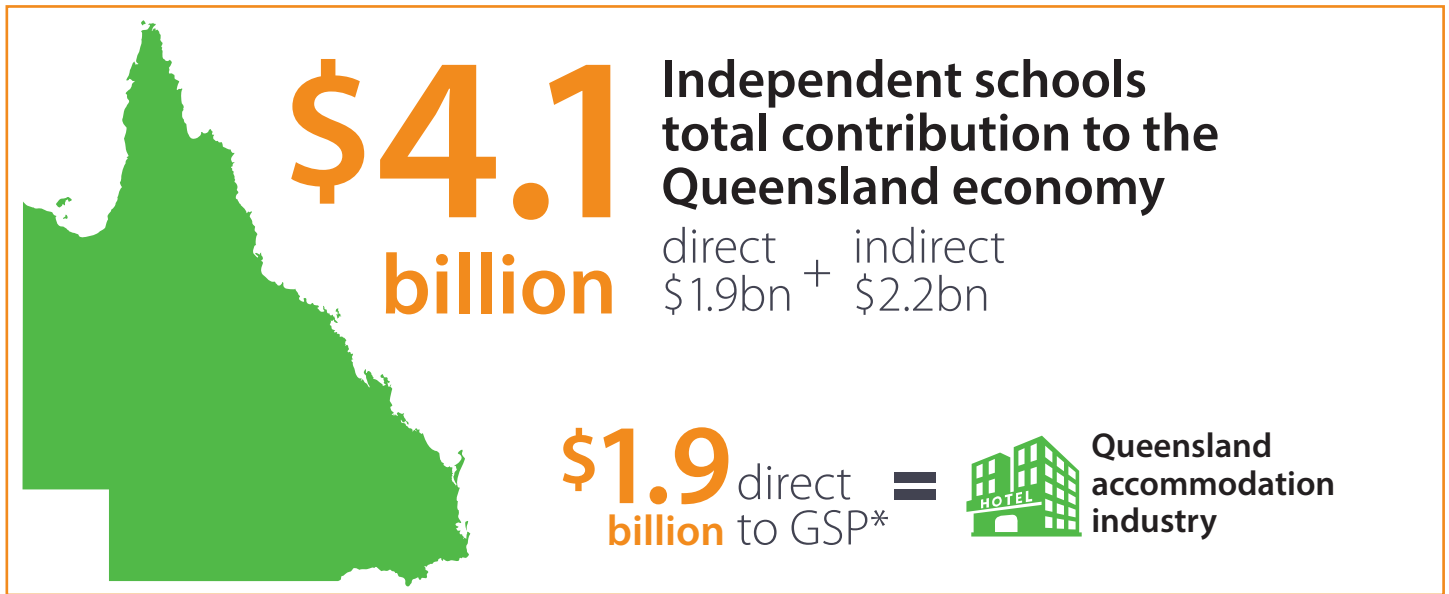
A particular highlight was that in 2014 parents allocated, from their after-tax income, \$218 million towards school infrastructure. Independent school parents invest \$3 for every dollar provided by governments.

The report adds another dimension to the achievements of independent schools and the contributions their principals, teachers, students and parents make to Queensland and their local communities. The findings highlight the vital need for both the Federal and State Government to continue to support choice in schooling through funding and regulatory arrangements that enable independent schools to play their part in educating future generations of Queenslanders. This is particularly important in the current economic and political climate where education funding has emerged as a key Federal election issue.



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Annual Economic Significance of Independent Schools to Queensland



Coaching as an implementation process for school improvement agendas

School leadership teams work extensively on developing strategic plans and goals for the continuous improvement of their schools in supporting student development. From these goals an implementation plan is developed with the senior and middle leadership team who grapple with the question “How can we create a process for improvement that generates success?” This is a common question asked by middle leaders and senior teachers who are charged with the responsibility of implementing school improvement agendas and goals. Often, they search for a process that allows for individualisation and contextualisation, whilst still being rigorous, measureable and visible.

With Hattie and other key influential researchers quoting the ‘single most impactful difference in schools for student achievement is the teacher (Hattie, 2009; Reeves, 2008; Marzano, Frontier & Livingston, 2011)’, a school may utilise a process that will help support teachers in their work, whilst developing their craft of teaching and providing a mechanism for data-driven conversations. One such approach that supports these concepts is a coaching process.

The coaching process contains a wide range of research highlighting the positive impact on student outcomes, professional growth of teachers, and achieving school improvement goals (Biancarosa et. al, 2010; Elish-Piper & L’Allier, 2010; Lockwood et al., 2010). The growth in implementation of coaching in schools has increased rapidly over the previous two decades which “influences both individuals and organisations, helping to establish systems that nurture and support new practices (Walpole et al., 2010).”

“The [coaching] program has been a phenomenal experience for all our staff. It has shifted the culture of our school and assisted us to deepen our literacy program.”

(school leader)

What is coaching?

Essentially, coaching is a change management process that provides the opportunity for differentiated support for the continual growth of teachers at all experience levels (Boyd, 2007). It impacts teacher development by supporting new practice through to mastery using a process of planned and intentional scaffolding as well as providing opportunities for collaborative reflection, planning and implementation of instructional strategies (Bean et. al, 2010; Knight, 2008).

Alongside an understanding that coaching is a well-researched and proven method for implementing school goals, there is a need for schools to consider and develop a coaching process to align to the school environment. Many models of coaching exist, including cognitive, peer and instructional to name but a few.

The challenge for schools is to continually reflect on the coaching process as it is implemented and respond to the needs of the context. In this way, the coaching process becomes contextually driven and aligned. Hence, coaching can, while maintaining the foundational principles listed above, look different across diverse contexts. Such a contextual approach, once considered problematic by researchers searching to find a one size fits all definition, has been shown to be a strength of the coaching process. So what makes coaching successful? According to Hunzicker (2011), professional learning for teacher development should:

- link theory to practice
- be collaborative
- be ongoing
- be instructionally focussed
- include contextual support

By utilising these guiding principles a coaching approach can be established in order to achieve school improvement agendas. There are three popular approaches for coaching in schools:

1. **Cognitive Coaching:** a set of strategies, or way of thinking or way of working that invites self and others to shape and reshape their thinking and problem solving capacities (Costa and Garmston, 2002)
2. **Peer Coaching:** Focuses on teachers helping their colleagues to build capacity through sharing, collaboration, observation and feedback (Prince, Snowden and Matthews, 2010)
3. **Instructional Coaching:** Supports teachers through instructional change using a variety of approaches to meet teacher and contextual needs (Knight, 2010)

Who is a coach?

The most simplified definition is anyone “who supports teachers in their daily work (Dole, 2004).” More specifically, a coach “helps teachers to recognise what they know and can do, assists teachers as they strengthen their ability to make more effective use of what they know and do, and supports teachers as they learn more and do more.” From this perspective, coaching is not a simple task for a teacher or leader to undertake and consists of a complex and demanding set of skills, dispositions and expertise.

As stated by Cornett & Knight (2009), the coach should support teachers with the goal of increasing student achievement aligned to school improvement agendas which could be vastly different from one school to another. In order for this to be successful, specific training for the coach is essential. Research supports this need due to the complex nature of the work to be undertaken (Mraz et. al., 2008; McLean et al., 2010). In a specific series of studies conducted by L-Allier & Elish-Piper (2006) it was determined that higher average student gains occurred in classrooms where teachers were supported by coaches with specific change management and interpersonal training.

Because of this, it is imperative schools select an appropriate coach to implement the school improvement agendas. A synthesis of research on coaching attributes and qualities has been developed by Fullan and Sharratt (2007) and can be used as a guide when selecting a coach:

Coaches support improved student achievement when they:

- demonstrate the four beliefs in their teaching:
 1. All students can learn, given sufficient time and support.
 2. All teachers can teach to high standards given the right conditions and assistance.
 3. High expectations and early and ongoing intervention are essential.
 4. Teachers need to be able to articulate what they do and why they teach the way they do.

- promote and facilitate professional learning in a specified content focus area determined by the school improvement goals
- coach teachers and model instructional strategies across the curriculum
- work with the staff to identify, select and organise curriculum resources in a common accessible area
- support the principal and school leadership team in planning professional development activities that promote effective classroom instruction

According to the International Reading Association (IRA), suitable coaches will be able to either demonstrate these attributes and skills or have the capacity to acquire these through a growth-focused mindset and willingness to extend their learning.

How does coaching operate?

It is widely accepted that the most impactful forms of professional development include ongoing support and commitment, focused goals and contain an allowance for collaboration with peers and mentors (Atteberry & Bryk, 2010). In the “Six Secrets of Change,” Fullan (2008) outlines a set of guiding principles that schools can use to support the development of a coaching process.

Coaching as an implementation process for school improvement agendas

1. Care about your teachers – teachers need to feel that there is a commitment to their wellbeing and professional identities.
2. Connect peers with purpose – teachers need the opportunity to engage in purposeful interaction with their peers and relevant learning for their context in order to ‘buy in’.
3. Capacity building prevails – teachers need support to build their professional capacity through identifying strengths and needs, building new competencies and celebrating success.
4. Learning is the work – by embedding the learning within the work, the two become synonymous. It becomes real and relevant.
5. Transparency rules – leaders being open and honest about the change, what the goals are and why the change is necessary will support data-driven conversations with teachers.
6. Systems learn – it is essential to share leadership and foster leadership among others in the team for sustainable change and recognition of teacher expertise.

The development of these guiding principles within the school context positions the school for the successful and productive introduction of a coaching process. As with the introduction of any new process into the school context, change management is a significant consideration. The introduction of the coaching process can be closely linked to well-recognised research in change management for organisations, such as Kotter’s (1995) *Eight Steps to Transforming an Organisation*. This seminal work provides a process for both the school leadership and the coach as they launch into this complex work.

Kotter’s steps include:

1. Establishing a sense of urgency
2. Forming a powerful guiding coalition
3. Creating a vision
4. Communicating the vision
5. Empowering others to act on the vision
6. Planning for and creating short-term wins
7. Consolidating improvements and producing still more change
8. Institutionalising new approaches

These steps can be best related to coaching in *Table 1*.

Table 1: Kotter’s Eight Steps to Transforming an Organisation

Eight Steps to transform an Organisation	Transforming an organisation with a coaching process
1. Establishing a sense of urgency	Use data informed by school improvement agendas to define the coaching focus
2. Forming a powerful guiding coalition	Form a coaching team (coach, leader/ sponsor, coachees)
3. Creating a vision	Align your school vision to the coaching goals
4. Communicating the vision	Communicate the coaching goals and process to all stakeholders
5. Empowering others to act on the vision	Engage teachers in the coaching process
6. Planning for and creating short-term wins	Plan coaching action goals and celebrate success
7. Consolidating improvements and producing still more change	Reflect of the process, with data, and continue refinement and action
8. Institutionalising new approaches	Build sustainable teaching and development practices that can be transferred across the school

How does coaching impact pedagogy and practice?

As well as the benefits already described in this paper, further research studies have been completed to determine the major benefits for coaching as an approach to school improvement. One such study by Marzano, Frontier & Livingston (2011), reported that even a modest increase in teacher expertise impacts significantly on student achievement. The implementation of a coaching process using a range of coaching activities results in gains in teacher expertise and ultimately improves teachers' performance.

Furthermore, professional learning that affects teams of teachers rather than individuals has a broader impact not only on the students of teachers involved, but also on students of their professional colleagues (Bruegmann & Jackson, 2009). Bean (2004) summarised such coaching activities into levels of intensity. His work concluded that the higher the level of intensity, the greater the impact on student achievement.

“Being part of the [coaching] has been a fantastic experience for me. It has improved my ability to have professional conversations with my colleagues, improved my knowledge and use of data and has allowed me to change, refine and improve my practice”
(coach)

Level 1: Informal, relationship building

- talking with colleagues to identify issues or needs
- developing and providing resources
- developing curriculum
- participating in professional learning activities with colleagues
- leading or participating in study groups
- assisting with student assessment

Level 2: More formal, more intense, getting focussed

- co-planning lessons
- holding team meetings
- analysing student work
- interpreting assessment data with teachers
- individual discussions about teaching and learning
- providing workshops and professional learning presentations.

Level 3: Intentional, more intense, may cause some discomfort

- modelling and discussing lessons
- co-teaching
- visiting classrooms and providing feedback
- analysing video of teacher lessons
- reflective coaching conversation to build problem solving and self-reflective capacity.

The effects of coaching are significant in both impact on teachers and student achievement. Studies have revealed that coached teachers were more likely than non-coached peers to transfer newly acquired teaching practices into classroom use (Sibley & Sewell, 2011; Marsh et. al, 2012; Symonds, 2002; Gross, 2010). The effects of coaching were also found to be long lasting. In a longitudinal study, Sibley & Sewell (2011) found that teachers paired with coaches demonstrated increased implementation of research-based instruction, greater levels of fidelity to instructional practice and heightened use of intentional teaching practices.

Coaching as an implementation process for school improvement agendas

What local impact studies have been completed?

Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) has entered their fifth year supporting the training and development of school-based coaches. Throughout this time, yearly pre- and post-data analysis on school collaboration and culture, as well as impact on the coach and teachers' professional development have been tracked with positive results as shown in *Figure 1* and *Figure 2*.

From this program, a number of conclusions can be drawn from the aggregated data. It is evidenced that schools who achieved the greatest gains in the above measurables were those who:

- linked the process of coaching with their school improvement goals
- positioned coaching within the school as a valued approach to professional learning
- had leaders that actively supported the coach and the coaching process
- had carefully and thoughtfully selected a coach based on their experience, capacity to learn and ability to build effective relationships with other staff.

ISQ are continuing with the coaching program (Coaching Partnerships) in 2016 and will continue to monitor and analyse growth in school development and student achievement.



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Figure 1: Reported growth during 2015 as a Collaborative Community
■ Beginning of 2015 ■ End of 2015

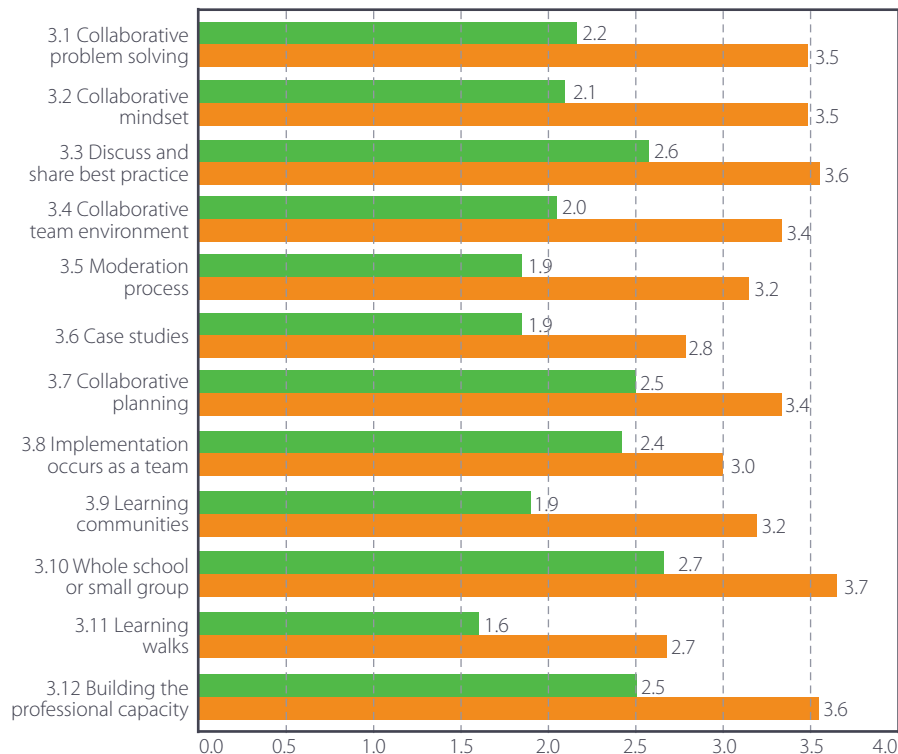
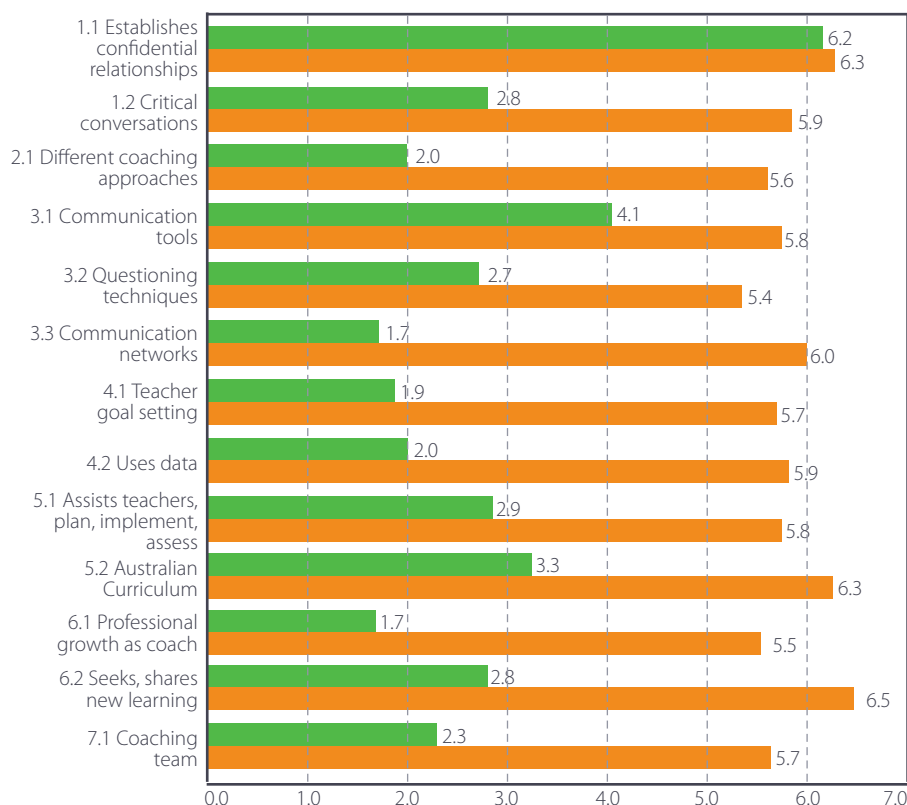


Figure 2: Professional growth of the school coach 2015 (Intensive Program)
■ Beginning of 2015 ■ End of 2015



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