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## The Special Edition

This issue of the Journal of Professional Learning is a Special Edition focused on the work of the Fair Go (FG) research program at Western Sydney University. The Fair Go research program is focused on pedagogy and engagement in low-SES schools through working with teachers on incorporating collaborative action research into their own practice. Fundamental to all of the research projects in which the overall Fair Go program has been involved are the principles or contexts of:

- pedagogy and engagement
- low-SES school communities
- practitioner action research
- collaboration.

We believe that the profession is enriched when teachers see themselves as generating, as well as delivering, knowledge as researchers, and to this end, we see the taking on of a ‘researchly disposition’ (Lingard & Renshaw, 2010) by teachers as fundamental to the work of the program.

Fair Go reaches its 21st birthday in 2021 and this Special Edition is helping to mark that milestone. The history of the overall program through its various specific projects is told in the article by Katina Zammit.

Many schools in Western Sydney and rural NSW have worked with the Fair Go program. Apart from the NSW Teachers Federation, numerous professional and academic organisations in Australia and overseas have cited Fair Go as an exemplary student engagement initiative for low-SES schools, including: Learning Difficulties Australia, Education Services Australia, Australian Council of TESOL Associations, Primary English Teaching Association Australia, Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, and University of Toronto’s Centre for Leadership & Diversity. Fair Go has informed government policy around improving schooling outcomes in varied ways, such as being used as an exemplar program by, for example, the Departments of Education in NSW and Victoria, and in the evaluation of the Bridges to Higher Education program.

In 2011 the NSW Department of Education (The Department) reported Fair Go as ‘informing the system, school leaders and other teachers about different ways to encourage and support teachers to improve their classroom practices and student engagement’, and subsequently used FG in professional development material for hundreds of teachers. The Department’s paper on ‘Research underpinning the reforms’ in reference to the Commonwealth/States National Partnership on ‘Low SES School Communities’ traced a series of Fair Go projects since 2002, referencing its model of engagement as



# Introduction to the Special Edition



showing ‘clear signs that (the relevant) changes to classroom teaching practices encouraged greater and extended interest in learning’. Fair Go was again featured in a cross-sectoral paper on the research base for the Low-SES National Partnership’s 2014 impact evaluation. This testifies to the program’s impact on the thinking of education authorities at high levels in Australia.

The Fair Go program developed in its early years an engagement framework through which to research pedagogy and engagement, and to this was later added an arm devoted to motivation (thanks to a collaboration with Professor Andrew Martin, now of UNSW). The Motivation and Engagement (MeE) Framework is discussed in the article by Geoff Munns in this edition and is referred to by the authors of the other articles.

Authors of the articles in the Special Edition have each been involved with the program in some way over these 21 years, either as academics, as postgraduate students focusing on Fair Go work in the relevant schools, as Principals in Fair Go schools, or, particularly, as teachers in individual Fair Go research projects such as School is For Me, Teachers for a Fair Go, Fair Go from the Get Go and Schooling for a Fair Go. Introductions to each article point to the background of the author and particular projects out of which the article arose. Of course, a number of other teachers and Principals have also been involved in a number of the projects listed in Katina’s history. In all, teachers in almost 90 schools in Western Sydney and rural NSW have taken part in various projects within the Fair Go research program.

Fair Go has always had a connection with the NSW Teachers Federation. Current Federation Officers have been researchers on individual projects. In 2014, the Federation co-hosted the Equity! Now More Than Ever conference in which teachers in the Schooling for a Fair Go project reported on their work and the JPL has published a number of articles in previous editions coming out of Fair Go projects. Thus, we would like to acknowledge the union for its strong support of this Special Edition, as well as for more general support of Fair Go over the past 21 years.

## ***References:***

Lingard, B., & Renshaw, P. (2010). Teaching as a research-informed and research-informing profession. In A. Campbell & S. Groundwater-Smith (Eds.), *Connecting inquiry and professional learning in education: international perspectives and practical solutions* (pp. 26-39). Routledge.