

Public education
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Excellence and Equity

Strategic Plan for WA Public Schools 2012–2015



Department of
Education

From the Director General

I am delighted to present this plan, *Excellence and Equity*, which sets the strategic direction for public education over the next four years.

This plan is for every child who attends a public school in Western Australia.

The critical importance of the early years of a child's life to their future educational success is well known. We want every young child to have the best start to school, and to master the foundation literacy and numeracy skills, as well as the personal and social capabilities, required for later years of schooling.

As students progress through school, it is important to ensure they develop essential skills, knowledge and understandings in a range of disciplines. We want parents, families and communities to support their children's learning at home and in school, and to value education as a powerful driver for future success and fulfilment.

When they graduate from school, we want young people to be confident about taking their places in the world, and to be active citizens who contribute to society in many different ways.

This plan builds on the ongoing commitment made in Classroom First – for classrooms to be at the centre of improvement efforts.

It also builds on a range of successes including some of the most significant improvements in student performance in recent years – Western Australia's highest-ever results on national assessments in literacy and numeracy, and civics and citizenship; and many more Year 12 students graduating from school with academic and vocational achievements.

In pursuit of excellence and equity for each student, all schools will continue to have more autonomy so teachers can personalise their approaches to teaching and learning, and meet the needs of their students and the expectations of their communities. We will also continue to explore different ways of working that further advance the interests of each student.

By focusing on the priorities and aspirations in this plan, I believe we will make a real difference to our students and to the communities we serve across Western Australia.



Sharyn O'Neill
Director General

May 2012



“This plan is for every child who attends a public school in Western Australia.”

Excellence and equity: the basis of a strong public education system for every student

As a public school system, the aim is to achieve the twin goals of excellence and equity.

The State has a long and proud tradition of public schools providing high quality education in every community. With Western Australia's vast geographical area – more than 10 times the size of Victoria – along with a diverse student population and a significant number of students in remote and very remote locations, the challenges are great.

As a system, we rise to these challenges every day. One of the great strengths is that public schools open their doors to all students, enabling them to mix and learn to get along, and to appreciate what each brings to their school community.

At the same time, public schools provide opportunities that extend and challenge students to achieve the highest possible standards and their personal best. Teachers are always alert to the possibilities for enriching classroom learning for students, both for those who learn easily and achieve highly as well as for those who need extra support.

That is why a strong system of distinctive public schools is critical to a cohesive society.

Each parent should feel confident that their local public school can meet the needs, aspirations and interests of their children.

All public schools need to provide education programs that prepare each student with the skills, understandings and values to reach their academic potential and contribute to society.

But public schools do much more than this.

Public schools also enable students to learn those things that make for a happy and fulfilling life – to understand their strengths, to be able to manage themselves and their emotions, to know that rights are accompanied by responsibilities, and that life consists of giving as well as receiving.

As the priorities in this plan are implemented over the next four years, we will maintain our commitment to the mission of public schooling: for every child to be provided with a high quality school education – whatever their ability, wherever they live, whatever their background.

| | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| PRIORITY 1: | Success for all students |
| PRIORITY 2: | Distinctive schools |
| PRIORITY 3: | High quality teaching and leadership |
| PRIORITY 4: | A capable and responsive organisation |

“A high quality school education for every child – whatever their ability, wherever they live, whatever their background.”



New and better ways of working to benefit students

Students, their achievements and their wellbeing drive all decisions and actions.

Further authority for decision making at the local level will help schools achieve their priorities. Recognising that school communities are at different stages in terms of their desire and readiness for greater autonomy, the needs of each school for more flexibilities in key areas of their operations will be taken into account.

Parents and community members, through school councils/boards, will play a greater role in the governance of their schools.

Evidence from monitoring, evaluation and research will be used to inform decisions at all levels.

Teachers will continue to monitor the progress of each student and use that information as a basis for decisions about their teaching strategies. Schools will engage in self assessment processes and use the data to inform their improvement plans. The system will use research evidence and findings of rigorous evaluations to determine future directions.

Collaboration between schools will continue to be encouraged so they can share resources and expertise to benefit students. Partnerships will be strengthened between teachers and parents, and between schools and their communities as well as industry and tertiary providers.

The transition will continue to an enabling organisation where schools are the focus – and networks and others support the endeavours, innovations and improvement strategies of schools.

Just as Classroom First said, change must result in improved classroom practices and student learning.

“Change must result in improved classroom practices and student learning.”



The opportunities ahead

Increasingly the focus is on providing opportunities for each school to reflect the context in which it operates.

In the past, policies, rules and processes have not been flexible enough to accommodate the needs of individual schools.

As we move away from this and towards more flexibility, the public school system will become a stronger system of distinctive schools.

| MOVING FROM | MOVING TOWARDS |
|---|--|
| CLASSROOM PRACTICE | CLASSROOM PRACTICE |
| Less differentiation in approach to teaching and supporting students | More tailored and personalised approach to teaching and supporting students |
| Curriculum for students determined by what each individual school could offer | Curriculum for students expanded through programs across schools and online |
| Services limited to compulsory years of schooling | More services for children before and during compulsory years of schooling |
| Unclear expectations of teachers in the early years of schooling | Clear expectations about teaching, assessment and reporting rigour, particularly in Kindergarten and Pre-primary |
| Schools limited to providing only education services | Extended school services including education, health and parenting |
| GOVERNANCE AND DECISION MAKING | GOVERNANCE AND DECISION MAKING |
| Centrally led reform | Innovation and reform led by staff in schools |
| Centralised control of decisions | Greater authority for decision making by principals and school communities |
| Generic expectations and accountability for all schools | Individual expectations, targets and accountability for each school in a formal agreement |
| Accountability emphasis on compliance and reporting | Accountability emphasis on student performance and outcomes |
| Common approach to programs in schools | Distinctive approach by each school to meet local community expectations and needs |
| STAFFING | STAFFING |
| Time-based movement between schools | Individual assessment of merit as the basis for promotion and movement between schools |
| Staffing profile set by central office | Flexibility at school level to create staffing profile to meet student needs |
| Central allocation of staff to schools | School-level selection of all staff |
| Professional expectations of teachers and school leaders | National professional standards for teachers, school leaders and other staff |
| PARENTS AND COMMUNITY | PARENTS AND COMMUNITY |
| Limited involvement in decision making | More opportunity for involvement in key decisions about direction of school |
| Principal selection undertaken outside school context | Parent and community involvement in principal selection |
| Schools reliant on own resources to achieve plans | Schools in partnerships with business, industry and community organisations to benefit students and families |
| Internal focus of schools to meet student needs | Schools reflect needs, interests and aspirations of their students and communities |
| SUPPORT FOR STAFF | SUPPORT FOR STAFF |
| Support through rollout of large centralised programs | Support within and across school networks and targeted professional learning programs |
| Limited use of technology for educational delivery and management | Expanded use of technology for teaching, learning and business systems |
| Professional support and expertise located in central and district offices | Expertise identified, developed and shared in and across schools |
| RESOURCING | RESOURCING |
| Multiple funding sources, formulae and acquittal requirements | Per capita funding model and one line budget to provide transparency, equity and flexibility |

Priority 1: Success for all students

All students can achieve success: our job is to ensure every student has the opportunity to do so.

For all students, teachers will identify areas requiring attention, put measures in place to address them and closely monitor progress so students achieve the standards we expect. Teachers will build on the strengths of students and extend their achievements.

We will:

- establish better intervention strategies and integration of services for children and families before they start school and in the early years of school
- establish Child and Parent Centres to meet the needs of children in vulnerable communities
- raise standards of literacy and numeracy for students across the State
- ensure all students attend school regularly
- ensure most students leave school eligible for university or having completed vocational qualifications
- support innovative strategies to close the educational achievement gap between Aboriginal students and their non-Aboriginal peers
- lift the levels of achievements of students with disability, students from rural and remote areas, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds
- expand opportunities for students to develop personal and social capabilities necessary for full participation in the workforce and society
- expand and strengthen education for gifted and talented students
- expand the use of technology to enhance student learning
- improve student engagement with learning
- implement the Australian Curriculum from Kindergarten to Year 12 and national quality standards in the early years.

Performance information:

- Use of integrated services provided for children and families in the early years
- Proportion of schools meeting the National Quality Standard in the Kindergarten year
- Proportion of students achieving regular (90 per cent and more) attendance
- Percentage of students demonstrating age appropriate literacy and numeracy skills on entry to school
- Percentages of students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 at or above national minimum standards in NAPLAN reading, writing and numeracy
- Mean scaled scores of students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 NAPLAN reading, writing and numeracy
- Percentage of the Year 8 cohort awarded the Western Australian Certificate of Education by Year 12
- Percentage of eligible Year 12 students who achieve an ATAR sufficient for admission to university and/or who gain a certificate II or higher qualification

Note: Where possible, reporting of performance will be disaggregated by gender, Aboriginality, geographic location, language background, socio-economic background and disability.



Priority 2: Distinctive schools

Schools meeting the needs and aspirations of their students help to build strong communities in Western Australia.

Schools will be organised in diverse ways and allocated resources to match local needs. A system of schools will continue to be built in which each school has the autonomy it requires to respond to the needs of its students.

We will:

- continue to provide opportunities for schools to become Independent Public Schools
- delegate appropriate authority to principals
- provide opportunities for school staff to develop skills to match delegated authority
- configure the delivery of schooling across the State to best meet the educational needs of students
- encourage diversity within the system to offer greater choice to parents and students
- encourage groups of schools to work together to improve student access to high quality education programs
- involve parents and the community in the life of each school

- provide a safe, welcoming and engaging learning environment in each school
- prepare for the smooth transition of Year 7 to secondary school
- strengthen the capacity of regional schools to deliver excellent educational opportunities for their students.

Performance information:

- Findings from independent reviews of Independent Public Schools
- Findings of the independent evaluation of Independent Public Schools
- Extent to which available flexibilities are taken up by schools
- Extent to which greater authority is delegated to principals
- Extent to which parents, students and staff are satisfied with their schools

Priority 3: High quality teaching and leadership

The basis for improving student learning outcomes is high quality teaching and leadership.

Through a greater focus on merit, flexibility and administrative simplicity, the skill sets of staff will be better aligned to the needs of students. This includes expanding investment in professional learning.

We will:

- attract, retain and develop high quality teachers and leaders, including the use of new incentives
- provide all staff with access to high quality professional learning opportunities
- support school-based networks that provide professional support for teachers and school leaders
- introduce new national professional standards for teachers and principals
- ensure sound workforce planning for future needs
- coordinate professional learning and leadership development
- support high quality, innovative teaching, assessment and reporting practice among teachers
- provide principals with greater authority to develop staffing profiles, and select and appoint staff
- introduce workforce reform that benefits students and learning

- build a culture of high expectations and high performance
- ensure high standards of professional conduct and ethics.

Performance information:

- Extent of professional development undertaken by principals and teaching staff
- Proportion of principals and teachers assessed as meeting professional standards
- Extent to which schools are staffed with appropriately skilled teaching staff
- Extent to which teaching appointments are matched to specific school contexts
- Extent to which employment diversity targets are achieved for women, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Indigenous people, people with disability and youth

Priority 4: A capable and responsive organisation

Using resources wisely and making open and transparent decisions build community confidence in public education.

Performance will be managed against outcomes, priorities and targets; and technology, research and innovation will be used to drive change. The organisation will be responsive so that all Western Australians have confidence in the high expectations public schools have of their students.

We will:

- provide greater equity, transparency and flexibility in school resourcing
- improve budget performance and efficiency
- ensure rigorous and transparent accountability practices at classroom, school and system levels
- foster innovative governance and educational practices, systems and initiatives
- deliver strategic infrastructure and information and communication technology to provide students with contemporary learning environments
- maximise opportunities for students and teachers through partnerships and initiatives with other sectors
- conduct research and system performance analysis to inform policy review and development
- deliver high quality services to the Minister for Education and State Government.

Performance information:

- Compliance with Department and Government policy and legislative requirements
- Extent to which the Department is managed within budget
- Cost per student of services for primary and secondary students
- Extent to which schools comply with audit standards
- Proportion of infrastructure projects delivered on time and on budget
- Quality and timeliness of services to the Minister for Education

