

South Australian Government Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Administration and Reporting of NAPLAN Testing

INTRODUCTION

In this submission the South Australian Government provides contextual information on National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results in South Australia and the assistance provided to schools and students to understand and address issues of concern. In addition details of the future improvements to the My School website that have been agreed by Education Ministers are provided.

BACKGROUND

South Australian performance in NAPLAN

South Australian students continue to perform strongly with the 2009 National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) outcomes consistent with previous state based testing and other national and international tests. NAPLAN data is considered an important measure of student achievement. The South Australian Strategic Plan targets include that 93% of students will achieve the minimum national standards for year 3, 5 and 7 reading, writing and numeracy by 2010.

In South Australia 80,263 students in 739 schools were eligible for the 2010 testing. The following table provides a breakdown per sector:

Sector	Number of schools	Number of students	Number of classes
DECS	544	52172	3137
Catholic	98	14718	797
Independent	97	13373	525
Total	739	80263	4459

Assistance Provided

Once the NAPLAN results are received the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) undertakes a number of actions to assist individual students and schools. These include:

- the development of individual intervention plans for every DECS student who does not meet the national minimum standards. The parents of the students are requested to attend a meeting at the school to discuss follow-up action.**
- ensuring that DECS schools understand their results and are able to put appropriate actions in place. Regional Performance Analysis and Reporting Consultants work with officers from Data Management, Curriculum Services,**

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School and Regional Operations and the Literacy Secretariat to develop and present workshops in all regions across the State.

Literacy and Numeracy Programs in DECS

To support public schools in South Australia a number of key initiatives have recently been implemented in literacy and numeracy. These initiatives include:

- the Primary Mathematics and Science Strategy
- Literacy Secretariat
- a new Literacy Strategy
- Supporting Improved Literacy Achievement (SILA)
- South Australian National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy

Primary Mathematics and Science Strategy

The Primary Mathematics and Science Strategy aims to contribute to a sustainable system improvement in student learning of mathematics and science from Reception to Year 7. The strategy which commenced in 2009 has funding totalling \$51.1M over 4 years. The strategy will be progressively rolled out in the following manner:

- From 2011, there will be guaranteed minimum teaching times in mathematics and science.
- By 2012 all primary school students in Years 4 to 7 will be spending a minimum of: 120 minutes per week on science and 300 minutes per week on mathematics/numeracy.
- By 2013 Reception to Year 3 students will be spending: up to 90 minutes per week on science and 300 minutes per week on mathematics/numeracy.

For every primary teacher from 2010-2012, the strategy will provide two programs of professional learning – one for mathematics and one for science. In each case, the professional learning will support the implementation of the minimum time requirements.

Literacy Secretariat

A Literacy Secretariat was established in 2009 to bring about a more focused approach to literacy improvements utilising the findings from educational research and successful practice to inform policy, programs and materials development. It will work in partnership with regions and sites, both proactively and responsively, in an integrated approach to improvement.

A new Literacy Strategy for DECS is being developed. This is due to be completed in 2010 and will focus on:

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- every child having an effective pathway for their literacy learning which reflects high expectations for achievement
- every school having a whole-school approach to literacy teaching and learning
- every teacher having skills and knowledge to provide high quality literacy teaching
- every school being engaged in a partnership with parents and community to maximise student achievement.
- establishing a minimum requirement of 300 minutes per week literacy instruction time from R-7. 2012 yrs 4-7; and by 2013 R-3
- providing an improved mechanism for allocating literacy funds to schools

Supporting Improved Literacy Achievement (SILA)

As part of a \$4m two year trial partnership called Supporting Improved Literacy Achievement (SILA) funded by the Australian Government 32 of the State's most disadvantaged schools have been provided with:

- a literacy coach for teachers
- a leadership coach for principals and
- an early years connection coach to strengthen family and community relations

South Australian National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy

The South Australian National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy (which began during Term 3, 2009) provides similar specialist teacher support to DECS schools. As part of this National Partnerships a literacy coach based in each school is supporting an additional 15 schools, and a numeracy coach based in each school is supporting 16 schools. These schools are located in the Northern Metropolitan Region, the Southern Metropolitan Region, the Yorke and Mid North Region, the Limestone Coast Region and the Barossa Region.

Improvements to the My School website

The Ministerial Council for Education Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) agreed to the development of the My School website with the goal of lifting educational outcomes across all schools through the better monitoring of performance at the student, school and system level. (MCEECDYA Communiqué, 17 April 2009)

It has always been the intention of Education Ministers to include additional information on the website to provide contextual information about students

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and schools on the website. Future developments agreed by MCEECDYA include:

- trends of students' NAPLAN performance;
- identification of selective intake schools;
- income data and financials for schools; and
- data on parent satisfaction.

When MCEECDYA met on 10 June 2010 Ministers endorsed a number of new initiatives for the future development of the My School website (see attachment 1) including:

- allowing users to refine the list of statistically similar schools using filters, or provide lists of like schools using analytic methods.
- providing a facility for schools to provide a brief commentary on their NAPLAN results.
- within the formula to calculate ICSEA, a variable to capture the effect of language background other than English.
- clarifying the process for quality assuring ICSEA values for individual schools where the initial estimate is shown to be inappropriate and provide schools with clear support in this process.

The South Australian Government supports all these improvements.

Governance of the My School Website

The My School website has been developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) following a decision by MCEECDYA Ministers in 2009.

ACARA is established under the *Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act 2008*. Section 7 (1) stipulates that The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority must perform its functions and exercise its powers in accordance with any directions given to it by the MCEECDYA in writing. MCEECDYA gives a direction, an approval or a refusal for the purposes of a provision of this Act by resolution of the Council passed in accordance with the procedures determined by the Council (s42).

These governance arrangements provide an effective means for the ongoing enhancement and improvement of the My School website as evidenced by the significant efforts currently being made in this regard by ACARA as described above. It is important to note that this work is being undertaken in consultation with stakeholders under the direction of the Commonwealth and State Education Ministers. South Australia, through representation on MCEECDYA, will continue to advocate for improvements and enhancement of the My School website as opportunities to do so are identified in the future.

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CONCLUSION

The South Australian Government continues to support the development of the My School website including the publication of NAPLAN results. The South Australian Government also supports the ongoing efforts of ACARA to enhance and improve the My School website. The South Australian Government considers the existing governance arrangements in place provide an effective means by which future changes to the reporting of NAPLAN results and related information can be initiated.