



Government of South Australia

Department for Education and
Child Development

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Standing Committee on Education,
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Dear Mr Watling

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry into teaching and learning – maximising Australia's investment in schools.

The attached submission outlines some key initiatives from the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) as we strive to create positive outcomes for young South Australians.

I look forward to reviewing the outcomes from the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Keith Bartley
CHIEF EXECUTIVE



Government of South Australia
Department for Education and
Child Development

South Australian Department for Education and Child Development

**Submission to the Senate Inquiry into Teaching and
Learning (maximising Australia's Investment in schools)**

Submitted:

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(a) the effectiveness of current classroom practices in assisting children to realise their potential in Australian schools;

The South Australian Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) believes that children and young people are at the centre of everything we do and our department strives to ensure that each child receives the best available services and practices to help them realise their potential.

To support this vision DECD has two strategic objectives which govern all programs and practices related to the effectiveness of classroom practices:

1) *every child achieves their potential* and 2) *excellence in education and care*.

The effectiveness of current practices within DECD schools are monitored at an organisational and individual level through the *DECD Improvement and Accountability Framework (DIAf)* and the *DECD Performance and Development Policy*.

The *DIAf* is underpinned by principles that support leadership and development of improvement processes within classrooms, sites and services.

The *DIAf* is supported by a comprehensive suite of tools that aim to support teachers to monitor, achieve and continuously improve the quality of their outcomes. These can be found at the following website:

http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/quality/pages/quality/QIE_Home/?reFlag=1

The *DECD Performance and Development Policy* connects the work of all employees to organisational planning, strategic objectives and relevant performance standards through individualised planning, learning and accountability programs. The ultimate goal of this policy is to maximise learning outcomes for the children and students of South Australia. It:

- encourages creativity and innovation within the framework of organisational goals and improvement planning.
- builds the professional capacity through professional development.
- develops a workforce that is accountable and responsive to the community that it serves.

The policy can be found on the following

website: <http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/docs/documents/1/PerformanceandDevelopment.pdf>

Teacher Standards and Effectiveness

The *National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST)* are being promoted in South Australia as a framework to guide teachers' individual self-reflection and accountability about the effectiveness of their classroom practices. The *NPST* are identified as a performance expectation framework in the *DECD Performance and Development Policy* and support school leaders' efforts in clarifying and making explicit performance expectations. The standards address expectation in relation to professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement.

The *NPST* make explicit what teachers are expected to know, do and understand if they are to deliver contemporary quality teaching and, as a consequence, improve learning outcomes for students as the teachers progress across four key career stages; *Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead*. Significant gains should be possible if teachers take on responsibilities for their own learning and the learning of peers as part of *NPST* expectations.

(b) the structure and governance of school administration 'local and central' and its impact on teaching and learning;

South Australian government schools have been encouraged to take on greater decision making since the release of the landmark *Freedom and Authority Memorandum* in 1970. In 1999 following the release of a commissioned report into local management in SA public education, schools and preschools were invited to participate in *Partnerships 21* which saw school Governing Councils established through legislation. Governing Councils have joint responsibility with the school leadership team to set broad direction and vision through strategic planning and oversee financial management. Since that time DECD has taken a series of major steps towards increasing the authority of all government schools and principals.

The SA public education system supports the education and development of about 180,000 young people across a range of geographic and educational locations. There are 12 school regions with 555 schools and 408 preschools. Schools are supported by a Head of Schools, an Executive Director of Preschool and School Improvement and 12 Regional Directors (local positions). Additional central support in the form of Human/Financial/Facilities Resources and Workforce Development are also provided centrally. DECD aims to set broad boundaries at the central level, based on delegated authority to support leaders at the local level operate in an environment of local authority. Central Office supports locally managed public schools, preschools and children's centres to provide quality education and care by working in partnership with their local communities.

Greater autonomy in resource allocation has come about through the South Australian Education Staff (Government Preschools and Schools) Arbitrated Enterprise Bargaining Award 2010 which included individual workload protection for teachers. This Award paved the way for schools to be funded via a Student Centred Funding Model, which provides schools with per capita funding allocations with additional loadings for students with additional needs.

In January 2012 the South Australian Government agreed to join the two year National Partnership on Empowering Local Schools which will bring just over \$4M to Government schools over the next 2 years. The aim of this National Partnership is to enable schools to better respond to local community needs and provide services to ensure their students achieve the best educational outcomes. This National Partnership gives the SA government a wonderful opportunity to use this funding to advance our own policy agenda for schooling. For this National Partnership, we are planning to use a trial approach to test increased local decision making in both metropolitan and regional schools with a view to charting the way forward for all of our schools.

The DECD model of governance is to provide schools with greater levels of authority and accountability to improve flexibility, reduce red tape and improve the quality of teaching and learning. The Gonski Review of School Funding highlighted that South Australia already has one of the most decentralised school budgeting systems in the country.

(c) the influence of family members in supporting the rights of children to receive a quality education;

Parents and families are their children's first teachers, laying the foundation for their early learning and wellbeing. Family engagement to support a child's right to receive a quality education is fundamental to the role of the South Australian Department for Education and Child Development. The DECD *Directions for the new Department* (created in October

2011) outline that the work of the department will be directed by five key reform areas. The first two being:

1. *Strengthening families, safeguarding children*
Establishing strong and resilient partnerships with families that support wellbeing and development of children and young people, and,
2. *Working in and for communities*
Engaging with communities in the co-production of services and programs that improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

There are numerous examples of new approaches to support family engagement. One is the establishment of a series of policy discussion papers on future directions the State Government intends to take to support education and care in South Australia. These policy directions statements aim to engage school communities in discussions with the Minister for Education and Child Development and with public education system leaders to improve opportunities for every child.

To support the policy directions papers and to further open channels for community engagement, DECD has, together with the South Australian Department of the Premier and Cabinet, contributed to the 'Have Your Say' website. This is an interactive space where community members can take part in online consultations about State Government initiatives. DECD has asked the community to share their thoughts on a range of parenting, education and family related topics by visiting a website and posting comments at www.everychild.sa.gov.au.

Working relationships with the Department also foster family engagement. The recently agreed memorandum of understanding between the Minister for Education and Child Development and the Local Government Association of South Australia includes *'developing child-friendly and child-inclusive consultation and engagement mechanisms on major policies and strategies'*...further, *"The Parties will consider the needs of children, parents and families who traditionally have difficulty in accessing services, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, children with additional needs, children from disadvantaged households, new arrival families, grandparents and carers with primary care responsibility for children, and fathers.'*

Services established by DECD integrate family engagement as a core component of service delivery. As an example the South Australian State Government is establishing 34 children's centres for early childhood development and parenting to provide easy access to family support, child care, education and health services for children from birth to eight years and their families. These centres are staffed by multidisciplinary teams including community development and family services co-ordinators. Community development coordinators focus on building community capacity as an integral part of the children's centre model. Community development coordinators are appointed at each children's centre to develop partnerships within the community and other agencies, and to support parents and families to actively participate in all the activities of the children's centre. Family services coordinators provide support to targeted children's centres to improve outcomes for children and families experiencing disadvantage, parenting difficulties and child development issues.

(d) the adequacy of tools available for teachers to create and maintain an optimal learning environment;

DECD works to ensure that its teachers have the tools necessary to provide optimal learning environments for students.

One example of South Australian contemporary practice in this area is the *Teaching for Effective Learning (TfEL) framework* and resources. This South Australian framework is central to this State's implementation of the newly released Australian Curriculum R-10, which is part of the national reform agenda. *TfEL* articulates the State policy position of the pedagogy ('the how') for Australian Curriculum implementation ('the what').

It is widely recognised that the quality of student learning is directly influenced by the teacher's pedagogy, or blend of theoretical understanding and practical skill that informs their style of instruction. Pedagogy has a direct impact on learner engagement and lifelong learner identity, which plays a large role in a student's social and educational successes later in life. The *TfEL* framework has a dual focus:

- a) *The role of school leaders in creating the professional learning community of teachers in which they collectively develop their teaching and learning classroom practice towards a whole school approach.*
- b) *The role of teachers in creating learning environments which intentionally support, challenge and engage learners.*

The Smarter Schools Low SES School Communities National Partnership SA *TfEL* research project is researching the relationship between teachers' pedagogy, learner engagement and achievement and is creating significant interest from the University of Bristol in the UK, through Professor Ruth Deakin-Crick. The research findings to date have provided critical insights into patterns of pedagogy across low-SES schools, and are helping to shape future professional learning programs with schools across the State.

Currently the *TfEL* team is explicitly working towards '*TfEL* in every classroom'. This will occur through continuing the work with school leaders through all South Australian school regions and conducting extensive learning programs for all educators in the government school system to ensure all are competent users of the SA *TfEL* as a basis for their professional learning programs with schools.

The South Australian Literacy Secretariat was established in 2009 to support a focused approach to literacy improvement for South Australian public education students from birth to Year 12. The Secretariat utilises findings from educational research and successful practice to inform policy, programs and materials development. A range of resources and programs now exist to enable regions, site leaders and teaching staff to support every child achieve their potential.

The reform aims to ensure that:

- ***Every child and student*** has an effective pathway for their literacy learning which reflects high expectations for achievement.
- ***Every educator*** is provided with the knowledge, skills and expertise to provide high quality literacy teaching and learning programs. This work will be supported by focussed professional development and central and regional support.
- ***Every leader*** will develop an evidence based, whole-site approach to literacy teaching and learning, with effective processes in place to collect and analyse achievement data to inform teaching programs, site directions, and identification of resources and intervention strategies to respond to the diverse literacy needs of individual children and students.
- ***Every site*** is engaged in partnerships with families and communities to maximise literacy achievement and support for children and students as they progress from early childhood to primary and secondary school and beyond.

The Literacy Secretariat supports a Literacy Leaders Network which has approximately 900 members. Further information can be found at:

<http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/literacy/pages/Home/38015/>

Numeracy and Literacy Strategy

In the context of our new department, we have a new opportunity to develop a *numeracy and literacy strategy* that supports teachers and encompasses the 'whole child' as each young person develops and learns. Therefore a new strategy for improving numeracy and literacy for children and young people from birth to 18 was released by the Minister for Education and Child Development for consultation.

Following community discussion and contributions, the new *Numeracy and Literacy – Birth to 18 Strategy* will be introduced in preschools, schools and the wider community from the 2013 school year.

(e) factors influencing the selection, training, professional development, career progression and retention of teachers in the Australian education system;

The South Australian Government recognises the vital role that teachers play in helping children unlock their talents and creativity. The Department for Education and Child Development has been working to lift the status and community recognition of teachers and their profession by:

- promoting the profession of teaching through a teacher recruitment campaign that seeks to bring out the best and brightest to pursue a teaching career.
- adopting new professional standards for teachers. Like other professionals teachers are entitled to have a set of standards that help to elevate and communicate the complexity of their roles, and which provide teachers with a reliable point of reference for reflecting on professional practice.
- implementation of the national certification of highly accomplished and lead teachers.
- establishing a new South Australian Public Teaching Awards scheme to recognise and honour the best of our outstanding teachers.

School Principals have gained a stronger say in selecting staff that best suit their schools' needs. Our government school principals now have the freedom to recruit staff to suit their school's circumstances. In 2011 DECD implemented a new recruitment and selection policy that provides principals with increased autonomy in vacancy management and staff appointment processes. The State Government has undertaken a significant departmental review of the education workforce and policies to develop a comprehensive new recruitment strategy to renew, refresh and reform our education workforce. The new strategy, amongst other things, will increase local school authority and responsibility for recruiting local teachers on the basis of open advertisement and merit.

Up to October 2010, South Australia recognised and rewarded quality teachers through the advanced skills teacher classifications (AST1 and AST2). In 2010, the AST1 classification was replaced with the competency based Step 9 increment. The new Step 9 teacher increment requires a teacher and their principal to enter into an agreed performance development plan that is reviewed annually. The momentum created by this new recognition of quality teachers enables the building of a strong culture of development and assists with career progression throughout an individual's career.

South Australia is working with universities and teachers to address teacher training. A Teacher Education Taskforce is examining ways to improve the quality of teacher training and practical placements, as well as addressing how best we can meet teaching supply and demand. There have been five new 'School Centres of Excellence' established to help final year pre-service teachers gain practical experience in the classroom. This initiative also includes extra practical teaching placements in schools that have traditionally been difficult

to staff. The student teachers are assisted by experienced supervising teachers. DECD is working to support practising teachers and quality teaching through initiatives such as:

- the Primary Mathematics and Science Strategy, in which all primary school teachers are being trained in new ways to teach maths and science.
- the Teaching for Effective Learning framework (TfEL) described earlier, by gathering the best evidence we have about what works.
- the provision of literacy and numeracy coaches to schools to help teachers develop improved teaching practices and achieve better results for students.

An annual awards scheme continues to be supported by the State Government and *The Advertiser* newspaper to celebrate the valuable contributions of dedicated and effective teachers, education leaders and support staff in schools and preschools. Mechanisms to strengthen relationships with teachers have commenced.

(f) other related matters

In October 2011 a new department 'The South Australian Department for Education and Child Development' was formed which included the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services and most of Families SA as well as, through delegation, 400 staff from the Primary and Population Health area in the South Australian Women's and Children's Local Health Network. This brought together education, care, child protection and areas of child health to:

- provide quality care and education so that every young person has the opportunity to be a successful learner, a confident and creative individual, and an active and informed citizen.
- build the capacity of families to provide safe and nurturing environments for children and young people.
- work closely with our partners in the community to ensure the wellbeing, safeguarding and healthy development of children and young people.

The creation of the new department has provided an unprecedented opportunity to fundamentally reform the way that services are designed and delivered to children, young people and families across the State. The new department works to ensure that children and young people are at the centre of services which support their health, development, education and safety. A fundamental desired outcome is to support teaching, learning and the wellbeing of children and their families and carers.