

Department of Education

EARLY YEARS AND SCHOOLS

GPO Box 169, Hobart, TAS 7001 Australia



15 November 2012

Committee Secretary
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committees
PO Box 6100
Parliament House Canberra
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

Senate Inquiry: Teaching and Learning – Maximising Our Investment in Australian Schools

Please find attached the Tasmanian Department of Education's submission to the above enquiry.

Submission to the Senate Inquiry on Teaching and Learning

maximising our investment in Australian Schools

Department of Education – Tasmania

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

Building 'learning cultures' in schools is fundamental to school improvement, improved practice and for children to realise their potential. Through whole-school ownership of school improvement plans, and student performance, it is becoming increasingly evident that school data is being used more effectively and is now integral to school improvement.

The move to creating 'learning communities' provides the opportunity for teachers to plan and work co-operatively, share resources, discuss individual students, reflect on the data available and observe and review their practice.

It is the combination of a wide range of system initiatives, school planning and programs and individual practice that is assisting children reach their potential.

In Tasmania, the Department of Education, Launching into Learning (LiL), Raising the Bar Closing the Gap (RTBCTG) primary, RTBCTG 7Up, RTBCTG maana and Next Steps are contributing to our strategic vision and assisting schools and classroom teachers to ensure all students are provided with learning opportunities to improve their learning outcomes and reach their potential. In 2013, the department will provide further support to schools and to classroom teachers in five key areas: Australian curriculum, literacy, numeracy, attendance and student behaviour. These key areas of support will provide a strong platform for classroom teachers to ensure all learners are successful and reach their potential.

Through conducting statewide professional learning and moderation days, teachers are improving their understanding of the Australian Curriculum, developing consistency in their judgement and focusing on the use of student generated data and work to inform planning and task design. When this is done in a collaborative and supportive manner teacher engagement increases and as a result student learning outcomes are improved.

The Department is focused on school improvement and in assisting and supporting schools. The focus on a 'whole school approach' brings high degrees of collaboration and community engagement in assisting teachers implement classroom practices that will improve the outcomes for all students.

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

A central focus for the Department of Education has been the development of the strategic plan: *Learners, first, connected and inspired 2012–2015*. The Strategic Plan clearly articulates the department's vision and seeks '*to provide every Tasmanian with the opportunity to continue to learn and reach their potential to lead fulfilling and productive lives and to contribute positively to the community*'. The department has supported this vision through the formation and development of the *Measuring Progress* document which provides schools with clear targets for improvement.

From 2012, Tasmania has undertaken an innovative reform guided by the Department's Strategic Plan. Four Learning Services have been reduced to three and eleven networks of schools have been established. The network structure supports school and system improvement, improved student learning outcomes and reform. Each of these networks is supported by a *Principal Network Leader* (PNL) whose role is to support the school principal with a focus on school improvement and accountability. The PNL role focuses on improving the performance of all schools by building the capacity of principals to lead and manage and to improve the quality of educational programs and the performance of all students.

In 2012 the continuing professional learning of all department staff became the responsibility of the *Professional Learning Institute*. With a 2011-12 budget of \$1.7 million, the Institute has initially been offering programs primarily aimed at school based leadership roles. It provides programs that support aspiring, newly appointed and experienced leaders as well as programs that equip leaders with the skills to manage and encourage innovation and continuous improvement.

PLI staff work closely with Literacy and Numeracy Lead Teachers and coordinators of the department's Literacy and Numeracy Framework to ensure that teachers access quality professional learning to support their teaching of literacy and numeracy in the classroom.

The Principals' Leadership Development Program conducted by the Department of Education is specifically designed for newly appointed principals in schools. The program also engages School

Executive Officers, who support the principal in managing the resources of the school. The aim of the Induction Program is to ensure that newly appointed principals, both experienced and non-experienced, develop an understanding of and are better supported to implement the department's mission to provide every Tasmanian with the opportunity to continue to learn and reach their potential to lead fulfilling and productive lives and to contribute positively to the community.

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

Families are the first and the long-term educators of their children. It is through families that children develop their core values and beliefs. In many cases where learning is valued and supported at home and there is a high level of expectation, children bring these values, beliefs and expectations to school and to their learning.

The engagement, support and assistance to families, particularly those from disadvantaged (disaffected) backgrounds, to break down barriers about schooling are crucial for both parents and children. Where there has been a history of family disinterest and negativity to education and schools in particular, all levels of government have a responsibility to provide opportunities to create a 'new picture' of school and provide hope and support for families to re-engage with learning. Without this, many children could become a third or fourth generation of disaffected learners.

Through the establishment of Children and Family Centres (CFCs) and the introduction of the Launching into Learning initiative, the Department of Education, through both State and Federal funding, is making a concerted effort to engage families early in the educational process. An example of the work being undertaken to further engage families is the Family Partnerships Training offered through the CFCs. The provision of 15 hours Kindergarten is another opportunity for families and schools to connect, build relationships and begin the journey of learning in a positive and supportive environment.

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

The Department's Literacy and Numeracy Framework introduced in 2012 supports improved student outcomes in literacy and numeracy. Based on the Framework, every school has an explicit literacy and numeracy strategy as part of their school improvement plan so that every child's literacy

and numeracy learning needs can be supported. An intention of the Framework is to develop inspiring leaders within networks to enhance literacy and numeracy teaching. To this end, the department has initiated a Lead School/Lead Teacher strategy. Network Lead Teachers, based in each Lead School provide leadership, direction and high level support to all principals and schools across the network in the implementation of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework.

The NAPLAN Toolkit, a resource for classroom teachers, has been developed by the Department of Education. It allows classroom teachers to view, sort and analyse students' NAPLAN data and to access links to relevant teaching strategies to support improved student performance.

The NAPLAN Toolkit aligns closely with department's Literacy and Numeracy Framework (2012 – 2015) which emphasises the importance of evidence-based teaching and learning programs to address individual student needs; recognises the need for support for educators to ensure they are equipped with skills and resources for effective literacy and numeracy teaching; and, aims to increase the proportion of students achieving expected literacy and numeracy outcomes in national testing. The Toolkit was introduced into Tasmanian government schools in April 2012.

The NAPLAN Toolkit:

- is designed to assist in the identification of individual, group and class needs.
- supports teachers to strengthen the link between student data analysis and curriculum strategies that will lead to improved student performance.
- is part of the comprehensive suite of resources that teachers already use to develop targeted interventions that support student learning.

The development of the Toolkit is the first part of a broader range of strategies to support teachers and to raise Tasmanian students' literacy and numeracy achievement. The Supporting Better Behaviour Resource Package, Literacy and Numeracy Resource Package and work in the area of retention and transition will further assist teachers in setting a learning environment that focuses on providing the best opportunities for students to succeed.

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

A key challenge for education systems around the nation is how to attract to teaching people with:

- a high degree of literacy and numeracy
- a passion for learning
- an ability to form relationships
- outstanding communication skills
- a core set of values that align with schools
- a capacity to work as part of a team
- high degrees of flexibility, initiative and innovation
- patience
- a willingness to work in conditions that may be isolated, rural, remote, difficult or poorly equipped.

Critically, when a person with the skills and qualities mentioned above, chooses to become a teacher, how do we as a system prepare them for their professional life? It will be during this time and the first few years of teaching that will decide how well we have chosen, how well we have prepared, how well we have supported and mentored and if they will remain in the profession.

In Tasmania, the Partnerships in Teaching Excellence (PiTE) Scholarships program currently operates in eight School Centres of Excellence. A small number of selected Bachelor of Education (B Ed) pre-service teachers along with a larger Masters of Teaching (M Teach) cohort are involved. Disadvantaged and hard to staff schools are selected as Centres of Excellence. The program provides a teacher education pathway with more school-based experience for those seeking a teaching career in Tasmanian government schools.

A strong focus on professional learning including, 'tribes', Literacy and ICT is part of a week-long induction process. The establishment of key relationships with schools, colleague and mentor teachers is a major feature of the program. However, it is the one day per week in their allocated school, along with their scheduled school experience that gives the pre-service teachers involved the critical learning about teaching.

The retention of our brightest and best teachers is dependent upon a number of factors including;

- selecting the 'right' people in the first instance
 - establishing a strong, working relationship and partnership with the University of Tasmania to ensure our 'newest' teachers are developing their knowledge, skills and understanding not only in broad terms but also in line with the department's Strategic Plan
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- focusing on collaborative practices with school leaders to , in turn, reflect these practices in their schools
 - providing support through appropriate programs such as PiTE
 - reducing the workload of teachers in their first few years of teaching through, for example, the Beginning Teacher Time Release (BeTTR) Program
 - fostering of professional networks to support beginning teachers
 - establishing a review and performance process, aligned with the AITSL National Professional Standards for Teachers, which focusses on improved practice and the understanding of children and learning
 - providing appropriate professional learning through the Professional Learning Institute (PLI), with a key focus in the first few years on teaching and learning, assessment and reporting and establishing and maintain a supportive school environment
 - having a salary system that is 'competitive' with other highly skilled professions
 - developing a long term career path for those highly skilled teachers who wish to remain in the classroom
 - developing our future leaders with a focus on professional development on leadership and change; leading others and aligning school- based practices with the DOE Strategic Plan
 - ensuring that schools are equipped and maintained at appropriate levels
 - balancing workload and out of school life.
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