

Chapter 9

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Schooling for all students in South Australia is enhanced by the valued tradition of cooperation between the three schooling sectors and collaboration on a range of projects designed to improve learning outcomes for students, such as the cross-sectoral two-year national literacy project. Education at primary and secondary levels is available at government, Catholic and independent schools. Enrolment at school is compulsory for children aged 6–15 years.

Overview

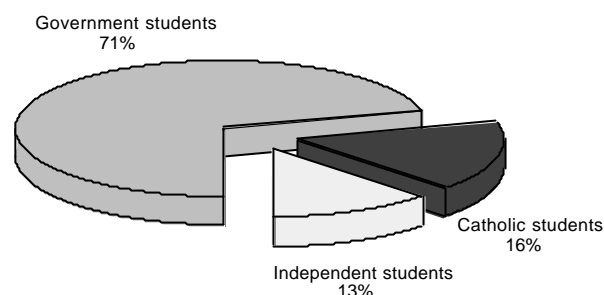
Government sector

The Department of Education, Training and Employment was established in October, 1997 and incorporates the functions of the former Department for Education and Children's Services and the Department of Employment, Training and Further Education. For the first time in this State, responsibility for children's services, schooling, vocational education and training (VET), employment and youth services is united in one integrated government agency.

The department's mission is to provide high-quality learning, teaching, care, employment and youth services within an integrated, responsive and supportive learning organisation which strives for continuous improvement in service and performance. It upholds the values of trust, excellence, respect, honesty, caring, integrity, fairness and responsibility in all that it does. Its work is underpinned by its commitment to the following principles:

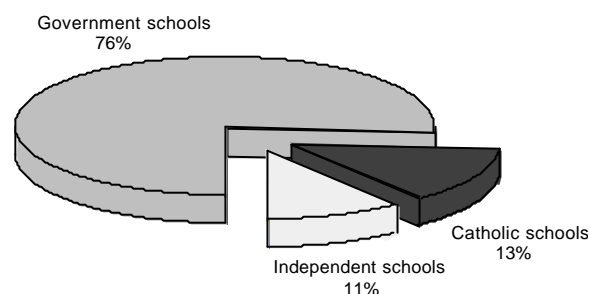
- a constant focus on quality, standards, continuous improvement and performance
- equity and access
- accountability
- partnerships
- responsiveness, innovation and competitiveness.

Figure 9.1 Students in South Australian schools, 1998



Source: South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment

Figure 9.2 Schools in South Australia, 1998

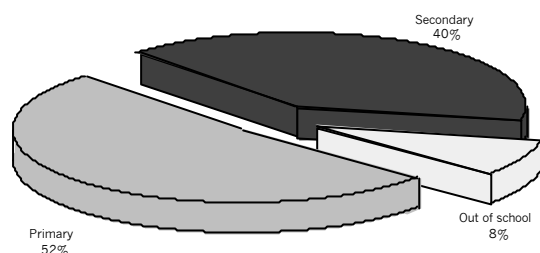


Source: South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment

The department's strategic plan was published in August, marking the beginning of a continuous process of strategic planning, strategic thinking and strategic management. The Plan for Aboriginal Education 1999–2003, and the Plan for Languages other than English 1998–2007 are in the final stages of consultation and will be implemented early in 1999.

The quality of the department's services is widely recognised: it is frequently visited by interstate and international delegations seeking to adapt its programs and services to their own environments and its students, educators, trainers and service providers win national and international recognition for excellence and innovation.

Figure 9.3 Expenditure by State government on government schools, SA, 1997–98



Source: South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment

Catholic sector

The South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools (SACCS) establishes the overall policies for South Australian Catholic schools. Most of the 108 schools are diocesan-governed, with the remainder being governed through an order. Nearly all of the schools are systemically funded through SACCS.

Catholic schools seek to provide a faith environment that supports parents as primary educators and assists in the whole development of each student as a unique human being.

Independent sector

The independent schools sector comprises 89 schools and includes schools with quite diverse educational philosophies and associated programs. Its enrolments, primary and secondary, total 32,080 students. Within this cohort Indigenous students and students from language backgrounds other than English total 1,276 while 1,576 are in the special needs category and 6,670 are eligible for the School Card.

Seventy per cent of schools are in Commonwealth funding categories 9–12, 12 per cent in 4–8, and 18 per cent in 1–3. These figures reinforce the point that large numbers of families associated with independent schools are in lower socioeconomic strata. Approximately 25 per cent of families in the independent school sector are on or below the average weekly wage.

The sector is a network rather than a system of schools, with each conducting its educational services independently. At the same time it is represented by the Independent Schools Board in respect of State and Commonwealth initiatives and policies in education. Its objectives are to provide South Australian families with genuine choice and, through high-quality programs, to cater for the full spectrum of students: students from language backgrounds other than English, Indigenous

students, gifted and talented students, students with intellectual and physical disabilities and those whose needs are met through mainstream academic courses. Most of its schools are linked to religious organisations which aim to provide school contexts that enable students to experience moral and spiritual development.

Major developments

Government sector

A Ministerial Working Party on Local Management investigated possible models for local management in South Australia. The report from the Working Party was presented to the Minister for his consideration in December 1998.

In November 1998, a Country (Schools and Children's Services) directorate within the Department of Education, Training and Employment was formed to enable country communities to have direct input into the development of better, more timely and more responsive services to country schools and children's services.

One of the foremost objectives for the Department of Education, Training and Employment is to raise standards in student attainment to ensure world-class performance in student learning. A number of monitoring programs were implemented in 1998:

- Ninety-six per cent of years 3 and 5 students sat the Basic Skills Test. The government provided \$2 million in 1998 for programs to help students identified by the tests as experiencing learning difficulties.
- Sample data on student achievement was collected from one-third of students in 1997 and 1998. The data is being used to establish benchmarks in the eight key learning areas (KLAs) for students in Reception to year 10.
- Teachers have been assessing children's early literacy and numeracy skills in their first year of school in a trial school entry assessment program.

Additional resources of \$1.5 million per year were allocated to implement a ten-year Plan for Languages Education. The plan covers professional development, retraining of teachers in languages, greater use of technology, development of multimedia materials, teaching of Indigenous languages, development of standards, establishment of focus schools and the expansion of language offerings through the Open Access College and the South Australian School of Languages.

The department is committed to maximising the use of technology to amplify, extend and transform learning throughout the organisation by providing training, infrastructure, hardware and software, and computer access for every student.

The five-year \$75 million DECStech 2001 strategy proceeded on target. The DECStech Computer Subsidy Scheme began in 1997 and by the end of 1998, 75 per cent of funds (\$12 million of \$16 million) had been made available to schools. A total of 10,800 computers have been delivered through the scheme. Higher levels of subsidy are available for schools with large numbers of School Card students.

The major focus of DECStech is to improve student learning outcomes by connecting schools to the Internet, to each other and to other department sites, and by linking classrooms, administration areas and resource centres within each school. Funds have been allocated to a three-year DECStech Learning Technologies Project which aims to:

- measure changes in student learning outcomes attributable to the use of learning technologies across the full spectrum of learning areas
- implement professional development that addresses pedagogy, teacher methods, learning outcomes and whole-of-school issues
- develop resource materials to improve the uptake and effective use of learning technologies and learning programs in schools.

In 1998, an additional \$10.6 million was made available for the Computers Plus initiative cash grants to schools for desktop and notebook computers, printers, modems, curriculum software and upgrades, virus protection, access to the Internet and furniture and computing facilities.

A total of \$5 million over 1997–98 was distributed to schools for training and development in information technology. Courses have been provided for information technology coordinators in collaboration with the University of South Australia.

As part of their annual reporting process South Australian government schools were surveyed about the impact of the DECStech training and development grants to schools. The report on the 1998 survey revealed the following trends:

- In the skill-based areas of basic computer operation and word processing, 63 per cent of schools indicated that the majority of staff are highly skilled in basic computer operation and 57 per cent indicated that the majority are

highly skilled in word processing. Responses indicated that expectations of what constitutes basic competence in these areas has increased markedly during the period surveyed.

- Outstanding results were seen in the area of integration, which is considered to be the key area in which the impact of information and communication technologies on student learning needs to be measured. Eighty-six per cent of schools now indicate that the majority of staff are operating at the highest level.
- In relation to the Internet, 51 per cent of schools indicated that the majority of staff are operating at a higher level than in 1997 in that they are able to ‘make profitable use of web searching software and lists of Internet resources to explore educational resources’. Fifty-six per cent indicated that staff are high-level users of email. These areas are significant since competence in using the Internet and telecommunications is integral to successful integration of learning and information technologies into student learning. Levels of expertise in use of the Internet and telecommunications are expected to improve further when schools have access to faster and higher quality telecommunications services in 1999.

Catholic sector

There were a number of significant developments in Catholic education in South Australia:

- the provision by each school with primary classes of a key literacy teacher with release time to assist in whole-school literacy development
- the launch of the Languages and the Education of Gifted and Talented Students policies
- the development of the *Curriculum Resources Folders* and *Finance Manual* to guide schools in curriculum and financial implementation
- the provision of \$250,000 for assistance with fees and/or study leave for school staff undertaking further studies, particularly in literacy
- the further development of financial and facilities planning
- the establishment of consultative mechanisms at school- and system-level to further teachers’ work and related professional issues.

Independent sector

Major developments for the period were:

- a 100 per cent increase in the number of students participating in VET programs
- significant work on early literacy programs and early intervention
- widespread involvement in Access Asia and intensive professional development in languages through seminars and network groups
- in the context of the National Literacy Project, participation of 82 teachers representing 42 schools in professional development that gives support for teachers and schools to extend the repertoires of effective assessment techniques to enable a more precise profile of student needs and abilities to be generated
- the coordination of an independent school sector response to the draft National Drugs Education Strategy
- excellent work with Indigenous students through the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme (IESIP), the Vocational Education and Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme (VEGAS) and the English as a Second Language – Indigenous Language Speaking Students (ESL–ILSS) initiative with large-scale student and staff participation.

The 1998 focus areas

South Australia successfully tendered for a two-year national literacy project designed to support the national literacy goals. The project is a collaborative undertaking between the Department of Education, Training and Employment, Catholic education, and the Independent Schools Board.

The objectives of the project are to assist Reception to year 5 teachers to accurately identify and respond to students' literacy and numeracy learning needs and assess students' progress against the benchmarks.

In 1998, the project focussed on:

- effective assessment techniques to enable more precise identification of students' needs and abilities
- developing teachers' capacity to adapt their teaching to be more responsive to students' identified needs and abilities
- teaching and assessment, tying literacy and numeracy assessment to explicit teaching and addressing students' needs

- using literacy and numeracy benchmarks.

Government sector

Literacy and numeracy

In South Australian government schools a focus on literacy and numeracy was maintained:

- Over \$4 million was distributed to schools and preschools as Early Assistance grants to help children at risk in their literacy and numeracy learning. Programs focussed on listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing through play, explicit teaching, phonics and integration of literacy across all the learning areas.
- A total of \$300,000 was allocated to the Reading Recovery program, an intensive reading program for year 1 students experiencing significant reading difficulties.
- Language and literacy courses were conducted in conjunction with the Catholic Education Office.
- The Basic Skills Test was conducted for students in years 3 and 5.
- A Writing Assessment was developed and trialled.
- Making the Links – Numeracy professional development training was delivered.
- A years 3–10 numeracy action research project in five schools was assisted.
- A numeracy reference group and numeracy discussion groups were established.
- A School Entry Assessment program was trialled to assess literacy and numeracy skills of children in their first year of school.



A South Australian government high school chamber music ensemble.

Civics and citizenship education

The Civics and Citizenship project in South Australia has enabled preschools and schools to develop models for effective

programs that are sensitive to the needs of the community and all students, and that address issues of educational disadvantage and social justice in teaching skills and understandings. It is aimed at improved student learning outcomes through active participation in classroom, school and preschool activities and learning programs. Teachers were also encouraged to review their skills and implement models for civics and citizenship education across the curriculum.

The department planned to develop and implement a program by the year 2000 that will be consistent with national developments and incorporates:

- a discussion paper (published November 1998)
- a core curriculum overview embedded in studies of society and environment
- publication of materials linking civics and citizenship with other learning and cross-curriculum areas
- collaboration with the Commonwealth, States and Territories, other sectors, professional associations and organisations to identify common components in civics and citizenship education programs and to develop and produce curriculum, materials and professional development programs
- support for the formation and coordination of student forums, including Constitutional Centenary Foundation School Conventions, on issues where a student voice is required
- liaison with tertiary institutions to ensure that pre-service teachers receive training in the teaching of appropriate knowledge, understandings, concepts, skills and values
- research with the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia and tertiary institutions.

The arts

The department continued to provide substantial funding and personnel support for the preparation and delivery of specific arts programs, including:

- the Come Out Festival
- Artists-in-Schools
- Musica Viva in Schools
- the New Rock Generation project (as part of AusMusic).



Smiling young artists in a South Australian government primary school.

Several new resources to support the teaching of the arts were made available to schools, including:

- *The Arts on CD-ROM*, a multimedia database of work samples in the arts
- *The Arts Teacher Classroom Guides: Early Years to Secondary*
- *Integrating the Arts: Twelve School-based Experiences*
- *The Arts: The Heart of Cultures: Teaching for Cultural Inclusivity*
- *Media Lab: A Media Studies Program for Junior and Lower Primary teachers*
- *Aboriginal Artists in South Australia*
- *Making Verona*, a video print resource supporting physical theatre.
- *Curriculum Digest* resource paper, a leadership document in the arts provided direction for curriculum leaders in schools for the planning and delivery of arts curriculum.

Vocational education in schools

Three important 1998 initiatives will provide more flexible pathways for senior secondary students and increase participation, retention, training and further education and employment opportunities:

- The \$11.8 million Ready, Set, Go program increased students' participation in VET programs from 2,417 students in 1997 to 8,907 students in 1998 – a 269 per cent increase.
- A new vocational college was planned. The college will work in association with a TAFE institute to provide general and specialised learning programs within the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE).

- Major construction works progressed on a new \$17 million Education Centre which will bring together a broad range of secondary and TAFE curriculum offerings.

The other key learning areas

The on-line publication *Pathways for Planning and Programming* was developed in each of the eight KLAs, including scopes and sequences in the arts, English, health and physical education, languages other than English (LOTE), mathematics, science, studies of society and environment, and technology.

The implementation of the statements and profiles was supported with a range of print and multimedia resources. Quality Assessment Tasks across the eight KLAs and encompassing all the bands were developed by teachers in South Australia and Tasmania to ensure greater levels of consistency of teacher judgement.

A school reporting software package was trialled in 50 schools for managing the recording of student achievement and reporting to parents. Learning area overviews in plain English were also produced to assist parents in understanding the scope of each KLA.

Forty-seven schools in the Cluster Curriculum Focus School Program provided training and development to teachers in one of the following areas: literacy, students with high intellectual potential, mathematics, science, technology, the arts.

Languages

There was a significant focus on teaching and learning in LOTE in 1998, which was supported by a comprehensive training and development program:

- There were 72 professional development programs for 2,300 teachers of languages, including 603 teachers of the targeted Asian languages. Programs focussed on linguistic proficiency and language pedagogy, including differentiation (catering for learner differences), *Pathways for Planning and Programming*, sociocultural understandings, LOTE and VET, and LOTE and information and communication technology.
- The Languages Retraining Program completed its second year, involving 88 teachers.
- The English as a Second Language (ESL) Review was completed.
- Twenty-two programs of the ESL in the Mainstream course were completed by teachers across the State.

- A review of teacher recruitment processes was undertaken. All other criteria being the same, preference in recruitment will be for teachers with a language other than English.

Catholic sector

Literacy and numeracy

Catholic education is implementing the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan with a position paper developed in 1998 on early years assessment. A major objective is the use of a Marie Clay observation survey in assessing all students during their fifth term of schooling. Reading Recovery is the formal intervention program in 50 per cent of Catholic schools with year 1 students. A further 21 teachers were trained in Reading Recovery during 1998.

Civics and citizenship

Civics and citizenship education was integrated in various KLAs, particularly studies of society and environment. A range of activities were undertaken in the areas of multicultural education, anti-racism, anti-discrimination, community service and parliamentary education, through the auspices of already established programs in Catholic schools. These include religious education, the study of other societies in languages programs and Indigenous studies.

The arts

The major system initiative in arts education is a three-day music festival at which both primary and secondary schools showcase their musical achievements in choral and instrumental performances for an appreciative public audience. Individual school initiatives in 1998 included Linking with Water Watch, which produced a year 5 musical showing how we should care for the environment, and combining with government schools to form a choir for the Mid-South East Music Festival. TAFE modules in VET in music were offered at years 10 and 11 and accelerated courses in music and visual arts were offered for gifted and talented students.



Children at Crossways Lutheran, Ceduna are learning about the mathematical concept of subtraction through the use of concrete materials.



Main characters of the 1998 Walford Anglican School for Girls year 6 musical production, The Wizard of Oz.

Independent sector

Literacy and numeracy

A group of schools trialled the ACER program DART (Developmental Assessment Resources for Teachers) as a tool for assessing against the literacy benchmarks. The positive response to the trial has meant this program will be available to all independent schools as part of a larger pilot program in 1999. An extensive professional development program on interpreting and understanding the benchmarks was provided for teachers and principals. Teachers participated in the development of a resource for school entry assessment of literacy and more than 50 per cent of schools are using the First Steps literacy program. Teacher professional development using the program Mathematics Learning and Teaching for Success focussed on early identification of students with numeracy difficulties.

Civics and citizenship

Three independent schools have been trialling the Discovering Democracy materials. Schools focus on multicultural studies via the study of other cultures through languages programs.

Some primary and secondary schools have developed religious units as components of this learning area and many schools have had an involvement in a range of community services. Parliamentary education in the classroom is extended through visits to Parliament and the law courts and a number of activities were undertaken at the time of the federal election, with a focus on anti-racism and anti-discrimination.

The arts

Student participation is high in music, drama and visual arts. Some schools raise the profile of the arts by staging galleries and engaging artists-in-residence to work with students on a negotiated project. Many schools are using software packages and computer-enhanced imaging to articulate school programs with industry practice in design and commercial art. Flexible initiatives between secondary and tertiary institutions have enabled students to benefit from access to special or advanced courses.

Other issues

In 1998, the Department of Education, Training and Employment continued the high-quality provision of education services to the children and students in South Australia by initiating and supporting a number of programs to improve standards of achievement for all students:

- A \$2 million per year incentive package improved the department's ability to attract and retain quality employees in country sites.
- Training and development grants totalling \$528,855 were provided to country schools.
- Access to services in rural areas was improved through a number of mechanisms, including transport assistance to country students, distance education through the Open Access College, and the Rural Student Accommodation Program.
- Educational accountability information was collected from a sample of Country Area Program schools.
- A second camp school was established at the Warradale Urban Camp Site for students from rural and remote areas.
- The Plan for Aboriginal Education 1999–2003 was developed. The majority of Aboriginal education resources and personnel will be dedicated to increasing literacy and numeracy levels of Indigenous students and developing

teachers' skills in delivering literacy and numeracy programs to Indigenous students.

- Training and development and professional support were provided for the Countering Racism Through Developing Cultural Understandings project in schools.
- Studies of Asia was supported in 157 schools, providing 15 professional development programs for 1,054 teachers and 29 teachers in Asian in-country programs.
- Thirty-three per cent of primary schools were provided with intensive training and development in physical education through the Active Schools Program.

- The department participated in a joint research project with SSABSA and the Flinders Institute for the Study of Teaching. The project seeks to identify reasons for students dropping out of school and failing to complete the SACE, and to consider strategies for increasing retention. Over 200 interviews with students who have not completed the SACE are being analysed.
- A third program for secondary students with high intellectual potential was established.