

Chapter 8

NEW SOUTH WALES

The structure and context of schooling

Schools in New South Wales operate under the provisions of the *Education Act 1990*. The Act legislates that school attendance is compulsory for all children between the ages of 6 and 15 years, although most children begin their kindergarten year when aged five. Children are required to attend a government school or a registered non-government school, or to have approval for home schooling.

The NSW Board of Studies (BOS) registers and accredits non-government schools, certifying that they may teach students and enter students for the School Certificate at year 10 and the Higher School Certificate (HSC) at year 12. The BOS sets the core curriculum for all students, issuing syllabuses to cover kindergarten to year 12.

In 1999, New South Wales had 3,087 schools and over one million students. Enrolments in 1999 increased overall by 8,036 students. The increases were in primary schools in the government and non-government sectors and in non-government secondary schools. There was a slight fall in government secondary school enrolments, although in the same period enrolments of students under 19 in training grew, with TAFENSW recording an increase of 10,441 students.

The smooth transition of students from school to work or further study was a priority for all sectors. NSW continued to have strong participation levels, with nearly 80 per cent of 15–19-year-olds being involved in either education or training.

The NSW government continued to build on its commitment to help young people to improve their lives and secure their

futures through record investments in quality education and training. The State Budget provided a record \$6,929.9 million for education and training. Total funding for schools was \$5,381.8 million, up by more than 3.6 per cent on the previous year.

Table 8.1 Schools and students in New South Wales, 1999

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Government</i>	<i>Non-government</i>
Primary schools	2,186	1,647	539
Secondary schools	539	389	150
Primary/secondary combined	247	65	182
Special schools	115	81	34
	3,087	2,182	905
Primary students	623,626	455,008	168,618
Secondary students	465,996	308,161	157,805
	1,089,592	763,169	326,423

Source: *Schools Australia*, 1999

Table 8.2 Participation 15–19-year-olds in education and training in NSW, 1997–99 (per cent)

	<i>1997</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>
Schools (government and non-government)	53.2	51.0	52.0
Tertiary	25.0	25.7	27.6
Total	78.1	76.7	79.5

Note:

- (1) Tertiary includes students in higher education, TAFE and other institutions.
- (2) Figures in the columns for 1997 to 1999 do not add due to rounding.

Source: ABS Supplementary Survey, *Transition from Education to Work* (unpublished data)

Priority objectives

Government schools

The Department of Education and Training provides high-quality education for around three-quarters of all school students in New South Wales at more than 2,200 locations throughout the State. In 1999, over 765,000 students attended NSW government schools, including preschools, primary schools, central schools, high schools, colleges and specialist schools.

The key priority of public schools was to provide children and young people with the foundations for lifelong learning so that they become literate, numerate, well-educated citizens with the capabilities and confidence to contribute positively to society.

The NSW government adopted a number of initiatives to benefit public schools. The strategic initiatives for public schools in 1999 provided a framework for systemwide planning, monitoring and reporting:

- *Laying Strong Foundations* – by improving literacy and numeracy skills; expanding vocational education and training (VET) options in schools in order to prepare young people for the world of work; developing the new School Certificate and preparing to introduce the new HSC; giving students better access to learning resources through new technologies; and encouraging participation in physical fitness activities and the creative and performing arts.
- *Building Effective Partnerships* – by supporting parental involvement in students' learning; reporting to parents about students' progress; increasing the community's understanding of schools' activities, performance and priorities; encouraging parents and community members to participate in decision-making; and making school facilities more accessible to the community.
- *Enhancing the Work of Schools* – by promoting the teaching profession and recognising quality teaching; increasing professional development in priority areas; encouraging and developing effective leadership and management in schools; and expanding the use of new technology in education and administration.
- *Giving Everyone a Fair Go* – by encouraging good discipline; promoting civic responsibility; enabling positive participation by students from all backgrounds;

helping students with special education and training needs; and assisting students in rural and isolated areas.

Catholic schools

In 1999, there were 594 Catholic schools, including seven special schools, serving more than 226,300 students.

Catholic schools, whether diocesan-administered (systemic) or congregational (non-systemic), expressed a common purpose to offer an education which fosters the growth of the human person towards full realisation of her or his total potential. This includes the dimensions of intellectual, cultural, social, physical and spiritual development and seeks to transmit a wholesome appreciation of the past and establish a value system for the young, preparing them for adult life and growth to full stature in Christ.

Particular attention is paid to assisting students in need and providing an opportunity for them to achieve confidence, self-esteem and full development of their talents. Catholic schools share actively in the evangelising mission of the Church through the structured teaching of doctrine, the integration of faith and culture in their whole curriculum and through the influence of teachers who strive to exemplify the Gospel values for their students.

The priority objectives of Catholic schools were:

- to support each school as a Catholic faith community in which practices and the school climate are conducive to ongoing faith development
- to make central to the policies and practices of each school, principles of social justice, particularly those embodied in the Church's preferential option for the poor
- to develop each student's ability to learn, to think critically and creatively and to communicate effectively
- to develop, implement and regularly evaluate curriculum in each school that is focused on the student and structured around key learning areas and their stated outcomes
- to develop in each school programs and structures which cater for students with special needs
- to develop in each school programs and structures which cater for the pastoral needs for all students
- to make provision for post-compulsory students in the context of the changing roles and relationships between secondary and tertiary education and industry.

The schools operate in two dimensions at once: as Church institutions, with religious aims and ethos, serving local communities or parishes and as registered providers of education within a framework of government laws and regulations. In effect, however, the two dimensions are complementary, providing in combination the ways and means by which students can be helped to develop as whole persons. Such is the inclusive character of Catholic education, nurturing students' spiritual development in step with their intellectual, social and physical growth.

Independent schools

There were 311 independent schools operating in NSW in 1999 with 100,024 students. The schools reported a wide variety of key objectives. Some of the main themes were:

- concentration on the development and delivery of curriculum in the key learning areas
- literacy and numeracy activities
- development of policies and procedures concerned with student welfare and behaviour
- objectives relating to the importance of effective religious development and its consequent effect and relation to everyday life
- a wide variety of curriculum, behavioural, management and administration, and cultural areas
- improved parent participation
- the expansion of vocational options in senior classes
- the development of gifted and talented programs
- the development of information technology programs.

Significant developments

Major developments across all sectors included improving the standards of literacy and numeracy, preparing teachers and school communities for the new School Certificate and HSC courses, changes to post-compulsory schooling provision and providing more computers to schools to enable students to succeed in a technological age. The NSW government conducted a major Drug Summit. NSW schools also provided strong support to the preparations for the Olympic Games.

Literacy and numeracy

NSW is leading Australia in setting standards for literacy and numeracy and monitoring student progress. The Department of Education and Training has developed a comprehensive set of standardised tests and public examinations including:

Years 3 and 5 – Basic Skills Tests in literacy and numeracy

Years 3 and 5 – Writing Assessment Program

Years 7 and 8 – ELLA (English Language and Literacy Assessment)

Year 7 – numeracy test

Year 10 – English-literacy and Mathematics in the New School Certificate

Year 12 – English in the Higher School Certificate.

About 120,000 students took part in the years 3 and 5 Basic Skills Tests in the government system and some 38,000 in Catholic and non-government schools.

Table 8.3 Basic Skills Test, 1999 skill band percentages for literacy and numeracy, all participating schools, all students

	Band	Year 3 %		Year 5 %	
		Literacy	Numeracy	Literacy	Numeracy
All students	6	n/a	n/a	21	24
	5	15	16	28	29
	4	26	27	31	26
	3	30	30	15	14
	2	19	17	4	6
	1	10	10	1	1
Boys	6	n/a	n/a	17	25
	5	13	18	26	28
	4	24	26	32	26
	3	30	29	18	14
	2	21	17	6	6
	1	12	10	1	1
Girls	6	n/a	n/a	23	23
	5	17	15	30	30
	4	29	27	30	27
	3	30	32	13	14
	2	17	17	3	5
	1	7	9	1	1

Source: NSW Department of Education and Training

Table 8.4 Basic Skills Test, 1999 skill band percentages for literacy and numeracy, all participating schools, Indigenous students

	Band	Year 3 %		Year 5 %	
		Literacy	Numeracy	Literacy	Numeracy
ATSI	6	n/a	n/a	5	6
	5	4	6	14	15
	4	13	14	31	27
	3	27	30	29	27
	2	29	26	15	18
	1	27	24	6	7
ATSI boys	6	n/a	n/a	4	6
	5	3	6	11	16
	4	12	15	29	26
	3	25	28	30	27
	2	28	26	19	18
	1	32	25	7	7
ATSI girls	6	n/a	n/a	7	6
	5	5	5	16	14
	4	15	14	32	27
	3	30	32	29	28
	2	29	26	12	18
	1	21	23	4	7

ATSI: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Source: NSW Department of Education and Training

In 1999, nationally comparable data was produced for the first time in relation to the reading skills of students in year 3 throughout Australia. Students' achievements in reading were compared to a national benchmark. The data showed that NSW had the highest percentage of year 3 students achieving the national benchmark in reading; as well as the highest percentage of male, female, and Indigenous year 3 students, and year 3 students from language backgrounds other than English.

In government schools the State Literacy and Numeracy Plan was expanded to ensure all NSW public school students acquire the basics. Schools from all sectors were extensively involved in the Professional Development Program in support of the National Plan for Literacy and Numeracy.

Schools with exceptional literacy programs were recognised during National Literacy Week in August 1999. Activities during the week included local school and community events highlighting literacy and a presentation of awards to selected schools whose creative, balanced and innovative literacy programs significantly improved students' literacy outcomes. Twelve government schools and four non-government schools received awards.

Table 8.5 Basic Skills Test, 1999 skill band percentages for literacy and numeracy, all participating schools, NESBT

	Band	Year 3 %		Year 5 %	
		Literacy	Numeracy	Literacy	Numeracy
NESBT	6	n/a	n/a	19	28
	5	13	16	25	26
	4	25	25	32	25
	3	33	30	18	14
	2	20	18	5	6
	1	9	11	1	1
NESBT boys	6	n/a	n/a	16	29
	5	11	17	23	25
	4	23	24	33	24
	3	33	30	20	15
	2	22	18	6	6
	1	11	11	2	1
NESBT girls	6	n/a	n/a	21	27
	5	15	15	28	27
	4	28	24	32	26
	3	32	31	15	14
	2	18	19	3	5
	1	7	11	1	1

NESBT: Students who answered Yes to Does anyone use a language other than English at home?

Note: While the BST shares a common scale for years 3 and 5, the year 3 scale extends only to achievement band 5.

Source: NSW Department of Education and Training

Improvements to the curriculum and to public examinations

The NSW BOS continued to focus on curriculum needs for kindergarten to year 6 in accordance with the long-term timeline specified in the 1995 Review of Profiles and Outcomes in NSW Schooling. In February 1999, the Board distributed to schools *The Human Society and its Environment K-6 Syllabus* package. The Board conducted briefing sessions for schools at locations throughout NSW. It produced information for parents in seven community languages and distributed a CD-ROM of the course and support documents to schools. Also completed during the year was the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education K-6 syllabus. More than 400 teachers in 51 workshops held across the State trialled the new draft outcomes. The Board developed the new Creative Arts K-6 syllabus to replace the Music and Visual Arts syllabuses. It conducted consultation on the draft syllabus and support documents in focus group meetings around the State.

The Linkages project continued in 1999. This initiative is aimed at addressing ways in which primary classroom activities can be designed to achieve a number of curriculum objectives and strengthen key learning skills. Work was completed during the year on mapping and publishing information about links across the curriculum, researching practices that involve the use of integrated curriculum materials, and reporting on the work being undertaken in schools. This information appears on the Board's website (<http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/>).

The implementation of the reforms to the School Certificate continued. The new School Certificate covers the foundation knowledge and skills that students need to succeed in years 11 and 12, and to take their place in the community and the workplace. The new approach to testing for the School Certificate, which was put into effect in 1998 for English-literacy and Mathematics, was extended to include a mandatory Science test in 1999. A comprehensive support document was made available to teachers to complement the new Science syllabuses for Stages 4 and 5. Trial testing of Australian History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship continued concurrently with implementation of the newly developed syllabuses for Stages 4 and 5 History and Geography. Changes to these syllabuses will ensure emphasis on the study of Australia by all students in each of years 7 to 10, and inclusion of explicit references to civics content.

A major priority during 1999 was the introduction of the HSC. Following extensive subject evaluations, a two-unit course structure was affirmed as the basic building block of the new HSC curriculum. Board-developed Stage 6 (years 11 and 12) syllabuses in all major subjects were revised following extensive consultation. A comprehensive community information strategy was undertaken in Term 2, including the distribution of printed material, placement of information on the Internet and a series of forums, seminars, meetings and focus groups involving schools and parents across the State.

Syllabuses in all major HSC subjects, including new syllabuses in English, Science, Software Design and Development, and Information Processes and Technology, were distributed to schools on schedule in July 1999. The development of the new HSC English curriculum was a key element of the HSC reforms and was aimed at raising standards and challenging all students. The syllabus includes provision for students to study up to four units of English in the HSC year. It provides a comprehensive range of courses to suit the needs and interests of all students and comprises a Standard course, an Advanced course, two new

Extension courses, a Fundamentals of English course and a new English as a Second Language course.

Seven new vocational frameworks were put in place for the development of high-quality, industry-recognised vocational education and training courses for the HSC. These are Information Technology, Tourism and Hospitality, Primary Industries, Retail, Construction, Metal and Engineering, and Business Services (Administration).

The development of a standards-referenced system of assessing and reporting student achievement progressed in preparation for the first new HSC examinations in 2001. Standards-referenced reporting will allow for clear comparisons over time between different cohorts of students. Marks will be reported, and there will be an emphasis on descriptive reporting in terms of what students know and can do. Where subjects offer differentiated courses, results will be reported on a common scale. School-based assessment practices are being redesigned in terms of range and balance to enable the outcomes in the new syllabuses to be assessed appropriately. The first students to undertake the new HSC began year 11 in 2000. Eight Life Skills courses were also developed to enable students with disabilities to undertake the HSC from 2000.

Technology

The NSW government is ensuring that education and training in this State have the most innovative, up-to-date resources and a curriculum that ensures all students have a solid foundation in computing and new technology skills. Under the Computers in Schools Program, the equivalent of 90,000 desktop computers were delivered to NSW classrooms.

Computer funding is allocated so that schools can choose, install and use computer equipment in ways that best suit their needs. Schools may choose to use their computer funding to acquire desktop and notebook computers as well as fileserver equipment and specialised peripherals for students with disabilities.

Internet usage in schools increased at a rapid rate. The Department of Education and Training's website received more than 220,000 'hits' every day and the BOS website became the nation's second most visited Australian government website, surpassed only by the Australian Taxation Office.

The use of KIDMAP software to assist the management of curriculum outcomes data was the focus of an intensive year-long pilot in a cross-section of 13 primary schools.

The provision of computers in Catholic schools is a priority but is constrained by limited resources.

Changes to post-compulsory schooling provision

Secondary schools and colleges in all sectors continued to build strong partnerships with TAFE institutes, universities and industry in order to expand the range of education, training and employment opportunities available to their students.

The Nirimba Educational campus, a cooperative venture between the government and Catholic sectors, opened in 1999 at Quakers Hill in Sydney's West. Government schools implemented the Collegiate Education Plan. The plan promotes cooperative ventures and partnerships among schools and other education providers, particularly with TAFENSW and universities, in order to broaden curriculum provision in schools and to use resources more effectively. Some school districts explored local issues concerning the provision of secondary education while others trialled collaborative arrangements involving schools, TAFENSW and universities. A range of reviews of secondary education were under way in the Northern Beaches, Central Coast and Bondi Districts. Planning was well under way for the formation of a multi-campus college at Mt Druitt, with Chifley College to commence operation at the beginning of 2000, with other colleges planned for Dubbo, Forster/Tuncurry and Oatley.

The provision of VET for school students has expanded rapidly over the past five years. In 1999, approximately one in three students in years 11 and 12 undertook some VET study. Growth is projected to continue with the introduction of the seven Industry Curriculum Frameworks in the new HSC.

Drug Summit

The NSW Drug Summit took place in May at Parliament House. It brought together drug experts, families, representatives of interest groups, community leaders and politicians to examine existing approaches to the drug problem and provide a launching pad for the way forward. The communique from the summit called upon all government, Catholic and independent schools to recognise and act upon their potential for the provision of information and education programs on drugs.

Sydney 2000 Olympics

The Olympics 2000 Schools Strategy is a joint initiative with the Australian Olympic Committee and the Sydney

Organising Committee for the Olympic Games. It provided students in government and non-government schools with the opportunity to be involved in the Sydney Olympic and Paralympic Games through education programs and special strategies which further the Olympic ideals.

Students participated in Australian Olympic Arts Festival events in the USA, Europe, the United Kingdom and Japan. A total of 280 students were selected and trained for the NSW component of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Band and around 16,000 students applied to audition for performances in the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Around 6,000 student dancers and 2,500 student vocalists will be selected to perform in the Olympic and Paralympic ceremonies in 2000. In addition, around 400 teacher volunteers will be involved with the Olympic and Paralympic performances.

As part of the Olympic 2000 Schools Strategy, an Olympic resource kit was developed to promote physical activity in primary schools. This resource, titled *The Aussie Frog Challenge K-6*, provides students with a fun-filled activity program reflecting Olympic ideals and concern for environmental issues.

A national Olympic education kit, *Aspire*, which was distributed to all primary and secondary schools in Australia. The kit provides every student with the opportunity to learn about the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games via a sophisticated, interactive CD-ROM. It provides virtual reality self-learning activities for students, and ideas for teachers on how to incorporate Olympic themes in the curriculum.

Professional development and teacher education

Professional development

All school systems participated with the NSW Board of Studies in a major professional development strategy to assist teachers in implementing the new HSC. Sessions were carried out across the State throughout Terms 3 and 4. The government allocated some \$30 million to this activity for government and non-government schools. Over 30,000 teachers attending 730 workshops were helped to fully understand the new courses and the new approach to assessment and reporting.

The department provided the equivalent of \$114 million to support the development in government schools of a highly skilled and flexible workforce committed to high standards of performance and quality of service. The

department provided professional development opportunities for school teachers through multi-phased and tertiary-accredited programs, short courses, workplace learning, sponsorships and increasingly, on-line delivery. The department conducted major professional development strategies in literacy and numeracy, technology in teaching and learning, VET and the introduction of the new HSC. Details of the strategies are available at www.tdd.nsw.edu.au/tdd/.

Catholic schools provided induction courses for new employees. In-service training was provided on curriculum areas and government initiatives in post-compulsory schooling and vocational education. Personal development activities included in-service training on performance appraisal requirements and on leadership. Schools and systems established cooperative arrangements with tertiary institutions and other education sectors in the presentation and accreditation of professional development courses.

The majority of independent schools provided executive professional development. Activities included conferences, association meetings and seminars, meetings or courses associated with leadership training, and courses concerned with new financial arrangements. Support staff training was principally associated with information technology, first aid training or occupational health and safety matters.

Teacher education

The Minister for Education and Training, the Hon. John Aquilina, MP, announced a wide-ranging review of teacher education in June 1999. Dr Gregor Ramsey was appointed by the Minister to undertake this review. The outcomes of the review will ensure that teacher education prepares people to become teachers who can meet the needs of today's students, schools and the community.

The review will look at how effectively universities are preparing education graduates for the classroom. It will examine the quality of the training offered to students preparing to become teachers and the quality of the professional development that is provided to those already teaching. The review will also look at how to better prepare new teachers to work with syllabuses; how to assist new teachers to manage students, particularly in the area of classroom discipline; the effectiveness of practice teaching; and the development of stronger collaboration between universities and schools.

An Internet website (<http://www.det.nsw.edu.au/teachrev/>) offers teachers and members of the community the opportunity to respond on-line to the review. Dr Ramsey

has committed to an extensive schedule of meetings with universities, teachers' employers, teachers' unions and professional bodies, parent and community organisations, business and industry leaders, as well as teachers and students. Around 150 submissions have been received and Dr Ramsey will report in mid-2000.

Commonwealth-funded capital projects

Government sector

In 1999, the Commonwealth provided \$75.230 million towards capital projects in NSW. Of the 31 capital projects funded by the Commonwealth and completed both physically and financially during 1999, the most common types of work undertaken and facilities provided were the construction of new primary and secondary schools in growth areas; upgrading of existing facilities; and provision of halls, gymnasiums, libraries or additional classrooms and specialist facilities in existing schools where the facilities met a priority need.

Catholic sector

In 1999, the Commonwealth provided \$21.5 million towards building projects in NSW Catholic schools. Of the 20 projects funded by the Commonwealth and completed both physically and financially in 1999, the most common types of work were the provision of classrooms and specialist facilities for new primary and secondary schools in population growth areas; the upgrading and refurbishment of older secondary schools to meet current curriculum requirements; the provision of libraries in primary schools; the upgrading of small rural schools, particularly the provision of staff and student facilities and the extension of junior secondary schools to senior secondary.

Independent sector

In 1999, the Commonwealth provided \$6.9 million towards capital projects in the NSW independent sector. Of the 29 capital projects funded by the Commonwealth and completed both physically and financially during 1999, the most common type of work undertaken and facilities provided were the construction of classrooms, science laboratories and technical facilities. Two-thirds of the facilities constructed catered for existing student needs while the remaining one-third was for new student places.

