



PORTFOLIO REPORTS - STATE COUNCIL

DISTANCE EDUCATION, SOTA AND CURRICULUM REPORT

Jane Hughes – Portfolio Holder, March 2024

EDUCATION INVESTMENT

The McGowan Labor Government announced on 11th May 2023 that the 2023-24 State budget would include a \$6.4 billion allocation for education, with a total of \$24.3 million committed to supporting improvements to the current Version 9 Western Australian Curriculum and the development of resources to support teachers in the classroom.

The Government will continue to invest in improving educational outcomes for Western Australian students, by increasing education funding. Public education funding will continue to increase over the forward estimates to accommodate growth in student enrolments.

An extra 3,962 (1.2%) students enrolled in public schools in Semester 1, 2023 compared to Semester 1, 2022. Additional funding has been allocated to ensure schools will have the necessary teaching staff and resources to accommodate enrolment growth and provide high-quality programs for all students.

The 2023-24 Budget also continues to increase support for students with disabilities and additional learning needs, with an additional \$137.6 million allocated over the forward estimates. On top of this, from 2023, an extra \$8.5 million will be provided to public schools per annum to support more students with additional learning needs in developing their literacy and numeracy.

A total of \$12.4 million has been allocated to provide additional regional incentives to teachers and school leaders to work in locations where demand for staff is the greatest.

<https://www.miragenews.com/record-investment-in-boosting-wa-education-1004077//>

WA District High Schools Funding Boost

The Cook Government has committed \$5 million a year on an ongoing basis to strengthen regional education and enhance student services in 51 District High Schools throughout WA.

Funding is allocated to the District High Schools to improve curriculum delivery, expand access to specialist student support services and help schools provide the best education to students in multi-age classes.

In 2024, District High Schools with 30 or more students enrolled in Years 7 to 12 will receive \$105,705 and District High Schools with less than 29 students in these year groups will receive \$63,423.

The funding will also be used to employ additional staff for the secondary years, build the skills of existing staff members through professional development and to secure support through the School of Isolated and Distance Education.

In addition, schools can use the funds to provide teachers with face-to-face and online mentoring in both mathematics and english.

<https://www.miragenews.com/wa-district-high-schools-receive-funding-boost-1085181/>



CURRICULUM

The Western Australian Government's revised Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines have been released. These guidelines will strengthen the teaching of digital literacy, cultural responsiveness, environmental education and mental health. The guidelines were reviewed following the Australian Government review of the Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF) V1.0. These guidelines are now available for use in all Western Australian kindergartens.

Quality early childhood education and care plays a critical role in supporting outcomes in children's early years development, school readiness and successes for later life.

The School Curriculum and Standards Authority has updated the Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines, which support teachers and educators to develop curriculum and facilitate the optimal learning and development of kindergarten children in Western Australia. The guidelines also support teachers and educators as they prepare kindergarten children for the transition to formal schooling.

<https://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/home/teaching/kindergarten-curriculum-guidelines>

NAPLAN

NAPLAN is a national assessment that tests students' ability in three domains of literacy—reading, writing and language conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation)—and numeracy.

NAPLAN transitioned to fully online testing in 2022, except for a very small number of schools delivering an authority-approved alternative curriculum. These schools will continue with alternative format (paper) testing.

From 2023, NAPLAN testing was conducted in Term 1 of the school year to allow the return of results to education authorities earlier in the year to inform school and system teaching and learning programs and will allow teachers to better assess what support students need for the coming year.

From 2023 four proficiency standards were introduced to the NAPLAN national report and replaced the 10 bands and national minimum standard previously used.

Around 93,100 WA public school students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 sat the national literacy and numeracy tests in 2023. Almost all students sat the assessments online, excluding the Year 3 writing assessment which remains a paper-based test.

A summary of Western Australian public school students' results for 2023 can be found [here](https://www.education.wa.edu.au/dl/m38lq3l) (<https://www.education.wa.edu.au/dl/m38lq3l>).

The NAPLAN test window runs from Wednesday 13th to Monday 25th March 2024.

National Assessment Program – Information and Communication Technology Literacy (NAP ICT)

The first national NAP ICT Literacy results since the COVID pandemic were released on 18th October 2023 by the Australia Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

The test, part of the National Assessment Program (NAP) sample assessments, was undertaken in 2022 and tests students' general ICT skills and knowledge in a sample of schools across the country.

The sample tests are held every three years but were cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. The 2022 report shows at the national level:

- 55 per cent of Year 6 students attained the proficient standard compared to 53 per cent in 2017. This result is not significantly different from previous NAP–ICT Literacy cycles, except for 2011, at 62 per cent.



- The average scale score of students in Year 6 (414) was significantly lower than in 2011 (435), but not significantly different from the average in any other cycle including 2017 (410).
- 46 per cent of Year 10 students attained the proficient standard compared to 54 per cent in 2017. This is significantly lower than the percentage achieved in all previous cycles of NAP–ICT Literacy.
- The average scale score of students in Year 10 (503) was significantly lower than in 2017 (523), 2011 (559), 2008 (560) and 2005 (551) but not significantly different from the average reported in 2014 (520).

Digital and ICT literacy skills are key in today's ever-changing world and from the NAP sample assessment, proficiency in this area among students is broadly stable. However, it is concerning to see a drop in ICT literacy amongst Year 10 students, which was more pronounced in certain states.

Other achievement results from the report show:

- Gender: Female students had higher levels of ICT literacy in comparison to male students in both Year 6 and Year 10. This is consistent with previous testing cycles.
- Indigeneity: The gap between indigenous and non-indigenous students attaining the proficient standard remained large in 2022 with a difference of around 30 percentage points.
- Language Background other than English (LBOTE): Year 6 students who speak a language other than English at home outperformed students who speak English at home. The difference was not significant for Year 10 students.
- Geographical location: Students from a metropolitan location tended to have higher levels of ICT literacy than students from a regional location for both Years 6 and 10.
- Parental occupation and education: ICT literacy achievement gradually increased with increasing levels of parental occupation and parental education resulting in large, significant differences between the highest and the lowest occupational and educational groups.

The NAP ICT assessment was last undertaken in 2017.

SCHOOL OF ISOLATED DISTANCE EDUCATION (SIDE)

On 13th December, 2023 the Cook Government announced a \$7.1 million funding boost for the Department of Education's School of Isolated Distance Education.

The additional investment in 2024 will enable SIDE to continue to deliver high-quality, inclusive and culturally responsive education programs for young people who are living in isolated, regional or remote locations.

SIDE was established in 1918 to educate primary students in the 'outback' via correspondence. Over the years, it has transformed into an online model using digital technologies that caters to students from Kindergarten to Year 12.

Demand for online learning services continues to grow, particularly among students outside of major cities.

This increase in resourcing will ensure SIDE can maintain appropriate student-to-teacher ratios.

ONLINE EDUCATION

Scotch College launched an online co-educational school 'Scotch Global' for geographically isolated students starting with Year 7 students in 2024. Scotch College has a track record of delivering the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) with exceptional results. Now, students from across the globe can access this education program online.

Offered in equal measure, students engage with a combination of remote collaborative and independent learning. Scotch Global uses a variety of modern technologies to deliver remote learning that is engaging and promotes connection.



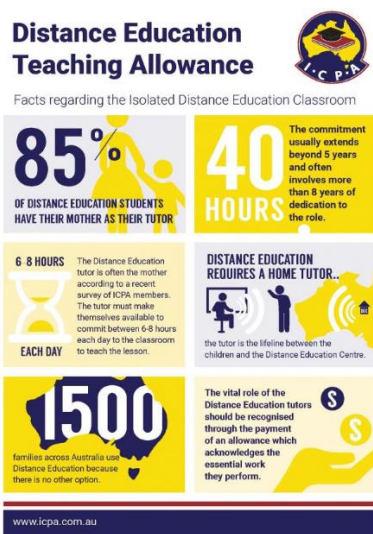
<https://global.scotch.wa.edu.au/home>

DETA

Correspondence was sent to the Minister for Education, Hon. Dr Tony Buti advocating for a Distant Education Teaching Allowance. Unfortunately, Minister Buti replied that the WA Government would not assist with a DETA and that it needed to be taken up with the Federal government.

The DETA would be the recognition of the supervisory role undertaken in the distance education schoolroom where families must provide a distance education tutor.

For around 1,500 families living in isolated regions of Australia, the only means of accessing education for their children is via distance education programs.



SCHOOL OF THE AIR

Throughout 2023, ICPA (WA) State Councillor Lousie Ford, has collaborated with a dedicated group of School of the Air (SOTA) parents from various regions in WA, to encourage parental engagement and conversations within this distinct educational framework. Louise diligently gathered insights from all five SOTAs, recognising the pivotal role parents play as educators. Parental input is crucial for informed decision-making in SOTA education.

In late November 2023, Melesha Sands, Deputy Director Schools; Denise Hilsz, Chairperson REVISE; Sue Potter, Co-ordinator REVISE and fourteen parents had a very productive discussion. Topics included: the significance of regular home visits, school camps, workload management, programming and inclusive family consultation.

An observation from the meeting was the limited collaboration among the five SOTAs. It is hoped that in the future, there will be increased opportunities that encourage and enable greater collaboration and processes between all SOTAs, to ensure optimal educational outcomes.

Melesha showed a keen interest in gathering ideas to enhance the understanding of practices that result in the optimal functionality of a distance education schoolroom. We look forward to future developments.