DISTANCE EDUCATION POLICY

POLICY: TO ENSURE THE DELIVERY OF THE BEST POSSIBLE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE TO GEOGRAPHICALLY ISOLATED STUDENTS WHO DO NOT HAVE DAILY FACE TO FACE CONTACT WITH THEIR TEACHER, THROUGH THE SUPPORT OF A DECENTRALISED DISTANCE EDUCATION NETWORK.

OBJECTIVES:

1. That the Department of Education creates a Division that coordinates all aspects of Distance Education.

2. With the implementation of Distance Education programmes:

   a. Ensure that there is access to adequate facilities for on campus curriculum activities available for geographically isolated students when attending their school. (2017: S6) (2018: S4) (2019: A5,A6) (2021:S6)
   b. That a formula be developed to allocate a space entitlement within Distance Education facilities for students and teachers. (2019: A7)
   c. The education of Geographically Isolated students must remain the priority within Schools of Distance Education. (2019: A8, A9) (2021: A9) (2022: A17,A21,S6)
   d. P-12 curriculum be available.
   e. Students with Special Needs be fully supported including receiving allocated aide time in the home classroom and source suitable information and/or programs from experts in private practice.
   f. SDE students are provided with affordable communication infrastructure capable of carrying clear, reliable two-way voice (VOIP), teleconferencing capabilities, and comparable broadband data. (2015: S2)
   g. That all Qld Distance Education families have access to a reliable internet service which supports the delivery of DE.
   h. That digital materials are compatible with technology and infrastructure available in rural and remote classrooms.
   i. That parents be fully informed with technical requirements necessary to implement the DE program.
   j. That all Geographically Isolated students enrolled with SDEs receive daily voice lessons.
   k. That digital learning platforms are rigorously tested for optimum, and functionality and updates/changes fully meet the needs of geographically isolated students. (2021: A17, A18)
   l. That the Distance Education materials be delivered to families in a timely manner to ensure continuity of learning. (2021: A16)
   m. That the Distance Education learning materials be delivered via Express Mail for all Geographically Isolated students during a severe weather event (2023: A6)
   n. That tele-lessons provided by Schools of Distance Education have a maximum of 12 students per lesson. (2014: A22) (2017: A8)
   o. That the learning of Phonics be embedded in the Distance Education Prep and year one Curriculum. (2016: A13) (2017: A10)
   p. School of Distance Education fees are negated for Queensland state schools where a full suite of curriculum is not available. (2018: S5)
   q. Age of students, times and duration of lessons be taken into consideration when timetabling on air sessions. (2018: A12)

r. The focus is the isolated learner working with an untrained Home Tutor in a multi-age rural and remote home schoolroom. (2014: A14, S6) (2015: A2)

s. The separation of Regional SDE Centres from mainstream schooling be maintained and de-centralization of distance education schools be continued. (2018: A11)

t. That acknowledgement is made of the important role Home Tutors play in the delivery of learning. 2022: A19)

u. That staff in SDE schools have an understanding of the unique circumstances of Geographically Isolated students compared to those undertaking distance education by choice (2022: A20)

v. That an enrolment Eligibility Plan for SDE's is established. (2022: S7)

w. That Principals of SDE schools understand the critical importance of grouping Geographically Isolated students from similar remote areas into the same "on air" class. (2022: A10)

x. Address the often unrealistic, unfair, and unmanageable excessive learning expectations placed upon Geographically Isolated students and their tutors in SDE schoolrooms. (2022: A22)

3. Support needs to be facilitated by:
   a. Budgeting which prioritises access to computer technology and field programmes for Geographically Isolated students
   b. Availability of sufficient Allied Health services.
   c. The provision of an internet and hardware subsidy for SDE students which reflects the current cost of connectivity (2021: A5)

   d. The installation of a secondary phone line in Geographically Isolated DE classrooms is subsidised and timely. (2017: A13, S1) (2021: A3)
   e. That ongoing financial assistance be available to all Geographically Isolated students, including students in Home Education Units and private Distance Education units. (2016: A16)

4. That the sporting needs of isolated students are met.

5. That Schools of Distance Education prioritise face-to-face opportunities with teachers and peers for Geographically Isolated students. (2021: A11, A12, A13)

6. Enrolment to SDEs, with no additional fees, be available to rural students with exceptional circumstances.

7. Provision of universally recognisable and best practice guidelines outlining maximum amount of daily exposure to computers. (2019: A1) (2021: F3)

8. Endorse handwriting across all year levels. (2019: A15)

9. Outcomes of all Reviews into Schools of Distance Education to be shared with stakeholders. (2021: A19)

STAFFING

10. That staffing levels and infrastructure be adequate taking into consideration the varying requirements of individual centres, students, and the need for a balance of teaching experience. (2014: S8)

11. In the appointment of staff, consideration be given to the unique features and duties characteristic of Distance Education.

12. That The Department of Education provide a non-teaching curriculum coordinator position in Schools of Distance Education.

13. Teachers appointed to Distance Education positions be given specific induction courses, web-conferencing licences, staff development programs and adequate professional development and follow up in-service courses.

14. That a specific role description of a School of Distance Education teacher be produced.

CURRICULUM

15. Ongoing curriculum development should have input from home tutors, parents and others directly involved in Distance Education. (2014: S3) (2015: A1)

16. Students to be provided with quality assured, all-inclusive curriculum aligned for multi age classrooms that keeps pace with current versions is available in paper (with colour) and digital form. (2014: A15) (2015: A2, S4) (2017: A12, S8, S9) (2019: S6) (2020:A9) (2022:A14)

17. The flexible delivery of distance education material should be maintained. (2015: A2, S4) (2021: A14, A15) (2022: A12, A13, S4)

18. Adequate funds are available to employ staff, resource, develop, review, evaluate, rewrite, and deliver Distance Education curriculum materials. (2014: A19, A20) (2015: S3) (2017: A7, A19) (2019: A14:S6: A12) (2021: A8)

19. That Geographically Isolated students' needs be met by access to Vocation Education, data conferencing, digitisation, and virtual schooling services.

20. That the Prep curriculum be suitable for use in multi-age classrooms and consistently reflect changes in the Australian Curriculum. (2017: A19) (2018: S3) (2019: A13)

21. That Distance Education materials be written in an age-appropriate student friendly format and style. (2015: A2) (2018: A10)

22. That Geographically Isolated students are not disadvantaged by the Senior Assessment and Tertiary Entrance (SATE) system. (2018: A8, A9).

23. Adequate access for all assessment processes for Distance Education students sitting senior assessments. (2019: A4)

24. That clear and flexible guidelines are set for SDE schools and State schools that allow flexible arrangements for students. (2022: A15)

25. Encourage SDE's to streamline and reduce the large number of online platforms currently being used. (2022: A11)

HOME TUTOR SUPPORT

26. Home Tutors are supported through Professional Development and networking, including their own log in space on the eLearning website, to assist them in achieving appropriate learning outcomes for their students while recognising their diverse home situations and workloads.

27. Home Tutors receive adequate technology training to keep pace with digital curriculum materials.

28. The additional workload of teaching multi-grade and special needs students is addressed.

29. That distance education home tutoring is recognised as credible teaching experience.

30. Promote the role the HT plays in Education. (2021: A10)

31. Home tutors continue to be supported by the Partners In Learning Program. (2019: A11)

32. That purpose-built on-site accommodation for Distance Ed families can continue to be used as it has previously. (2021: A20, A21, A22, A23, A24, A26, A27, A28, S5, S7, F4)

KINDY

33. That Schools of Distance Education are included in plans by the government to give all Qld children access to a quality Kindergarten program.

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