



Knowledge & Skills

IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

A Better Reporting and
Accountability System for Schools

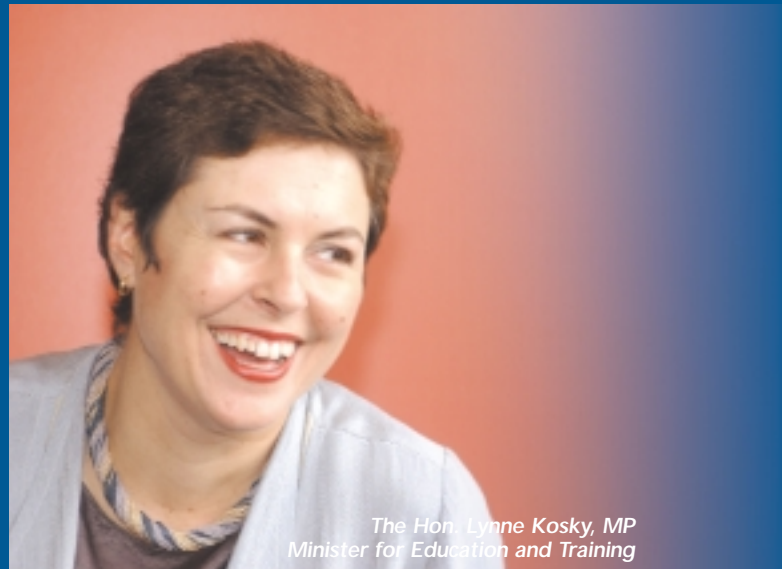
The Hon. Lynne Kosky, MP
Minister for Education and Training

VICTORIA



Knowledge & Skills
Building a Future





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Minister for Education and Training*

OCTOBER 2002

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Context

Since October 1999 the Victorian Government has moved quickly to develop and implement major reforms in education and training.

New policy directions, goals and targets have been set, and these have been backed up by significantly increased resources to the school and the training system.

With an additional investment of \$2.75 billion since 1999, this Government has understood the need to invest more resources in our schools.

The vastly improved policy and resource mix is producing very positive results. Many Victorian students now attain numeracy and literacy levels that are above national benchmarks. >>



Victoria leads the other States in retention rates to Year 12. Also real progress has been made across the State in the last two years towards the target of 90 per cent completion of Year 12 or its equivalent by 2010 (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Government schools, retention rates Year 10–12

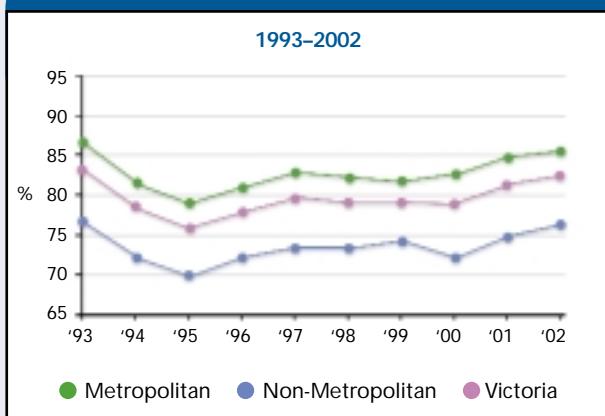
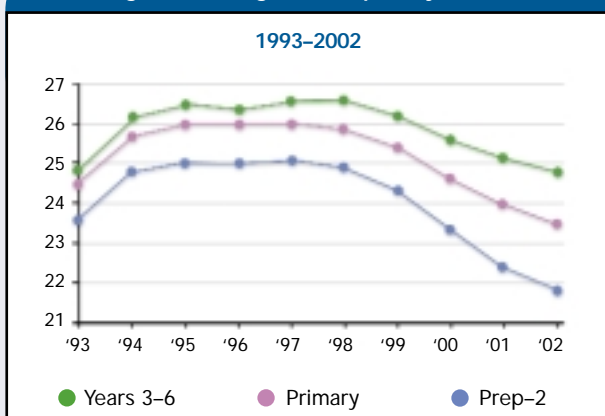


Figure 2: Average sizes of primary classes



Class sizes have been reduced significantly in the early years of schooling under this government (see figure 2), and new teaching and learning initiatives have been put in place in the early and middle years of schooling.

Victoria is setting the pace nationally in the post-compulsory years with the introduction of individual career plans called Managed Individual Pathways, a new Year 11 and 12 vocational credential – the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning, expanded Apprenticeship and Traineeship provision, and the Local Learning and Employment Networks.

Teacher morale is considerably higher, most schools are performing well and we are recording our best-yet parent survey results. Much of the credit for these tangible improvements should go to teachers, school principals, school councils, school support staff and broader regional and statewide support networks.

The Victorian Government is fulfilling its broader social and economic obligations to achieve the best policy and resource mix for all schools to succeed.

Our challenge now is to improve further.

Improved Reporting and Accountability Arrangements

The Victorian Government recognises that improved education and training outcomes are the key to increased prosperity and security for all Victorians. All students need to succeed and find the pathway that will lead them to employment and meaningful lives. If schools and the broader community fail people when they are young it has the potential to fail them for life.

This Government recognises that there is a need for ongoing and targeted improvements in student learning outcomes and school performance.

To this end, we are announcing new and improved reporting and accountability arrangements to make sure specific steps are

taken to better inform parents and students of learning progress and to provide the public with more information about school performance.

We also intend to implement a more robust quality assurance system, to recognise and reward excellence in schools, and to guarantee student learning through improved school performance.

Parents/carers have a right to know exactly how their child's progress and learning performance compares with Victorian and national standards. This should be communicated to parents in clear ways and schools need to respond with revised learning strategies, where necessary. >>



Schools have an added responsibility to ensure that their educational programs and organisation are delivering improved educational outcomes for their students individually and collectively. They have a special obligation to their school communities to outline what is working and if anything needs to be changed just how and when that will be achieved.

Governments too have an ongoing duty to explain to the Victorian public what steps they are taking to lift student learning outcomes. This includes acknowledging outstanding achievements in schools,

extending good teaching and learning practices across the school system and ensuring that under-performance is identified and rectified.

The first part of the task is to significantly improve reporting arrangements to parents and the Victorian public on student learning outcomes.

The second part of the task is to streamline accountability requirements for schools in order to recognise good teaching and learning practice and develop clear plans to improve student learning outcomes.

Current Accountability Arrangements

Teachers in Victorian schools have a sound record of using student achievement data to guide their teaching. However, existing arrangements need to be strengthened to ensure they translate into improved student outcomes across government schools. We don't want a system that is data rich but action poor, or one that relies on producing simplistic league ladders of schools.

The reporting to parents against the Curriculum and Standards Framework

provides a useful indication of student progress. However, the current reporting to parents does not adequately inform them about how their child is performing against national standards.

Parents and the Victorian public are also entitled to better and richer information about the Victorian Certificate of Education performance and the impact of the new Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning program at the senior secondary levels.

Reporting to Parents and the Victorian Public

The following steps will be taken to improve reporting to parents and the Victorian public.

Initiative 1 → *New and improved arrangements will be put in place to extend literacy and numeracy testing to all Year 7 students*

There is universal support for lifting literacy and numeracy achievement in our schools. To this end, the Year 3 and 5 literacy and numeracy Achievement Improvement Monitor tests will be extended to all Year 7 students in government schools in 2003. Implementation will be the subject of immediate consultation with all relevant

groups. The results will be reported to parents and will assist schools in targeting literacy and numeracy programs to student needs.

Obtaining an informed overview of student achievement in literacy and numeracy on entry to secondary school is important because it gives the school a baseline measure against which student performance can be tracked.

Initiative 2 → *Reporting to parents against national literacy and numeracy benchmarks will commence in 2003*

While Years 3 and 5 Achievement Improvement Monitor test results are currently reported to parents they are only provided against Victorian benchmarks.

From the beginning of 2003 parents will also receive information about their child's literacy and numeracy performance in Years 3, 5 and 7 against national benchmarks to provide parents with further comparative data.

Initiative 3 → *From December 2002 the Victorian public will receive a clearer picture of student performance in Years 11 and 12*

The Government will provide more extensive information about student performance in the Victorian Certificate of Education and from December 2003 the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning.

The new information will include a summary of student results, including rates of satisfactory completion, the median study scores in the Victorian Certificate of Education and the percentage of students applying for tertiary places.

Outstanding performances by students who achieve study scores above 40 will continue to be publicly acknowledged. For the first time, information on senior school programs will be published alongside this student achievement data.

This information will be available on a school-by-school basis.



Following a detailed evaluation by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, from 2002 the Victorian Certificate of Education Improvement and Tertiary Preparation Indices (derived from the General Achievement Test) will no longer be produced. Further research on the practical application of the indices clearly indicated that they were not a valid measure of the value added by the school. The new range of information will be far more useful to parents and students.

The General Achievement Test will continue as a means of moderating Victorian Certificate of Education scores.

Initiative 4 → *Starting in May 2003, a new transition profile reporting on post-Year 12 pathways will be made available to parents and the Victorian public*

A post-Year 12 transition profile will provide valuable information to parents, students and the Victorian public on educational attainment and the post-compulsory

education, training and employment destinations of all Year 12 students on a school-by-school basis.

This development is a ground-breaking initiative – it will be the first time this has occurred in Australia on a system-wide basis.

A post-Year 12 transition profile will provide the Victorian public with a broad picture about what happens to students when they complete Year 12, and will assist schools in planning better educational programs and targeting resources to match student aspirations with their educational pathways.

This Government wants an education system that supports excellence, inspires achievement in all students, and recognises success in a range of educational pathways. A clearer understanding of where students go when they complete school will assist all education and training providers on how best to help students choose the most effective pathway and provide them with the necessary support to succeed.

Streamlining School and System Accountability

What is needed above all in our system is to ensure that existing educational reforms are well targeted to produce improved and sustained educational outcomes.

A series of international reports, including *Trends in Mathematics and Science Study*, show that we are maintaining our high standard above the international average. The *Program of International Student Assessment* conducted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development confirms that Victorian and Australian school students are high achievers in reading, as well as mathematics and science.

However, from these and other sources, we know that there are gaps in and between school performance and that in some instances students are underachieving. Family and/or geographic circumstance may be the issue here, but we are determined to learn more about the major causes of under-achievement and to develop appropriate responses.

The Victorian Government intends to undertake the following three initiatives to increase the uptake of good educational programs and improve student learning where school performance is low. These initiatives are specifically designed to assist school



leadership and recognise what is working well so that improvement can occur across the system. We do not want schools and students being left behind. Principals and teachers are the key to sustained improvement.

Initiative 5 → *From the beginning of 2004, and for the first time in Victoria, a formal system of public credit will be given to schools and school groups to recognise quality educational programs and outstanding teaching and learning practice*

Across Victoria we have many excellent and innovative programs being taught every day in our schools. The Government and the Victorian community should be celebrating this excellence and congratulating outstanding achievement. We need to publicly acknowledge the many exceptional practices of our principals and teachers in schools right across the State.

A school quality recognition program will be implemented that provides a clear structure for giving recognition to quality and exemplary programs within schools and school groups.

Accordingly, a joint education, business and community task force will be established in 2003 to develop this program. The task force will develop specific criteria against which achievement will be judged. Once recognised, schools will be able to report these achievements publicly and celebrate them with their communities.

A teacher professional education program will be developed to share and extend directly the learnings from recognised quality programs.

Initiative 6 → *A new package of strengthened planning and management arrangements to improve school accountability will be implemented during 2003*

The capacity of schools to lift educational outcomes depends largely on the quality and effectiveness of a school leadership team, which includes senior staff, principals and the school council.

Changes will be made to improve the principal selection processes in government schools to obtain the best candidates. This will be achieved in part by each selection panel having a principal representative.

A detailed professional development program will be implemented that provides ongoing support and training for new and existing principals, with a particular emphasis on educational leadership. Moreover, to guarantee strong school leadership into the future a new professional development program will be established aimed at strengthening the skills of potential principals.



It is most important that such programs concentrate on the value of cooperative arrangements, such as shared programs and facilities between schools and with training providers, and examine how they might be better managed. Current initiatives being promoted through the Local Learning and Employment Networks and School Networks need to be built on and linked to sharing good learning, teaching and management strategies.

Initiative 7 → *Where detailed evaluation suggests that a school requires assistance in achieving improved student learning outcomes, detailed intervention strategies will be put in place to lift performance*

When intervention is warranted based on available information covering student results, participation, stakeholder surveys and relevant other indicators a specific School Development Strategy will be prepared with relevant parties.

The School Development Strategy will incorporate an enhanced school review process, a detailed education outcomes improvement plan, a revised school charter, and an expanded annual reporting process.

The School Development Strategy will also include suitable partnership and mentoring with other schools, targeted staff development, senior management training, and support for those in leadership positions. Changes to senior leadership will be considered if improvement is not evident following this process of significant input and support.



Conclusion

The end product of these improved reporting and new accountability arrangements will be a better performing school system and a far more prosperous and secure Victorian society.

We know that the future belongs to a well-educated and trained society.

Better reporting, together with improved and streamlined school accountability, will ensure that each government school plays its part in securing the best possible learning futures for our children.

Their success will depend on our combined ability to capture and expand good teaching and learning practice while identifying and acting promptly to turn around demonstrated under-performance. It will feed into improved access for all students and the further development of innovation and excellence in our schools.



Improved Educational Outcomes

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