

Supplementary Notes for *Tasmania's Education Performance Report 2008*

What has changed since last year?

Most measures have shown some improvement since last year. Of particular note is the improvement in the measures for readiness for school, early literacy, early numeracy, gain in literacy, percentage of parents generally satisfied, parent satisfaction with reporting, staff attendance and indigenous equity.

Early years

- *Readiness for school (Acceptable to Excellent)*. This is a high achievement and compared with previous years is trending up, suggesting that *Launching into Learning* is having a positive effect on young children starting school. The government's *Launching into Learning* initiative, at a cost of \$12.6 million is now underway in 102 schools and provides programs that cater specifically for children, birth to four, and their families.
- *Early literacy and Early numeracy*. Students in their Prep year are also doing well, with higher achievement in both literacy and numeracy. *Launching into Learning* success in schools also contributes to this improvement; and as larger numbers of participants in the program will be in Prep from 2009 onwards further high achievement is expected.

Literacy and Numeracy

- In May 2008, for the very first time, all students in Years 3, 5, 7, and 9 across Australia were tested on aspects of literacy and numeracy using a common test in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and Numeracy. Prior to this, each state conducted its own literacy and numeracy monitoring program to determine national benchmarks. From 2008, the national benchmarks were replaced by new national minimum standards. The literacy testing measure is based in student results in Reading.
- A supplementary report is available online comparing NAPLAN results of Tasmania and each Learning Service referenced to national scores. This includes both average scores and the percentage of students at or above the National Minimum Standard at each year level in Reading and Numeracy.

Parent satisfaction

- Participation in the parent opinion survey increased by 74% in 2008 and parents indicated a greater degree of satisfaction with their child's schooling in general.
- Parents also indicated a greater level of satisfaction with school reporting of their child's educational progress. This coincides with the implementation of the Reporting to Parents Taskforce recommendations.

Two measures show that there has been no overall improvement since 2007 (*Numeracy testing – index of gain and Student satisfaction*).

- *Numeracy – Index of gain (Good to Acceptable)*. While the actual measure increased from 24.2 to 24.3 and remains at the upper end of the intermediate range, the improvement has gone from Trend Up to Stable making the overall progress Acceptable rather than Good.
- *Student satisfaction (Excellent to Good)*. The measure went from 7.3 in 2007 to 7.2 in 2008 and is still an achievement that indicates a high level of student satisfaction with their education. However the improvement has gone from Trend Up to Stable making the progress Good rather than Excellent.

What is being done to address areas of Issue and Concern?

Student Participation

- *Student attendance*. This has decreased slightly in 2008 (91.2) compared to 2007 (91.7). Locally schools employ a range of strategies to address absenteeism, including communicating with parents about absences, utilising modern technology. One of the biggest concerns is the lack of response from parents to explain why their child has been absent from school. New attendance and enrolment policies and associated guidelines, designed to monitor student participation in schooling more closely, are due for implementation in 2009. Learning Services in conjunction with schools are also implementing initiatives to identify and re-engage students with chronic absenteeism.
- *Student retention*. Retention fell from 2007 (63.7) to (61.8) in 2008. Individual schools have made some improvements but these have not been reflected at the system and Learning Service level. It should be noted however, that this measure does not take account of students who obtain employment between Years 10 and 12, nor those who undertake apprenticeships. The Tasmania *Tomorrow* initiative is specifically aimed at improving retention into Years 11 and 12. The impact of Tasmania *Tomorrow* reforms are not reflected in the 2008 report because the measures relate to the students retained from 2007 to 2008. Student retention remains a concern across the state.

Why are values considered Acceptable when the achievement is Low; or only Good when the achievement is High?

- The reporting of both achievement and improvement categories supports accountability and recognises success by acknowledging both the achievement in relation to absolute targets, as well as monitoring evidence of improvement over time. Using this approach the progress towards the high achievement is considered to be greater accomplishment than the maintenance of an already high achievement. This may seem harsh; however, there are very few areas where further improvements cannot be made; so there is always room for growth.