

Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development: One Year On



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Messages from the Ministers

More than 12 months on from the release of the *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*, there has been enormous activity and change achieved by those involved in early years services in Victoria.

Integration of early years services into the new Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has provided a strong platform and a clear focus on providing Victorian children with the best possible start in life.

Some of the major achievements for the early childhood sector over the first year of Blueprint implementation include the new Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, the introduction of Transition Learning and Development Statements, the opening of our 51st Children's Centre, the revised Maternal and Child Health Service Activity Framework, the introduction of the new *Children's Services Regulations 2009* and the provision of increased places and support for children with a disability or developmental delay.

The Blueprint presents a coherent framework for providing young children with the best possible learning and development opportunities. Many of the reforms commenced during the first year will be fully implemented during 2010. A range of new initiatives and refined directions will be introduced, many of which are further articulated in the Victorian Government's Statement on Early Childhood Development – *Growing, Learning and Thriving: Building on Victoria's Achievements in Early Childhood Development*. The Statement builds on the substantial progress that has been made through the Blueprint, and signals the next wave of reform we will be pursuing to improve quality, integration and outcomes in early childhood development.

The early childhood sector in Victoria has strong partnerships at its core. I look forward to continuing to work with all of our partners in the early childhood sector as we continue implementing this ambitious reform agenda.

Maxine Morand

The Honourable
Maxine Morand MP
Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development



The *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development* launched in September 2008 renewed the Victorian Government's commitment to education as its number one priority.

We set out an ambitious and coherent program of reforms aimed at positioning Victoria as one of the world's best-performing education systems.

Much has been accomplished during the first year of implementation across a range of areas highlighted in this report, including the e⁵ Instructional Model for teachers, the Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership, new Regional Network Leaders, Teach for Australia, and the accountability and transparency agenda.

These accomplishments have occurred amidst other major developments during the last 12 months. We have faced the significant challenges of the Victorian bushfires, the impact of the H1N1 Swine Flu Virus and the opportunities afforded for investment in education facilities through the Brumby Government's Victorian Schools Plan, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Government's Building the Education Revolution program.

While much has been achieved in 2009, the Blueprint is our five-year plan for education in Victoria. We want to build on our accomplishments in 2010 and this 'One Year On' document outlines some of the key initiatives for the year ahead.

We will continue to focus on system improvement, partnerships with parents and communities, and workforce reform.

I have been very pleased with the commitment of the broad education community to implementing Victoria's Blueprint reform program.

I look forward to continuing to work with you as we strive to give every Victorian child every opportunity to shine.



The Honourable
Bronwyn Pike MP
Minister for Education



The Blueprint in context

The Blueprint, released in September 2008, sets out the Government's five-year reform agenda to improve education and development outcomes for children and young people.

The *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development* (the Blueprint) describes the learning and development outcomes we want for all children and young people from birth to adulthood, and presents the major reforms that will occur within both the early childhood sector and school education.

This report highlights the achievements made in the first year of Blueprint implementation and describes the actions that the Government will commit to in the next 12 months.

Much has happened since the Blueprint was launched a year ago:

- The global financial crisis continues to put significant pressures on the employment market. Those with few employability skills are especially vulnerable. Previous economic downturns have shown that it can take a long time for these people to regain employment. The crisis highlights the importance of education and life-long learning in preparing people for employment and assisting them to find new work when jobs disappear.
- The devastation wrought by the February bushfires in Victoria has presented enormous challenges for many local communities. Schools and early childhood services have responded magnificently in helping children and families in affected areas to cope both with the loss of loved ones, and the destruction and damage to education facilities. Schools and early childhood services will continue to play a key role in these communities as re-building occurs in the months and years ahead.
- There have been major reforms to Commonwealth–State relations during the last 12 months. In November 2008, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) signed a new National Education Agreement with the result that all Australian governments are now working towards a common set of outcomes for children and young people. National Partnership Agreements have been signed that focus on teacher quality, literacy and numeracy, and outcomes in low socio-economic status (SES) school communities.
- Other National Partnership Agreements have been signed since November 2008 which commit governments to achieve universal access to 15 hours of kindergarten per week in the year before school by 2013, and to reforms in the area of youth transitions and participation.
- In March 2009, an agreement was signed to implement Building the Education Revolution (BER), a part of the Nation Building – Economic Stimulus Plan, a major school building and modernisation program. The BER, together with the Victorian Schools Plan, is supporting employment across Victoria in response to the global financial crisis and will ensure that children are educated in 21st century school environments.

- In December 2008, Australian Education Ministers released a new national declaration on their aspirations for young Australians for the next decade – the *Melbourne Declaration on the Educational Goals for Young Australians*. The Declaration outlines eight areas of action, including promoting a world-class curriculum in eight agreed learning areas and a commitment to strengthen accountability and transparency.
- Most recently, the Victorian Government released its Statement on Early Childhood Development – *Growing, Learning and Thriving: Building on Victoria’s Achievements in Early Childhood Development*. The Statement encompasses services and resources that support children’s learning, health and development from birth to 8 years of age. It builds on the substantial progress that has been made through the Blueprint, and signals the next wave of reform we will be pursuing to drive improvement in early childhood outcomes.



All these developments have impacted on the work of everyone engaged in the education and early childhood sectors, and provided a dynamic context for implementation of the Blueprint reforms.

The first year of the Blueprint has seen the development and implementation of 42 actions across the three reform strategies: system improvement, partnerships with parents and communities, and workforce reform. The direct involvement of many schools and early childhood services in adopting new programs or trialling new projects has been pivotal to the smooth implementation of actions during 2009.

Many Blueprint actions will impact over a sustained period and the focus during 2010 will be on embedding and supporting further implementation as initiatives extend across early childhood services and schools. The second year of implementation will also see new initiatives introduced that build on the work already completed and the opportunities for reform presented by the new Commonwealth–State National Partnerships.

At the same time, implementation of other reform priorities will continue. These continuing reform priorities are further detailed in Appendix 1. The Victorian Schools Plan and BER will continue to roll out new school infrastructure across Victoria. Support for communities affected by the 2009 Victorian bushfires will continue and new policies will be enacted to ensure that school communities and children’s services are well prepared for the threat of bushfires. The Regional Network Leaders appointed in 2009 will continue to play a pivotal role in developing leadership capacity within and across their network schools.

Growing, Learning and Thriving builds on the substantial progress made through the Blueprint and signals ongoing reforms to drive improvement in early childhood outcomes.



Strategies for reform

The Blueprint outlines an integrated reform agenda designed to improve performance and promote excellence across Victoria's schools and early childhood services.



The Blueprint outlined 42 actions for the first year of implementation across three reform strategies and seven action areas.

System improvement

Ensure that all children and young people and their families have access to high-quality early childhood services and schools.

- Integration and transitions
- High-quality, accessible early childhood services
- Excellent school education

Partnerships with parents and communities

Ensure that parents and families are valued partners in their children's development and learning.

- Working with families, communities and business
- Opportunity for all Victorians

Workforce reform

Ensure that schools and early childhood services have skilled and committed staff who are supported to deliver their very best.

- Modern careers and workplaces
- A culture of strong leadership and professional learning

The following section summarises key achievements of Blueprint implementation between September 2008 and November 2009.

2009 achievements



System improvement



Action area: Integration and transitions

- An integrated approach assists continued progress in children’s and young people’s development and learning. Major transition points in the system are times of risk as well as opportunity. Greater integration through partnerships and collaboration is an effective way to link services and support children and young people at these times of transition.
- The Blueprint committed to a series of actions to improve integration and transitions in the areas of ‘Co-location and integration’, ‘Improved transitions’ and ‘New development frameworks’. Achievements made are detailed below.

Roll out Victorian and Commonwealth funding for multi-service children’s centres

The Victorian Government has committed over \$47 million towards the establishment of 98 integrated Children’s Centres since 2003–04. There are now 51 integrated Children’s Centres open and operating in Victoria, with six centres opened in the past 12 months. Funding for another 12 centres has been finalised in this period, taking the number under planning or construction to 27.

Case Study

Springside Children’s Hub

In February 2009, the Victorian Government opened a new Children’s Hub in Caroline Springs. Springside Children’s Hub co-locates key services for children, family and community on the Prep–Year 9 Caroline Springs College site.

Integrated services provide parents with a ‘one stop shop’ including Maternal and Child Health, extended hours kindergarten, occasional childcare, playgroups and early childhood intervention.

The Springside Hub also offers community health services, parenting skills groups and English as a second language classes to respond to the specific needs of parents in Caroline Springs.

By locating the Children’s Hub on a school site, families and children feel familiar with the school environment and have more confidence when making the important transition to school.

Implement the Commonwealth and Victorian Government commitment to early childhood centres on school sites

An integrated approach to co-locating children’s services and schools to ensure continuous support throughout children’s development and learning, is an effective way to link services for children at times of transition. The Victorian Government has committed to the establishment of integrated Children’s Centres across the State. In total, 34 of the 98 Children’s Centres have been funded for location on or near a school site since 2003.

Pilot transition plans for children entering primary school

30 pilot programs were conducted with early childhood services and schools across Victoria to test approaches for supporting children's transition from early childhood services to schools. The initiative, Transition: A Positive Start to School, aims to improve children's experiences when starting school. Transition Learning and Development Statements share information between a child and family, early childhood educators, carers outside school hours and Prep teachers. A common Victorian approach has been developed to guide families, early childhood education and care services and schools. In an Australian first, Transition Learning and Development Statements for children starting school are now being introduced.

Case Study

Knox City Council transition plan pilot

Knox City Council participated as one of the 30 pilot programs across Victoria.

From Term 4 in 2008 to Term 1 in 2009, a network of early childhood services and schools in the Knox City Council area trialled an individualised transition statement that enabled staff to outline strengths and ideas to support a positive transition to school. The process helped to understand what is important for children and their families, and to ensure that when children started school they were more ready to learn and that schools were ready for them.

The Knox City Council pilot demonstrated promising transition practice and was well received by parents and staff. Lessons from the pilot, as well as other pilots across Victoria, were used to inform a common Victorian approach for children's transition to school. The approach will be introduced for children starting school in 2010.

Trial and consult on the Early Years Learning and Development Framework

The draft Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework for children from birth to 8 years was released in August 2009 for trialling and validation in 42 sites across the State. Public consultation on the draft framework occurred between August and October to inform the final framework, which will be implemented from 2010. Victoria also trialled the National Early Years Learning Framework, launched in July 2009, at 17 sites across the State as part of a nation-wide trialling process. The National Framework is focused on children from birth to 5 years of age.



Roll out the Maternal and Child Health Service Activity Framework

In the past 12 months, 97 per cent of Victoria's Maternal and Child Health (MCH) nurses have completed training in the revised MCH Activity Framework. The revised framework provides consistency across MCH services, including the use of standard health promotion resources and evidence-based tools. Support and monitoring of statewide implementation continues, including a three-year evaluation due to commence in late 2009.

Roll out the Early Childhood Intervention Reform project and 1000 additional Early Childhood Intervention Service places

The Victorian Government has undertaken a comprehensive review of services and supports for children with developmental concerns in order to develop a more effective system of early childhood intervention services. Key recommendations include strengthening services, program planning and accountability mechanisms. The recommendations are being considered in the context of the whole-of-government strategy for children and young people from birth to 18 with a disability or developmental delay.

In the past year, the Victorian Government has completed its commitment to an expansion of 1000 additional early childhood intervention places across the State. The extra places have had a significant impact on the lives of these children and their families by providing them with the support that they need.

Develop a whole-of-government strategy for children and young people from birth to 18 with a disability or developmental delay

The Victorian Government is developing a whole-of-government strategy for children and young people from birth to 18 with a disability or developmental delay. The strategy aims to establish a more sustainable service system that improves the wellbeing, development, education, community participation and future economic participation of all Victorian children and young people with a disability or developmental delay and their families.

Improve the career structure for Student Support Services staff

The 2008–09 Victorian Government Budget committed \$33.2 million over four years to strengthen student support services to better meet the needs of children and young people with additional learning and wellbeing needs, and to enhance the capacity of schools and networks to respond to these needs.

The Budget initiative has funded the recruitment of 10 Student Support Services Coordinators and 70 additional staff to improve governance and increase resources for students with additional needs. The reforms include the development of *Strengthening Networks and School Communities Guidelines for Student Support Services*, a targeted service delivery model to better meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people, and improved assistance for the student support services workforce. The guidelines are being piloted in late 2009 prior to full implementation in 2010.

Develop further details on strengthening school responsibility for monitoring young people's pathways

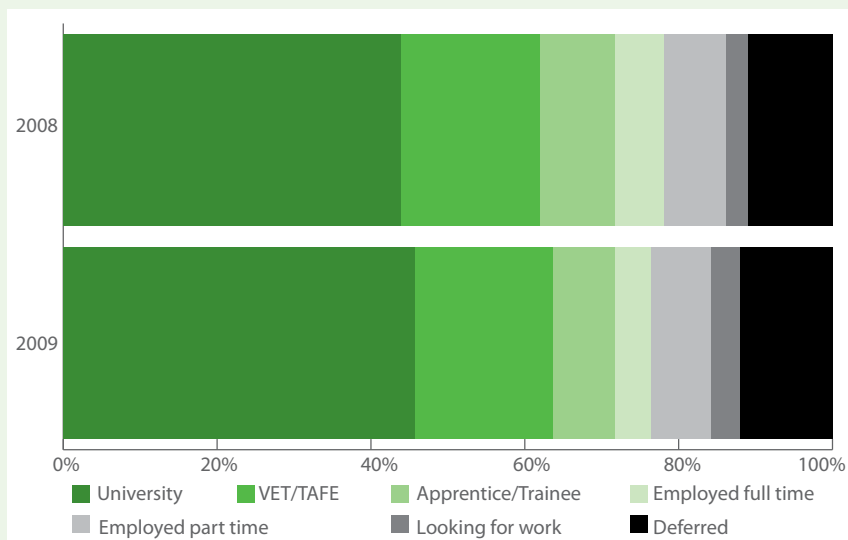
The responsibility of schools for monitoring young people's pathways has been strengthened through expanded accountability requirements. To help identify and support students at risk of early leaving, the enhanced Student Mapping Tool enables schools to track, monitor and evaluate interventions used to address risk factors that contribute to early leaving. The *Effective Strategies to Increase School Completion Report and the companion Guide to Help Schools Increase School Completion* were published in late 2008 and disseminated to all Victorian schools, providing information on how to implement empirically proven successful intervention strategies to improve student engagement and increase rates of school completion.

Career On Track is a pilot initiative operating in the local government areas of Brimbank, Wyndham, Frankston and Greater Bendigo to provide careers counselling to early school leavers to assist them to re-engage with education, training or employment. Data on students' reasons for leaving and post-school destinations will be used in schools to further strengthen outcomes.

Careers coordinators have undertaken accredited professional learning programs to enhance their capacity to provide improved pathways and transition advice.



Transition of young people into education, training or work, 6 months after school



The vast majority of students who complete Year 12 or equivalent make a successful transition into further education, training or employment. Those who defer a tertiary education place are largely in full- or part-time employment.

Source: DEECD On Track Year 12 Completer Survey 2008 and 2009



Action area: High-quality, accessible early childhood services

- A focus on improving the quality of early childhood services recognises the importance of learning and development from birth and increasing the qualifications of staff. Increased participation in early learning and development from birth and health services is equally critical.
- The Blueprint committed to a series of actions to achieve high-quality, accessible early childhood services in the areas of ‘Quality early learning’, ‘Improved access’ and ‘Better planning and coordination’. Achievements made are detailed below.

Finalise new regulations for children’s services

The Victorian Government’s new Children’s Services Regulations 2009 came into effect in May 2009 in conjunction with substantial new provisions of the *Children’s Services Act 1996*. The release of the new Regulations followed extensive public consultation, with over 1600 people participating in public information sessions across the State and over 700 submissions received.

The new regulations mean that for the first time in Victoria family day care and outside school hours care are regulated and Victoria’s children will be assured of minimum standards that will raise the quality of their care and learning experience and better support their development in the early years, regardless of the children’s service they attend.

Case Study

Whittlesea City Council Early Years Aboriginal Centre

A partnership between the Victorian Government, Whittlesea Aboriginal community and the City of Whittlesea to increase kindergarten participation of Aboriginal children has led to the establishment of a new Early Years Centre in Lalor. The centre provides a funded kindergarten program with a special focus on Aboriginal culture.

Following extensive consultation and planning, the Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Early Years Centre opened its doors in September 2009, with nineteen 3-and 4-year-old Aboriginal children enrolled in kindergarten programs.

Bubup Wilam combines the fundamentals of traditional early years education with a special focus on culturally relevant ways of teaching Aboriginal children about their culture, including the significance of Elders and Community, the relationship with the environment, and traditional rites and rituals.

The culturally inclusive service model at Bubup Wilam supports the cultural and developmental needs of the local Aboriginal children and their families.

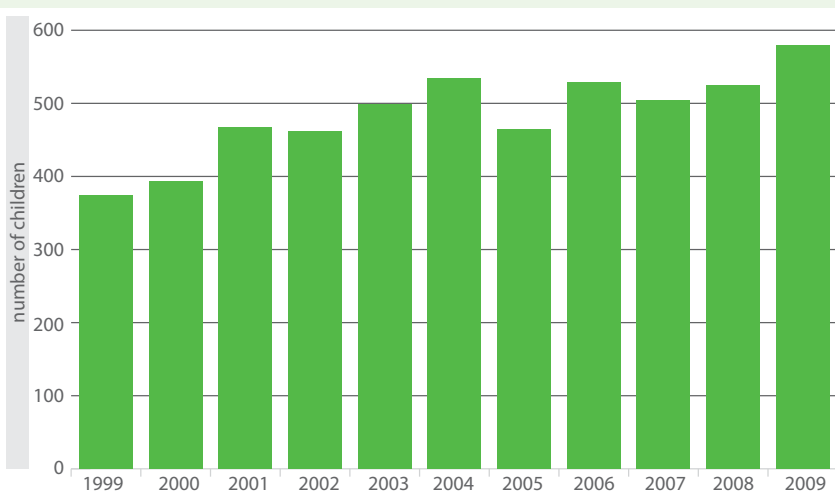
Further improve participation in kindergarten and Maternal and Child Health Services

In the past 12 months, the Victorian Government has addressed barriers to kindergarten participation through a range of initiatives. In 2009, the kindergarten fee subsidy supported 17,202 children to access a 10-hour per week kindergarten program in the year before school at no cost.

In addition, significant work has occurred to improve kindergarten participation for Aboriginal 3- and 4-year-old children. Victoria is leading on the establishment of two Aboriginal Children and Family Centres in Whittlesea and Bairnsdale, and has assumed program responsibility for the six Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services from the Commonwealth, with a view to increasing the range of services available for Aboriginal children and families in these locations. Aboriginal early childhood teacher scholarships are being provided for diploma-qualified early childhood educators to upgrade to degree qualification.

During the last 12 months, MCH services have been supported to develop strategies to improve access to early years services in their local area, with an emphasis on engaging the most vulnerable families. Families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds now have better access to a range of early years information through a tripling of funding for interpreters and the translation of MCH resources into a range of languages. MCH now also provides outreach services to over 20 Aboriginal community-controlled services and to the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service to support Aboriginal children and their families access MCH.

Indigenous children participating in kindergarten in the year before school

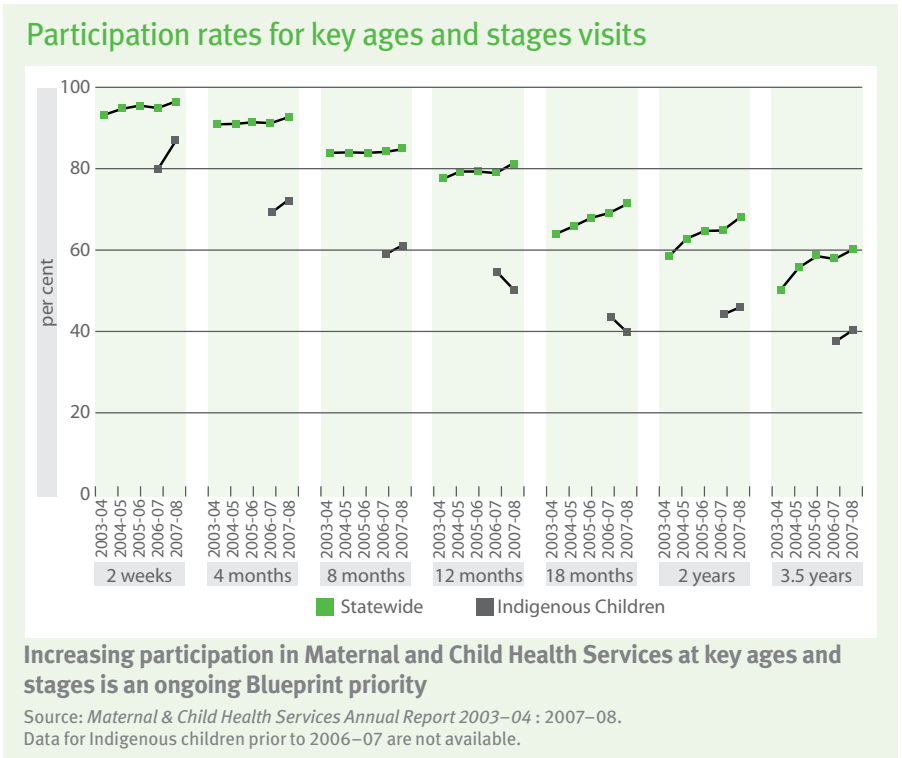


New Government initiatives have been in place aiming to increase kindergarten participation of Indigenous children

Source: DEECD administrative data

Indigenous children are those children identified by their parent or guardian as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.

The number of enrolments includes the total number of enrolments in kindergarten in the year before school, i.e. first and approved second year.



Extend free kindergarten through fee subsidies for those children known to child protection services

Early Start kindergarten provides 3-year-old children known to child protection with up to five hours per week of quality kindergarten free of charge.

Sixteen partnerships have been funded in the last 12 months to implement the initiative in municipalities with high rates of child protection reporting. The partnerships, encompassing local government, Best Start, Child FIRST, family service organisations and Kindergarten Cluster Managers, support the inclusion of eligible children in quality kindergarten programs in their local area.

Negotiate a partnership agreement between the Department and the Municipal Association of Victoria

A partnership agreement between the Department and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) came into effect on 6 August 2009.

The partnership agreement recognises the collaborative relationship between the Department and MAV in the planning, development and provision of education and early childhood services, and provides an overarching framework to guide current and future relationships and activities relating to funding and program arrangements, plans and policies.

Action area: Excellent school education

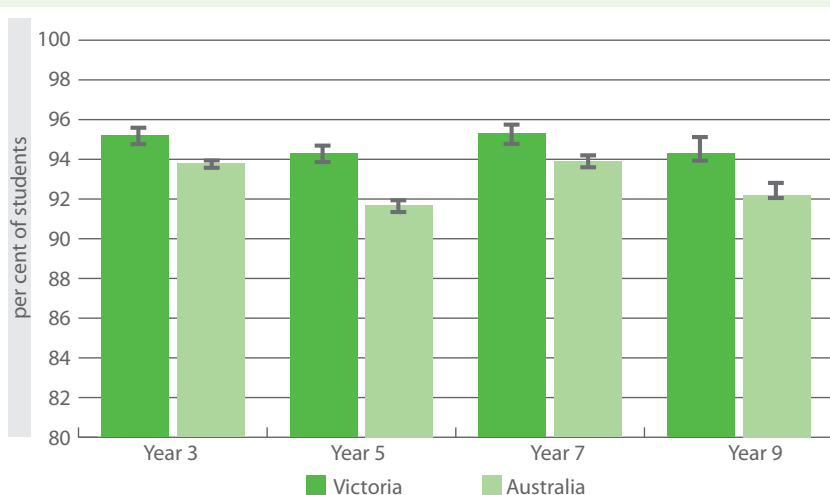
- Pursue a stronger systemic approach to school improvement in government schools by driving improvement through regional networks, and stronger interventions in schools where performance needs to improve.
- Promote partnerships between government and non-government schools, more consistent accountability frameworks and greater transparency about performance and provision from all schools regardless of sector.
- The Blueprint committed to a series of actions to achieve excellent school education in the areas of 'Quality teaching and learning', 'Government school improvement' and 'Cross-sectoral strategies'. Achievements made are detailed below.

Release a statement on Victoria's approach to literacy and numeracy

A statement articulating Victoria's approach to literacy and numeracy education was released, in late 2009 to provide guidance for schools' 2010 learning program in the context of the national release of the second year of NAPLAN results. The statement clearly outlines a set of expectations about the roles and responsibilities of Victorian teachers and school leaders in supporting high-quality literacy and numeracy education. The statement also describes the strategies and initiatives provided by the system to support teachers and school leaders to carry out these roles and responsibilities.



Students at or above the national minimum standard in reading, 2009



Victoria has again performed strongly in the 2009 NAPLAN national assessments, with in excess of 90 per cent of students at or above the national minimum standards in all domains and all year levels. The results for Reading mirror those for the other domains.

Source: NAPLAN national assessments, MCEECDYA 2009

Release strategies on mathematics and science, languages and the use of information and communication technologies (ICT)

The Energising Science and Mathematics Education in Victoria strategy was released during National Science Week in August 2009. The strategy aims to attract more Victorian students to sustain studies in science and mathematics, engaging and maintaining their interest through a range of forward-looking initiatives to ensure that Victoria maintains its high performance in science and mathematics.

Languages education in Victoria enriches the learning of our young people and helps to build their intercultural skills. A discussion paper is being released signalling new directions to strengthen the provision of languages education. This will form the basis for targeted consultation with key stakeholders and inform the development of the languages strategy to be released in 2010.

The use and influence of technology in education, including new modes of delivery, is increasing dramatically. Initial work has been completed on identifying elements of a Digital Learning Strategy to describe our vision and objectives for digital learning in Victorian education. Work on proposed actions is underway and includes projects such as the Ultranet, KnowledgeBank: Next Generation, Find Use Share Education (FUSE), the Netbook Trial and implementing the Federal Government's National Secondary Schools Computer Fund initiative.

Case Study

Literacy coaching in Loddon Mallee Region: Heather Ridge

The Literacy Improvement Teams initiative provided funding to employ 60 literacy coaches, including 15 Koorie literacy coaches, to provide intensive coaching assistance for teachers. The coaches focus on strengthening the literacy knowledge and skills of teachers in schools where students have lower than expected literacy outcomes.

Coaching has been shown to have a high impact on classroom practice. The coach is a critical friend who helps the teacher gather information, reflect and improve their practice to meet all students' needs. Evaluation during 2008 showed that over a six-month period, the students in the classes of the participating teachers showed an average nine months reading growth.

After a distinguished career as a classroom teacher, Heather Ridge was appointed a literacy coach in 2007 and coached for two years in schools around Bendigo. Heather's ability to influence the teaching and learning approaches of the teachers she coached led to impressive gains in student literacy results. Her expertise was recognised in 2008 when she received the Lindsay Thompson Fellowship award. Heather used the award to investigate effective coaching strategies in the United States that could be adopted in schools in Victoria.

In 2009, in recognition of her expertise, Heather was appointed as lead coach for the Loddon Mallee Region. She will work closely with the 34 literacy, Koorie literacy, and teaching and learning coaches to support nearly 60 regional schools.

Publish standards for provision in government schools

Clearly articulated education provision standards will make explicit what all parents and young people can expect from a government school. The standards will articulate the curriculum offerings that every child and young person should be able to access from P–12.

While work on the standards has commenced, further consideration will need to be given to the standards in the context of new policy documents and Blueprint Implementation papers, including Transparency and Accountability, the Digital Learning strategy and the Rural Education Strategy. The standards will also be developed in the context of other recent initiatives and projects such as the Ultranet, Regeneration Projects and the Building Education Revolution, including science and language centres. A discussion paper will be released for consultation in early 2010, prior to publication of the standards.

Implement the enhanced School Accountability and Improvement Framework, with an increased role for school networks

The School Accountability and Improvement Framework was enhanced through the introduction of extended diagnostic reviews in government schools. These comprehensive reviews enable a greater depth of inquiry and interaction, involving expert independent analysis of current school performance and practice, together with advice on improvement strategies.

The Blueprint implementation paper, *Supporting School Improvement: Transparency and Accountability in Victorian Government Schools*, was launched in November 2009. This reform includes enhancements to support further improvement across the government school system. A School Performance Summary was released in November for government schools.

The role of school networks has been increased to better target school improvement efforts. Seventy Regional Network Leaders (RNLs) have been appointed with responsibility for leading a network of schools to improve the quality of the educational offering. They will focus on building collective capacity and responsibility for educational provision of all schools in the network. The expansion of the role of school networks will continue over the next two to five years.

Case Study

Regional Network Leaders

The introduction of RNLs provides increased support for the achievement of large-scale school improvement. Each RNL has a clear focus on individual and collective improvement in the performance of all network schools.

Working closely with each of their network schools, RNLs have provided a sharper focus on government and Department priorities – improvement in literacy and numeracy, Year 12 retention and completion, and system-wide enhancement.

Each RNL has led the development of strategic and annual implementation plans for their network of schools, giving networks the lead role in school improvement.

To support higher levels of teaching expertise, RNLs are working to ensure that each network teacher has opportunities to engage in effective, ongoing professional learning through regional and network programs. A major professional learning focus is classroom coaching.

Begin negotiating new arrangements with non-government schools, based on the National Goals of Schooling and the COAG productivity agenda

The Government has concluded a new 2010–2013 funding agreement with the non-government schools sector that supports the achievement of the national and Victorian reform agendas. Negotiated with the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and the Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, the new agreement will take effect from 1 January 2010. It will enhance transparency and accountability, and provide new funding to support improved outcomes for students in Victorian non-government schools, particularly students with disabilities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In addition, the Blueprint implementation paper, *Transparency and Accountability Across All School Sectors in Victoria*, setting out the cross-sectoral aspirations and approach for transparency and accountability was launched in November 2009. This outlines new transparency actions, including a Victorian School Performance Summary across all sectors to be released in early 2010 to complement the information available nationally on the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) website.

Partnerships with parents and communities



Action area: Working with families, communities and business

- Create strong partnerships between early childhood services, schools, the broader community and business so that parents and families raising children are supported by the whole community in this crucial undertaking.
- The Blueprint committed to a series of actions to enhance partnerships with parents and communities in the areas of 'Parenting support', 'Community hubs' and 'Partnership with business'. Achievements made are detailed below.

Initiate better information and support for parents, and a program to assist vulnerable families to further develop their homes as positive learning environments

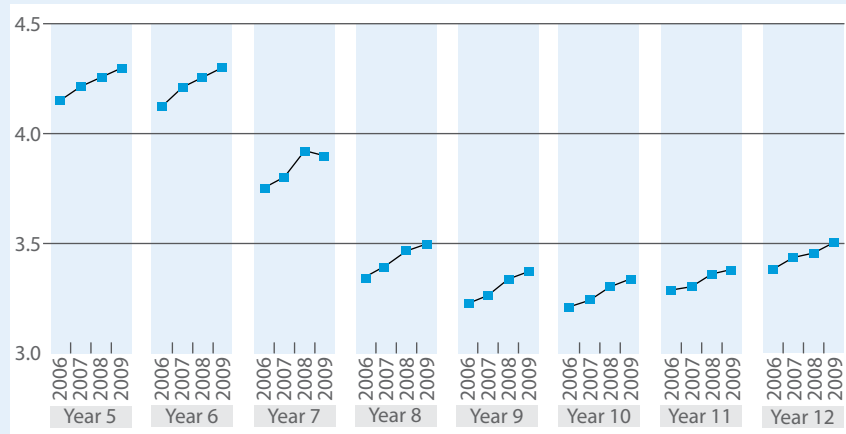
The Victorian Government is committed to supporting vulnerable families through evidence-based programs to strengthen the home learning environment. These programs will improve family literacy and parental skills and confidence for up to 2000 vulnerable families. The approach for program delivery that has been developed over the last 12 months will link to the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework.

The *Positive Education Planning* booklet has been developed to support parents of students with disabilities to build positive partnerships with their child's school. It provides important information to parents about their role and the role of the school in supporting their child, including suggestions for education planning, goal setting and measuring learning progress. The book was developed by the Association for Children with a Disability, in partnership with the Department, and has been made available to parents of children attending government primary schools across Victoria.

Publish guidance to schools and early childhood services on engaging with parents

A Family Partnership Policy Framework has been developed based on contemporary evidence and is being prepared for broader consultation with key stakeholders. The framework will provide guidance to schools and early childhood services on engaging with parents. The framework will be accompanied by a 'tool box' of new resources for schools to improve family involvement in their child's learning and development.

Students attitudes to school: school connectedness, state means*, Years 5–12, 2006–2009



Student engagement in schooling has improved again in Victoria for the third successive year

Source: Student Attitudes to School Survey, 2006–2009

* scale of 1–5 where 5 is the best possible score

Release a statement of priorities for the relationship between business and Victoria's learning and development system

A statement of priorities outlining the relationship between business and Victoria's learning and development system has been developed. The *Business Working with Education Statement* sets out the priority areas for partnerships between business and education and outlines how these partnerships can be established. The statement provides a framework for business and education to connect across five critical priority areas:

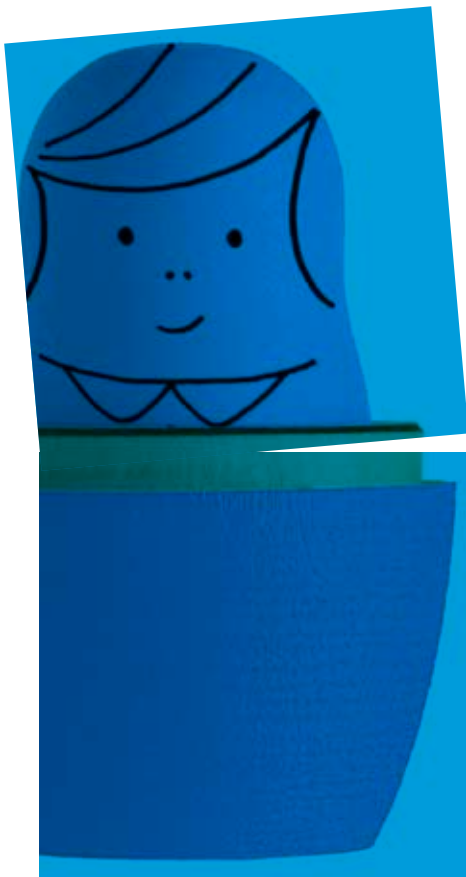
- creating greater opportunity for students from disadvantaged backgrounds
- developing an education system that values excellence in learning and teaching
- maximising the impact of leadership on improved outcomes
- creating community partnerships
- expanding opportunities and pathways in areas of benefit to the economy and society.

Case Study

Australian Business and Community Network

The Australian Business and Community Network (ABCN) is a partnership of highly committed national business leaders and companies working on mentoring and coaching programs. ABCN was created in 2004 by a group of senior business leaders whose vision was to inspire, challenge and engage businesses to have a greater positive impact in the community. The ABCN's focus is on education and improving opportunities for students and schools that are most in need.

The ABCN has more than 27 member companies that currently work with more than 149 disadvantaged schools across Australia. Member companies include American Express, Bain & Company, Citigroup, Commonwealth Bank, Deloitte, Ernst & Young, Fuji Xerox and Goldman Sachs JBWere. In Victoria, they are working with 13 primary and 16 secondary schools. ABCN Victorian programs include a Year 9 mentoring program (GOALS), Spark (primary school reading), Partners in Learning (partnering business leaders with principals), Career Choice Day (students visiting businesses), TEAM (technology, enterprise and mathematics mentoring) and InterAct Arts Experience (free arts performances and activities).



Action area: Opportunity for all Victorians

- Some children and young people need extra or more individualised opportunities and support in order to achieve their best. We will ensure that schools and early childhood services are equipped to respond effectively to the needs of all children.
- The Blueprint committed to a series of actions to improve opportunities for all Victorians in the areas of 'Place-based approaches' and 'Meeting diverse needs'. Achievements made are detailed below.

Release a strategy to improve participation and outcomes in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage

The National Partnership for Low Socio-economic Status School Communities provides guidance for the development of strategies to improve participation and outcomes in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. This National Partnership will involve a series of ambitious reform initiatives for implementation in specific low-SES school communities.

Continue implementing the Victorian Schools Plan, including regeneration projects

The major upgrade of Victorian government school infrastructure and facilities through the Victorian Schools Plan is continuing. The Victorian Schools Plan is being complemented by the introduction of the Commonwealth Government's BER. Together these programs are leading to significant upgrading of facilities within all Victorian schools.

Continue to implement Wannik

The continued implementation of the Wannik strategy has resulted in a reformed Koorie Education Workforce, with 27 new positions created and significant skill and remuneration increases agreed to. The Wannik Education Scholarship program is in place for high-achieving Koorie students, and tutorial assistance schemes have been established for students who need additional support. Additional literacy coaches are assisting teachers in schools with large numbers of Koorie students. Four new Koorie Pathways Schools have been opened, focusing on providing individualised assistance and support for Koorie students aged 12–16 who are not engaged in their mainstream school or who are at serious risk of disengagement.

Case Study

Supporting greater engagement for Koorie students

Debra Kiley, Wannik Project Officer in the Hume Region, has been working closely with schools, community groups and the Local Learning and Employment Networks to develop effective pathways for every Koorie student. In a planned approach, secondary students in the Shepparton and Goulburn Murray networks were surveyed to gain information about attitudes to school retention, career choice and aspirations, barriers to these aspirations and the cultural environment within schools.

The information gathered through the survey was used to develop the Koorie-specific week-long Worlds of Work program in Melbourne in conjunction with the Foundation for Young Australians. Twenty-five students from the Hume Region participated in the program and were linked with work experience placements relevant to their aspirations.

Work with the Commonwealth Government to develop an early childhood strategy for Koorie children and their families

Victoria has signed a National Partnership for Indigenous Early Childhood Development to improve the outcomes of indigenous children in the early years. Victoria has also assumed responsibility for the six Commonwealth funded Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services to help increase the range of services available for Aboriginal children and families.

Consultations with Aboriginal organisations to develop the Aboriginal Early Years strategy commenced in November 2009. The strategy will complement:

- the Victorian Indigenous Affairs Framework
- Dardee Boorai: the Victorian Charter of Safety and Wellbeing for Aboriginal Children and Young People
- the Wannik strategy, Learning together: Journey to our future
- the 10-year plan for Aboriginal children and young people (currently being drafted)
- the Koorie Health Plan being developed through the Victorian Aboriginal Committee on Koorie Health.

Develop a strategy to improve educational outcomes for students who are homeless

The Department has developed guidelines for schools to enhance support for children, young people and their families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The guidelines, *Supporting Children, Young People and Their Families Affected by Homelessness*, aim to achieve improved educational outcomes for homeless students by building the capacity of schools to identify and appropriately respond to issues of homelessness.

Workforce reform



Action area: Modern careers and workplaces

- Encourage the best people to work in education and early childhood. For those workforces the Government employs, provide attractive and rewarding career structures and modern work practices.
- The Blueprint committed to a series of actions to improve opportunities for all Victorians in the areas of 'Early childhood workforce development', 'Attracting the best people to teaching' and 'High-performing school workforces'. Achievements made are detailed below.

Release an early childhood workforce strategy

Victoria's early childhood workforce strategy has been released as part of its Statement on Early Childhood Development – *Growing, Learning and Thriving: Building on Victoria's Achievements in Early Childhood Development*. It sets out the long-term reforms needed to develop a highly skilled, professional workforce that supports the health, learning and development of all Victorian children. The strategy outlines actions to address immediate gaps and deliver on the long-term reform needed to improve children's learning and development. There will be a focus on providing opportunities to support the upskilling of the existing early childhood workforce through the provision of scholarships and professional development.

Recruit the first intake into the Teach for Australia program, to commence teaching in 2010

Victoria will lead the nation in putting some of the brightest university graduates into disadvantaged classrooms and be among the first in Australia to be part of the new teacher recruitment program – Teach for Australia, starting in 2010.

In April 2009, Premier John Brumby joined Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Minister for Education Bronwyn Pike to officially launch the program, announcing that Victoria would lead the way in rolling out the program within Australia as part of a \$550 million National Partnership to raise the level of teaching nationwide.

This innovative program prepares high-achieving graduates (known as associates) from non-education disciplines who might be studying law, accounting, sciences, management consulting or similar disciplines and trains them to work as teachers for two years in educationally disadvantaged schools.

Training begins with an initial intensive university course. The associates will be allocated to a school and spend 80 per cent of their time in the classroom. The remaining time will be spent undergoing the rest of their two-year teaching qualification and leadership program. The associates will receive intensive academic, professional support and leadership development by trained school-based mentors and educational advisers.

... joining Teach For Australia is an opportunity to work with and under the guidance of passionate, vibrant people with a common goal ...

2010 Associate

The first cohort of associates has already been recruited to commence teaching in 2010. Victoria will recruit and place a minimum of 75 associates over two years.

Legislate to allow Executive Class contracts

The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* was amended in January 2009 to create an Executive Class for school leaders. A Ministerial Order for the terms and conditions of employment of the Executive Class was signed in April 2009. An Executive Class contract has been developed and is currently being reviewed to ensure that it meets requirements under the Act and other obligations under State or Federal law.



Case Study

Building instructional capacity and enhancing joint responsibility

The Assistant Regional Director, School Improvement, in Gippsland Region, Karen Cain, is responsible for the leadership development of principals and Regional Network Leaders (RNLs).

Karen's work has a dual focus – building the instructional capacity of leaders and enhancing the internal accountability and commitment within each network. The intention is to reduce variation in student results between different classrooms and schools.

In 2009, three networks in the region have built knowledge of effective teaching and learning practices with a focus on classroom evidence. Two more networks are preparing to undertake this work in 2010.

Karen has also worked closely with the RNLs to build a team commitment to school improvement, developing shared knowledge and practice and making connections across the region.

According to Karen, 'Leaders are directly linking to classroom practice through observation and analysis of classroom teaching and learning. Coaching of team and teacher practice is related directly to identified "problems of teaching and learning practice". Importantly, there has been a real growth in joint responsibility for every child in every school.'



Negotiate with universities and the Commonwealth Government on improved pre-service education

The Department worked with the University of Melbourne to develop the first Masters level pre-service teacher education program. The Master of Teaching is offered in three streams: early childhood, primary and secondary. The program commenced in February 2008 with the engagement of 14 Teaching Fellows in 14 participating government schools. The program received a very positive mid-year evaluation, which informed a number of improvements and developments made for the 2009 program.



Trial innovative approaches to work organisation

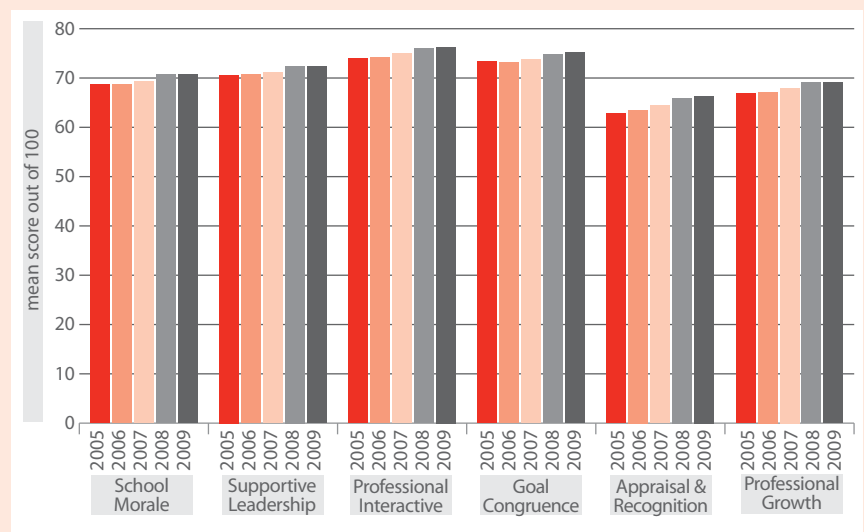
The planning phase of the Wider Workforce Field Trial to investigate innovative and sustainable models of workforce organisation was completed during 2009. The field trial, involving 35 schools and clusters, explores employment models of para-professionals and teacher assistants, and experts from local communities, business, universities and government agencies, to enhance teaching practice. The use of other professionals and para-professionals has the potential to reduce the administrative burden on classroom teachers, freeing them up to focus on their core business of teaching and learning.

Participating schools will trial and evaluate models of workforce organisation throughout 2010.

Investigate rewards and incentives for effective teaching

A literature review as well as consultations with a wide range of stakeholders was completed in 2008 to support the development of models designed to reward teaching excellence. Two models were judged suitable for trials in the short term – financial rewards for individual teachers based on the use of a balanced scorecard (teacher rewards) and financial rewards for schools based on a broad-based performance measure (school rewards). Both models have qualified support from key stakeholders. A Blueprint implementation paper setting out the approach was released in August 2009, with trials to commence in Victorian government schools in 2010.

Staff opinion – all Victorian government schools, 2005–09



The Government’s commitment to workforce reform is supported by the improvement in staff satisfaction levels on key measures across Victorian government schools in recent years

Source: DEECD Staff Opinion Survey, 2005–09

Action area: A culture of strong leadership and professional learning

- Engage the workforce in professional learning as part of an overall approach to service improvement.
- The Blueprint committed to a series of actions to improve opportunities for all Victorians in the areas of ‘Leadership development’, ‘Capacity building in early childhood services’ and ‘Professional learning for teachers’. Achievements made are detailed below.

Establish the Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership

A major objective for the Victorian Government is to develop leadership on a wide scale to systematically support the development of current and aspiring leaders across the education and early childhood workforce. These leaders will have the knowledge and skills to enable them to support ongoing improvement in the achievement of all children in the Victorian education system.

The Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership will offer a continuous and differentiated set of learning opportunities that are informed by a coherent view of early childhood development and teaching and learning. All programs will be grounded in both theory and practice and underpinned by the Department’s models of effective schools, effective leadership and effective professional learning.

Case Study

Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership

In July 2009, the Minister for Education officially launched the Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership. The Bastow Institute will provide outstanding professional learning opportunities for emerging leaders, leadership teams, and new and experienced principals. Modules for teachers who have demonstrated achievement in a leadership role and are aspiring to a principal class position will form an important part of the Bastow Institute’s range of professional learning opportunities. Learning opportunities will also be provided for Regional Network Leaders, literacy, numeracy and instructional coaches, business managers and professionals in the early childhood workforce.

Bastow Institute Director, Bruce Armstrong, said that ‘the Institute is a landmark in the provision of leadership professional learning in Victoria. Not only will it raise the bar in relation to the quality of leadership development programs, it will extend the reach of the Department’s current leadership strategy’.

The Bastow Institute will be located in a heritage building in Queensberry Street, North Melbourne. The building is undergoing significant refurbishment and will feature state of the art technology and learning spaces including a lecture theatre, observational classroom, syndicate rooms and a large, group learning space. The building is scheduled to open in 2011.

Provide professional development centred on the Early Years Learning and Development Framework

The Victorian Government provided professional development to over 3500 early childhood educators and teachers in the early years of primary school in August and September 2009. The professional development focused on the learning outcomes of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework and on supporting children's transition to school.

Collect and share evidence of the characteristics of effective professional learning across all sectors

Significant work has been undertaken to collect and share evidence on the characteristics of effective professional learning for teachers across all sectors. A range of case studies have been developed showcasing best practice professional learning. *Willing to Lead* case studies are available in print form and online. An updated document of the DEECD *Professional Learning in Effective Schools* will be developed by the end of 2009.

Disseminate an instructional model for teachers

The Department has developed and disseminated an evidence-based model of quality instructional practice – the e⁵ Instructional Model – to assist school leaders and teachers to develop a shared understanding of how to improve classroom practice and identify areas of professional learning and growth that require an increased focus. The e⁵ Instructional Model was launched in April 2009 and copies of the publication have been distributed to all schools and regional offices.

The year ahead



System improvement

The following section describes the new initiatives that the Government commits to for 2010.



Action area: Integration and transitions

The 2009 Blueprint actions have helped to solidify the Government's focus on an integrated learning and development system that supports children and their families from birth through to adulthood.

The second year of Blueprint implementation will continue to promote co-location and integration of services in new and existing facilities. This will include 10 Children's Centres and two integrated Indigenous Children and Family Centres that are being developed as part of the National Partnership on Indigenous Early Childhood Development.

To support a positive start to school for all children, a common Victorian approach to transitions has been developed to guide families, early childhood services and schools. We will continue to roll out this approach, and further strengthen the evidence base by measuring its success. Additional research will be undertaken to identify the next wave of emerging promising practices, which will continue to guide the development of transition programs throughout Victoria.

Key components of the student support services reforms, as outlined in *Strengthening Student Support Services Directions Paper: The Way Forward*, will be advanced and implemented during 2010. A common assessment framework will also be developed to support children and young people with additional needs.

New initiatives for 2010

The National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions, to be implemented from 1 January 2010, will deliver major improvements to the way we support young people to make the transition from school to further education, training and employment. Under this National Partnership, young people will be required to be in full-time education, training or employment until the age of 17 and will have a guaranteed education or training place to the age of 24. Funding will be provided for a significant enhancement to Victoria's Local Learning and Employment Networks, and to deliver Youth Connections, a comprehensive, statewide youth support service. During 2010 we will:

- implement a range of youth career and transition programs agreed under the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions

Transitions will be further improved by developing and promoting clusters of subjects within the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) that lead to further training and employment in specific industries. This approach will be piloted through the Industry Themed programs project. During 2010 we will:

- develop Industry Themed programs in three pilot sites

New developmental frameworks will continue to feature in 2010. As outlined in the Statement on Early Childhood Development – *Growing, Learning and Thriving: Building on Victoria’s Achievements in Early Childhood Development*, work is currently underway on the development of a health and wellbeing service framework for children and young people from birth to 18 years of age. This framework will build health and wellbeing services, including the MCH Service, school nursing and allied health workforces into a coherent and coordinated system for children, young people and their families. During 2010 we will:

- develop a health and wellbeing service framework for children and young people from birth to 18 years of age

Action area: High-quality, accessible early childhood services

Early childhood services that are of high quality and easily accessible are fundamental components of the Victorian approach to the delivery of health, development, education and care services for children and their families.

The Victorian Government is co-funding the longitudinal study *Effectiveness of Early Education Experiences for Children*. This is the first major longitudinal study of the effectiveness of Australian early childhood programs on young children’s learning, health and development and their social inclusion. The National Partnerships on Early Childhood Education and Indigenous Early Childhood Development will also provide Victorian children with improved early childhood learning and development experiences.

The Blueprint actions achieved in 2009 have helped to improve participation rates in kindergarten and MCH services. During 2010, the Department will continue to promote increased participation of children from vulnerable groups in universal early childhood services, such as MCH and kindergarten services.

New initiatives for 2010

The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework advances children’s learning and development from birth to 8 years. The Victorian Framework supports all early childhood professionals to work together and with families to achieve common outcomes for all children’s learning and development. It shares with the Australian Early Years Learning Framework (for children birth to 5 years), the following five outcomes: that children have a strong sense of identity; are connected with and contribute to their world; have a strong sense of wellbeing; are confident and involved learners; and are effective communicators. It also outlines practice principles for learning and development which describe the most effective ways for early childhood professionals to work together and with children and families to advance learning and development. As outlined in *Growing, Learning and Thriving*, during 2010 we will:

- implement the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework



Action area: Excellent school education

The Blueprint articulates the Government's responsibility to assure quality and promote a culture of excellence in all schools across Victoria. Much has been achieved during 2009 in the areas of quality teaching and learning, government school improvement and cross-sectoral strategies.

Through the Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership, the Government has committed to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students, especially those who are falling behind. The agreement focuses on effective and evidence-based teaching of literacy and numeracy, strong school leadership, whole-of-school engagement with literacy and numeracy, and monitoring student and school performance to identify where support is needed. A focus of the second year of Blueprint actions will be the implementation of key elements of the Literacy and Numeracy Statement, together with the release of the languages strategy.

The new network model introduced in 2009 is allowing networks to better target school improvement efforts. The 70 Regional Network Leaders will continue to drive accountability and improvement and oversee the implementation of the Network Accountability and Improvement Framework, through which networks establish specific actions and targets for improvement.

The new funding agreements between the State of Victoria and non-government schools and systems will be implemented from the start of 2010.

In addition, the Commonwealth is working with the States and Territories to develop a national curriculum. Victoria will play a role throughout 2010 in shaping the development of the new curriculum.

New initiatives for 2010

Efforts to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes will be further enhanced through the establishment of a Victorian Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat. The Secretariat will coordinate literacy and numeracy policy and programs, and assist regions, networks and schools to improve student achievement.

Throughout 2010, the Secretariat's major priority will be to oversee the new six to 18 month rolling literacy and numeracy strategy in schools involved in the Smarter Schools National Partnership projects. In due course, the agenda will broaden to other important connections to the literacy and numeracy education agenda, including the years prior to formal schooling. During 2010 we will:

- establish the Victorian Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat to drive improvement in student achievement in literacy and numeracy including through the National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy

Effective governance plays an important role in the performance of government schools. It is timely to identify ways in which we can further support governance in government schools. During 2010 we will:

- explore practical steps that can be taken to further support school governance

The Blueprint's vision is for young Victorians to make effective contributions to their local and global communities. We will continue to promote Victoria's reputation as a destination of choice for international students. The 'internationalising' of school education is increasingly important and Victoria will continue to provide opportunities for students, teachers and school leaders to engage across other languages and cultures. During 2010 we will:

- implement a range of initiatives that enhance the international education experiences of Victorian school educators and students

Further work will be undertaken to progress transparency and accountability in Victorian schools so that parents are better informed about the outcomes being obtained by their children. In the second year of Blueprint implementation we will work with the government, Catholic and independent sectors to develop and implement a consistent approach to transparency and accountability across sectors. During 2010 we will:

- implement a range of initiatives that support the Government's transparency and accountability agenda

Partnerships with parents and communities



Action area: Working with families, communities and business

High levels of parental involvement and strong communities are critical to children's development and learning. In 2010, our challenge is to continue the focus on effectively engaging families in learning and development.

During 2010, we will support the development of an additional 10 new Integrated Children's Centres through the Children's Capital program. These centres offer maximum convenience, flexibility and choice for parents by combining a range of services that a family may need to help raise young children.

The Department will provide schools with a range of tools and resources that are informed by evidence-based practice to strengthen the involvement of families in their children's learning.

Partnerships with business will continue to feature prominently in 2010. Options for business involvement in school management and governance that draw on international experiences will be examined, particularly in areas where student outcomes could be improved.

New initiatives for 2010

Parental engagement will be further promoted in the next 12 months with the roll-out of the Ultranet IT portal to all Victorian government schools. The parent portal of the Ultranet will enable parents to become full partners in their child's education, giving them online access to their child's homework, attendance, assessment, curriculum and teacher feedback at any time. During 2010 we will:

- improve parents' engagement with their children's education through the roll-out of the Ultranet parent portal in Victorian government schools

The Early Home Learning Study will be conducted in 2010 to support vulnerable families to strengthen home learning environments through evidence-based home learning programs. As outlined in the Statement on Early Childhood Development – *Growing, Learning and Thriving*, during 2010 we will:

- conduct the pioneering Early Home Learning Study for vulnerable families, with a particular focus on children from birth to 3 years of age

Kindergarten cluster management is a key strategy to building a stronger kindergarten service network for children and families. It brings together a group of community managed kindergartens under the management of a single organisation, relieving parent committees of the responsibility of licensing, regulatory and financial requirements as well as staff employment and management. During 2010 we will:

- implement the revised Kindergarten Cluster Management Policy Framework to develop stronger local networks, more effective local planning and greater integration of care and education

A place-based approach to supporting students and their families through the development and coordination of partnerships between schools, business and communities will be piloted through a model of extended school hubs. Extended school hubs will provide learning programs and activities before, during and after school hours, such as homework clubs, outside school hours care, sport, music, other extra-curricular activities, and programs for parents to build their capacity to support their children's learning. They will also provide opportunities for co-location, integration of services, cross-sectoral collaboration, cooperation across schools in a network and increased community use of school facilities. During 2010 we will:

- trial the establishment of extended school hubs in low socio-economic locations

Action area: Opportunity for all Victorians

The second year of Blueprint implementation will see activity that builds on the progress made in improving outcomes and participation in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage, tackling place-based disadvantage and meeting diverse needs.

A key driver of these efforts will be the national partnership programs. The development of the bi-lateral agreement between Victoria and the Commonwealth Government for a National Partnership for Low Socio-economic Status School Communities, signed in October 2009, will provide the foundation for the development of broader strategies to improve participation and outcomes for children and youth from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. This will include strategies for cooperation and coordination between the government, Catholic and independent school sectors, government and non-government agencies and organisations, business and parents in a comprehensive whole-of-state approach.

The Victorian Schools Plan is delivering major infrastructure changes through the rebuilding, renovating or extending of all Victorian government schools over a 10 year period. The Commonwealth's Building the Education Revolution program has injected further funding into school infrastructure, and together with the Victorian Schools Plan, is helping to provide 21st century education facilities for our schools and their communities. Developing school infrastructure into community hubs and making school facilities available for community use will be the focus of ongoing infrastructure renewal.

New initiatives for 2010

Indigenous students will continue to be supported through the suite of Wannik strategy initiatives. An important area of work in 2010 will be the development and release of a 10-year Victorian Plan for Aboriginal Children and Young People covering the period 2010–20. During 2010 we will:

- release a 10-year plan to improve outcomes for all Victorian Aboriginal children and young people

The needs of homeless students will continue to be an area of focus. To promote a coordinated approach across government, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Department of Human Services will develop an agreement to improve the educational experience and outcomes for students affected by homelessness. During 2010 we will:

- implement the strategy to improve educational outcomes for homeless students

The Rural Education Framework, an overarching framework for rural education that aligns with existing and emerging initiatives across the Department, will assist in the implementation of the school improvement agenda for rural schools.

The Framework will address inequities between rural and metropolitan student outcomes arising from reduced access and opportunities and is focused on the key domains of Leadership, Workforce, 21st Century Curriculum Provision and Partnerships. During 2010 we will:

- develop a rural education strategy to strengthen education delivery in rural and remote schools

The learning needs of gifted and highly able students who are capable of extended learning focussed on their demonstrated interests and orientations will continue to be supported. We will continue to develop options to expose these students to advanced content and skills. During 2010 we will:

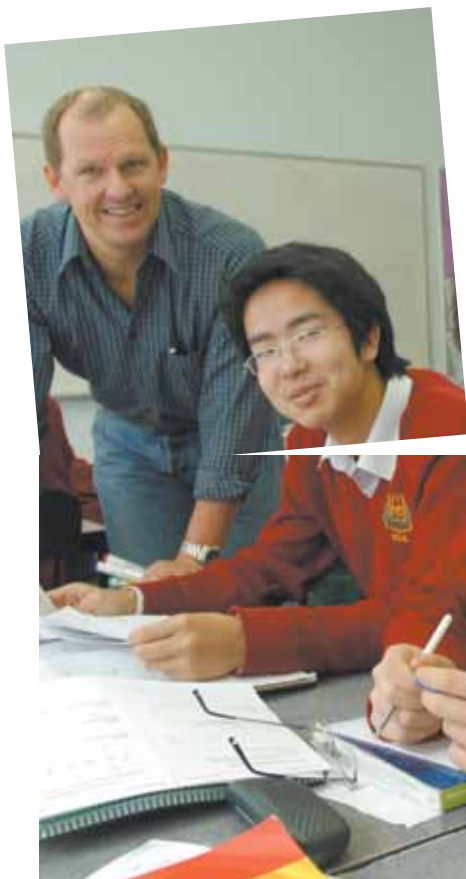
- improve opportunities through a range of contexts and modes for gifted and highly able students

Our community sector partners provide an important role in fostering better outcomes and participation for children and young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This can only be achieved through collaborative and consultative relationships with these partners, including not-for-profit agencies and peak bodies. During 2010 we will:

- develop a framework for collaboration with the community sector on education and early childhood development



Workforce reform



Action area: Modern careers and workplaces

There have been significant developments in 2009 affecting both the early childhood and school education professions.

The development of an early childhood workforce strategy recognises the demand for a skilled and professional workforce to support all Victorian children in their years before primary school. The number of children accessing early childhood education and care programs has increased dramatically over the last decade and parents' expectations about service quality has grown as well.

The reforms contained in the National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality, designed to attract, train, place, develop, retain and reward quality teachers and leaders in our schools, align strongly with our Blueprint reform direction.

The first intake of Teach For Australia Associates will commence the two-year program in 2010 and the second intake of Associates will be recruited to commence in 2011.

The Blueprint's commitment to investigate rewards and incentives for effective teaching will be taken a step further in 2010, with two-year trials of the 'teacher rewards' and 'school rewards' models to begin in selected schools. An independent evaluator will be appointed to assess the impact and outcomes of the two trials.

New initiatives for 2010

As outlined in the Statement on Early Childhood Development – *Growing, Learning and Thriving*, the second year of the Blueprint will see a focus on implementing initiatives for Victoria's early childhood workforce. Our initial priority is to attract enough qualified early childhood professionals, particularly in early childhood education and care, to meet the demand arising from population growth and recent reforms. This will include support for the existing workforce to attain higher qualifications. During 2010 we will:

- implement the Victorian early childhood workforce strategy, *Improving Victoria's Early Childhood Workforce: Working to give Victoria's children the best start to life*

The improvements made in pre-service education for school teachers will be built on in 2010. We will also provide more opportunities for pre-service student teachers to engage in practice-based learning as part of their training. This will involve negotiation with pre-service education providers to offer more diverse clinical models, where students spend more time working and learning in schools with support from experienced practitioners. During 2010 we will:

- collaborate with providers of school teacher pre-service education to identify requirements for the preparation of a modern workforce

We want to encourage highly effective teachers and principals to work in areas of high need and low performance. To do so, we will provide incentives for some of the State's best performing teachers to undertake appointments in hard-to-staff schools. During 2010 we will:

- develop an approach to encourage and enable effective school teachers and leaders to work in areas of high need

Action area: A culture of strong leadership and professional learning

The Blueprint acknowledges that service improvement in early childhood services and school education must be driven by a culture of sustained professional learning across the system. This is particularly important in a rapidly changing social, economic and technological context where the community's expectations of teachers and other professionals are also changing.

Professional learning programs and resources will support the continued implementation of the new Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework in 2010. The focus will be on using the Victorian Framework to inform curriculum decisions and on the Practice Principles for Learning and Development. Professional development programs will be delivered through both face-to-face and online modules. The programs and resources will be available in multiple locations across all regions and will focus on quality improvement, learning and transition.

Leadership is acknowledged as a major contributor to excellence in early childhood services and schools and it will remain an ongoing priority for professional learning in the second year of the Blueprint. The National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality, with its focus on providing high-quality professional development for school leaders and teachers effective from 2010, provides further impetus to the Blueprint reforms in Victoria.

In 2010, Victoria's Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership will begin providing school leadership development opportunities grouped under four themes: leading people, leading organisations, leading instruction and leading futures. The focus in 2010 will be on the development and delivery of a series of leadership modules.

We will support the continued internationalisation of Victorian schools by promoting teacher exchanges between our schools and participating overseas educational systems through the Victorian International Teaching Fellowship program. This will enhance the professional learning and build the leadership capacity of participating teachers and school leaders.

New initiatives for 2010

The e⁵ Instructional Model, which provides the framework for defining high-quality instruction in Victorian government schools, will become the focus of the Teacher Professional Leave (TPL) program in 2010. All TPL participants will undertake the Professional Leave and Teacher Outcomes program to provide direct assistance in using e⁵ to address local professional development needs. During 2010 we will:

- promote teacher professional leave focused on the e⁵ Instructional Model

School leadership development will be further promoted through principal internships. The internship program will give aspirant leaders extended experience of real school leadership, supported by expert tutelage and professional learning. During 2010 we will:

- develop a culture of strong leadership and professional learning through principal internships

Education support staff have an important role to play in supporting students to achieve their best. Professional learning that develops the leadership skills of education support staff including business managers will strengthen their capacity to manage the complexity of tasks they perform and to engage effectively as a member of the school's leadership team. During 2010 we will:

- develop the leadership capacity of education support staff including business managers

Appendix 1 – Continuing reform priorities

Much has been accomplished in the first year of Blueprint implementation, and many new initiatives are proposed for 2010. In addition, there are a range of other continuing reform priorities that will leverage and support the Blueprint reform program.

These continuing reform priorities require ongoing and sustained effort over several years in order to fully realise the intended improvement outcomes.

Key reform priorities that will continue in 2010 and beyond include:

- school improvement initiatives including:
 - a strengthened role for School Networks and Regional Network Leaders in promoting school improvement
 - an ongoing focus on improving Literacy and Numeracy outcomes
 - a whole-of-government focus on vulnerable and disengaged youth.
- initiatives in the Statement on Early Childhood Development – *Growing, Learning and Thriving*, including:
 - implementation of the new statewide approach to support a positive start to school for children and their families
 - continuing to improve participation in early childhood services, particularly by vulnerable groups.
- implementation of Commonwealth–State National Partnerships:
 - Smarter Schools National Partnerships in the areas of Literacy and Numeracy, Low Socio-economic Status School Communities, and Improving Teacher Quality that provide a comprehensive approach to improving student outcomes
 - National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education which focuses on reforming the delivery of early childhood education and care services through the delivery of universal access to early childhood education
 - National Partnership Agreement for Indigenous Early Childhood Development to improve the outcomes of Indigenous children in their early years by addressing the high levels of disadvantage they currently experience to give them the best start in life
 - National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions to increase participation of young people in education and training, increase attainment levels nationally and improve successful transitions from school.
- implementation of major infrastructure initiatives including:
 - the Victorian Schools Plan, together with the Building the Education Revolution program (as part of the Nation Building– Economic Stimulus Plan) which are delivering world-class educational infrastructure
 - the Ultranet IT portal that will be rolled out in all Victorian government schools
 - the Digital Education Revolution program focusing on the effective use of ICT in teaching and learning.

Appendix 2 – New initiatives for 2010

System improvement

Integration and transitions

- implement a range of youth career and transition programs agreed under the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions
- develop Industry Themed programs in three pilot sites
- develop a health and wellbeing service framework for children and young people from birth to 18 years of age

High-quality, accessible early childhood services

- implement the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

Excellent school education

- establish the Victorian Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat to drive improvement in student achievement in literacy and numeracy including through the National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy
- explore practical steps that can be taken to further support school governance
- implement a range of initiatives that enhance the international education experiences for Victorian school educators and students
- implement a range of initiatives that support the Government's transparency and accountability agenda

Partnerships with parents and communities

Working with families, communities and business

- improve parents' engagement with their children's education through the roll-out of the Ultranet parent portal in Victorian government schools
- conduct the pioneering Early Home Learning Study for vulnerable families, with a particular focus on children from birth to 3 years of age
- implement the revised Kindergarten Cluster Management Policy Framework to develop stronger local networks, more effective local planning and greater integration of care and education
- trial the establishment of extended school hubs in low socio-economic locations agreed under the National Partnership on Low Socioeconomic Status School Communities

Opportunity for all Victorians

- release a 10-year plan to improve outcomes for all Victorian Aboriginal children and young people
- implement the strategy to improve educational outcomes for homeless students
- develop a rural education strategy to strengthen education delivery in rural and remote schools
- improve opportunities through a range of contexts and modes for gifted and highly able students
- develop a framework for collaboration with the community sector on education and early childhood development

Workforce reform

Modern careers and workplaces

- implement the Victorian early childhood workforce strategy, *Improving Victoria's Early Childhood Workforce: Working to give Victoria's children the best start to life.*
- collaborate with providers of school teacher pre-service education to identify requirements for the preparation of a modern workforce
- develop an approach to encourage and enable effective school teachers and leaders to work in areas of high need

A culture of strong leadership and professional learning

- promote teacher professional leave focused on the e⁵ Instructional Model
- develop a culture of strong leadership and professional learning through principal internships
- develop the leadership capacity of education support staff including business managers

