

Compulsory years of education

Education in Victoria is compulsory for children aged from six to 15 years. This section discusses the provision of education and associated services for these students.

The first five years of schooling (P–4) are referred to as the early years and are chiefly concerned with developing in each child the essential skills and knowledge necessary for ongoing progress in education. Literacy and numeracy are widely recognised as foremost among these foundation skills.

During the middle years of schooling (Years 5–9), students grow from childhood to adolescence and consolidate competency in literacy and numeracy while developing physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually. They attain a greater breadth of knowledge and learning, including extending their capacity for creative and critical thinking.

Blueprint for Government Schools

The *Blueprint for Government Schools* provides the framework for an effective Victorian government school system. Its objective is that all government school students, irrespective of the school they attend, where they live or their social or economic status, have access to a high-quality school education and a genuine opportunity to succeed. The Blueprint is set within the context of a transparent and rigorous accountability framework that focuses on three priority areas for reform – recognising and responding to diverse student needs, building the skills of the education workforce to enhance the teaching–learning relationship, and continuously improving schools. The Blueprint identifies seven Flagship strategies that provide a basis for continuous improvement in schools, with students as the central focus.

Recognising and responding to diverse student needs

- 1 Student learning
- 2 Developing a new resource allocation model

Building the skills of the education workforce to enhance the teaching–learning relationship

- 3 Building leadership capacity
- 4 Creating and supporting a performance and development culture
- 5 Teacher professional development

Continuously improving schools

- 6 School improvement
- 7 Leading Schools Fund

These Flagship strategies provide a shared vision, focus on teaching and learning and professional leadership, set high expectations and accountabilities, and provide for robust, stimulating and secure learning environments. Effective teachers, leaders, schools, regions and the central office value and contribute to a culture of learning and improvement at all levels of the system.

Progress made during 2006–07 in implementing the initiatives of each strategy is detailed below.

Recognising and responding to diverse student needs

Student learning

The Department continued to develop curriculum advice and resources to support whole-school planning and build teacher capacity to implement student learning initiatives. The advice and resources support schools to implement the Victorian Essential Learning Standards progressively and to make decisions about appropriate curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting.

Highlights

- Over 65 per cent of schools participated in the training program associated with the rollout of the Student Learning Professional Learning Package. The program focused on building understanding of the Student Learning initiatives through the use of a suite of online resources. Participants were supported to develop professional learning plans to suit their school.
- One hundred and fifty schools participated in the Principles of Learning and Teaching professional learning program in 2007, bringing the total number of schools involved over the past three years to 850 (approximately 53 per cent of government schools).
- Professional learning forums for secondary school leadership teams focusing on effective whole-school curriculum planning were implemented across all regions in Term 3, 2006. Similar forums for secondary and primary school leadership teams were held in 2007 in a number of regions.
- In 2006, all schools planned and implemented programs consistent with the English and Mathematics domains of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards and reported student progress against them. In 2007, all schools are implementing and reporting on the domains of English, Mathematics, Health and Physical Education, Personal Learning, Civics and Citizenship, Humanities (Economics, Geography, History), Communication, and ICT.
- From 2007, all Victorian government schools are using the new plain English report cards to report to parents. These report cards provide consistency in reporting across the State, and information on student progress against common statewide standards. More than 90 per cent of schools are using the Department-provided software to produce reports. To assist with implementation of the new plain English report cards, advice, support materials and case studies were made available for schools, parents and software vendors on the Student Reports website. Brochures were also sent to parents.
- Web pages for each domain of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards were published. There are links to the standards, progression points, assessment maps and domain-related learning and teaching support materials.
- A survey administered in November 2006 asked principals to indicate the value to schools of the online student learning resources. The survey was completed by approximately 71 per cent of schools. The results indicate that there has been a notable increase in the perceived value of these resources by schools since the 2005 survey.
- The P–10 Mathematics and English Developmental Continua were published online in Term 3, 2006. They provide teaching strategies to help students achieve the Victorian Essential Learning Standards in Mathematics and English.
- The Mathematics Online Interview, previously known as the Early Numeracy Interview, was published online at the beginning of the 2007 school year. This resource enables teachers to monitor student learning in Mathematics in Years P–4.
- The Literacy Professional Learning Resource, published during Term 1, 2007, supports all teachers to deepen their understanding of literacy to inform their planning for literacy learning and assessment for all domains of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards. It also supports literacy leaders in schools to plan opportunities for professional learning for the whole staff, professional learning teams and/or individual teachers.

- The Literacy Leader Professional Learning program was implemented in Term 2, 2007. This three-day program assists school-based literacy leaders to build knowledge about literacy learning and the Online Literacy Professional Learning Resource. It also supports participants to develop a professional learning program that best meets the needs of their own school.
- The Literacy Improvement Team initiative was implemented in Term 4, 2006. From 2007, literacy specialists in identified schools work to bring about the changes in classroom practice and organisational culture that are necessary to accelerate the literacy performance of all students to at least the expected level. The initiative is funding the training and employment of 45 literacy specialists and the training of another 24 specialists funded by schools and regions. To date, 162 schools have been involved.
- Literacy and Numeracy Week was celebrated in regions and schools in September 2006. Web-based literacy and numeracy materials were provided to Victorian schools.
- The Victorian Premier's Reading Challenge targets students in Prep to Year 9 in all schools. In 2006, more than 190,000 students participated and more than 106,000 completed the Challenge. In 2007, registrations exceeded 195,000 by mid-June.
- The Science Continuum P–10, an online resource for teachers, was published in June 2007. It refers to the critical understandings necessary for students to progress in their knowledge of science concepts.

Developing a new resource allocation model

The Student Resource Package was launched in January 2005 and replaced the School Global Budget. The funding allocation is now student focused rather than expenditure-input focused.

Highlights

- In the Student Resource Package 2007, funding for the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) coordinators was refined and distributed on a per student basis with an increase to the maximum level of funding. Additionally, capacity was provided for funding to be delivered to schools where students enrolled after census day and were part of an approved re-engagement program.

Building the skills of the education workforce to enhance the teaching–learning relationship

Building leadership capacity

The Government allocated additional funding of \$11.6 million over four years to develop leadership capacity across the system. As a result of this funding, nine new leadership development programs were designed, bringing the total number of leadership development opportunities for current and aspiring school leaders to 19.

Highlights

- In 2007, 158 high-potential leaders are undertaking a Masters in School Leadership course which aims to improve succession planning and promote mobility and learning across the government school system. An external evaluation shows that almost 60 per cent of participants applied for a promotion and 67.5 per cent of these applicants were successful.
- One hundred and seventy-five aspiring leaders participated in Preparing for Leadership and Leading for Student Learning programs. These programs focus on building participants' capacity as curriculum leaders and change agents within their schools.
- One hundred and forty-four first-time principals received mentoring support from highly skilled principals to assist them to become more effective managers.

- Ninety experienced principals were provided with 10–15 hours of one-to-one coaching to enable them to strengthen their leadership capabilities through reflective learning.
- Sixty principals joined the Development Program for High Performing Principals. Participants are encouraged to look beyond their own school and to view themselves as system leaders who value the collective responsibility for improving all schools within the system.
- Two hundred and fifty-seven teachers and leaders participated in programs for school leadership teams focused on building their capacity to reform curriculum practices.
- Three hundred and nine assistant principals and leading teachers participated in new programs focused on the development of specific leadership capabilities to drive school improvement. The programs involved workshops, coaching, shadowing and mentoring.
- Thirty aspiring leaders, assistant principals and principals received scholarships to participate in postgraduate courses to increase their capacity as school leaders and their expertise in a particular learning area.
- Eighteen networks are supporting 260 aspirants in the Leaders in the Making program, designed to strengthen leadership capacity within school networks and support the development of succession planning models.
- In March 2007, *The Developmental Learning Framework for School Leaders* was published. The framework describes the capabilities required to lead effective Victorian government schools and will assist leaders to identify their development needs. The framework provides the basis for statewide leadership development programs.
- The *Guidelines for Principal Class Performance and Development 2007* were updated and distributed. The guidelines and proformas were updated to be consistent with *The Developmental Learning Framework for School Leaders* and changes to school annual implementation plans.

Creating and supporting a performance and development culture

The accreditation scheme for Performance and Development Culture in Schools is in its third year. The accreditation process is based on a Self-Assessment Framework, which is verified by an external body. The objective is for all schools to be accredited by the end of 2008.

Highlights

- As of June 2007, a total of 368 schools have been accredited.
- In 2007, 50 accredited schools are supporting non-accredited schools on a needs basis to work towards accreditation through involvement in activities such as workshops, school visits and the provision of supporting resources.
- Over 550 schools have registered their intention to be accredited during 2007. The remaining schools will be externally verified in 2008.
- Support materials, including a DVD, were developed to assist small schools to work towards accreditation.

Teacher professional development

Programs were funded to provide teachers with opportunities to build their capacity and consolidate their practice. Underpinning the programs is the belief that high-quality professional learning is one of the cornerstones of an effective school and is central to improving student learning.

Major professional development initiatives included Induction and Mentoring for Beginning Teachers and Teacher Professional Leave. Refresher courses for teachers returning to government schools were also delivered as part of the Teacher Supply and Demand strategy.

Highlights

- Over 2353 teachers participated in the two-day statewide Teacher Mentor Support program in 2006.
- Day 1 of the 2007 program was completed with 1718 teachers participating.
- Participants in the program were provided with a comprehensive learning guide exploring the practice of mentoring.
- The publication *Induction in Effective Schools* was distributed to all principals participating in the statewide meeting of principals in September 2006.
- To further develop their skills and expertise, between four and ten weeks of Teacher Professional Leave was undertaken by over 600 teachers in 2006–07.
- The publication *Teachers as Researchers – Reading Guide* was provided to all 2006–07 Teacher Professional Leave participants.
- Ten refresher courses were delivered in metropolitan and regional locations in 2006, with 245 teachers participating.
- Four refresher courses were delivered in metropolitan and regional locations by June 2007, with 102 teachers taking part.

Continuously improving schools

School improvement

During 2006–07, the School Accountability and Improvement Framework was used by school communities to:

- plan for improvement via a four-year school strategic plan and annual implementation plan, in collaboration with regional offices
- evaluate progress towards the achievement of the school's goals and targets, using an internal school self-evaluation and an external school review process
- report on progress in core performance indicators via a school-level annual report
- manage risk and compliance with legislation and Departmental policies via an online school compliance checklist.

Anecdotal feedback and formal evaluations indicated that there is strong support from principals, school councils and stakeholder organisations for the framework, which is in its third year of implementation.

The Department draws on a range of resources and strategies to further support school improvement, including the Targeted School Improvement initiative. Regional offices provide support to schools where student performance is below expected levels.

Highlights

- In 2006, over 300 primary and secondary schools undertook a year of self-evaluation, review and planning. A further 300 schools are undertaking this process in 2007.
- The framework was introduced successfully into special schools, English language schools and outdoor education schools.
- The School Compliance Checklist, the final element of the framework, was successfully piloted in 37 schools and subsequently implemented across the State from February 2007.
- Following the first rollout of the new school-level annual reporting process in early 2006, the guidelines and templates for annual reporting to the school community were revised as a result of stakeholder feedback.
- At 30 June 2007, 165 schools were receiving additional regional support through Targeted School Improvement funding.

Leading Schools Fund

The Leading Schools Fund continued to support whole-school transformation of government schools in the secondary sector through:

- the implementation of innovative organisational models to improve student outcomes
- innovation in infrastructure design to improve teaching and learning, including ICT facilities
- system-wide sharing of school improvement models

-
- the development of local solutions to education provision issues.

The fund has provided \$162 million to employ 450 additional teachers, to redevelop or build new facilities and to support ICT infrastructure. The fund was rolled out in three phases with Phase 1 schools funded to June 2007, Phase 2 schools funded to December 2007 and Phase 3 schools funded to December 2008.

The focus of the Leading Schools Fund is now on sustaining whole-school transformation and increasing understanding of how teaching and learning practices can influence school design.

Highlights

- One hundred and sixty-two schools with a secondary component received funding through the three Leading Schools Fund phases with an average allocation of 2.6 additional teachers per school (for three years) and an average allocation of \$348,000 per school for capital works.
- Case studies were undertaken for all 91 Phase 1 and 2 schools during the second half of 2006 under the auspices of the University of Melbourne. Feedback was provided to these schools on the evaluation of case study findings.
- Eight key variables were identified by the University of Melbourne as impacting on school transformation. A transformation matrix has been developed mapping the eight key variables to support and guide schools in identifying the next steps towards transformation.
- To promote system-wide sharing, over 70 Phase 1 and 2 schools participated in a showcase strategy during Term 3, 2006. This gave principals and teachers the opportunity to visit Leading Schools and observe the new teaching and learning approaches. Many Leading Schools have now established long-term sharing arrangements with other schools.

- The first annual statewide Innovations Showcase was held in Melbourne on 17 May 2007 and involved 165 schools and 510 participants showcasing successful strategies.

Student programs

In addition to initiatives introduced as part of the Blueprint, the Department continued to implement programs for students in the early and middle years.

Early years

Early years initiatives support continuous improvement in student achievement in literacy and numeracy in Years P–4.

Highlights

- The Government target of an average of 21 students in P–2 classes, which was met in February 2003, has been exceeded each year since then. In February 2007, the average P–2 class size was 20.7 students.
- Funding was allocated to all primary schools to support early years literacy and numeracy coordination.
- Reading Recovery programs were delivered in approximately 80 per cent of schools with Year 1 enrolments.

Middle years

Middle years programs aim to improve student learning in literacy and numeracy, and the attendance and engagement of students in Years 5–9.

Highlights

- An extension of funding to 245 clusters of primary and secondary schools in 2007 was made to enable every school with middle years students to continue to participate in the Schools for Innovation and Excellence program. This program encourages and supports innovation in curriculum that leads

to improvements in literacy, numeracy, attendance, and transition from primary to secondary schooling. During 2006–07, clusters have had a strong focus on other reforms, including the Student Learning initiatives.

- In 2007, 95 cluster educators participated in the Building the Capacity of Professional Learning Leaders program, taking to 205 the total number of educators who have completed this ten-day activity funded by the Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme.
- A review of middle years initiatives conducted in 2006 found that there has been a substantial increase in most teachers' knowledge about the way adolescents learn and how teachers can best support that learning. There have also been improvements in literacy and numeracy, participation and engagement across all year levels, particularly the literacy achievement of Year 7 and Year 8 students, the numeracy achievement of Year 7 students and parents' satisfaction with their children's schools.
- In 2007, Middle Years Equity and Secondary Equity funding was allocated to identified schools to enable them to support improved student learning outcomes, with a focus on literacy and numeracy.

Key initiatives

Several initiatives continued to be implemented to support the learning needs of students, including targeted groups, to allow them to participate effectively in a diverse and changing world.

Koorie education

Koorie education initiatives are designed to support improved educational outcomes for Koorie students and increase all students' knowledge and understanding of Indigenous cultures and issues. In addition

to funding provided through the core and equity components of the Student Resource Package, Koorie students are supported by a range of targeted measures including the Koorie Student Allocation.

Highlights

- Literacy Improvement Teams were introduced into schools in 2007 with high numbers of Koorie students being assisted. The teams focus on strengthening the literacy skills of teachers in schools identified as having significant numbers of students not achieving expected literacy outcomes. The initiative provides intensive assistance and professional development to build the capacity of teachers in identified schools to support improved literacy in students in Years 3 to 8. Professional learning programs are available to assist Koorie education staff to work with teachers and students to improve literacy outcomes.
- The Department worked with regions on action research projects which will contribute to the Forward Strategy for Indigenous Education. The strategy includes the development and implementation of Regional Koorie Education Action plans, which are negotiated in consultation with, and approved by, Regional Koorie Education Committees. Regional Koorie Education Action plans outline targeted local and regional initiatives to progress the improvement of Koorie student education outcomes.
- The Department trialled the implementation of Individual Learning plans for all Koorie students in one region. The development of the Individual Learning plans involved a partnership arrangement between the school, the family/carer and the Koorie student. The Department will evaluate the trial of these plans to determine their broader application and inclusion into the Forward Strategy for Indigenous Education.

- The Koorie Student Allocation was provided to schools with 20 or more Koorie enrolments and/or 10 per cent population density to implement initiatives to improve Koorie student attendance. Schools are encouraged to work in partnership with the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group to develop the programs and/or activities to reduce absenteeism.
- The Department, as part of its Reconciliation event in 2006, hosted a workshop for teaching staff on Indigenous Studies and Perspectives. As it is recognised that Indigenous Studies cannot be undertaken in isolation from other subjects, the workshop provided opportunities for teachers to explore the inclusion of Indigenous Studies into all aspects of the curriculum.
- Work commenced on the Koorie Inclusive Resource Guide, a joint project of the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated and the Department, which will guide teachers on appropriate and culturally inclusive curriculum.
- The Koorie Attendance, Engagement and Re-engagement project surveyed more than 80 schools in Victoria during 2006 in order to identify issues in relation to Koorie student attendance and engagement and to share good practice strategies. The findings are currently being reviewed and will be incorporated into the Forward Strategy for Indigenous Education.
- Work commenced on the curriculum resource, *Making History in Victorian Classrooms*, which includes protocols for consultation with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated.
- The Department supported an accelerated literacy and numeracy program in Shepparton schools. Shepparton High School, Gowrie Street Primary School and Mooropna Primary School remained actively involved in the project in 2006.

English as a second language

English as a second language (ESL) initiatives focus on improving support for ESL students, including the increasing numbers settling in rural and regional settings. In 2006, one-third of new arrivals were on humanitarian and refugee visas. These students require high levels of new-arrival and ongoing support. Partnerships with key government and non-government stakeholders continued to be strengthened to coordinate support for refugee students and their families.

Highlights

- A total of 4854 new arrivals received intensive and targeted ESL support in 2006.
- Intensive ESL programs were provided for 2049 newly arrived students in English language schools, centres and outposting programs in mainstream schools. An additional 217 students were supported by the visiting outposting program.
- A further 326 students were supported through new arrival programs in Geelong and Shepparton, and the Isolated ESL Students program in regional Victoria.
- Fifty schools received Transition Initiatives funding for programs that provide support to students with little or no previous schooling, mostly from refugee backgrounds. This funding provided additional English language tuition to assist their transition to mainstream schooling.
- Funding was allocated to 351 primary schools, 99 secondary schools and ten primary–secondary schools to support the specific learning needs of ESL students.
- A handbook was distributed to all schools with ESL programs to assist them in planning appropriate programs for their ESL students.
- Funding continued to be provided to schools for 210 FTE multicultural education aides.

- A total of 7799 on-site and telephone interpreting assignments were provided in 71 languages, and 244 documents were translated into 32 languages for government schools.
- Twenty-two ESL tutors were trained in eight regions to present an ESL teacher development course: Teaching ESL Students in Mainstream Classrooms. The course is being run statewide in 2007.
- To assist teachers to make accurate and consistent assessments about the progress of their ESL students in learning English, the *English as a Second Language Companion to the Victorian Essential Learning Standards* was developed by the Department and published by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

Languages other than English

The following initiatives supported the provision of languages other than English (LOTE) programs for students in Years P–10.

Highlights

- Twenty-two languages were taught in government primary and secondary schools, and 40 languages were provided through the Victorian School of Languages.
- Several initiatives were introduced to extend and improve the teaching of Chinese in government schools, including inaugural study tours to China for principals and teachers, and a series of professional development programs presented by Professor Zhang PengPeng from the Beijing Language and Culture University.
- The development of *Languages Online*, a free, interactive web-based resource for students of French, German, Indonesian and Italian, was completed. It is accessed by about 4000 users per week who visit approximately 100,000 pages of the site.
- Grants were provided to 13 language teacher associations to support teachers in the implementation of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards, the Principles of Learning and Teaching P–12 and the Department's Assessment Advice.
- More than 30 government schools were assisted to introduce new languages, or expand their languages programs, by the provision of seeding grants for teaching resources.
- Regional Project Officers for Languages supported the establishment of language networks to facilitate the sharing of expertise and resources.
- Funding was allocated for the provision of appropriate teacher training and professional learning programs, including an inaugural language refresher program for teachers of Indonesian.
- Funding was provided for approximately 33,000 students learning a total of 50 languages in after-hours community languages schools.

Strategic partnerships

The Strategic Partnerships program provides \$4.92 million annually to 93 community, cultural and scientific organisations and professional teaching associations to deliver 145 programs for students and teachers across the State. The wide-ranging programs cover environmental sustainability, humanities, performing arts and media, science and technology, the visual arts and design, as well as specialist programs for rural and regional areas. The program forges partnerships between schools and their wider communities by connecting learning and teaching with practice beyond the classroom. All programs are directly linked to Department priorities and initiatives. They promote transformative learning, empower students to become lifelong learners and support a greater emphasis on student learning outcomes.

ICT and e-learning in schools

Work on ICT and e-learning supports teachers to improve teaching and learning for students.

Highlights

- The ePotential ICT capability resource went live in May 2007. ePotential is an innovative tool designed primarily to identify and support the professional learning needs of teachers and principals. It provides teachers with a confidential survey to identify their level of ICT capability. It links directly to a bank of resources showing models and videos of best classroom practice related to teachers' professional learning needs.
- Digilearn, a new portal designed to provide teachers with ready access to 4500 innovative digital learning resources, was launched as part of a national initiative.
- Victorian government schools now have a site licence for Kahootz – 3D animation software.
- A suite of resources to support schools to implement digital portfolios was developed and distributed in Term 4, 2006. It includes professional readings, movies, sample portfolios, and planning and support documentation.
- The Victorian Education Channel continued to provide quality online resources for schools. They are connected through blogs, and a protected space has been created to explore Web 2.0 technologies.
- A Website Tool Kit was provided to support schools in developing and maintaining websites to meet current government guidelines, and to minimise the risks associated with using the Internet.
- Twenty-eight schools formed the Creating eLearning Leaders initiative, supported by the Microsoft Partners in Learning program, which provided mentoring and professional learning for 14,000 teachers.
- The first Victorian Kids Congress, part of the Creating eLearning Leaders initiative, was attended by 220 students, 100 teachers and 350 parents. This was an ICT congress run by students for students during which they developed technology, creative thinking, problem solving and collaborative skills.
- The Intel Teach professional learning program supported the integration of ICT across all areas of the curriculum. Since 2003, 15 per cent of Victorian government teachers have trained in the Intel Teach program. Two courses are currently offered through this program – Intel Teach 'Essentials' and Intel Teach 'Thinking with Technology'.
- Twenty-five schools participated in school-based, action learning research to investigate the use of emerging technologies – iPods, tablets and personal digital assistants – to support teaching and learning.
- Through Multimedia Victoria's Broadband Innovation Fund, schools in the Yarra Valley eLearning Community investigated round-the-clock learning in a technology-rich environment.
- An ICT Peer Coaching pilot involving 30 schools was trialled to support teachers integrating ICT into the curriculum. Victoria received the Asia Pacific Partners in Learning Honour Roll Award for its outstanding work with peer coaching.

The Ultranet

In November 2006, the Premier Steve Bracks announced an election commitment to develop and deploy a statewide online teaching and learning system, called the Ultranet, to all government schools. The Ultranet is a student-centred electronic learning environment that supports high-quality learning and teaching, connects students, teachers and parents and enables efficient knowledge transfer.

The Ultranet will be rolled out progressively to all government primary, secondary, language and special schools from 2008.

Infrastructure

In 2006, the Victorian Government continued the \$89.3 million VicSmart broadband rollout to provide every Victorian government school with access to high speed fibre-optic broadband.

The goal of the VicSmart broadband initiative is to upgrade every Victorian government school to four megabits per second (Mbps) fibre-optic broadband over a four-year period. This will enable communication between schools throughout the entire State and give students easy access to the rapidly increasing range of online learning resources.

The first phase of this initiative – to connect every school to VicSmart and provide a minimum Mbps broadband connection – has been completed. The second phase of VicSmart was officially launched on 5 February 2007. This phase will ensure that all Victorian government schools will be provided with a four Mbps optical fibre connection by the end of 2008.

Multicultural education

Multicultural education initiatives support schools to provide culturally inclusive programs, promote an appreciation of Victoria's diverse cultural heritage, and foster mutual respect and intercultural understanding.

Highlights

- The Cultural Diversity Quest offered students the opportunity to explore and celebrate Victoria's rich cultural diversity through a variety of media. Entries on the theme 'Different but the same – All Victorian' were received from government, Catholic and independent schools and 33 awards were given. In addition, 76 primary and secondary schools received grants to conduct Cultural Diversity Week community activities.
- Over 4000 students from more than 40 schools participated in Courage to Care exhibitions and workshops. Senior secondary students participated in facilitated discussions with Holocaust survivors on the importance of tolerance and understanding of others. The visits had a powerful impact on students and teachers, as well as being relevant to the curriculum in English and the Humanities.

- The Languages and Multicultural Education Resource Centre expanded its services, providing professional development, teaching resources and professional advice to teachers from all sectors. The Centre was used by over 1100 teachers, 350 new borrowers and lent over 23,000 items.

School Innovation in Teaching: Science, Mathematics and Technology

The School Innovation in Teaching (SIT) program operated within a policy environment guided by the whole-of-government Science, Technology and Innovation Initiative – Second Generation. The four-year program received \$5 million funding from the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development, and concluded on 30 June 2007.

Highlights

- More than 200 schools have participated in SIT since 2003. Its main elements included research and development, leading change, professional development, curriculum resources and community partnerships.
- An independent evaluation of SIT commenced and will be completed by the end of 2007. The evaluation will provide a view on teacher and student perceptions and recommendations for achieving improvements in Science education in Victorian government schools.

Health, sport and physical education

Health, sport and physical education initiatives promote and support the teaching and learning of health, sport, physical and traffic safety education. A key focus was the continued promotion of the benefits of physical activity and healthy eating habits for students and the wider community.

Highlights

- Healthy Canteen Guidelines were provided to all government schools.
- Professional learning opportunities continued to be offered to support primary and secondary teachers to implement effective health, sport and physical education programs.
- Traffic safety education materials were produced in collaboration with all key road safety agencies.

Gifted and high-potential students

The Department meets the educational and social development needs of gifted and high-potential students across all aspects of schooling.

Highlights

- Seven additional Select Entry Accelerated Learning program schools commenced operation in 2007. They are strategically located to improve equity of access for gifted students.
- Select Entry Accelerated Learning coordinators and regional coordinators for gifted student programs continued to meet quarterly for networking and professional learning.

School councils

School councils play a key role in influencing the effectiveness of government schools in Victoria. Informed and empowered school councils have significant potential to build community capacity and influence student outcomes. School governance arrangements are a critical factor.

During 2006–07, a dedicated website and training materials were developed in response to the recommendations from the *Review of School Governance in Victorian Government Schools*. The website and materials provide

school councillors with ongoing support for the work they do in school communities. Specific training modules on induction of school councillors and financial responsibilities were delivered in regional areas.

Facilities and infrastructure

Emergency and security management

The Department coordinated the installation of 82 new and replacement alarm systems in schools during 2006–07.

The Department introduced a new Incident Reporting Information System (IRIS) during the period. IRIS has improved the accurate recording and maintenance of data associated with incident reporting in schools and has also improved the communication, control and management of incidents.

The Department continues to run workshops in emergency management and emergency planning for senior school staff with representatives from more than 250 schools attending these workshops in the past 12 months. Training was also provided for over 500 staff including regional personnel, psychologists, social workers, primary welfare officers and school personnel in a variety of response and recovery activities related to crisis response training.

There were 12 significant school fires during 2006–07 with structural and replacement costs estimated at approximately \$3.2 million.

Asset projects

The 2006–07 State Budget committed \$347 million in new capital funding for school education. This funding directed:

- \$9.3 million to Leading Schools Fund projects, including funds for investing in excellence

- \$41.1 million to seven new schools or stages thereof
- \$19.63 million to replacing six schools
- \$178.29 million for modernising and improving existing school sites, including the provision of funds for the Leading Schools Fund (\$12.12 million), the Rural Learning Centre (\$1 million) and planning for future projects (\$4.12 million)
- \$58 million for land acquisition
- \$9 million for computers for schools
- \$6.58 million for the Rural Replacement Schools program
- \$5.1 million for the software development program Victorian School Number
- \$20 million for Planning for Transformation (Regeneration) projects.

School regions

The nine regional directors are responsible for supporting and building the capacity of regions and schools to deliver high-quality educational services and improved student outcomes through continuous school improvement. The transformation of the government school system is being achieved through effective and dynamic relationships between schools, regions and the central office.

Effective regions value and contribute to a culture of learning and improvement at all levels of the system. They are characterised by the behaviours shown in the Effective Regions model.

The key functions of regions include:

- meeting corporate responsibilities
- improving the performance of every government school
- strengthening strategic partnerships to provide multiple pathways and opportunities for students
- deploying their resources effectively to improve student learning outcomes.

Regions, in partnership with the central office, play an important part in the implementation of the Government's school education reform agenda. They do this by:

- providing leadership to translate the system's aspirations into reality for students in schools
- managing and supporting schools to provide a high-quality education for all students
- developing the capacity of leaders to plan strategically for school improvement
- developing the capacity of regional and school-based staff as facilitators of continuous learning communities and creating the strategies that sustain them
- monitoring the achievement of clearly articulated, high-quality outcomes and using data to inform and refine improvement strategies
- providing finance, facilities, personnel and workforce planning support services to facilitate the achievement of effective learning environments

Effective Regions model



- supporting schools to implement innovative approaches to increase levels of student achievement, retention, engagement and wellbeing
- promoting learning communities and collaboration, and fostering supportive networks within and across local government areas to improve education and employment outcomes
- engaging with the wider community to develop strategic relationships and partnerships to build capacity and bring the resources of the community to the work of schools.

Metropolitan regions

Western Metropolitan Region

Mr Brett New
Acting Regional Director
Level 4, Wool House
369 Royal Parade
Parkville Victoria 3052
PO Box 57
Carlton South Victoria 3053
Telephone: (03) 9291 6500
Facsimile: (03) 9291 6555
Website: <http://www.wmr.vic.edu.au>

Northern Metropolitan Region

Mr Wayne Craig
Regional Director
Level 2, 189 Urquhart Street
Coburg Victoria 3058
Locked Bag 2001
Coburg Victoria 3058
Telephone (03) 9488 9488
Facsimile (03) 9488 9440
Website: <http://www.nmr.vic.edu.au>

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Dr Jim Watterston
Regional Director
Level 2, 29 Lakeside Drive
Burwood East Victoria 3151
Telephone: (03) 9881 0200
Facsimile: (03) 9881 0243
Website: <http://www.emr.vic.edu.au>

Southern Metropolitan Region

Mr Peter Greenwell
Regional Director
33 Princes Highway
Dandenong Victoria 3175
PO Box 5
Dandenong Victoria 3175
Telephone: (03) 9794 3555
Facsimile: (03) 9794 3500
Website: <http://www.smr.vic.edu.au>

Non-metropolitan regions

Barwon South Western Region

Ms Glenda Strong
Regional Director
5A Little Ryrie Street
Geelong Victoria 3220
PO Box 2086
Geelong Victoria 3220
Telephone: (03) 5225 1000
Facsimile: (03) 5225 1099
Website: <http://www.bsw.vic.edu.au>

Grampians Region

Mr Malcolm Millar
Regional Director
Level 1, 1220 Sturt Street
Ballarat Victoria 3350
Telephone: (03) 5337 8444
Facsimile: (03) 5333 2135
Website: <http://www.grampians.vic.edu.au>

Loddon Mallee Region

Mr Ron Lake
Regional Director
37–43 Havlin Street East
Bendigo Victoria 3550
PO Box 442
Bendigo Victoria 3552
Telephone: (03) 5440 3111
Facsimile: (03) 5442 5321
Website: <http://www.lcmdoe.vic.edu.au>

Hume Region

Mr Stephen Brown
Regional Director
Arundel Street
Benalla Victoria 3672
PO Box 403
Benalla Victoria 3672
Telephone: (03) 5761 2100
Facsimile: (03) 5762 5039
Website: <http://www.hume.vic.edu.au>

Gippsland Region

Ms Michonne van Rees
Regional Director
Cnr Kirk and Haigh Streets
Moe Victoria 3825
PO Box 381
Moe Victoria 3825
Telephone: (03) 5127 0400
Facsimile: (03) 5126 1933
Website: <http://www.gippsland.vic.edu.au>

Non-government schools

The Minister for Education has legislative responsibility for the education of all primary and secondary school students in Victoria.

The Department contributes to the achievement of the Government's goals and targets for education by providing funding and other support to non-government schools in Victoria.

As of March 2007, a total of 702 registered non-government schools – 484 Catholic and 218 independent – were educating over 298,086 students statewide or 35.6 per cent

of all Victorian school students. Of these students, 61.7 per cent attended Catholic schools and 38.3 per cent attended independent schools.

In 2006–07, the Department provided over \$352 million in financial assistance to non-government schools in untied recurrent funding allocated through the Financial Assistance Model for Non-Government Schools, which was introduced in consultation with sector authorities in January 2006. A further \$11.6 million is provided to non-government sector authorities for specific purpose grants for targeted programs such as for students with special needs, suicide prevention and Internet access.

In addition, non-government schools are able to access a range of resources and opportunities available to government schools, including teacher professional development and curriculum materials, government-negotiated pricing for broadband access and a range of taxation concessions or exemptions.

Eligible non-government school students in outer and non-metropolitan areas can access the Government's conveyance allowance and school bus service. Non-government school students are also able to access public transport travel concessions.

Thirty million dollars over four years has been committed to support capital works in needy non-government schools. Land will also be set aside in growth areas for new, not-for-profit non-government schools.

The Department liaises with the non-government sector authorities on funding, and collaborates on a range of program initiatives to improve learning outcomes across all sectors.

Highlights

- In late 2006, ten Catholic schools were accredited as Performance and Development Culture schools and a further 13 Catholic schools are undertaking external verification for Performance and Development Culture accreditation in 2007.

- Collaboration with the non-government sector occurred across a range of curriculum initiatives, including assessment and reporting, and for cross-sectoral initiatives such as drug education and values education.
- Non-government school student participation in the Premier's Reading Challenge increased from 41,000 in 2005 to 52,000 in 2006.
- \$21.1 million was provided for student transport, mainly in outlying areas, and \$4.6 million in public transport subsidies through the Department of Infrastructure.

Registered Schools Board

The Registered Schools Board is the statutory authority responsible for the registration of Victorian non-government schools. The *Education Act 1958* requires the Registered Schools Board to:

- register and, where appropriate, revise the registration of schools
- monitor a school's compliance with the requirements for registration.

Non-government schools are reviewed at least every six years.

Registration of non-government schools

During 2006–07, the Registered Schools Board approved the registration, or revision of registration, of schools in the following categories.

New primary schools	2
New secondary schools	5
New primary and secondary schools	1
New special schools	1
Additional secondary year levels	19
Additional campuses	7
School amalgamations (two schools to form one school)	1
Relocations	8
School closures	2
Campus closures	0

All schools complete an 'approval to open' application at least six months prior to opening. Before being granted approval to open, schools must be able to demonstrate that the curriculum, policies, facilities and organisation are of a satisfactory standard and that teachers are registered. New schools must also meet probity requirements and demonstrate that they are financially viable. A school must apply to the Registered Schools Board for registration within 14 days of opening.

Monitoring schools

Annual returns

As a requirement of the Act, the Registered Schools Board maintains a database of school details that are collected on census day in February each year. Schools submit their returns electronically.

Registration reviews

In order for non-government schools to maintain registration under the Act, the Registered Schools Board must be satisfied that the school continues to meet the requirements for registration. Registration review material is updated annually in accordance with changes in legislation and regulations relevant to non-government schools. Between July and December 2006, 44 schools undertook registration reviews.

No registration reviews were undertaken in the first half of 2007 due to impending legislative changes and the incorporation of the Registered Schools Board into the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority.

Membership

The Board, which meets monthly, consists of eight members: four from the public sector, including the nominee of the Secretary of the Department as Chair, and four from the non-government sector, appointed by the Governor-in-Council.

Membership of the Registered Schools Board as at 30 June 2007 was as follows:

Department of Education

Mr John McCarthy (Chair)

Ms Maria Kelly

Mr Don King

Vacancy

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria

Mr Tony O'Meara

Mr Christopher Lennon

Association of Independent Schools of Victoria

Ms Michelle Green

Mr Neville Lyngcoln

Centenary function

A function to mark the centenary of a registration body for non-government schools was held in October 2006. In 1906, the Teachers and Schools Registration Board was established, followed by the Council of Public Education in 1911 and the Registered Schools Board in 1982.

On 1 July 2007, the role of the Registered Schools Board will be incorporated into the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority. This is a new statutory authority and will be the regulator of schools, education and training providers and qualifications.