
Compulsory years

Education in Victoria is compulsory for children aged from six to 16 years. This section discusses the provision of education and associated services for these students, improving the quality of learning through responding to student needs, recognising the importance of building the skills of the education workforce, and improving schools.

2003 Blueprint for Government Schools

Recognising and responding to diverse student needs

Student learning

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

Highlights

- In 2007, all schools implemented programs consistent with the following domains of the VELs: English, Mathematics, Health and Physical Education, Personal Learning, Civics and Citizenship, Humanities (Economics, Geography and History), Communication, and ICT. Schools reported student progress in each of these domains.
- In 2008, all schools are required to design curriculum and assess and report student progress against all domains of the VELs.
- In 2008, more than 90 per cent of schools are using the software provided by the Department to produce student reports.

This software enables schools to provide parents with A–E reporting against the VELs.

- In 2008, 64 participants from 27 government schools completed the Principles of Learning and Teaching professional development training program, bringing the total number of government schools to participate in the program over the past four years to 877 (approximately 55 per cent of government schools).
- A survey administered in November 2007 asked principals to indicate the value to schools of the online student learning resources, with 660 government schools responding to the survey. There was an increase in responses on the effectiveness of the student learning resources. There was also an increase in the proportion of schools operating at Levels 3 and 4 on a continuum from Level 1 (lowest) to Level 4 (highest exemplification) in relation to five elements of the student learning whole-school self-assessment tool.

Literacy

Literacy is a priority for Victoria. The Department has continued to develop evidence-based resources and to provide high-quality professional learning to ensure that all students' literacy learning is supported and enhanced.

Highlights

- The Literacy Improvement Team initiative continued during 2007 and 2008. Literacy specialists in identified schools work with classroom teachers to bring about the changes in classroom practice 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 FTE literacy specialists,

and the training of another 27 specialists funded by schools and regions. To date, 196 schools have been involved. The interim evaluation report shows greater than expected improvement in the literacy skills of students in Years 3–5 involved in the initiative, as measured by the Achievement Improvement Monitor (AIM) On Demand test for Reading. Results for Years 6–8 are also promising but not statistically significant due to smaller numbers.

- Enhancements were made to the online English Developmental Continuum P–10 and the online Literacy Professional Learning Resource. These include videos that exemplify student performance at selected levels. They are designed to support teachers to make consistent and accurate judgments of students' progress.
- Three-day Literacy Leader Professional Learning programs, two primary and one secondary, were run in each region in Terms 3 and 4, 2007, involving 1023 participants. In 2008, a second round of these programs was offered to an additional 294 participants. Overall, the professional learning program was attended by 1317 participants, representing 475 primary schools and 180 secondary schools across the state. 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 professional learning that best meets the needs of their own school.
- The Premier's Reading Challenge targets students in Years P–9 in all schools. In 2007, a total of 203,264 students participated, representing a significant increase over the previous year when approximately 190,000 students participated in the Challenge.
- Literacy and Numeracy Week was celebrated in all school regions.

Mathematics and science

Mathematics and science are critical areas of student learning. A number of projects were developed over 2007–08 to support Victorian teachers to deliver targeted and effective mathematics and science learning for all students.

Highlights

- *The Fractions and Decimals Online Interview*, which complements the *Mathematics Online Interview*, was published in Term 2, 2008. This resource enables teachers to monitor student learning in fractions, decimals, ratio and percentage in Years 4–8.
- A three-day professional learning program for mathematics leaders in secondary schools was offered in all regions during Terms 3 and 4, 2007 to support implementation of the VELS and build pedagogical content knowledge. Two hundred and eighty-nine participants, representing 58 per cent of secondary schools, attended the program.
- A Science Continuum P–10 was published online in July 2007. The continuum supports teachers to improve student learning outcomes in science through the provision of appropriate evidence-based teaching approaches and learning activities. Regional briefings to familiarise teachers with the resources were held in Term 4, 2007.
- From the start of the 2008 school year, 200 Teaching and Learning Coaches and 50 Ultranet Coaches were deployed in identified government schools across the state to work in classrooms on a one-to-one basis with teachers to increase their capacity to improve student achievement. This initiative focuses on improving outcomes in mathematics and science and supporting schools to prepare for the Ultranet.

ICT and e-learning in schools

ICT and e-learning supports teachers to maximise the use of ICT to improve learning outcomes for students.

Highlights

- The ePotential ICT Capability Resource is an online tool designed to assist the development of teachers' ICT capabilities. It provides teachers with a confidential survey to identify their level of ICT capability. It links directly to a bank of resources showing examples of best classroom practice to support teachers' professional learning needs and guide planning for e-learning. Responses from 21,258 teachers were received.
- Digilearn, a portal designed to provide teachers with ready access to 6000 innovative digital learning resources, was launched in May 2007 and new resources continued to be added to the portal.
- Victorian government schools have a site licence for the updated Kahootz 3.0, a three-dimensional animation software program that provides students with dynamic tools to create and share digital content.
- The Victorian Education Channel continued to provide quality online resources for school students, teachers and principals. The Global Teacher project provides a protected space and is used by teachers and students to explore Web 2.0 technologies.
- The eLearning/ICT Showcase provided examples of how ICT can be used effectively to support learning and teaching, demonstrating the possibilities for teachers. Eight showcases were live in 2008, highlighting 118 learning objects/case studies.
- A Website Tool Kit was regularly updated. It provided a practical framework for schools for developing and maintaining websites and clear guidelines for promoting safe Internet use.
- Nine schools, one in each school region, formed the Catalyst initiative, supported by the Microsoft Partners in Learning program. These schools are participating in action-learning research projects to

investigate ICT and pedagogy. School leaders were supported to plan for ICT integration across their schools and staff were supported through an ICT Peer Coaching program.

- The Intel Teach professional learning program supported teachers to design inquiry-driven, student-centred learning activities that integrate technology across all areas of the curriculum. Two courses were offered through this program, Intel Teach Essentials Online and Intel Teach Thinking with Technology, and 133 master trainers were trained.

The Ultranet

The Ultranet is a student-centred electronic learning environment that supports high-quality learning and teaching. It connects students, teachers and parents and enables efficient knowledge transfer.

The Department released a request for a tender in August 2007 and has completed a tender evaluation process without being able to select a successful tender.

The Department is committed to the delivery of a quality Ultranet to schools by the third quarter of 2010 and will re-tender for a solution that will meet the core functions and benefits for learning and teaching as well as a parent portal.

ICT infrastructure

The Government continued to invest in ICT infrastructure in schools. This investment included equipment, connectivity, technical specialists, and software systems and licences to support schools to deliver high-quality education to all students in Victorian government schools. The quality and range of ICT infrastructure and resources in schools was an important factor in the effective use of ICT in the classroom.

Highlights

- Schools continued to receive access to high-quality hardware, secure remote access, information technology grants to purchase curriculum computers and access to suitable educational software.
- The provision of a reliable high-capacity broadband network in schools under the VicSmart program encouraged teachers to continue to integrate technology into new methods of teaching.
- Teachers and principals were assisted in the use of ICT technology through the provision of a notebook computer under the Notebooks for Teachers and Principals program. All centrally paid teachers who hold an edumail email account that is used on a regular basis are eligible for a laptop. Teachers are also required to participate in 40 hours of e-learning professional development.
- Computer maintenance and support was provided with specialist technicians working in every school through the Technical Support for Schools program. The technicians maintained computers, servers and the notebooks provided to teachers and principals.

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 Years P–2 classes was met in February 2003. In February 2008, 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.
- Funding was provided to all schools with Year 1 enrolments to support literacy intervention for 20 per cent of the cohort. Reading Recovery programs were used by 62 per cent of schools.

Middle years

Middle years initiatives support improvements in the quality of student learning in Years 5–9.

Highlights

- In 2008, approximately \$77 million in 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.

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.

Highlights

- The Department undertook a comprehensive review of its approach to education for Koorie students in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated. The outcomes from the review have informed the development of the Government's new education strategy for Koorie students: Wannik, Learning Together – Journey to Our Future. Fundamental to this strategy is:
 - repositioning the education of Koorie students within all government schools through school leadership that creates a culture of high expectations and individualised learning
 - systemic reform across government schools to deliver the best possible education to meet these expectations, underpinned with explicit accountability at all levels of the system
 - creating an environment that respects, recognises and celebrates cultural identity through practice and curriculum
 - professional development opportunities for principals and teachers in cultural awareness, including pre-service and in-service teacher training

- supporting individual learning needs of Koorie students through:
 - intensive literacy and numeracy programs for students achieving below expected levels
 - additional support and incentives for top students to provide encouragement to excel
 - leadership opportunities for Koorie students in secondary schools
 - better engagement with Koorie parents and the community through school–community partnerships.
- The Department evaluated the trial that was underway in one school region of individual education plans for Koorie students. The outcome of this evaluation produced the Individual Education Plan Guide and Template for all schools to use for their Koorie students. A professional development package is now being constructed for regions and schools.
- The Department provided regions with funding for projects targeted at improving Koorie students' literacy and numeracy, attendance and parent engagement. The funding was used in many areas, such as the successful Literacy Improvement Team initiative, local attendance strategies, and parental engagement strategies.
- A curriculum resource was developed, *Making History in Victorian Classrooms*, in consultation with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated.
- A number of principals attended the Stronger Smarter Principals Leadership program through the Indigenous Education Leadership Institute in Queensland. This program challenges the assumptions of leaders about school practice for Indigenous students, as well as supporting principals in pursuing their own reform journey for school transformation.

Languages other than English

The following initiatives supported the provision of languages other than English (LOTE) programs for students in Years P–12.

Highlights

- Twenty-two languages were taught in government primary and secondary schools, and 44 languages were provided through the Victorian School of Languages.
- The Languages Online site was enhanced with the addition of new resources. These include interactive templates, which allow teachers and students to create their own interactive languages games, as well as resources to assist teachers to link their languages program to other curriculum areas. The site had an average of 30,000 users per week.
- Grants were provided to 13 language teacher associations to increase teacher capacity in the implementation of the VELs, the Principles of Learning and Teaching P–12 and the use of technology in LOTE classrooms.
- Twelve clusters of schools were granted additional funding to increase the quality of LOTE program provision to students.
- Regional Project Officers for Languages continued to support language teacher networks to facilitate the sharing of expertise and resources.
- The LOTE Training program provided funding to increase the number of fully qualified LOTE teachers available to government schools. In 2008, 47 teachers were given a LOTE Methodology scholarship to study how to teach languages. Forty-four teachers were awarded a languages scholarship to enable them to gain higher proficiency in their language.
- Programs that have continued to improve the teaching of Chinese in government schools include study tours to China for principals, teachers and students. In 2008, seven Chinese language teaching assistants are operating in government schools to work with students in the Chinese language classroom.
- Funding was provided for approximately 33,000 students learning a total of 39 languages in after-hours community

languages schools. Additional funding was provided for the development of an accredited training program for teachers of community languages.

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 2007, approximately 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 5551 new arrivals received intensive and targeted ESL support in 2007. This was an increase of 697 students compared with 2006.
- Intensive ESL programs were provided for 2191 newly arrived students in English language schools, centres and outposting programs in mainstream schools. An additional 306 students were supported by the visiting outposting program.
- A further 282 students were supported through new arrivals programs in Geelong, Ballarat and Shepparton, and the Isolated ESL Students program in regional Victoria.
- At a cost of \$2.8 million, eight out of ten purpose-built relocatable classrooms were located in growth areas to allow intensive English language classes to be held closer to where new arrivals live. The remaining two classrooms will be on site in Term 3, 2008.
- An evaluation of ESL and New Arrivals program delivery in Victorian government schools was conducted to investigate and report on the effectiveness of current program delivery.
- Over 60 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 349 primary schools, 98 secondary schools and 11 primary–secondary schools to support the specific learning needs of ESL students. Extra contingency funding was provided to schools for increased numbers of ESL students enrolling after the annual school census.
- Funding continued to be provided to schools for over 240 FTE multicultural education aides.
- One hundred and thirty aides attended the annual multicultural education aide conference.
- Updates to CASES21 were made to identify ESL students for the collection of ESL student achievement data for benchmarking purposes.
- One hundred scholarships to the total value of \$522,580 were awarded to teachers to gain qualifications in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages in order to increase the number of fully qualified ESL teachers in government schools.
- One hundred mainstream classroom teachers were trained in the ESL teacher development course: Teaching ESL Students in Mainstream Classrooms.
- An online resource, *Strengthening Outcomes – Refugee Students in Government Schools*, was released. This resource outlines the support available to refugee students in government schools.
- A pilot Out of School Hours Learning Support program commenced in Western Metropolitan Region at North Melbourne, Footscray, Melton, Wyndham and Werribee.
- A total of 9108 on-site and telephone interpreting assignments were provided in 71 languages, and 325 documents were translated into 28 languages for government schools.

Multicultural education

Multicultural education initiatives support learning in schools that is culturally inclusive and promote intercultural understanding and social cohesion, together with an appreciation of the advantages of Victoria's contemporary society.

Highlights

- The Ministerial Advisory Council on Languages, English as a Second Language and Multicultural Education was reconstituted. The Council's work plan for 2008–10 includes development of a new multicultural education policy for government schools, strategies for increasing the uptake of languages other than English and strategies to support ESL students.
 - There was a 15 per cent increase in school entries to the Cultural Diversity Quest. The Quest provides school communities with the opportunity to showcase the way multicultural perspectives can be embedded across the curriculum.
 - \$70,000 in grants was provided to 109 schools to conduct school and community events to mark Cultural Diversity Week, 17–23 March 2008.
 - The Languages and Multicultural Education Resource Centre provided professional development, teaching resources and professional advice to teachers, teacher educators, community language teachers and pre-service teachers from all sectors. In 2007, the centre was used by over 1450 teachers, an increase of 30 per cent compared with 2006. Over 28,000 items were borrowed, an increase of 23 per cent. In addition, the centre sent boxes of resources to 68 primary and secondary schools in rural areas to assist them with meeting the English language learning needs of newly arrived students.
 - In January 2008, five half-time regional project officer positions for multicultural education were established in rural regions to support the development of cultural literacy in school communities, particularly those in areas of new settlement.
- Advice for school communities was provided in response to the introduction of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.
 - Professional development to enable educators to incorporate studies of Asia across their curricula included provision of 15 scholarships to attend the Asia Education Foundation Linking Latitudes Conference in India in September 2007.
 - The Keynotes project provided schools with advice on addressing world conflicts within the curriculum. Background information, learning and teaching strategies and resources on the nine most prominent religions were also provided.
 - Almost 4000 students in Years 10–12 from 42 metropolitan and rural schools attended Courage to Care exhibitions and workshops in the past 12 months. The program provides students with an opportunity to explore the impact of discrimination on everyday lives – at home, at school, in the playground, and in the local and wider community.
 - Over 700 teachers from government and non-government schools were involved in three projects: the School Dialogue project (La Trobe University), Enhancing Relationships in Schools (University of Melbourne) and Diversity – An Education Advantage (Deakin University). All three projects focus on enhancing cultural and linguistically inclusive school practices and community partnerships.

Health, sport and physical education

Health, sport and physical education initiatives promote and support the teaching and learning of health, sport, physical education, sexuality education and traffic safety education.

Highlights

- Professional learning opportunities continued to be offered to support primary and secondary teachers to implement effective health, sport and physical education programs.
- A comprehensive new website was developed to assist all primary and secondary schools on matters relating to sexuality education.
- A new sexuality education resource, *Catching on Everywhere*, was distributed to all schools to assist with program development in their school communities.
- Traffic safety education materials, produced in collaboration with all key road safety agencies, were distributed to government and non-government schools.

Go for Your Life schools programs

As part of the whole-of-government Go for Your Life initiative, several key programs were implemented in schools in 2007.

The focus was on the continued promotion of the benefits of physical activity and healthy eating habits for students and the wider community.

Highlights

- The second round of Healthy Start in Schools grants for government schools with primary enrolments was completed. Grants were received by 183 schools.
- The second phase of the Free Fruit Friday program was implemented, providing 805 government schools with Years P–2 enrolments with grants to purchase fruit and vegetables for their students once a week. The total budget for this initiative in 2007–08 was \$1.6 million.
- As part of the Kitchen Garden project with Stephanie Alexander, Phase 1 projects continued their implementation. Phase 2 of the project will be implemented in 2009.

Selective entry schools

In April 2008, the Government announced a \$40 million investment to establish two new selective entry schools in Melbourne's outer growth corridors from 2010. The two new Years 9–12 schools will be situated in Berwick and the City of Wyndham, providing greater opportunities and choice for students in regional and outer suburban areas. They will complement the existing selective entry schools – Melbourne High School and Mac.Robertson Girls' High School – and work in partnership with these schools to promote excellence in teaching and learning across the government school system.

Both schools will be co-educational and will open with an initial enrolment of up to 200 Year 9 students, including highly able students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Each of the new selective entry schools will have a maximum student population of 800 when fully operational.

The new Berwick school will be situated on the Monash University campus, while the City of Wyndham school will forge links with the University of Melbourne and Victoria University. These partnerships will allow staff and students to work on joint research projects, attend special classes and lectures, undertake enhancement studies, share facilities and develop joint projects.

A centralised selection process, including a common entry exam for Year 8 students, will be established for all four selective entry schools. The examination and selection process will be overseen by an independent authority.

The proportion of students that can attend the selective entry schools from any individual government or non-government school will continue to be capped. However, in order to provide further opportunities for highly able students, the cap will increase from 3 per cent to 5 per cent of the Year 8 cohort from

any school. Under the policy, 10 per cent of places at selective entry schools will be based on equity grounds.

Highlights

- High-level governance bodies, including a steering committee, project board, selective entry school network and regional working groups, were established.
- An experienced principal was appointed to project manage the establishment of the two schools and two principals were appointed to oversee the regional working groups.

Gifted and high-potential students

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

Highlights

- In 2008, there are 36 Select Entry Accelerated Learning program schools operating across Victoria. They are located to improve equity of access for gifted students.
- Select Entry Accelerated Learning school-based coordinators and regional coordinators continued to meet quarterly for networking and professional learning.

Strategic partnerships

During the current triennium (2006–08), the Strategic Partnerships program continues to fund 93 organisations and agencies with \$5.2 million annually to deliver 145 student and teacher professional learning programs across the state. Organisations range across community, cultural and scientific organisations, professional teaching associations and large institutional partners such as the National Gallery of Victoria, Museums Victoria and Zoos Victoria. Programs typically support the implementation of the VELs. They also support schools to work towards closer links with their communities by connecting learning and teaching with practice beyond the classroom.

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

Building leadership capacity

The Government has allocated significant funding to deliver the current suite of 19 leadership professional learning programs for government schools. Programs are targeted to meet the development needs of principals and teachers at different stages of their careers and in different contexts.

Highlights

- In 2008, 159 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 66 per cent of participants in the first cohort who commenced the course in 2004 have achieved a promotion to the principal class.
- One hundred and seventy-four 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 leaders.
- One hundred experienced principals were provided with 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 leaders who value the collective responsibility for improving all schools within the system.

- One hundred and ninety teachers participated in the Building the Capacity of Professional Learning Leaders program.
- Two hundred and eighty-six teachers and leaders participated in programs for school leadership teams focused on building their capacity to reform curriculum practices.
- Three hundred and twenty 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 strengthen their expertise in a particular learning area.
- Sixteen networks in the 2008 program are supporting 172 aspirants in the Leaders in the Making program, designed to strengthen leadership capacity within school networks and support the development of succession planning models.
- Eighteen networks in the 2007 program continued to provide network-based leadership development activities for their aspirant leaders in 2008.
- The *Guidelines for Principal Class Performance and Development 2008* were distributed.

Creating and supporting a performance and development culture

The accreditation scheme for Performance and Development Culture in Schools is in its fourth and final year. The accreditation process is based on a Self-Assessment Framework, which is verified by an external body.

Highlights

- Nine hundred and forty-eight government schools have been accredited. All remaining schools not yet accredited will be verified during 2008.
- Accredited schools partnered non-accredited schools on a needs basis to work towards accreditation through involvement in activities such as mentoring and school visits.
- Ten accredited reference schools supported the statewide implementation of the Performance and Development Culture initiative. Nominated by regions, they represent the range of schools across the state and provide presentations for groups of schools seeking accreditation.
- Over 100 open sessions were hosted by accredited schools to share their expertise and experiences. These sessions were attended by 500 schools, with over 1500 participants.

Teacher professional development

Programs were funded to provide teachers with opportunities to further develop 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 and the Overseas Trained Teachers program were also delivered as part of the Teacher Supply and Demand strategy. The Secondary Teacher Assistants initiative commenced in 2008 as part of the Government's Better Schools, Better Performance policy.

Highlights

- Over 2627 teachers participated in the two-day statewide Teacher Mentor Support program in 2007.
- Day 1 of the 2008 program was completed, with 1780 teachers participating. Participants in the program were provided with a comprehensive learning guide exploring the practice of mentoring.

- To further develop their skills and expertise, between four and ten weeks of Teacher Professional Leave was undertaken by over 548 teachers in 2008.
- To maximise the benefits of Teacher Professional Leave, 180 recipients participated in the Professional Leave and Teacher Outcomes program.
- Ten refresher courses were delivered in metropolitan and regional locations in 2007, with 243 teachers participating.
- Four refresher courses were delivered in metropolitan and regional locations by June 2008, with 87 teachers taking part.
- To support the transition of overseas-trained teachers into government schools, the Overseas Trained Teachers program was trialled in 2008. The trial program targeted teachers in hard-to-staff subject areas. Eighteen teachers completed the program in May 2008.
- The Secondary Teacher Assistants initiative commenced in 2008, with funding provided to schools for 90 secondary teacher assistants. These assistants allow teachers to focus on the teaching and learning process by reducing the administrative burden.
- Six professional learning programs were provided in metropolitan and regional locations for secondary teacher assistants and the teachers they work with. Seventy-four participants undertook these programs to June 2008.
- The *Secondary Teacher Assistants Initiative Principal Guidelines 2008* were distributed to all schools that were funded for the initiative.

Continuously improving schools

School improvement

During 2007–08, 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 the online School Compliance Checklist.

To support the continued effectiveness of the framework, the supporting guidelines and templates are updated annually in response to feedback from schools and regions and to ensure their alignment with changes in Departmental policy.

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 2007, over 400 primary and secondary schools undertook a year of self-evaluation, review and planning to support the development of their school strategic plan. This four-year plan is supported by an annual implementation plan.
- The School Compliance Checklist, implemented across the state in February 2007, provides a means for schools to self-assess their compliance with legislative and Department policy requirements. The checklist helps to reduce the administrative burden on principals.
- All government schools completed an annual report to their school community.
- Approximately 160 schools received additional regional support during 2007–08 through Targeted School Improvement funding.

Partnerships

The Department continued to encourage government schools to engage in partnership activity. These partnerships encompass

connections between schools and the community sector, the business and philanthropic sectors, local government, other education providers and parents. Schools are encouraged to embark on partnerships that address the particular needs of the school, its students and the local community.

Highlights

- The Government released the *Blueprint for Early Childhood Development and School Reform* discussion papers, which outlined the proposed areas of reform, including a focus on strengthening partnerships with families and the community to improve educational outcomes.
- The Office for Children and Early Childhood Development transferred to the Department, which provided the opportunity to develop stronger connections among schools, the broad pre-school sector and local government.
- The Department established the Education Regeneration and Community Partnerships Division, which is focused on supporting schools to undertake effective partnerships with the community.
- There was increasing interest from the community, business and philanthropic sectors in making positive contributions to public education.

Regeneration projects

The Department has continued to support school regeneration projects across the state. A regeneration project is a planned response by a group of schools, their communities, early childhood service providers and the Department to enhance education in a local area.

The key drivers of regeneration projects are improved curriculum provision, student outcomes, pathways and the redressing of disadvantage. Typically regeneration projects are large-scale and complex, and have substantial infrastructure implications.

The 2007–08 State Budget announced total funding of \$93.3 million over two years

to commence the implementation of eight regeneration projects. These projects are located in Altona, Laverton, Broadmeadows, Dandenong, Western Heights (Geelong), Colac, Bendigo and Wangaratta.

Highlights

- The large-scale Broadmeadows Regeneration project has a budget of \$25 million. Seventeen primary, secondary and specialist schools will be reconfigured as four primary schools, one secondary college (with two Years 7–9 campuses and one Years 10–12 campus) and two specialist facilities.
- The Bendigo Education Plan aims to revitalise the city's educational facilities through the establishment of four new state-of-the-art secondary colleges. This involves the building of new schools on the existing sites of Weeroona College and Eaglehawk Secondary College, as well as the creation of two new schools through the merger of Flora Hill Secondary College, Golden Square Secondary College and Kangaroo Flat Secondary College. The merger took effect in January 2008.

Leading Schools Fund

One hundred and sixty-two government secondary schools are involved in the Leading Schools Fund program. Four hundred and fifty additional teachers have been employed in total through the Leading Schools Fund for three years. Funding for 265 of these teachers involved in Phases 1 and 2 concluded in 2007. Funding for 185 teachers involved in Phase 3 concludes in December 2008. Each participating school received an average allocation of 2.6 additional teachers for three years and \$390,000 for capital works, enabling schools to build or redevelop innovative learning spaces to support new approaches to teaching and learning. The Leading Schools Fund has supported the implementation of new models of secondary provision and the transfer of innovative pedagogy and curriculum options across the system.

Facilities and infrastructure

Emergency and security management

The Department coordinated the installation of 90 new and replacement alarm systems in schools during 2007–08.

The Department developed a colour-coded alert notification system for all schools (including non-government schools) to inform of any critical incidents or events that may impact on the safety of students and staff. The colour-coding outlines the type of response schools are required to use to deal with these specific incidents or events.

Crisis response training was provided for over 600 staff, including regional personnel, psychologists, social workers, primary welfare officers and school personnel.

There were ten significant school fires during 2007–08, with structural and replacement costs estimated at approximately \$3.15 million.

Asset projects

The 2007–08 State Budget committed \$555 million in new capital funding for school education. This funding directed:

- \$50 million for seven new schools or stages thereof
- \$27 million to replace four schools
- \$93.3 million for the Regeneration program (see page 47)
- \$204.6 million for modernising and improving existing school sites, including the provision of \$20 million for the Better Schools Today program
- \$35 million for land acquisition
- \$7 million for computers for schools
- \$3.3 million for the Science Rooms Redevelopment program
- \$13.5 million for the Securing the Future of Small Rural Schools program
- \$1 million for Planning for Selective Entry Schools (see page 43)
- \$10 million for Maribyrnong Secondary College (Sports School)

- \$50 million for the Technical Wings and Trade Equipment for Government Schools program
- \$60.5 million for the Ultranet project.

School councils

School councils play a central role in government schools in Victoria. Each school council determines the school's direction and supports the school to achieve the goals and targets of its Strategic Plan and Annual Implementation Plan, particularly to improve student outcomes in the areas of student learning, engagement and wellbeing, and pathways and transitions.

The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* and *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007* set out the functions, roles and responsibilities of the school council, school council members and the principal, as the council's Executive Officer. Each year the school community has the opportunity to elect parents and Department employees to the school council. In addition, school councils may decide to co-opt community members from the school or the wider community to provide expertise in particular areas.

Highlights

- New Ministerial Orders, which came into effect in 2008, provided improved processes and clarity for the school council election process.
- Training for school councillors, including induction programs, continued to be delivered by regional offices.

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.

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 below.

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
- 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.

With the formation of the new Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, in 2009 regions will assume responsibility for the integration of services for children and young people from birth to 18 years and their families.

Effective Regions model



Regional directors and contact details as at 30 June 2008 are listed below.

Metropolitan regions

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Dr Jim Watterston
Regional Director
Level 3, 295–297 Springvale Road
Glen Waverley Victoria 3150
Telephone (03) 9265 2400
Facsimile (03) 9265 2444
Website <http://www.emr.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>

Southern Metropolitan Region

Mr Peter Greenwell
Regional Director
Level 1, 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>

Western Metropolitan Region

Ms Katherine Henderson
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 6565
Website <http://www.wmr.vic.edu.au>

Non-metropolitan regions

Barwon South Western Region

Mr Grant Rau
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>

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>

Grampians Region

Mr Malcolm Millar
Regional Director
109 Armstrong Street North
Ballarat Victoria 3350
Telephone (03) 5337 8444
Facsimile (03) 5333 2135
Website <http://www.grampians.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>

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>

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 2008, a total of 707 registered non-government schools – 486 Catholic and 221 independent – were educating over 298,000 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 2007–08, the Department provided over \$380 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 \$11.5 million was provided to non-government sector authorities for specific-purpose grants for targeted programs, including students with special needs, suicide prevention and Internet access.

In addition, \$7.5 million, of a total \$30 million in capital support committed over four years in the 2006–07 State Budget, was provided to

assist needy non-government schools to update educational facilities.

Non-government schools are also 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.

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 2007, seven Catholic schools were accredited as Performance and Development Culture schools and a further 16 undertook external verification for accreditation in 2008.
- Collaboration with the non-government sector continued across a range of curriculum initiatives, including strategies to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes 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 52,000 in 2006 to 64,300 in 2007.
- \$22.1 million was provided for student transport for non-government school students, mainly in outlying areas, and \$4.6 million was provided in public transport subsidies through the Department of Infrastructure.