

# Research Priority Areas of Interest 2008–11

Every  
child,  
every  
opportunity



Published by Education Policy and Research Division  
Office for Policy, Research and Innovation  
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development  
Melbourne  
December 2008

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Authorised by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2 Treasury Place,  
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002.

Also published on <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/researchpriority.htm>

For more information contact:

Sandra Mahar

Research Manager

Email: [research@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:research@edumail.vic.gov.au)

## Research Priority Areas of Interest 2008-11

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Research Committee advises the Portfolio Board on current research and evaluation activity in the light of Departmental objectives and sets future directions and broad research and evaluation priorities to inform policy development. The Research Priority Areas of Interest support this strategic role.

Aligned to the Department's Corporate Plan and the Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development, the Research Priority Areas of Interest also support the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agenda.

The Research Priority Areas of Interest provide direction to internal and external researchers on the areas in which the Department wishes to promote high quality research and foster partnerships. Major research projects and proposals to the Research Fund should be aligned to the Research Priority Areas of Interest.

The Department's Research Committee ensures that evidence from both local and international research is used to identify areas for future directions in education and early childhood development. National and international environmental scans identified emerging issues and trends of particular relevance to the Australian and Victorian context. This information was used in the development of the Research Priority Areas of Interest 2008-11 to ensure a forward looking focus with the potential to yield new knowledge. This new research agenda supports the Department's commitment to improving the health, wellbeing, learning and development outcomes of every young Victorian.

# System improvement

Priority areas	Areas of interest
Integration	<p>Identify and monitor:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the features of successful models of integrated service provision in early childhood education and care</li> <li>2. longitudinal or large-scale studies on the effectiveness of programs and services in early childhood</li> </ol>
	<p>Monitor and evaluate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. strategies and resource allocations that foster inclusive mainstream education that meets the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people</li> <li>4. innovative and discerning use of ICT, such as 24/7 virtual services, to support an integrated approach to service delivery</li> </ol>
Improved transitions	<p>Identify and monitor:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. the holistic developmental learning requirements that best support young children's transition to school and future learning</li> <li>6. strategies and practices that help prepare children for successful learning in early childhood learning centres and school</li> </ol>
	<p>Review and evaluate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. coordinated partnerships that support and monitor young people's transitions and pathways through to Year 12, or its equivalent</li> </ol>
Health, wellbeing and development	<p><b>Early childhood</b></p> <p>Identify and review:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. successful models of early childhood health and wellbeing services and policies, and their implications for education policy</li> <li>9. models that effectively align early childhood developmental needs with school curricula and teaching strategies</li> </ol> <p>Monitor and assess:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. the uptake and impact of the 4-year-old health check</li> </ol>
	<p><b>Schools</b></p> <p>Review and analyse:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. the wellbeing of Victoria's children and young people in the areas of health, educational attainment, resilience, community connectedness, and social and emotional well-being</li> <li>12. the balance between economic policy objectives and social development, health and wellbeing in school curricula</li> <li>13. how children and young people are encouraged to develop their own sense of identity and citizenship in changing times and diverse communities</li> </ol>
	<p>Explore and critique:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14. the role of 'soft' skills such as judgement, caring, ethics, intuition and imagination in the competitive knowledge-based economy and society</li> </ol>

Priority areas	Areas of interest
<p><b>Quality teaching and learning</b></p>	<p><b>Literacy and numeracy</b>            Examine and critique:            15. the features of literacy and numeracy plans that deliver measurable improvements in attainment outcomes for children and young people            16. the effectiveness of intervention models that are systematically organised over time in response to diagnosed need (three waves of provision)            Identify:            17. effective strategies that capture, interpret and utilise data to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes in schools and early childhood settings</p> <hr/> <p><b>Languages</b>            Review and evaluate:            18. the role of multi-lingual learning in the development of literacy skills and improved outcomes and its implications for curricula design and integration            Identify:            19. models of good practice that demonstrate an increase in knowledge of and fluency in particular Asian languages</p> <hr/> <p><b>ICT and emerging technologies</b>            Investigate and review:            20. the advantages and limits of ICT for more self-paced, interactive and individually effective styles of learning            21. the role of ‘new’ literacies in a knowledge-intensive service economy            22. teaching, classroom and assessment practices and professional development in the digital age            Identify:            23. emerging workforce needs in terms of attitude, professional expertise, motivation and support in an environment of fast-paced change and student technological proficiency            Monitor and evaluate:            24. the effects of ICT-rich learning spaces in school design</p>
<p><b>Accountability and improvement</b></p>	<p>Design:            25. effective accountability frameworks to ensure transparency and encourage consistent performance improvement            26. sophisticated and comprehensive value-added measures to effectively monitor and measure student progress and achievements            Analyse:            27. how national and state policy frameworks can/might successfully engage and interact with schools in ways that optimise the capacity and work of school leaders to influence and promote effective learning            Identify and review:            28. new measures of performance and behaviours in schools that are recognised as valid by statisticians and practically useful to those tasked with improving schools            29. the moderating characteristics of low SES school communities that are achieving excellent educational outcomes            Explore:            30. how investing in social capital contributes to school and system improvement</p>

# Partnerships with parents and communities

Priority areas	Areas of interest
Partnerships/ networks	<p>Investigate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>31. ways in which engagement with parents of pre-school children can build foundational literacy and numeracy skills</li> <li>32. how corporate and philanthropic sectors build social and human capital through supporting schools and how issues of sustainability are addressed</li> </ol> <p>Design and monitor:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>33. models of partnerships with early childhood service providers, parents and communities that are the most effective in achieving strong learning and developmental outcomes</li> </ol> <p>Monitor and assess:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>34. the role of networked approaches in catering for diverse student needs and supporting flexible learning options</li> </ol>
Meeting diverse needs	<p><b>SES and educational outcomes</b></p> <p>Identify:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>35. the facilitators and barriers to meeting the needs of disadvantaged children and young people</li> <li>36. effective models of inclusion and early intervention for priority groups e.g. low SES, indigenous groups, highly vulnerable children and young people</li> </ol> <p>Investigate and evaluate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>37. the extent to which schools and early childhood centres are equipped to meet the challenge of educational disadvantage faced by new arrivals and children and young people for whom English is not their first language</li> </ol> <p>Investigate and monitor:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>38. the extent to which better identification and support of vulnerable young people leads to greater engagement, participation and retention into post-compulsory education and expectations of lifelong learning</li> <li>39. the identifiable behaviours related to teacher efficacy and the role of collective efficacy in contributing to improved educational outcomes for low-achieving students</li> </ol> <p>Identify:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>40. models of workforce-based initiatives that have achieved measurable success in tackling equity and disadvantage for children and young people</li> </ol> <hr/> <p><b>Targeting resources</b></p> <p>Investigate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>41. ways in which school governance and accountability can be improved to ensure better outcomes for disadvantaged young people</li> <li>42. resource and equity implications of a more personalised approach to learning</li> <li>43. equity and access implications of increased use and reliance on ICT for learning, particularly for children and young people from low SES backgrounds</li> </ol>

# Workforce reform

Priority areas	Areas of interest
Workforce reform	<p><b>Early childhood</b></p> <p>Identify:</p> <p>44. features of a comprehensive strategy to reform and upgrade the training, status, remuneration and retention of the early childhood education and care workforce</p> <p>45. successful models of training and development in the early childhood sector that produce the best outcomes for children, particularly for low SES families and communities</p>
	<p><b>Teacher quality and effectiveness</b></p> <p>Identify:</p> <p>46. the effects of the combination of managerial and teacher leadership in building ‘professional communities’ and ‘collective efficacy’ in school-level learning communities</p> <p>47. emerging roles for teaching support staff, including participating in leadership teams as school leadership becomes more distributed</p> <p>Identify and critique:</p> <p>48. the extent to which network models of professional support are available to student and beginning teachers, and the means by which they are evaluated and sustained</p> <p>49. successful mentoring models that have involved university, business and school mentors working with beginning and experienced classroom teachers</p>
	<p><b>Incentives</b></p> <p>Investigate:</p> <p>50. ways in which different systems recognise and reward quality teachers and support their development needs</p> <p>51. performance pay models that have been found to correlate with improved educational outcomes for students</p>
	<p><b>Attracting and retaining high-quality teaching staff</b></p> <p>Investigate:</p> <p>52. ways to promote the status of teaching as a profession in order to enhance public perception of teachers and to attract high-quality recruits</p> <p>53. what motivates high-performing teachers, and how this can be used to inform policy frameworks and local decision-making to aid teacher retention</p> <p>Investigate and design:</p> <p>54. new pathways to teaching for high-achieving, non-teaching graduates and those interested in a career change</p> <p>Examine:</p> <p>55. the effects of the trend to greater feminisation of the teaching workforce in schools</p>
	<p><b>New and emerging roles in education</b></p> <p>Identify and monitor:</p> <p>56. innovative approaches to work organisation that promote workforce diversity and professionally-appropriate activity</p> <p>Explore:</p> <p>57. the need to reconceptualise education in recognition of the digital environment</p>

# Workforce reform

Priority areas	Areas of interest
Workforce reform (cont.)	<p><b>School leadership models</b></p> <p>Review and monitor:</p> <p>58. the key dimensions of leadership that lead to improved student outcomes and how these can best be supported through professional training and development programs</p> <p>Identify:</p> <p>59. challenges for leaders of small and/or isolated rural schools, and how they have been successfully addressed in similar situations elsewhere</p> <p>Investigate:</p> <p>60. how distributed leadership is being implemented and evaluated in Victorian schools</p> <hr/>
	<p><b>Professional development</b></p> <p>Identify:</p> <p>61. highly effective professional development programs for school leaders and the development needs of leaders as identified by leaders themselves</p> <p>Explore:</p> <p>62. how national and state policy frameworks can optimise the capacity of school leaders to influence and promote learning</p> <p>Investigate:</p> <p>63. ways in which the skills and experience of successful leaders are used to develop knowledge, understanding and performance-enhancing practices by new leaders and those working in challenging environments</p> <p>64. the professional development and support needs of teachers working in hard-to-staff schools, and how these are best met</p>