Information statement

9th MCEETYA meeting
Hobart, 23 April 1998 to 24 April 1998


Benchmarking in Literacy and Numeracy

Ministers approved the benchmarks and professional elaborations in Writing, Spelling and Reading for Years 3 and 5, which, in accordance with the decision of the 8th (December 1997) MCEETYA meeting, had been distributed for further consultation and undergone a validation process. A statement on this matter was released at the meeting (Attachment 1 - below).

Progress on Speaking, Listening and Viewing benchmarks, which are subject to further general trialing, was noted. Draft numeracy benchmarks for years 3 and 5 were also noted and it was agreed that this material be trialed in conjunction with statewide assessment programs in 1998.

Ministers also endorsed the following statement on the purpose and use of benchmarks:

‘Literacy and numeracy benchmarks articulate nationally agreed minimum acceptable standards for literacy and numeracy at Years 3 and 5, and enable State/Territory reporting of aggregated student achievement data against common standards to the Australian community through the National Report on Schooling.

States and Territories will report aggregated student achievement data in relation to the achievement or non-achievement of the benchmark standards.

State/Territory aggregated student achievement data in designated literacy and numeracy strands will be made available on the whole cohort of students, by gender, by language background other than English, and by Aboriginal background or Torres Strait Islander background, unless small student numbers mean that State/Territory confidentiality protocols would be breached.’

It was also agreed that literacy and numeracy benchmarks be developed for Year 7 during 1998 and that the Benchmarking Taskforce undertake further consideration of alternatives for benchmarks at Year 9/10 and report on this at a future MCEETYA meeting.

National Goals for Schooling

Ministers agreed to a draft set of revised national goals for schooling. The Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty First Century is to be released for a period of six months of public debate and comment. A statement from Ministers outlining the decision was released at the meeting (Attachment 2 - below).

Development of Draft Education Standards under the Disability Discrimination Act

Ministers considered the results of a consultation process with key interest groups on the feasibility and desirability of preparing Education Standards under the provisions of the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) and agreed to the development of draft Education Standards for further consultation with all stakeholders.

While most States and Territories have anti-discrimination legislation for people with disability, the DDA provides a process for complaints to be conciliated or resolved more formally by a hearing and includes a provision to make disability standards in some areas, including education. The preparation of draft standards is intended to clarify education providers' responsibilities under the DDA itself and similar State/Territory legislation and not to give rise to responsibilities which are not already implicit in the legislation.
Portrayal of Violence in the Electronic Media

Council has sought advice on current or planned initiatives to support the critical evaluation of the media, with particular reference to the portrayal of violence in the media, by students in the upper primary years of schooling (ages 9-12).

The Department of Education, Training and Employment, South Australia, has undertaken to consult with Commonwealth, State and Territory officials to prepare a paper for consideration by Ministers which provides an overview of initiatives and identifies and assesses any action required to address these matters.

National Youth Week

Ministers supported, in-principle, the concept of an Inaugural National Youth Week in the year 2000. A feasibility study for a National Youth Week will be undertaken to examine: the program; timing; involvement of young people; and financing. The feasibility study, funded by the Commonwealth, will be overseen by a National Youth Week Coordinators Committee, convened by the Commonwealth, with representatives from all jurisdictions, to prepare a report back to Youth Ministers.

Science, Engineering and Technology Places in Universities

Ministers asked that the Higher Education Joint Planning Committee, augmented as necessary, meet urgently to consider the issue of the apparent decline in student demand for Science, Engineering and Technology places at Australian universities. The Committee will establish mechanisms to monitor trends in the level of demand for science, engineering and technology programs in Australian universities and how these levels and trends compare internationally; the significance of these trends for State and national economic development; and action that Governments might take, if necessary, to increase the level of demand.

Principles and Framework for the Consistent Application of the National Training Framework within Secondary Schools

Ministers endorsed six principles for the consistent application of the National Training Framework within secondary schools. The six principles: recognising training; meeting industry and/or enterprise standards; pathways through senior secondary certificates; ensuring dual outcomes; determining priorities for the delivery of VET in schools; and using training packages - were developed from the original 14 developed for New Apprenticeships.

Each of the principles was considered in terms of the implementation issues arising for accreditation and for other State/Territory agencies. Ministers requested the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Agencies (ACACA) further develop the implementation issues and provide a report to the next MCEETYA meeting.

Middle Years of Schooling

Ministers endorsed the staging of the Middle Years of Schooling Conference to be held in Victoria in 1999 and encouraged participation from all States, Territories and the Commonwealth in the conference.

Attachment 1 - Historic National Literacy Standard Established

Joint statement issued by Federal, State and Territory Education Ministers
Hobart, 23 April 1998

Australia's first national literacy standard for all children in Year 3 and Year 5 was officially approved today by the Federal, State and Territory Education Ministers.

The decision means children in Year 3 in all States and Territories will be assessed against the national literacy standard this year. Year 5 children will be assessed against the Year 5 literacy standard as soon as possible.
The literacy standard is the basis of the National Literacy Plan which aims to have every child reading and writing properly by the end of Year 3. Children in Year 3 and Year 5 below the national literacy standard will receive extra support to bring them up to standard as quickly as possible.

Under the plan, the literacy needs of all children will be assessed by classroom teachers in the first year of school. Children requiring extra help will receive additional literacy support.

The Ministers hailed the agreement as an important step towards lifting basic literacy standards.

The Governments of Australia have declared their commitment to high literacy standards for all children.

The national literacy standard will provide a vital common benchmark against which parents, teachers and governments can assess the improvement of children. It will help ensure all children receive the necessary tuition and support to be able to read and write properly.

National numeracy standards will be trialed this year.

**Attachment 2 - New Schools Goals for a New Century**

*Statement issued by Federal, State and Territory Schools Ministers, Hobart, April 1998*

All Australia's Schools Ministers have agreed to a draft set of revised national goals for schooling. Ministers believe that these draft goals provide an opportunity to chart real direction for our children's schooling as we move into the 21st Century.

The existing goals were originally agreed at a meeting in Hobart in 1989 and became known as the Hobart Declaration on Schooling. At their meeting in Hobart today, Ministers agreed to release for consultation over the next six months a revised set of draft national goals. An extensive process of consultation will involve key stakeholders in schooling, including teachers, the non-government sector, parents and employers.

Ministers agreed that it was timely to review the goals to take account of the significant social, economic and technological changes which have occurred over the last decade. As well, Ministers believe that there are new challenges which will face schools in the future.

The revised goals represent a much sharper focus on students and their learning outcomes. It is anticipated that the final set of revised goals will be underpinned by a number of targets which will be developed during, and as part of, the consultation process.

The draft statement will provide an appropriate framework for key stakeholders in school education and members of the wider Australian community to contribute directly to the development of national goals which will take us into the next century.