

## Chapter 3

# Meeting the national goals for schooling: Focus areas

## Literacy and numeracy

The issue of student achievement in literacy and numeracy has been a major concern of Ministers for some time. In 1997, they added a new national goal:

That every child leaving primary school should be numerate, and be able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level.

In addition, they established a sub-goal:

That every child commencing school from 1998 will achieve a minimum acceptable literacy and numeracy standard within four years.

and put in place a National Literacy and Numeracy Plan.

The national plan calls for a coordinated approach by the Commonwealth, States and Territories to improving literacy and numeracy outcomes and achieving the national goal. The plan was developed in 1997 and includes the following key and interrelated elements:

- assessment of all students by their teachers as early as possible in the first years of schooling
- early intervention strategies for those students identified as having difficulty
- the development of agreed benchmarks for years 3, 5, 7 and 9, against which all children's achievement in these years can be measured
  - the measurement of students' progress against these benchmarks using rigorous state-based assessment procedures, with all year 3 students being assessed against the benchmarks from 1998 onwards, and all year 5 students being assessed against the benchmarks as soon as possible

- progress towards national reporting on student achievement against the benchmarks, with reporting commencing in the 1999 *National Report on Schooling in Australia*

- professional development for teachers to support the other key elements of the plan.

## Development of national benchmarks

State, Territory and Commonwealth education Ministers agreed, as part of the national plan, to develop national benchmarks for reporting on literacy and numeracy performance in support of the national literacy and numeracy goal. They agreed that benchmark standards for this purpose for years 3, 5 and 7 should articulate nationally agreed minimum acceptable standards in literacy or numeracy.

The benchmarks for years 3, 5 and 7 were developed under the authority of a Benchmarking Taskforce, comprising nominees of State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers, the National Catholic Education Commission, the National Council of Independent Schools' Associations and Curriculum Corporation. The Corporation was responsible for the development work.

Literacy benchmarks for years 3 and 5 have been approved by all education Ministers. It is expected that numeracy benchmarks for years 3, 5 and 7, and literacy benchmarks for year 7 will be approved in early 2000. Ministers have also agreed that benchmarking for year 9 or 10 will be postponed, pending information from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment project, which involves the collection of data in 2000 on the achievement in mathematics literacy, science literacy and reading literacy of a sample group of 15-year-olds from Australia and other countries.

Education Ministers have agreed that data will be reported in relation to the attainment or non-attainment of the minimum acceptable standard. They have also agreed that information to enable national reporting against benchmarks will be gathered by rigorous state-based assessment procedures. School authorities are working through an agreed national process to locate the benchmark on the different tests, to enable nationally comparable reporting of aggregated performance data by States and Territories.

Nationally comparable data on 1999 year 3 student performance against the year 3 reading benchmark were published as a preliminary paper to this report. The results reported in the preliminary paper are reproduced in full in the Appendix 2 of this report, along with the year 5 reading benchmark results which subsequently became available.

## **Implementing the National Literacy Plan in States and Territories**

### **New South Wales**

In 1999, New South Wales government schools continued to implement the State Literacy Strategy as part of the State Literacy and Numeracy Plan. The strategy provides a comprehensive and coordinated structure to ensure early identification in primary and secondary schools of students experiencing difficulty in acquiring literacy skills. In 1999, each of the 40 school districts had a district literacy consultant, while six consultants provided targeted support for teachers of students in years 5 to 8. Learning support teams in schools developed systems for monitoring student achievement in literacy, determining the nature and extent of support to be provided and assessing individual progress over time.

Students experiencing difficulty in acquiring literacy skills were assessed for inclusion in the Reading Recovery program (in 751 schools) or the Support Teacher Learning Difficulties program. The Reading Recovery program is an early intervention program for students who are experiencing difficulties learning to read and write after their first year of schooling. Students received 30 minutes of intensive daily instruction from a specially trained teacher over a period of 12 to 20 weeks. In 1999, the program was implemented by 857 specially trained Reading Recovery teachers working in 751 schools. A total of 7,509 year 1 students participated in the program, with 88 per cent improving to the point where they no longer need additional support.

Early Literacy Initiative (ELI) programs were established in 468 primary schools in lower socioeconomic areas with a focus on supporting growth in teacher skills in literacy teaching in classrooms. The support materials, *Follow Up to BST* for years 3 and 5 and *Follow Up to ELLA*, were developed and distributed to schools to assist teachers using the test data.

A range of electronic and print-based support materials were made available to teachers to ensure that all students achieve appropriate outcomes. Analysis of district-wide data by District Superintendents and district literacy teams provided guidance in targeting consultancy support to schools. District literacy support teams had responsibility for developing and providing professional development to local schools.

The New South Wales Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP) targeted 478 school communities, which represented 20 per cent of students and schools in communities with the highest concentrations of disadvantaged students. Literacy interventions through targeted projects assisted schools to implement programs in reading K–12, literacy across the subjects years 5–10, and talking and listening K–6. DSP schools were assisted to develop plans and programs for whole-school change, including the identification of groups of students at risk of not making adequate progress to meet the goals of the state literacy strategy and national agreements.

The Department of Education and Training provided a number of programs aimed at improving the literacy, numeracy, attendance and participation of Aboriginal students from preschool through to year 12. They ranged from home-to-school transition programs to literacy enrichment for years 11 and 12 Aboriginal students. Four hundred schools participated in these programs in 1999.

Curriculum materials were developed to provide follow-up English as a Second Language (ESL) support to ESL students identified through the years 3 and 5 Basic Skills Test (BST) and the year 7 English Language and Literacy Assessment (ELLA) as needing additional teaching and learning support. These materials demonstrate effective ESL teaching strategies in the skill areas of reading and responding and writing, and are linked to the ESL Scales.

Professional development for teachers and districts was provided through a range of strategies. Materials and training were developed to support the implementation of the *Follow Up to BST* and *Follow Up to ELLA* packages. The writing component of the BST for years 3 and 5 (the

Writing Assessment Program or WRAP) included intensive training and development for teachers who marked the writing tests as well as production and distribution of school support materials.

Log on to Literacy is a program designed to address the needs of K–2 teachers in small, isolated schools by providing access to quality teaching and learning materials through participation in online learning communities. Teachers from 40 schools participated in the program in 1999, targeting year 1 students who had been identified as being at risk. Participants undertook eight fortnightly modules over one semester delivered over the Internet. Each module has training material, a classroom-based task, resources and opportunities for online discussion and support through a mentor. Participants valued the direct focus on reading and diagnostic tools and teachers reported improved student achievement in reading and writing skills.

The following broad strategies were common to all diocesan intervention plans used in Catholic schools:

- implementation of an early intervention strategy, for example Reading Recovery, School Wide Early Literacy Learning, Starting with Assessment: Literacy, First Steps
- school-based literacy policies
- BST for of all years 3 and 5 students
- ELLA for year 7 students
- trial and development of teaching resources to assist lowest achieving secondary students
- targeting resources to students with specific needs
- employment of specialist support staff (literacy aides, Aboriginal education workers)
- support for school literacy resource exams.

Professional development in literacy issues in 1999 included:

- training of teachers and literacy assistants in the ongoing implementation of literacy programs (Reading Recovery, First Steps, Schoolwide Early Language and Literacy (SWELL))
- understanding a process for action planning to develop programs, beginning with the analysis of testing data
- training of secondary teachers in the subject-specific literacy requirements of texts and language

- teaching literacy through the use of information technology
- workshops on authentic assessment strategies, relevant to Syllabus Stages
- support for teachers to undertake university courses: Graduate Diploma in Literacy and Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Introduction to Early Childhood
- involvement of teachers in developing the writing strand of the BST.

Nearly all independent schools had some arrangements in place to assist those assessed as having inadequate literacy skills. Half of these schools employed specialist teachers (remedial, resource, special needs) to work with small groups or individual students. A limited number of schools sought parental assistance with remedial work, while others used Reading Recovery techniques.

Interventions in literacy development included the provision of First Steps and Teaching Reading More Successfully courses. Other programs included Spalding, the development of Individual Education Programs and commercial and teacher-devised programs.

A large majority of independent schools indicated that they conducted professional development activities in the field of literacy. Nearly a quarter of schools made use of courses developed by the Association of Independent Schools. Staff attended a number of relevant conferences. Several primary schools used the First Steps program, and a similar number placed greater emphasis on early intervention. A few schools increased their involvement in teaching English as a second language.

## Victoria

In 1999, the Early Years Literacy Program continued to be a major vehicle for the implementation of the National Literacy Plan in Victorian government schools. It provides a comprehensive and strategic approach to literacy achievement for all students in the early years and is based on the premise that, given enough time and support, almost all children achieve literacy success. The essential elements are:

- the structured classroom program in reading and writing within a daily two-hour literacy block
- development of individual case management for students requiring additional assistance and access to a one-to-one intervention program such as Reading Recovery for those students in year 1 who need it

- development of home–school links through the development by each school of a strategic Parent Participation Plan reflecting the needs of each school community
- ongoing development and support for early years professional learning teams, with Early Years Coordinators providing training for these teams.

The state budget has provided \$76.1 million over two years (\$26.1 million in 1998–99 and \$50 million in 1999–2000) to 1,282 primary schools (including P–12 and specialist schools) for implementation of the Early Years Literacy Program.

In 1999, these schools were able to:

- release an Early Years Coordinator from regular classroom duties to ensure the implementation of all elements of the program – approximately 480 new graduates were employed to fill the classroom teaching positions created by this strategy
- access initial training and ongoing professional development for Early Years Coordinators from a statewide network of regional and school-based trainers
- implement a one-to-one intervention program such as Reading Recovery for students experiencing difficulties with reading and writing in their second year of school.

One thousand schools implemented Reading Recovery programs in 1999 and 29 Reading Recovery tutors provided statewide training and ongoing professional development for Reading Recovery teachers. Nine regional Early Years Project Officers coordinated the strategy and monitored the implementation of School Early Literacy Plans across each region. Two statewide managers of literacy and numeracy were appointed.

Support materials and ongoing professional development that were available to teachers to enable them to ensure that all students achieved literacy success included:

- Teaching Speakers and Listeners (P–2) and Teaching Readers in Years 3 and 4
- Developing Literacy Partnerships – a parent education program
- documentation of case studies to illuminate literacy development of Indigenous and ESL students.

Schools that participated in this initiative were required to submit a three-year School Early Literacy Plan. These plans were subject to an approval process involving central and

regional experts and are renewed annually. Special schools were included in this initiative and all the schools involved committed themselves to the achievement of statewide minimum standards in reading for years preparatory and One. The schools also committed themselves to documenting their performance against these standards in their annual report.

A consultative committee oversees the implementation of this initiative and, in 1999, membership was drawn from the parents clubs, school councils, principals, the Deans of Education, Board of Studies, and the department.

A review of the Early Years Strategy was undertaken during 1998. A survey of a sample of Victorian government schools who were among the first to implement the Early Years Literacy Program was conducted. The Learning Assessment Project, school annual reports and triennial reviews all formed part of the evaluation process.

Consistent with the National Literacy Plan, the Department of Education, Employment and Training is committed to assessing students on entry to school to determine their literacy and numeracy needs and to ensure that plans are developed for students at risk of not making progress towards the achievement of the national literacy goals. In 1999, the Prep Entry Assessment Procedure was available to assist teachers in selecting appropriate assessment strategies for students on entry to school. As part of the Prep Entry Assessment Procedure, the *School Entry Assessment* kit was made available to all Victorian government primary, P–12 and specialist schools for initial literacy and numeracy assessment of students.

The Early Years Literacy Program advocates a daily two-hour, focused, uninterrupted literacy teaching and learning block. In 1998, data about time allocation to literacy was collected through the school review process. For the years P–2, the mean number of hours per week was nearly 10, with three-quarters of all schools allocating over 9 hours 30 minutes.

An important initiative aimed at ensuring student achievement in literacy continues to improve into 2000 is the reduction of class sizes. In 2000 an additional 450 primary school teachers will be employed which is estimated to reduce the average P-2 class size from 24.3 in 1999 to 23.3 in 2000.

Student literacy learning in years 5 to 9 has been an important focus of the Middle Years Strategy. A research project was commissioned to draw together research and successful practice in classrooms. In the first phase, of the

project which was completed in May, planning guidelines for schools were produced, using a website ([www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/mys](http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/mys)) to disseminate information, and a conference was held attended by 1,500 participants.

As part of the Successful Interventions Project, the Secondary Literacy Research Project (1999–2000) investigated the range of programs and strategies used in secondary schools to provide additional assistance to students whose literacy achievements are not up to standard. The Middle Years Literacy Research Project (1999–2000), building on an environmental scan of literacy intervention programs in schools completed in 1998, began research into effective literacy teaching practice in mainstream classes across all key learning areas.

The Literacy Advance Strategy is the response of the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) to the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan. This strategy was developed as a systematic approach to improving literacy teaching and student achievement in Victorian Catholic schools and has been implemented in schools since the commencement of 1998. In 1999, the strategy required all primary schools to review their literacy provision and submit a literacy plan that provided for:

- implementation of a literacy program that incorporated the components of effective classroom teaching, early intervention, specialist assistance and home–school links
- assessment of all year 1 students at the beginning of Term 1 to identify those students at risk of not progressing
- participation in the national benchmarking assessments (in Victoria the Learning Assessment Project) at years 3 and 5
- appointment of a literacy coordinator
- provision of an annual Literacy Program Accountability Statement.

Targeted secondary schools were required to:

- appoint a literacy coordinator
- nominate specific professional development that school staff would attend
- provide a detailed literacy plan. The plan called for each school to supply details of the school profile, the strategies and procedures the school used to identify student's literacy needs, strategies used to assess student

progress and outcomes, the selected professional development program and the professional development needed to support the program.

Assessment and reporting were also seen as important elements of the literacy strategy in Catholic schools. All year 1 students in the dioceses of Melbourne, Ballarat and Sandhurst were assessed by their teachers at the beginning of the year using the observation instruments contained in the Marie Clay *Observation Survey of Literacy Achievement*. The requirement to assess year 1 students at the beginning of each year was viewed as a minimum, and all schools in the three dioceses were encouraged to re-administer the assessments in November, with a view to identifying the degree of literacy growth that had occurred.

An additional service was supplied by the Centre for Applied Educational Research (CAER) at the University of Melbourne, which has been commissioned by the CECV to analyse the data collected from the assessments. Prep and year 2 data could also be submitted. A CAER report, detailing analysed test data and benchmarked Curriculum and Standards Framework II Text Level data for English, was sent to each school that submitted assessment information.

In the Diocese of Sale, year 1 students were screened using the First Steps Developmental Continua and those identified as 'at risk' were then assessed using the Clay materials, which were used specifically for the purpose of planning appropriate intervention. The monitoring of the literacy development of all students in P–6 was through the use of the WA First Steps Developmental Continua.

In addition, to support the overall assessment strategy, Special Education staff from the Catholic Education Office in Warrigal provided educational assessment and referral services.

A number of Catholic schools participated in the Children's Literacy Success Strategy (CLaSS). In 1999, CLaSS involved a total of 205 schools and year 1 students in these schools were required to undertake additional tests during the assessment periods, including the Record of Oral Language. All CLaSS schools participated in the post-testing assessments. Assessments in these schools were also extended to cover year Prep (in the first year of implementation) and year 2 (in the second year).

There was considerable activity in Catholic schools during 1999 in the area of literacy professional development. Literacy Advance professional development provided specific support to the schools and teachers implementing

Literacy Advance. It consisted of a range of professional development programs for teachers, including:

- training for all year 1 teachers in literacy assessment
- CLaSS
- Victorian Early Years Literacy Program
- Reading Recovery Teacher Development Course
- Reading Recovery Independent Observers Course (P–6)
- Reading Recovery Continuing Contact
- WA First Steps Professional Development
- Primary Literacy Networks
- ESL in the Mainstream Course
- Writing in The Subject Areas
- Making a Difference
- Secondary Literacy Networks.

Professional development for all year 1 teachers in literacy assessment training on the use of the Marie Clay resources has been offered to all year 1 teachers in Catholic schools since 1997 and continued in 1999. A training video package designed to assist teachers administer the Observation Survey was delivered to all primary schools.

The professional development provided for CLaSS was multilevel and included the training of CLaSS facilitators, principals, school-based CLaSS coordinators and teachers. The training was conducted both at the school level (professional development teams) and off-site. Four off-site training and induction components provided professional development to literacy coordinators (eight days), principals (four days), CLaSS facilitators (one day per week) and CLaSS teachers (four days). The professional development sessions focused on each of the following CLaSS design components: leadership and coordination; standards and targets; monitoring and assessment; classroom teaching; professional learning teams; school and class organisation; intervention and special assistance; and home, school and community partnerships.

In Catholic education, the emphasis on developing a system capacity to improve literacy outcomes by funding high-quality programs has also been reflected in the secondary school component of the Literacy Advance Strategy. Training for the school-based delivery of Making a Difference was provided during 1999 as well as support for the implementation of this program in schools. ESL in the Mainstream Teacher Development Course and Writing in the Subject Areas professional development programs were provided to both secondary literacy and mainstream

teachers. The school-designed programs included the incorporation of Special Education based strategies and approaches as well as other programs such as, Bridging the Gap. The Secondary Literacy Network was maintained as a central professional development activity. The pilot project Writing and Reading in the Teaching of English involved Catholic secondary English and key learning area teachers in professional development to increase their understanding of English language knowledge and its realisation within school subjects. The major aim of the project was to increase awareness of how to teach literacy skills to secondary students and how these literacy skills could be transferred across the learning areas.

A substantial minority (30–45 per cent) of surveyed independent schools made use of the State's literacy tests in 1999, while less than a quarter had them under consideration for use in the future. Most of the schools using the tests made the data generated available to all teachers and students. A very small number of schools did not make the information available to students. Most schools also gave parents a full report of their child's results, often at parent–teacher interviews. A newsletter to parents summarised the overall results of the school. No schools gave any indication the reporting of results outside the individual school community.

Those independent schools not using the State tests relied mainly on a series of standardised tests, checklists and ongoing profiles. Australian Council for Educational Research tests were used by several schools, as were anecdotal records. Students received feedback from teachers in most cases, mainly through oral discussions of their results. Parents were informed through both parent–teacher interviews and written reports.

Most independent schools had developed programs and activities to assist identified students to improve their literacy skills. Specialist teachers and teacher aides were employed by the majority of schools, while others utilised parent assistance. Several schools used outside consultants to advise and work with those requiring help. Programs such as First Steps, Early Years, and Reading Recovery were employed in a substantial minority (30–45 per cent) of the schools.

Nearly all independent schools undertook some professional development activities in the field of literacy in 1999. Several made use of courses developed by the Association of Independent Schools, while a similar number introduced First Steps or other early intervention programs. Other schools arranged for staff to attend

conferences, with a few schools employing outside consultants. Others made use of in-house resources. One school had a writer in residence.

## Queensland

In 1999, implementation of the highly successful Support-a-Reader and Support-a-Writer programs continued in government schools to provide additional assistance for young children with literacy difficulties. During that year, \$3.8 million in State funding was allocated directly to schools to support students identified through the Year 2 Diagnostic Net. The Reading Recovery Program expanded to include 423 Education Queensland schools, involving 4,770 students, 573 Reading Recovery teachers, four trainee Reading Recovery Tutors and 25.5 Reading Recovery Tutors.

Through the Centre for Teaching Excellence, a number of vacation schools that focused on literacy improvement in government schools were held for teachers and para-professionals. Issues such as 'Boys and literacy' and 'Literacy teaching and learning for students with learning difficulties' were addressed.

In the Catholic sector, professional development activities included the promotion of learning support networks and exploration of development continua in schools.

A range of professional development programs were attended by teachers in independent schools. Associated Independent Schools of Queensland provided facilitated workshops on intervention programs associated with early years of schooling, the development of whole-school literacy plans and literacy audits.

An additional \$1 million in State funding was provided to schools to assist with the professional development literacy needs of key teachers (teachers responsible for developing and providing support to students requiring additional assistance in literacy) and teachers new to the Year 2 Diagnostic Net process. The Reading Recovery program provided extensive professional development and training to 191 new Reading Recovery teachers, 382 trained Reading Recovery teachers and four trainee Reading Recovery Tutors.

The Queensland School Curriculum Council finalised development of new syllabuses in the areas of Languages other Than English and Studies of Society and the Environment. Cross-curricula issues relating to literacy have been integrated into these syllabus materials for years 1–10.

## South Australia

As part of South Australia's response to commitments under the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan for Schools, the government has, as one of its highest educational priorities, the Early Years Strategy, which includes among its aims improved literacy and numeracy skills for children under the age of eight years.

During 1999, the strategy was supported by the Learning Difficulties Support Team, which provided training and development, support and advice for preschools, schools (R–12) and the teachers of students with learning difficulties and specific learning disabilities. The main focus of their work was on explicit teaching in literacy, numeracy and assessment.

Assessment in the early years occurred during 1999 using the guidelines provided by 'Foundation Areas of Learning'. Older students were assessed using the Basic Skills Tests in Aspects of Literacy. Children and students with learning difficulties in literacy were identified, and information about the achievements of all children and students was provided to families through regular reporting.

Activities in literacy intervention, including those accompanying the Early Years Strategy, that occurred in South Australia in 1999 included:

- implementation of School Entry Assessment (SEA) during 1999 in 75 per cent of departmental schools with Reception enrolments, (SEA requires Reception teachers to assess their literacy and numeracy for planning and reporting purposes in their first term at school.)
- grants allocated to schools and preschools for early assistance and follow-up action from Basic Skills Test results
- provision of specialist advice and early assessment services such as speech pathology
- publication of curriculum resource materials
- funding to support and maintain Reading Recovery programs
- year 8 baseline data project – using student achievement data to explore local school issues.

During 1999, review and refinement of existing curriculum frameworks occurred and a preliminary draft of the South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework was prepared. This framework incorporates an Early Years band (birth – year 2).

The Vacation Literacy Course operated in 1999. The course is a literacy initiative targeting years 6–7 students experiencing learning difficulties and at risk of not successfully making the transition from primary to secondary school. The programs were conducted during three vacation periods at eight sites throughout the state and four programs were also conducted at two city sites for years 8–9 students. Since the program's inception in October 1997, 1,328 students and 180 teaching and support staff have participated in programs at 18 country and 39 city sites.

The Learning Difficulties Support Team provided training and professional development to teachers, School Services Officers and groups of parents in preschools and schools R–12. Presentations focused on inclusive methodology specifically in the area of reading, spelling, Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills (THRASS), written language, handwriting and literacy assessments. A total of 6,399 people participated in training and development in 1999, and 32 per cent of training and development time was allocated to country locations.

An Action Research Project on multilevel programming in reading was implemented in two junior primary, two primary and two secondary settings. Information gained from the project is being used to form the basis of training and development presentations by the Learning Difficulties Support Team.

A series of workshops and seminars were organised for teachers to develop understanding about improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for groups of boys and girls from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Topics included the construction of gender, critical literacy and the use of popular culture. A total of 350 teachers participated in these learning activities.

The Training and Development Unit coordinated two literacy professional development initiatives:

- THRASS—phases 1 and 2
- First Steps programs – modules include writing (10.5 hours), reading (10.5 hours), spelling (7.5 hours), and oral language (15 hours).

In 1999, there were 43 THRASS classes run: 18 in the country, 12 in metropolitan areas, and 13 at the Netley Training and Development facility. There were 3,580 participants.

In the First Steps program, 23 classes were run (five in writing, eight in reading, seven in spelling and three in oral

language). Six of the classes were held in country schools, nine in the metropolitan area and eight at the Netley facility. In total, they involved 601 participants.

Other professional development activities included:

- the provision of statewide orientation (for teachers at all year levels) to the years 3 and 5 literacy benchmarks
- the development of support programs such as a literacy program for para-professionals
- supported action research and development projects, including a collaborative cross-sector Commonwealth-funded project focusing on professional development of R–5 teachers.
- training and professional development courses including Early Literacy and the ESL Learner and the Language and Literacy course.

Curriculum materials *Australia Fair: Teaching and Learning for a More Socially Just Australia* (Department of Education, Training and Employment, 1999) in health and physical education, and studies of society and the environment were distributed to all government schools with a middle years population in Term 4, 1999. Professional development seminars were held to support the implementation of these curriculum materials and sessions will continue in 2000 as part of the celebrations of centenary. The materials, which use critical literacy as part of the methodology, support students to understand, and engage critically with, a range of data, media and representations of Australian society.

A feature of the literacy intervention programs in South Australia is the extent to which the various sectors work together. This cooperation is apparent in the area of Reading Recovery, where Catholic Education SA, Department of Education Training and Employment and the independent schools continue to work collaboratively in providing Reading Recovery courses.

This collaboration enabled the Catholic sector in South Australia to continue to provide strong support at school and principal level for the Reading Recovery program. The Catholic Education Office supports schools in accessing the program through the provision of funding for teacher training and release. During 1999, 45 teachers were involved from Catholic schools, from a total of 90 teachers across the sectors. Some 620 students were involved in the program in 1999 and 60 per cent of Catholic schools with year 1 classes provided the Reading Recovery program.

During 1999, assessments of literacy achievements of students in their fifth term of schooling at Catholic schools



were conducted to identify 'at risk' students who need more intensive intervention strategies. Following the selection and development of testing instruments, teachers underwent professional development experiences in the administration of the tests. The Key Literacy Teachers in each school were an essential resource at each school in the assessment process.

Catholic Education SA continued with its Literacy Strategy, which has the key components of provision of professional development courses and experiences and Key Literacy Teachers in schools. Primary schools were given a staffing allocation and secondary schools were allocated funding provision for the Key Literacy Teacher.

The professional development program offered to Catholic teachers was a structured, accredited program, with some articulation with university courses. During 1999, the following courses were offered:

- Applications of English Grammar (for the teaching of writing and reading in middle primary)
- Critical Literacy
- Early Literacy and the ESL Learner
- Early Literacy in Transition
- Early Years Assessment
- Early Years Literacy Program
- ESL in the Mainstream
- First Steps
- Language and Literacy
- Literacy and the Information Age
- Literacy of the Subject Areas
- Planning and Programming for Teaching English
- Planning for Literacy in the Key Learning Areas
- Reading Recovery
- Scripture as Text
- Teachers into Literacy
- Teaching Literacy for Educationally Disadvantaged Students
- Teaching Viewing.

Increasing numbers of teachers in Catholic schools availed themselves of these opportunities with every primary school accessing professional development in literacy

during 1999. There was a growing trend in secondary schools of accessing the professional development courses.

The Key Literacy Teachers, in the main, proved to be key agents of change within the school contexts. A support program for their development was conducted during 1999. Their work was linked to individual teacher and whole staff support, Early Years Assessment and trialling the Developmental Assessment Resource for Teaching and Cost Effective instruments.

In the independent sector in 1999, 17 schools had Reading Recovery programs and 47 schools, representing approximately two-thirds of the independent primary schools, undertook professional development in the Education Victoria Early Years Literacy Program in Teaching Readers. The approaches used involved early assessment of students using Marie Clay's Observation Survey and intervention for those students at risk through explicit teaching, use of running records, and individual and guided reading.

Four independent schools accessed ESL-ILSS (English as a Second language – Indigenous Language Speaking Students) funding to support a program of language development for Aboriginal students who began school with oral language in standard Australian English at pre-level 1 on the ESL Scales. Progress over a ten-month period was excellent, with most students progressing three levels in that time.

Bilingual support programs were implemented for students in independent schools with limited English proficiency as assessed in the Oral and Writing strands of the ESL Scales. This involved 36 students in 13 schools.

All schools were issued with a resource folder that outlined recommended tasks for identifying students at risk, including use of the Observation Survey by Marie Clay. All schools had the opportunity to undertake professional development in the use of this resource.

Independent schools chose from the range of professional development available, including First Steps, Early Years Literacy Program, ESL in the Mainstream, Teaching Reading 3–5, School Entry Assessment, Early Literacy and the ESL Learner, Teaching Aboriginal Children and Students (Indigenous), New Arrivals Workshop, ESL Assessment, Language and Literacy program. During 1999, 1,170 teachers attended professional development sessions related to literacy and numeracy; 131 teachers attended professional development activities in relation to ESL; and ten teachers attended professional development activities in relation to newly arrived students.

Schools participating in the Early Years Literacy Program implemented a literacy teaching and learning block in the early years of between 90 and 120 minutes. Schools not in the program made their own allocation of time for literacy teaching in the primary and secondary years.

## Western Australia

During 1999, a draft Literacy Strategy was circulated in the government school sector for consultation. Information gathered as part of this process informed further development and refinement of the strategy, which has the following key features:

- It is outcomes focused, establishing ambitious objectives and measurable targets at both system and school level.
- It is a multilayered approach to improving literacy, based on the recognition that a combination of initiatives and techniques will be more effective than a single-element approach.
- It is the centrepiece for curriculum improvement: without strong literacy skills, students will be unable to achieve the outcomes now expected in all areas of the curriculum.

Implementation of the strategy represents a five-year commitment to dedicate resources and focus efforts across the government school system.

A significant support element of the Literacy Strategy is the Literacy Net program funded by the State Government. The P-3 phase of the Net focuses on the early identification of children who may require assistance in terms of their literacy development and incorporates ongoing monitoring of progress against specific checkpoints that describe critical aspects of reading, writing and oral language at each year level. The checkpoints define year-level expectations to assist teachers in making judgements about appropriate standards and have been developed in consultation with university personnel and teachers working with children experiencing difficulties with literacy.

The Literacy Net program specifically addresses the needs of those students identified as at risk in relation to the national benchmarks in all phases of schooling. The national benchmark standards have been incorporated into the Literacy Net checkpoints developed for P-7.

During 1999, all P-3 teachers were able to access Literacy Net training and professional development. The training program provided resources to assess individual students' literacy development and identify specific learning difficulties. The professional development provided support

in the area of intervention planning to address the specific needs of individual students. There was a strong emphasis on the involvement of parents in the intervention process.

A component of the Literacy Net targeted P-2 Indigenous children in selected schools. Feedback after the first year of operation indicated significant improvements in all areas of literacy. This support will expand in 2000 to promote partnerships between schools, parents and the Indigenous community.

The 4-7 phase of the Net focuses on assisting teachers in the development of individual intervention plans to support students experiencing difficulties in literacy learning. Further trialling of this phase was undertaken during 1999. The trial components included a diagnostic framework that incorporated the four roles of a reader (codebreaking, participating with the knowledge of the text, making social use of the text, and analysing and criticising the text), data gathering against literacy checkpoints, and intervention planning. The 4-7 Net was found to be helpful in diagnosing reading and writing difficulties and developing intervention plans. Schools involved in the trial process received professional development and support through district-based processes.

During 1999, the Commonwealth Literacy and Numeracy Programme (CLNP) was implemented on the same basis as in 1998 and 450 schools received funding on a sliding scale based on the Ross-Farish H index.

The program was implemented in schools serving communities with the largest proportion of students at risk of not achieving successful outcomes in literacy and numeracy. Schools were encouraged to integrate literacy and numeracy activities with existing State initiatives to facilitate the most effective use of funds.

Schools involved in the CLNP in 1999 employed a range of strategies and programs to achieve the program's objectives, including:

- use of the Literacy Net to identify students at educational risk and in need of individual intervention
- determination of students' literacy needs by means of First Steps Developmental Continua and the use of appropriate intervention plans
- specialised strategies for ESL students
- strategies to assist Indigenous students who had not developed adequate literacy outcomes
- whole-class, small-group and individual literacy improvement plans within a whole-school context

- professional development for teachers in the area of identification and intervention strategies to improve the transition between primary and secondary schooling.

The National Literacy and Numeracy Cross-sectoral Project (NLNCSP) was funded through the Literacy Programme National Strategies and Projects Professional Development Funding Pool, to facilitate teacher professional development in support of the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan. It focused on the provision of professional development to support mainstream classroom teachers P–3 in early identification and intervention, and the use of the National Literacy and Numeracy Benchmarks.

Collaboration was central to the design and implementation of the NLNCSP, which concluded at the end of 1999. The project promoted partnerships, professional mentoring and sharing between teachers in government, Catholic and independent schools. Those schools who elected to work on the literacy aspects of the project were provided with intensive support over one semester. Schools working with a numeracy focus were supported for three terms during the second year of the project. Work with teachers was complemented in both models by ongoing networking and professional development.

Evidence about the effectiveness of the NLNCSP was gathered through individual teacher surveys and collaborative plans, quarterly reports from project officers and evaluations by teachers and principals. The project was found to effectively support schools' planning and direction through teachers being assisted in their professional learning about early identification and intervention.

The range of activities offered to support teachers' professional learning was viewed as effective by the majority of respondents. Of particular note was the flexible but focused ongoing school-based support provided by the project officers. Almost 90 per cent of responses indicated that teachers either achieved or made significant progress towards professional learning outcomes in relation to early identification and intervention. Ninety-three per cent indicated the project had assisted teachers 'greatly' or 'significantly' in their planning for mainstream intervention. Eighty-four per cent believed they had learned about teaching–learning strategies to support mainstream intervention practices and a further 39 per cent considered that they had acquired knowledge and skills in relation to intervention planning.

Teachers rated the professional development model favourably, with 91 per cent indicating that it was either 'very effective' or 'effective' in supporting their

professional learning. Its strengths were cited as ongoing regular support (34 per cent); collaboration, consultation and professional sharing (23 per cent); and the provision of resources, strategies and ideas (13 per cent).

The key objective of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia was to implement a coordinated, system-wide approach to the development of whole-school literacy improvement, and funding depended on schools providing plans addressing:

- a whole-school approach to supporting students at risk
- identification and diagnostic procedures
- proposed literacy/numeracy outcomes
- intervention, including assessment and monitoring strategies.

Professional development and support was provided for teachers in the identification of students at risk, diagnosis of difficulties, development of individual learning programs and monitoring of students' progress. All schools involved submitted evaluations of their progress towards implementing their improvements and assessment of the students' achievement of the outcomes set.

The Kimberley Literacy Project (1998–99) involved Indigenous students in their first year of schooling who were attending town or remote Catholic schools. Community involvement was an important focus of the project. The key strategy was to form teaching teams of the classroom teacher, the Indigenous teaching assistant and an experienced early childhood teacher seconded from a school in the south-west of the State.

Professional development was provided about sociocultural considerations and appropriate literacy strategies were developed. Literacy levels were measured using bandscales or the Literacy Net. Each teaching team nominated literacy outcomes and documented progress toward their achievement. Teaching teams found the project helpful, and reported that the extra support translated into increased student confidence in the use of Standard Australian English and consequently improved literacy skills.

In independent schools in Western Australia, the Commonwealth Targeted Program (CTP) aimed to measurably improve literacy outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students through support for schools in four areas:

- centralised Program Officer support
- sectoral, cluster and school-based professional development

- targeted research and action research projects to support school-based planning, needs assessment and initiatives
- school-based funding through a submission process.

In 1999, implementation of the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA) Literacy Strategic Plan continued. The plan addresses the following priorities identified by the Commonwealth:

- greater awareness and use of early identification and intervention strategies
- increased awareness of students' needs in the early years of schooling
- improved individual student achievement in literacy and numeracy
- improved monitoring and reporting of student literacy levels
- improved levels of teacher skills to accommodate educationally disadvantaged students in the middle years of schooling
- the development of whole-school literacy strategic plans
- increased support for teachers of Indigenous students, to improve literacy outcomes for these students.

Most surveyed schools undertook some form of professional development in literacy. First Steps was used in half of the schools, with most of the remainder making use of other courses, including those developed by AISWA. Half of the schools based their policies and procedures on the Education Department's Student Outcome Statements.

Literacy conferences and seminars were attended by staff representatives from a substantial majority of schools, leading to greater awareness of the importance of early intervention. Professional authors were involved in a few schools, with one acting as a consultant and another serving as a writer in residence. The Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills program and Early Years program were introduced in several schools. To promote good practice and to make quality professional development available to rural or remote schools, AISWA/CTP offered sponsorship to the State Literacy Conference.

## Tasmania

In 1999, the Tasmanian Department of Education developed the Tasmanian Literacy and Numeracy Plan 1999. The 1999 plan was the beginning of a sequence of planning processes

aimed at developing a Tasmanian strategic plan for literacy and numeracy programs in 2000.

The 1999 plan emphasised that literacy and numeracy learning and teaching was a high priority throughout all the years of schooling. While there was an emphasis on general literacy and numeracy learning for all students in all schools from Prep to year 12 in 1999, the Department of Education placed a particular emphasis on students who were at risk of failing to achieve appropriate literacy and numeracy outcomes.

In Tasmania, there are relatively higher numbers of families of low socioeconomic status than in other States. Low socioeconomic status and poverty are a clear indicator of risk of failure in literacy and numeracy. Statewide monitoring and assessment results evidence the links between poverty and literacy failure. Consequently, the Department of Education has a continuing emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy programs for students from backgrounds of poverty and low socioeconomic status.

In 1999, there were five major foci for planning related to literacy and numeracy teaching and learning in Tasmania:

- 1 Intensive general support programs up to year 3. This was supported by programs and strategies such as Flying Start, Count Me In Too and Program of Additional Structure and Support (PASS).
- 2 Intensive research and support programs years 3 to 6. This was supported by programs and strategies such as the Classroom Literacy Project.
- 3 Intensive research and support programs in the middle school years, especially years 7 and 8. This was supported by programs and strategies such as the Classroom Literacy 7 and 8 Extension Program and Planning and Teaching for Numeracy in Years 7 to 9 Project.
- 4 Intensive research and support programs years 11 and 12. This was supported by programs and strategies such as the Senior Secondary Literacy Project.
- 5 Programs for other targeted groups of students known to be at risk of not achieving literacy/numeracy benchmarks. This was supported by programs and strategies such as the Aboriginal Literacy Program In Early Childhood and Improving Numeracy for Indigenous Students in Secondary Schools.

The following are some examples of literacy and numeracy programs and interventions undertaken in government schools during 1999.

### *1 The School Resource Package*

All schools, including those that received additional funding through the Commonwealth Literacy Programme, were required to:

- ensure that there was student assessment data for literacy and numeracy that will serve as a baseline for further monitoring
- develop a three-year Partnership Agreement that detailed student learning outcome targets in literacy and numeracy
- report annually on their progress towards the attainment of their student learning outcome targets
- develop school literacy and numeracy action plans that detailed ways of using literacy and numeracy achievement information to inform curriculum review and development, allocate resources and provide further assistance to all students
- identify a literacy and a numeracy curriculum leader to manage and coordinate the whole-school literacy and numeracy program
- devote minimum required times (as outlined in the Literacy Policy) dedicated to literacy and English teaching and learning
- devote minimum required times (as outlined in the Numeracy Policy) dedicated to numeracy and mathematics teaching and learning
- develop Individual Education Plans for children with significant disabilities who received funding from Category A special education programs
- report to parents on Key Intended Literacy Outcomes (KILOs) and Key Intended Numeracy Outcomes (KINOs) achieved by individual children.

### *2 The Flying Start program*

A continuing literacy initiative was the provision of additional teachers employed in the comprehensive early childhood Flying Start program.

Flying Start builds on the success of the earlier Prep Literacy and Early Literacy programs, providing a more comprehensive program which focuses on assisting young children from Prep to year 2 to achieve literacy, numeracy

and social skills outcomes. The following are the essential elements of the Flying Start program:

- daily program provision
- inclusive of all students
- teachers working in teams within the classroom
- equitable professional development opportunities for teachers
- intervention strategies and explicit teaching to improve student learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and social skills
- planned provision of information to parents and promotion of parent participation.

The comprehensive Flying Start program will be evaluated over a three-year period, and preliminary results indicate that the program made a significant difference to the literacy outcomes for students in 1997. The program will be re-evaluated taking into account the completed research in 2000.

### *3 PASS*

This program supplements the Flying Start program. It targets teachers of Prep to year 2 in 22 schools with a high proportion of students who are educationally disadvantaged in terms of their literacy outcomes. Three schools from each educational district were nominated by superintendents to be part of the program. Extra schools became involved on a 'user pays' basis.

The program provides additional professional development and training in the use of interventions aimed at students experiencing difficulties in learning to read and write, based on the Early Literacy Research Program used in Victoria.

It helps teachers establish classroom and school practices that support students experiencing difficulties. There is an emphasis on assessment, focused teaching, grouping students according to need and providing finely graded reading materials to match students' reading performance.

Research on the PASS project based on elements of the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test, indicated that:

- students from the schools in the program performed on average at a higher level than expected for their average age
- girls outperformed boys on the measures used from the Woodcock.

The research on the PASS program will inform strategic planning in 2000.

#### 4 The Kindergarten Development Check

The Kindergarten Development Check is administered in Term 1 of a child's kindergarten year and its use was continued in 1999. It is intended as a screen to identify children who are at risk in the development of their gross motor, fine motor, listening, speaking, understanding and personal and social skill development.

During 1999, a working party of kindergarten teachers, guidance officers, speech pathologists and managers of support services in the Arthur and Barrington Districts was established to undertake a review of the Kindergarten Development Check. The review involved:

- collation of responses from teachers throughout the state in relation to the Kindergarten Development Check
- establishment of the issues and concerns
- development of a network of colleagues to respond to the material collated
- development of recommendations, a draft document and support material for the Kindergarten Development Check
- consultation on the draft document in schools throughout the state in Term 2, 1999
- finalisation of the revised check and support materials.

#### 5 The Writing Road to Reading, The Spalding method

During 1999, three Spalding 1 trained staff undertook further professional development and accreditation through the Spalding Foundation to become Spalding trainers, able to train and accredit teachers in Spalding 1. A three-year trial of the Spalding method had been undertaken and, during 1999, a redesigned research process was established to further focus the research. Initial school site action research was undertaken in 1999 with the following intentions:

- to explore the Spalding method within the school literacy provision
- to explore the links between the Flying Start program and the Spalding method
- to identify the number of P-2 children who are 'at risk' in terms of language development and to reduce this

number as a result of interventionist strategies including the Spalding method

- to design lesson exemplars using the method
- to explore and develop 'comprehension' aspects and the broader aspects of literacy development within the Spalding frame
- to facilitate and support the training of other educators to promote the integration of the Spalding method into the classroom context
- to explore parent participation within the program.

One school site undertaking action research reported the following significant results. Table 3.1 summarises the average spelling progress made by children in eight teaching months.

These scores strongly suggest that the addition of Spalding spelling lessons to the literacy program improved spelling outcomes. Children with grade equivalent scores lower than chronological ages were considered to be 'at risk'. The number of children in this 'at risk' category was reduced after involvement in the Spalding program regardless of the test administered.

Table 3.2 compares numbers of children with chronological ages lower than spelling and reading ages in March and in October.

**Table 3.1 Progress in spelling, a sample Tasmanian government primary school, 1999**

	<i>Grade 1 progress in 8 teaching months</i>	<i>Grade 2 progress in 8 teaching months</i>
Morrison McCall Spelling Test	12 months	14 months
Waddington Diagnostic Spelling Test	14 months	10 months
South Australian Spelling Test	16 months	19 months

Source: Department of Education, Tasmania

**Table 3.2 Reduction in number of at risk students, sample Tasmanian government primary school, 1999**

	<i>No. of students 'at risk' in March</i>	<i>No. of students 'at risk' in October</i>
Waddington Diagnostic Spelling Test	35	18
Waddington Diagnostic Reading Test	35	20
South Australian Spelling Test	53	31
Woodcock Word Identification Test	20	17
Woodcock Passage Comprehension Test	22	19

Source: Department of Education, Tasmania

The third significant and unexpected outcome was that in four of the five tests which compared the outcomes of boys with girls, the boys did better than the girls.

## Northern Territory

In 1999, the government and non-government education authorities in the Northern Territory did not have system-wide intervention programs in place for students considered 'at risk' in the literacy area. However, several trial projects were implemented with a view to making recommendations about their appropriateness for replication in other schools and their implications at the system level.

The First Steps Intervention Project was undertaken to provide data, qualitative information and recommendations about intervention using First Steps methodologies in a range of educational contexts and with a view to determining its appropriateness for future replication.

The project was developed around three schools, one urban, one small rural and one remote, which were selected according to specified criteria. One of the schools found it necessary to curtail the project because of school and community factors unrelated to the project itself. This impacted on the implementation, data collection and outcomes and highlighted some of the critical issues that affect education in the NT, more particularly in rural and remote areas but also in the urban context.

The outcomes for schools, personnel and individual students were very positive in the majority of cases, with a significant proportion of students from all contexts making gains. Part-time instructors and teachers built on their

knowledge and skills and gained from the opportunity to network and develop support mechanisms.

The NT Secondary Schools Literacy and Numeracy Intervention Pilot Project was implemented at two government secondary schools during 1999 to trial strategies for assisting those students who have reached secondary school without acquiring the literacy and numeracy skills necessary to succeed in the eight learning areas.

Two teachers with significant experience and expertise in literacy and numeracy were employed and, through consultation with other teachers, the students and their parents, 10–15 year 9 students were identified in each school during Term 4, 1998. The project was implemented differently in each school according to identified needs of the students. For example, one of the schools conducted the

class in the local shopping centre for two days per week for one term. The teachers conducted professional development sessions for staff members from all curriculum areas including those from other schools. Parallel projects were implemented in one Catholic and one independent secondary school.

Various forms of intervention that met the specific needs of their students occurred in individual primary and secondary schools in all systems. The following provided support for a range of students experiencing difficulties in achieving acceptable literacy standards:

- Parents as Teachers– a preventative program which aims to ensure that parents of children aged 0–3 years have a strong understanding of the process of literacy development and can help their children.
- Early Childhood Programs for Aboriginal Children – a system-wide project available for urban and remote schools to improve and extend access to effective and culturally appropriate early childhood programs for Indigenous children aged 3–5 years.
- Teachers who used the First Steps program assessed and monitored children's understandings and skills by observing their behaviours in the course of regular teaching and matching children's performance with appropriate strategies and activities.
- Walking Talking Texts – a programming and assessment resource that provides teachers with a sequenced activities-based English as a Second Language (ESL) program, allowing them to implement effective ESL teaching practice.

- As an outcome of the 1998 Indigenous Students Achieving Numeracy Project, designed to identify successful strategies for the development of numeracy of Indigenous students, a project officer was funded by the NT Department of Education to implement the findings.
- The NT Department of Education's Student Services Branch and the Catholic Education Office provided specialist services and resources to enable students with disabilities and learning difficulties to gain access to, participate in and derive benefit from the common curriculum, for which literacy is essential.
- Staff at the two NT Early Intervention Resource Centres in Alice Springs and Darwin worked with children from birth to entry to full-time schooling, their families and their teachers.
- Speech pathologists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists were employed to work consultatively and collaboratively with the school community.
- The NT Aboriginal Hearing Program addressed the educational disadvantage that results for children with the conductive hearing loss that is associated with chronic ear disease in Indigenous infants and children.
- The independent sector's Strategic Results Project was also designed to improve the literacy achievements of Indigenous students through intervention for students with hearing disabilities.
- Behaviour Management Services provided advisory and programming support for students in primary and secondary schools who experienced moderate to severe behavioural difficulties, including those diagnosed with attention deficit disorders.

Many intervention strategies in literacy and numeracy included professional development for both teachers and part-time instructors.

In the NT, there were several professional development programs which aimed to enhance teachers' literacy and numeracy teaching and assessment skills at both the primary and secondary levels. In addition to the existing professional development programs listed below, extra professional development support continued through the NT Literacy and Numeracy Support Program, which has three components:

- the dissemination of information to schools and the community about outcomes profiles and benchmarks, and the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan

- the provision of support for early childhood teachers in the identification of appropriate assessment strategies to support good practice and at the same time meet the assessment requirements of the system
- the provision of assistance in the implementation of the NT Multi-age Assessment Program (MAP).

Furthermore, it is an ongoing responsibility of the NT Literacy and Numeracy Task Group to identify gaps that exist in the systemic provision of appropriate professional development programs for teachers and make suitable recommendations about changes or extensions to existing programs, the adoption of new programs, and the more effective allocation of resources.

Professional development for NT teachers in 1999 included:

- the First Steps program
- the ESL Teacher Development Project, which provided a comprehensive program of workshops, seminars and school-based support to teachers of Indigenous students who are learners of English as a second language, as well as to office-based advisory personnel and curriculum developers
- the employment of 12 ESL coordinators, who provided ESL support to teachers working in predominantly Aboriginal schools where English is the second language or dialect of the students
- the project Early Childhood Programs for Aboriginal Children, which provided professional development for teachers of Indigenous children aged 3–5 in urban and remote schools
- the ESL–ILSS program
- the NT Aboriginal Hearing Program, which provided an ongoing inservice program for educators on teaching and classroom management strategies to assist Indigenous children who have conductive hearing loss and associated auditory processing problems to access the curriculum
- a collaborative project between the Association of Independent Schools (NT) and the Menzies School of Health Research called Advancing Indigenous Literacy through Intervention for Hearing Disabilities, which operated in six schools
- the Aboriginal Language Fortnight, an annual event organised by Batchelor College in collaboration with the NT Department of Education and many remote



community schools for Aboriginal staff and Batchelor College Teacher Education

- students – often one and the same group – to develop literacy skills in the vernacular
- the Using Technology to Provide Professional Development for Teachers in Remote Communities program, which used electronic technologies to provide professional development access to participating educators in remote areas
- the Zero In intervention project, which was managed by Marrara Christian School and provided literacy and numeracy professional development for teachers at NT Christian Schools Association schools in the Top End.

In the government sector, a large number of the school, cluster and regional projects provided professional development specifically tailored to meet the needs of the teachers in that school, cluster or region. Additionally, interstate presenters were invited to the NT on a regular basis to provide professional development and present keynote sessions at conferences.

Catholic schools participated in the Multi-age Assessment Program to assess literacy achievements of year 3 and year 5 students. The results are made available to schools for reporting and diagnostic purposes. Parents of primary students in Catholic schools also received reports of their students' achievement against English profiles on a regular basis.

### **Australian Capital Territory**

In keeping with the National Literacy Plan, 'improving literacy and numeracy' is one of the goals of the ACT Government Schools Plan 1998–2000. This goal underpins the ACT strategy for literacy, Literacy Matters.

Key elements of the strategy involve providing professional development for teachers and improving partnerships with parents. These elements build on existing programs for improving literacy outcomes for all students.

Through the K–10 Learning Assistance Program, approximately \$5.5 million (plus additional on costs) was distributed to schools in 1999 to support students who were identified as requiring literacy or numeracy intervention. Learning Assistance teachers worked closely with mainstream classroom teachers in a variety of ways as determined by students and school needs.

Under this program, students from their second year at school who were in the lowest performing 20 per cent of the

population received literacy and numeracy assistance in 1999. Primary school students were identified using the ACT Assessment Program results for the past two years. An important component of the program was Reading Recovery, which was implemented in 36 schools by 36 Reading Recovery teachers

Operating in its second year, the Literacy and Numeracy Team continued to coordinate the department's literacy programs and initiatives, including the following professional development initiatives:

- 1999 was the third year of the four-year K–10 Literacy Initiative which is based upon the use of the Western Australian First Steps program in primary schools and the ACT-developed Language for Understanding Across the Curriculum (LUAC) in high schools.
- 1,200 primary school teachers received training in the First Steps reading materials and five high schools and four primary schools participated in LUAC workshops.
- 100 per cent of high schools (17) received training on the First Steps writing materials adapted to meet the needs of high school teachers in addressing literacy in all the key learning areas.
- Seven teachers successfully completed the year-long Reading Recovery course provided by the ACT Reading Recovery Tutor.
- Seven sessions were held for trained Reading Recovery teachers. Two sessions on assessment procedures were also held for 20 teachers who had been nominated by their schools to support the Reading Recovery teachers.
- Three Phonemic Awareness field officers/tutors, were trained. These tutors led four central courses and six in-school courses during 1999, which a total of 200 teachers attended.
- The Supportive Practices to Enhance Literacy Learning project provided training for teachers in developing partnerships between parent/carers and teachers. Components of this project included Home School Communication (two high schools and four primary schools), Homework (15 teachers from six schools and 390 children in years 3–7) and Integrating Home and School Literacy and Numeracy Practices (ten teachers from two high schools and three primary schools).
- Six primary schools were identified as Professional Development Schools. They disseminated information

about their literacy programs to over 200 teachers from other ACT primary schools.

- An Early Childhood conference, Literacy in the Early Years – Home and School What Works, was attended by 478 delegates from the ACT Department of Education and Community Services, the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools in September 1999. The conference was part of National Literacy Week.
- Other professional development was provided through Learning Assistance meetings held each term covering topics such as parent programs, peer tutoring programs, Scaffolding Literacy, Phonemic Awareness and assessment.

Information from the ACT Assessment Program was used by schools to set targets and determine professional development needs as documented in their literacy plans. All primary and high schools submitted their literacy plans by mid-1999, and many were revised as the year progressed.

A video, *Never Miss a Chance*, was produced to enhance literacy development. The video is aimed at parents and teachers and focuses on the wide range of literacy practices that support the literacy development of children.

Within the Catholic sector, the following interventions and professional development activities were provided for identified at risk or lowest achieving students in 1999:

- support at school level by the school Literacy/Special Needs resource teams
- use of Commonwealth literacy funds to develop effective programs at both primary and secondary levels
- effective use of system funds to provide extra Teacher Assistant time through the Special Needs (Literacy and Learning Outcomes) Program
- development and delivery (8 x 6 module courses) of the Speech and Language – Assessment and Programming course for primary/secondary students with language learning difficulties
- development and delivery of the Secondary Literacy Initiatives Program tutors course to address the needs of lowest achieving secondary students
- a series of three professional development workshops for school-based members of the literacy team (First Steps tutors/Literacy focus teachers/tutors).

The Territory's literacy tests were not used by any of the surveyed independent schools, but all had them under

consideration for future use. All the surveyed schools had in place some means of assisting students with inadequate literacy skills. Most surveyed schools had a designated support teacher to work with individuals or small groups. One had a 'parents as teachers' program operating, and extra tutorial sessions, while another made use of external consultants. Some surveyed schools had made use of the First Steps literacy program, and had attended relevant conferences and seminars. Other schools had held courses in the Spalding phonics method.

## State and Territory Literacy assessment results

As well as the year 3 and year 5 reading benchmark results reported in Appendix 2, all States and Territories reported other data obtained during 1999.

### New South Wales

The 1999 Basic Skills Test (BST) data for literacy and numeracy continued to confirm the effectiveness of statewide literacy and numeracy strategies. The test was used in all government schools and was taken by about 126,000 students. Another 40,000 students in the Catholic and other non-government schools took the test. The testing program provided a measure of student achievement and progress in literacy and numeracy in the primary years of schooling.

In Catholic schools in 1999, the literacy BST was administered to approximately 34,500 years 3 and 5 in the dioceses of Armidale, Bathurst, Broken Bay, Lismore, Maitland-Newcastle, Parramatta, Sydney, Wagga Wagga, Wilcannia/Forbes and Wollongong. The measurement and reporting of literacy achievement in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn were based on the national Literacy Benchmarks Years 3 and 5 Writing, Spelling and Reading.

The 1999 Archdiocesan Benchmarking Exercise was based on the validity of teacher assessments and involved a process of extensive, moderated and supported teacher judgement of student attainment. Samples of student work were matched to the First Steps indicators, which linked directly to the years 3 and 5 national literacy benchmarks in spelling, writing and reading.

BST results are reported in five skill bands for year 3 and six skill bands for year 5. Skill Band 1 is the lowest level of achievement. A year 3 child placed in Band 3 or above for

literacy and numeracy is considered to have demonstrated substantial achievement, and a year 5 child placed in Band 4 or above for literacy and numeracy is considered to have demonstrated substantial achievement.

In 1999, the literacy component of BST was expanded to include a writing component (WRAP) featuring teacher-based marking of the task. More than 1,000 government and non-government primary schools, and over 90,000 students volunteered to participate in the program. In government schools, 63 per cent of year 3 students and 62 per cent of year 5 students participated.

The writing assessment required students to attempt two writing tasks, a short story and a written report. The assessment reported on student achievement in sentence construction, spelling, punctuation, tense, subject-verb agreement, use of prepositions and pronouns and writing in different styles such as descriptions or instructions.

Table 3.3 shows the proportion of students in each skill band. The skill band percentages are for all participating schools for Indigenous and NESB by gender.

The results of the 1999 Writing Assessment program indicate that 76 per cent of government students in year 3 and 83 per cent of government students in year 5 who participated in the program demonstrated proficient or higher level of skills in writing. Other results revealed that girls did better than boys and that there was very little variation in the performance of students from language backgrounds other than English when compared to the whole group. The results for participating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were significantly lower than the group as a whole. Results of students in Catholic schools were similar.

The English Language and Literacy Assessment (ELLA) was introduced in NSW government schools as part of the State Literacy Strategy. ELLA became compulsory for year 7 students in all government schools in 1998 and has since been adopted by ten out of eleven Catholic dioceses and some independent schools. In 1999, schools also had the choice to retest students in year 8. The test examined students' reading, writing and language skills. Students who achieved at the lower end of the scale were identified and given additional assistance. The success and importance of the ELLA program was most clearly demonstrated by the large number of government schools

(more than 90 per cent in 1999) choosing to participate in the optional retesting of year 8 students.

ELLA results were reported against four levels of achievement (high, proficient, elementary and low). The results of the 1999 ELLA program showed a marked improvement in the skills and achievements of students in the lower bands in comparison with the 1998 ELLA results. The overall results of the 1999 ELLA tests indicated that:

- 83 per cent of students in year 7 and 88 per cent of students in year 8 demonstrated proficient or higher level skills in reading
- 84 per cent of students in year 7 and 87 per cent of students in year 8 demonstrated proficient or higher level skills in language
- 85 per cent of students in year 7 and 87 per cent of students in year 8 demonstrated proficient or higher level skills in writing.

Table 3.3 Percentage of students in skill bands, by sub-group, NSW participating schools, Basic Skills Test, 1999			
		Year 3 %	Year 5 %
All students	Band 6	n/a	21
	Band 5	15	28
	Band 4	26	31
	Band 3	30	15
	Band 2	19	4
Boys	Band 1	10	1
	Band 6	n/a	17
	Band 5	13	26
	Band 4	24	32
	Band 3	30	18
Girls	Band 2	21	6
	Band 1	12	1
	Band 6	n/a	23
	Band 5	17	30
	Band 4	29	30
A&TSI	Band 3	30	13
	Band 2	17	3
	Band 1	7	1
	Band 6	n/a	5
	Band 5	4	14
A&TSI boys	Band 4	13	31
	Band 3	27	29
	Band 2	29	15
	Band 1	27	6
	Band 6	n/a	4
	Band 5	3	11
	Band 4	12	29

**Table 3.4 Percentage of students in skill bands, by sub-group, NSW participating schools, ELLA Test, 1999**

		<i>Year 7</i>			<i>Year 8</i>		
		<i>Reading</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Writing</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Writing</i>
		%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>All students</i>	High skills	33	33	37	45	40	44
	Proficient	50	51	48	43	47	43
	Elementary	12	12	11	9	10	9
	Low	5	4	4	3	3	4
<i>Boys</i>	High skills	29	25	29	39	30	35
	Proficient	50	54	51	45	52	48
	Elementary	14	15	14	11	13	12
	Low	7	6	6	5	5	5
<i>Girls</i>	High skills	38	41	45	52	50	54
	Proficient	49	49	44	40	42	38
	Elementary	10	8	8	6	6	6
	Low	3	2	3	2	2	2
<i>A&amp;TSI</i>	High skills	11	11	14	17	15	19
	Proficient	46	51	49	51	51	47
	Elementary	26	25	23	20	22	21
	Low	17	13	14	12	12	13
<i>A&amp;TSI boys</i>	High skills	8	7	9	14	10	14
	Proficient	44	47	47	47	48	45
	Elementary	28	30	26	24	25	24
	Low	20	16	18	15	17	17
<i>A&amp;TSI girls</i>	High skills	14	15	20	21	20	24
	Proficient	48	55	50	54	55	48
	Elementary	25	20	20	16	18	19
	Low	13	10	10	9	7	9
<i>NESBT</i>	High skills	29	32	35	38	36	39
	Proficient	49	51	46	45	48	43
	Elementary	15	13	13	12	12	12
	Low	7	4	6	5	4	6
<i>NESBT boys</i>	High skills	26	26	28	33	28	31
	Proficient	49	52	49	17	51	46
	Elementary	17	16	16	14	16	16
	Low	8	6	7	6	5	7
<i>NESBT girls</i>	High skills	32	39	43	42	45	47
	Proficient	50	49	43	45	45	40
	Elementary	13	10	10	10	8	10
	Low	5	2	4	3	2	3

A&TSI: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

NESBT: Students who answered 'Yes' to 'Does anyone use a language other than English at home?'

Source: NSW Department of Education and Training

**Table 3.5 Reading and writing achievement, years 3 and 5, Victorian Learning Assessment Project, all students, 1999**

	Year 3			Year 5		
	<i>Below year 1</i>	<i>At expected level</i>	<i>Above year 4</i>	<i>Below year 3</i>	<i>At expected level</i>	<i>Above year 6</i>
Reading	6.0	69.0	25.0	6.9	70.5	23.6
Writing	4.3	69.0	26.7	6.3	66.8	26.9

Source: Board of Studies 1999

A variety of literacy assessment forms was used in the independent sector including curriculum-based assessment, normative testing, standard-referenced forms and the BST. A substantial minority of independent schools with primary students made use of the State tests in 1999. Slightly more had the tests under consideration, with a view to using them in either 2000 or 2001. Of the schools using the tests, half of them informed parents directly about their child's results, allowing them to share the information with students. The remaining schools gave students direct access to all information. Teachers were informed of results in all schools, as were parents, through written reports or parent-teacher interviews.

Literacy in the School Certificate was strengthened in 1999 with the English literacy tests conducted in November for year 10 students. The Board of Studies began making important changes to the assessment and reporting procedures to provide more detailed and meaningful information on individual achievements. The revised School Certificate documents use descriptive reporting and provide students with school-based grades in all learning areas as well as their own marks in statewide tests. The new reports give students, parents and employers more information on what students know and can do, thereby providing greater detail on specific literacy achievement.

The new HSC structure offered 2-Unit English courses in Standard, Advanced, English as a Second Language for students from a language background other than English, and a Preliminary course, Fundamentals of English, for students who require extra assistance with literacy skills

## Victoria

Reading and writing achievement was measured in years 3 and 5 through the Learning Assessment Project (LAP). Schools in all sectors participated and the results are set out in Table 3.5.

During 1999, trials were conducted of the Victorian Student Achievement Monitor (VSAM), which aims to provide

information to teachers and parents about the learning outcomes of students in the compulsory years of secondary schooling within the Curriculum Standards Framework (CSF). This information will assist teachers and schools in the evaluation and improvement of their teaching and learning programs and assist in the continued improvement and development of the CSF.

The VSAM is designed to supplement and support schools' existing assessment and reporting programs and to guarantee confidentiality of results. It is delivered by an interactive computer-based program capable of providing immediate feedback of results. The test consists of both multiple choice and construction questions. The system will match assessment items to each student's current working level, so that no student will face assessment which is too easy or too difficult. The VSAM will be delivered via either the Internet or a broadband network such as VicOne, the Victorian whole-of-government Wide Area Network. A central data base will be used for analysis and reporting.

Consistent with the National Literacy/Numeracy Plan, the Department of Education, Employment and Training is committed to assessing students on entry to school to determine their literacy and numeracy needs and to ensure that plans are developed for students at risk of not making progress towards the national literacy goals. The Prep Entry Assessment Procedure assists teachers in selecting appropriate assessment strategies for students on entry to school. As part of the Prep Entry Assessment Procedure, the *School Entry Assessment* kit is made available to all Victorian government primary, P-12 and specialist schools for initial literacy and numeracy assessment of students. Teachers may incorporate the *School Entry Assessment* kit into the assessment schedule within the Early Years Literacy Program.

The reading levels, in terms of Reading Recovery Text Levels, of students in years Prep to 2 were assessed statewide for the first time to collect baseline data at the end of 1998. The data collection was repeated at the end of

1999. Over 60,000 students in 600 schools were involved in the first data collection and all schools participated in the second. From the graph in Figure 3.1, at an accuracy of over 90 per cent, it can be seen that the reading ability of students was better in 1999 than in 1998 for all three year levels (Prep, year 1 and year 2).

During 1999, some important data became available from the Catholic sector. The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria commissioned the Australian Council for Educational Research (with Commonwealth funding assistance) to evaluate the effectiveness of the various approaches to the enhancement of literacy, by tracking the progress of some 4,700 students in 164 schools through the early years. The study incorporates the collection of student achievement information based on a number of measures, including Clay's Observation Survey, the Burt Word Reading Test, Peter's Spelling in Context and the Reading Progress Test 2.

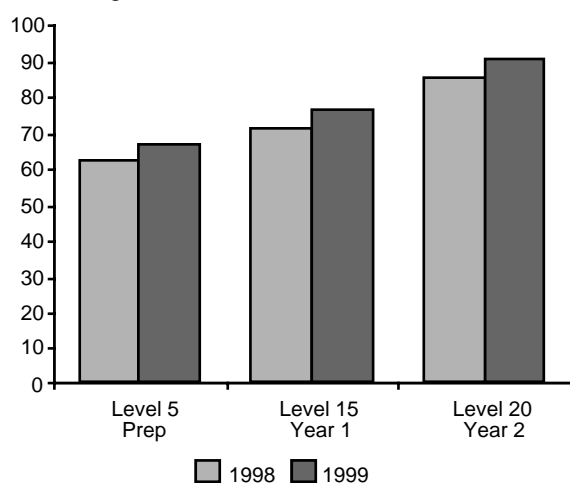
Source: CECV

A report based on analysis of the initial data showed the effects of different approaches on reading progress and drew attention to other influences on the development of reading over year 1. Using the CSF II levels for reporting and assessing student achievement, from the beginning to the end of the year students showed substantial growth on each of the achievement measures. An example of the growth recorded for the Reading Recovery Text Level is outlined in Figure 3.2.

The report also drew attention to factors such as gender, socioeconomic background and language background other than English on literacy achievement. The initial analysis of the first year's data revealed that although the differences between girls and boys in year 1 on the beginning-of-year and end-of-year assessments were small girls performed better than boys. The largest difference was in writing vocabulary at both assessments.

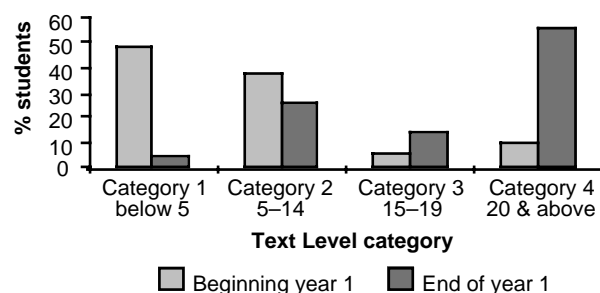
There were differences associated with socioeconomic background (whether measured by parental occupational status or receipt of an education maintenance allowance). These differences were similar in the beginning-of-year assessments and the end-of-year assessments. The patterns for Text Level are illustrated in Figure 3.3.

**Figure 3.1 Percentage of students by year level reading with 90 per cent or higher accuracy, Victorian government schools, 1998–99**

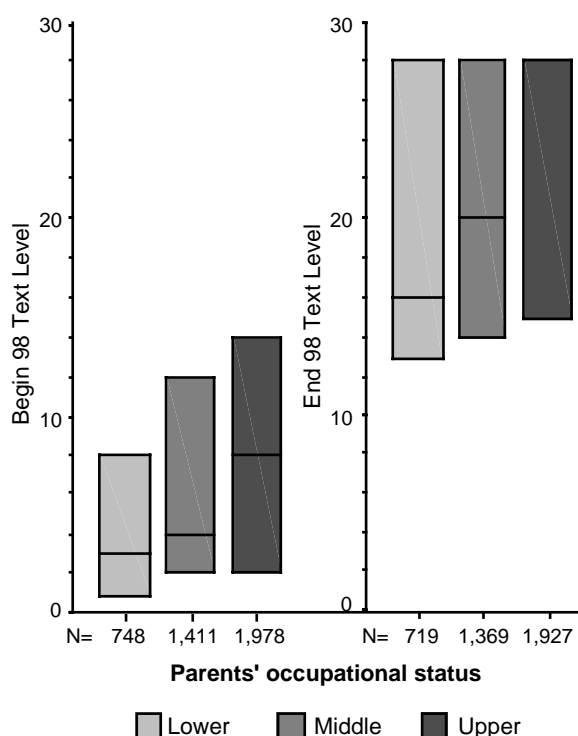


Source: Vic Department of Education, Employment and Training

**Figure 3.2 One year growth in Reading Recovery Text Level, year 1, selected Victorian Catholic schools, 1999**



**Figure 3.3 Distribution of one year Text Level growth by socioeconomic status, selected Victorian Catholic schools, 1999**



Source: CECV

**Table 3.6 Year 3 literacy mean scores: by strand, Queensland schools, all sectors, 1999**

Strand	All students	Boys	Girls	NESB	ATSI
Writing	518.6	501.4	537.4	521.0	463.7
Viewing	505.5	499.4	512.3	505.4	458.8
Reading	511.5	501.2	522.9	500.9	466.9
Spelling	522.2	503.2	542.8	532.5	465.3

Source: Education Queensland

**Table 3.7 Year 5 literacy mean scores: by strand, Queensland schools, all sectors, 1999**

Strand	All students	Boys	Girls	NESB	ATSI
Writing	616.1	598.9	634.6	613.2	550.1
Viewing	616.6	609.2	625.0	604.7	545.4
Reading	612.0	604.6	620.0	600.8	553.4
Spelling	619.5	601.7	638.7	627.9	553.9

Source: Education Queensland

**Table 3.8 Year 7 literacy mean scores: by strand, Queensland schools, all sectors, 1999**

Strand	All students	Boys	Girls	NESB	ATSI
Writing	690.7	671.5	711.1	688.0	623.3
Viewing	683.7	677.6	690.6	672.7	628.5
Reading	685.9	676.6	696.1	669.7	620.7
Spelling	692.7	671.4	715.5	698.8	630.5

Source: Education Queensland

The number of students from a language background other than English was small but these students scored just a little lower than students from an English-speaking background. For the Burt Word test, the difference between those from a language background other than English and other students was 2.2 score points at the beginning of the year and 1.7 score points at the end of the year. There was less than one Text Level (0.8) between students from a language background other than English and other students at both the beginning and end of the year. Correlation coefficients of the beginning assessments with students from a language background other than English were around 0.1 (except for Concepts About Print, for which the figure was 0.2), and those involving end-of-year assessments were less than 0.1.

## Queensland

The Queensland School Curriculum Council developed and conducted literacy testing in years 3, 5 and 7. A summary of the results is shown in Tables 3.6, 3.7 and 3.8.

The tables show that, in 1999, girls outperformed boys in aspects of literacy (writing, reading and spelling) across the three-year level testing programs (years 3, 5 and 7). The mean score for NESB students was almost the same as the State mean while the performance of Indigenous students was lower.

Over the period 1998 to 1999, the performance of students in year 3 writing and spelling has improved. For example, the mean score for writing rose from 496.9 in 1998 to 518.6 in 1999. Literacy achievement was also measured through the Year 2 Diagnostic Net. The mean score for the Year 2 Reading Diagnostic Net distribution decreased in Rural and Urban locations over the period 1997–99. The Rural mean decreased from 2.54 to 2.46 and the Urban mean fell from 2.55 to 2.49. Changes in the mean scores for writing over the same period are set out in Table 3.10.

Literacy achievement in secondary schools was measured through year 10 and year 12 English. Year 10 English results were moderated only at the school level. These



results were determined by teachers using a criteria-based assessment model. Year 12 English results were moderated by teachers across schools in accordance with procedures described by the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies.

The percentage of all Education Queensland year 10 students who achieved a Sound Achievement (SA) or higher in

English was virtually the same in 1998 and 1999. The percentage of all Education Queensland year 12 students who achieved an SA or higher in English was consistent over the period 1995–99 at around 80 per cent. The percentage was 79.3 in 1995 and 80.7 in 1999.

**Table 3.9 Literacy mean scores: selected strands and years, Queensland schools, all sectors, 1998–99**

<i>Year Strand</i>	<i>All students</i>		<i>Boys</i>		<i>Girls</i>		<i>NESB</i>		<i>ATSI</i>	
	<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>
Year 3 Spelling	502.1	522.2	494.4	503.2	510.2	542.8	508.4	532.5	432.0	465.3
Year 3 Writing	496.9	518.6	484.8	501.4	509.5	537.4	502.6	521.0	421.3	463.7
Year 5 Reading	592.8	612.0	582.6	604.6	602.8	620.0	578.4	600.8	532.1	553.4

Source: Education Queensland

**Table 3.10 Writing mean scores, by culture and location, Year 2 Diagnostic Net, Queensland government schools, 1997–99**

<i>Cultural Background Location</i>		<i>1997</i>		<i>Year 1998</i>		<i>1999</i>	
		<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>ATSI students</i>	Rural	1.72	0.64	1.75	0.63	1.71	0.61
	Urban	1.86	0.58	1.83	0.54	1.90	0.56
	All	1.77	0.62	1.78	0.60	1.77	0.60
<i>All students</i>	Rural	2.14	0.59	2.06	0.55	2.06	0.56
	Urban	2.16	0.58	2.10	0.56	2.11	0.55
	All	2.15	0.58	2.08	0.56	2.09	0.56

Source: Education Queensland

## South Australia

The government's priority to improve student's literacy skills in the early years of schooling is showing results. Overall, the 1999 Basic Skills Test results in years 3 and 5 were better than in previous years. This is a positive reflection of the school-based programs carried out through the Early Years Strategy and supported by a wide range of curriculum initiatives. The 1999 results for literacy and numeracy include:

- the highest average for year 3 students in literacy since the Basic Skills began in 1995
- 6 per cent more year 3 students with satisfactory literacy skills than there were in 1998
- 6 per cent more year 3 students in the top two skill bands than there were in 1998 showing that more students are able to carry out more complex literacy tasks
- the largest number of year 5 students with satisfactory literacy levels since the Basic Skills Test began in 1995

- 3 per cent more year 5 students with satisfactory literacy levels than there were in 1998. Teachers worked intensively with students between year 3 and year 5, and as a consequence many students who had very poor literacy skills in year 3 have shown greatly improved literacy skills in year 5
- better literacy skills for year 3 Aboriginal students than in 1998. In 1999, Aboriginal students were about ten months ahead of 1998 year 3 students while year 5 Aboriginal students were about seven months more advanced.

As illustrated in Table 3.11, testing in years 3 and 5 has revealed an increase in the numbers of students between 1998 and 1999 who had satisfactory literacy skills.

The testing has also shown that there has been a significant improvement in the literacy levels of Indigenous students, as is shown in Table 3.12.

**Table 3.11 Percentage of students at satisfactory literacy level, South Australian government schools, 1998–99**

	1998 %	1999 %
Year 3	79	85
Year 5	88	91

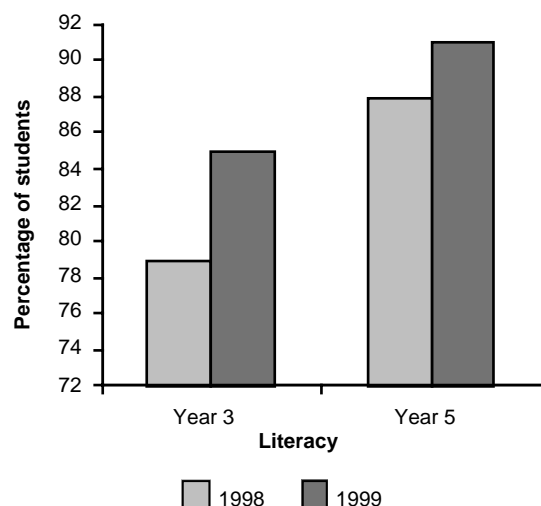
Source: SA Department of Education, Training and Employment

**Table 3.12 Improvement in literacy levels of Indigenous students, South Australian government schools, 1998–99.**

	1998	1999	Number of months 1999 students were ahead of 1998 students
Literacy year 3 mean score	41.5	44.5	10 months
Literacy year 5 mean score	47.3	49.3	7 months

Source: SA Department of Education, Training and Employment

**Figure 3.4 Increase in percentage of students at satisfactory literacy level, South Australian government schools, 1998–99**



Source: SA Department of Education, Training and Employment

**Table 3.13 Writing assessment mean scores, by sub-group, South Australian government schools, 1999**

Group	Year 3		Year 5	
	No. of students	Mean score	No. of students	Mean score
All Students	1,589	50.7	1,796	55.0
Boys	789	49.5	911	54.0
Girls	800	51.8	885	56.1
Indigenous	68	43.6	73	50.3

Source: SA Department of Education, Training and Employment

**Table 3.14 Writing assessment, percentage of students in each skill band, South Australian government schools, 1999**

Skill band	Year 3	Year 5
Band 6	Not applicable	10
Band 5	14	29
Band 4	31	36
Band 3	30	19
Band 2	17	5
Band 1	8	2

Note: Band 1 contains the lowest achieving students. Band 5 in year 3 and Band 6 in year 5 contain the highest achieving students.

Source: SA Department of Education, Training and Employment

**Table 3.15 DART mean scores, by strand, year 3: South Australian independent schools, 1999**

Group	Literacy strand mean scores		
	Reading (Max. = 24)	Writing content (Max. = 16)	Written language (Max. = 16)
All students	16.35	11.81	11.35
Boys	16.15	11.45	10.84
Girls	16.55	12.15	11.85

Source: SA Independent Schools Board

In 1999, assessment of writing took place and involved a sample of students in years 3 and 5. Generally, the results of the writing assessment parallel the results of the Basic Skills Tests in aspects of literacy. The mean achievement score for boys was less than girls for each cohort, while the mean achievement score for Indigenous students indicated that year 5 students were performing at about a year 3 level.

A total of 761 year 3 students and 26 year 5 students, representing 36 classes from 28 independent schools participated in a pilot program for reporting against the literacy benchmarks for reading and writing using Developmental Assessment Resource for Teaching (DART) developed by Australian Council for Education Research (ACER). This figure represented just over one-third of the total year 3 cohort. A further 1,340 students (579 year 3 and 761 year 5) from 51 schools participated in a pilot to develop cost-effective assessment methods for measuring literacy and numeracy performance. This represented just under one-third of the total cohort at year 3 and year 5. Results are available for DART only, and are shown in Table 3.15.

## Western Australia

In 1999, literacy assessment in government schools was undertaken through the Monitoring Standards in Education (MSE), random sample testing program. Previous assessments were conducted in 1992, 1995 and 1997. In 1999, years 7 and 10 students were tested in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Because all year 3 students had been assessed in reading and writing in national population testing, a sample of students was tested only in speaking and listening. A summary of the MSE literacy results is presented in Table 3.16.

**Table 3.16 Percentage of students at MSE literacy levels, by strand, Western Australian government schools, 1999**

<i>Reading</i>	
Year 3 students achieving at or above MSE Level 2	95.4%
Year 7 students achieving at or above MSE Level 3	92.8%
Year 10 students achieving at or above MSE Level 4	86.6%
<i>Writing</i>	
Year 3 students achieving at or above MSE Level 2	96.8%
Year 7 students achieving at or above MSE Level 3	89.4%
Year 10 students achieving at or above MSE level 4	92.6%
<i>Speaking</i>	
Year 3 students achieving at or above MSE Level 2	89.9%
Year 7 students achieving at or above MSE Level 3	81.5%
Year 10 students achieving at or above MSE Level 4	57.8%
<i>Listening</i>	
Year 3 students achieving at or above MSE Level 2	92.5%
Year 7 students achieving at or above MSE Level 3	96.1%
Year 10 students achieving at or above MSE Level 4	54.6%

Source: Education Department of WA

There was a strong program of literacy assessment in the independent sector and 13 schools participated in an ACER pilot project on literacy and numeracy assessment against national benchmarks. Many schools used a screening test in pre-primary for early intervention. They also monitored students in all the junior primary years for remediation purposes. A significant number used First Steps and some the Education Department's Student Outcome Statements.

Initiatives taken in independent schools to improve assessment and reporting included:

- providing in-service courses
- using monitoring and diagnostic tests
- appointing literacy coordinators
- identifying children at risk
- having parents and volunteers assist children with their reading.

## Tasmania

In 1999, the Department of Education and the Catholic Education Office collaborated in monitoring literacy achievement in reading, writing and spelling for years 3 and 5. Individual and school-level reports were provided to schools and it was recommended, but not mandated, that these be provided to parents. Reports were expressed in terms of the outcomes used by each system and the year 3 and year 5 results were used to measure performance against the national benchmarks.

**Table 3.17 KILO literacy levels, by ENI category, year 5, Tasmanian government schools, 1999**

ENI category	Literacy level						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0.00–30.00	0.4	0.0	2.5	23.9	69.6	3.3	0.2
30.01–40.00	0.0	0.5	6.8	22.8	66.5	3.4	0.0
40.01–45.00	0.0	0.2	5.9	24.9	62.4	5.9	0.7
45.01–50.00	0.3	0.3	7.0	23.9	64.3	4.3	0.0
50.01–55.00	0.2	1.2	6.8	24.7	63.1	3.8	0.2
55.01–65.00	0.3	1.7	11.0	28.8	56.0	2.0	0.1
65.01–80.00	1.2	2.4	14.0	30.5	50.1	1.7	0.0
> 80.00	0.4	4.1	18.1	37.1	40.1	0.2	0.0
State	0.3	1.3	9.1	26.9	59.3	3.0	0.1

7 = Achieved the year 7–8 KILOs level.

6 = Was working towards the 7–8 KILOs level.

5 = Achieved the 5–6 KILOs level.

4 = Achieved the 3–4 KILOs level.

3 = Achieved the 1–2 KILOs level.

2 = Was working towards the 1–2 KILOs level.

1 = Standard of performance was below the level of the K–P KILOs.

Source: Department of Education, Tas.

**Table 3.18 Reading levels, by ENI category, year 5,  
Tasmanian government schools, 1999**

ENI category	Reading level					
	A	B	C	D	E	Z
0.00–30.00	56.2	24.5	12.4	4.7	1.6	0.7
30.01–40.00	48.8	25.1	14.5	6.9	3.4	1.3
40.01–45.00	48.8	23.3	16.9	8.4	2.0	0.7
45.01–50.00	41.0	28.9	15.3	9.0	4.5	1.1
50.01–55.00	39.1	29.1	16.6	8.6	4.4	2.2
55.01–65.00	37.2	24.4	19.5	11.0	4.3	3.5
65.01–80.00	34.4	21.8	17.7	13.7	7.5	4.9
> 80.00	24.1	20.8	22.5	19.4	9.3	4.0
State	41.3	24.8	16.9	10.1	4.6	2.3

A=Demonstrated an ability to interrelate events and/or ideas from relatively complex passages in order to draw conclusions.

B=Read competently. Made more complex inferences and identified subtle details in passages.

C=Demonstrated sound comprehension. Made basic inferences and judgements from what was read.

D=Effectively determined the overall meaning of comprehension passages and identified statements that had similar meanings.

E=Read uncomplicated sentences and predicted the meaning of unrecognised words by simple word association.

Z=The standard of performance on the test was too low for the student's performance level to be meaningfully described.

Source: Department of Education, Tas.

**Table 3.19 Writing Text Levels, By ENI category, year 5,  
Tasmanian government schools, 1999**

ENI category	Writing Text Level						
	A	B	C	D	E	F	Z
0.00–30.00	0.7	10.4	43.0	33.3	10.8	1.4	0.5
30.01–40.00	0.6	6.7	32.0	39.6	18.2	2.6	0.3
40.01–45.00	2.7	14.8	27.7	39.4	12.8	2.4	0.2
45.01–50.00	2.7	12.4	39.0	29.6	13.4	1.8	1.1
50.01–55.00	1.4	9.0	36.3	34.5	15.0	2.8	1.0
55.01–65.00	0.3	6.5	31.0	39.0	17.0	4.6	1.6
65.01–80.00	0.4	6.9	27.1	37.9	20.5	4.4	2.8
> 80.00	0.4	2.2	23.2	33.2	28.8	8.4	3.8
State	1.1	8.2	32.3	36.3	17.2	3.5	1.4

A=Wrote sustained and integrated texts that showed conscious selection and control of material for the audience and purpose. Demonstrated a capacity to engage effectively the intended audience. Made competent and effective use of a variety of complex sentence structures and paragraphs.

B=Wrote fluently expressed, extended texts that were organised in a logical, coherent manner. Showed a strong awareness of audience and purpose, and – where appropriate – attempted to create an impact on the reader. Used paragraphs to organise ideas.

C=Wrote fluent, extended texts. Presented accurate and appropriate details. Sequenced ideas and events in an appropriate manner.

D=Wrote texts that showed clear evidence of organisation, and in which at least some of the ideas and/or events were detailed. Showed an ability to elaborate.

E=Wrote texts that were focused on the topic and which showed clear signs of sequencing. Connected events and ideas.

F=Wrote texts that showed some evidence of organisation of material and of connections between events and ideas. Showed an elementary awareness of audience and purpose.

G = Wrote briefly on the topic, with some degree of focus. Listed ideas and events instead of explicitly connecting them.

Z=The standard of performance on the test was too low for the student's performance level to be meaningfully described.

Source: Department of Education, Tas.

**Table 3.20 Writing Conventions Level, by ENI category,  
year 5, Tasmanian government schools, 1999**

ENI category	Writing Conventions Level						
	A	B	C	D	E	F	Z
0.00–30.00	0.0	4.5	73.6	19.1	2.3	0.0	0.5
30.01–40.00	0.0	2.7	65.9	23.7	7.3	0.4	0.0
40.01–45.00	0.9	3.5	65.7	24.1	5.3	0.4	0.0
45.01–50.00	0.2	5.3	68.6	19.5	5.6	0.2	0.6
50.01–55.00	0.4	3.4	72.7	17.4	5.4	0.6	0.2
55.01–65.00	0.1	3.1	63.4	21.7	10.2	1.0	0.6
65.01–80.00	0.0	2.7	57.3	26.0	11.0	1.8	1.2
> 80.00	0.0	1.2	47.4	33.8	14.4	2.8	0.4
State	0.2	3.2	64.3	23.1	7.9	0.9	0.4

A=Had good control of grammatical structure in complex sentences and could vary 'point of view' in an appropriate and consistent manner. Showed excellent control of all basic punctuation and demonstrated an ability to use other punctuation such as brackets, dashes, colons and semi-colons on occasions.

B=Presented writing that was not only grammatically proficient but which also showed an ability to vary both 'person' (point of view) and tense accurately and appropriately. Accurately and consistently used capital letters and full stops, and – when required – question marks, exclamation marks, apostrophes for contraction, and inverted commas (for direct speech). Used commas, apostrophes for possession, and hyphens accurately in straightforward contexts.

C+Writing was grammatically proficient. Used capital letters and full stops accurately and consistently to identify simple sentences and mostly used them correctly with more complex sentences. Occasionally used successfully other punctuation, such as commas (in straightforward contexts), question marks, exclamation marks and apostrophes for contraction.

D=Used most grammatical conventions correctly, and mostly maintained point of view (1st, 2nd or 3rd person) and tense (past, present or future) once established. Used capital letters and full stops correctly most of the time to identify simple sentences.

E=Generally used most basic grammatical conventions correctly, and occasionally used capital letters and full stops correctly.

F=Only sometimes followed syntactic conventions correctly. Did not use capital letters or full stops correctly.

Z=The standard of performance on the test was too low for the student's performance level to be meaningfully described.

Source: Department of Education, Tas.

In year 5, the results from government schools were analysed in terms of Tasmania's Key Intended Literacy Outcomes (KILOs), and reported in terms of the socioeconomic status of each school. In Tables 3.17–3.21, the ENI refers to the Educational Needs Index. Schools measured as having high needs have a high index.

A substantial minority of independent schools reported on their methods of measuring student attainment in literacy in 1999. As well as standardised tests, the Australian Council for Educational Research tests were used, and a range of others such as Holborn and Neale. School-developed tests were also used, and one school had a system of key markers operating, to assist in the identification of students at risk.

Results were made available to teachers, and to students on request. One school made the results available to students

through conferencing. Written reports and parent–teacher interviews informed parents of results, and if students

**Table 3.21 Spelling levels, by ENI Category, Year 5, Tasmanian Government Schools, 1999**

<i>ENI category</i>	<i>Spelling Level</i>				
	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Z</i>
0.00–30.00	4.9	44.3	49.0	1.3	0.4
30.01–40.00	5.3	43.6	47.5	2.6	1.0
40.01–45.00	7.6	36.2	54.2	1.8	0.2
45.01–50.00	2.6	38.4	54.6	3.4	1.1
50.01–55.00	3.8	37.8	52.7	4.8	0.8
55.01–65.00	3.0	33.8	56.8	4.7	1.8
65.01–80.00	2.6	27.9	60.0	6.2	3.4
> 80.00	1.4	22.9	64.6	8.5	2.6
State	3.9	36.1	54.5	4.1	1.5

A=Demonstrated an ability to spell accurately many words with complicated spelling patterns, including many that do not conform to simple phonetic principles or common spelling patterns.

B=Demonstrated an ability to spell accurately many words with less common spelling patterns and many multisyllable words.

C=Demonstrated an ability to spell accurately most one- and two-syllable words with common spelling patterns, most of the frequently used and readily recognised words with less common spelling patterns, and some other words of more than one syllable.

D=Demonstrated an ability to spell accurately many frequently used and readily recognised words, including most one-syllable words with less common spelling patterns and some two syllable words.

Z=The standard of performance on the test was too low for the student's performance level to be meaningfully described.

Source: Department of Education, Tas.

moved to another school the information was available on request.

## Northern Territory

In 1999, years 3 and 5 students were assessed using the Multilevel Assessment Program (MAP). The MAP tests are designed to monitor student performance against agreed curriculum outcomes in English and mathematics and assess achievement against the national benchmarks in literacy and numeracy.

The test cohorts were changed from years 4 and 6 in 1997 to years 3 and 5 in 1998 to align the Northern Territory with the other States for the purpose of reporting benchmark results nationally. Because of changes to the NT test cohorts and related structural changes introduced in 1998 to accommodate assessment of the benchmarks in years 3 and 5, it is useful to consider 1998 as the baseline year from which year-on-year comparisons can be made. However, changes in performance occurring over a short period of time are not a reliable indication of long-term trends. For this reason, caution needs to be exercised in interpreting improvements or declines over the period reported.

In both 1998 and 1999, the MAP consisted of two components. The first, called the urban testing program, operated in schools in urban centres such as Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy, Alyangula

**Table 3.22 MAP test reading results: by school group, NT government schools, 1998–99**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Average score</i>		<i>% Achieving benchmark</i>	
	<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>
Urban schools: year 3	57.9%	56.7%	78	82
Urban schools: year 5	70.7%	65.6%	72	n/a
Non-urban schools: 8-yr-olds	43.6%	38.1%	6	5
Non-urban schools: 10-yr-olds	42.8%	46.2%	4	n/a

Source: NT Department of Education

and Batchelor. The second, called the non-urban program operated in community schools such as Angurugu, Papunya, Numbulwar and Gunbalanya which have predominantly Indigenous students. The two programs were similar in design and structure and contained a number of common items.

In urban schools between 1998 and 1999, the MAP results showed no significant change in reading performance for year 3 but an apparent decline for year 5. In non-urban schools between 1998 and 1999, there was an apparent decline in reading performance for 8-year-olds (year 3) but an improvement was observed for 10-year-olds. On the year 3 reading benchmark, 82 per cent of students in urban schools achieved the benchmark in 1999 compared with 78 per cent in 1998.

In non-urban schools, there was little change between the 1998 and 1999 results. However, in absolute terms, the success rate of 5 per cent in 1999 in non-urban schools was disturbing. A significant factor was the high proportion of exemptions: 77 per cent of all exemptions came from non-urban schools. Detailed analysis carried out shows that 29.7 per cent of Indigenous students in all NT schools (urban and non-urban combined) achieved the benchmark compared with 88.0 per cent for non-Indigenous students. The low success rate in non-urban schools was a significant factor affecting the success rate of Indigenous students as a group.

## Australian Capital Territory

ACT government school students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 completed literacy assessments during August 1999. The ACT Assessment Program is a rigorous program used for system purposes and as the basis for national benchmark

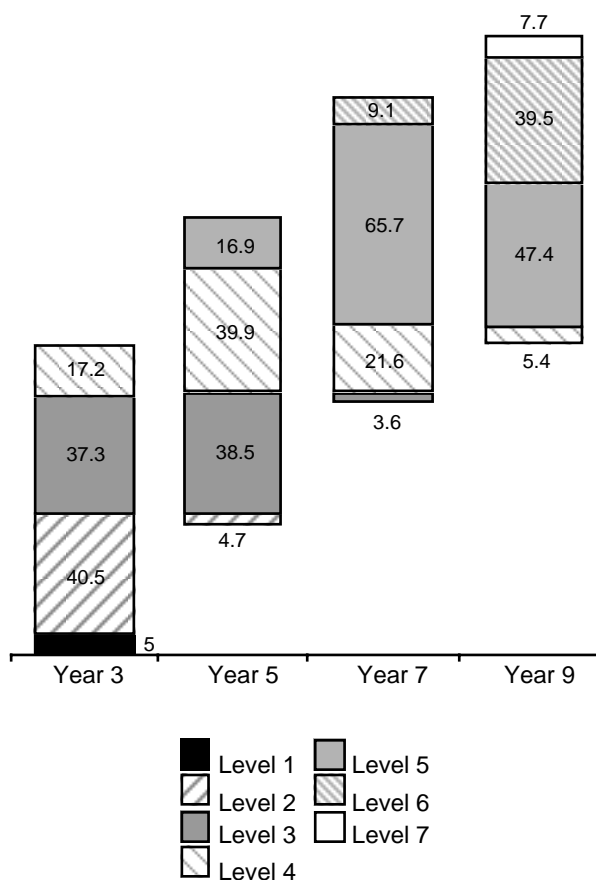
reporting. The primary school program assessed reading, writing, listening, speaking and viewing using a thematic approach in a curriculum-based unit of work. Spelling was assessed for the first time for benchmark purposes. All strands except speaking were externally marked.

The high school program assessed students in reading, writing and spelling. The literacy assessments for years 7 and 9 also followed a thematic approach. All strands in literacy were externally marked.

The 1999 results in literacy indicated that:

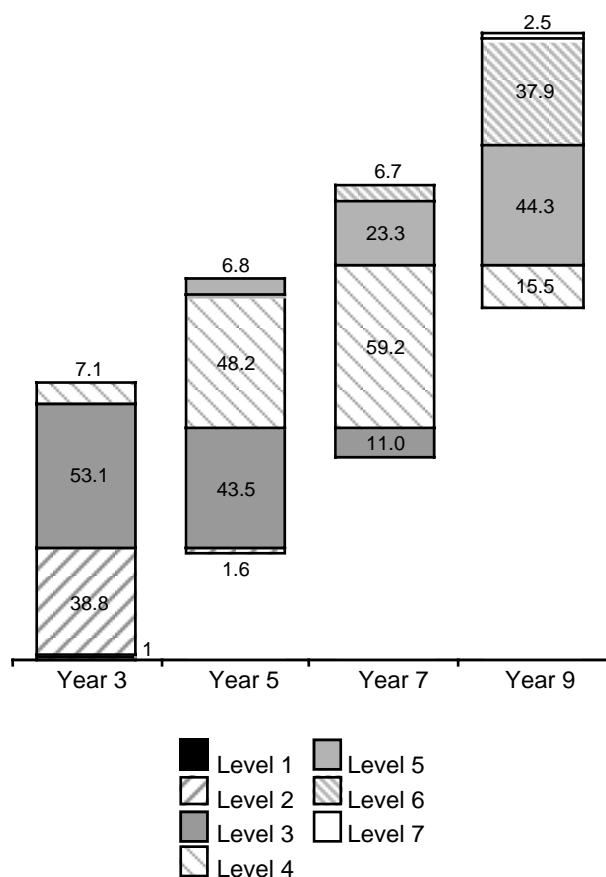
- year 3 students in 1999 had maintained the high level of achievement attained in the previous two years
- 89.9 per cent of year 3 students and 90.4 per cent of year 5 students in 1999 were assessed as being above the national standard
- in the Writing strand 98.4 per cent of year 5 students achieved at National Profile Level 3 or above compared to 87.85 per cent in 1997 and 88.2 per cent in 1998
- in the Speaking strand, 92.7 per cent of year 5 students achieved above National Profile Level 2 compared to 82.8 per cent in 1998
- in the first year of testing for year 7 and 9, 96.4 per cent of year 7 students performed above the lower National

**Figure 3.5 Percentage of students at each reading Profile Level, years 3, 5, 7, 9, ACT government schools, 1999**



Source: ACT Department of Education and Community Services

**Figure 3.6 Percentage of students at each writing Profile Level, years 3, 5, 7, 9, ACT government schools, 1999**



Source: ACT Department of Education and Community Services

Profile Level for the year group (Level 3) for reading and 94.6 per cent of year 9 students achieved above the lower National Profile Level (Level 4)

- in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 female students continued to perform at the higher profile levels in greater numbers than male students in all literacy strands
- in years 3, 5 and 9 the largest margin in performance between female and male students was in the writing strand.

ACT students were also assessed against curriculum profiles. Profiles describe the progression of learning typically achieved by students during the compulsory years of schooling. The performance of students in years 3–9 spans the profile levels 1–7. Figures 3.5 and 3.6 show the performance of students in reading and writing in years 3, 5, 7 and 9.

Within the Catholic sector, the mechanisms for measuring and reporting literacy achievement were detailed in the

system publication *1999 Archdiocesan Benchmarking Exercise Book*. The basis of the process was the validity of teacher assessments and involved:

- extensive, moderated and supported teacher judgement of student attainment
- matching samples of student work to the First Steps indicators linked directly to the years 3 and 5 national literacy benchmarks in spelling, writing and reading.

Whole cohort assessment was effected for all years 3 and 5 students. Students were assessed as having attained or not attained the performance (*First Steps*) indicators. Levels of attainment beyond the 'minimum acceptable standard' were not reported in this reporting process. Comparisons cannot be made with the national literacy benchmarking exercise in which the ACT government schools participated.

For year 3, student attainment was 90 per cent or above for 16 out of the 18 outcomes assessed. Attainment of the other two outcomes was 80 per cent or above. For year 5, student attainment was 90 per cent or above for nine out of the 15 outcomes assessed. Attainment of the other six outcomes was 80 per cent or above. Lowest levels of attainment were demonstrated by Special Education students (Commonwealth definition) and students with established and significant learning difficulties/disabilities (as identified by teachers).

ESL student (per Commonwealth definition as identified at school level) attainment levels were at the same or similar levels of the whole cohort. For year 3 students, the highest level of attainment, 98 per cent, was for spelling outcome number 1 ('usually spells commonly used sight words correctly'). For year 5 students, the highest level of attainment, 98 per cent, was for spelling outcome number 2 ('syllabifies and correctly inserts a vowel before the 'r' at the end of a word').

For year 3 students, the lowest level of attainment, 83 per cent, was for reading outcome number 6 ('works out the meaning of some unfamiliar phrases and words'). For year 5 students, the lowest level of attainment, 84 per cent, was for writing outcome 6 ('punctuates simple sentences correctly'). Years 3 and 5 female students attained higher levels than males for all outcomes. For both year groups, this difference was most significant in writing outcomes related to punctuation. Year 3 attainment of writing outcome number 7 ('attempts to use some punctuation consistently') was 90 per cent for females and 76 per cent for males, while year 5 attainment of writing outcome number 6 ('punctuates simple sentences correctly') was 88 per cent for females and 81 per cent for males.

**Table 3.23 Attainment of First Steps literacy outcomes, year 3, ACT Catholic schools, 1999**

<i>Benchmark statement number</i>	<i>Outcome number</i>	<i>Spelling component Statements of outcome-linked First Steps indicator</i>	<i>% Attainment</i>
1	1	Usually spells commonly used sight words correctly, eg <i>in, has, his, he, my, the</i> .	98
	2	Uses some known patterns in words, eg <i>...ing, th..., sh...</i>	97
2	3	Uses syllabification for spelling longer words, eg <i>telefon</i> (telephone), <i>butufl</i> (beautiful).	93
	4	Identifies and uses knowledge of similar sounding words.	92
	5	Uses letters to represent all vowel and consonant sounds in a word, placing vowels in every syllable, eg <i>holaday</i> (holiday), <i>gramous</i> (grandma's), <i>castel</i> (castle), <i>replyd</i> (replied), <i>gorrillas</i> (gorillas).	91
<i>Writing component</i>			
<i>Statements of outcome-linked First Steps indicator</i>			
1	1	Uses basic sentence structures and varies sentence beginnings.	94
	2	Joins simple sentences (often overusing the same connectors, eg <i>and, then</i> ).	96
2	3	Uses a partial organisational framework, eg simple orientation and story development.	95
	4	Attempts to orient, or create a context for the reader, but may assume a shared context.	96
3	5	Includes several items of information about a topic.	96
	6	Experiments with words drawn from language experience activities, literature, media and oral language of peers and others.	96
4	7	Attempts to use some punctuation consistently, eg full stops, capital letters to start a sentence, capital letters for names.	83
<i>Reading component</i>			
<i>Statements of outcome-linked First Steps indicator</i>			
1	1	Identifies the main topic of a story or informational text and supplies some supporting information.	96
2	2	Shows an ability to connect ideas and events from stories heard or viewed by retelling events in sequence, using pictures, memory of the story and knowledge of story structure.	94
3	3	Talks about ideas and information from informational texts, making links to own knowledge.	94
4	4	Integrates prediction and substantiation.	92
5	5	Carefully reads text, demonstrating the understanding that meaning is vested in the words.	92
	6	Works out the meaning of some unfamiliar phrases and words.	88

Source: ACT Catholic Education Office

## State and Territory initiatives in numeracy

### New South Wales

As part of the State Literacy and Numeracy Plan, government schools focused on improving students' outcomes in numeracy by providing targeted professional development programs for teachers. The key professional development programs included Count Me In Too for primary school teachers and Counting On for secondary school teachers. Count Me In Too, which focuses on developing the strategies children use when learning mathematics in the early years of schooling, was implemented in over 360 primary schools and involved more than 15,000 students. The program starts with a one-to-one diagnostic interview for all of the students within

the class. The interview and a detailed analysis of the results are undertaken by the classroom teacher with the assistance of the district mathematics consultant. The results of the analysis are then used as the basis for designing teaching activities that build upon the most sophisticated methods of solution that each student has mastered.

A second major program involved providing primary teachers with guidance on how to make informed judgements about the entry numeracy achievements of students from Kindergarten to year 3. This support emphasised the identification of students at risk of not achieving the outcomes for that year of schooling. During the pilot program that operated under the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan in 1999, approximately 700 teachers in 230 schools engaged in implementing assessment tasks, collecting work samples and making judgements about



**Table 3.24 Attainment of First Steps literacy outcomes, year 5, ACT Catholic schools, 1999**

Benchmark statement number	Outcome number	Spelling component Statements of outcome-linked First Steps indicator	% Attainment
1	1	Uses visual knowledge of common English letter sequences when attempting to spell unknown words, eg <i>thousand</i> (thousand), <i>cort</i> (caught).	97
2	2	Syllabifies and correctly inserts a vowel before the 'r' at the end of a word, eg brother instead of 'brothr', water instead of 'watr'.	97
	3	Spells inflectional endings such as ... <i>tion</i> , ... <i>ious</i> , ... <i>ight</i> conventionally.	86
	4	Is beginning to make spelling generalisations, eg uses some double letters correctly.	95
3	5	Is beginning to use knowledge of word parts, eg prefixes, suffixes, compound words.	95
Writing component Statements of outcome-linked First Steps indicator			
1	1	Uses a variety of simple, compound and extended sentences.	93
2	2	Uses a variety of linking words, eg <i>and</i> , <i>so</i> , <i>because</i> , <i>if</i> , <i>next</i> , <i>after</i> , <i>before</i> , <i>first</i> .	92
3	3	Selects vocabulary according to the demands of audience and purpose, eg uses subject-specific vocabulary.	98
4	4	Maintains appropriate tense throughout text.	92
5	5	Uses appropriate subject-verb agreements.	93
6	6	Punctuates simple sentences correctly, eg uses capital letters for proper nouns uses capital letters to start sentences uses capital letters for titles uses full stops to end sentences uses question marks correctly sometimes uses commas.	84
Reading component Statements of outcome-linked First Steps indicator			
1 & 2	1	Identifies the main topic/idea/purpose of a story or informational text and supplies some supporting information.	89
3	2	Can retell and discuss own interpretation of texts read or viewed with others, providing information relating to plot and characterisation in narrative or to main ideas and supporting detail in informational text.	88
4 & 5	3	Makes inferences and predictions based on information which is both explicit and implicit in a text.	87
6	4	Works out the meaning of some unfamiliar phrases and words (eg works out the meaning of some figurative language – <i>Her face was as white as a sheet</i> ).	87

Note: In Tables 3.23 and 3.24, each outcome number (eg 1–5 for spelling) is to be read as a separate statement of attainment pertinent to the component reported. The outcome number does not imply a hierarchy, prerequisite or sequential acquisition of each outcome.

Source: ACT Catholic Education Office

student achievement and effective teaching strategies to support students in the early years.

At the secondary level a pilot Numeracy Plus program operated in ten schools to identify and address the needs of students who had not achieved the expected mathematics outcomes of the primary syllabus on entry to secondary schools. The evaluation of the pilot indicated that many of the students identified through the program relied exclusively on basic methods of counting-by-ones to solve addition, subtraction, multiplication, division and place-value questions.

Forty district mathematics consultants provided site-based professional development in support of the Count Me In Too program and the Numeracy Plus pilot. The consultants

used a model of professional development that linked the results of research into mathematics education with practical implementation strategies. Groups of teachers working as school teams assessed, analysed and planned appropriate teaching activities, using a research-based learning framework for guidance. The evaluations of the Count Me In Too program indicated that it had an impact on the professional knowledge of the teachers involved, changed their expectations of what students could do and resulted in improved learning outcomes for the students taking part in the program.

As part of the Quality Teaching Learning Materials program, corporate learning portfolios were compiled by participating schools. The portfolios indicated the

following trends in relation to teacher skills in mathematics:

- increased teacher awareness of the language component of the mathematics syllabus
- application of a wider range of data-collection strategies, including a greater focus on the BST numeracy results
- commitment to continuing implementation of the Count Me In Too program because of its emphasis on outcomes and indicators in all strands of mathematics
- team documentation of successes and future needs of teaching programs and evaluation and reporting strategies
- identification and use of a wider range of appropriate resources to cater for individual students' needs.

Catholic schools in all dioceses used *Starting with Assessment Numeracy* materials to assist intervention programs for Kindergarten, year 1 and year 3 students. Parramatta diocese provided training in *Numeracy for All* (an intervention assessment strategy) to over 130 teachers in primary schools over the past four years. Many schools used this approach to develop intervention strategies based on numeracy interviews in the early years. Other schools developed their own strategies for the identification of students at risk. In some schools intervention was classroom based while in others it was in staged or grouped learning with targeted students.

In the Armidale diocese, funding was allocated for teacher release to undertake individual or small-group assessment. Outcomes-based profiles were developed for monitoring individual students. Focus teachers were funded in all schools to support classroom teachers with assessment and intervention programs.

Areas of professional development for teachers in Catholic schools included:

- understanding a process for action planning to develop programs, which begin from the analysis of testing data
- using information technology to teach numeracy
- workshops for multi-age class teachers to develop skills for numeracy teaching to cater for individual stages of development
- workshops from University of New England in developmental-based assessment and hands-on strategies for students 'at risk'

- grade day workshops to raise awareness of mathematics K–6 syllabus outcomes
- use of strategies from Count Me In Too program by focus teachers/teachers aides to assess students' level of understanding.

In independent schools, a variety of intervention programs was implemented for those with difficulties in numeracy, including special education or English as a Second Language (ESL) Support, computer-aided instruction, and individual education programs. Arrangements similar to those in place for literacy assisted those needing extra help in achieving appropriate numeracy skills. Special and remedial teachers worked with small groups or individual students. Tutorials, parent support and outside experts were used in some schools.

A majority of independent schools undertook professional development programs in numeracy. These included conferences, seminars, computer-based sessions and meetings. Children Learning Mathematics, a course presented to many schools, allowed staff to increase their knowledge of the learning process and to implement effective classroom methodologies for achieving greater student confidence and performance levels. Many schools also accessed the Association of Independent Schools consultancy support for their numeracy programs.

Several independent schools reviewed their mathematics curriculum, and there was further emphasis on early intervention. Through the Professional Development program in support of the National Plan for Literacy and Numeracy, many schools were extensively involved in the trialling of assessment frameworks for the early identification of students at risk. All independent schools in NSW received draft copies of the assessment frameworks.

## Victoria

A major initiative for government schools in 1999 was the initial development of the Early Years Numeracy Program P–4. The Early Years Numeracy Program is designed to help schools plan for and implement a strategic and comprehensive approach to successful early numeracy achievement. The Early Years Numeracy Program has been based on the model of the Early Years Literacy Program.

Following the success of the Early Literacy Research Project, the Early Numeracy Research Project (1999–2001) was commissioned to assist in the development of a comprehensive and strategic approach to numeracy achievement in the early years of schooling. Thirty-five trial schools and 35 matched reference schools (including

one specialist school, and schools from the CECV and the Association for Independent Schools Victoria) participated in this research in 1999.

Parallel with the activities described in the literacy section, the Successful Interventions Project also addressed numeracy improvement. A scan was completed in 1998 of ways in which schools sought to improve the numeracy skills of students demonstrating difficulties. This study found that very little coordinated and systematic intervention was implemented in the middle years.

Research into the effectiveness of best practice in numeracy improvement was commenced, jointly sponsored by the government, Catholic and independent sectors. When completed, it will also produce guidance for schools on implementing effective strategies for the teaching of numeracy in mainstream classes in the middle years.

In Prep to year 2, three-quarters of government schools devoted over 4 hours 50 minutes per week to mathematics in 1998. This rose to five hours per week for subsequent years.

In 1998, Phase 1 of the CECV Numeracy Strategy commenced a process that would enable Victorian Catholic schools to implement the National Plan in terms of numeracy. Through a series of action research teams of teachers (Prep – year 12) and a mapping exercise, the strategy explored the key areas of:

- comprehensive assessment in numeracy
- numeracy benchmarks
- early identification and intervention for students at risk
- professional development for teachers and mathematics coordinators in numeracy

- research in numeracy learning, teaching and assessment
- role of parents in supporting numeracy development.

Phase 2 of the strategy commenced in 1999 and built on the learnings from two areas explored in Phase 1, namely the identification of students at risk of not progressing in numeracy, and numeracy learning and teaching in the early years of schooling.

The Catholic Education Office numeracy professional development programs, entitled Supporting Children's Early Numeracy Learning and Strategies for Maths Intervention, were used as the starting points for the development of materials for use by early years teachers. Two sets of materials are being developed as part of the numeracy pilot project. The first set will be used in conjunction with the training of numeracy focus teachers. The second set will be used by the focus teachers in their schools with colleagues and will consist of a series of modules that will assist teachers to:

- consider the developments in understanding early numeracy learning
- examine the counting stages
- examine strategies for developing number sense
- consider factors influencing success in learning
- consider the factors that impede learning in mathematics
- examine the role of manipulatives in supporting learning.

The professional development programs provided to Catholic schools in 1999 focused on assessment and intervention.

**Table 3.25 Numeracy professional development programs, Victorian Catholic schools, 1999**

<i>Title</i>	<i>Target group</i>	<i>Description</i>
Mathematics Intervention	Special Education teachers, classroom teachers.	Research shows that early planned intervention in mathematics, especially in development of number concepts, has direct benefits across mathematics development for children requiring support. The program explores specific strategies teachers can use.
Developing Children's Numeracy Learning in the Early Years (P-2)	Junior school teachers, Numeracy curriculum coordinators	This three-session program is designed for junior primary teachers wishing to be informed on research advances in early number learning. The program examines classroom applications.
Developing Children's Numeracy Learning Beyond the Early Years	Classroom teachers 3-6, mathematics coordinators	The program considers numeracy learning beyond the early years with particular emphases on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assessment strategies</li> <li>• factors influencing children's mathematical learning</li> <li>• how games and calculators support children's learning</li> <li>• curriculum design</li> </ul>
Assessment & Reporting	Classroom teachers, maths coordinators	This program assists primary teachers to plan for assessment, gather information and report upon progress in mathematics. The program is based on exemplary tasks that provide teachers with rich assessment information.

Source: Catholic Education Office, Victoria

In independent schools, assistance for students experiencing difficulties with numeracy paralleled that developed for literacy problems. Specialist teachers and aides were used, while all other programs and procedures in the literacy field were also available to assist numeracy development. Several schools used computer programs to improve skill levels. Numeracy was a topic for professional development in most schools, and the methods of delivery were similar to those used for literacy. An extension of the use of computers in mathematics education was apparent in a very few schools.

## Queensland

In 1999, \$1.3 million was allocated directly to government schools to support students identified through the Year 2 Diagnostic Net as experiencing numeracy difficulties. This funding was used to develop school-based intervention programs. Commonwealth funding was utilised to publish the intervention program *Support a Maths Learner: Number*. This program, which was a joint initiative of Education Queensland, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission and the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland, was developed to provide additional support for young children having difficulties with number.

An additional \$1 million in State funding was provided to government schools to assist with the professional development numeracy needs of key teachers (teachers responsible for developing and providing support to a range of students requiring additional assistance in numeracy) and teachers new to the Year 2 Diagnostic Net process. In addition, Commonwealth funding (\$800,000) was used to provide professional development training to teachers and para-professionals to assist in the implementation of the *Support a Maths Learner: Number* initiative. The Catholic sector professional development activities conducted in 1999 in numeracy included *Support a Maths Learner: Number*, sequencing, language, formatting and assessment.

Independent schools identified 'at risk' students through statewide testing, the Year 2 Diagnostic Net results and a range of diagnostic tools. Specific professional development programs were offered through the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland, to train teachers and support personnel in the use of *Support a Maths Learner: Number*, and intervention strategies and program development in the middle primary and early secondary school levels.

## South Australia

In South Australia, School Entry Assessment (SEA) was implemented in 75 per cent of schools with junior primary enrolments in 1999. SEA requires teachers of Reception students to assess students' literacy and numeracy in their first term at school for planning and reporting purposes.

Outcomes for students include:

- improved literacy and numeracy programs
- early identification of students who may need additional support in their literacy and numeracy learning
- baseline information at the school and system level to measure children's educational progress through the early years.

The School Entry Assessment project also supported 20 Project Schools throughout South Australia to investigate and document literacy and numeracy development in young children. A CD-ROM designed to assist teachers with SEA was developed during 1999. The Junior Secondary Numeracy Project focused on enhancing numeracy achievements and attitudes of low-achieving students in years 8 and 9 through classroom-based action research across learning areas.

*Home and Away in Space* and *House and Garden Chemicals*, which are integrated science and mathematics units for the middle years (Department of Education, Training and Employment, 1999), were distributed to all government schools with a middle years population in Term 3, 1999. A number of professional development seminars were held to support the implementation of these curriculum materials and these will continue into 2000. Other professional development in numeracy education included *Making the Links*, and the Years 3–10 Numeracy Program.

Throughout 1999, the Learning Difficulties Support Team provided training and development and advice to teachers, School Services Officers and groups of parents in mathematics and numeracy. Training and development sessions focused on awareness-raising in numeracy, a variety of assessment procedures for gathering data and ways of accommodating children and students with learning difficulties in mathematics/numeracy. Written information in the form of handouts were provided on resources available in mathematics/numeracy.

In 1999, Catholic Education SA continued its commitment, through its various numeracy projects, to provide an excellent education. Table 3.26 summarises the initiatives undertaken in supporting Catholic schools in South Australia in numeracy/mathematics.

**Table 3.26 Numeracy/mathematics professional development programs, South Australian Catholic schools, 1999**

A	R-9 Numeracy Project	1997-99	21 schools	25 teachers
B	Lower Secondary Numeracy Project	1998-2000	14 schools	21 teachers
C	Early Years Assessment Project	1999-2001	1999 – 10 schools 2000 – broader trial across interested schools 2001 – proposed commencement of system implementation of assessment tool	12 teachers
D	Regional country projects	1998-99	1999 –three regions – 10 schools	60 teachers
E	Mathematics professional development R-9		14 schools	approx 140 teachers

Source: Catholic Education, SA

The main focus in each project has been on improving individual student numeracy, through teachers focusing on developing effective approaches to learning mathematics and supporting numeracy across and beyond the school curriculum. These developments in teachers' methodologies have been achieved by conducting action research in classrooms, with an emphasis on analysing student work samples and monitoring progress against the growth points for student learning.

A significant overall outcome to date is the extent of involvement of South Australian Catholic schools. In addition to the 34 schools directly involved in at least one of the projects, 36 other primary and secondary schools have taken the opportunity to be involved through a range of professional development mechanisms.

A major component of these projects was, and will continue to be, the importance of monitoring the participation and achievement of all students and developing strategies to meet their needs. Teachers are identifying an array of strategies to ensure that their program provides equity and educational opportunity for all students. The teacher's selection of students must be representative of the class, including any targeted groups. For this reason these numeracy projects are initiatives which address:

- students at risk
- gender
- Indigenous students
- gifted and talented students
- students who have English as a second language.

The programming and planning document being written from this research includes progress maps of growth points which describe ways in which students develop mathematical understandings and examples of planning frameworks which support multilevel entries into

investigations. The document also describes the importance of and strategies for teachers' continual monitoring of their own classroom organisation and assessment practices to ensure classroom programs are supportive of all students in achieving success.

A key aspect of the 1999 project was for the project teachers to continue to build upon their leadership role within their school. The key teacher role varied considerably between the project schools. In some instances, the role incorporated a Position of Responsibility or release time, with provision for numeracy /mathematics sessions at staff meetings. In these cases, key teachers were able to plan and implement a long-term structured approach for in-service support within their school. The key teachers described their success in this role as including:

- positive feedback from other teachers, and teachers engaging in discussion about numeracy both in and outside sessions
- regular requests for mathematics materials and resources
- increased student motivation and enthusiasm towards mathematics sessions
- positive parent feedback.

Some of the numeracy key teachers also fulfilled a wider leadership role through facilitating sessions for teacher networks, presenting workshops at the State Literacy and Numeracy Showcase in August and, for undergraduate student teachers, hosting visits from country teachers and conducting regional workshops.

### Western Australia

During 1999, government schools continued the implementation of First Steps in Mathematics (FSIM). FSIM seeks to improve learning outcomes for early childhood and primary students, particularly those at risk of