



EDUCATION IN THE KIMBERLEY, YRS K – 12

AN ANALYSIS FROM THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

This analysis was written at the request of the Commission and provides a Departmental view of the Education system in the Kimberley – September 2014

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT



**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
INFORMATION TO SUPPORT REGIONAL BLUEPRINT DEVELOPMENT FOR
THE KIMBERLEY REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

TRENDS, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The Department of Education is committed to delivering a strong public education system that enables each school to be a good school, every teacher to be an effective teacher and every student to be a successful student.

Focus 2014 sets out the system priorities for schools in the areas of:

- success for all students;
- improved student engagement and behaviour and attendance;
- high quality teaching and leadership; and
- a capable and responsive organisation.

Each parent should feel confident that their local public school can meet the needs, aspirations and interests of their children. Public secondary schools in the country offer children a range of high quality educational opportunities and the option of staying close to home.

Increasingly the focus of public schooling is on providing opportunities for each school to reflect the context in which it operates and thereby address individual needs. This is being achieved through increased opportunity for local level decision-making, innovation and engagement with the school community, providing regions with the opportunity to be leaders in the delivery of a high quality and locally informed education service. It is widely shown that effective and quality education and training are key drivers of economic growth, a higher standard of living and a socially cohesive community. *Priority 2 of the Strategic Plan 2012-2015 Distinctive schools*, further recognises and confirms that schools meeting the needs and aspirations of their students help to build strong communities in Western Australia, particularly involving parents and the community in the life of each school, and strengthening the capacity for regional schools to deliver excellent educational opportunities for their students.

In collaboration with their school community, Independent Public Schools (IPS) set their own strategic directions, have authority for day-to-day decision making and are in an ideal position to make decisions that best cater for their students. Parents and community members have an important and enhanced role in this initiative. While called Independent Public Schools, these schools remain part of the public school system.

Distinctive schools meet the needs and aspirations of their students to help to build strong communities in Western Australia. To enable this, the Department will:

- continue to provide opportunities for schools to become IPS;
- configure the delivery of schooling across the State to best meet the education needs of students;
- encourage groups of schools to work together to improve student access to high quality education;
- involve parents and the community in the life of each school;
- prepare for the smooth transition of Year 7 to secondary school; and
- strengthen the capacity of regional schools to deliver excellent education opportunities for their students.

Student achievement does not only refer to academic success. We want our schools to produce well rounded individuals who possess social and personal competencies and so our measurement of success will encompass these outcomes as well. The Department's *Classroom First* strategy recognises that we want all our students to leave school well prepared for the future. A successful education will equip them to prosper economically, be happy and secure in themselves, and contribute to their community. We believe in building on our students' strengths so every student leaves school confident they can succeed.

There are some groups of students who, on almost every measure of success, cause us great concern. We need to act more strategically to get our Aboriginal students to attend school and achieve well. We need to find smarter ways of ensuring our students being educated in rural and remote areas are not disadvantaged by their location. And, we need to reduce the achievement gap between our students who live in economically difficult circumstances and their peers who have the advantage of greater home and community resources.

In 2015, Year 7 children will move to secondary school. This means that students who are in Year 6 and Year 7 in 2014 will move together to secondary school at the start of 2015. This move aligns with the introduction of the Australian Curriculum in 2015 which has more in-depth content in each subject and higher expectations about the knowledge and skills that children need so they can succeed in and contribute to our modern world. Secondary schools will give Year 7 children access to the specialist subject teaching and facilities needed for this new curriculum, providing a more diverse range of learning experiences.

Current data also tells us that many students in rural and remote schools have limited awareness of appropriate subject choices, pathways and opportunities available to them once they leave school. It is anticipated by researching and targeting areas of need and through recognising and developing best practice models; the aspirations and capacities of students in rural and remote areas will improve. This will contribute to the provision of equitable education opportunities for students in rural and remote communities.

Attracting and retaining high quality staff and accessing specialist services is a challenge in many education regions. Regional and remote schools face additional challenges in attracting and retaining high quality staff, and consequently many of these areas are serviced by the youngest, most inexperienced teachers. In addition these regions generally have a shorter average length of teaching service per teacher in comparison with metropolitan regions. The effective supply of a high quality education workforce to regional and remote locations is impacted by a declining willingness to work Statewide; staffing evidence demonstrating that fewer education staff are prepared to be appointed to regional and remote locations. Adding to this, many of the teachers appointed to these areas are recent graduates who keenly feel the disconnection from their online personal and professional communities in addition to the physical location. Limited access to reliable internet services also significantly inhibits the ability for regional and remote teachers to connect with teachers across the state and undertake online professional learning anytime, anywhere.

In a very powerful sense for both students and staff Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and eLearning offers the promise of changing our current approach to education. The advent of advanced ICT and evolving software offers educators dynamic alternatives and puts the student at the centre of the learning process. It will inspire students to learn and conduct their own inquiries and allow a student's interests, needs, strengths and weaknesses to drive the learning process. Further, it

will allow for ongoing, accessible and interactive professional development not only on a statewide level, but nationally and internationally.

CURRENT PROVISION

Currently the Department provides the following education sites within the Kimberley Regional Development Commission area:

School type and numbers		Total students	Aboriginal	% Aboriginal
Agricultural Colleges & Schools	0	0	0	0
District High Schools	5	2256	1595	70.7%
Education Support	0	0	0	0
Primary Schools	4	1676	579	34.5%
Remote Community Schools	12	916	897	97.9%
Senior High Schools	1	619	241	38.9%

KEY INVESTMENT PROJECTS

The key investment projects in the Kimberley Region focus on addressing four priority areas:

- delivering strategic infrastructure to cater for growth and improve education provision;
- enhancing information and communication technology to provide students with contemporary learning environments;
- attracting, retaining and developing high quality teachers and leaders; and
- supporting innovative strategies to close the educational achievement gap between Aboriginal students and their non-Aboriginal peers.

Strategic infrastructure

There is an opportunity to explore different ways of addressing the educational needs of Kimberley Region students.

Capacity exists to strengthen education for secondary students from remote Aboriginal communities by increasing the capacity and number of hostels in the region. Schools linked with these hostels would attract students by offering specialist programs based on the pastoral, mining and tourism industries of the area; requiring purpose build infrastructure, industry links and specialist staff similar to the Agriculture School model of the Wheatbelt.

The transiency of teachers in many Kimberley towns and communities is high. Further work on the attraction and retention of staff to the region could result in a more stable and experienced workforce.

Information and communication technology

Emerging advances in technology offer educators dynamic eLearning alternatives that will bring improvements in education delivery and inspire and assist students to learn through customised programs, leading to more equitable outcomes for the Kimberley Region students:

The following projects will enable this in the Kimberley Region schools:

- upgrade and improvements in bandwidth and quality of service;
- access to Connect eLearning software; and
- support through eLearning and peer coaching.

Teachers and leaders

Quality teachers and leadership are factors that are well documented as being fundamental to the enhancement of education, health and life outcomes for students. The Teacher Development Schools (TDS) initiative provides specialist and practical teaching and learning support for classroom teachers with the sharing of high level curriculum expertise and innovation across schools, networks and professional learning communities.

In 2014, the initiative was expanded to provide additional support to teachers in rural and remote communities with the establishment of six Regional Teacher Development Schools. The Kimberley Region TDS located at Roebuck Primary School has a key role in the planning of professional learning opportunities and coordinating the sharing of expertise to support schools, teachers and networks within the region.

A key system priority in *Focus 2014* is 'high quality teaching and leadership'. This priority is supported through a wide range of strategies that aim to attract and retain quality teachers in regional and remote areas, and build teacher and leadership capacity through ongoing formal and informal learning. The Remote Teaching Program is an example of an initiative aimed at attracting high quality teachers in regional and remote areas.

Aboriginal students

A range of strategies and programs are available to schools to engage and reengage Aboriginal students. Such programs and strategies including *Follow the Dream* and Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers, provide schools and communities with an opportunity to select and implement targeted and relevant interventions for local students.

Particular attention is given to ensuring students in remote locations have access to quality secondary education and further training through a range of strategies, including providing hostel accommodation. Local decision making and tailored learning programs contribute to improved student school attendance, engagement and graduation rates leading to enhanced future pathways and life outcomes.

REFERENCES

Strategic Plan for Public Schools 2012-2015

<http://det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/strategic-documents/strategic-plan-for-wa-public-schools-2012-2015.en?oid=com.arsdigita.cms.contenttypes.FileStorageItem-id-12793162>

Progressing Classroom First

<http://www.det.wa.edu.au/classroomfirst/detcms/navigation/progressing-classroom-first/>

Focus 2014

<http://det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/strategic-documents/focus-2014.en?oid=com.arsdigita.cms.contenttypes.FileStorageItem-id-14557416>

Annual Report

<http://det.wa.edu.au/about/detcms/education/department-homepage/annual-report/department-of-education-annual-report-.en?oid=MultiPartArticle-id-13313350#toc1>