LINK 9: Policy Documents 1999 - 2007: Tasmania

Bill Mulford and Bill Edmunds
Faculty of Education
University of Tasmania

Contents

Introduction

Tasmania has a number of recent policy documents with implications for the public purposes of education and their enactment. These documents start at the state level with *Tasmania Together* and then move to the educational level with, chronologically, *Learning Together* and the *Essential Learnings*, *Supportive School Communities*, *Essential Learnings for All*, the *Tasmanian Curriculum*, and *Reporting to Parents*. In what follows, each policy document is briefly outlined. More detailed summaries can be found at the web sites provided. The paper concludes with a summary of the implications of recent Tasmanian government or educational policy documents for the public purposes of education and their enactment.

Tasmania Together

A 20 year social, environmental and economic plan for Tasmania has provided the over-arching policy framework for Tasmanian education since the year 2000 (Refer to Appendix 1 and **www.tasmaniatogether.tas.gov.au**). The vision developed during the *Tasmania Together* process was:

> *Tasmania is an island community, unique for its natural and cultural environment, where people enjoy a prosperous lifestyle based on quality, creativity and opportunity.*

Director of the *Tasmania Together* Progress Board, Phillip Hoysted, said that the Progress Board recognised the value of involving the next generation of young people in developing and working on our goals for the future.

> *"Students are interested in the world they live in – and are concerned about issues like education standards, healthy living and the environment,"*

> *"Our students are our future citizens and leaders, and it's important that they learn about their community and become involved in civic processes and citizenship activity."*

Public purposes of Tasmanian education as identified in *Tasmania Together* include providing:

- High quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce
- Support for preschool children to give them an early start
- Improved levels of community literacy
- Recognition of, promote share and celebrate aboriginal culture and heritage
- Opportunities for all Tasmanians (students) to participate in decisions that affect their lives
- Opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making processes.

Goal 3 Standard 2,Support improved levels of community literacy, looks at the performance of students in years three, five and seven in reading, writing and numeracy and compares student performance against national literacy and numeracy benchmarks. Tasmania Together considers literacy and numeracy to be fundamental to all areas of learning and that the capacity to learn and to continue to be involved in learning throughout life depends upon proficiency in literacy.

Learning Together and the Essential Learnings

In mid 1999 a separate, but complementary process to *Tasmania Together* was begun by the Minister for Education following which future directions for education in Tasmania were identified and the *Essential Learnings Curriculum* (ELs) developed and implemented (Refer to Appendix 2 and http://www.education.tas.gov.au/school/educators/curriculum/el_standards/essential_learni

ng.pdf). The Values and Purposes expressed in the ELs documentation embody many public purposes of education.

Public purposes of education as identified in *Learning Together* include the provision of:

- Services that ensure all Tasmanians develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they need
- Opportunities that enable people to work effectively and participate in society
- Safe and inclusive learning environments that encourage and support participation in learning through out life
- Access to global and local information resources so that everyone has the opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, a healthy democracy and a prosperous society
- A guiding set of core values; connectedness, resilience, achievement, creativity, integrity, responsibility and equity
- Shared purposes of ensuring students and children are; Learning to relate, participate and care, Learning to live full and healthy lives, Learning to create purposeful futures, Learning to act ethically, Learning to learn and Learning to think, know and understand.
- Essential Learnings that include a focus on the key elements of:
  - Thinking (inquiry and reflective thinking),
  - Communicating (being literate, being numerate, being information literate and being arts literate),
  - Personal futures (building and maintaining identity and relationships, maintaining wellbeing, being ethical, creating and pursuing goals)
  - Social responsibility (building social capital, valuing diversity,
  - Acting democratically,
  - Understanding the past and creating shared futures), and
  - World futures (investigating the natural and constructed world, understanding systems, designing and evaluating technological solutions and creating sustainable futures).

Supportive School Communities Framework 2003-2007

A *Supportive School Communities Policy Framework 2003-2007* was developed to refocus the Supportive School Environments policy that was released in 1989.While the initial intention had been to develop a revised policy, it became clear that a framework was needed to bring together the numerous related departmental policies, statements, guidelines, programs and services which had been developed in the intervening years (Refer to appendix 3 and www.education.tas.gov.au/**school**/educators/support/**supportiveschoolcommunities**/policieslegisl ation). Specific goals to which schools needed to respond were:

Tasmania Together

Goal 2	*Have a community where people feel safe and are safe in all aspects of their lives.*
Goal 4	*Create a culture that encourages people to learn and develop new skills, including life skills, throughout their lives.*
Goal 5	*Develop an approach to health and wellbeing that focuses on preventing poor health and encouraging healthy lifestyles.*
Goal 9	*Foster an inclusive society that acknowledges and respects our multicultural heritage, values diversity and treats everyone with compassion and respect.*

Learning Together

Goal 3.1	*Ensure that all childcare services, schools and training institutions are supportive and safe places.*
Goal 3.2	*Ensure that students who are "at risk" have the opportunity to participate.*

Goal 3.4   *Ensure that all learning organisations successfully include all students.*

The Public purposes of Tasmanian education as identified in *The Supportive School Communities Policy Framework 2003-2007* include being:

- Responsive to the needs and aspirations of the school community
- Supportive and inclusive of the diverse groups that comprise the community
- A central component in the continuum of provision for lifelong learning that includes childcare at one end and a range of adult and community education provisions at the other
- Engaged in the quest for continual improvement of outcomes for students
- Key contributors to social and community strength, through access, participation and achievement in order to maximise the learning outcomes of all students.

Essential Learnings for All

A Review of Services for Students with Special and/or Additional Education Needs (*Essential Learnings for All* or Atelier *Report*; 2004 and http://www.education.tas.gov.au/school/educators/curriculum/elscurriculum) endorses the Tasmanian Education Department's strong commitment to inclusion as a core value of public education. The report was implemented at the beginning of 2005, resulting in major changes to the way schools operated. Schools were grouped into 27 clusters with resources to support the inclusion of students, previously dispersed through the five Education District student support centres, now being allocated by principals within each cluster of schools.

Public purposes of Tasmanian education as identified in *Essential Learnings for All* included providing:

- A strong social justice and equity component as its values base
- A strong commitment to inclusion as a core value
- Equity of access to ensure students with special and/or additional needs have
- Resources for inclusive learning approaches and programs.

The Tasmanian Department of Education mandated the reporting of student progress in the ELS during 2005 despite the varying levels of teacher confidence in their understanding of and capacity to implement the ELs curriculum. When coupled with the inappropriate use of language by the Department of Education in student reports and the pressure applied by the Federal Minister for Education, through the media, on Tasmania to conform to Federal requirements, the future of ELs was placed at risk.

The Tasmanian Curriculum

In fact the *Tasmanian Curriculum* replaced the ELs Curriculum following controversy over ELs (see Edmunds & Mulford, 2007) and appointment of a new Tasmanian Minister for Education, after the 2006 State elections. The values, purposes and goals of the *Tasmanian Curriculum* support the vision expressed in *Tasmania Together* (Refer to appendix 5 and http://www.education.tas.gov.au/school/educators/curriculum/tasmanian-curriculum). Accompanying the change from ELs to the *Tasmania Curriculum* was another restructuring of the Department of Education into four Learning Communities (Education Districts) and the abandonment of the clusters of schools. The decentralised distribution of Department of Education resources to schools would now be made by each Learning Community.

The following chart indicates how the goals and indicators of *Tasmania Together* can be linked to the *Tasmanian Curriculum.*

Tasmanian Curriculum Area	*Tasmania Together*: Examples of relevant Goals / Headline Indicators
English - Literacy	Goal 3: High quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce: *Literacy and Numeracy*
Mathematics - Numeracy	Goal 3: High quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce: *Literacy and Numeracy*
Health and Wellbeing	Goal 4: Active, healthy Tasmanians with access to quality and affordable health care services: *Avoidable Mortality*
Society and History	Goal 8: Open and accountable government that listens and plans for a shared future: *Local Government Elections*
Science	Goal 12: Sustainable management of our natural resources: *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*
Vocational and Applied Learning	Goal 9: Increased work opportunities for all Tasmanians: *Workforce Participation Rate*
The Arts	Goal 6: Dynamic, creative and internationally recognised arts community and culture: *attendance at cultural heritage sites*

Reporting to Parents

One of the factors contributing to the demise of ELs related to reporting to parents. The new Minister for education set up a taskforce in this area. The *Reporting to Parents* Taskforce reported to the Tasmanian Minister for Education on 30 November 2006 (See Appendix 6 and www.education.tas.gov.au/dept/about/visions/**Reporting**to**parents**). In their concluding remarks they stated that they believed that a little more attention to communicating with parents would bring more support from them. While recognising the demands on teachers, the Taskforce thought that the rewards for children, schools, teachers and parents are worth the investment (of time and effort spent by teachers on the reporting process). An analysis of the report prepared by the Taskforce, with particular focus on the student attributes to be reported upon, showed that the following public purposes of education were evident or implied:

- Developing appropriate work-habits, attitudes, effort and behaviour
- Engaging in consistent and reliable assessment standards across the state system
- Tracking a child/student's progress from year to year and recording this in annual reports to parents
- Advising parents/guardians on how the progress of their child might be improved.

Summary an conclusion

In summary, the public purposes of Tasmanian education, as identified in recent Department of Education policy documents, includes the provision of:

Essential learnings that include a focus on the key elements of:

- Thinking (inquiry and reflective thinking),
- Communicating (being literate, being numerate, being information literate and being arts literate),
- Personal futures (building and maintaining identity and relationships, maintaining wellbeing, being ethical, creating and pursuing goals)
- Social responsibility (building social capital, valuing diversity,
- Acting democratically,
- Understanding the past and creating shared futures), and
- World futures (investigating the natural and constructed world, understanding systems, designing and evaluating technological solutions and creating sustainable futures),

that have:

- A guiding set of core values: connectedness, resilience, achievement, creativity, integrity, responsibility and equity
- Shared purposes to ensure students and children are: Learning to relate, participate and care; Learning to live full and healthy lives; Learning to create purposeful futures; Learning to act ethically; Learning to learn and Learning to think, know and understand,

and are:

- Responsive to the needs and aspirations of the school community
- Supportive and inclusive of the diverse groups that comprise the community
- A provider of lifelong learning that includes childcare at one end and a range of adult and community education provisions at the other
- Engaged in the quest for continual improvement of outcomes for students
- Key contributors to social and community strength, through access, participation and achievement in order to maximise the learning outcomes of all students
- A central component in the continuum of provision for lifelong learning that includes childcare at one end and a range of adult and community education provisions at the other

whilst:

- Providing safe and inclusive learning environments that encourage and support participation in learning through out life
- Initiating support for preschool children to give them an early start
- Giving access to global and local information resources so that everyone has the opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, a healthy democracy and a prosperous society
- Recognising, promoting, sharing and celebrating aboriginal culture and heritage
- Developing appropriate work-habits, attitudes, effort and behaviour
- Providing opportunities for the participation of young people in decision-making
- Enabling people to work effectively and participate in society
- Engaging in consistent and reliable assessment standards across the state system
- Tracking a child/student's progress from year to year and recording this in annual reports to parents
- Advising parents/guardians on how the progress of their child might be improved

resulting in:

- Improved levels of community literacy
- Services that ensure all Tasmanians develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they need

- high quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce.

In conclusion, and despite this long list of public purposes and the means of their enactment, when it comes to the "crunch" they do not seem to be given high priority. Two recent pieces of evidence support this assertion. The first relates to the speed with which ELs was dropped even though the media led attack on them related to the reporting process and the use of plain English (Edmunds and Mulford, 2007). The second relates to the emphasis in the evaluation of progress with *Tasmania Together* goals and standards. A recent report card (**http://www.tasmaniatogether.tas.gov.au** – Snapshot of Progress for 2007) only reports on literacy and numeracy scores.

Reference:

Edmunds, B., & Mulford, B. (2007). The Mercury Newspaper: Reporting on the Tasmanian Essential Learnings Curriculum 2000 – 2007, a Paper prepared for the ARC Linkage Research Project "Education Investment in Australian Schooling: Serving Public Purposes"

Appendix 1

Tasmania Together

In February 1999 the Tasmanian Premier, Jim Bacon, initiated *Tasmania Together*, a strategy intended to develop a 20 year social, environmental and economic plan for Tasmania. A Community Leaders' Group held 60 forums across Tasmanian communities to hear views about social, environmental and economic issues.

Tasmania *Together* is a unique project that allows the people of Tasmania to say what they want, and work together to achieve their long-term social, economic and environmental future. The project sets goals for the future, sets targets and monitors our progress towards these targets. Tasmania *Together* is a plan that identifies what is important, and what we need to work on if we're going to have the Tasmania we want by 2020. This is the vision of the community:

Tasmania is an island community, unique for its natural and cultural environment, where people enjoy a prosperous lifestyle based on quality, creativity and opportunity.

There are 12 goals and 146 benchmarks that reflect the concerns people expressed during two of the biggest community consultation processes ever undertaken in Tasmania (in 2000 and 2005). The 12 Goals of Tasmania Together are listed as follows:

Goals

1. A reasonable lifestyle and standard of living for all Tasmanians.

2. Confident, friendly and safe communities.

3. High quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce.

4. Active, healthy Tasmanians with access to quality and affordable health care services.

5. Vibrant, inclusive and growing communities where people feel valued and connected.

6. Dynamic, creative and internationally recognised arts community and culture.

7. Acknowledgement of the right of Aboriginal people to own and preserve their culture, and share with non-Aboriginal people the richness and value of that culture.

8. Open and accountable government that listens and plans for a shared future.

9. Increased work opportunities for all Tasmanians.

10. Thriving and innovative industries driven by a high level of business confidence.

11. Built and natural heritage that is valued and protected.

12. Sustainable management of our natural resources.

Whilst all goals contain implications for the public education sector, Goals 3, 7 and 8 are more directly referenced.

Goal 3. High-quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce.

Standard		Indicators		Targets	Comments
1	Support pre-school children for an equal start.	1.1	Proportion of children meeting the Kindergarten Development Check 2005: 72% *Source: Department of Education*	2010: 76% 2015: 80% 2020: 84%	The Kindergarten Development Check is an indicator of early childhood development and an early-warning system for individually focused primary education services.
2	Support improved levels of community literacy.	2.1	Proportion of persons (15-74) who are considered to be functionally literate 1996 Prose literacy: 51.7% Document literacy: 46.8% Quantitative literacy: 47.5% *Source: Aspects of Literacy: Assessed Skill Levels, Australia (ABS 4228.0)*	Targets to be established in 2007	Functional literacy is important for self-development and effective engagement in community life.
		2.2	Student performance against national literacy & numeracy benchmarks Reading (2000) Year 3: 91.2% Year 5: 81.4% Year 7: 87.5% (2001) Writing (2000) Year 3: 86.2% Year 5: 88.2% Year 7: 85.9% (2001) Numeracy (2000) Year 3: 92.8% Year 5: 87.6% Year 7: 79.7% (2001) *Source: Department of Education*	Reading & Writing (Year 3/5/7) 2005: 98% 90% – 2010: 98% 95% 90.5% 2015: 98% 98% 92% 2020: 98% 98% 93.5% Numeracy (Year 3/5/7) 2005: 98% 98% – 2010: 98% 98% 90.5% 2015: 98% 98% 92% 2020: 98% 98% 93.5%	Literacy and numeracy are fundamental to all areas of learning. Capacity to learn and to continue to be involved in learning throughout life depends upon proficiency in literacy.

Goal 7. Acknowledgment of the right of Aboriginal people to own and preserve their culture, and share with non-Aboriginal people the richness and value of that culture.

Standard		Indicators		Targets	Comments
1	Recognise, promote, share and celebrate Aboriginal culture and heritage, encouraging mutual recognition and respect between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.	1.1	Percentage of teaching staff who have received professional development specifically related to their role as teachers of indigenous studies 2001/02 - 2003/04: 114% *Source: Department of Education*	2005: 100% 2010: 100% 2015: 100% 2020: 100%	If teachers are educated about Aboriginal culture it will enable and encourage them to communicate this to students.
		1.2	Percentage of schools integrating Aboriginal perspectives throughout all relevant areas of the curriculum 2000: 50% *Source: Department of Education, Aboriginal Education Unit Annual Survey*	2005: 100% 2010: Maintain 2015: Maintain 2020: Maintain	If Tasmanians are to have a greater understanding of Aboriginal culture, it is essential that the school curriculum reflects this culture.
		1.3	Number of major visitor centres containing Aboriginal cultural interpretation 2000: 6 *Source: Department of Premier and Cabinet*	2005: 9 2010: 10 2015: 11 2020: 12	There is a need to increase public awareness of Aboriginal culture through its inclusion in major visitor centres.

Goal 8. Open and accountable government that listens and plans for a shared future.

Standard		Indicators		Targets	Comments
1	Provide an opportunity for all Tasmanians to participate in decisions that affect their lives.	1.1	Proportion of people who think there are opportunities to have a real say on important issues Baseline to be established in 2007 *Source: General Social Survey (ABS 4159.0) 2006*	Targets to be established in 2008	People need to believe that they can have a say in decision-making processes before effective participation will occur.
		1.2	Proportion of people participating in a decision-making process. Baseline to be established in 2007 *Source: General Social Survey (ABS 4159.0) 2006*	Targets to be established in 2008	Participating in the decision-making processes should give people a better understanding of the issues involved and provides an incentive for people to help determine the future of their communities and contribute to realising that future.
		1.3	Proportion participating in local government elections 1999: 55.66% *Source: Tasmanian Electoral Commission*	2005: 60% 2010: 65% 2015: 70% 2020: 75%	Voting in local government elections is voluntary, therefore participation should indicate interest and awareness.
		1.4	Involvement in community action to improve or protect local services or activities Baseline to be established in 2007 *Source: General Social Survey (ABS 4159.0) 2006*	Targets to be established in 2008	Involvement in community action should build stronger, more vibrant communities.
2	Support the participation of young people in decision-making.	2.1	Percentage of councils with youth advisory committees 2001: 65.5% *Source: Department of Premier and Cabinet, Office of Youth Affairs*	2005: 79% 2010: 89% 2015: 95% 2020: 95%	Youth advisory committees can provide experience of governance, promote awareness of political issues, encourage participation and provide for leadership succession while informing councils on youth issues.
		2.2	Performance of students against national benchmarks for civics and citizenship 2004 (data released late 2006) *Source: Department of Education*	Targets to be established in 2007	The ability to participate in the democratic process in an informed way is a core competency which should be nurtured in the education system.

During the last twelve months (2006/2007) Tasmania Together has not met its targets in Goal 3 -literacy and numeracy targets in schools for years 3, 5 and 7.

For more information visit: http://www.tasmaniatogether.tas.gov.au/our_progress/4

The Tasmania Together Guide for Students and Teachers

There are many good reasons for students to be involved in Tasmania *Together*.

1. Students are the future citizens of this state; learning more about the community and becoming involved benefits both young people and the community.
2. Young people are an important part of the community. Tasmania *Together* is about consultation with the community.
3. Many of the benchmarks and goals in Tasmania *Together* affect young people, both now and in the future.

Director of the Tasmania *Together* Progress Board, Phillip Hoysted, said that the Progress Board recognised the value of involving the next generation of young people in developing and working on our goals for the future.

"Students are interested in the world they live in – and are concerned about issues like education standards, healthy living and the environment," Mr Hoysted said.

"Our students are our future citizens and leaders, and it's important that they learn about their community and become involved in civic processes and citizenship activity."

The Tasmania Together Guide for Students describes some ideas to help students learn about, and become involved in, Tasmania *Together* benchmarks, goals and processes. For example

- Planning and undertaking civic action in their school and local community
- Understanding and using democratic decision making strategies
- Examining the identified issues, goals and benchmarks of Tasmania Together as part of curriculum studies in a diverse range of areas.

"The purpose of the Guide is to encourage students to help achieve the vision of Tasmania *Together* for 2020 – and make a difference to the social, economic and environmental future of State," said Dr Gray.

- The Guide is now available on line at http://www.education.tas.gov.au and at www.tasmaniatogether.tas.gov.au/schools
- Explore the Tasmania *Together* website: www.tasmaniatogether.tas.gov.au

Appendix 2
Learning Together: The Essential Learnings Curriculum 1999 -2006

In mid 1999 a separate, but complementary process to Tasmania Together was begun by the Minister for Education, Paula Wriedt, who held a series of meetings with Department of Education officials and representatives from principals' associations, teacher and public sector unions, and parent associations at future directions for education in Tasmania were explored.
In June 2001 a 13 member Learning Together Council was formed by the Minister to monitor the implementation of the 46 strategies consisting of 139 initiatives matched to the five goals. The Learning Together Council reported directly to the Minister and had the power to request Department of Education officers to report on the progress made with the implementation of Learning Together initiatives.

The five goals articulated in Learning Together were as follows:

1. Responsive and continually improving services that ensure all Tasmanians develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they need
2. Enriching and fulfilling learning opportunities that enable people to work effectively and participate in society
3. Safe and inclusive learning environments that encourage and support participation in learning throughout life
4. An information-rich community with access to global and local information resources so that everyone has the opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, a healthy democracy and a prosperous society
5. **A valued and supported education workforce that reflects the importance of teaching as a profession**

Development and Implementation of the Essential Learnings Curriculum Framework

Following the release of the draft proposals for education, training and information provision in February 2000, a nine-member Consultation Team was appointed to conduct a three-year project to develop a curriculum, consisting of three phases: clarifying values and purposes; specifying content; and developing teaching and assessment practices. Beginning in June 2000, district reference groups led more than 6,900 teachers, child-care professionals, business people, community members and students at meetings focusing on clarifying the values and purposes of public education. The report on the consultation, released in October 2000, led to the publication of a statement in December 2000 identifying seven values and six purposes as important.

Values:
We are guided by a set of core values
- Connectedness
- Resilience
- Achievement
- Creativity
- Integrity
- Responsibility
- Equity

Purposes:
We share the purposes of ensuring our students and children are:
- Learning to relate, participate and care
- Learning to live full and healthy lives
- Learning to create purposeful futures
- Learning to act ethically
- Learning to learn
- Learning to think, know and understand

The Values and Purposes Statement formed the basis for developing 'emerging' essential learnings. Responses collected from a review were used to produce 'working' essential learnings consisting of five categories, each containing a description and several key elements. Practitioners in schools were insistent that 'thinking' be included.

Essential Learnings:
1. Thinking
   a. Inquiry
   b. Reflective thinking
2. Communicating
   a. Being literate
   b. Being numerate
   c. Being information literate
   d. Being arts literate
3. Personal futures
   a. Building and maintaining identity and relationships
   b. Maintaining wellbeing
   c. Being ethical
   d. Creating and pursuing goals
4. Social responsibility
   a. Building social capital
   b. Valuing diversity
   c. Acting democratically
   d. Understanding the past and creating preferred futures
5. World futures
   a. Investigating the natural and constructed world
   b. Understanding systems
   c. Designing and evaluating technological solutions
   d. Creating sustainable futures
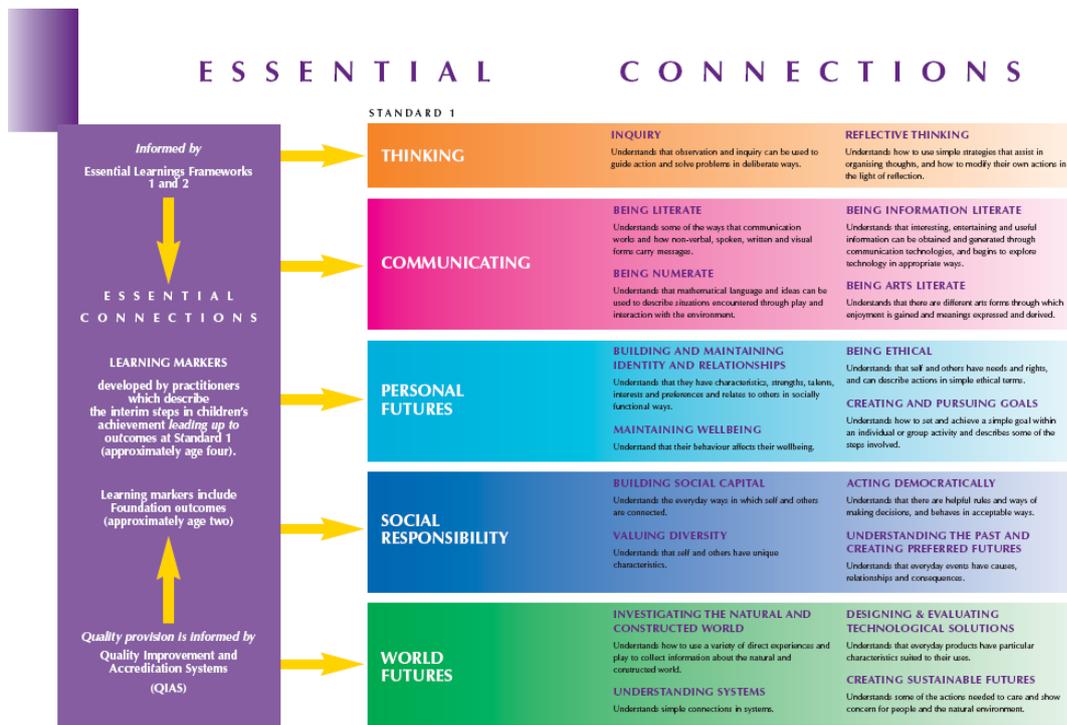
Refer to: http://www.education.tas.gov.au/school/educators/curriculum/el_standards/essconnchart.pdf

Appendix 3

Supportive School Communities Policy Framework 2003-2007

1. Purpose

This policy framework has been developed to refocus the Supportive School Environments policy that was released in 1989.While the initial intention had been to develop a revised policy, it became clear that a framework was needed to bring together the numerous related departmental policies, statements, guidelines, programs and services which had been developed in the intervening years.

There is an increasing expectation that schools will be responsive to the needs and aspirations of its community, and supportive and inclusive of the diverse groups that comprise that community. Schools are being reconceptualised as a central component of the continuum of provision for lifelong learning that includes childcare at one end and a range of adult and community education provisions at the other. Interagency co-ordination, partnerships, clear pathways and collaborative action are imperative if educational provisions from birth to adulthood are to be effective for all participants.

This framework aims to help schools to address the issues they face as a result of significant changes in the educational and social climate in the last decade particularly in the quest for continual improvement of outcomes for students. It also promotes effort towards achieving goals identified in *Learning Together* and Tasmania *Together* which relate to improving the health and wellbeing of students in Tasmanian schools.

At the same time:

- it specifies the policy initiatives which now exist to address the impact of those changes and seeks to achieve the goals of those key Departmental policies through a range of strategies. These are listed in Section 5 of this document;
- it provides a framework for schools and colleges to be able to develop a more coherent approach to the delivery of related services to students and staff. Refer to the diagrammatic representation of this framework in Section 5;
- it provides a structure to allow future relevant initiatives to be incorporated in a coherent way;
- it provides a basis for improved efficiency in interagency tasks. Interagency protocols have been designed to assist with interagency cooperation and partnership. Examples are *Sharing Responsibility* (for cases of suspected child abuse or neglect) and *Working Together* (for children under care and protection orders).

- The *Policy Framework* also offers a means by which schools can reassess the supportiveness of their school culture. It provides a guide to action which can enhance the effectiveness of school communities as key contributors to social and community strength, through access, participation and achievement and which maximises the learning outcomes of all students.

2. Statement of Values and Beliefs

A supportive school community views everyone as an individual, with unique qualities and abilities to be developed and nurtured and for whom the community has collective responsibility. A supportive school community emerges from the interaction of a shared set of beliefs, attitudes and actions. It is a place of learning for all, based on the belief that all children can learn, in which everything that happens contributes to the intellectual, social and emotional growth of all its learners, the professional growth and personal wellbeing of staff, and positive involvement of the community.

These values and beliefs align with those underpinning the *Essential Learning Framework*, which are:

- connectedness, including developing a sense of community;
- resilience, including recognising strengths and maximising potential;
- achievement, including attaining personal success and pursuing individual excellence;
- creativity, including valuing original ideas;
- integrity, including being honest and ethical;
- responsibility, including accepting individual and collective responsibility and contributing to community development; and
- equity, including developing tolerance and a commitment to social justice, acknowledging diversity, respecting difference and encouraging distinctiveness.

3. Elements of a Supportive School Community

Closely aligned with these values and beliefs are a number of elements integral to the development and maintenance of a supportive, inclusive and equitable community.

The elements that constitute a supportive school community are:

- a school culture that reflects care, concern and respect for diversity, models democratic processes, develops a sense of community and contributes to a healthy cohesive society;
- leadership that has a clear vision based on a set of shared values, beliefs, and respectful relationships; that brings people together to make decisions; and promotes practices that are inclusive and democratic;
- school organisation which is flexible, enables the development of strong relationships, allows for variable student groupings, and provides time and space for teachers to work and plan together and support one another;
- a curriculum which engages all students at a level appropriate to their knowledge, skill and ability, across a full range of learning experiences; that facilitates the development of individual social and communication skills and that builds student resilience;
- learning and teaching that caters to differences in student needs, learning styles, performance levels, and individual capacities, while maintaining high expectations for all students;
- assessment, monitoring and reporting that are integrated into learning and teaching, are inclusive of all students and their families and contribute to the supportive culture of the school;
- relationships with parents and the broader community which foster access and participation; reciprocal support; shared directions and purposes; and positive partnerships that build on community services and resources and develop strong interagency links; and
- professional development, within a learning community that is focussed on enhancing teacher understandings and competencies that enable the implementation of the curriculum and teaching practices central to supportive schooling.

Questions relating to these elements have been developed. *Elements of a Supportive School Community: Key Questions for* provides a basis for discussion and reflection on provision of supportive and inclusive schooling.

4. Social And Educational Context

Tasmania *Together* and *Learning Together* are significant documents which impact on much of the work undertaken in schools. Specific goals to which our schools must respond are:

Tasmania *Together*

Goal 2   *Have a community where people feel safe and are safe in all aspects of their lives.*

Goal 4   *Create a culture that encourages people to learn and develop new skills, including life skills, throughout their lives.*

Goal 5   *Develop an approach to health and wellbeing that focuses on preventing poor health and encouraging healthy lifestyles.*

Goal 9   *Foster an inclusive society that acknowledges and respects our multicultural heritage, values diversity and treats everyone with compassion and respect.*

Learning Together

Goal 3.1   *Ensure that all childcare services, schools and training institutions are supportive and safe places.*

Goal 3.2   *Ensure that students who are "at risk" have the opportunity to participate.*

Goal 3.4   *Ensure that all learning organisations successfully include all students.*

The Department of Education's *Report Card* states a commitment to achieving the vision and policy goals established in Tasmania *Together* and *Learning Together*. Tasmania *Together* performance indicators have been included as *Report Card* performance measures that the Department is committed to achieving.

The *Report Card* is centred on three **key performance categories** in which the Department's ultimate value as an organisation is evident:

- achievement;
- participation; and
- access.

... More importantly, the *Key Performance Categories* also provide a performance model to which all sections of the agency and everyone who works in the Department can relate their work. This can be phrased in terms of a single question:

"What influence, consequence or effect will my work have on achievement, participation and access both within and without the agency?" Our *Report Card*, DoE, Tasmania 2003

The contribution of any sector, school or individual should eventually be able to be linked to improvements in achievement, participation and access. A school community in which these factors are a priority is likely to be supportive of every individual, regardless of circumstances, and ultimately lead to improved learning outcomes.

Since the release of the Supportive School Environment Policy in 1989, the social and educational context has undergone significant, wide-reaching changes, some of which have been external to education, while others have resulted from new ways of thinking about educational provision.

The Supportive School Communities Policy Framework has been developed in the light of these social and educational changes, and aims to better inform school communities working towards better learning outcomes for their members.

4.1 Social changes

Changes in the economic and social circumstances of successive Australian generations have implications for society, and for its institutions and policies. Generational changes in incomes, living standards, family size and living arrangements can affect the economy, the communities where people live and the provision and funding of services ranging from schools and hospitals, through to pensions and other income support. Understanding generational changes and trends will assist in assessing their impact and in developing appropriate responses.

In response to these social changes a 'whole of government' approach to social policy has been developed. This demonstrates a wider recognition of the importance of community capacity building and structures that support the community, exemplified by:

- establishing interagency approaches to disability policy and implementation;
- an interdepartmental Multicultural Policy;
- and *Our Kids*, a Strategic Policy Framework from the Department of Health and Human Services which aims to develop policy and operational links between government and community services.

Aspects of young people's lives in which changes are most apparent include:

The structure and character of families

In recent times the incidence of marriage breakdown has increased, with more than one third of marriages ending in divorce. Of these, 52.7% involve children under the age of 18. (ABS, 2000)

As a result, many families have one parent, with the mother assuming major responsibility for the family in most cases. In Tasmania, lone-mother families make up 22.7% of all families with children under 15 years of age, compared with lone father families at 1.8% of the same group. The number of blended families and families headed by same sex couples has also increased. Fewer children are a part of an extended family network and more families experience poverty.

The changing nature of families of itself is not the issue. Problems arise when the dislocation is accompanied by violence, financial distress, separation from social groups or significant others, or other such outcomes, and where there is no capacity for individuals to reduce associated anxiety or for external support to counterbalance the distress. Schools always have been counterbalancing institutions for many young people.

Patterns of employment and high levels of poverty

In Tasmania, some families have experienced unemployment for three or four generations. The Anglicare Report *The Cost of Education: Two Classes in One Room* (2002) states that

As a state, Tasmania has experienced high levels of unemployment since the mid 1970s. Entering the new century, nearly 40% of the Tasmanian population are dependent on Commonwealth pensions and benefits as their main source of income. (ABS, Australian Social Trends, 2001)

Other families have access only to casual and usually part-time work. More redundancies, increased mobility and upheaval in order to obtain work, less certainty about employment and low family incomes all contribute to a sense of futility, insecurity and pessimism in many young people.

Department Of Education Policies Integral to the Supportive School Communities Policy Framework

The *Supportive School Communities Policy Framework* is formulated on the premise that the school community will be supportive if other key policies and practices are in place and they in turn can only succeed if they are implemented within a supportive context. The diagram below identifies many of the policies, programs and practices which together enhance the supportive, inclusive nature of school communities. The list is not exhaustive, and the relevance of some of these policies and initiatives will vary according to each school context.

Policies, plans, programs and guidelines that sit within this framework include:

- Policy on Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Regular Schools (1994);
- Equity in Schooling Policy (1995);
- Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools (1997);
- School Improvement Review (formerly Assisted School Self-Review) Process (1997);
- Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy (1998);
- Education for Students who are Gifted (2000);
- Policy on Educational Provision for Students with Challenging Behaviour (2001);
- Policy on Management of Drug Issues and Drug Education in Tasmanian Government Schools and Colleges (2002);
- Assessment, Monitoring and Reporting Policy (2002);
- Attendance, Participation and Retention Policy (2003);
- Student Health and Wellbeing Program;
- VET in Schools/Vocational Education and Learning;
- Managing Workplace Diversity (previously Equal Employment Opportunity Policy);
- Inclusive Practice Competency Framework (2003); and
- Managing Student Behaviour Competency Framework (2003).

A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

ACHIEVEMENT PARTICIPATION ACCESS for all students through

School Improvement Review

Aboriginal Education Strategic Plan (1997-2002)

Policy on Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Regular Schools (1994)

Alternative educational provision

Flexible learning options

Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy (1998)

Equity in Schooling Policy (1995)

Interagency Protocols

Health + Wellbeing Project Inc. MindMatters

Multicultural Education Policy

Education for Students who are Gifted (2000)

Transition planning and support

Inclusive Practice + Managing Student Behaviour Competencies

Assessment, Monitoring and Reporting Policy (2002)

Policy on Educational Provision for Students with Challenging Behaviour (2001)

Middle Schooling

Behaviour Support Team

Flexible Learning Through Distance Mode (K-12) Strategic Policy (2002-2005)

Policy on Management of Drug Issues and Drug Education in Tasmanian Government Schools and Colleges (2002)

MARSSS

Enrolment and Discipline Guidelines

Managing Workplace Diversity

Attendance, Participation and Retention Policy (2003)

VET in Schools

Literacy and Numeracy Plan

Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools

SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

Professional Learning

Leadership and Decision-Making

School Culture

Curriculum

School Organisation

Learning and Teaching

Assessment, Monitoring and Reporting

Community and Parents

POSITIVE OUTCOMES.

SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLING FOR ALL MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

For greater detail access:

http://www.education.tas.gov.au/school/health/inclusive/supportiveschoolcommunities/framework

Social and Educational Context of the Supportive School Communities Policy Framework 2003-2007

Tasmania *Together* and *Learning Together* are significant documents which impact on much of the work undertaken in schools. Specific goals to which our schools must respond are:

Tasmania *Together*

Goal 2   *Have a community where people feel safe and are safe in all aspects of their lives.*

Goal 4   *Create a culture that encourages people to learn and develop new skills, including life skills, throughout their lives.*

Goal 5   *Develop an approach to health and wellbeing that focuses on preventing poor health and encouraging healthy lifestyles.*

Goal 9   *Foster an inclusive society that acknowledges and respects our multicultural heritage, values diversity and treats everyone with compassion and respect.*

Learning Together

Goal 3.1   *Ensure that all childcare services, schools and training institutions are supportive and safe places.*
Goal 3.2   *Ensure that students who are "at risk" have the opportunity to participate.*
Goal 3.4   *Ensure that all learning organisations successfully include all students.*

Appendix 4

Essential Learnings for all

Essential Learnings for All

Report of the

Review of Services for Students with Special and/or Additional Educational Needs

A Review commissioned by the Tasmanian Department of Education

Executive Summary

Introduction

In December 2003, the Tasmanian Minister for Education, Hon Paula Wriedt MHA, announced an independent and extended Review of Services for Students with Special and/or Additional Educational Needs. Tasmania has long been a national leader in the inclusion of students with special and/or additional educational needs within the mainstream of schooling. The department is strongly committed to inclusion as a core value of public education. The policy enjoys wide community endorsement.

The Review was asked to consider the full scope of service provision across the department,
including policy and practice, resourcing, capacity-building and accountability. In undertaking the Review, information was gathered from many hundreds of people across Tasmania. Meetings and interviews were conducted with parents, teachers, teacher aides, school executives, principals, district and state support service staff, representatives of government

and non-government agencies, union representatives, representatives of special interest groups, and senior departmental executive officers and their support staff. The Review undertook twelve case studies in schools to gain a grounded understanding of practice, also visiting alternative programs for students with special and/or additional educational needs.

Although the government has allocated substantially increased resources to services for students with special and/or additional educational needs, there is continuing demand for more to be done. Some believe that the proportion of these students is increasing. For example, figures are cited indicating that the number of children diagnosed with autism is much greater than it was a decade ago. Behavioural issues to do with family and social dislocation are seen as more prominent than once was the case. The demand for more resources to address such needs seems never ending.

Across the nation, there is a growing sense of the pressure placed on families, communities and schools arising from children and young people whose needs do not seem to be well met within traditional approaches to educational service provision. Tasmania is not unique in this regard.

Policy and Practice

The values base of Tasmanian public education has a strong social justice and equity component. This values base was developed within the community as part of the school transformation process currently underway with the implementation of the *Essential Learnings Framework*. The policies that articulate the values base have been brought together under the banner of *Supportive School Communities*.

The community orientation of the Tasmanian public education system is one of its defining characteristics. The Review cannot stress sufficiently the importance of the values base. It provides the window through which must be seen issues in service provision for students with special and/or additional educational needs.

The Review found that one of the key challenges in service provision for students with special and/or additional educational needs is to translate the values of the public education system into practice that makes a difference in their schooling. In best practice situations, the connection between policy and practice is strong, well articulated and transparent. Understandings about policy and best practice in implementation are shared widely across the school community. All students are regarded as having the right to learn in an inclusive environment and every effort is made to guarantee equity of access, participation and achievement.

While the Review acknowledges the best practices in inclusion currently occurring, they are far from universal across Tasmania's public schools. The Review found that the intent of policy is often not implemented in ways consistent with the values base. Although in many schools there is extraordinary staff dedication and effort, practices that are clearly inconsistent with the values around inclusion are rationalised as good practice. For example, withdrawal from class of students in the company of a teacher aide is argued as inclusive. Alternative programs that have no real connection to the curriculum of the school are argued as inclusive.

In such situations, students with special and/or additional educational needs come to be seen as creating problems for the main operation of the classroom and the school. The schools respond to student needs by separating them and demanding more resources for supervision and care. Rarely did the Review find mainstream work in school transformation being inclusive of students with special and/or additional educational needs. In large measure this can be explained by the relative lack of connection between the two at an organisational level across the department.

Current approaches to service provision in public education for students with special and/or additional educational needs are vested principally in district support structures. Money and staffing are provided to district support services. Decisions are then made in each district about the allocation of these resources. In the main, the allocations are tied directly to identified students who have special and/or additional educational needs.

The Review found that, in response to the demands of schools, district and state support services work in a culture that is predominantly one of reaction. The culture is focused on addressing conditions, deficits and problems. This is despite the very great professional expertise and often exceptional hard work of many support service staff.

Much of what support services do reflects this culture. It can be seen in the importance that is attached to the categorisation of students according to their disability or behaviour, the distribution of resources to schools driven by the extent of individual conditions and the 'cashing-in' of specialist time in exchange for teacher aide hours. The culture can also be seen in the relatively low priority that is given by the support services to building capacity at the school level to ensure the access, participation and achievement of all students.

The Review believes that it is now timely to chart new directions that will ensure the translation of the intent of policy for students with special and/or additional educational needs into practice, across the system and its schools. At the core of these new directions is the need to link service provision for these students into the mainstream school transformation process. Effective and efficient service provision cannot be achieved while ever students with special and/or additional educational needs are regarded and treated as peripheral to the core priorities and operations of the department and its schools. The new leadership structure in the schools division signals clearly systemic intent to align the operational aspects of the organisation.

In the new directions suggested by the Review, the current organisation of support services needs to be reconfigured. The Review found that support services are both disconnected from the centre and internally disconnected at the district level.

This can be seen in the inconsistent ways in which policy intent is implemented. For example, services for a student with similar needs can be more inclusive in one district than another. On a number of occasions, the Review was reminded that districts and district support services were quite different.

The Review identified a generally high level of disconnection between district support services and the school transformation processes inherent in the Essential Learnings Framework. The culture and Review of Services for Students with Special and/or Additional Educational Needs Atelier Learning Solutions practices of support services focus on inputs, allocations and processes. The contrast with the outcomes focus of the work around the Essential Learnings could not be more dramatic.

The Review believes there is a need to place decision making, resource allocation, school
transformation, curriculum innovation and outcomes accountability closer to schools and their
communities. This will be best achieved through a formally established community of schools, led by a board of principals. In these communities, schools can be provided with the close-at-hand support necessary to transform their curriculum to increase flexibility, authenticity and inclusiveness. With responsibility vested at the local level, schools will have the capacity to work together to develop the critical mass of knowledge and understandings necessary for best practice in the implementation of policy for all students, including those with special and/or additional educational needs.

Complementing the strengthening of local support, the department needs to have the leadership and organisational capacity that will ensure the strongest possible connection of practice to systemic policy. Only through consistent implementation of policy will students with special and/or additional educational needs have equity of access, participation and achievement. The current structure is not providing the level of equity that the values base of the department demands.

The Review believes that the current district structure should give way to new organisational arrangements involving three branches of central office focused on alignment across all areas of the department's operations, quality service provision at the local level, and clear outcomes-focused accountabilities. The branches would be the operational arms of the department. They would not be regions. Each branch would be led by an operational director who would be a member of the schools division corporate management team. They would be supported by an appropriate number of assistant directors (school support) who would provide a much closer and stronger level of support to principals than is presently the case. The assistant directors (school support) would work with principals to ensure the implementation of policy intent and accountability for outcomes.

Resource Allocation

The Review found that the current resource allocation model, by funding individual students, fails to resource the inclusive learning approaches and programs that are required if they are to be truly included. Individually-focused funding addresses only one component of a larger, more complex picture of educational provision. What is needed is equity of resource distribution based on addressing identified needs, but not based on a categorisation-driven funding formula.

The current resource allocation model has evolved into one which stretches resources very thinly, leading to a culture of internal competition for them. Moreover, when the resources are provided, they are invariably allocated to individual care rather than for inclusive educational access, participation and achievement.

The Review was struck by the general lack of discussion around the issue of quality in service
provision. The current model focuses on quantity of input, commonly teacher aide hours, not the quality of the program or the level of outcomes. The Review believes that using teacher aide hours as the currency of service provision for students with special and/or additional educational needs acts as an inhibitor to addressing the quality question. It is a currency that should be discontinued.

The Review found that the current resource allocation model gives insufficient priority to building the capacity of schools and staff to develop and implement inclusive approaches for students with special and/or additional educational needs. It is a model that has built reliance on support through reaction rather than support through capacity-building.

As such, the model has led to the situation where, in many instances, responsibility for the
education of students with special and/or additional educational needs is passed to others. For
example, the model is now funding so called 'alternative programs' where some students are
effectively removed from their schools. In these instances, the schools have no responsibility or accountability for the outcomes of students who are still enrolled with them.

The Review believes that approaches to resourcing educational provision for students with special and/or additional educational needs should focus on funding and supporting inclusive programs. The resourcing model needs to provide for the fuller learning context of the student with special and/or additional educational needs as the means to most effectively address the student's individual needs.

The Review envisages a mainstream resource allocation model that incorporates differential funding according to state moderated but locally identified needs. In addition to a core school resource package, formal communities of schools would receive a resource package to fund changed school operations that will provide quality approaches and programs for all students, including those with special and/or additional educational needs.

Led by the board of principals, schools would make shared decisions about the configuration of resources needed to provide high quality educational approaches. These decisions would include how best to provide for those students who have been locally identified as having special and/or additional educational needs. Along with other resources, those currently allocated to district and state support services and those allocated to districts for professional learning and curriculum support would be included in the community of schools resource package.

Capacity Building

Building the capacity of schools and school communities has been a major aspect of the
implementation of the Essential Learnings Framework to date. During the course of the Review, many pointed to this work as an outstanding example of the department's commitment to developing the understandings, knowledge and skills required for Tasmania to become a world class system of public education. The priority given to capacity-building in school transformation and curriculum innovation is widely and strongly endorsed.

Evidence was gathered that the priority given to capacity-building in this work should now be
broadened to address capacity in the provision of services for students with special and/or
additional educational needs. The present orientation of student support services means they are unable to give sufficient priority to capacity-building. Indeed, evidence was gathered indicating that approaches and practices to build knowledge and skill are often disconnected from the work of teachers and schools, implemented as external courses. Although the providers of professional learning courses for school staff generally regard the courses as successful, their clients do not always agree.

During the Review, the observation was made repeatedly that simply offering more external courses was not the answer to building capacity. Nor were the often fleeting visits of specialist staff seen as contributing significantly to capacity-building in schools. Teachers and teacher aides are looking for quality approaches that build capacity in the immediate context of their work.

The Review believes that capacity-building should be an integral part of service provision. It should, in the main, be provided through in situ, 'just in time' support, located within the local community of schools. This does not involve notions of courses. Rather, it is about skilled specialist staff working alongside teachers and para-professional staff to increase their capacity to meet student needs through the implementation of effective approaches and programs.

The undoubted expertise and skills of specialist support staff will be best utilised when they are located as closely as possible to the schools they support. The Review envisages a local community of schools model in which support teachers will coordinate service provision across schools to meet identified needs. They would work closely with specialist staff so that they could contribute to inclusive approaches in their local community of schools. The Review believes that, for this to occur, there needs to be a greater level of role clarification than exists in the current arrangements.

To further increase capacity in schools, the Review envisages a new para-professional position. The title of 'assistant teacher' is suggested. Located between a teacher and a teacher aide, the new position would require specialised training. This specialised training would include knowledge and skills across the spectrum of conditions related to students with special and/or additional educational needs. For example, assistant teachers would have specialised training in areas such as those related to the spectrum of autistic behaviour and approaches to students whose behaviour reflects family and social dysfunctionality and disconnection from school. Assistant teachers would enter the position on the basis of formal qualification and selection on merit. The position would provide a level of support to schools and teachers not available in present arrangements.

Accountability

The Tasmanian Department of Education enjoys a well deserved reputation as a national leader in the development of data management systems for school improvement and accountability. Through the Office of Educational Review, the department provides a substantial amount of performance information to schools, including value-added data. The department is developing outcomes statements that relate directly to the Essential Learnings Framework.

While much significant and potentially ground-breaking work is underway that will strengthen accountability processes, the Review found limited information on outcomes for students with special and/or additional educational needs. That so little outcomes data exists for these students points to the importance of strengthening approaches to and practices in accountability across the system as a whole. However, the Review acknowledges that the department is aware of the need to make the outcomes statements in the Essential Learnings Framework relevant to students whose intellectual performance is substantially impaired.

The Review found that, irrespective of current work undertaken and the systems in place,
accountability in relation to students with special and/or additional educational needs is strongly input rather than outcomes focused. When asked the question 'what learning outcomes have students achieved?' it often appeared that, at school, district or system level, there was little real knowledge. This includes the outcomes for high needs students and the outcomes for students withdrawn into alternative programs. In other words, very substantial resources allocated to state and district support services and to schools have little outcomes accountability. In the main, the accountabilities are financial accountabilities for the proper expenditure of funds.

The Review believes that a much stronger culture of accountability needs to be developed around the outcomes of service provision for students with special and/or additional educational needs. Organisational arrangements are required that address issues in present practice such as multiple, unclear and at times purposefully unfulfilled accountabilities. The new arrangements need to vest responsibility for the outcomes of students with special and/or additional educational needs in principals, including the shared accountabilities they should have arising from increased capacity in decision making at the local level.

In the organisational structure envisaged by the Review, accountabilities from principals and boards of communities of schools would be to the operational director in the branch. The accountability processes would involve assistant directors (school support) working with schools and communities, using and responding to the full suite of outcomes data gathered and provided systemically.

Assurance that provision is made for high needs students would be addressed through regular
review of their learning outcomes and an explicit focus on inclusion in the school improvement review process. The approach, rather than separating high needs students or isolating them as belonging to a category, would genuinely include them.

Conclusion

Given that the department has invested so much in curriculum innovation and school
transformation, it is iniquitous that students with special and/or additional educational needs
should not have full access to educational provision. The department has set in place a values base that no longer perceives students with special and/or additional educational needs as having a 'deficit' or a 'problem'. It is now time for practice systemically and at the school and community level to match the values base. The Essential Learnings Framework provides the core opportunity for values and practice to be aligned for students with special and/or additional educational needs.

Recommendations

The Review recommends that:

1. the department initiate a process of dialogue in communities of schools through which all stakeholders can gain the deepest possible understandings of the values base of Tasmanian public education, the inclusive policies that arise from it and the best practices in the implementation of policy for all students, including those with special and/or additional educational needs.
2. across the department and in its schools, there be established a culture of, approaches to and practices in service provision for students with special and/or additional educational needs that is strongly focused on developing learning capacity rather than responding to deficits.
3. the present nomenclature around categories of students no longer be used, although a central register of students with high needs continue to be held.
4. once students are deemed eligible for inclusion on the central high needs register, the resource be provided to the communities of schools who, through their boards, determine allocation to inclusive approaches according to the perceived functional and educational needs of students.
5. districts and district support services be replaced by a new organisational branch structure that will align service provision for students with special and/or additional educational needs with mainstream provision and will enable the closest possible alignment between the department's core operations.
6. services for all students, including those with special and/or additional educational needs, be provided as closely as possible to schools by formally establishing supportive communities of schools, led by a board of principals.
7. services for students with special and/or additional educational needs be structured so that they are part of mainstream provision and are clearly linked to the school transformation process based on the Essential Learnings Framework.
8. the department develop a funding model, based on consistent systemic criteria, that will provide to communities of schools a differential resource package to enable the implementation of approaches and programs for students with special and/or additional educational needs.
9. all external school support staff, other than those associated with low incidence conditions, as a general rule be located in communities of schools and be accountable to the board of principals.
10. the department develop clear role statements for all external school support staff to reflect their responsibilities and accountabilities in the new organisational structure.
11. the department clarify the distinctions between flexible and alternative provision so that all approaches for students with special and/or additional educational needs are implemented under the auspices of a school as part of the implementation of a broadened, flexible and authentic school curriculum.
12. communities of schools be provided with resources to support particular schools in which a critical mass of high needs students is enrolled, so that best practices in inclusion are implemented, researched and promulgated.
13. the department establish a new para-professional position of assistant teacher, requiring formal qualifications and specific industrial arrangements, so that there is increased capacity in schools to provide learning programs for students with special and/or additional educational needs.
14. the department orient accountability processes across the system and its schools to measuring and reporting the full range of outcomes for students with special and/or additional educational needs, including curriculum, social and equity outcomes.

15. the school improvement review process incorporate an explicit focus on inclusion so that schools can report on the improvements they have made to guarantee the access, participation and achievements of students with special and/or additional educational needs

the department liaise with the University of Tasmania to ensure that the teacher education program addresses policy and practice in relation to the inclusion of students with special and/or additional educational needs.

Appendix 5

The Tasmanian Curriculum 2007

(The Tasmania Curriculum replaced the Essential Learnings Curriculum (Announced during 2006) following the appointment of a new Tasmanian Minister for education after the 2006 State elections with implementation planned for commencement in 2007.

The vision expressed in Tasmania *Together* supports the values, purposes and goals of the Tasmanian Curriculum.

Involving students in using Tasmania *Together* data, issues and processes will enable students to achieve in all areas of the Tasmanian Curriculum. Most goals and benchmarks relate to issues that could be studied across the curriculum; for example *"Goal 11: Built and natural heritage that is valued and protected"* could be the subject of study in Society and History, Science or Vocational and Applied Learning.

The following additional examples indicate how goals and indicators can be linked to curriculum area studies:

| Curriculum Area	Examples of relevant Goals / Headline Indicators
English - Literacy	Goal 3: High quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce: *Literacy and Numeracy*
Mathematics - Numeracy	Goal 3: High quality education and training for lifelong learning and a skilled workforce: *Literacy and Numeracy*
Health and Wellbeing	Goal 4: Active, healthy Tasmanians with access to quality and affordable health care services: *Avoidable Mortality*
Society and History	Goal 8: Open and accountable government that listens and plans for a shared future: *Local Government Elections*
Science	Goal 12: Sustainable management of our natural resources: *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*
Vocational and Applied Learning	Goal 9: Increased work opportunities for all Tasmanians: *Workforce Participation Rate*
The Arts	Goal 6: Dynamic, creative and internationally recognised arts community and culture: *attendance at cultural heritage sites*

There are 143 benchmarks in the Tasmania *Together* plan, and many areas that students can investigate.

To find out more about the Tasmanian Curriculum, visit
http://www.education.tas.gov.au/dept/about/minister/curriculumupdateparents/

Tasmania Curriculum Framework

What does the Curriculum Framework look like?

A useful summary of the Tasmanian curriculum framework is this diagram.

Tasmanian Curriculum Framework
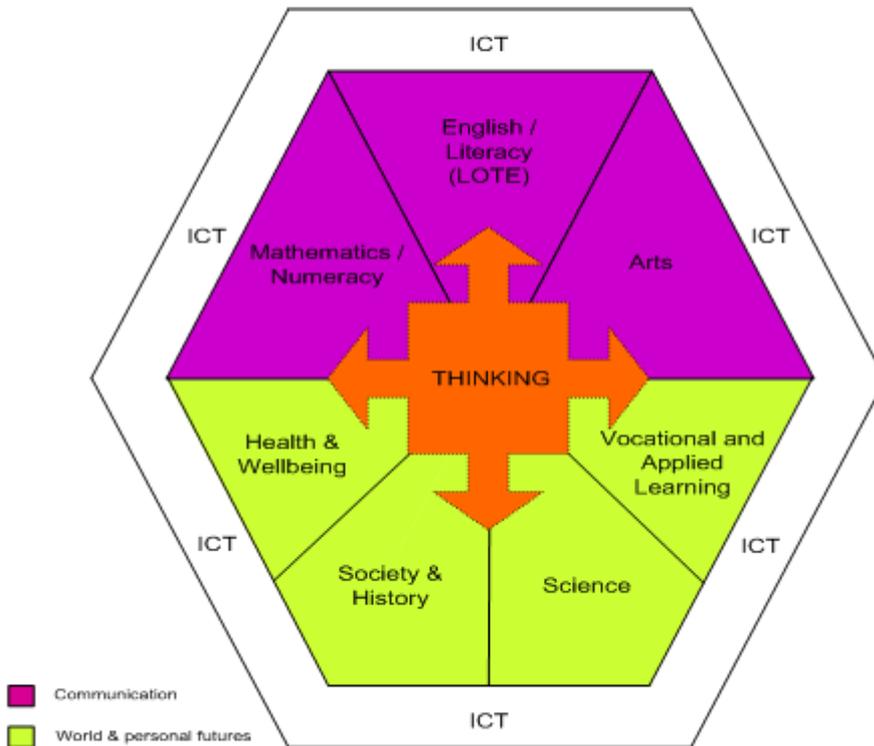
Appendix 6

Reporting to Parents

Taskforce

Report

to the

Minister for Education

Hon David Bartlett MHA

30 November 2006

Tasmania

Explore the possibilities

PREFACE

School reports are an essential element in the partnership between teachers, schools and parents on which Tasmanian education depends. As in any partnership the responsibility is shared. The education of every child is helped immeasurably when parents take an active interest. It was the expression of this interest that led the Minister to set up the Taskforce.

Parents believe the partnership with schools and teachers cannot work if the reporting element fails. They are right in this, and they are also right to insist that reports cannot fulfil their essential task if they are written in ways that parents cannot understand. Parents are entitled to expect useful information and guidance from school reports: there is no way to provide this except in plain and familiar language.

The Taskforce decided that in school reports parents seek answers to three main questions.

1. **How is my child going?**
   a. Does she have the right attitude? Is he trying hard enough? Is her behaviour a matter for concern?
   b. In 'subject' areas.
   c. What are his strengths and weaknesses?

2. **Is everything OK or should I be concerned?**
   a. How is she going compared to others of her age?
   b. Is he doing his best? (Are there any destructive influences?)

3. **How can my child learn better?**
   a. What will the school do?
   b. How can I help?
   c. What can my child do?

The two things that parents value most in reporting are interaction with teachers and a mark that gives a fair and accurate assessment of their children's progress. Conversations with responsive teachers are critical.

The Taskforce recognised that good reporting is sometimes difficult, often burdensome and always time-consuming. A good report must convey complex information and subtle judgements in a few well-chosen words. Taskforce members were very conscious of teachers' workloads and the extra burden good reporting brings. They were also aware that in some cases their recommendations are no more than schools are already doing, and they wished to record the appreciation of the effort put in by these teachers and their schools.

However, many parents are dissatisfied with the standard of reporting and believe, with good reason, that the standard of reporting could improve. The Taskforce would encourage all teachers to think about reporting from the perspective of parents, and all schools to encourage this perspective. It is for parents that the reports are written and it is to the parents that they must be addressed. Parents do not deal every day in the technical concepts of education and cannot be presumed able to grasp them. The technical language in which these concepts are (often unnecessarily) expressed is not suitable language for reporting. Whatever educational methods and professional language schools and teachers employ, their responsibility to report to parents in plain, clear-cut language remains unchanged.

It should be added that the Taskforce takes the view that teachers and schools are entitled to expect parents to carefully read and make every effort to understand the reports.

Reporting is now even more complex because it is possible to produce data that was previously unavailable. Should reports include all of this information or only the parts of it deemed to be of interest to parents? The Taskforce took the view that all useful information collected by the Department of Education should be shared with parents. In reaching this view, the Taskforce considered many questions: Why report? How best to report? What should be included and excluded? What do parents need to know? What do parents want to know?

The report is substantially based on the views of the parents on the Taskforce and parents' focus groups. Previous reports and research were also considered. The focus groups discussed reporting generally and considered samples of possible elements to be included in written reports. Other members of the Taskforce provided advice from the twin perspectives of professional educators and parents.

1. **HOW IS MY CHILD GOING?**

The Taskforce thinks for parents to judge how their child is going they need reports throughout the year. Written reports are an essential part of reporting but they do not provide a full picture of a child's progress at school. As well as informal talks with teachers, reporting should include formal meetings, meetings involving parents, teacher and child, phone-home programs and portfolios of work.

Ideally, through regular contact with the school, parents should know enough about their child's progress for there to be nothing in a written report that comes as a total surprise.

VALUING TEACHERS

Parents value conversations with teachers. They want to hear from them. Every school needs a simple process that makes this possible throughout the year. Some parents in the focus groups complained that their school's arrangements for such meetings were too complex. They said they found it hard to get past the front desk.

In written reports parents favour balance between standardised results data and teachers' comments. They believe written comments are critical to understanding and monitoring the educational progress of their children.

WRITTEN REPORTS

Written reports serve a number of purposes.
- They can help to build relationships between parents and school and serve as a focus for discussion.
- They can help parents to chart the progress of their children.
- They should provide useful and accurate information that helps teachers to direct and encourage each child's educational progress.
- They help parents and teachers alike to make decisions about what each child needs.

Written reports allow parents to judge not only how their child is going, but how well teachers and schools are meeting the needs of their child. Written reports are a means of making schools account for their actions.

The Taskforce concluded that parents want written reports to contain different information at different times of the school year.

Recommendation 1

The Taskforce recommends one comprehensive report supported by two short statements a year:

- *a very short statement issued 5-8 weeks into the year to let parents know how their child is settling in and alert them to any concerns;*
- *a mid-year full written report issued by the end of July. This would be a substantial report telling parents what their child has learned and alerting them to any matters that need attention. A mid-year report would allow time for all parties to solve the problems a student may have.*
- *a summary of the year's results to be issued at least 10 days before the end of the school year. This timing gives parents the chance to talk to teachers before the end of the school year.*

This recommendation is made on the assumption that students study a course for a full year. The Taskforce acknowledges that not all courses are run the same way. For example some courses are studied in blocks at different times during the school year. Where such courses do not match the timing of the recommendation above, schools will need to report to parents at the most appropriate time.

CONSISTENCY OF FORMAT OF WRITTEN REPORTS

While recognising that some variation between primary and high schools is inevitable, the Taskforce believes that the format of reports for primary and high schools (Prep to Year 10) should be similar. This will allow parents and their children to get a clear and immediate picture of the educational journey that every child makes.

The Taskforce thinks that Kindergarten children should receive a different report to those in Prep to Year 10.

From 2007, under the State Government's Guaranteeing Futures initiative, young Tasmanians who have completed Year 10 or have turned 16 must participate in education and training for a further two years, or until they have turned 17 or gained a Certificate III vocational qualification. Most students will be expected to go on to Year 11 and for this reason the Taskforce considers it needless and inappropriate to provide a report that has traditionally signalled the end of school. Instead, the Taskforce believes that an extra report should be provided for Year 10 students who choose to take up vocational education and training or a job, rather than go on to Year 11. This report should be provided on request only and include the names of teachers as potential referees.

Recommendation 2

The Taskforce recommends:

- *a common format for reports from Prep to Year 10 with variations appropriate to the differences in the way school work is structured in primary and secondary schools;*
- *a different format for reports for Kindergarten children;*
- *a supplementary school-based report for those Year 10 students who take up vocational education and training or jobs rather than go on to Year 11. This report would be provided on request only and would include the names of teachers as potential referees.*

Some of those who participated in the focus groups were parents of children with special needs. Some wanted their child to receive the same report as other children and some wanted a reported tailored to their child's particular circumstances.

Recommendation 3

The Taskforce recommends that reports for children with special needs continue to be negotiated on an individual basis as part of each child's Individual Education Program.

FORMAL PARENT/TEACHER MEETINGS

The Taskforce believes that parent/teacher meetings are crucial to parents' understanding of how their child is going. At least one formal meeting between parents and teachers should be held each year, and it should be based on the mid-year report. This issue is considered in section 3.

1A.   HOW IS MY CHILD GOING? DOES SHE HAVE THE RIGHT ATTITUDE? IS HE TRYING HARD ENOUGH? IS HER BEHAVIOUR A MATTER FOR CONCERN?

Parents want to know more than just academic results. They want to know about their child at school - what talents and interests are emerging.

The Taskforce believes that the short progress statement written and issued 5-8 weeks after the start of the school year, should concentrate on the attitude, effort and behaviour of the student and should include some general comments from the teacher about how the student is settling in to school life and study. The Taskforce believes that the mid-year report and end-of-year summary statement should concern work habits, in particular attitude, effort and behaviour.

Recommendation 4

The Taskforce recommends that:

- *the short progress statement concentrate on the attitude, effort and behaviour of the student and include some general comments from the teacher about how the student is settling in to school life and study; and*
- *the mid-year report and end-of-year summary include information on the student's work habits, and where there is no progress bar also include information on the student's progress, as per the example below.*

Primary School

Work Habits				
	Needs attention	**Acceptable**	**Good**	**Excellent**
Effort			✓	
Behaviour			✓	

Secondary School

Work Habits				
	Needs attention	**Acceptable**	**Good**	**Excellent**
Attitude			✓	
Organisation		✓		
Homework		✓		

	Needs attention	**Acceptable**	**Good**	**Excellent**
Progress			✓	

1B. HOW IS MY CHILD GOING IN 'SUBJECT' AREAS?

REPORTING ON THE TASMANIAN CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

The Taskforce was briefed about the work being done to refine and simplify the Tasmanian curriculum framework. It believes that all written reports should include information on all areas that are assessed under the revised framework as well as comments from teachers. The Taskforce also believes that it will be an aid to parents' understanding of their children's progress if written reports are closely aligned to the curriculum framework.

Recommendation 5

The Taskforce recommends that:

- *reports concern all subjects studied and assessed under the revised Tasmanian curriculum framework;*
- *reports should contain comments from the teachers who have taught each child; and*
- *the curriculum framework, the school timetable and each child's written report are aligned to ensure that parents understand their child's progress in relation to the framework.*

ACADEMIC RESULTS

At present a child's learning development from Kindergarten to Year 10 is described on a scale with five levels of understanding. These levels are called 'standards'. Each level is divided into three smaller steps – lower, middle and upper. Students make progress along these 15 steps during their schooling: hence the steps are called progressions. This way, parents can watch the progress of their children over the whole time they are at school, and see how one year's results relate to the next. The five levels of understanding and the progress steps (or progressions) are currently represented as per the example below.

Standard 1			**Standard 2**			**Standard 3**			**Standard 4**			**Standard 5**		

Taskforce members believe that the progress bar should be retained. However, the Taskforce supports the views of many teachers that there should be more progressions on the bar. The current model makes it hard for teachers to show gradual and steady progress by students.
The Taskforce believes that while this may make the system more complex it will also make it a more accurate and sensitive guide to how a student is going. If the recommendation is adopted, schools will need to explain to parents what the progressions mean and how they are displayed on the progress bar.

Recommendation 6

The Taskforce recommends that the Department of Education show more progressions on the progress bar.

In view of this recommendation and continuing work on the curriculum framework, the example below is for the purposes of this report only. The current bar has five standards, each with three progressions. This gives 15 progress steps. The Taskforce considered a bar with 15 steps, each with a lower and upper division to be reasonable. However, it accepts that this needs expert evaluation.

English/Literacy

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15

(Sample only)

1C. **WHAT ARE HIS STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES?**

Parents want to know their child's strengths and weaknesses and the Taskforce believes that the best way for parents to discover them is through a combination of results and discussion with teachers. The Taskforce believes very strongly that parents trust the professional expertise of teachers to assess their child's strengths and weaknesses.

2. **IS EVERYTHING OK OR SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?**

The Taskforce thinks parents must be confident that there are consistent and reliable assessment standards across the state system in Tasmania - that a mark in one school means the same thing in another. They need to know that the system is fair and that all students are assessed according to the same standards. Most parents recognise that it is not always easy to provide an objective assessment of a child's progress, and it is reassuring to know that teachers work together through the moderation process on consistent assessment standards.

At the same time, the Taskforce very strongly believes that standardised assessment should not be considered in isolation from teachers' comments.

2A. **HOW IS SHE GOING COMPARED TO OTHERS OF HER AGE?**

Parents need a means by which to measure their children's results against others of their age. At present in Tasmania there are two yardsticks:

- the State standard, which allows a comparison with others in the same year in state schools, and
- results from the previous reporting period.

The Taskforce believes that written reports should indicate the standard expected for the particular year group and continue to show the child's result from the previous year.

Recommendation 7

The Taskforce recommends written reports that include the progress bar should:

- *indicate the standard expected for the particular year group; and*
- *show the child's result for the previous reporting period*

as per the example below.

English/Literacy

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
						○	●							

⬆ Year 6 standard

(Sample only)

[The black dot is the current reporting period (eg end-of-year) and the open circle is the previous reporting period (eg mid-year).]

STANDARD ACHIEVED BY THE MIDDLE 50% OF STUDENTS

Currently, the progress bar includes grey shading showing the standard achieved by the middle 50% of students in the same year group in State schools, as per the example below.

Standard 1		Standard 2		Standard 3		Standard 4		Standard 5	
				○	●				

Taskforce members believe that parents would prefer to know what standard they should expect their child to reach in a particular year, as per recommendation 7 above. The Taskforce thinks that only the standard expected for a particular year should be shown on the progress bar so that there is no confusion about the differences between the two concepts. Parents who want the information indicated by the grey shading, should be able to get it on request from schools, preferably at parent/teacher meetings.

Recommendation 8

The Taskforce recommends that the information currently displayed by the grey shading (the standard achieved by the middle 50% of students in Tasmania in the same year) should be available on request from schools, preferably at parent/teacher meetings.

RESULTS HISTORY

After discussion, the Taskforce decided it would be useful to include results from the time each child joined the state system. In this way parents can see the child's progress at a glance without having to search for old reports.

Recommendation 9

The Taskforce recommends that, wherever possible, written reports should show the child's results for previous years, as per the example below.

English/Literacy

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
K		P	1	2	3	4	5							

↑ Year 6 standard

(Sample only)

A-E RATINGS

Parents on the Taskforce and in the focus groups overwhelmingly felt the A-E ratings were unhelpful. They believe that the information provided in Tasmanian reports far exceeds the requirements of the Australian Government. They recognise that it is an Australian Government requirement for A-E ratings to be given to parents.

Recommendation 10

The Tasmanian Department of Education asks the Australian Government to formally recognise the information provided to parents in Tasmania, in place of specific A-E ratings.

Should the Australian Government refuse to accept the recommendation, the Taskforce believes that, rather than confuse parents with two reports for the same reporting period, A-E ratings should be automatically incorporated into the mid-year report and end-of-year summary. It also decided that the terms in the progress bar should be 'well above the standard', 'above the standard', 'at the standard', 'below the standard' and 'well below the standard', with a key equating these terms to the A-E ratings

Recommendation 11

The Taskforce recommends that:

- *in the event that the Australian Government insists on A-E ratings, that they be incorporated into the mid-year report and end-of-year summary, as per the example below; and*
- *that the terminology to be used in the progress bar be 'well above the standard', 'above the standard', 'at the standard', 'below the standard' and 'well below the standard', with a key equating these terms to the A-E ratings.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	At the standard

COMPLETED PROGRESS BAR

Below is an example of the bar containing all of the information outlined above (except the A-E rating).

English/Literacy

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
K		P	1	2	3	4 5	○ ●							

↑ Year 6 standard

(Sample only)

2B.   **IS HE DOING HIS BEST?**

Teachers are in the best position to know if children are doing their best. As well they are uniquely placed to observe their social and emotional behaviour. Parents rely on teachers to tell them if their children are doing as well as they can, and if they can see any matters for concern. But teachers also rely on parents to tell them what they know about their children's circumstances, interests and character. In the end we can only learn the answer to the question when parents, teachers and children put their heads together. Parent/teacher meetings are an essential way of sharing knowledge and perspectives. Written reports should serve a similar purpose; encouraging parents to become close observers and informed and active partners in their children's progress.

Written reports: provide motivation for the child, show evidence of strengths and weaknesses, and indicate the need for individual programs. The question, 'Is my child doing her/his best?' is linked to the question below: 'How can my child learn better?'

3.   **HOW CAN MY CHILD LEARN BETTER?**

As active partners in their education, discussion between parents and teachers is the best way to find out how children can learn better.

PARENT/TEACHER MEETINGS

The Taskforce thinks that meetings between parents and teachers are crucial to parents understanding how their children are progressing and how they can do better. Meetings with teachers give parents the chance to raise their concerns about their children, or their misgivings about the school and the teacher teaching them. Meetings offer a chance to clear the air and to find reassurance.

As described in section 1, the Taskforce believes that there should be at least one formal meeting between parents and teachers each year and that this should be to discuss the mid-year report. Taskforce members believe that while some parents are unwilling or unable to be actively involved, building strong and trusting relationships between parents and schools is essential and every effort must be made to build them.

The Taskforce recommends that to highlight the importance of these meetings and encourage parents' participation the mid-year report is sent home only in exceptional circumstances. The aim should be to 'induct' parents into a two or three way partnership through meetings between teacher, parents and child, phone-home programs or, when parents are unable or unwilling to come to the school, meetings away from school premises. The Taskforce believes that teachers still have the primary responsibility for reporting at three-way meetings, but including the child often helps schools to reach parents. For example, at one Tasmanian school where the teacher, parents and child were all actively involved, three-way meetings improved attendance by parents at parent/teacher meetings from 23% in 2002 to 85% in 2006. Taskforce members also emphasised that schools should try to provide the privacy most parents want when they are talking about their children.

Recommendation 12

The Taskforce recommends that:

-    *mid-year reports are given to parents at three-way meetings or, at the very least, parent/teacher meetings, and only sent home when these options are not practicable;*
-    *where there ARE exceptional circumstances and the report is sent home, other means of contacting parents are used to discuss the mid-year report, such as phone-home programs.*

Currently reports include the statement, 'Teacher/Parent Interview Requested'. In focus groups some parents said they were annoyed or intimidated when this statement was marked 'No'. They felt that it implied that they were not welcome to talk to the teachers. In the event that recommendation 12 is not accepted the Taskforce believes that parents should always be invited to meet with the teacher.

Recommendation 13

The Taskforce recommends that, if recommendation 12 is not adopted, in all reports not specifically requesting a parent/teacher interview parents are invited to meet their children's teachers.

FUTURE FOCUS

Parents want clear and constructive advice from teachers about how their children can improve. For parents mid-year is the critical time to receive this information because it gives them time to do the helpful and necessary things before the school year ends. The Taskforce believes that the mid-year report should provide academic results, assess work habits and direct students and parents to aspects of study and behaviour that need attention in the second half of the year.

The 'Future Focus' section should be the basis for establishing how each student can learn better through the combined efforts of schools, parents and children. The Taskforce believes the 'Future Focus' section can guide and encourage parents to be involved in their child's education.

Recommendation 14

The Taskforce recommends that mid-year reports include a section, 'Future Focus'. The section should describe practical ways to improve the student's performance.

3A.   WHAT WILL THE SCHOOL DO?

As stated above, the 'Future Focus' section of written reports would form the basis for an agreement about how child, parents and teacher will work together to help the child learn better.

3B.   HOW CAN I HELP?

Parents can help by talking with their children about their school work and reports, and by asking teachers how they can help. In general, discussions with teachers are most valuable when the child is present and everyone understands what the concerns, aims and responsibilities are.

3C.   WHAT CAN MY CHILD DO?

In the 'Future Focus' section of reports parents should be able to see what the teacher thinks each child can do. Information in written reports on behaviour, attitude and effort would also help parents appreciate how their children can learn better.

LANGUAGE

Good reports are clear reports and clear reports need clear language. Parents cannot know how their children are going if they cannot understand reports on their progress. Obscure language puts a barrier not only between parent and teacher but between parent and child. How can parents talk to their children about school work if school reports are beyond understanding? How can they discuss results if they don't know what they mean? Why should parents have to decipher the meaning of reports?

Teachers should talk to parents in a way that is clear, precise and meaningful, and they should write to them in the same way. This does not mean the language should be sterile or simplistic, but it should be free of jargon and vague abstractions. It should be the language of common, everyday understanding. Reports should describe the child; what that child is learning, the directions he or she seems to be taking and where more work is needed – and it should do these things in words their parents recognise. The Taskforce believes that parents want honesty in reporting but they also value balance between critical and constructive comments.

The Taskforce believes that the language of reports must be separated from the often technical language of education. Parents should not be addressed in the often turgid, sometimes impenetrable language of the curriculum. Similarly, reporting should not be caught up in meaningless, dehumanised "management speak" which might be thought apt for adults working in the corporate world but has nothing to do with the achievements of children. Don Watson's observations on this subject make for essential reading. They are at Attachment A.

The Taskforce believes that support should be provided to teachers to enable them to write and talk to parents in a way that parents understand. As Don Watson states in the attached article, "writing is hard enough at the best of times. Writing concisely is even harder. To set down in a few plain words what we think about a student's work, behaviour and potential is about as hard as writing gets". The Taskforce acknowledges that improving the report-writing skills of teachers will take time and will also require support through professional development.

The Taskforce thinks that before sending them to parents, schools should make sure their reports present the most clear and accurate picture possible. The Taskforce believes principals should establish editorial processes to check all reports for readability and accuracy.

Recommendation 15

The Taskforce recommends that:

- *there is professional development for teachers and principals on reporting to parents and, in particular, report-writing;*
- *all schools have an editorial process to ensure reports are readable, written in the plainest possible language, and say something meaningful about each child; and*
- *teacher education at the University of Tasmania includes specific units/work on dealing with parents, reporting, and report writing.*

IMPLEMENTATION

The Taskforce recognises that cultural and procedural shifts will be necessary in order to implement its recommendations. It believes that the scale of the implementation task means that changes to reports will not be possible in 2007.

While it is the responsibility of the Department of Education to implement the recommendations that are adopted by the Minister for Education, the Taskforce believes that a reporting timeline for schools would be useful. This would be additional support for business process and professional development.

The Taskforce believes that leadership from principals is crucial to meet parents' needs, and that principals need to embrace and value the recommendations made by the parents on this Taskforce. Principals and school associations need to be partners in leading their school communities, and the partnership between parents and teachers should reflect that broader relationship.

The Taskforce believes that those recommendations adopted from this report should be evaluated through surveys to gauge the satisfaction of parents. It also believes that the whole strategy should be reviewed for its relevance and effectiveness in meeting parents' needs in 2011, following the completion of the 2010 reporting cycle.

Recommendation 16

The Taskforce recommends that:

- *those recommendations adopted by the Minister for Education be implemented for the 2008 school year;*
- *a reporting timeline be developed for schools' information;*
- *those recommendations adopted by the Minister for Education be evaluated through parent surveys; and*
- *reporting to parents be reviewed in 2011 for relevance and effectiveness in meeting parents' needs.*

IN CONCLUSION

The Reporting to Parents Taskforce believes that a little more attention to communicating with parents would bring more support from them. While recognising the demands on teachers, the Taskforce thinks that the rewards for children, schools, teachers and parents are worth the investment.

Reference: http://www.education.tas.gov.au