

Non-Government Reform Support Strategic Plan

2019-2022

Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia

Non – Government Reform Support Fund

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Executive Summary

AISWA's vision for the Reform Support Fund over the next five years, is to provide a comprehensive range of offerings to schools in the Independent sector to support them in their endeavour to provide high quality and equitable education for all students. Our plan to achieve this is through the development of projects which explicitly address the national policy initiatives: supporting students, student learning and student achievement; supporting teaching school leadership and school improvement; and enhancing the national evidence base. In addition, we have planned to work on specific state based reforms with the other system sectors through the Bilateral Reform Agreement.

AISWA has established a strategic direction to assist schools to improve the academic achievement for all students, including those from priority equity cohorts. The priority equity cohorts which are areas of focus for AISWA include Aboriginal students, students with a disability, students with a language background other than English and students from regional and remote areas. In addition, we have planned to ensure that all students are engaged in their schooling and that they have the skills they need in order to transition to further study, work and life success.

A key to understanding about how the strategic directions will be enacted, in the Independent sector in Western Australia, is to appreciate the degree of geographical and philosophical diversity of our schools. This necessitates an individualised approach in order to achieve an improved understanding and implementation of the national and state based reforms alluded to above. The approach that we have found to be the most effective in working with our schools has been to embed professional learning into School Based Action Learning projects which flow into whole school improvement planning and implementation with consistent consultant support and networking opportunities. When takes place over a number of years, improved teacher and school capacity flows into improved student outcomes and engagement. This sustained approach is predicated on the idea that national reform takes time to implement and mature.

Current context

AISWA supports 146 Non Government Non Catholic Schools in WA through this funding element. AISWA does have an additional 10 Catholic member schools that are order owned that, while part of the Catholic Education in WA and thus covered by the Catholic's funding, also select to be members of AISWA for the collegiality and subsidised professional learning.

Independent Schools are spread across the state with about two thirds (103) in major cities, 14 in Inner regional areas within 300kms of Perth, 12 in outer regional areas, more than 300kms from Perth, 3 Remote and 13 Very Remote. The Very Remote and one Remote school are Majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Schools (MATSI) with 11 based in remote Aboriginal Communities and thus are sole providers. With 10 schools in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions of WA the cost of supporting the schools is very high when much of the support needed is face to face and travel to or from a school can take a day of combined flights and many hours of driving. These schools are over 2000 kilometres from Perth and the roads to them are four wheel drive only.

Across the sector we have almost 1850 Aboriginal students and these are split across all schools with about 700 in our MATSI schools and about 280 in our boarding schools that all have programs to support aboriginal boarding students

Another aspect of diversity of schools, and thus the support they need, is the religious, cultural and philosophical background of schools. The majority of our schools are Christian, but we have 50 schools that do not have a religious base and of these a number are Montessori, Steiner or special assistance schools. We also have a number of Islamic Schools and one Jewish School.

This diversity of socio cultural background results in the need for our support to be flexible in order to meet the contextual needs of the schools and school community.

The schools in the sector needing the most support are those which serve low SES communities; the remote Aboriginal Schools and the Curriculum and Re-Engagement Schools which cater for students at educational risk. In addition, the diverse range schools and communities seek our assistance and support as they work through the school improvement cycle. This necessitates a robust and flexible plan and approach in order to meet the needs of schools in the Independent sector.

All schools will be involved in many aspects of the National Education Reform Agreement. A number of schools are already implementing a formative assessment approach and see the great benefit of an online formative assessment tool linked to Learning Progressions developed for the Australian Curriculum. In WA, AISWA is the certifying body for Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers and while the uptake has been slow the teachers that have participated say it has had an incredible impact on their own practice, the practice of others in their schools and consequently the outcomes students achieve. We would continue to work with all schools on improving the teaching workforce.

As a sector, for many of our projects, we propose them to schools and schools will opt in based on their need and how the project relates to their own school improvement plans. In other areas such as NCCD we ensure all schools are involved in the work.

National Policy Initiatives

From the National Reform Agreement Plan AISWA will support the national initiatives as they are developed such as the Unique Student Identifier, the national evidence institute and the online assessment tools. AISWA will continue to support schools in the implementation of the Australian Curriculum and support teacher assessment of student growth. We will work with the State on a high level review of Senior Secondary and have a specific project looking at alternative pathways to tertiary study.

AISWA will continue to work with schools on the implementation of NAPLAN Online, Nationally Consistent Collection of Data for Students with a Disability and improving school governance.

Decisions around the initiatives are a result of discussions with schools and their identified needs and responding to State Reform priorities.

State-based Reforms

The State has agreed to support the Implementation of a National Unique Student Identifier (USI), the establishment of an independent national evidence institute and to improving national data quality, consistency and collection to improve the national evidence base and inform policy development.

Specific state reforms are:

- Improving Student Engagement and Wellbeing in schools
- Investigation of Alternate pathways to post-secondary options
- Support for School leaders, teachers and early career teachers
- STEM Initiatives
- Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on Students With a Disability

AISWA will continue to work with the Catholic and Government sector through regular cross sectoral meetings chaired by the State Minister, and through our ongoing consultations with the other two sectors that are scheduled during the year and in response to State priorities.

Objectives

Our long term objectives for the Independent sector in Western Australia are to improve the learning outcomes for all students and ensure they are prepared for successful lives after their schooling. To do this our support must be tailored to the individual school, teacher and student context. Part of our approach is to work with schools to understand their context and the needs of their students and implement strategies with the school to improve student achievement. This will entail working with school leaders, governing bodies and teachers to improve school leadership and teaching and ensure that all schools make a significant difference to the lives of the young people in their care. This will mean some very different approaches and work in each school according to their context and their needs.

Implementing the State based reforms in our sector should deliver improvement in student outcomes as measured by a range of external and school based assessments. Our understanding of the diversity of the schools in our sector means the interventions, the projects and the assistance provided will be targeted on what each school needs and wants to achieve.

Measurement and Evaluation

While we use attendance at events as a quantitative measure, the richer ones are the surveys completed by project participants detailing how they have used what they have learned in the classroom to improve outcomes for students. A number of projects are ongoing so this qualitative feedback is useful in continuing the process and in our planning for the future. As schools commit their time and resources to working with AISWA in various ways we all want to see good results from that commitment. Measures we use will vary by the project and by the types of participants.

We would ensure that evaluation of the projects meets the requirements from the State Government and the Bilateral arrangements.