



## Public submission made to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

Submitter: Australian Catholic Primary Principals Association  
Submitting as a: Peak body  
State: NSW

### Summary

ACPPA believe Catholic Primary Schools need:

- a systemic approach to Catholic Education which is treated with fairness, respect and equity in comparison to other school systems.
- Time to embed effective practices around teaching and learning, not constant new initiatives and 'one off' programs.
- Greater authority by principals, teachers and school communities over the curriculum priorities for their community.
- Dedicated school leaders and teachers with high expectations of student learning and communities that respect and value education.
- The removal of student NAPLAN results from My School, and include only sample testing.
- National and State bodies to better align policies and curricula to reduce duplication and workload
- Adequate and equitable resources necessary for every child to reach his or her potential, in particular students with mental health issues.
- Representation on key education authorities to ensure the voice of the principal is providing insight for policy development.
- Increased support to teach and develop the general capabilities aspects of the curriculum, including critical thinking, problem solving, emotional literacy and self-assessment.
- A national approach that moves to an assessment for learning rather than for reporting.
- Primary schools require graduate teachers who are competent, confident and classroom ready.

## Main submission

The Australian Catholic Primary Principals Association (ACPPA) provides a valued and considered voice for Australian Catholic primary schools. It is a recognised and respected national association that represents Catholic Primary Principals and Leaders from over 1220 primary schools and 150 combined primary/secondary schools from all of the states and territories of Australia. These schools educate over 400,000 primary students.

ACPPA's focus continues to be on advocacy and representative work to influence the development and implementation of national education priorities and structures.

### Overview

This submission will focus on the key review themes as presented in the issues paper. Our emphasis will be on identifying opportunities and presenting ideas that will provide direction for policy and practice in Australian schools and to improve outcomes for all Australian students.

### Review themes

#### What students learn and how they learn

Education in Australia has been compromised due to the focus on national and international testing. The curriculum is overcrowded and complex due to the changing and often contradictory expectations and demands of government, industry and society. Australian education requires a curriculum from Early Years to Year 12 that has clear, consistent, flexible achievable outcomes for every student. Australian schools require a more targeted focus on general capabilities that encourages inquiry, innovation, and problem solving.

ACPPA recommends that:

- Principals and their school communities be given greater decision-making authority over the curriculum priorities for their community.
- Professional learning resources be developed and provided for schools to use in building the capacity of their teachers to teach the general capabilities of the Australia Curriculum.
- All children, regardless of location or socio-economic status, have access to, and experience of, early childhood education and the support needed in the successful transition to school. This should include shared facilities or early childhood services in regional, rural and remote areas.
- Class sizes are capped to manage the diversity and complexity of the learners in a single teacher's care. Years F-3 = 20 students and Years 4-7 = 25 students with support.

- The evidence and judgment of teachers is more strongly valued. Strategies need to be developed and shared to enhance and build the competency and confidence of teacher judgement.
- National Education jurisdictions need to inject resources into building the competency and confidence of all teachers to lead and deliver the Digital Technologies learning area of the curriculum.
- Specialists and Allied Health Services support across all schools that is funded upon need, especially for regional and rural towns and/or where a cluster of schools can access these services.

## Teachers and School Leadership

### Classroom Teachers

Primary school teachers are under appreciated in Australian society and all measures must be taken to improve the status of teachers and teaching in our community. Every opportunity must be given to encourage young people to consider teaching as a rewarding, fulfilling and respected career. ACPPA strongly supports the focus to lift teacher education standards so that teachers entering the classroom have the necessary skills, training and education to improve student outcomes.

ACPPA recommends that:

- A national approach be designed and delivered to improve and promote the status of teachers and school leaders in our community.
- Incentives, including salary and conditions, housing (safe) and professional support for attracting and retaining teachers and leaders be provided for all teachers, especially in remote and rural areas.
- The ATAR standard for entry into Initial Teacher Education courses in all universities be increased. To support this there must be a rigorous screening of applicants, where universities, in collaboration with principals, select students who are academically capable, emotionally intelligent, dedicated, and conscientious, morally and ethically principled and are able to communicate effectively with children and adults.
- National initial teacher education courses must have a strong emphasis on the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Graduates must also have proficient communication skills, expertise in classroom management, ability in curriculum and pedagogy, display a high level of professional conduct and exhibit parent engagement skills and strategies.
- National initial teacher education courses must have a minimum of 100 days per year for practicum experience. At least one year in a regional, rural or remote school. That the fourth year of the initial teacher education course

move to a more in-school or internship learning experience for graduates. Mandated training completed in education courses including trauma and restorative practices.

- Universities must have a procedure for addressing unsatisfactory performance in studies, as well as, the formal practicum experience.
- Programs and relationships between urban, rural and remote schools be established. A mutually beneficial program could support and build capacity of the rural and remote school, while providing a rural perspective and opportunity for teachers and leaders in urban schools.
- Universities establish regional teaching and learning schools that offer flexible delivery of professional learning through onsite and offsite courses, with in-school experience and teacher educator support.
- A national registration body for teachers be established. This would encourage teachers to move interstate and lessen the bureaucratic process currently in place.
- A review into the registration, process and requirements for casual relief teachers, so as they are not onerous or over restrictive to attracting and retaining our experienced teachers.
- Professional learning be provided to build capacity of teachers to teach the general capabilities and 21 century skills.

## Leadership

Leadership in Australian primary schools is a challenging and complex issue. There are many challenges facing authorities and communities in attracting and retaining quality leaders in schools. Recent research highlights the increasing workload and compliance requirements impacting on principal health and wellbeing. ACPPA supports the development and implementation of a national leadership framework that supports and accredits the delivery of leadership courses or programs that cover the key roles in school leadership and prepares principals to lead their school community in practical and achievable ways.

ACPPA recommends that:

- A leadership framework be developed in consultation with principals that is inclusive of all sectors and articulates the knowledge, skills and experiences for aspiring leaders.
- The establishment of a national body that can provide quality assurance processes for principal preparation programs and recognition for individuals for pre-principal accreditation.

- Administration support for all principals in all schools be increased so they can focus on being the instructional leader, thereby relieving some of the administrative burden.
- All systems and jurisdictions implement well supported policies, procedures and practices to ensure primary school leaders can manage staff, students and parents effectively.
- Conditions and incentives be explored to ensure leadership positions are attractive and prove worthwhile in providing school communities with highly effective leadership.
- Systems and jurisdictions review their current compliance and accountability measures with a view to ensure they are meaningful and have a direct link to teaching and learning.

#### Parent and community engagement

Parent engagement and community partnerships are very much a part of the contemporary education setting. Ongoing research shows that parent and community engagement improves student achievement, increases student attendance and promotes parent and community confidence in education.

ACPPA recommends that:

- School-family partnership packages be developed to support schools and parents.
- Parent learning packages be created in collaboration with schools to improve and enhance the skills and knowledge of parents in areas such as literacy, numeracy, readiness for learning, engaging in learning with their child, participating in school community programs and activities.
- Schools link into the skill set of local business people and employees to outsource services and develop partnerships with businesses.
- All schools are supported and resourced with 'wrap around' services to provide specialists such as Speech and Occupational Therapists, Psychologists and wellbeing coordinators which assist to improve student learning outcomes.
- Mandated across Australia affordable pre-school programs and experiences for all children, pre-birth to 5 years of age. Minimum 15 hours per week.

#### Defining and measuring success in education

The government's current 'one size fits all' mindset needs to change. This approach is not aligned to the move to personalised and differentiated learning now currently being implemented in schools. Schools should have autonomy in identifying tools to

measure their success. This allows for context, location and purpose to be specific and learning focused and gives appropriate recognition to teacher professional judgement.

ACPPA supports sample testing for school and system data collection. ACPPA believes the My School website has not demonstrated or contributed to any significant change to school performance and is detrimental to student health and wellbeing.

ACPPA recommends that:

- My School website be disbanded, and resources directed into developing and providing schools with more aligned assessment and evaluation tools for student learning.
- A national independent evaluation be conducted into the effectiveness and impact of NAPLAN and the My school website on student learning.
- NAPLAN Online be implemented by sample testing to provided state, territory and national trend data.
- Governments ensures the necessary technology infrastructure and connectivity is in place before online testing is implemented and the cost benefit to learning approaches is determined.
- A review be conducted of the assessment and reporting needs of schools, ensuring the views of principals, teachers and parents are central to any recommendations.
- Resources and professional development to support the implementation of teaching based on Learning Progressions.
- Assessment tools used in schools need to compliment and align with the principles of learning which include success criteria, learning intentions and feedback.

Identifying, sharing and driving good practice and continuous improvement

ACPPA is supportive of the continuous learning by schools to ensure children are achieving success and growth. However, the focus should be on empowered accountability, not compliance accountability.

ACPPA recommends that:

- Government and relevant authorities provide long term policies and practices that will allow schools and school leaders time to embed best practice.
- Any education reforms are developed in direct consultation with primary principal associations from all sectors.

- Professional learning materials be developed to support primary principals in their role as instructional leaders and ensure the school is implementing quality teaching and learning practices.
- Innovation and action research should be key practices that are supported and encouraged in schools.