



School Reporting and Transparency

Background

National reporting of information about individual schools is beginning in Australia from January 2010, with the launch of a new national website. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is responsible for reporting the information. For the first time there will be genuine nationally comparable data on schools, whichever state or territory they are in and whoever they are owned and operated by. These new reporting arrangements will ensure that clear and accurate information is publicly available, which will facilitate honest, comprehensive public debate on schooling in Australia. It will also enable governments to look at comparable schools and their results, understand different patterns of disadvantage, and share best practice and innovation.

Information to be reported

Each school will have its own profile page that will contain a range of information about the school. The categories covered will include:

- information about the type of school
- student and staff numbers
- student attendance rate
- socio-economic background of the school student body
- results from national literacy and numeracy tests, and
- and data about vocational education participation and Year 12 attainment.

Each school also has the opportunity to provide a description statement that can give additional information such as the school's ethos, special programs, and its strengths and challenges. A link to the school's own website (where one exists) will also be included.

Further information will be included on the website as measures are developed and as data becomes available. This additional information will include school income, measures of growth, and outcomes from satisfaction surveys of teachers, parents, and students.

Like-school groups

Information will be available about how a school performs in literacy and numeracy, compared to other schools that serve student populations that have similar socio-economic backgrounds (known as like-school groups). A like-school group could include, for example, schools with similar proportions of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and comparisons would be made between these schools. Like-school comparisons will be the only form of comparison made. The website will include a list of schools in the local area of the selected school, but comparisons between schools in the same local area will not be undertaken.

The like-school comparison approach recognises research that indicates that factors such as socio-economic background can have a predictive effect on student outcomes. Identifying schools with similar student populations enables comparisons between schools to be made on a fair basis. Evidence shows that schools with similar student populations can have quite different outcomes. Having this information available will enable schools to learn from other schools that perform better with the same kind of student population, and help their students achieve better outcomes in the future.

Progress

ACARA is currently collecting data from schools and systems all over Australia, including school description statements. In the case of most indicators, schools are not subject to additional reporting requirements. Most data is being collected from bodies that already hold data on behalf of schools, such as testing authorities that hold NAPLAN data. Collation and analysis of data and information will be taking place between October 2009 and January 2010.

Further Information

The Australian Council for Educational Research report entitled *Reporting and Comparing School Performances* is available at:

http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/_resource/s/ACER_Report_on_Reporting_and_comparing_school_performances.pdf

Principles and Protocols for Reporting on Schooling in Australia:

http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/nap_principles_protocols_for_rep_on_school_2009,27896.html

Website: www.acara.edu.au