



Government of
South Australia

South Australia's
Action Plan for

LITERACY & NUMERACY

Council of
Australian Governments

National Reform Agenda
Human Capital Reform

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1. Achieving Literacy and Numeracy Targets

South Australia's Plan for Investment in Literacy and Numeracy, in response to the National Reform Agenda, is designed to improve educational attainment and productivity through a coherent, sustainable focus on literacy and numeracy improvement.

The plan identifies proposed reform actions to achieve the COAG agreed high level indicative outcomes to *increase the proportion of young people meeting basic literacy and numeracy standards, and improve overall levels of achievement.*

The progress measures of this outcome are:

- The proportion of students achieving at or above the literacy and numeracy benchmark (minimum) standards in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9; and
- From 2008, the proportion of students achieving proficiency standards.

The National Reform Agenda for literacy and numeracy supports the 1999 *Adelaide Declaration of National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*, which states that:

“students should have attained the skills of numeracy and English literacy, such that every student should be numerate, able to read, write, spell and communicate at an appropriate level.”

Improved literacy and numeracy requires a focus on both the quality and equity of student outcomes. One of the greatest challenges facing South Australia is how to improve the achievements of our lowest performing students and schools, while also raising the achievement of the middle and highest performers.

The South Australian Strategic Plan 2007 outlines the following targets and key measures that fit with, and will be supported by the COAG agreed measures:

- By 2010, 93% of students in Years 3,5 and 7 to achieve the national benchmarks in reading, writing and numeracy.
- By 2014 achieve a 10% improvement in the number of children reading at an age appropriate level by the end of Year 1.
- Increase yearly the proportion of Aboriginal children reading at age appropriate levels at the end of Year 1.

Achieving these targets, along with the outcomes associated with the actions detailed in this plan, and particularly relating to ‘closing the literacy and numeracy gap’ for our most ‘at risk’ learners, will require substantial commitment from both the Commonwealth and the State.

Achievement of COAG's agreed priorities in terms of Literacy and Numeracy Reform must take into account current South Australian actions and directions, and acknowledge that the best gains will occur through supporting flexible and contextually based implementation plans, as proposed by each State and Territory. Further, while South Australia is committed to on-going literacy and numeracy improvement, the full package of actions outlined in this plan are dependent on the Commonwealth providing a fair sharing of the costs and benefits of such reform.

2. The National Reform Agenda

2.1 What is the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Reform Agenda?

COAG is committed to increase the nation’s productivity and workforce participation. The Council has initiated a long term National Reform Agenda in two areas - *human capital*, and *competition and regulatory arrangements*.

The Council’s interest in how human capital is developed in Australia is based on the belief that higher levels of productivity and participation rely on the nation’s capacity to ensure that people have both the opportunity and the capacity to be active and productive participants in a global knowledge-based economy. It recognises that a healthy and skilled population will secure a strong national economy through increased workforce participation and productivity, and will provide Australians with the opportunity to participate fully and actively in our economy and society.

Governments in Australia have shared funding responsibilities in areas of policy that are central to human capital reform, such as health and education. The National Reform Agenda recognises that the improvements delivered by governments working together in the national public interest far outweigh those achieved by governments acting alone.

South Australia’s Plan for Investment in Literacy and Numeracy reflects a commitment to the human capital thread of the National Reform Agenda and contributes to the achievement of the targets in South Australia’s Strategic Plan, particularly those relating to Objective 6: Expanding Opportunity.

2.2 The role of education and training

COAG has identified education and training as central to human capital reform. The National Reform Agenda recognises that education and training underpin the development of a highly skilled, innovative workforce – a critical enabling factor for social, cultural and economic growth in Australia.

Educational attainment is positively linked to:

- increased labour force participation rates;
- ease of labour force re-entry;
- higher wages;
- higher levels of employment and lower levels of unemployment;
- lower levels of welfare dependence; and
- higher levels of productivity.

The National Reform Agenda has adopted a ‘lifecycle’ approach to education and training reform that focuses on the cumulative impact of outcomes across four key learning phases in a person’s life (Figure 1). This approach recognises that improving early childhood development outcomes will increase the likelihood of improving literacy and numeracy outcomes later in life. Similarly, improved literacy and numeracy outcomes for young people will improve outcomes related to youth transitions and adult skills.

	EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT	LITERACY AND NUMERACY	YOUTH TRANSITIONS	ADULT SKILLS
Outcomes	Significantly improve the proportion of children that are born healthy Significantly improve the proportion of children acquiring the basic skills for life and learning	Increase the proportion of young people meeting basic literacy and numeracy standards and improve overall levels of achievement	Increase the proportion of young people making a smooth transition from school to work or further study	Increase the proportion of adults who have the skills and qualifications needed to enjoy active and productive working lives

FIGURE 1: OUTCOMES AGREED AT THE JULY MEETING OF COAG

2.3 Why are literacy and numeracy important?

The education and training outcomes of the National Reform Agenda reflect COAG’s view that core literacy and numeracy skills are fundamental requirements for learning and are essential for work and life opportunities beyond school. Low levels of literacy and numeracy impact negatively on educational attainment and employment prospects, resulting in economic costs that are borne by the whole community (Chriswick *et. al.*, 2003).

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) has underlined the importance of literacy and numeracy achievement in Year 9 as an indicator of future academic achievement. ACER has found that:

Lower achievement [in literacy and numeracy at Year 9] has been associated with lower engagement in school, lower participation in Year 12, lower tertiary entrance scores and less successful transitions from school. (Rothman & McMillan, 2003)

There is a clear relationship between solid literacy and numeracy skills and completing Year 12. This relationship is even stronger than the relationships between parental occupation and completing Year 12, and school type and completing Year 12 (Figure 2).

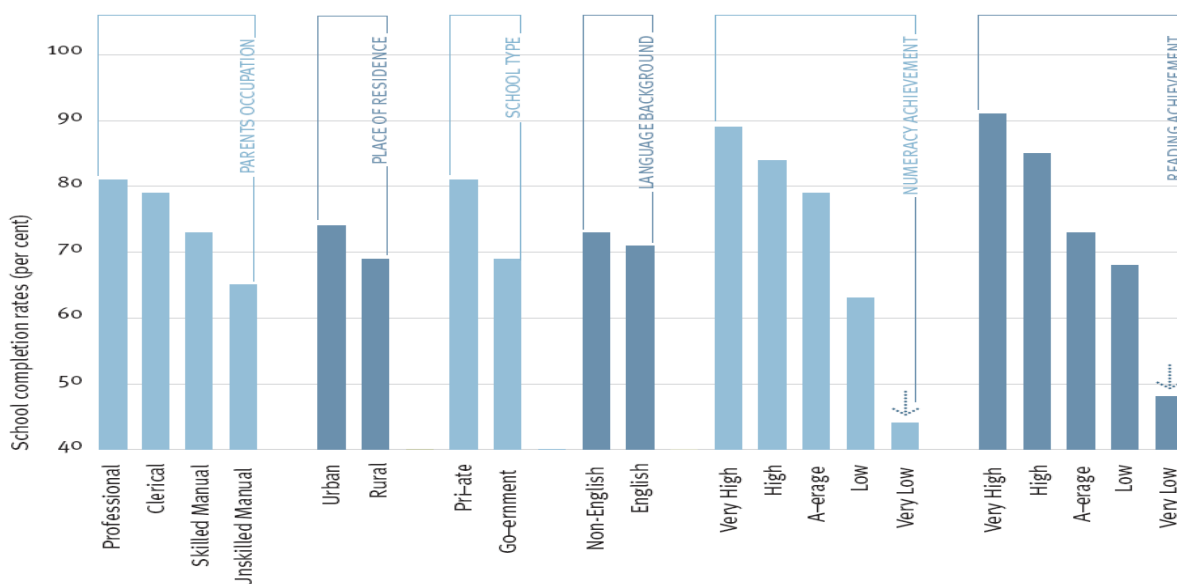


FIGURE 2: SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES FOR MALES BY ACHIEVEMENT AND SELECTED BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

Source: Lamb S, “School achievement and initial education and labour market outcomes”, 1997, The Australian Council for Educational Research.

South Australia’s Plan for Investment in Literacy and Numeracy recognises that some groups of students eg Indigenous learners and those from low socio-economic backgrounds, consistently perform below acceptable levels in a range of literacy and numeracy assessments. The Plan incorporates strategies to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes overall but with targeted strategies for those most at risk in their literacy and numeracy learning.

3. The South Australian Context

3.1 South Australia's diverse strengths and challenges

The South Australian Government holds a firm position that literacy and numeracy are critical enablers in pursuing social inclusion and economic progress in this state. Issues relating to sustained literacy and numeracy improvement are complex and cannot be seen in isolation from broader social policy.

South Australia has diverse strengths and challenges in terms of population profile, economic factors and educational provision, which all impact on students' access to educational opportunities and achievement of literacy and numeracy outcomes. For example;

- South Australia's share of the Australian population was 9.2% in 1961, declining to 7.7% in 2003. At 0.5%, South Australia's annual population growth rate is lower than the national level of 1.2%. The population decline is not uniform for all population groups. The Indigenous population of South Australia, while small at less than 2% of total population, has a significantly younger age profile than the rest of the population attributed to a higher birth rate (3.3%) and an earlier age of death.
- Approximately 73.3% of the population of South Australia resides in metropolitan Adelaide with the rest of the population sparsely distributed across rural areas. There are a small number of regional centres, the largest being Mount Gambier with a population of 24,000. (ABS 2003)
- South Australia has the highest poverty rate of any State in Australia with 17% of all children living in poverty. In 2004 approximately 57,000 students in Government schools or 33% were recipients of School Card (low socio economic indicator). (Dept. of Health 2003)
- The public education system provides directly for the education of approximately 70% of the young people in South Australia. DECS preschools and schools cater for the education and care needs of 187,192 children and students. The number of school students who identified as Aboriginal increased from less than 5,000 in 1994 to more than 7,000 in 2003. This constitutes 4% of total enrolments.
- Data from the Report on Government Services (2004) indicates that 4.6% of school students in SA have a disability. This has risen over the last 5 years from 3% and can be expected to continue rising with at least 7% of children between birth and eight years having a disability. (ABS 2003)
- Approximately 16,000 ESL learners have been identified as needing to develop their English language and literacy skills in order to successfully access the curriculum.
- Annually, about 1300 new migrant and refugee students with minimal English enroll in Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) new arrivals centres and schools. It can be anticipated that these students will take at least 5 to 7 years to develop the language skills to an equivalent level to that of local students.

South Australia has a unique opportunity in that all children's services and public schooling are under one jurisdiction, the Department of Education and Children's Services, and future directions are being forged to provide whole of Government approaches to the early years, (birth – 8 years), that will support and connect with literacy and numeracy reform throughout subsequent years of schooling.

3.2 South Australia is investing in literacy and numeracy

The DECS Statement of Directions 2005 – 2010 identifies the responsibilities of central office, districts and schools in working for improvement in the following areas:

- Developing successful whole school approaches
- Collecting, analysing and responding to literacy and numeracy data
- Professional learning, particularly through inquiry approaches
- Developing cohesive approaches across the early, primary, middle and senior bands
- Identifying and sharing effective local practices
- Identifying and sharing local, national and international research

- Developing literacy and numeracy through all learning in the future South Australian Certificate of Education

The South Australian government is making strategic investments to improve literacy and numeracy achievement. Major literacy initiatives include:

- **Early Years Literacy Program**
The South Australia Government has committed \$35 million, over three years (2005-2007), to an Early Years Literacy Program in schools and preschools. This funding provides professional development and resources to increase children's literacy engagement and achievement. Over 180 teachers are implementing mentoring programs, which enable teachers to work together and improve their literacy programs. For Year 1 children identified as requiring additional assistance, funding is provided for one-to-one literacy support.
- **South Australian Accelerated Literacy Program (SAALP)**
Accelerated Literacy (formerly known as Scaffolded Literacy) covers reading, writing, spelling and speaking. Its aim is to significantly increase the literacy levels of low achieving students. Accelerated Literacy has been used in remote Aboriginal schools and some other government schools, for a number of years and Accelerated Literacy teaching methods are now being offered state-wide, predominantly to mainstream schools from Reception to Year 10. Fifty schools are currently involved in the program.
- **The Premier's Reading Challenge**
In 2006, 90% of all schools in South Australia participated in the Premier's Reading Challenge with over 90,000 students awarded either a certificate, bronze, silver or gold medal from the Premier. Of the students completing the Challenge in 2006, 49% were male and 51% were female.

In numeracy, major initiatives include:

- **Mathematics for Learning Inclusion Project**
This project focuses on students in the primary years from low socio-economic backgrounds and Indigenous learners. The program funds 8 coordinators to support learners and teachers across clusters of schools with a focus on Mathematics, particularly in relation to Years 3, 4 and 5. Teachers are developing knowledge and skills in the explicit teaching of mathematics and teaching, learning and assessment practices that support the development of broad based numeracy skills.
- **First Steps in Mathematics**
This professional learning program is designed to improve learning outcomes for students by supporting teachers to further their own understandings of mathematics, understand how students learn mathematics and plan learning experiences to progress each student. The program is suitable for teachers of Reception to Year 8 with particular courses aimed at improving outcomes for Indigenous learners. Thirty facilitators have been trained in First Steps in Mathematics (Number).

Other initiatives that enhance literacy and numeracy outcomes include:

- **Assessment of all students in the initial years of schooling.**
 - ❑ South Australia developed and first implemented School Entry Assessment in 1999, for all children in their first term at school. This program has enabled children's development in literacy and numeracy to be tracked through the first years of school, building on the learning in prior-to-school settings. Information has been collated at school level and used to inform teaching practice and specific interventions.
 - ❑ Systemic collection and school based analysis of Early Years Literacy Program Running Records data (reading) for Year 1 and 2 children in DECS schools.
- **Early intervention strategies for those students identified as having difficulty.**
 - ❑ Additional funding through early assistance grants is allocated to schools with Reception –Year 2 enrolments, to enable local identification of children with lower than expected literacy and numeracy achievement and to implement intervention programs.
 - ❑ Reading Recovery has been used in a small number of South Australian public schools since 1993. In 2005, Reading Recovery was expanded as part of the Early Years Literacy Program, enabling specialised training of additional Reading Recovery teachers.

There are currently 140 Reading Recovery trained teachers across the government and non-government sectors.

- From 2003, teachers have been appointed to South Australia's most disadvantaged schools, to reduce Reception to Year 2 class sizes to 18 children per class in category 1 and 2 Index of Disadvantage schools and 21 children in category 3 schools. In 2006 this initiative was expanded to reduce Reception to Year 2 classes in less disadvantaged schools.
- In 2007, the appointment of 100 additional teachers has enabled the reduction in class sizes to be further extended to Year 3 classes which allows for greater focus on raising the literacy and numeracy achievement for these students.

- **The Science and Mathematics Strategy (SciMas2)**

- The strategy aims to increase the number of students studying science and mathematics and to address the fall in the number of qualified mathematics and science teachers. There are action learning projects and other professional learning opportunities for teachers to improve practice and engage students in maths and science learning as well as opportunities to connect with scientists in a range of industry contexts. Another strand of the project has initiatives to encourage experienced teachers to country schools and provide retraining opportunities for existing teachers to retrain as mathematics or science teachers.

- **Moving Forward with SACSA**

- To implement targeted improvement strategies in the areas of student underperformance as measured by the standards in the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability (SACSA) Framework, the Moving Forward with SACSA Strategy is focussing on assessment and moderating evidence of student achievement. This, combined with increased teacher understandings of how literacy and numeracy levels limit or enhance achievement of the curriculum standards, will lead to more effective whole site approaches to improving literacy and numeracy achievement.

- **The *future* SACE**

- The future SACE is the new South Australian Certificate of Education which will be introduced from 2009 to all Government, Catholic and Independent schools with secondary students.

Literacy and numeracy requirements will be compulsory under the *future* SACE. There will be a number of ways for these requirements to be achieved, including a range of English/ESL and Mathematics courses. The literacy element will contribute 20 credit points towards the *future* SACE, and the numeracy element 10 credit points. Literacy and numeracy will be integrated across the curriculum through a range of 'Capabilities' which will enable students to demonstrate what they know and can do. Teachers helping students to map their Personal Learning Plan will be informed by a range of assessment information, including the national Year 9 Test, of each student's literacy and numeracy skills.

This will support intervention before the crucial senior years.

- **Teacher quality and school leadership**

- The implementation of the DECS Professional Standards for Teachers promotes quality teaching and teachers' ongoing professional learning, and creating a positive culture around performance planning and development (at beginning, Established, Advanced Skills and Teacher Leader levels).
- School leaders and preschool directors have the opportunity to attend workshops in collaboration with the SA Centre for Leaders in Education (SACLE).
- The Teachers Registration Board of SA is currently working towards aligning teacher professional standards with the National Professional Standards Framework for teachers on entry to the profession, moving from provisional to full registration and renewing registration.

3.3 South Australia's current performance in literacy and numeracy

South Australian achievement and national comparisons

The annual literacy and numeracy tests for years 3, 5 and 7 held in each state and territory enable national comparisons of achievement in aspects of literacy and numeracy.

Overall South Australian students are faring well with around 90 percent of students achieving at or above the national benchmarks for reading, writing and numeracy. This is on par with the Australian average. A gradual increase in the proportions of students achieving benchmark standard is also evident in general.

At Year 3 the State Literacy and Numeracy Test results indicate some improvement from 2003 to 2005 (Figure 3). In 2005 there was no significant difference between the South Australian Year 3 benchmark results and the national averages for reading, writing or numeracy.

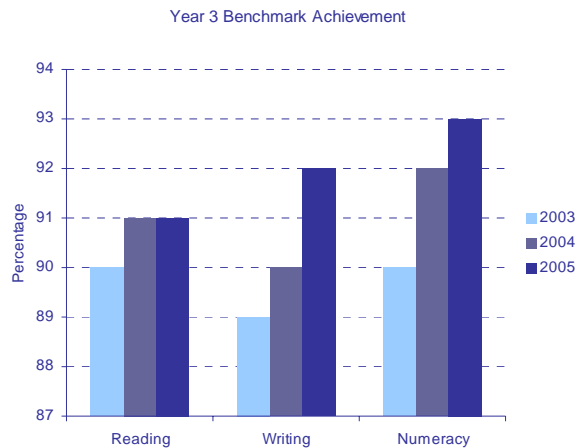


FIGURE 3 • PERCENTAGES OF SA STUDENTS ACHIEVING LITERACY AND NUMERACY BENCHMARKS AT YEAR 3

At Year 5 the State Literacy and Numeracy Test results over 2003 to 2005 have fluctuated (Figure 4). In 2005 there was no significant difference between the South Australian Year 5 benchmark results and the national averages for reading, writing or numeracy.

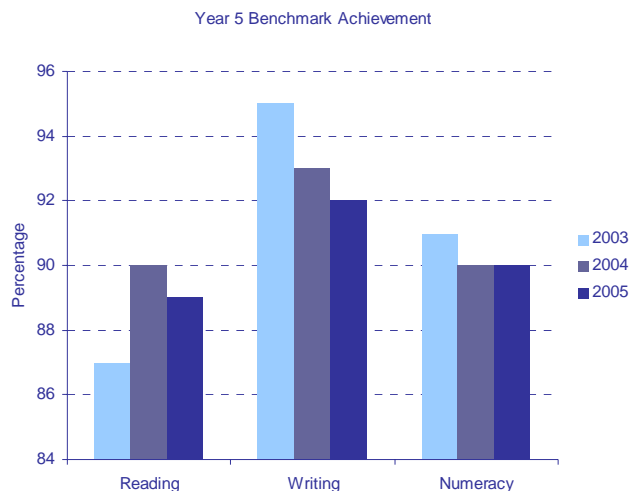


FIGURE 4 • PERCENTAGES OF SA STUDENTS ACHIEVING LITERACY AND NUMERACY BENCHMARKS AT YEAR 5

At Year 7 the State Literacy and Numeracy Test results are relatively stable from 2003 to 2005 (Figure 5). In 2005 South Australian Year 7 students were significantly above the national average in reading and numeracy but significantly below the national average in writing.

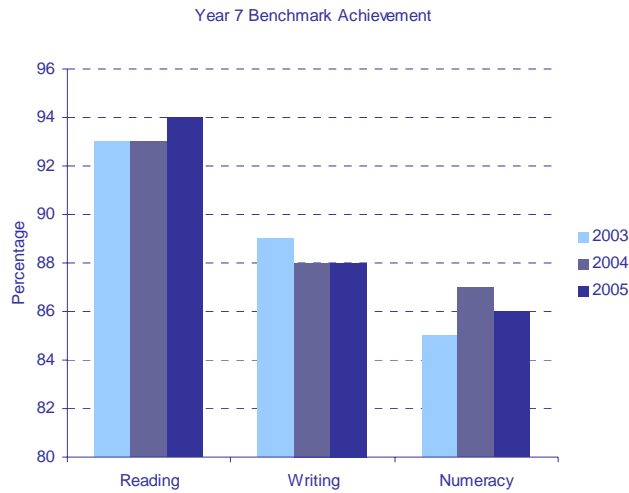


FIGURE 5 • PERCENTAGES OF SA STUDENTS ACHIEVING LITERACY AND NUMERACY BENCHMARKS AT YEAR 7

These SA benchmarks results indicate a consistent fall in numeracy results from Year 3 to Year 5 and again to Year 7 which means that the outcomes of the National Numeracy Review proposed through the COAG National Reform Agenda will be especially relevant to South Australia.

The significant differences in achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students also indicate an area that requires attention. Comparisons between benchmark achievements for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Year 7 students in 2005 are shown below.

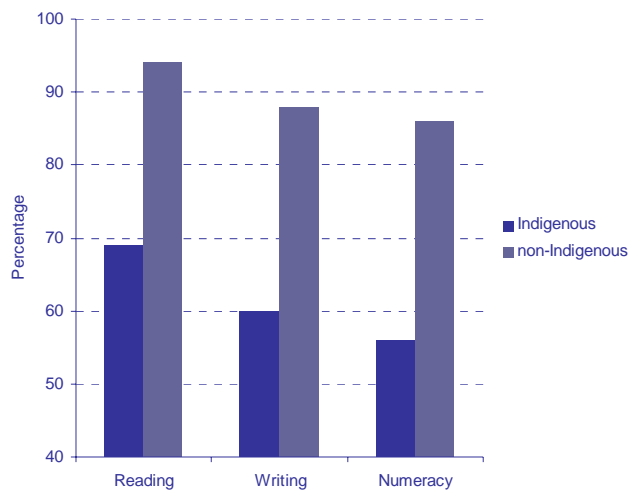


FIGURE 6 • PERCENTAGES OF INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS SA STUDENTS ACHIEVING LITERACY AND NUMERACY BENCHMARKS AT YEAR 7 IN 2005

Typically this 'gap' in benchmark achievement widens from Year 3 to Year 7. In 2005 benchmark achievement for Indigenous Year 3 students was around 20% below that of non-Indigenous students, by Year 7 this 'gap' had widened to around 25 to 30%.

Running records data (Figure 7) collected through the Early Years Literacy Program indicates that by Term 4 in Year 1 about 60% of Aboriginal children have a reading level between 1 and 10 compared to less than 25% of non-Aboriginal children. Almost 60 % of non-Aboriginal children have reading levels of 16-25 but less than 25% of Aboriginal children are in this range.

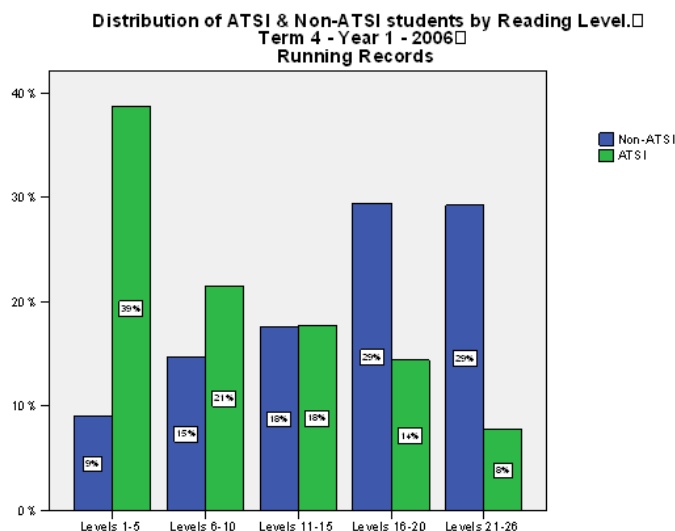


FIGURE 7 • READING LEVELS OF ATSI AND NON-ATSI STUDENTS YEAR 1 2006

International comparisons

The **Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)** assesses the mathematical and reading literacies of 15 year old students in over 50 OECD countries. The latest results available are for the 2003 tests and show that South Australian students are achieving sound results nationally and internationally. South Australia ranked third amongst Australian states and territories in both mathematical literacy and reading literacy.

Even though the overall results for South Australia are outstanding, about 25% of 15-year-old South Australian students still struggle with reading, mathematical and scientific literacy. While this is favourable compared with the corresponding OECD average of 42%, it is a result that South Australia wishes to improve significantly.

Noticeable differences still exist in achievement between 15-year-old girls and boys, Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and between students who speak English at home and those who do not. These too, are priority areas for improvement.

The **Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)** assesses trends in students' mathematics and science achievement at Year 4 and Year 8 in over 50 countries on a regular 4 year cycle. The TIMSS 2003 results indicate

Year 4 Mathematics:

- South Australia is ranked 5th in Australia
- South Australia's average score was lower than both the Australian and the international average scores
- 2-3% of South Australian students achieved the international advanced benchmark compared to the international average of 8%
- 15% of year 4 students did not achieve the low international benchmark compared to the Australian average of 12% and the international average of 17%.

Year 8 Mathematics:

- South Australia is ranked 3rd in Australia
- South Australia's average score was higher than the international average and lower than the Australian average score.
- 6% of South Australian students achieved the advanced international benchmark compared to the international average of 7%.

- About 11% of year 8 students did not achieve the low international benchmark compared to the Australian average of 10% and the international average of 27%.

While TIMMS results do not show large differences between the mathematics achievements of South Australian students and the national average they do indicate that additional attention needs to be addressed to improving mathematics outcomes for both ends of the achievement scale. Compared to Australia, South Australia has too many students performing below the low benchmark and on international comparisons we have too few students achieving at advanced levels.

4. South Australia’s Plan for Investment in Literacy and Numeracy

4.1 A coherent policy framework

COAG has established a broad set of policy directions with the potential to have a significant impact on literacy and numeracy outcomes. These policy directions have framed the development of South Australia’s Plan for Investment in Literacy and Numeracy. They are:

1. **Improve the quality of teaching**
2. **Develop school leadership**
3. **Engage parents in high education expectations**
4. **Improve the performance of students below benchmark and proficiency**

Figure 8 outlines the relationship between actions, policy directions, progress measures and outcomes within the National Reform Agenda framework.



FIGURE 8 • THE NATIONAL REFORM AGENDA FRAMEWORK FOR LITERACY AND NUMERACY

4.2 Overview of proposed actions

This table summarises actions to be taken by the South Australian Government (with Commonwealth support) and recommended actions for the Commonwealth Government.

The table below aligns South Australia’s actions with the policy directions and proposals agreed by the Literacy and Numeracy Sub-group of the Human Capital Working Party.

SA Government Current Commitments	Commonwealth Government Reform Proposals	SA Government Recommended Actions that Require Commonwealth Support
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Policy Direction 1: Improve the quality of teaching

1. Develop a core set of nationally consistent teacher standards for literacy and numeracy by end of 2007

DECS Professional Standards for Teachers promote quality teaching and teachers' ongoing professional learning, and creates a positive culture around performance planning and development.

The Commonwealth should coordinate the development of a core set of nationally consistent teacher standards for literacy and numeracy.

South Australia contributes to the development and implementation of a core set of nationally consistent teacher standards for literacy and numeracy.

2. Accredit university teacher education courses and registration of teachers to meet the standards by 2009

South Australia will use existing state regulatory levers to ensure course accreditation and teacher registration is consistent with nationally consistent teacher standards for literacy and numeracy by 2009.

The Commonwealth should:

- resource universities' education faculties to ensure they have sufficient resources to provide the best possible quality of pre-service teacher training, including practicum placements
- provide schools with adequate incentives to take student teachers on practicum.

South Australia recommends increasing student practicum support, including facilitating access to high quality supervising teachers and the development of consistent mentoring practices for supervising teachers.

3. Provide resources to select universities for the development of model evidence-based course content to assist all universities to meet course accreditation and teacher standards by 2008 - Commonwealth

South Australia recommends that the Commonwealth ensures that South Australian universities are represented in this initiative.

4. Increase the attraction and retention of quality teachers

The Science and Mathematics Strategy (SciMas2) - retrains mathematics teachers and attracts mathematicians and scientists to the teaching profession.

The Commonwealth should reduce or abolish HECS fees for existing or new teachers undertaking studies in targeted areas eg mathematics and science.

SA Government Current Commitments	Commonwealth Government Reform Proposals	SA Government Recommended Actions that Require Commonwealth Support
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Policy Direction 1: Improve the quality of teaching (continued)

<p>Thinkers in Residence Program has a focus on neuroscience and increasing teachers' engagement with the sciences.</p> <p>Major DECS initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision of Country Practicum Scholarships for 3rd and 4th year pre-service students to undertake country practicums • recruitment programs to attract teachers for Anangu (remote Indigenous) schools • removal of ten year limited tenure for teachers in the most disadvantaged schools. 		
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5. In relation to teacher development, develop a new range of flexible and sustainable arrangements

<p>* The Early Years Literacy Program provides professional development for preschool to Year 3 teachers.</p> <p>The DECS Learning to Learn Program features teacher practicums and expert practitioner pedagogy networks to improve teacher practice.</p>		<p>South Australia recommends professional learning conferences, workshops and programs focusing on literacy and numeracy improvement are conducted for all teachers working in years 3 to 10 (Literacy) and years R to 10 (Numeracy).</p>
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6. Implement nationally consistent on entry to school literacy and numeracy diagnostic assessment systems in 2009

<p>The current SA School Entry Assessment is mandated in all DECS schools, and complies with many of the 10 COAG agreed common attributes.</p>		<p>South Australia recommends reviewing the existing SA School Entry Assessment, developing it further to comply with the agreed national attributes and implementing the revised assessment system.</p>
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SA Government Current Commitments	Commonwealth Government Reform Proposals	SA Government Recommended Actions that Require Commonwealth Support
Policy Direction 1: Improve the quality of teaching (continued)		
7. Ensure that diagnostic assessments are followed by sufficient resourcing and support to address identified learning needs, as well as providing a mechanism for tracking student performance over time at the school level and providing evidence on the efficacy of these interventions		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Targeted funding to support special needs students identified through diagnostic assessments * The <i>future</i> SACE has compulsory literacy and numeracy requirements and integrates literacy and numeracy into all courses. The <i>future</i> SACE includes diagnostic literacy and numeracy assessment and Personal Learning Plans for all students to improve literacy and numeracy. * The reduction in Junior Primary class sizes has been extended to Year 3 classes which allows for greater focus on raising the literacy and numeracy achievement for these students. 	<p>The Commonwealth should adequately resource national assessments at Yrs 3, 5, 7 and 9 from 2008, and support jurisdictions to put in place effective interventions for identified students.</p> <p>The Commonwealth, States and Territories, through MCEETYA, will develop a strategy to monitor and report on existing intervention practices including whether the improvements from the interventions are sustained in the longer term.</p>	<p>South Australia recommends professional learning opportunities for primary and secondary teachers in the analysis of literacy and numeracy assessment data and the development of appropriate teaching strategies and interventions for identified students.</p> <p>South Australia recommends the employment of 36 district advisers and 4 centrally based curriculum officers to address literacy and numeracy improvement.</p>
8. Undertake a National Numeracy Review in 2007		
DECS is currently developing a Numeracy Strategy.	The Commonwealth should host the Secretariat and coordinate the Review.	South Australia will contribute to the National Numeracy Review at the classroom, school and system level.
POLICY DIRECTION 1 SA government funding commitment over four years from February 2006 (Initiatives marked with *) TOTAL \$110.2m		

SA Government Current Commitments	Commonwealth Government Reform Proposals	SA Government Recommended Actions that Require Commonwealth Support
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Policy Direction 2: Develop school leadership

9. Developing a core set of nationally agreed skills, knowledge and attributes on instructional leadership in literacy and numeracy teaching and learning for principals by end of 2007

	The Commonwealth should coordinate the development and implementation of a core set of nationally agreed skills, knowledge and attributes on instructional leadership in literacy and numeracy.	South Australia will contribute to the development and implementation of a core set of nationally agreed skills, knowledge and attributes on instructional leadership in literacy and numeracy.
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10. Develop leadership programs to implement the core skills, knowledge and attributes (up to Dec 2012)

The South Australian Centre for Leaders in Education (SACLE) provides high quality professional services to support, challenge and continually strengthen the practice and leadership capability of educational leaders within DECS.		South Australia recommends developing professional learning programs for school leaders based on the nationally agreed skills, knowledge and attributes on instructional leadership in literacy and numeracy.
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11. Develop a range of innovative modes and incentives for delivering the new leadership programs in literacy and numeracy (up to Dec 2012)

The DECS Learning to Learn Program features leaders learning circles, focussing on leading school reform and learning centred leadership. It also contracts the University of South Australia to research the characteristics of leadership for learning.		South Australia recommends delivering professional learning programs for school leaders based on the nationally agreed skills, knowledge and attributes on instructional leadership in literacy and numeracy via flexible and innovative modes of delivery to meet the needs of leaders within diverse contexts across SA.
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12. Develop a range of innovative strategies related to principal leadership to target resources to where they are need most (up to Dec 2012)

* Professional learning is made available for school leaders around the literacy and numeracy components and requirements of the <i>future</i> SACE.		<p>South Australia recommends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • drawing on local and national examples to develop school based strategies to target resources to where they are needed most • incorporating these strategies into programs developed in 10 above.
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SA Government Current Commitments	Commonwealth Government Reform Proposals	SA Government Recommended Actions that Require Commonwealth Support
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Policy Direction 2: Develop school leadership (continued)

<p>POLICY DIRECTION 2</p> <p>SA government funding commitment over four years from February 2006 (Initiatives marked with *)</p> <p>TOTAL \$3.0m</p>		
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SA Government Current Commitments	Commonwealth Government Reform Proposals	SA Government Recommended Actions that Require Commonwealth Support
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Policy Direction 3: Engage parents in high education expectations

13. Raise educational expectations by aligning strategies for effective parental/carer engagement around three focus areas

<p>* The Premier’s Reading Challenge provides an incentive for students to read a set number of books each year. Schools and parents work together to support and encourage students to complete the challenge.</p> <p>The Early Years Literacy Program includes a design element, <i>Working with Community</i></p>		<p>South Australia recommends participating in Commonwealth funded research into the long term benefits of investing in family literacy and numeracy programs, which support children’s learning and literacy and numeracy development.</p>
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14. Tailor parental engagement strategies to meet the needs of specific communities/student groups

<p>Schools encourage parental involvement in student learning and actively develop programs and processes to do so which are included in site development plans. Many schools (particularly primary schools) run programs targeted at engaging parents in their child’s education.</p>		
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<p>POLICY DIRECTION 3</p> <p>SA government funding commitment over four years from February 2006 (Initiatives marked with *)</p> <p>TOTAL \$0.3m</p>		
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Policy Direction 4: Improve the performance of students below benchmark and proficiency

15. Implement future targeted strategies to address literacy and numeracy under achievement around four agreed focus areas and in alignment with the MCEETYA national goals of schooling

* The JP160 initiative reduces the class sizes of junior primary classes in the most disadvantaged schools to enable literacy and numeracy improvement.

* The Early Years Literacy Program provides mentor teachers to the most disadvantaged schools.

South Australia is focussing the role of Aboriginal Education Teachers and Aboriginal Education Coordinators to support clusters of schools to develop and implement strategies to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for Aboriginal learners.

South Australia continually reviews accountability processes to ensure that State and Commonwealth literacy and numeracy grants to schools are used effectively to gain maximum impact on improving the learning outcomes of our most underachieving cohorts of learners.

The Commonwealth conducts research into the underlying causes of the national fall in literacy and numeracy benchmark achievement from Year 3 to Year 7.

South Australia recommends providing Literacy Coordinators and/or Numeracy Coordinators to clusters of SA schools on a needs basis.

South Australia recommends the provision of Literacy Mentor Teachers be extended beyond Year 3 and the inclusion of Numeracy Mentor Teachers to targeted clusters of government schools.

SA Government Current Commitments	Commonwealth Government Reform Proposals	SA Government Recommended Actions that Require Commonwealth Support
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Policy Direction 4: Improve the performance of students below benchmark and proficiency (continued)

16. Through MCEETYA, develop a strategy to monitor and report on existing intervention practices, including whether the improvements from the interventions are sustained in the longer term

	The Commonwealth, States and Territories, through MCEETYA, will develop a strategy to monitor and report on existing intervention practices including whether the improvements from the interventions are sustained in the longer term	South Australia recommends monitoring and reporting on existing intervention practices.
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17. The Commonwealth, States and Territories recognise the impact on literacy/numeracy outcomes of broader causes of disadvantage (eg health, geographic isolation, income levels, housing) and that this impact may differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and agree to explore, through MCEETYA, possible options

	The Commonwealth, States and Territories recognise the impact on literacy and numeracy outcomes of broader causes of disadvantage	South Australia recommends contributing data about the impact of disadvantage on literacy and numeracy achievement and participating in the development of whole of government options for improvement.
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POLICY DIRECTION 4

SA government funding commitment over four years from February 2006
(Initiatives marked with *)

TOTAL \$41.2m

The total funding commitment over four years made by the South Australian government, to all four Policy Directions, since February 2006 is \$154.7m.

4.3 Proposed actions within the National Reform Agenda Framework for literacy & numeracy

POLICY DIRECTION 1: IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF TEACHING



1. Develop a core set of nationally consistent teacher standards for literacy and numeracy by end of 2007

South Australia is well placed to contribute to any national work on teacher standards through the work of DECS and the Teachers Registration Board (TRB) of South Australia. The DECS Professional Standards for Teachers in South Australia are based on the National Framework for Professional Standards for Teaching and developed through an inquiry process involving over four hundred educators. These professional standards make explicit the knowledge, capabilities and practices that are required for effective teaching across all career stages – beginning, established, accomplished and teacher leaders. The inter-connected professional elements are values, knowledge, relationships and practice.

The South Australian TRB has also produced professional standards currently in draft form. The TRB professional standards

- are underpinned by Code of Ethics and four values – Integrity, Respect, Responsibility, Advocacy
- have three Core Principles – professional relationships, professional knowledge, professional practice with nine Level 2 standards which are broad aspects related to the core principles
- contain example characteristics which provide evidence of the standards and vary for entry to the register, change of status to registration and renewal.

Aspects of each of the DECS and TRB professional standards are transferable to teacher standards for literacy and numeracy.

Action 1 South Australia contributes to the development and implementation of a core set of nationally consistent teacher standards for literacy and numeracy.

2. Accredit university teacher education courses and registration of teachers to meet the standards by 2009

High quality pre-service teacher training which effectively addresses literacy and numeracy teaching and learning for a diversity of students, must underpin the sustainable development of a high quality teaching profession.

Currently, across Australian universities, there is a wide variation in time allocated to preparing pre-service teachers to;

- effectively teach all aspects of literacy and numeracy
- use and interpret data on student performance
- use diagnostic tools to inform intervention programs for students under performing in literacy and numeracy
- communicate effectively with, and establish partnerships with, parents to enhance literacy and numeracy achievement for students
- participate in high quality, extended teacher practicums.

South Australia's Plan for Investment in Literacy and Numeracy recognises the Commonwealth's responsibility to

- resource universities' education faculties to ensure they have sufficient resources to provide the best possible quality of pre-service teacher training, including practicum placements
- provide schools with adequate incentives to take student teachers on practicum.

In order to accredit university teacher education courses and registration of teachers by 2009, using a nationally consistent teacher standards for literacy and numeracy, it is anticipated that increased opportunities for diverse and extended practicums that expose new teachers to a range of high quality literacy and numeracy teaching will be required.

Action 2 South Australia recommends increasing student practicum support, including facilitating access to high quality supervising teachers and the development of consistent mentoring practices for supervising teachers.

3. Provide resources to select universities for the development of model evidence-based course content to assist all universities to meet course accreditation and teacher standards by 2008

South Australia recommends that the Commonwealth ensures that South Australian universities are represented in this initiative.

4. Increase the attraction and retention of quality teachers

Consistent with national trends, South Australia has a shortage of suitably qualified maths and science teachers.

South Australia is addressing emerging shortages of specialist mathematics teachers by providing professional learning programs to support existing secondary teachers to re-train as teachers of mathematics and by targeting and encouraging mathematicians and scientists to become mathematics and science teachers. DECS also provides incentives for mathematics teachers to take Coordinator positions in identified country locations.

With fewer maths and science graduates from teacher education courses joining the teaching profession, alternative recruitment strategies need to be considered. To attract more high quality teaching recruits such as career change professionals and high-calibre maths and science graduates, many jurisdictions (such as the United States and United Kingdom) have recognised the need to introduce alternative and fast-track pathways into the teaching profession. This has become an accepted and successful strategy for attracting quality teaching recruits, including career change professionals, into schools.

Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) fees are a significant disincentive for new and existing teachers wishing to take university level study in mathematics or science subjects thus creating a barrier to state actions to increase the numbers of qualified teachers in these areas. The

Commonwealth needs to review HECS fees associated with university courses that impact on predicted areas of teacher shortage.

South Australia recommends that the Commonwealth reduce or abolish HECS fees for existing or new teachers undertaking studies in targeted areas eg mathematics and science.

5. In relation to teacher development, develop a new range of flexible and sustainable arrangements

The quality of teaching is widely acknowledged as the single most important contributor to student outcomes after the socio-economic status and background of the student. The 2005 *National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy* found that:

- once at school, quality teaching makes the largest positive influence on children's learning and reading;
- teachers require a range of teaching strategies upon which they can draw to meet the development and learning needs of individual children.

It should be a professional expectation that all teachers across the Early, Primary, Middle and Senior Years are competent teachers of literacy and numeracy. In order to fully support this requirement, teachers need time and resources to engage in quality professional learning to understand the literacy and numeracy demands of the curriculum and have opportunities to develop and incorporate these understandings into their teaching and learning practices and programs.

The need for highly trained teachers is strongly supported by the experience in Finland where excellence is driven through teachers who are trained to Masters degree qualification level, in conjunction with an individualised and integrated learning environment.

Many of South Australia's current literacy and numeracy initiatives, such as the Early Years Literacy Program, Learning to Learn and the Mathematics for Learning Inclusion Program contain significant professional learning components.

Professional learning must focus on increasing each teacher's capacity to teach, assess and monitor literacy and numeracy to enhance learning outcomes for all students. This will involve teachers developing repertoires of practice that connect school based literacy and numeracy learning with student and community funds of knowledge and experiences. Specifically professional learning must focus on:

- the literacy and numeracy skills that students need to successfully access the school curriculum and to undertake further study and employment pathways
- inquiry into, and identification of, discipline or subject specific literacies and numeracies and their implications for inclusive pedagogy and assessment
- developing literacy and numeracy through pedagogy that values and responds to diverse student backgrounds and needs, particularly Indigenous and low socio-economic background students
- using assessment data to inform intervention strategies for underperforming students.

Action 3 South Australia recommends professional learning conferences, workshops and programs focusing on literacy and numeracy improvement are conducted for all teachers working in years 3 to 10 (Literacy) and years R to 10 (Numeracy).

6. Implement nationally consistent on entry to school literacy and numeracy diagnostic assessment systems in 2009

An evidence-based assessment system in the first years of school is essential to effective planning for literacy and numeracy development. The information obtained from this assessment provides an important early indicator of development at the individual student level, allowing issues to be addressed early, ensuring that they do not become a barrier to learning as a student progresses. Inherent in this system should be the ability to assess other important aspects of a child's development, such as their emotional, social and cognitive development.

The importance of early identification of student learning difficulties was recognised by the Committee for the *National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy* (2005). The Committee recommended that

nationally consistent assessments on entry to school be undertaken for every Australian child, including regular monitoring of decoding skills and word reading accuracy (Recommendation 9).

An effective assessment system should:

- assess in detail what students can do over a period of time, against a range of early literacy and numeracy capabilities, based on research evidence (such as the Rowe's five essential literacy components) on the essential capabilities that underpin literacy and numeracy skills;
- provide a reliable profile of a child's strengths and weaknesses in early literacy and numeracy capabilities;
- be suitable and easy to use by teachers in the early years and in diverse school communities;
- be engaging for students and provide a basis for reporting to parents;
- guide teachers in adopting particular classroom-based interventions and approaches to meet the literacy and numeracy learning needs of individual students;
- provide a baseline for monitoring value-added progress;
- be able to store, retrieve and organise diagnostic assessment data in such a way as to enable, at the school level, teachers and schools to access a student's results in diagnostic assessments as well as later results in Years Three, Five, Seven and Nine;
- enable teachers to map the literacy and numeracy growth of individual students as they move through the phases of learning;
- support the teacher to monitor the efficacy of their classroom-based interventions and approaches; and
- be complementary to the AEDI.

In South Australian government schools, School Entry Assessment is used to support continuity of learning through acknowledging prior learning and enhancing relationships between schools, preschools and families. The assessment information is used to develop programs that build on children's literacy, numeracy and social skills. Ongoing data can be up-dated at regular intervals to monitor student learning, identify students at risk and develop intervention programs.

School Entry Assessment links to the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability (SACSA) Framework and provides ongoing data as educators support children in working towards Standard 1. National literacy and numeracy benchmarks are evident in the Application Stage of School Entry Assessment.

In order to implement a nationally consistent on-entry to school literacy and numeracy assessment system additional work is required in South Australia to:

- provide data for the longitudinal tracking of student achievement [and be able to be linked to national testing in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9]
- enable the teacher, school, region and system to evaluate and measure the efficacy of particular classroom-based interventions and approaches
- allow for comparison of cohorts over time (ie compare children entering school in 2007 with children entering school in 2008).

Action 4 South Australia recommends reviewing the existing SA School Entry Assessment, developing it further to comply with the agreed national attributes and implementing the revised assessment system.

7. Ensure that diagnostic assessments are followed by sufficient resourcing and support to address identified learning needs, as well as providing a mechanism for tracking student performance over time at the school level and providing evidence on the efficacy of these interventions

South Australia recognises the need to increase the use and understanding of diagnostic assessments in order to identify learning needs and has an extensive program in place for special needs students. Developmental work for the *future* SACE will explore the use of diagnostic assessments as a means of supporting students to direct their literacy and numeracy learning to areas

of greatest needs. However at a national level much greater support is needed for follow up intervention identified through these diagnostic assessments.

From 2008 the national literacy and numeracy assessments at Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 will identify learners below literacy and numeracy benchmarks across all states and territories. Commonwealth support is required for both, this national testing program and the necessary interventions for identified students.

Few current teachers are confident users of learner achievement data to determine actions for literacy and numeracy improvement. This is an area that needs considerable resources to upskill teachers. Teachers need extended professional learning programs with opportunities to trial, adapt and incorporate new assessment strategies into their classroom practice. Additional staffing will be needed in districts and central office to provide expertise and leadership to effectively support teachers in this transition.

Action 5 South Australia recommends professional learning opportunities for primary and secondary teachers in the analysis of literacy and numeracy assessment data and the development of appropriate teaching strategies and interventions for identified students.

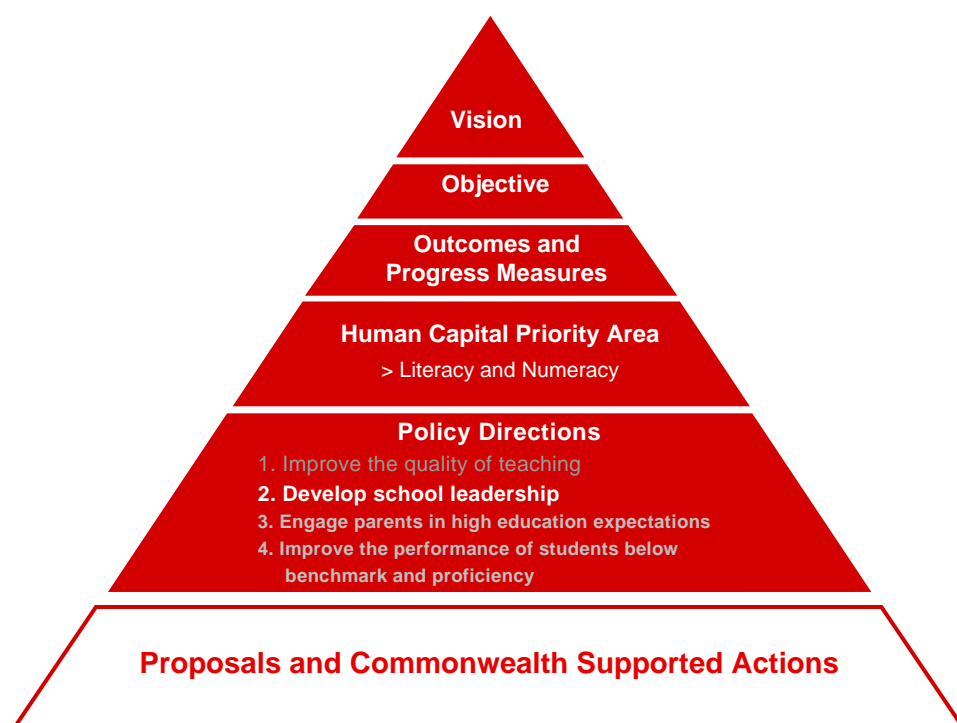
Action 6 South Australia recommends the employment of 36 district advisers and 4 centrally based curriculum officers to address literacy and numeracy improvement

8. Undertake a National Numeracy Review in 2007

The proposed National Numeracy Review will provide information about successful numeracy practices at a classroom, school and system level and should be modelled on the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy ie hosted and coordinated by the Commonwealth. This Review will need input from all states and territories to ensure that it reflects the knowledge and experiences of educators in diverse settings that are a feature of the Australian educational landscape. Once released, the findings of the Review will be incorporated into South Australian actions to improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers and school leaders.

Action 7 South Australia contributes to the National Numeracy Review at the classroom, school and system level.

POLICY DIRECTION 2: DEVELOP SCHOOL LEADERSHIP



9. Develop a core set of nationally agreed skills, knowledge and attributes on instructional leadership in literacy and numeracy teaching and learning for principals by end of 2007

The roles of school principals and leadership teams are critical in supporting whole school approaches to literacy and numeracy professional learning and improvement. High quality literacy and numeracy leadership is dependent on leaders' knowledge about effective teaching practices and balanced literacy and numeracy programs that contribute to and foster high aspirations and achievement for all students.

Developing effective community relationships and genuine two way communication with parents about the focus, direction and evaluation of school improvement, especially as they relate to literacy and numeracy achievement, are also key attributes of high quality school leadership. Extensive national and international research about the qualities of good leaders could be drawn upon in a nationally coordinated and developed set of skills, knowledge and attributes on instructional leadership in literacy and numeracy teaching and learning for principals.

Action 8 South Australia contributes to the development and implementation of a core set of nationally agreed skills, knowledge and attributes on instructional leadership in literacy and numeracy.

10. Develop leadership programs to implement the core skills, knowledge and attributes (up to Dec 2012)

The school is the most effective unit of change to improve learning outcomes, particularly for schools serving communities with high levels of disadvantage (Haberman 1991). International research indicates that a whole school approach to the teaching of literacy and numeracy leads to substantial improvement in educational outcomes by raising standards across the curriculum (Fullen *et. al.*, 2006).

Leadership programs need to include the ways in which successful leaders inspire commitment and focus on literacy and numeracy improvement and how they manage whole school approaches to achieve this.

Two reports from research in South Australian schools, *Nothing Left to Chance* and *Towards a Profile for Improving Numeracy for all Students*, have confirmed the benefits of whole school approaches by in-depth case studies in selected South Australian primary schools. The reports are available on the South Australian Literacy and Numeracy Network website www.thenetwork.sa.edu.au and provide leaders with examples of whole school planning, teaching and learning practices, audit tools and monitoring and accountability processes.

Action 9 South Australia develops professional learning programs for school leaders based on the nationally agreed skills, knowledge and attributes on instructional leadership in literacy and numeracy.

11. Develop a range of innovative modes and incentives for delivering the new leadership programs in literacy and numeracy (up to Dec 2012)

The South Australian Centre for Leaders in Education (SACLE) provides high quality professional services to support, challenge and continually strengthen the practice and leadership capability of educational leaders within DECS.

The DECS Learning to Learn Program features leaders learning circles, focussing on leading school reform and learning centred leadership. It also contracts the University of South Australia to research the characteristics of leadership for learning.

There is considerable scope for initiatives such as these to increase their capacity to meet the expanding need for flexible delivery of professional learning for principals, pre-school directors and leadership teams working in the variety of contexts across South Australia. Further programs, involving statewide leadership conferences and extended mentoring programs, could be developed to ensure consistent literacy and numeracy outcomes are achieved by all children and students.

Action 10 South Australia delivers professional learning programs for school leaders based on the nationally agreed skills, knowledge and attributes on instructional leadership in literacy and numeracy via flexible and innovative modes of delivery to meet the needs of leaders within diverse contexts across South Australia.

12. Develop a range of innovative strategies related to principal leadership to target resources to where they are need most (up to Dec 2012)

Innovative strategies for professional leadership need to address the range of needs and challenges experienced by school and preschool leaders. For example, the introduction of the *future* SACE and the establishment of birth-8 Children’s Centres will require specific leadership knowledge and attributes to maximize the literacy and numeracy outcomes for the students and children catered for within these programs and services.

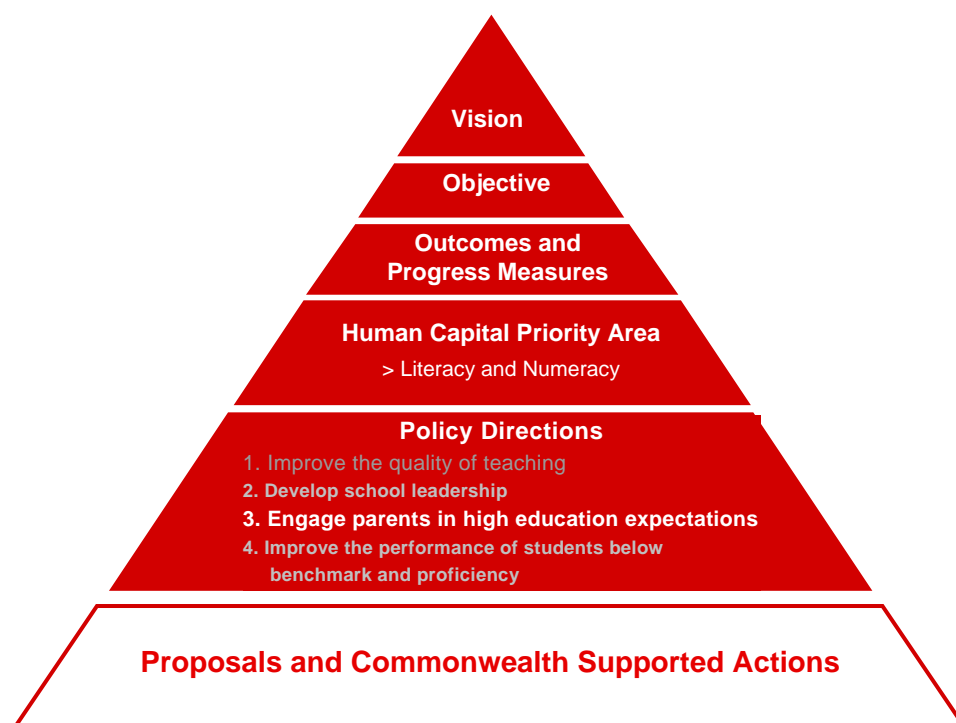
Targeted resources and actions relating to leadership could effectively support:

- New career and isolated leaders
- Leaders working in schools and preschools characterized by multiple indicators of disadvantage eg. geographical location, high numbers of Indigenous students, low socio-economic communities, transient populations
- Leaders needing to update their literacy and numeracy professional knowledge
- Leadership networks and professional mentor programs within and across districts

Action 11 South Australia will:

- draw on local and national examples to develop school based strategies to target resources to where they are needed most
- incorporate these strategies into programs developed in Action 9 above.

POLICY DIRECTION 3: ENGAGE PARENTS IN HIGH EDUCATION EXPECTATIONS



13. Raise educational expectations by aligning strategies for effective parental/carer engagement around three focus areas

Parental involvement in children’s education has become widely recognised as an important element in effective schooling. Effective parental/carer engagement results in higher educational expectations. Research indicates that parents are most likely to choose to become involved in their children’s education when they see this as an important role, when they have a strong sense of efficacy and when they see the requests and invitations for involvement as authentic.

There has been agreement across jurisdictions that in order to raise the educational expectations of parents, attention in each of the following three principle focus areas is required:

- building the capacity of parents to support student success
- addressing parental involvement in teacher training and professional development
- communication with parents on expectations, student outcomes and opportunities for parental involvement.

The South Australian DECS strategic plan supports the principle of developing authentic parent/school partnerships which recognise and value the input parents (families) have had in children's literacy and numeracy learning prior to starting school and therefore aim to build on and strengthen these partnerships throughout schools and within the wider system.

Each school develops improvement plans and strategies and literacy plans. Partnerships with parents and families are integral to these. Each school has parent representation on the Governing Council where literacy and numeracy are a priority. There is an intention and expectation that the culture of schools would welcome parental involvement in student learning and actively develop programs and processes to do so which are included in site development plans. Many schools (particularly primary schools) run programs targeted at engaging parents in their child's education.

The highly successful Premier's Reading Challenge provides an incentive for students to read a set number of books each year. Schools and parents work together to support and encourage students to complete the challenge and many of these reading activities are occurring at home. Parents therefore are actively supporting their children's reading success and acknowledging the importance of literacy in their lives.

The Early Years Literacy Program has developed resources based on current research that describes five basic "Design Elements":

- Professional learning and leadership
- Whole site commitment and focus
- Effective use of evidence and data
- Effective teaching and learning
- Working within community

These elements support cultural change within schools and districts and reflects the tri level approach to monitoring improvement in literacy and numeracy. The *Working within community* element particularly addresses engaging with families and communities.

To further identify opportunities and processes to effectively engage parents in their children's learning, and to capitalise on South Australia's combined education and children's services infrastructure, South Australia sees value in researching and acting upon the long term benefits of investing in family literacy and numeracy programs.

Action 12 South Australia will participate in Commonwealth funded research into the long term benefits of investing in family literacy and numeracy programs, which support children's learning and literacy and numeracy development.

14. Tailor parental engagement strategies to meet the needs of specific communities/student groups

The 138 designated Primary counsellors in DECS primary schools and Aboriginal Education Workers, situated in schools with significant Indigenous student populations, actively foster communication with parents about their children's literacy and numeracy achievement and their expectations and aspirations for them.

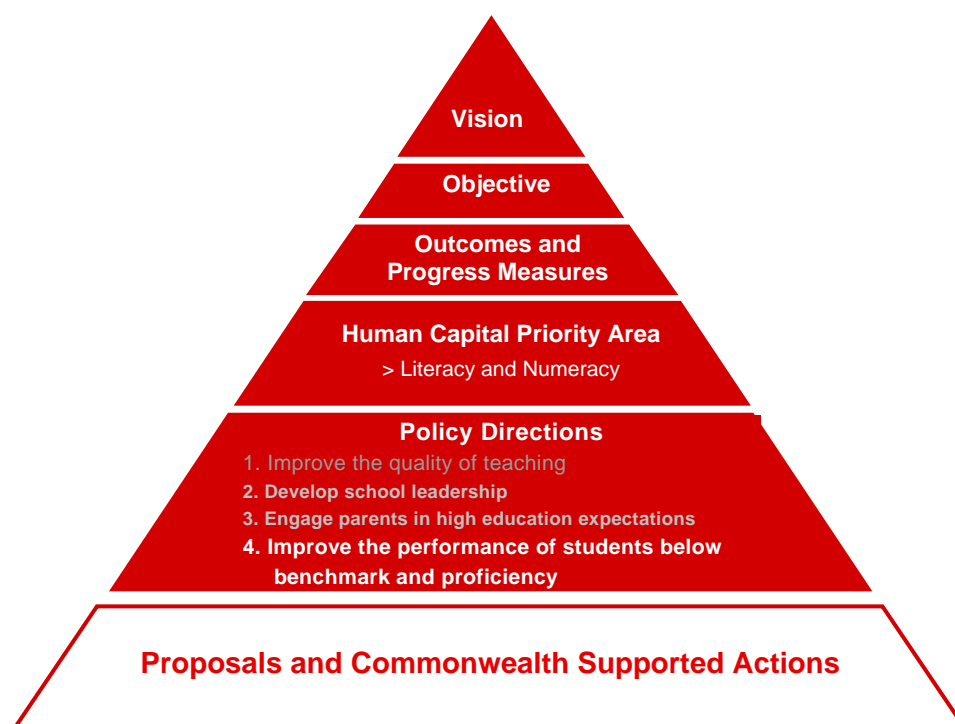
Other significant DECS strategies that build the capacity of schools and preschools to work collaboratively with specific parents and families include:

- Learning Together
- I Can
- Education Works

- Children’s Centres for early development and parenting
- Student well being and involvement
- Cross government strategies involving DECS, Health and Families SA

In addition, the *Partnerships for Children’s Literacy Learning* Action Research project with educators from schools and preschools has resulted in a range of strategies for building strong educator / parent relationships and partnerships.

POLICY DIRECTION 4: IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS BELOW BENCHMARK AND PROFICIENCY



15. Implement future targeted strategies to address literacy and numeracy under achievement around four agreed focus areas and in alignment with the MCEETYA national goals of schooling

There are unacceptable gaps in literacy and numeracy achievement among groups of Australian students, despite our overall high quality performance. The OECD has referred to Australia as a ‘high-quality, low-equity’ country (OECD 2001) due to the impact of social background on literacy and numeracy performance.

The available evidence demonstrate that GDP and productivity benefits accrue with increases in literacy and numeracy outcomes - suggesting that it is beneficial to address, through targeted resources and actions, those students who are failing to achieve acceptable standards of performance in literacy and numeracy. For the individual, achievement in literacy and numeracy has been shown to be a key determinant of future educational and labour market outcomes.

Studies have found that the returns of human capital in terms of higher economic growth are more sensitive to the average skills of the entire population than to the share of individuals with higher-level skills, suggesting that it is more beneficial to aim for a general lift in standards of performance than to focus attention only at the top end.

A complex range of factors influence poor student outcomes, including teacher quality, school leadership, student background, whole of school disadvantage and geo-location.

The policy implications of this evidence suggests the need to identify targeted strategies, approaches and actions aimed at improving the outcomes of socially and educationally disadvantaged students, to augment universal reforms directed at all students.

Actions to address literacy and numeracy underachievement should include strategies based on the following agreed focus areas and in alignment with the MCEETYA national goals of schooling;

- target resources both through schools and individually towards students at risk of not meeting literacy and numeracy outcomes
- focus on overcoming barriers that some students may face in relation to literacy and numeracy
- enhance the capacity of the teaching workforce to assist students at risk of not meeting literacy and numeracy outcomes
- promote a holistic approach, which builds in links between parents, community agencies and other government agencies to support students and their families.

There is a need to ensure that targeted strategies are not just confined to students who do not meet the national benchmarks. Some students are exempted from these standardised tests, but have high needs, while others may just meet the national benchmarks without achieving their full productive potential. To address issues such as this, DECS is implementing the reduction of Junior Primary class sizes to enable effective interventions for children identified as being at risk of not meeting literacy and numeracy outcomes.

Improving the achievement of Aboriginal students is a major priority for the Department of Education and Children's Services. Around \$5 million annually funds the placement of Aboriginal Education Teachers in schools with Aboriginal students and they are supported by 17 district based Aboriginal Education Coordinators. An evaluation is currently underway in South Australia to consider ways of focussing this significant resource allocation more explicitly on

Supporting clusters of schools to develop and implement strategies to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for Aboriginal learners.

The current South Australian Mathematics for Learning Inclusion Project has demonstrated the effectiveness of a cluster coordinator model to improve classroom practice in mathematics across a cluster of disadvantaged schools. Professional learning for the cluster coordinators is provided centrally. This model would be a sound basis on which to provide key leadership in literacy and numeracy.

To adequately address literacy and numeracy under achievement, approaches are required that assist both individual students, as well as whole schools that have a high percentage of students who perform poorly or marginally in standardised literacy and numeracy tests (including schools with high concentrations of socio-economic disadvantage) to achieve higher standards for their students. These schools need intensive, expert assistance to turn around their performance and achieve a greater parity of outcomes in literacy and numeracy across all groups of students.

Literacy and numeracy coordinators could be appointed to these schools to drive improved literacy and numeracy outcomes by:

- working with teachers and school leaders to develop and implement a whole school literacy and numeracy plan and monitor outcomes;
- devising a professional development program to support the whole school literacy and numeracy plan;
- leading school training sessions to familiarise teachers with the most effective tools for assessing student performance;
- managing the literacy and numeracy budget and liaising with colleagues to purchase appropriate resources;
- developing school structures and cultures that support sustainable changes to classroom practice in literacy and numeracy.

Action 13 South Australia recommends providing Literacy Coordinators and/or Numeracy Coordinators to clusters of SA schools on a needs basis.

Data from the MCEETYA National Report on Schooling in Australia (2004) indicates that there is a general drop in both literacy and numeracy benchmark achievement from Year 3 to Year 5 and to Year 7. Seven per cent of year 3 students in each of reading, writing and numeracy are not achieving the benchmark level, while ten per cent of year 5 students are achieving below the benchmarks. Comparison with the 2003 achievement rates shows that the proportion of students meeting the numeracy benchmarks was lower in year 7 than in year 3 or year 5.

The reasons for these trends, especially for students from low socio-economic and Indigenous communities are unclear, but extremely concerning. From these types of national literacy and numeracy tests, it appears that the effect of schooling is making little difference, too, or in fact exacerbating the gap in learning achievement and life prospects for many of our students. Current literacy research flags this issue, and South Australia contends that the following quote would be equally applicable to numeracy,

“...relatively few studies have considered either literacy curricula or literacy development in the middle years of primary school. Yet a number of educators have suggested that the gap between the literacy performance of students living in low socio-economic circumstances increases, rather than decreases as we might expect, after the early years of schooling. Further, some educators now speak of a ‘fourth-grade slump’, which suggests that there may be unexplained changes in school literacy tasks which impact differentially on children’s development at this point.”

Literacy after the early years: a longitudinal study, Comber, Badger, Barnett, Nixon, Pitt
(http://www.myread.org/readings_literacy.htm -accessed 2 March 2007)

South Australia recommends therefore that the Commonwealth conducts research into the underlying causes of the national fall in literacy and numeracy benchmark achievement from Year 3 to Year 7, particularly

- identifying the school and classroom practices used in schools that demonstrate unexpected high levels of consistent achievement given their profile
- investigate the transferability of these successful strategies to schools needing to raise their levels of achievement.

The findings of such research could significantly inform and guide the development of teachers’ repertoires of practice in teaching literacy and numeracy. There is strong evidence to support the effectiveness of professional learning, reflection and action research within the classroom using an intensive, ‘shoulder-to-shoulder’ collaborative learning approach between a mentor and a teacher.

Mentors guide teachers in the collection and analysis of student performance data, using data to inform planning, modelling lessons and team-teaching, with the aim of improving levels of literacy and numeracy among high needs students whose performance was below the national average. An independent evaluation by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER, 2005) found that the Western Australian strategy was having a significant impact on practice. The mentor role has been successfully translated to South Australia’s Early Years Literacy Program (EYLP) where mentor teachers have been working shoulder-to-shoulder with teachers in disadvantaged schools. EYLP Mentor Teachers have supported colleagues in professional learning models based on inquiry approaches, trialing and implementing more effective teaching strategies in their classrooms.

The impact of Literacy Mentor Teachers and Numeracy Mentor Teachers would be increased by the provision of literacy and numeracy co-ordinators, as outlined in Action 13 of this plan.

Action 14 South Australia recommends the provision of Literacy Mentor Teachers be extended beyond Year 3 and the inclusion of Numeracy Mentor Teachers to targeted clusters of government schools.

16. Through MCEETYA, develop a strategy to monitor and report on existing intervention practices, including whether the improvements from the interventions are sustained in the longer term

A very broad range of intervention practices are in use in schools around Australia. Schools are not equipped to engage in research studies into the efficacy of these programs and can therefore be influenced by short term gains in some aspects of literacy and numeracy or behavioural and attitudinal changes that may not transfer into actual gains in achievement. For some students, intervention programs may not have any significant positive impact on their achievement in the long term, in fact if they have been withdrawn from class to participate in the intervention program it may have detrimental effects on their learning.

Schools and systems would benefit from an audit of current intervention strategies and programs in use across Australia and a longitudinal study into the long term impact of these approaches. The findings from such a process would give schools and teachers the information on which to base

informed choices about intervention strategies and lead to greater consistency in these strategies across Australia.

Action 15 South Australia recommends monitoring and reporting on existing intervention practices.

17. The Commonwealth, States and Territories recognize the impact on literacy/numeracy outcomes of broader causes of disadvantage (eg health, geographic isolation, income levels, housing) and that this impact may differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and agree to explore, through MCEEETYA, possible options

Health levels, low income, geographic isolation and other related factors are significant in South Australia and impact on literacy and numeracy outcomes.

The current practice of national comparison does not take these factors into account and may therefore not give a true indication of the 'value added' in South Australia and other states or territories with similar levels of disadvantage.

Action 16 South Australia recommends contributing data about the impact of disadvantage on literacy and numeracy achievement and participates in the development of whole of government options for improvement.

5. Budget and Proposed Funding Mechanism

South Australia's Plan for Investment in Literacy and Numeracy demonstrates the South Australian Government's commitment to the National Reform Agenda, to raising the literacy and numeracy achievement of all South Australian students and, in particular, to reducing the gaps in achievement between various cohorts of students.

In addition to this financial commitment we are improving accountability for literacy and numeracy at the school level and providing support through central and district offices to school leaders to plan and enact literacy and numeracy reform. These changes will deliver improved educational outcomes with associated gains in employment and productivity. Productivity increases will generate fiscal benefits to government budgets, the significant majority of which would go to the Commonwealth.

Provision of the full package of reforms set out in this plan (summarised in the table in Section 4.2) is only possible with financial support from the Commonwealth, together with its cooperation and commitment to reform and to a fair sharing of the costs and benefits of that reform.

Strong national leadership and collaboration is the only way to ensure that we give our young people every opportunity for future success – and that we equip our nation with the educated and skilled population we will need to meet the challenges ahead.

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