

Queensland Education Performance Review

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Government Response to the Report of the Queensland Education Performance Review — ‘Masters Review’

A Shared Challenge: Improving Literacy, Numeracy and Science Learning in Queensland Primary Schools

Overview

On 1 May 2009, Professor Geoff Masters of the Australian Council for Educational Research presented the report of the Queensland Education Performance Review to the Premier and to the Minister for Education and Training. The report was released for public consultation and submissions were accepted until 29 May 2009.

The Queensland Government thanks Professor Masters for the diligence and expertise with which he has conducted the review.

Professor Masters' report emphasises the importance of high quality teaching and school leadership. His recommendations reflect this focus, which the Government endorses.

The Government's response to the recommendations of the report is now provided.

The Government notes developments that will soon occur nationally, such as the national curriculum and national consistency in accreditation of teacher education courses, teacher registration and teaching standards. Queensland's commitments to these reforms will need to be taken into account in the implementation of the Government's responses to the recommendations.

The report raises some significant issues that are not addressed by specific recommendations. Notable among these are outcomes for Indigenous students, and the role of parents and caregivers in supporting their children's education. The Government undertakes that its response to each of the recommendations will take account of these issues.

The Queensland Department of Education and Training will coordinate the implementation of the response. In late 2009, the Government will publish a progress report detailing the implementation of the Government's response to the review's recommendations.

Response to recommendations

Recommendation 1

That all aspiring primary teachers be required to demonstrate through test performances, as a condition of registration, that they meet threshold levels of knowledge about the teaching of literacy, numeracy and science and have sound levels of content knowledge in these areas.

Response

Supported

Comments

The Government supports the need to ensure threshold standards in literacy, numeracy, science and teaching techniques for entry to the teaching profession.

The Government will commission tests of personal literacy, numeracy and science knowledge for student teachers, and tests to confirm that aspiring primary teachers have the necessary knowledge of teaching techniques. These tests will be administered to Queensland primary teachers on completion of the requirements of their teaching qualification and prior to registration. The Queensland College of Teachers will be charged with developing and administering the tests.

The Government will develop appropriate pre-registration testing arrangements for secondary teachers subject to consultation with stakeholders.

The Government will encourage teacher education institutions to establish their own testing arrangements for new teaching enrolments early in their teacher education programs.

In addition, the state, independent and Catholic schooling sectors agree that they have a responsibility to be clear about the skills and knowledge that they expect aspiring teachers to have, and to support beginning teachers.

Action

The Department of Education and Training will work with the Queensland College of Teachers to develop options for the tests. By December 2009 the agencies will develop an implementation plan that details the scope and form of the tests, their timing and method of delivery and cost implications, taking into account issues raised in consultation. Trial tests will be implemented in 2010.

This work will take into account the developments at the national level on consistency in accreditation of teacher education courses, teacher registration and in the development of national teaching standards.

Achievements with respect to the implementation plan for pre-registration tests will be reported as part of the Government progress report in late 2009.

Recommendation 2

That the Queensland Government introduces a new structure and program of advanced professional learning in literacy, numeracy and science for primary school teachers.

Response

Supported

Comments

The Government supports the recommendation as a way of providing high quality professional development that advances the priorities of improving students' learning, in particular in literacy, numeracy and science.

The Queensland College of Teachers will develop and administer a rigorous professional development framework in literacy, numeracy, science and assessment capability accessible to teachers and school leaders in all schooling sectors.

The framework will accredit professional development modules developed by a range of providers, including universities, school sectors and other education providers. Sequenced modules will build advanced professional capability for teachers and school leaders, with articulation to higher education programs.

The three school sectors will be able to nominate priority areas within the framework that will align with the continuing professional development already required by the Queensland College of Teachers for teachers to maintain their registration. This will enable a balance to be achieved between system priorities and local school choice.

Practising teachers need to have adequate knowledge of how to teach and assess literacy, numeracy and science. To ensure this is the case in state schools, the Government will make completion of professional development in these areas mandatory for state school teachers.

Action

The Department of Education and Training will work with the Queensland College of Teachers to develop and administer a rigorous professional development framework to accredit modules that provide evidence-based professional development in literacy, numeracy, science and assessment capability for teachers and school leaders.

The Department of Education and Training will develop a plan for ensuring that state school teachers access professional development in essential knowledge of how to teach and assess literacy, numeracy and science.

The professional development framework and state school professional development plan will be submitted to the Minister for Education and Training, and achievements will be included as part of the Government progress report in late 2009.

Recommendation 3

That additional funding be made available for the advanced training and employment of a number of 'specialist' literacy, numeracy and science teachers to work in schools (and/or district offices) most in need of support.

Response

Supported

Comments

As acknowledged in Professor Masters' report, the Government is already taking action consistent with this recommendation.

In addition to the \$547 million invested in literacy and numeracy over the last three years, in 2009 the Government has made the following commitments.

- Up to 80 literacy and numeracy teaching coaches will strengthen teaching performance in state schools identified on the basis of their National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) 2008 results, percentage of Indigenous students, and percentage of students eligible for English as a Second Language (ESL) support.
- 100 additional teachers will be placed in state primary schools to allow experienced science teachers to be released to assist their colleagues to work with students in science in Years 4-7. As well, 15 science teachers will provide a comprehensive professional development program to primary schools to support the teaching of science. The professional development provided by the 15 'Science Spark' trainers – equivalent to one day for each Years 4-7 teacher – will be supported by the in-school work of the 100 science teachers.

Education Queensland has committed to review existing resources in districts and schools, such as Support Teachers – Learning Difficulties. More than 900 of these teachers in Queensland state schools will receive professional development to focus on lifting performance in literacy and numeracy across the school.

The Government will work to better support parents and encourage them to share responsibility for the literacy and numeracy skills of their children.

In addition, the state, independent and Catholic school sectors are giving priority to professional development in the crucial areas of literacy, numeracy and science.

Action

The Government will implement its new funding commitments, taking into account issues raised in consultation.

The Government will deploy the additional resources, commencing with the engagement and training of literacy and numeracy coaches, from Semester Two 2009. Science trainers will be engaged from Semester Two 2009, and the 100 additional teachers from Semester One 2010.

Achievements will be reported as part of the Government progress report in late 2009.

Recommendation 4

That standard science tests be introduced at Years 4, 6, 8 and 10 for school use in identifying students who are not meeting year-level expectations and for monitoring student progress over time.

Response

In-principle support

Comments

The Government sees improved teaching of science as a priority and supports the intent of this recommendation: to build students' knowledge and to communicate curriculum standards and scope to teachers. However, the Government acknowledges the views expressed by stakeholders on the suitability of introducing mandatory testing in an environment where many teachers admit to a lack of confidence and expertise in teaching science.

Building on the Queensland Curriculum Assessment and Reporting framework in conjunction with the development of national curriculum offers the best means to increase the time spent on science and improve the quality of science teaching in primary schools.

The Government will therefore develop the skills and knowledge of Queensland primary teachers to teach and assess science more effectively, before moving to provide more standardised testing through refinements to the Queensland Comparable Assessment Tasks.

Action

The Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) will:

- enhance Queensland Comparable Assessment Tasks (QCAT) to provide a rigorous common assessment for Queensland students and build a strong assessment culture amongst teachers
- develop a range of additional science assessment tasks to be placed in the Assessment Bank for the use of schools and teachers, including sample tests that schools and teachers can access to prepare students for national and international tests
- analyse Queensland students' performance in national and international tests to identify priority areas for professional development programs.

The Government will make science a priority for state schools.

The Government progress report in late 2009 will describe achievements against the above actions.

Recommendation 5

That the Queensland Government initiates an expert review of international best practice in school leadership development with a view to introducing a new structure and program of advanced professional learning for primary school leaders focused on effective strategies for driving improved school performances in literacy, numeracy and science.

Response

Supported

Comments

The Government affirms that educational leadership offered by principals and other school leaders is a critical factor in the performance of schools, the quality of teaching, and the educational experiences of students.

The Government will establish a new Queensland Education Leadership Institute for school leaders. The education leadership institute will coordinate advanced professional learning programs for school leaders and aspiring school leaders from state, independent and Catholic schools.

The programs will focus on educational leadership of school improvement and schools system priorities, including the teaching of literacy, numeracy and science. They will serve the needs of school leaders across their career stages and school environments.

The Government is currently negotiating with the Australian Government with regard to Queensland hosting a national education leadership development institute which, if successful, will complement the response to this recommendation.

Action

The Government will appoint an expert committee to drive the development of the Queensland Education Leadership Institute, with a provisional launch date of July 2010. The committee will involve key stakeholders including representatives from the schooling sectors, universities, and principals' associations, and will keep abreast of negotiations with the Australian Government with respect to a national institute.

Achievements will be included as part of the Government progress report in late 2009.

Queensland Education Performance Review Implementation Plan

| Key actions | Milestones |
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| Recommendation 1 | |
| Develop an implementation plan detailing: scope and form of test(s); timing; method of delivery; cost implications | Trial test(s) in 2010 Achievements will be reported as part of the Government progress report late 2009 |
| Recommendation 2 | |
| Develop a framework to accredit evidence-based professional development in literacy, numeracy, science and assessment capability for teachers and school leaders | Achievements will be reported as part of the Government progress report late 2009 |
| Develop a state school professional development plan for state schools | Professional development plan submitted to the Minister for Education and Training Achievements will be reported as part of the Government progress report in late 2009 |
| Recommendation 3 | |
| Deploy specialist teachers | Achievements will be reported as part of the Government progress report in late 2009 |
| Recommendation 4 | |
| QSA to enhance QCATs to provide a rigorous common assessment for Queensland students and to build a strong assessment culture amongst teachers | Trial enhanced QCATs with a number of schools commencing in 2010 |
| Develop additional science assessment instruments for QSA Assessment Bank | Assessments available in the Assessment Bank for the use of schools and teachers |
| Science established as a leadership priority for principals in state schools | Achievements will be reported as part of the Government progress report in late 2009 |
| QSA to analyse Queensland students' performance in national and international tests to identify priority areas for professional development programs | Achievements will be reported as part of the Government progress report in late 2009 |
| Recommendation 5 | |
| Appoint an expert committee to establish education leadership institute | Terms of Reference developed and expert committee appointed New education leadership institute launched Achievements will be reported as part of the Government progress report in late 2009 |