



Non-Government Reform Support Fund

Strategic Plan 2023

Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia

Executive Summary

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

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

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

Current context

AISWA supports 162 Non-Government Schools in WA. The Independent schools are spread across the state with about two thirds located in major cities, 16 in inner regional areas within 300 kms of Perth, 12 in outer regional areas, more than 300 kms from Perth, three Remote and 15 Very Remote. The Very Remote and Remote schools are Majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (MATSI) schools that are sole providers. With the majority of the MATSI schools in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions of WA, the cost of supporting the schools is very high when much of the support needed is face to face and travel to or from a school can take a day of combined flights and many hours of driving. These schools are located over 2,000 kilometres from Perth and the roads to many of them are only accessible by four-wheel drive vehicles.

Across the sector we have approximately 2,200 Aboriginal students split across all our member schools with 600 students enrolled in our MATSI schools and about 300 enrolled in our boarding schools. All the boarding schools have specific programs in place to support Aboriginal boarding students.

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

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

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

All schools will be involved in many aspects of the National Education Reform Agreement. A number of schools are already implementing a formative assessment approach and see the great benefit of an online formative assessment tool linked to Learning Progressions developed for the Australian Curriculum. In WA, AISWA is the certifying body for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers (HALT) and while the uptake has been slow the teachers who have participated comment that it has had an incredible impact on their own practice, the practice of others in their schools and consequently the outcomes students achieve. We will continue to work with all schools on improving the teaching workforce, particularly in line with The National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, published in December 2022.

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

National Policy Initiatives

AISWA will continue to support the implementation of the eight national policy initiatives as set out at clause 44 of the National School Reform Agreement. As outlined in the 2023 guidelines, AISWA will prioritise activities to strengthen the three national priorities as follows:

- A) improve the quality of information on the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability and improve the efficiency and integrity of the data collection
- B) strengthen NAPLAN, including through bringing the test window forward to term 1 from 2023 and offering schools the opportunity to opt-in to assessment of students' ability in Science, Digital Literacy and Civics and Citizenship
- C) improve governance and financial management practices in non-government schools to strengthen financial viability, improve business decision making and build resilience to mitigate unforeseen circumstances.

AISWA will work with the Department of Education (WA) to ensure the objectives and outcomes of the National School Reform Agreement are achieved in 2023.

Specific state reforms are:

- Improving student engagement and wellbeing in schools.
- Support for school leaders, teachers, and early career teachers.
- STEM initiatives.
- Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on Students with a Disability.
- Enhancing the evidence base

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

Objectives

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

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

Measurement and Evaluation

Indicators of success are gathered and measured through the collection of quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data includes, but is not limited to, surveys and questionnaires; and qualitative data includes feedback responses. While we use attendance at events as a quantitative measure, the richer ones are the surveys completed by project participants detailing how they have used what they have learned to improve outcomes for students. A number of projects are ongoing so this qualitative feedback is useful in continuing the process and in our planning for the future. As schools commit their time and resources to working with AISWA in various ways we all want to see positive and progressive results from that commitment. Measures we use will vary by the project and by the types of participants.