



REPORTING STUDENT AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

AEU FEDERAL ELECTION FACT SHEET

NUMBER 5 - JUNE 2007

When then Education Minister Brendan Nelson introduced The Schools Assistance Act 2004 into Parliament, he included in it a number of conditions on schools which had not previously applied. Any systems or schools that do not comply risk losing their Federal funding. In the case of public schools this amounts to 11% of the total. Included amongst the conditions was an extensive set of requirements involving student and school reporting.

Student Reporting

The Regulations under the Schools Assistance Act specify that from 2006 schools are required to report twice a year to parents using “plain English,” and the reports must show how the student is achieving relative to his/her peer group at the school by at least quartile bands and the report has to include an assessment against achievement levels or bands labelled as A, B, C, D, E (or an equivalent); and be clearly defined against specific learning standards.

This drew considerable negative response from teachers, education unions and state and territory departments, who are concerned about the invalidity of returning to the old form of reporting students in comparison to other students, and in ways that leave some students always “failing” rather than reporting progress.

There have been some concessions as a result of protests, but there is an ongoing struggle and negotiation to make the conditions educationally valid. In particular there are concerns about the application of the conditions to the earlier years of school, and the description of the A-E or equivalent categories.

In reality, many schools had worked out excellent reporting arrangements with parent bodies and there was no need for Federal interference. It is producing unnecessary work, duplication and confusion.

School Reporting

Another new requirement was that from mid-2007 all schools must publish a range of “school performance” information covering:

Professional Engagement

- Staff attendance
- Staff retention
- Teacher qualifications
- Expenditure and teacher participation in professional learning

Key Student Outcomes

- Student attendance
- Proportions of Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 students meeting national reading, writing, spelling and numeracy benchmarks
- Changes in benchmark results from the previous year
- Value added
- Average standardised assessment results for Year 9 and Year 10 students
- Senior Secondary outcomes
- Proportion of Year 9 students retained to Year 12 (or equivalent)
- Post-school destinations

Satisfaction

- Parent, student and teacher satisfaction

The Regulations require that this information will be provided in at least two of the following forms:

- (a) a hard copy school annual report provided to parents and made available to prospective parents upon request;
- (b) a hard copy newsletter provided to parents and made available to prospective parents upon request;
- (c) a hard copy school handbook provided to parents and made available to prospective parents upon request;
- (d) on the Internet, using a URL address provided to parents and prospective parents upon request;
- (e) by means of a billboard or sign that is clearly visible to the public inside or outside the school.

Again, states and territories seem to have negotiated reasonable forms of application, but one is left wondering what benefit there is in the Federal Government intruding in this way. The suspicion is that it is the beginning, the thin edge of the wedge, formed out of a belief that schools should compete with each other and that league tables will stimulate this competition and provide the information for parents to judge which is the “best” school. In reality, it serves no valid educational purpose and just creates more bureaucratic work for schools.