

**POLICY**

STATEMENT

**11**

**ASSESSMENT AND  
REPORTING FOR SCHOOLS**

## **FOREWORD**

The Department for Education and Children's Services is committed to providing students in schools with quality educational opportunities and valued outcomes. In particular, teaching and learning programs which promote the development of knowledge, life-long learning attitudes and skills in students must be a major goal of all schools. Assessment and reporting are crucial elements of such teaching and learning programs.

This policy has been developed to guide schools in developing procedures in the assessment and reporting of student learning achievement. It provides key principles and protocols, outlines responsibilities and defines important terms regarding assessment and reporting which are central to the work of teachers in schools. Assessment and reporting procedures developed by schools will incorporate existing requirements, including curriculum statements and profiles, the foundation areas of learning and the SA Certificate of Education.

Making assessments of what students know, understand and can do is critical in assisting them to participate fully in the learning process. Information gathered during the assessment of student learning needs to be shared by teachers, students and parents so that goals for future learning can be identified.

I endorse this policy, which I believe reinforces our aim to achieve excellence in the provision of education and children's services.

Denis Ralph  
Chief Executive

## **BACKGROUND**

Assessment and reporting have always been important aspects of teachers' work. They are integral parts of teaching and learning programs in all schools.

DECS policies, the extended subject frameworks and curriculum statements and profiles for each area of study provide a basis for teachers' decision-making about the scope and nature of learning and assessment and reporting activities.

The Education Department of SA's 1989 Position paper on student assessment provided information to school communities about developing their own most appropriate assessment and reporting procedures to meet the teaching and learning needs of their students.

The 1990s have seen the strengthening of a number of assessment and reporting frameworks at the system level which require common and consistent assessment and reporting practices across schools.

For years 1-10, the curriculum statements and profiles for Australian schools and the ESL scales provide an agreed standards referenced framework for assessing and reporting student achievement. The basic skills tests identify and report aspects of students' literacy and numeracy skills in years 3 and 5.

In the post-compulsory years, assessment and reporting occur within the frameworks of the South Australian Certificate of Education and the Australian Qualifications Framework.

This policy encompasses school-initiated assessment and reporting action as well as system-wide requirements for years R-12. It has been developed for the school sector.

## **ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING**

Assessment is the process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about progress in students' learning.

The purposes of assessment are to improve the learning outcomes of all students, to provide information about whether the learning goals of the teaching program have been achieved and to assist with making decisions about subsequent teaching and learning.

Reporting is communicating to others the knowledge gained from assessing student learning.

The purposes of reporting are to support teaching and learning by providing information to students, parents, caregivers and teachers about students' learning progress and achievement. Schools inform others including divisions of the Department for Education and Children's Services (DECS), the Senior Secondary

Assessment Board of South Australia (SSABSA), higher education systems, employers and the wider community about student learning achievement. Reports on student achievement provide information to guide curriculum development, review and reform.

## **RATIONALE**

This policy provides direction for practice in schools. The policy requires assessment and reporting to be planned and integral parts of effective teaching and learning. It assists schools to develop effective assessment and reporting practices based on a set of principles.

Consistent application of these principles will prepare students to be successful when, throughout their schooling, a range of assessment methods is used. The policy will help to improve learning outcomes for all students in DECS schools.

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

DECS values assessment and reporting practices which promote improvement in students' learning. Teachers will use a variety of assessment methods and reporting processes to meet diverse needs.

The assessment methods used in schools must recognise the differing needs of individuals and groups. Assessment and reporting practices must take into account and address the complexities of Aboriginality, ethnicity, culture, gender, socio-economic status, disability, geographical isolation and the age of the student.

Teachers' professional judgements will be an essential component of assessment and reporting processes. Teachers will work with students to make decisions about what and when to assess and to ensure that processes are focussed, manageable and useful. Recognising prior learning will be an important aspect of assessment, recording and reporting processes.

All students should have regular opportunities to receive, discuss and clarify information about their progress toward the achievement of agreed learning goals and outcomes. Students will learn to use a range of processes to gather and provide evidence of their learning progress. Teachers and students will assess and report student learning progress and achievement in all areas of study across the curriculum. Assessment practices will be developed in line with the stated curriculum objectives and explicit learning outcomes. In some cases, schools will work with industry and other out-of-school providers on workplace assessment and reporting.

Ongoing records will be maintained in ways which best support teachers' professional judgement and assessment purposes and methods.

Assessment information will be used at classroom and school levels to inform decision-making about learning programs and priorities for curriculum development.

Schools will plan a range of opportunities for parents and caregivers to participate in assessment and reporting processes.

Planned reporting by teachers to students and parents will occur a minimum of three times a year. For students in years 1-10, one of these reports will provide information about achievement against the profiles. In addition, parents of students in years 3 and 5 will receive another report on students' basic skills in aspects of literacy and numeracy.

The reporting of learning progress must be consistent with assessment methods. Reporting will be an ongoing process, both planned and informal, with reports available in oral and written forms according to the needs of the audience. At least one report each year will be in written form and it will provide a summary of student achievement. Numbers and grades, if used, will be reported with accompanying descriptive information.

Schools will plan for appropriate assessment and reporting within the context of this policy. Schools will map how assessment and reporting practice occurs across all required areas of study and across the curriculum. Schools will regularly review their practices, taking into account changing priorities and the changing needs of students and communities.

The education system will report on student performance to students and parents and provide regular reports to fulfil a commitment to public accountability and to assist in curriculum review and reform. The release of information will be in accordance with an agreed code of conduct for using student achievement information. (See appendix on page 14.)

## **PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING**

The following principles should underpin all practices which schools adopt in relation to assessment and reporting.

### **Principle 1: All students have the right to be skilled and knowledgeable participants in the processes of assessment and reporting.**

- In practice this means that students:
- monitor and evaluate their learning progress
- negotiate goal setting and self assessment
- influence the processes of teaching and learning
- understand the place of assessment and reporting in their own learning
- participate in selecting explicit criteria for assessment activities and reporting processes.

## **Principle 2: Effective teaching practices rely on assessing and reporting strategically.**

In practice this means that teachers:

- use their professional judgement to make decisions about student learning progress
- develop assessment and reporting plans as part of the teaching and learning program
- will not over-assess; they identify aspects of the content and skills to be assessed within each topic or unit of work
- monitor the range of assessment and reporting methods used
- plan opportunities for students to learn the skills and develop the knowledge required to be successful in formal or recorded assessment tasks
- describe students' progress towards the achievement of personal learning goals and curriculum objectives
- use the information gained from assessing as a basis for reporting to parents and caregivers
- use the information for future programming and teaching.

## **Principle 3: Effective assessment and reporting of student achievement requires a coordinated whole school approach.**

In practice this means that schools:

- plan for assessment at all stages of curriculum planning and implementation
- explore, develop and implement appropriate ways of reporting learning outcomes to the school community
- provide clear information to students and parents about how assessment and reporting occur in the school
- provide the opportunity for students, parents and caregivers to participate actively in the reporting process
- develop a range of reporting procedures consistent with their assessment practices and the teaching and learning program
- review and reform assessment and reporting practices regularly.

## **Principle 4: Effective assessment and reporting practices are equitable.**

In practice this means that:

- students have the opportunity to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do in a variety of ways
- learning goals are explicit, clearly stated and developed collaboratively

- teachers understand that some assessment practices discriminate against specific groups and individuals, and plan accordingly
- students are engaged in authentic assessment tasks (see glossary)
- students are taught the skills and develop the knowledge to participate fully in the processes of assessment and reporting.

### **Principle 5: Effective assessment and reporting requires the use of a comprehensive range of methods and strategies.**

In practice this means that:

- teachers use valid and reliable assessment tasks or activities (see glossary on page 10)
- teachers formally teach students the skills to be successful in a range of assessment methods
- teachers expect students to succeed in a range of assessment activities
- teachers use a range of assessment activities which promote productive relationships in the learning environment
- schools' plans incorporate the trialing and development of new ways of assessing and reporting
- teachers adopt assessment methods and strategies appropriate to the age and stage of development of their students
- schools use a variety of reporting strategies to meet the needs of different audiences.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Teachers have a responsibility to:**

- negotiate with students the assessment, recording and reporting procedures that meet the learning needs of individuals and groups of students
- develop students' knowledge, skills and understanding of effective assessment and reporting methods
- maintain and share relevant records of student progress
- plan tasks and activities which provide evidence that particular learning outcomes have been achieved
- report student progress and achievement to parents and caregivers as outlined in this policy
- report student achievement as required to DECS and SSABSA.

**Teachers in leadership positions have a responsibility to:**

- facilitate the implementation of the school's assessment and reporting plans within their particular areas of responsibility
- work with colleagues to contribute to a coordinated whole school approach to assessment and reporting
- lead in identifying and developing good practice.

**Principals have a responsibility to:**

- plan and manage the implementation of the policy in line with quality assurance principles
- allocate responsibility for developing and implementing the policy to school leadership positions
- ensure that information about the policy and school action is accessible to all members of the school community
- ensure that teachers are supported to implement this policy effectively
- ensure that school assessment and reporting practices are regularly monitored, reviewed and evaluated.

**District superintendents of education have a responsibility to:**

- work with principals to ensure that this policy is implemented
- support individual schools to trial and develop inclusive assessment and reporting practices consistent with the principles outlined and appropriate to individual communities
- provide support for schools as they plan to implement the policy
- assist schools to monitor the implementation of the policy.

**Curriculum officers within DECS have a responsibility to:**

- provide support through training and development and materials development
- support the sharing of good practice between schools
- monitor the implementation of the policy in schools
- contribute to reports about student achievement
- ensure that support teams for DECS projects have current information about good practices in assessment and reporting
- provide advice to the Chief Executive and the Minister for Education and Children's Services about initiatives and developments in assessment and reporting from local, national and international perspectives.

**Other DECS officers have a responsibility, when appropriate, to:**

- be advocates for this policy



- support the implementation of the policy.

## **GLOSSARY**

### **Authentic assessment**

Students complete particular assessment tasks as part of their learning program. The tasks are worthwhile, significant and meaningful within the agreed learning frameworks. Such assessment fosters disciplined enquiry, integration of knowledge and value beyond the assessment period. Students may be involved in completing a product over a period of time in collaboration with others.

### **Competency based assessment**

This is assessment of what the learner can demonstrate, perform or do at the end of training related to a specific workplace task. It is based on industry-prescribed standards and the requirements are specified in the training curriculum.

### **Criterion referenced assessment**

Student achievement is measured against the standard of predetermined performance criteria or objectives. These objectives are spelt out in detail so that students clearly understand the criteria for assessment. The assessment process uses a variety of activities to determine whether or not the student has achieved the agreed objectives.

### **Formal assessment**

Teachers and students make decisions about the learning goals and plan assessment events to provide information about progress. Requirements of teachers and students and other agencies (eg SSABSA) are explicit, and results from the planned assessment activities are documented.

### **Formative assessment**

Teachers use a range of strategies which can be both formal and informal. This ongoing assessment method can have a diagnostic purpose. It can assist teachers to determine learning progress and to identify future emphasis for individuals and groups according to their needs.

### **Informal assessment**

Teachers make judgements about student achievement and provide feedback coincident with learning in order to allow students to assess and review their progress towards learning goals. Informal assessment may be initiated by the teacher or student and may be oral or written.

## **Method**

In this policy, method refers to a mode or procedure or a process for assessing in accordance with a recognised framework. Some methods are defined in the 1989 position paper and in this policy.

## **Norm referenced assessment**

The achievement of one student is compared with that of the other students in a particular group. It is a comparative assessment method used for sorting and ranking students according to their performance on given tasks.

## **Planned reporting**

This is the way in which schools manage the regular communication about student achievement and progress to students and parents. It may be in oral or written form.

## **Reliability**

Assessment evidence is reliable if it reflects accurately what a student has achieved, understood and done. Reliable assessment would also reflect the same outcomes if the same tasks were given at another time. Another teacher on another day might also be expected to reach the same conclusions given the same information and the same outcomes.

## **Standards referenced assessment**

Performance is measured against a description of expectations as determined in common curriculum frameworks. Each of the levels in the curriculum profiles for Australian schools describes a standard against which student progress can be described. The level represents an agreed benchmark and is based on an explicit description of outcomes already achieved. This assessment method supports students to continue striving to achieve their personal best.

## **Strategy**

In this policy, strategy refers to the planned actions to implement the method(s) of assessment. Some examples are observation, discussion, conferencing and analysis of the products.

## **Summative assessment**

Processes which enable a description of progress and recognition of learning at certain defined stages are referred to as summative assessment. It can provide information to students and others to guide further learning.

## **Teacher professional judgement**

Judgements by teachers about students' learning progress come from observations of students engaging in a range of activities and from the use of a number of different strategies for assessing achievement. Through the teaching and learning program, teachers have detailed knowledge of their students' achievements. Valid and reliable assessment depends on collaboration between teachers to develop shared meanings of commonly-used criteria. Discussion, common assessment tasks and quality assessment tasks and experiences assist teachers in this process.

## **Validity**

An assessment is valid if it makes judgements and provides evidence relevant to the learning program and the intended purposes of assessment. The information collected is related to the explicit learning goals.

## **Work required assessment**

Teachers and students negotiate the work that is to be completed over a period of time. This is recorded as a contract. Assessment and reporting are continuous, with detailed comments describing what the student achieved and whether or not the negotiated work was completed.

# **APPENDIX: CODE OF CONDUCT FOR DECS EMPLOYEES**

This code of conduct on using information related to student achievement is binding on all DECS personnel, both school and non-school based. It requires all employees to be scrupulous in their use of student achievement information. It addresses the key issues of the purposes of collecting information, access to the information and confidentiality at school and system levels.

This code of conduct will be subject to periodic review and possible revision

Student achievement information as referred to in this document is the information recorded in terms of :

- the profiles levels (1-8) in the curriculum profiles for Australian schools. Levels of achievement are derived from balanced judgments by relevant teachers about the outcomes students have achieved in the eight areas of study. When reporting to parents, the number should be accompanied by a description of the learning for that level. This information represents a view of the progress of the student at the particular time at which it is recorded.
- individual students' results from the basic skills tests in aspects of literacy and numeracy, and the resulting data provided to schools.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COLLECTING AND USING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT INFORMATION**

Collecting and using student achievement information is to be conducted within the framework of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet circular no 12 'Information privacy principles' (reprinted in the DECS Administrative instructions and guidelines section 1, para 148 and section 3, para 85.)

All officers of the Department for Education and Children's Services must be provided with information about the purposes for collecting student achievement information.

Assigning of levels in each strand using the curriculum profiles is to be based on teachers' professional judgements within the school's ongoing program of observation, assessment and record keeping.

Basic skills testing in aspects of literacy and numeracy provides information to students, parents and teachers. It will be used to assist with curriculum planning.

Achievement information about individuals and groups of students, whether collected by schools or the system, is only to be used for the curriculum purposes for which it was intended.

The focus of achievement information collection and use is on student achievement and not on the personal performance of a teacher, manager or school.

When student achievement data is collected from schools and transferred between schools it is to be collected in a form which protects the confidentiality of students, teachers and schools.

DECS employees, at system and school level, will not publish or broadcast, or aid in the publication or broadcast of any information on achievement which allows comparison between individual students or which ranks schools.

Student achievement information will not be used to publicly advertise or denigrate schools, teachers or managers.

Teachers, principals and other departmental officers will ensure that information about student achievement is not misused.

Principals are responsible for managing the confidentiality of school records.

Student achievement information is to be collected and used in a way which supports the teaching and learning practices in the school. It takes account of social justice, reform in curriculum design, and assessment and reporting methods which improve learning outcomes for all students.

Teachers, principals and other officers of DECS involved in curriculum development and resourcing must ensure that information about student achievement is used to improve learning outcomes for students.

Parents have a right to be informed about the purposes for data collection and its uses and to receive information relating to their child's achievement. Processes such as interpreting and translating services need to be available for parents from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Principals will work with school councils and parent groups to ensure that the purposes and uses of student achievement information are understood by the whole school community.

## **COLLECTING AND USING ACHIEVEMENT DATA AND INFORMATION FOR CURRICULUM PURPOSES**

The primary purposes for collecting achievement information are to report on the progress of individual students and groups of students and to improve teaching and learning outcomes.

The information will be used at classroom, school and system levels for reporting to students, parents and the public and for providing directions for future curriculum initiatives.

Teachers have a responsibility to use student achievement information to:

- determine how well students are achieving in relation to the eight areas of study, in the valued learning outcomes identified in the statements and profiles
- determine the achievements of students in years 3 and 5 in relation to those aspects of literacy and numeracy covered in the Basic Skills Tests
- monitor the achievement of individual students and of students by group, gender, age and area of study
- monitor student learning as well as the effectiveness of their own programs, teaching methods, record keeping and assessment tasks
- provide students and parents with a view of student progress
- help in managing the curriculum.
- Principals and other school leaders have a responsibility to use student achievement information to:
  - monitor and report on student achievement for individuals and groups
  - provide students and parents with a view of student progress
  - monitor and evaluate program effectiveness
  - support transition between levels of schooling and different schools

- help implement policies and guidelines relating to assessment, recording, and reporting
- help in managing the curriculum.

The Chief Executive and other DECS officers have a responsibility to use student achievement information to:

- report on progress in meeting identified priorities
- provide schools and divisions with reports about student achievement by gender, group, age, location or year level according to agreed reporting priorities
- indicate areas for curriculum review and reform, and issues which need investigation and further support
- identify significant trends in student achievement
- provide information to the public about the achievements of students through state education
- help in managing the curriculum.

## **STORAGE AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

Section 3.85.2.2 of the Administrative instructions and guidelines must be observed.

- All reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that information about students is securely stored and not misused.
- Filing cabinets containing student records should be locked when not under direct supervision of authorised personnel.
- Rooms, offices or buildings which contain personal records in unlocked files or drawers must be locked when unattended.
- Normal practices with respect to the security of student records and delegation of authority should be clearly articulated in school policy statements.
- Authority to access computer records must be clearly delegated and controlled by appropriate passwords (reviewed regularly to maximise security).
- Computers should be logged off when unattended or left on a screen for which a password is needed in order to access confidential information.
- Computer screens should be visible only to those who have a right to use them.

## **ACCESS**

### **Individual records**

Principals will ensure that staff members are given appropriate access to all school-held information so that they are able to make a proper assessment of student performance.

Adult students and parents have right of access to their own or their children's profiles/Basic Skills Test achievement information. It is recommended that schools make this available to parents/caregivers once a year, at a regular time.

Within the school, an individual's class or subject teachers and those staff members working directly with a student have right of access to that student's achievement information on a need-to-know basis.

School staff members responsible for processing records and compiling data also have right of access to records.

### **Group and school records**

Group records consist of statistical information about groups of students - for example a class, year level, gender or other demographic grouping, including combined criteria eg all girls in year 7.

Such data and whole of school data will be compiled and monitored within the school. The principal, school staff and DECS officers with delegated responsibilities will have access to the data and it will be used for school development purposes as outlined in the section 'Collecting and using achievement data and information for curriculum purposes' above.

The data will also be accessible to groups and individuals responsible for providing information to meet future national reporting requirements; these requirements will have been determined in consultation with DECS officers, schools, SAIT and the Minister for Education and Children's Services.

### **DECS system records**

This refers to DECS student achievement information - for example information about a year level across the state. These records will be accessible to senior management and those officers responsible for monitoring and reporting student achievement.

Reports on particular aspects of student achievement will be published annually by DECS. If a school or individual officer needs more information than is published in the reports, for planning purposes, application should be made to the Executive Director Curriculum.

## **RESEARCH**

Applications to conduct research within DECS must be made in accordance with the Administrative instructions and guidelines, section 1.87. Each application will be considered carefully on its merits, taking into consideration privacy matters and any implications for DECS service groups and schools.

## **DISPOSAL**

The Administrative instructions and guidelines , sections 3.85.4 and 1.138, provide information regarding the disposal of individual student assessment and achievement data.