

IMPROVED LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR ALL STUDENTS

Education Queensland's purpose is to achieve the best educational outcomes for every student in our schools, so that they become effective adults in their work and social lives.

The measurement of learning outcomes is complex and challenging. When measuring learning outcomes, consideration must be given to:

- what constitute the key areas of learning (perceptions of which may differ between students and communities)
- the need to be fair to all students, without discriminating against groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or students with disabilities
- the need for measures that include the social skills of students, because schools are expected to develop students socially as well as academically
- the need for measures that have the confidence of teachers and parents
- the need for some measures to be compatible with the national benchmarks so that Queensland's performance on these can be reported.

During the year, students in all state schools were assessed in literacy and numeracy through the Year 2 Diagnostic Net, and with tests in year 5. They were also tested in a range of subjects in year 10 and year 12. The year 5 test replaced the year 6 test, to allow comparison with other States. Most schools also entered students in various national competitions, and each school had its own internal monitoring systems.

The results of these tests do not provide any simple answers about the performance of individual schools and government schools as a whole. They show how many students achieve certain levels, but do not explain how much of their achievement is due to their school. Students' results are due as much to their natural ability, application and family circumstances as to their school. With this in mind, the department grouped its schools into 'like schools', so that each school can compare its results with the averages of other schools with similar broad characteristics.

It is not possible at this stage to make a fair comparison of state schools to non-state schools, because their students come from different backgrounds.

Occasional media reports claim that educational standards are slipping. However, the Chief Inspector of Schools noted the same claims in his 1935 report, stating that 'education critics of all time delight in harking back to the "good old days"'. A 1997 report by the Australian Council for Educational Research found that, nationally, there had been little change in the reading comprehension and numeracy ability of 14-year-olds between 1975 and 1995. The percentage of numerate students had, however, increased.

During the year, the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments agreed to report against the national benchmarks for literacy for year 3 and 5 students in 2000, and the benchmarks for numeracy in 2001. Processes will be developed to allow nationally comparable reporting in science, information technology, and vocational education and training.

Staying on at school

The job market these days puts a premium on young people who have year 12 qualifications or higher.

The proportion of year 8 students in 1994 who completed year 12 in 1998 was estimated to be 72 per cent. This is a slight improvement on recent years, but still below the rate in 1994. Table 1 below shows that the retention rate was higher than the rest of Australia in recent years.

Table 1: Apparent retention rates, Queensland and Australia, government schools

1994–98, per cent

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Queensland	73.7	69.7	69.7	70.8	71.7
Australia	70.6	67.2	65.8	65.7	65.7

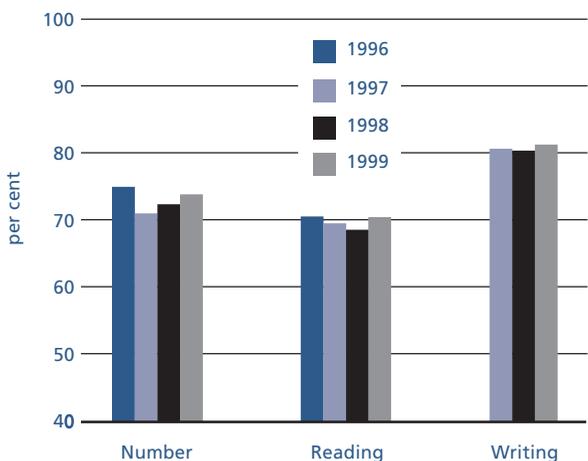
Academic outcomes

The School Opinion Survey found that on most aspects of this organisational goal, three-quarters of parents and of primary school students were satisfied, while more than half of secondary school students were satisfied. This was similar to the previous year's rating by parents.

Literacy and numeracy results

As the following figure 2 shows, there was an improvement in 1999 by year 2 students in reading, writing and number.

Figure 2: Year 2 students not requiring additional support

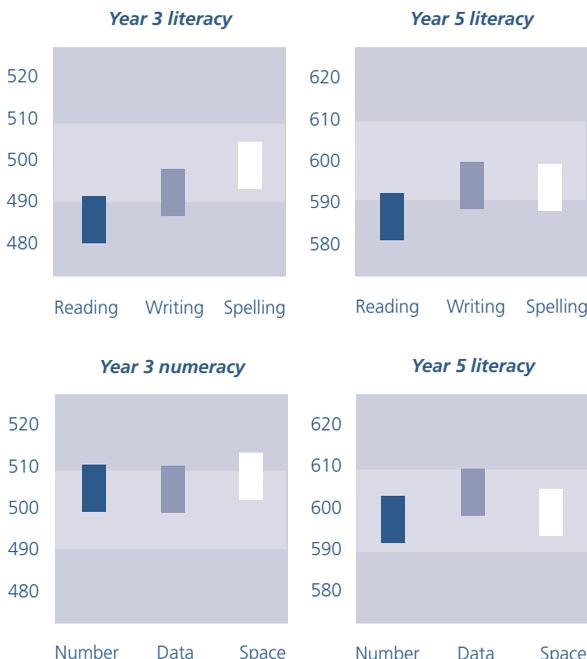


Note: Results for writing in 1996 are not included here, because they are not directly comparable with later years. The way in which children were identified as requiring additional support in writing was changed from 1997 onwards.

The Reading Recovery program targeted students identified as being at greatest risk. Most students undertaking this program subsequently caught up with their peers in reading.

Literacy and numeracy testing of a sample of year 3 students and year 5 students was undertaken for the first time in 1998. The results are presented in figure 3.

Figure 3: Literacy and numeracy, years 3 and 5, 1998



Note: The tests scales were designed so that the average scores clustered around 500 for reporting year 3 and 600 for year 5.

Year 7 tests were held for the first time in August 1999.

Key learning area results

The information in the following table is mostly for year 12 key learning area results. Year 10 results at the State level were similar to the previous year in all subject areas.

Student groups

Each group contains a wide variety of abilities. The information refers to the average of students in each group, and not to each student in these groups. Where students are performing less well than others, the department has a range of strategies to assist them.

Gender

Overall, girls continued to perform better than boys in most learning areas at all levels of schooling, and a higher proportion of girls completed year 12. However, boys outnumbered girls in the top 5 per cent of the year 12 results. In year 2, the gap between boys' and girls' performance in numeracy was less than the gap between them in literacy. These patterns have been stable in recent years.

'I have seen fantastic improvements in children that prior to Reading Recovery were struggling badly. Great scheme!'

(Teacher at Bargara State School)

IMPROVED LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR ALL STUDENTS (*continued*)

Subject	Sound achievement or higher results, 1998	Trend on previous year and since 1994	Special mention
English:			
English	79%	Stable	Woodridge High students won the national creative thinking competition Odyssey of the Mind.
Mathematics:			
Mathematics A Mathematics B	62%	Stable	MacGregor State School topped the State in the Australian primary schools' mathematics competition. The third international mathematics and science study reported that Australian final year students performed better than the international average, and well above the USA.
Mathematics C	72%	Stable	
Science:			
Chemistry; Biological Science	76%	Similar to 1997. 13% better than 1994	The third international mathematics and science study reported that Australian final year students performed better than the international average, and well above the USA.
Physics	72%	Similar to 1997. 10% better than 1994.	Students from Kirwan State High School achieved high distinctions in the world's largest science competition.
Technology:			
Information Processing and Technology	64%	Stable	A national survey in 1998 found that 93% of Education Queensland students in years 7 and 10 had at least basic skills, and 64% had advanced skills (such as using spreadsheets).
Accounting	67%	Stable	
Languages Other Than English:			
Japanese	85%	Stable	Students generally achieved higher marks in languages, but this was due to the types of student who choose languages.
The Arts:			
Drama	78%	Stable	
Art	69%	Stable	
Health and Physical Education:			
Health and Physical Education	70%	Stable	Queensland students outperformed all other States in national sporting competitions, achieving 28 firsts, 31 seconds and 14 thirds in the 82 national competitions during the 1998 school year.
Health Education	73%	Significant improvement	These are recently introduced subjects, with fewer students than Health and Physical Education.
Physical Education	83%	Significant improvement	
Studies of Society and Environment:			
Geography	73%	Stable	
Legal Studies	72%	Stable	

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students improved their performance on the Year 2 Diagnostic Net relative to other students in 1998, and slightly reduced the gap in a number of year 10 subjects.

However, the academic performance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students was considerably lower than that of other students at all year levels, and in all subjects. At year 10, the difference in performance in subjects with substantial enrolments was largest in science, and least in health and physical education.

Language background

Students from a non-English speaking background did not perform as well as other students in years 2 and 3, except for spelling in year 3, at which they performed better than other students (however, those with very low proficiency in English were exempt from the test). At year 10, they performed better than other students in mathematics and business principles and practice, but not as well in English and science.

Students with a disability

The nature and severity of disabilities are so diverse that it is not useful to compare an average of students with disabilities with the whole student population. Individual education plans are used to set goals for students with a disability, and to monitor achievement.

Rural students

Students at rural schools performed similarly to students at urban schools in year 2, but were behind in years 3, 5 and 6. Average scores were similar in year 10, except that rural students did not perform as well in French and Japanese.

Social outcomes

During the year, the department started developing measures to track the progress of students' social skills. Twenty schools were involved in a trial to measure and report on the social outcomes of schooling.

Education Queensland hosted the National Social Outcomes Forum in July 1999 and will develop methods to track achievement of social outcomes of education.

An independent evaluation found that 99 per cent of parents thought that the Youth Action Program (which placed 750 secondary students in a variety of community organisations) improved their child's skills in leadership, team building, self-reliance and community service.

Table 2: Post-year 12 university and technical and further education (TAFE) enrolments

1994-98, per cent

Enrolled in following March	Year completed year 12				
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Qld universities	25.4	30.1	31.0	29.2	28.2
Qld TAFE (full-time only)	11.2	9.0	11.2	9.8	8.7

Outcomes after school

Thirty-seven per cent of the 1998 year 12s enrolled in tertiary study in 1999. This is estimated to rise to 52 per cent by the time they reach 24 years of age. Of those who left school before year 12, at least 10 per cent later undertake TAFE study.

The rates were slightly lower than for the previous year, due to a lower proportion of students applying for tertiary study.

The figures in Table 2 underestimate the proportion of students going on to further education, as many enrol mid year, in later years or independently of the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre.

Outlook

- Each State will conduct its years 3, 5 and 7 literacy and numeracy tests at approximately the same time of the year.
- An international survey of reading, mathematics and science skills of 15-year-olds in 2000 will include 1000 Queensland students.