

Supporting School Improvement: Transparency and Accountability in Victorian Government Schools

Blueprint Implementation Paper

Every
child,
every
opportunity



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Contents

Ministerial foreword	3
Executive summary	4
1. Introduction	6
2. A world class approach to school improvement	8
3. Driving school improvement through increased transparency	12
4. Improving transparency with good platforms and information	16
5. Connecting transparency to accountability and improvement in government schools	20
6. A shared endeavour in government schools	24



Ministerial foreword

Victoria has a world class education system and a strong record of success that is recognised globally. Most schools in Victoria are already achieving excellent results for their students—however, some schools can be expected to lift their performance. The Victorian Government is committed to giving every child every opportunity to shine.

Victoria continues with an ambitious reform agenda, building on the success we have already achieved. I was extremely proud to see that the recent UK Government’s Cabinet Office recognised Victoria’s Performance and Development Culture in its 2009 study of the world’s best public services:

Professionals leading the development of performance and development cultures in Victoria’s schools exemplify how world class public services unlock the creativity and ambition of professionals delivering services, fostering a new professionalism to ensure that services are responsive, innovative and of a consistently high quality.¹

Based on the strong foundations already in place, the next crucial step in our education reform and performance improvement agenda is outlined in this Blueprint Implementation Paper—*Supporting School Improvement: Transparency and Accountability in Victorian Government Schools*.

The Victorian Government’s transparency strategy is based on a firm belief that enhancing transparency helps the community hold schools, the system and Government accountable for improving student outcomes. Unless we have a clear picture of current performance we cannot focus on the most effective strategies for improvement.

We want to make information about school performance available to our schools, parents, carers and the broader community. We want everyone to be able to access the information they need and work together to achieve excellence in every sector. And we want to foster a shared understanding between parents and carers, schools, the school system and Government of how every school is working and improving.

A strong and robust government school system is an achievement to be proud of, and we certainly have that here in Victoria. However, we can do more to ensure that every Victorian child is given every opportunity to attain the best possible education outcomes.

I am confident if we continue to work together in pursuit of our goal, we will achieve the success our community expects and deserves.



Hon Bronwyn Pike MP
Minister for Education



¹ UK Government’s Cabinet Office’s Strategy Unit (2009), *Power in People’s Hands: learning from the world’s best public services*.

Executive summary

It is the mission of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) to ensure a high quality and coherent birth-to-adulthood learning and development system to build the capability of every young Victorian. In pursuit of this mission, the Government has launched a range of crucial policy papers in the last five years. The *Blueprint for Government Schools* (2003) made significant progress in education reform, and the *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development* (2008) continued the ambitious reform agenda to further improve outcomes for all Victorian children and young people.

This paper outlines the next step in the reform process, the Victorian Government's approach to enhanced transparency and accountability. Across Victorian government schools, children and young people have access to high quality education. But we also face challenges such as improving outcomes for every student (to minimise the significant variation that exists between schools), rising expectations of the school and parent community, and continual engagement of parents and the broader community in the shared enterprise of providing quality education for all.

The Victorian Government's transparency strategy is based on a firm belief that everyone responsible for a young person's education needs a shared understanding of how a school is performing. Enhancing transparency helps the community hold schools, the system and Government accountable for improving student outcomes. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that Victorian government schools that have embraced data and improvement plans have been able to lift student outcomes.

In recent years in Victoria, we have focussed squarely on aspects of leadership and organisational development, building teacher knowledge, regeneration of infrastructure and provision, the network structure and role of Regional Network Leaders, and enhancements to the school review process to drive improvement across government schools.

Victoria is aligned with international thinking that suggests transparency of reporting and school performance is intrinsic to success. A culture of excellence is underpinned by publicly available information which identifies high performance, and where improvement is necessary. Victoria, alongside all Australian governments has committed to a set of nationally agreed principles and protocols for reporting on schooling.

These are:

Principle 1. Reporting should be in the broad public interest.

Principle 2. Reporting on outcomes of schooling should use data that is valid, reliable and contextualised.

Principle 3. Reporting should be sufficiently comprehensive to enable proper interpretation and understanding of the information.

Principle 4. Reporting should involve balancing the community's right to know with the need to avoid misinterpretation or misuse of the information.

Principle 5. Schools need reliable, rich data on the performance of their students because they have primary accountability for improving student outcomes.

Principle 6. Information about schooling, including data on performance of individuals, schools and systems, helps parents and families make informed choices and engage with their children's education and the school community.

Principle 7. The community should have access to information that enables an understanding of the decisions taken by governments and the status and performance of schooling in Australia. This will ensure schools are accountable for the results they achieve with the public funding they receive and governments are accountable for the decisions they take.

Principle 8. Governments need sound information on school performance to support ongoing improvement for students, schools and educational systems. Governments also need to monitor and evaluate the impacts (intended or unintended) of the use and release of this information to improve its application over time.

This paper outlines the Victorian Government's enhanced approach to transparency and accountability, including key priority actions that the Government will progressively implement in government schools including:

1. Victorian State Register with all school's annual reports available online: June 2009

This has provided a common location for parents and the community to access information about their school, regardless of sector.

2. Intake adjusted measures of school performance in government schools: November 2009 and

3. Government School Performance Summaries (presenting both absolute and intake adjusted school performance data) added to State Register: November 2009

These new performance measures provide a clearer picture of whether a school, taking into account its students, is performing higher than, similar to or lower than other schools, taking into account their students.

4. A Victorian School Performance Summary across all sectors: Early 2010

These reports, consistent across all schools in Victoria, provide a means for comparing a Victorian school's performance with 'like schools' composed of similar student populations.

5. ACARA website: Early 2010

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) will publish nationally comparable data on all Australian schools.

6. Ultranet: Late 2010

An online learning and information sharing environment that supports high quality learning and teaching in Victorian government schools.

Finally, the paper outlines a number of priority actions flowing from this enhanced approach to transparency and accountability, demonstrating how transparency will be matched with the support necessary for schools to achieve improvement in student outcomes. This additional support includes stronger more targeted interventions where necessary, learning from our highest performing schools to drive improvement across the system, and ongoing intensive monitoring for all Victorian government schools.

1 Introduction

We will pursue a stronger systemic approach to school improvement in government schools... and promote more consistent accountability frameworks and greater transparency about performance and provision from all schools regardless of sector.

Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development, Victorian Government. 2008

The *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development* (2008) sets an ambitious reform agenda to further improve outcomes for all Victorian children and young people, building on the significant progress already made from the *Blueprint for Government Schools* (2003). The intention is to take reform of the government school system to the next level by lifting learning outcomes for all students, improving student engagement and wellbeing and ensuring all students have meaningful pathways to further study, training and/or employment.

The 2008 Blueprint recognises several important characteristics of the Victorian government school system. A range of international assessments and benchmarks have shown our system is a strong one: our government school system has performed well compared with other states in Australia and other developed countries.

Responding to challenges

Victorian children and young people have access to high quality education. However, when we compare our system with the world's highest performing systems it is clear we cannot be complacent. Our school system faces three broad challenges.

The first challenge is to improve outcomes for every student at every Victorian school. Some other education systems produce better learning outcomes and at the same time achieve higher equity. The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring students have broadly the same opportunities and are exposed to high expectations regardless of the school they attend. When we analyse the performance of our students and schools, there is significant variation within and between schools across our system. If we could replicate the best outcomes for students, reduce the gaps between schools regardless of their student cohorts, and reduce the influence of socioeconomic background on student outcomes, then Victoria would strengthen its place among the world's highest performing systems.

A second challenge facing education in Victoria is the rapidly rising aspirations of the community for its children and young people. The development of our economy, society and culture is placing greater demands on the graduates of our education system; expectations are such that we want our young people to enjoy academic excellence, but also to be resilient, confident individuals, prepared for the next step in their learning pathways. To meet these demands and expectations our schools need to improve the experience and outcomes for their students so they are capable and ready to benefit from high quality post-compulsory education and can fully participate in post-school life.

Finally, our third challenge is to continue to build confidence and engage parents and the broader school community in the shared enterprise of providing consistently high quality education for all children and young people. Research suggests that the more frequently and seamlessly schools, students and parents work together to create optimal learning environments, the better the learning outcomes and achievements.

These challenges can be addressed by the collective effort of all those responsible for a young person's education, including parents, carers, teachers, principals, support staff, regional and central staff, across all schools and sectors.

Greater transparency for improvement

In order to realise these aspirations, the Victorian Government has developed a strategy for transparency and accountability in government schools, which will assist our schools to build community knowledge and engagement and improve for the benefit of our young people.

The Victorian Government's transparency strategy is based on a firm belief that everyone responsible for a young person's education (parents, carers, teachers, principals, regional and central office staff) need a shared understanding of how children are progressing in their learning and how a school is performing.

Enhancing transparency helps the community hold all parts of the school system accountable for improving student outcomes. Unless we have a clear picture of current performance we cannot focus on implementing the most effective strategies for improvement.

Victorian schools already have a strong base of transparency and accountability. The work of recent years has provided an excellent platform on which to enhance transparency about school performance and build a more systemic and stronger approach to accountability and improvement. This experience underscores our belief that increased transparency will further drive school improvement, resulting in higher outcomes for all children and young people.

Greater transparency will strengthen the confidence parents and the community have that

- children and young people will receive the highest quality education in every government school;
- high quality data is used and shared to monitor and drive improvement;
- where performance is not as good as it should be, there will be well-informed actions to support improvement; and
- as a system, we have the skills, knowledge and the targeted resources to ensure improvement will occur.

A deeper understanding of how we need to target our resources for school improvement will enable the government school sector in Victoria to meet the challenges and expectations outlined.

This work in government schools is being complemented by collaborative actions with the Catholic and independent school sectors. We are now working in partnership to pursue our transparency and accountability reform across all schools and sectors in Victoria.

2 A world class approach to school improvement

The Victorian government school system has a world class approach to school improvement, which is internationally recognised. Much has been achieved in recent years. The Effective Schools Model has guided school improvement planning with support from a world class suite of leadership development programs, strategies to build teacher knowledge, major regeneration of educational infrastructure, and enhancements to the school review process.



The Effective Schools Model

Leadership and organisational development

Strong leadership is a precondition for success in all high performing government schools. Our leadership programs are among the world's best. In a 2008 OECD report, Victoria was selected as a case study example of world's best practice. The report stated that Victoria was 'an outstanding example of effective large scale reform ... from which other systems can learn'.²

School leaders are using our Developmental Learning Framework for School Leaders to self-assess their leadership capabilities which assists them to identify professional learning that is relevant to their development needs. The Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership, opening in 2010, will provide further professional development opportunities for existing and aspiring principals and school leaders from across Victoria.

The Performance and Development Culture Accreditation Scheme identifies developmental steps undertaken by schools to help them reach a set of standards that signify a strong organisational culture. Ninety-four percent of Victorian government schools are now accredited and the next phase is being developed to ensure schools can further strengthen their Performance and Development Culture beyond the initial accreditation standard.

The UK Government's Cabinet Office identified Victoria's Performance and Development Culture in its 2009 study of the world's best public services:

Professionals leading the development of performance and development cultures in Victoria's schools exemplify how world class public services unlock the creativity and ambition of professionals delivering services, fostering a new professionalism to ensure that services are responsive, innovative and of a consistently high quality.³

Building teacher knowledge

Introduced in April 2009, the e⁵ Instructional Model recognises the need for teachers, school leaders and Regional Network Leaders to develop a common language for and an understanding of high quality instructional practice. The e⁵ Instructional Model is a framework for purposeful teaching and describes the interactions that take place within a classroom between the teacher, the student and the content, using five instructional practice domains: Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate and Evaluate.

The Victorian Government has invested heavily in the employment of experienced educators to provide intensive coaching support for teachers in the areas of literacy, maths, science and information technology. Victorian teachers benefit from the expertise of 200 teaching and learning coaches who focus on mathematics and science; 50 Ultranet coaches to assist schools to develop their ICT capacity and Ultranet readiness; and 60 literacy specialists to assist schools with intensive literacy support, including 15 specialists to work exclusively with teachers of Koorie students.

These support services and tools are complemented by many other professional development opportunities for teachers including building skills in the use of assessment data to inform teaching and learning.



² Pont, B, Nusche, D, Hopkins, D (2008) *Improving School Leadership; Volume 2: Case Studies on System Leadership* OECD.

³ UK Government's Cabinet Office's Strategy Unit (2009), *Power in People's Hands: learning from the world's best public services.*

Regeneration—infrastructure and provision

Education regeneration projects are a key platform to support improved educational outcomes for students in several geographic areas in Victoria. Education regeneration delivers a multifaceted, planned and collaborative improvement strategy across a number of schools, focusing not only on infrastructure but also leadership, teacher quality, provision planning and school community linkages.

These projects involve significant school reorganisation including substantial new educational and early childhood infrastructure, co-locations and transformed curriculum programs and pathways. Community access to important infrastructure such as libraries, sporting facilities and meeting rooms is also enhanced.

The network structure and Regional Network Leaders

The network is a new level of accountability with increased authority and responsibility in Victoria's government school system, providing for greater collaboration to drive school improvement. Networks engage in diagnosis and planning, and sharing knowledge and resources.

The 70 networks in the government school system are each led by a Regional Network Leader. Regional Network Leaders play a vital role, working with schools and networks to identify and broker key improvement strategies. They help schools diagnose, analyse and implement their improvement strategies, monitor their impact and respond by suggesting new strategies where improvement is not readily apparent.

Enhancements to the school review process

Our School Review Program has been enhanced to further individualise support for each school. It is now more responsive to the range of performance improvement opportunities and the particular challenges faced by some schools. We will continue to combine quality data analysis with contextual information to diagnose performance issues, plan for school improvement and target resources and support effectively.

A fourth category of review—the Extended Diagnostic Review—has been added to the three existing review categories (Negotiated Review, Continuous Improvement Review and Diagnostic Review). The Extended Diagnostic Review has been designed for schools that face the greatest improvement challenges. These schools have been identified through the enhanced School Accountability and Improvement Framework, using robust data collection and analysis, for intensive support and targeted investment to help respond to the performance challenges they face.

The Extended Diagnostic Review allows expert school reviewers, in consultation with Regional Network Leaders and schools, additional time (total of 4 days field work) to analyse the particular issues affecting the school's capacity to improve. School reviewers work in conjunction with Regional Network Leaders to identify the most appropriate of a broader suite of improvement strategies which would assist the school given their current stage of development.

A prerequisite for transparency is the existence of comprehensive trend data across the range of outcomes we want for our students, as well as parent, staff and student feedback. Victoria, due to the excellent work over a number of years in building this data, is now able to demonstrate to the community a deeper understanding of the quality of education available to young people.



3 Driving school improvement through increased transparency



The Victorian Government's transparency strategy will enhance school and community engagement, strengthen accountability and further support school improvement to achieve better learning outcomes for our children and young people.

Governments in Australia and internationally are increasingly responsive to community demands of their right to access comprehensive information on the performance of publicly funded services. The Victorian Government acknowledges the community has the right to know how schools are performing and the strategies in place to improve performance.

The Victorian government school sector operates on a strong base of transparency, openness and community engagement. This is delivered through school councils, high quality data sets, and universal availability of school annual reports. This platform is now being complemented by a strong improvement agenda, effective analysis and use of data, and additional resources to support improvement. As a result, the Victorian government school system is uniquely placed to implement a balanced transparency strategy that

- respects the community's growing demand for increased knowledge of how our schools are doing and their capacity to consider and intelligently interpret new information;
- is responsible and well managed, and based on clear and well designed principles;
- delivers benefits to parents and the community, students, schools and governments; and
- avoids the pitfalls that other education systems have experienced, such as the release of poor quality data, simplistic league tables, narrow judgements of success, and uninformed commentary.

A culture of excellence in Victorian education is underpinned by publicly available information which identifies high performance and where improvement is necessary.

Transparent information about school performance is intended to engage the broader community, engender an understanding of the areas where improvement is most needed and inform all Victorians of the measures the Government is taking to lift student outcomes across the state.

Sharing information openly will help develop a joint commitment from parents and carers, schools and the community to celebrate the achievements of schools and to work together to address the issues and challenges individual schools might face. Important differences in performance, effectiveness of approaches to education, and results should be examined, explained and understood for the benefit of our children and young people.

A clear and shared picture of performance builds community understanding of the areas where, as a system, we most need to improve. The community rightly expects that in those instances where low expectations or inaction prevail, appropriate action will be taken to ensure all students benefit from high quality teaching and learning in their school.



Principles for effective transparent reporting

There is a significant body of literature which drives international thinking and trends on the role of transparency policies for improving services to the community including education.⁴ The Victorian Government's approach to transparency builds on this international thinking and has been informed by a set of nationally agreed principles and protocols. Across the Australian education system all states and territories have committed to these *Principles and Protocols for Reporting on Schooling in Australia*. The eight principles and our approach in Victoria to each principle are set out below.

Principles and Protocols for Reporting on Schooling in Australia

Principle 1: *Reporting should be in the broad public interest.*

Building on the significant work already achieved, Victoria's transparency strategy is designed to be fair, balanced and in the best public interest.

Principle 2: *Reporting on the outcomes of schooling should use data that is valid, reliable and contextualised.*

Across our government school system we have high quality data, blended with robust analysis that is fair, builds confidence in the system, and shows the particular strengths of individual schools. Using this base, we will continue to build our approach, enhancing availability and the practice of using data to drive improvement. Importantly, we have developed a new intake adjusted school performance measure (see section 4.2) to complement other important information about the school.

Principle 3: *Reporting should be sufficiently comprehensive to enable proper interpretation and understanding of the information.*

We will continue to provide rich data across the areas of student learning, student engagement and wellbeing, and student transitions and pathways. This will be complemented by each school's response to their data including their own improvement plan set out in their Annual Report.

Principle 4: *Reporting should involve balancing the community's right to know with the need to avoid the misinterpretation or misuse of the information.*

In Victoria we already provide data across a broad range of measures to ensure the community has a comprehensive picture of school performance. Our intake adjusted school performance measures alongside absolute performance data are developed in a way that counters attempts to create simplistic league tables, which fail to place school performance information in its proper context.

Principle 5: *Schools need reliable, rich data on the performance of their students because they have the primary accountability of improving student outcomes.*

Victorian government schools already use data to inform their improvement planning. The introduction of the Ultranet in late 2010 (see section 4.6) will facilitate improved assessment at the classroom level. We will continue to provide high quality information that is useful, supports schools to deliver improvements for their students, and enhances each school's own internal accountability.

Principle 6: *Information about schooling, including data on the performance of individuals, schools and systems, helps parents and families make informed choices and engage with their children's education and the school community.*

Building on our extensive platform of data and tools such as the Ultranet, we will present data that is clear and helps parents make informed decisions. We will work with students, parents, schools and school communities to ensure they have a good understanding of the disclosed data, what it can be used for, as well as the strategies in place to improve performance.

Principle 7: *The community should have access to information that enables an understanding of the decisions taken by governments and the status and performance of schooling in Australia. This will ensure schools are accountable for the results they achieve with the public funding they receive and governments are accountable for the decisions they take.*

Transparency is one element of a broader approach to accountability and improvement and is connected to other systems and processes, including the School Accountability and Improvement Framework. The newly available funding through the *Smarter Schools* National Partnerships is being used to support school improvement. Using data as well as the school review program to effectively diagnose issues provides a strong evidence base and a clear narrative for the improvement strategies in which individual schools are engaged.

Principle 8: *Governments need sound information on school performance to support ongoing improvement for students, schools and educational systems. Governments also need to monitor and evaluate the impacts (intended and unintended) of the use and release of this information to improve its application over time.*

We will regularly analyse our data and review our transparency approach. Through focus groups and surveys we will test with students, parents, schools and school communities their satisfaction with the approach and how they are using the information made available to them to inform their decisions.

These principles guide how the Victorian Government will communicate performance data for all schools to parents and carers, the community, schools and within government. They underpin our approach to promote reliable, rich data made easily accessible to the community so parents and other stakeholders understand school performance and the decisions made to support improvement in every school.



⁴ An example is the Kennedy School of Government's *Ten Principles for Creating Effective Transparency Policies*. Fung, A, Graham, M, Weil, D & Fagotto, E (2007), *Transparency Policies: Two Possible Futures*, Kennedy School of Government.

4 Improving transparency with good platforms and information



Victoria's transparency strategy has six priority actions to be fully implemented over the next year. These actions will take advantage of new platforms to give ready access to all stakeholders and give new insights to inform understanding of school progress. They form a comprehensive approach to transparency from the classroom level, to school, state and national level.

A well managed approach to transparency will ensure the benefits are shared and realised. The approach will strengthen the confidence of parents and the community in their schools. It will mitigate problems created by narrow representations of school performance by the media and others by making available rich and comprehensive information.

The box below sets out the timeline for implementing these priority actions.

Priority Actions—Transparency in Government Schools

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 1. Victorian State Register with all schools' annual reports online | June 2009 |
| 2. Intake adjusted school performance measures for government schools | November 2009 |
| 3. Government School Performance Summaries (containing absolute and intake adjusted school performance data) added to State Register | November 2009 |
| 4. A Victorian School Performance Summary across all sectors | Early 2010 |
| 5. ACARA website | Early 2010 |
| 6. Ultranet | Late 2010 |

4.1 Victorian State Register

The State Register now makes comprehensive and detailed performance information easily accessible to schools, parents and the community. The register is managed by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA). School Annual Reports which contain information about schools, including student performance and the improvement strategies in place are now easily available to parents, carers and the community. Annual Reports typically draw on student learning data, student engagement and wellbeing and student transitions and pathways to provide an overall picture of a school's performance.

4.2 Intake adjusted school performance measures for government schools

The systematic collection of reliable data over time has meant we are now able to produce better measures to assist understanding of school performance. We are now able to introduce a new data model for school performance analysis, which include measures that adjust for student intake. Intake adjusted school performance measures reflect the demographics of each school's population, including the academic context of the school. Considering these factors, it is possible to estimate the value each school is adding to student outcomes.

This analysis makes it possible to identify whether a school, taking into account its students, is performing higher than, lower than, or broadly similar to other schools, taking into account their students. It shows that some schools

are delivering significant 'value add' for their students even though they may have relatively low 'absolute outcomes' or raw scores. Equally, some schools that are delivering relatively high level 'absolute outcomes' or raw scores, are not adding as much value as they could.

This analysis uses multiple sources of data that Victorian government schools have collected and used, including teacher judgment and National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) (formerly Achievement Improvement Monitor) data; student surveys; attendance and destination data. Like all the datasets government schools have been using so far, these intake adjusted analyses are

- fair, taking into account the factors that affect performance in Victorian government schools;
- balanced, taking into account the range of outcomes for which Victorian government schools are accountable;
- reliable, having been based on exhaustive analysis of performance in Victorian government schools and built on a proven methodology; and
- useful, in that they provide new insights into school performance and the type of intervention that may be required to ensure all students are making the progress that we expect of them.

More detail on intake adjusted school performance measures can be found in the technical paper—*Measuring performance fairly; developing intake adjusted performance measures in Victorian government schools*, available at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/initiatives.htm>

We can now measure whether a school, taking into account its students, is performing higher than, lower than or broadly similar to other schools, taking into account their students.

4.3 Government School Performance Summaries

Evidence shows Victorian government schools that have rigorously monitored their performance data, identified issues requiring attention and put in place improvement plans have been able to raise student outcomes. Using data to improve teaching and learning is a key characteristic of improving and effective schools.⁵

This performance data can now be made readily available to the whole community. From November 2009 we will publish an annual Government School Performance Summary for every Victorian government school. The Performance Summary will summarise the data in a user-friendly format giving parents and carers a clear overview of how a school performs in a range of areas. For schools with primary school students only, school performance information will be available in the areas of student learning and student engagement and wellbeing. Government School Performance Summaries for schools with secondary students will have this information as well as information in the area of student pathways and transitions.

For each of the measures, the Government School Performance Summary will show alongside each other both absolute student outcome data as well as the contribution the school makes to improving student progress (intake adjusted school performance data). Information will be published so that parents and the community will be able to see how well a school is performing compared to the average of all Victorian government schools and also whether a school, taking into account its students, is performing higher than, lower than, or broadly similar to other schools, taking into account their students.

This format provides valuable new information, but does not easily lend itself to the production of simplistic league tables or narrow misrepresentations of school performance by other users.

Parents have been very clear that they support the provision of additional information about schools and their performance. At the same time parents undoubtedly want to know what is being done to improve the school, regardless of its current performance. We know that schools wish to take ownership of their performance data and carefully plan their next stage of improvement. It is for these reasons that we will present the Government School Performance Summary to each school principal to give them the opportunity to explain their context, respond to the information, and identify their improvement plans before the Performance Summaries are made publicly available. This process will also allow for an ongoing feedback loop to suggest ways the Government School Performance Summary can be improved over time.

The Government School Performance Summaries will be introduced in November 2009 through a transitional arrangement. From 2010 onwards the Government School Performance Summary will become an integrated part of the school's annual planning cycle.

4.4 A Victorian School Performance Summary across all sectors

The Victorian Government's policy is for a school performance summary for every Victorian school to be publicly available.

The government, Catholic and independent school sectors are currently working towards publishing a Victorian School Performance Summary, outlining existing school performance data in a user-friendly format. The Victorian School Performance Summary will complement the information available at a national level. A 'like schools' framework, consistent in the first instance with the national model, will be used to allow fair comparisons between schools from all sectors in Victoria that have similar student populations.

The Victorian Government has begun this work, facilitated by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), and working with all school sectors will produce a Victorian School Performance Summary in early 2010, to be hosted on the VRQA website. This summary report will, like the Victorian Government School Performance Summary, be published annually.

There is a commitment across all sectors to develop greater consistency in performance data and intake adjusted school performance measures so that publicly available information is broadly comparable, taking into account the specific context of each sector.

4.5 ACARA website

The National Education Agreement (which all states and territories have committed to) requires that Victoria provides the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) with performance and demographic data about all schools. ACARA will use a website to publish nationally comparable data on Australian schools. This information includes the NAPLAN data and contextual information about each school. For 2010, the contextual information will include school profile text, the number of full time teachers, the number of student enrolments, the percentage of Indigenous students, attendance rates, 2008 VET and year 12 outcomes and a link to the school's website.

4.6 The Ultranet

The Ultranet is an online learning and information sharing environment that supports high quality learning and teaching in Victorian government schools. The Ultranet will facilitate student level assessment and effective data at the classroom level to support teaching and learning and improve the consistency of information to be shared among students, parents and teachers.

The Ultranet will connect school leaders, students, teachers and parents and enable efficient and accessible knowledge and information transfer. It will enhance accountability and communication within schools and across the wider school community. The work of school leaders, teachers and students will also become more transparent and accessible to whole school communities.

The information available to parents and students about learning progress will generally be richer and more substantial. The Ultranet will enable student understanding and learning outcomes to be tracked throughout the school year. Information available to parents and students will be more detailed, focused and timely because it will be tied to particular assessment activities. Assessment of student activities on the Ultranet will also provide early warning if learning intervention is necessary.

School leaders, students, teachers and parents will have access to this innovative system in 2010. Preparations are underway across Victoria to ensure that schools are ready for the implementation of the Ultranet and that all those involved in a young person's education can participate in and provide support for their learning.

DRAFT

Victoria Secondary College

At Victoria Secondary College our fundamental purpose is to enable every student to reach his or her full academic, social and physical potential. A balanced range of Year 12 studies is available to meet the varied needs of students. We have a strong and successful science program that has received several awards for excellent student work. Students may also learn a musical instrument and complete sports activities, such as athletics, swimming, cycling, basketball and others.

We also have a developing International Students program with more than 20 students from China studying in the school and staying with Australian families. Victoria Secondary College is entering the second year of its 2008-2011 Strategic Plan, and the College looks forward to accelerated improvement during 2009 as we define directions for improved student outcomes.

Student Learning	Student Engagement and Wellbeing	Student Pathways and Transitions
Our school is proud that our students perform above the Victorian average in student learning. This level of performance is higher than other schools, taking into account the background and characteristics of our students. Our students are performing higher on National Reading and Numeracy Tests, as well as VCE. Improvement of Literacy continues as a priority in 2010 with the introduction of a Literacy Coach and Literacy Coach aide within the Year 8 program. Student learning will be further supported by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a whole-school approach to literacy; Implementing a rigorous, imaginative review of curriculum, particularly for Years 8 and 9. 	Our students have a good attendance record, with results slightly above those of other Victorian government schools. Our students' enjoyment of school and sense of belonging is at or slightly above that of other schools. The complete review of strategic strategies has enabled a consistent approach, which contributes to the development of an agreed 10 Rules of Engagement which are driving approaches to teaching and staff-student relationships. Student engagement and wellbeing will be further supported through the following actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies to improve staff-student relationships; Recognition and encouragement of student leadership and student voice. 	Our ability to retain students to Year 12 is slightly below other Victorian Secondary schools. The numbers of students existing to further studies and full time employment are above the result for other schools. The implementation of the Out of School Options program has been encouraging, with disengaged students returning and remaining in education. Student pathways and transitions will be further supported through the following actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further development of our of school options for re-engaging students; Comprehensive use of Managed Individual Pathways for all Year 10, 11 and 12 students.

For more detailed information regarding your school please visit our website at www.vsc.vic.edu.au

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Victoria Secondary College

How this school compares to all Victorian government schools

Key: Range of results for the middle 50% of Victorian government schools. Result for this school. Median of all Victorian government schools.

Overall Measures	Student Outcomes	School Comparison
1. Student Learning Comparing teacher assessments from the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS), the results from the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests and the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE).	Lower Outcomes Higher Outcomes	Lower Similar Higher
2. Student Engagement and Wellbeing Comparing student attendance rates and results from the annual student attitudes to School survey.	Lower Outcomes Higher Outcomes	Lower Similar Higher
3. Student Pathways and Transitions Comparing the number of students remaining at school through to Year 10 and students going on to further study or full-time employment from Years 10 to 12.	Lower Outcomes Higher Outcomes	Lower Similar Higher

School Profile

- Average level of parent satisfaction with the school, as derived from the annual Parent/Carer survey. The score is reported on a scale of 1 to 7, where 7 is the highest possible score.
- Overall socio-economic profile. Based on the school's Student Family Occupation Index which takes into account parents' occupations.
- Proportion of students with English as a second language. 500 students (20% female, 300 males) were enrolled at this school in 2009.

For more information regarding this school, please visit www.vsc.vic.edu.au/strg

Page 1

5 Harris, A, Chapman, C, Muijs, D, Russ, J & Stoll, L (2006), 'Improving schools in challenging contexts: Exploring the possible', *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 17, 4, 409-424.

5 Connecting transparency to accountability and improvement in government schools

We have a strong base of capacity building initiatives in Victorian government schools and a strong accountability framework. The new actions to enhance accountability will build on these to further support improvement across the system.

A key objective of education policy in Victoria is to strengthen confidence among parents that wherever their child goes to school they will receive a high quality education. Providing detailed school performance information to the community increases accountability at a system and school level for school improvement, and strengthens parents' confidence in Victorian government schools. However, providing information on performance alone does not improve student outcomes, so performance information will be matched with a clear response by schools, their communities and Government, including targeted support and interventions, and intensive monitoring where needed. The information will also be available so Government and the community can assess the impact the support and resourcing have on school and student performance.

As set out in Section 2, Victoria has a world class approach to school accountability and improvement. Building on this significant base we are further enhancing our approach by strategically using commonwealth and state funds to support improvement.

The School Accountability and Improvement Framework and complementary frameworks provide a range of tools for diagnosis, strategies and support programs to drive improvement in government schools. In Victoria, schools take ownership of their own improvement and have built increasingly strong internal accountability for improving the outcomes of every young person.

However, we have greater understanding of the variation in performance both within and between schools. In particular, the impact of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds in some schools and geographic areas is having too great an influence on the learning of some students.

To raise overall standards and address the variation in outcomes, it is critical that strong and timely responses can be deployed to assist schools in their improvement. Barriers to improvement need to be addressed, the best available professional knowledge and practice should be embedded in teaching and learning, and additional resources made available to ensure effective implementation.

Funding the reform—strategic use of state and commonwealth investment

The challenge to improve student outcomes is matched by the significant investment necessary to achieve success.

Significant funding from both the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments provides a unique opportunity to deliver support to schools that require it most so that improvements are sustainable.

A whole-of-system strategy has been designed to implement significant reforms across a range of Victorian schools identified as being in need of further support. This whole-of-system strategy involves the integration of commonwealth and state funding to construct a state-wide improvement strategy.

The challenge to improve student outcomes is matched by the significant investment necessary to achieve success.



The 2009–10 Victorian State Budget allocated \$57.7 million for teaching and learning coaches and Ultranet workers and \$38 million for a range of education reforms to support the achievement of national improvement targets. This new funding complements the 2008–09 allocation of \$71.4 million for specific initiatives to improve the capacity of regions to provide schools with individualised support.

Victoria's engagement in three new *Smarter Schools* National Partnerships with the Commonwealth Government has provided an additional \$325 million over seven years to facilitate improvement in Victorian schools. Of this, almost \$250 million is allocated to supporting government schools. The three Partnerships are Literacy and Numeracy, Supporting Low SES School Communities and Teacher Quality. In addition to the facilitation funds, Victoria is eligible to receive an additional \$150 million in reward payments under these Partnerships. Importantly, the majority of funds will be used to build internal school capacity and provide targeted support in individual schools.

The delivery of high leverage, high impact initiatives across the National Partnerships requires specialist skills and knowledge ranging from literacy and numeracy experts, to leadership, mentoring and coaching expertise, assessment and data managers, community engagement experts and others. The Victorian Implementation Plan therefore will include a significant emphasis on workforce capability strategies at state and sector levels to ensure quality delivery at the network and school level.

Stronger, more targeted support and interventions where necessary

Victoria's school improvement agenda is well embedded and our schools have a strong record of identifying and implementing the most effective improvement strategies, based on what we know works in Victoria. Core school improvement work focuses on building leadership and teacher capacity to deliver high quality teaching and learning.

There is a small number of schools across the state that require different interventions or face particular barriers to improvement. We are now providing the opportunity for additional interventions for these schools accompanied by new funding to enable Regional Network Leaders, following diagnosis of needs, to continue to work intensively with them.

These interventions will create the preconditions for success. They have been developed to help address barriers to improvement identified by principals and school reviewers and based on evidence which has emerged in recent years about how schools can improve. Specific new support strategies have already been introduced or will be available shortly:

- We are providing additional capacity to move staff between schools to best meet local needs, including staff exchange programs to provide opportunities for development and capacity building in participating schools through coaching and mentoring.
- We are appointing high performing principals to work as Executive Principals. This may be to work in challenging schools with complex problems or as part of a targeted support strategy to work intensively alongside existing leadership teams to lift a school's performance.
- We are developing a career transition program for teachers who lack contemporary teaching skills and have lost the motivation to teach. The strategy will provide opportunities for these teachers to voluntarily leave the teaching profession and begin a new career. These will be one-off opportunities for a small number of teachers to enter a new profession and be replaced by talented teachers who are currently employed on a fixed term basis. This intervention will be carefully targeted to ensure maximum benefit to the public education system through workforce renewal. We are currently developing the application and selection process including criteria and the terms and conditions for accepting the offer. It is expected that the first round of applications will be invited before the end of 2009.
- We are building an investment strategy that directs schools' available resources (including finance balances and staffing), combined with additional resources from external funding sources, towards targeted school improvement activities. These combined funds can be used to establish key improvement strategies such as employing high performing teachers and coaching for existing staff or para-professional staff for a limited period of time (generally over two or more years).
- In some cases we are furthering and supporting curriculum provision discussions, including considering regeneration projects, so that all young people have access to a high quality and broad curriculum, specialist and extra-curricular activities and a range of academic and vocational offerings in the post-compulsory years, including in partnerships with others.

Over time other strategies will emerge to increase the pool of improvement strategies that can be drawn on by schools, networks and Regional Network Leaders. These will take into consideration the diverse needs of our young people and their families.

Learning from our highest performing schools to drive improvement across the system

Improving the performance of all government schools in our system means recognising and capitalising on excellence and building a collective responsibility for improvement. Enhanced transparency about school performance will support network collaboration to enable schools to identify and learn from best practice. Victoria's highest performing schools will take on further responsibility to deliver additional support back to the system. They will work collaboratively with other schools in their networks and regions, sharing their knowledge and capacity for the benefit of other schools. We already have many examples of schools which are leading practice in Victoria and are sites of innovation.

In some cases, and based on the demonstrated educational leadership and management capacity, we will enable these schools to take additional control of local human resource management and provide the environment where schools can diversify to create opportunities for all students.

Over the next year we will work with a small number of our highest performing schools to gather field evidence to help us further develop the concept of leading practice schools. This will include establishing processes for developing partnerships between schools.

Ongoing intensive monitoring

Regional Network Leaders are already working closely with schools to identify the improvements expected across the network and in particular schools, and have set out these expectations including performance targets, strategies for improvement and targeted support where necessary. School leaders understand they have a shared responsibility to work with their Regional Network Leader to ensure everything that can be done to move a school on to an improvement path is underway.

In a very small number of cases, where student learning has been identified to be clearly at risk, strong interventions around governance structure, leadership, financial and human resources management, teacher capacity and school structure may be necessary to ensure that positive change occurs in the school. This may mean the financial and human resource management delegations available to schools that are not improving may be supervised by a Ministerial nominee. We expect that this type of supervision would be rare and operate for a limited period, during which improvement strategies are put in place and the pre-conditions for lifting student outcomes are established.



6 A shared endeavour in government schools

In Victoria, government schools have a long tradition in engaging parents, carers and the broader community to support student learning.

The new actions outlined in this Blueprint Implementation Paper build on our significant achievements to date. These actions will be implemented in coming years, as we continue our work of embedding a culture of high expectations across all levels of the government school system: schools, networks, regions and central office.

The new transparency arrangements will mean all those with an interest will have access to the information they need to support Victoria's young people through their education. This shared understanding and commitment to achieving excellence will underscore our ongoing focus on continuous improvement in Victorian schools.

We will also match the information with appropriate responses where it is clear that action needs to be taken. In the small number of cases where further support is needed, parents and carers can have confidence that we will take a stronger systemic approach, use best practice improvement strategies and target resources effectively to help schools progress on their improvement path.

With everyone working together at all levels we can achieve a high quality education for every student in every school across the Victorian government school system, to help young Victorians enjoy productive, fulfilling lives while contributing to their local and global communities.

