Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Education**

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1 1 JAN 2012

Legislative Assembly
Committee

Dr Brian Gordon
Education and Health Standing Committee
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Dr Gordon

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the inquiry into improving educational outcomes for Western Australians of all ages.

As you would be aware, the Department of Education is committed to maintaining a strong public school system that earns the respect of the community for the quality of education that it offers. The issues raised in the Terms of Reference 1, 2 and 3 are at the core of contemporary educational provision and, as such, I am pleased to provide you with the attached submission.

Please note that a response has not been provided to Terms of Reference 4 and 5 as the issues raised do not fall within the core business of the Department of Education.

I wish you well with your deliberations.

Yours sincerely

SHARYN O'NEILL
DIRECTOR GENERAL

1 6 DEC 2011

Att.

151 Royal Street, East Perth Western Australia 6004

SUBMISSION BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
to the
EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE
inquiry into improving educational outcomes for
Western Australians of all ages

November 2011

Term of Reference 1
Current and future resourcing of new methods and activities to improve educational outcomes such as eLearning and school partnerships

1. Improving educational outcomes through eLearning

Today's students are learning in very different ways. Students are increasingly experiencing learning in non-traditional environments created through new communication technologies that enable virtual interaction and collaboration.[1]

Australian society has in the last three years experienced an explosion in availability of versatile, easy to use, consumer-focused, personal computing devices including tablets, smartphones and netbooks. Technology use in schools is a continuing preoccupation of parents, teachers and school leaders, with media-driven expectations of ubiquitous internet connectivity, seamless integration into the curriculum and mastery by teachers. This phenomenon has raised parent, teacher and student expectations about access to and usability of learning technology. Increasingly, technology skills are critical to success in almost every arena and those who are more competent with technology will advance, while those without access or skills will not.

For several years the Department has invested in technical infrastructure and centralised ICT systems to improve the quality and flow of information to and from schools and to enhance the effectiveness and impact of online learning systems. The return on this investment has been mixed, with huge improvements in student information, digital resource access, reporting and inter-school communication and less than expected uptake and retention of technologically-enhanced teaching and learning approaches.

Recent evidence from teachers shows the current user experience is disjointed. Teachers and students want more than delivery of multiple technology components acting in isolation. They want a seamless and personalised user experience that "just works".

eLearning – the way forward
The Department has commenced planning for an educational vision that describes a modern, schooling delivery model. It aims to provide online, classroom centric services and tools to enable teachers, students, administrators and parents to collaborate in planning, creating, delivering, learning, assessing and reporting anytime, anywhere. This model is based on the principle that all schools, regardless of their physical location, should have access to reliable, secure, easy-to-use tools to cater for their individual students' learning needs. Learning will flourish if student and teacher needs are at the core of system design, development and delivery.

eLearning programs have the potential to deliver improved services and tools for schools coupled with quality professional support by providing:

- a secure entry to services that enables schools to select the online learning tools and services, web conferencing, blogs and emails that better meet their community's teaching and learning needs;
- a means by which the Australian Curriculum can be used in the context of online learning;

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[1] Johnson, L., Smith, R., Levine, A., and Haywood, K., (2010). 2010 Horizon Report: K-12 Edition. Austin, Texas: The New Media Consortium.

- digital resources that can be discovered, shared, rated, commented on and incorporated into lessons;
- data from NAPLAN and reporting systems that can be viewed at the same time as lessons are designed and delivered;
- the capacity for all schools to offer flexible curriculum delivery methods between and within schools that may involve full or partial ICT solutions;
- for secondary students, access to a broader range of subjects to enable students to have a range of post schooling options and reach their potential;
- parental engagement where parents can actively participate in and support their child's learning (e.g. view the assessment tasks, marks and attendance patterns) through secure access and involvement in classroom activities;
- coaching and support for staff in the use of enterprise platforms for online professional learning and web conferencing tools; and
- support to help schools understand and implement their distinctive online learning solutions.

Online schooling environments
At the heart and centre of any eLearning strategy is the need for a flexible, consistent and supported online schooling environment. A broad range of communication tools (class announcements, blogs, email, photo gallery, community space) have recently been trialed in a variety of ways to complement other structured classroom activities. Trial schools have used the services in a way that meets their individual needs and demands.

eLearning Professional Development
Professional development programs are a critical element of eLearning to tackle teachers' reluctance to use technologies with their students. Too often the champions and early adopters of ICT create a divide in the school with reluctant teachers feeling alienated or afraid to take their first steps into online learning strategies. Professional development programs need to guide the more expert teachers in how to mentor less confident teachers to use ICT purposefully and flexibly to improve student learning outcomes. Coaching programs support teachers to embed ICT into teaching, which is of critical importance in developing students' 21st century competencies[2] and should be grounded in international research[3] with opportunities for formal accreditation[4].

eLearning Leadership
Developing a culture of eLearning into every classroom requires support for school leaders. This can take the form of providing evaluation frameworks, ICT competency continua, hands-on workshops with mentors and online opportunities such as videocasts and podcasts to share ideas. Students can have a role in developing the eLearning culture by being involved in technology committees, decision making and collaboration on the E-Schooling initiatives that are delivered and technology that schools will adopt.

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2 Learning outcomes include the development of student ICT competence as defined in the set of Australian Curriculum general capabilities.
http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/GeneralCapabilities/Information-and-communication-technology-competence

3 The TPCK model (Koehler, M.J., and Mishra, P. 2009) http://www.citejournal.org/vol9/iss1/general/article1.cfm
is being implemented as the underpinning framework in components two and three of the Australian Government's ICT Innovation Fund "Teaching Teachers for the Future" project.

4 The E-Learning Peer Coach Program is based on the Microsoft Accredited Peer Coaching Facilitator Training, and will be accredited in Western Australia through the Institute for Professional learning.

eLearning Technologies
New and innovative digital technologies are appearing on the market almost daily and schools are realising the potential of technology to change teaching methods that reflect the learning styles of today's students. All students, including regional and remote students need access to the right technology for the task to maximise their learning outcomes. This requires supportive and enabling policy development around device procurement and management.

Developing Capacity to Deliver eLearning
"I before E" – Infrastructure before eLearning
Improving the ICT infrastructure platform in all schools is critical to delivering any eLearning vision through which students and school communities are able to utilise the services that best meet their needs. Elements of ICT infrastructure that are critical for eLearning include

- Broadband – all schools require improved bandwidth services to cater for the increased uptake of online services.
- Core Central Network –required to deliver videoconferencing services to schools
- School Standard Operating Environments (SOE) – to enable consistent and reliable service delivery to all schools. The Department is currently implementing the SOE to deliver the *Digital Education Revolution* to students in Years 9-12 as part of the *National Secondary Schools Computer Fund*. A state-wide deployment of a SOE will enhance the Department's capacity to deliver its services in metropolitan, regional and remote settings through one coordinated network.
- Video Conferencing – to support delivery of learning across school sites. The Great Southern Local Schools Working Together Partnership highlights that, with access to the right technology, schools are able to deliver innovative programs to meet individual students' needs, regardless of their location. The six senior high schools in this partnership have created an online classroom environment to offer subjects that each school on their own could not offer due to limited numbers.
- Technical Support – to maintain a quality of service for every school location. Whilst many ICT services can be provided and maintained centrally, many school or location-specific technologies and services also require a level of onsite support.

Term of Reference 2
Factors influencing positive or negative childhood development from birth to Year 12

a. Period before and immediately after birth (to 3-4 yrs)

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care recognises the first five years of a child's life shapes their future.

Evidence from many countries demonstrates consistently that children who grow up in poverty and other forms of disadvantage are more vulnerable to poor health, learning and behaviour difficulties, under-achievement, low skills and aspirations, low-paid employment or unemployment, welfare dependency and (for girls), pregnancy at too early an age (UNICEF, 2007).

Risk factors in early childhood for predisposition to mental health problems include: low birth weight and prematurity, complications or injury at birth, physical or intellectual disability, poor relationships with parents or caregivers, chronic illness and poor health.

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is widely recognised as the most common preventable cause of birth defects and brain damage in children. Research into the number of babies born with FASD varies. Figures range from 0.02 to 2.7 per 1,000 babies born in Western Australia.

Due to the rapid neurological development that occurs in the first years of a child's life, it is important that mechanisms are in place to systematically identify and address any developmental, emotional, social and/or physical delays. Feasibility research into national health checks conducted by the Child and Health Research Institute in Melbourne in 2009 found that the ideal age to conduct national health screening is three years of age. Prior to this age, it is difficult to discern minor and maturational delays from profound and long-term emotional/behavioural and/or cognitive delay. It is also imperative that government agencies with responsibility for young children have formalised links to ensure joined-up support for children and their families.

The National Early Childhood Development Strategy is based on the principle of broad-based universal provision of early childhood health, education and care services supplemented by more targeted services in high needs communities. As a widely trusted and readily accessible universal provider in nearly every community across Western Australia, the public school system is well placed to broaden its remit to provide and/or host integrated child health, maternal health, playgroup and parent support programs for children younger than the current school entry age of 3.7 years and to form early, positive and collaborative relationships with parents.

The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) measures (at around age five) key domains of early childhood development that are considered predictors of good adult health, education and social outcomes: physical health and wellbeing; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive skills (school-based); communication skills and general knowledge. The 2009-2010 AEDI data shows:

- boys in Western Australia more likely to be developmentally vulnerable than girls (boys - 31.8%, girls - 17.4%).
- Western Australia's Indigenous children are much more likely to be developmentally vulnerable (Indigenous - 52.3% and non-Indigenous - 22.9%).

Despite these challenges, the *Effective Provision of Preschool Education* (EPPE) study found that a child's intellectual attainment at age four years of age is a stronger predictor of literacy and numeracy at age seven than their background characteristics (Sylva et al., 2008). The researchers conclude that pre-school and school influences may act together to reduce the impact of disadvantageous background influences on future learning.

The benefits of early childhood education and care are most significant for disadvantaged children[5]. Early childhood education and care provides a valuable opportunity to overcome the disadvantage experienced by children from a very young age and to help put them on a positive pathway for life and learning, particularly where this is delivered across mainstream services.

Children to age three are particularly vulnerable to all experiences, through both the presence and absence of opportunities. What is included or excluded from their learning has a lasting effect on what and how children develop, learn and understand.[6]

Since 1995, Western Australian children have had universal access, free of compulsory charges, to a minimum of 11 hours per week of preschool (known as kindergarten) taught by a degree qualified teacher. Kindergarten programs are being expanded to 15 hours per week through implementation of the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education which will be fully implemented by 2013. In 2011, 97.5 per cent of age-eligible children enrolled in kindergarten in Western Australia in a public, Catholic or independent school. This participation rate is the highest in Australia.

[5] *Waldfogel, J. (2004) Social Mobility, Life Chances, and the Early Years, CASEpaper 88, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, London School of Economics, at http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/case; and Sylva, K. et al. 2007, Promoting Equality in the Early Years: Report to The Equalities Review, Effective Pre-school and Primary Education 3-11 Project (EPPE 3-11), at www.ioe.ac.uk/projects/eppe*

[6] *Lally, J.R (2007) 'Teaching and caring: Responding to both the vulnerability and competence of infants and toddlers' Childcare and Children's Health Vol. 10 (3) p. 2 Melbourne, Centre for Community Child Health: Victoria. Cited in: A national quality framework for early childhood education and care - A discussion paper, August 2008.*

b. Secure, caring, high quality relationships

Brain research shows that from birth to five years, children acquire approximately 80 per cent of their adult brain capacity and that the first three years are the most critical[7]. It also shows that secure relationships and strong attachments to caregivers are critically important for the future learning capacity of very young children and influence their ability to regulate their emotions[8]. In contrast, high and sustained levels of stress in infants produce high levels of cortisol which inhibits neurological development. The quality of the emotional climate in which infants are raised and the quality of relationships with children's primary caregivers has a significant effect on early brain development. Poor caregiver interactions may compromise the healthy formation of neural pathways[9]. According to infant developmental specialist Dr. Michael Lewis "the single most important influence of a child's intellectual development is the responsiveness of the mother to the cues of her baby." This highlights the benefits of ensuring mothers and families are well supported in the first months and years of their children's lives and for all children in childcare settings to be in the care of highly trained early childhood professionals who understand the links between emotional security and healthy brain development.

Australia's Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) emphasises the importance of relationships as being crucial to a sense of belonging for children. It recognises the importance of children feeling connected to family, community, culture and place in order to develop and learn. These relationships are expanded to include those established between their family and their school/teacher and peer relationships when they transition into schooling programs. Education programs that instill mutual trust and a genuine interest in the child and his/her family are most effective in supporting children's development and learning.

Young children develop primarily through their relationships with the important people in their lives — their parents and families, their peers and well-trained early childhood professionals[10]. These relationships are the 'active ingredients' of the environment's influence on healthy human development[11].

Relationships are of primary importance to children's learning and development. Children in the first three years grow and change rapidly and are dependent on

[7] Catherwood, D. (1999). *New views on the young brain: offerings from development psychology to early childhood education. Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 1(1), 23-35.*
Hertzman C. (2000), *The Case for an Early Childhood Development* Strategy Canadian Journal of Policy Research. Autumn;1(2):11-18. .

[8] Laevers, F. (2005). *Deep-level-learning and experiential approach in early childhood and primary education. Research Centre for Early Childhood and Primary Education Katholeike Universiteit: Leuven* Cited in:a Research Paper to inform the development of an Early Years Learning Framework in Australia 2008.

[10] Bennett, J. (2004) *UNESCO Policy brief on early childhood: Curriculum in Early Childhood Education and Care.* http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001374/137401e.pdf
11 National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2004) 'Young Children Develop in an Environment of Relationships', NSCDC Working Paper No. 1. National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, Brandeis University: Waltham, Massachusetts. Cited in: *A national quality framework for early childhood education and care - A discussion paper, August 2008.*

adults to meet their physical and emotional needs, more than in any other period of their lives.12

c. Teacher quality
Related to above, the importance of **teacher quality** to build in children:
- Personal and social competencies (relationships)
- Literacy and numeracy (content knowledge and pedagogical expertise)
- Other general capabilities captured in the national goals of schooling

The importance of teaching quality has been recognised for many years[13]. For example, in the early 1950s, Benjamin Bloom identified *Quality of Teaching* as one corner of the triangle of factors that determine the extent to which learning programs will be effective – the other two corners being *Affective Entry Behaviours* (emotional security, engagement) and *Cognitive Entry Behaviours*.

The importance of teacher quality has recently been recognized by governments across Australia through their commitment to the National Partnership Agreement on Improving Teacher Quality (COAG, 2009) and the recent COAG agreement to increase the number of qualified educators working in early childhood settings. This trend is supported by the findings of the Preschool Curriculum Evaluation Research Consortium study (2008), which emphasised the importance of the teacher's role in facilitating children's achievement in the learning areas of the curriculum. Quality early childhood programs are critical for the educational and social development of young children and to long-term learning outcomes into their teens and beyond.

Two landmark studies, one in the United States[14] and one in the United Kingdom[15], have shown that learning outcomes are maximized when adults have an active role in children's learning. In the past, professionals in early childhood programs were encouraged to focus on setting up learning environments, then observe and facilitate individual children's learning. This was because children were thought to learn through discovery and by playing in open ended experiences. We now know that important long-term outcomes result when adults take a more active role in children's learning. US studies have shown a clear link between quality early learning and children's later life chances, such as owning a home, having a second car and graduating from college.

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[12] *Lambert, B. & Clyde, M. (2000). Rethinking early childhood theory and practice. Social Science Press: Katoomba NSW.*

[13] *Hattie, J. (2003). Teachers make a difference: What is the research evidence?* Keynote address at the
ACER Research Conference, Melbourne, October.

[14] *Currie, J. & Thomas, D. (2000). Does Head Start make a difference? American Economic Review, 85(3), 341-364.* and
Schweinhart, L. J., & Weikart, D. P. (1999). The advantages of High/Scope: helping children lead successful lives. Educational Leadership, 57(1), 76-78.

[15] *EPPE. (1997-2007). The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) Project. Retrieved 14 May, 2008, from http://k1.ioe.ac.uk/schools/ecpe/eppe/eppe/eppeintro.htm
Cited in:A Research Paper to inform the development of an Early Years Learning Framework in Australia 2008.*

The quality of teaching is the largest predictor of successful student learning outcomes across all years of schooling (Rowe, ACER, 1980). This finding has been repeated in numerous studies including the Teaching for Growth[16] research in Western Australia and was a key finding in the Review of Educational Practice in Kindergarten, Pre-Primary and Year 1 (Tayler, 2010) commissioned by the Department of Education. Tayler referred to three key dimensions of pedagogy that work in unison to contribute to high quality teaching: the emotional, organizational and instructional dimensions.

Key elements of what is known about effective teaching have been captured in the Director General's Statement on Effective Teaching, published in 2009. It refers to the complex nature of the craft of teaching and emphasizes the importance of teachers having high expectations, acknowledging individual differences, using a range of pedagogies, encouraging student responsibility, having mastery of their teaching content, providing a safe environment, monitoring progress and providing feedback and building positive relationships.

d. Individualised programs based on high quality (in)formative assessment
High quality, insightful and ongoing assessment is critical to effective teaching. In a recent essay, Masters[17] (2011) suggests that 'unnecessary complexity' abounds in the research literature about assessment, and that all educators and administrators need to remember that 'assessment has only one fundamental purpose: to establish where learners are in their progress at the time of the assessment'.

The on-entry assessment of literacy and numeracy conducted through a one-on-one interview with children early in their first year of full-time schooling is an example of effective wide-scale assessment practice. Not only do teachers derive a baseline score of children's current point of knowledge and understandings, but through the interview process, also glean rich information about children's approaches to tasks, capacity for perseverance, response to challenge, and so on. Having access to this rich information enables teachers to target learning programs at children's immediate point of learning.

High quality, ongoing, informative assessment as the lynch-pin of individualized child-centred learning programs and emphasizes the need to ensure that teachers bring to bear a wide range of factors including the cultural, linguistic and cognitive characteristics of all students in their classes. This is a prominent thread in the Director General's statements on Effective Teaching and the more recent statement on The Early Years of Schooling published in 2011.

e. Clarity about learning outcomes sought
Related to all the above, clarity about the learning outcomes sought is the crucial touch-stone for improved educational outcomes. While all the contributing skills and knowledge are important building blocks – as captured in the learning area content descriptors of the Australian Curriculum from Pre-Primary to Year 12 – it is important that teachers, students and the broader community share a vision about the 'what'

and 'why' of learning programs. Articulation of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians provides this touch-stone. The goals have informed the content, scope and priorities of the Australian Curriculum and the EYLF.

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[16] *Louden, W., Rohl, M. and Hopkins, S. (2008). Teaching for Growth, Graduate School of Education, University of Western Australia*
[17] Masters, G. (2011). *Assessing student learning: Why reform is overdue.* ACER Occasional Essays – September 2011

Term of Reference 3
Facilitating greater opportunities to engage all students in Year 11 and 12

Strategic planning for public schools in Western Australia through the *Plan for Public Schools 2008-2011* reflects State and National aspirations to improve education outcomes for all young people.
Implementation of the Raising the School Leaving Age (RSLA) Legislation or *The Education Acts Amendment (Higher Schooling Leaving Age and Related Provisions) Bill 2005* was enacted in November 2005, with implementation occurring in 2006.
For young people entering Years 11 and 12 there are a range of approved options to meet the School Education Act (1999) participation requirement. These options are:

- Full-time school

- Full time enrolment in accredited training at a training institution (state training provider or private registered training organisation)

- Full time apprenticeship or traineeship

- An endorsed Community Based Course

- Full time employment

- A combination program involving part-time school/training and/or part-time work.

- Full time university program

To support the changes to legislation public schools in Western Australia are providing flexible pathways and options to ensure that all senior secondary students have the opportunity to engage in programs that lead to higher education, training and employment, and meet the needs and expectations of their communities. Students participate in a combination of university entrance courses, Vocational Education and Training (VET), community service and personal development programs to maximise their post school options. There are programs for senior secondary students wishing to pursue avenues other than full-time schooling, such as part-time schooling with other approved education, training or employment options. Opportunities also exist for students to continue with or re-enter secondary studies in learning environments that are more flexible than the traditional secondary school.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to the National Partnership Youth Attainment and Transitions (YAT-NP) in July 2009 to achieve:
- a national Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate of 90% by 2015;

- provide an education or training entitlement to young people aged 15-24;

- better engage young people in education and training;

- assist young people aged 15-24 to make a successful transition from schooling into further education, training or employment; and

- better align Commonwealth, State and Territory programs and services related to youth, careers and transitions.

Western Australia's Youth Attainment and Transitions National Partnership, Implementation Plan was endorsed by Minister Gillard, in her capacity as Minister for Employment, Education and Workplace Relations, in late March 2010.

This Implementation Plan details a number of key reforms and initiatives Western Australia is undertaking in the coming four years.

The identified reforms and initiatives focus on 15 to 24 year olds and involve a number of key stakeholders, including the Department of Education, the Catholic Education Office, the Western Australian Association of Independent Schools, the Department of Communities (Office of Youth) and the Department of Corrective Services. The YAT-NP supports the strategic direction outlined in the *Plan for Public Schools 2008-2011.*

Senior Secondary Engagement Programs
Secondary Schools have Engagement Programs that focus on increasing the participation and engagement of students who are at risk of disengaging from mainstream schooling. These programs develop the awareness, skills and knowledge to enable students to better access further education, training and employment. The major focus of an Engagement Program is to:

• develop each student's academic, emotional and social competence;

• support students to develop the awareness, skills and knowledge to enable them better access to further education, training and employment; and

• provide flexible, clear pathways that respond to student needs within the context of their school and community.

Students can participate in a range of approved options, other than full time schooling, which will satisfy the participation requirement, under the Raised Leaving Age Legislation. A parent or guardian is required to notify and/or seek approval of arrangements made in an alternative option. This is either through a signed Notice of Arrangements form or through official documentation relating to apprenticeships/traineeships or full time training at a State Training Provider. Details of the alternative option undertaken are entered onto the Participation Management Database at the Department of Education.

No alternative option can be approved until the Department of Education processes have been completed to ensure that all legislative requirements have been adhered to and that the option is deemed to be in the best interest of the young person. In each Education Region, a Manager Participation (MP) and a team of Participation Coordinators support schools, parents and students in identifying the most suitable Individual Pathway Plan using the approved options. A significant role of the Participation Coordinator is to make referrals and liaise with other service providers, businesses, community organisations, parents/carers and the school. The Participation Coordinators work closely with the young person to determine the pathway that is in the student's best interest and to achieve re-engagement in education, training or employment.

The MP oversees the work of the Participation Coordinators. MPs support schools, Registered Training Organisations and community organisations in the development of programs for students at risk of not being engaged in education, employment or training. MPs work closely with teachers to develop senior school engagement programs for at risk young people who remain in school in Years 11 and 12 rather than taking up one of the other approved options. MPs also work collaboratively with schools, community organisations and RTOs to develop an Education Training and Participation Plan for each education region.

The Education and Training Participation Plan (ETPP) is developed in each region and targets gaps in program or service delivery for young people not transitioning to

Year 11 and 12. In 2011 funds were allocated to schools, RTOs and community organisation. ETPP funding will continue to be allocated to education regions, but be distributed through a revised set of business rules that prioritises funding to community organisations. The following process will apply:

- a regional consultation process is conducted to identify service and program delivery gaps;

- scoping documents are developed outlining the services/programs required to meet the identified gaps;

- expressions of interest called for delivery of programs to address the gaps;

- a central representative panel allocates funds; and

- service agreements are developed with successful applicants from the expression of interest process.

Through Endorsed programs schools are providing students with the opportunity to use one of four types of learning to meet the completion requirement of the WACE. These are:

- university studies;

- community organisation;

- workplace learning; and

- personal development programs

Students can be involved in any of these types of learning activities through a variety of strategies in or outside of school time. Schools provide programs designed specifically to meet the individual needs of students requiring additional support through a combination of all of these processes.

The Department of Education has two Endorsed programs.
- The Life Skills Endorsed program is a ten module program that is designed to develop in young people the skills, competencies, attitudes and understandings that will enable them to lead to successful and healthy lives. The program is of particular benefit to students who are at risk of disengaging from mainstream schooling and/or who are yet to attain the skills to access Workplace Learning and Work Readiness programs.

- The Learning to Live endorsed program is a five module project based program, which consists of hands-on practical activities with a focus on the development of skills in one of five applied learning areas: general construction, home maintenance, horticulture, landscaping and sustainability. Each of the modules will enable students to develop a range of practical skills that will equip them for living independently and engaging in employment and further training.

Vocational Education and Training in Schools
Public school students are meaningfully engaged in VET qualifications, providing them with opportunities to explore post school options and enabling them to access higher level qualifications. VET outcomes have improved significantly, with public school students achieving 4 901 VET certificates in 2010, a growth of 40 percent from the previous year. Much of this improvement was seen at Certificate II

qualification level or higher which aligns with the NP YAT target of 95 per cent of all students with a Senior Secondary Certificate (or equivalent) or Certificate II by 2015.

Students in public schools are provided with the opportunity to access a variety of VET pathways to engage them in their senior secondary schooling. These VET pathways can take on a variety of different models:

VET in Schools programs - Schools after meeting the Australian Quality Training Framework requirements under their Registered Training Organisation can deliver through an auspice arrangement a variety of qualifications to students whilst at school. These qualifications are usually at Certificate I and II level however some schools are able to deliver to Certificate III level in some qualification areas. As these qualifications are competency based, with many delivered by schools in practical industry areas, students are provided with a program that is predominately skill based, therefore much of their time is 'hands on' rather than theoretical. School based traineeships and apprenticeships – These are available to students in a variety of trade and non-trade industries to Certificate II level. These programs are sourced through school VET Coordinators and through alliances with various industries who approach the Department of Education to offer programs. These programs engage students by mixing up their time at school, with students completing between 1 - 2 days in the workplace where they are provided with on-the-job training which includes the delivery of the qualification, and at school 3 - 4 days meeting their other WACE requirements. This is an ideal engagement model for students where they are working and receiving a wage for their time in the workplace, in addition to a full qualification. Many School based traineeships and apprenticeships lead to employment or further training pathways at the completion of the program in addition to finishing Year 12 and meeting WACE.

Aboriginal school based traineeships and apprenticeships - These programs are offered to Indigenous students from Years 10 – 12 and include workplace training with a host employer and time training with a training provider. They offer an alternative pathway for Indigenous students into employment.

Profile funded courses – These are offered by State Training Providers to schools and provide an opportunity to engage students in qualifications that can also be linked to work placement in a variety of industry areas that students may not normally have access to as a part of their school program. These programs have students attending a State Training Provider for one day per week where delivery is completed against the national training package requirements. Programs can also include work placement with students having the opportunity to transfer what they learn in a classroom into a real workplace.

Pre-Apprenticeship in Schools programs – These provide students with the opportunity to complete pre-apprenticeship qualifications in a number of industry areas identified as skill shortage areas from the skill priority occupation list. The programs involve training off site at a State Training Provider campus in addition to work placement requirements in the program. The combination of hands on training and work placement is another key aspect in engaging students and enabling them to gain skills in post school pathways.

Work placement programs - Another major program for engaging students in schools. Students are offered the opportunity to work in a real work placement that will also earn them credit towards their WACE. The program provides students with access to a variety of different employment/career pathways to experience that will

support their post school destinations. Student complete between 1 - 2 days per week or are released on block placements.

- Industries often offer programs in the hope of attracting students into their employment pathway. These programs offer real industry exposure to students and schools design programs within their school environment to meet the training package requirements and provide real work placements. The recent Agri-Food Skills Australia project, which is being supported by the Department of Education and the Food, Fibre and Timber Industries Training Council offers recipient schools funding and support to deliver Certificate I or Certificate II in Agri-Food to students in 2012.

- Schools involved in the Western Australian School Pathways Program – Defence Industries are supported in providing access for students to training qualifications within this industry area. This program provides students with access to the delivery of qualifications which will provide them with sustainable university and VET pathways in applied science, technology, engineering and mathematics. These programs support work placements that will provide students with the opportunity to transfer what they are learning in a class-based environment.

Integrated program – This Department of Education developed Engagement Program assists teachers to engage Year 11 and 12 school students in a work readiness program that provides opportunities for WACE achievement and completion of a Certificate II in General Education for Adults. Students are individually case managed and are encouraged to have their own individual pathway plan. This type of learning environment is usually accompanied by a curriculum that has been specifically tailored to meet the needs of the students, within the context of the school and community. The program is designed to provide clear pathways to maximise student opportunity to gain formal accreditation, with a focus on accruing points toward the WACE.

Trade Training Centres are being established to help increase the proportion of students achieving Year 12 or an equivalent qualification. An important step in achieving this increase is to ensure students have access to high quality, relevant education and training opportunities that continue to engage and encourage them to complete their studies. The Commonwealth Government launched the Trade Training Centres for Schools Program in March 2008 and will provide $2.5 billion over 10 years to enable all Australian secondary schools to apply for funding for Trade Training Centres. The Program enables schools to partner with State Training Organisations, private RTOs, and industry and employer groups to give more students the opportunity to leave school on a pathway to achieving a Certificate III trade qualification. Students can commence training for a trade qualification in trade-standard facilities with trade-standard equipment whilst still staying within a school environment.

Engagement of Aboriginal students
The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008) recognises that educational outcomes for Aboriginal students are substantially behind those of other students in key areas of enrolment, attendance, participation, literacy, numeracy, retention and completion.

Western Australia has led the development of the national *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014* which was agreed by the MCEEDYA Ministers for implementation across all Australian jurisdictions. The national agreement has informed the *Aboriginal Education Plan for WA Public*

Schools 2011-2014. The focus is on school led responses to meet the needs of Aboriginal students including pathways to real post-school options and engagement.

Considerable work has been undertaken to date by schools to support Aboriginal young people to realise their potential. Some important gains have been made in Western Australian public schools including an increase in the number of Aboriginal students undertaking Year 12 programs and achieving a Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) and an increase in the number of Aboriginal students participating in academic pathways and achieving university entrance.

Aboriginal students need to have the opportunities and sufficient resources to support their participation in real post-school options. The development of self regulation and social responsibility enables students to participate positively in higher education, training or work. Schools will be empowered through key strategies to provide individual support to Aboriginal students to lift their rates of attainment of the WACE or Certificate II qualifications to match those of all students. Support will also be targeted to increase the number of Aboriginal students gaining direct entry to university.

Key strategies

- Increase access to school-based accredited training for Aboriginal students in Years 10 to 12, including apprenticeships and traineeships;

- Provide targeted case management and expand support for high achieving Aboriginal students, and for those at risk of leaving school early.

- Provide engagement programs and flexible schooling options for Aboriginal students to meet their learning needs.

- Provide career development services for Aboriginal students and their families.

- Provide case management and mentoring for Aboriginal trainees to link them to employment services.

The Department programs established to engage Aboriginal students in Year 11 and 12 include: Follow the Dream: Partnerships for Success Program; Follow the Dream Outreach program; Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme; Aboriginal School Based Training; attendance and sporting programs.

Education programs for Aboriginal students need to be relevant to student interest and linked to real post school pathways including higher education, training and employment. It is recognised that study opportunities for Aboriginal students in remote areas are limited along with access to post school pathways. Strategies to assist these Aboriginal students will require development.

Current school based programs for Aboriginal students use sport as a vehicle for engaging students, specifically males. The programs incorporate individual mentoring to maximise each student's educational potential, facilitate transitions through school and into post-school options and to develop important social and life skills. Findings of a *Review of Engagement and Retention Sporting Programs for Aboriginal Youth in Western Australian Schools* undertaken by the Department of Education and Training in 2008 included: young Aboriginal people need an addition to core western education processes to effectively engage with the Western Australian Education System; and improved participation, attendance and retention rates for Aboriginal students are an intended outcome of dedicated Aboriginal sporting programs. In 2010, the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee agreed that the Departments of Indigenous Affairs, Education and Sport and Recreation

would collaborate to develop tools to assess and evaluate sports based Aboriginal engagement programs. In undertaking the task, the working group adopted the term 'Aboriginal School Based Engagement Programs' (ASBEP) to broaden the scope of the programs to include activities such as art, music and other cultural pursuits to engage Aboriginal students. This would increase opportunities for Aboriginal females. ASBEP are best suited to secondary schools, given the emphasis is typically on supporting students in their transitions from senior school to work or further study.

Regular attendance remains one of the most significant factors in achieving success in schools. The Department provides support to schools for the development and implementation of innovative strategies to increase attendance of Aboriginal students. Aboriginal Attendance Grants are provided to schools to improve attendance of their Aboriginal students. In 2011 the Department also provided Aboriginal Attendance Recognition Grants to schools whose 2010 average attendance rate for Aboriginal students was at least 90 percent. These grants provide an incentive to schools and acknowledge and reward schools' achievement in reaching attendance targets.

Students with disabilities and learning difficulty
Students with special education needs, due to identified disability, language impairments or other learning difficulties, may experience difficulty at school or have reduced levels of attainment.

The Seamless Transition Program enables students with disability and high support needs attending education support schools and centres and local secondary schools who are eligible for the Disability Services Commission *Alternatives to Employment Program (ATE)* undertake seamless transition to their selected ATE service provider in their final term of schooling. Research and practice have consistently shown that young people with disability and high support needs experience positive post school outcomes when links between school and the service provider are in place before the student leaves school.

Award Scheme Developmental Accreditation Network (ASDAN) is a curriculum development organisation and an internationally recognised awarding body which grew out of research at the University of the West of England in the 1980's. ASDAN offers a wide range of curriculum programs and qualifications for all abilities targeting the 11-25 age group. ASDAN Award Programs blend activity-based curriculum with a framework for the development, assessment and accreditation of key skills with emphasis on rewarding achievement. The Curriculum Council has recognised the quality of the ASDAN Award Programs and has given them WACE Endorsed Program status with points awarded on completion of modules. In Term 4 2011, a trial of the ASDAN award programs commenced with West Coast Institute of Training to build further education pathways for students wishing to access State Training Organisations. This program will be expanded in 2012.

Building flexible pathways between schools, VET providers, universities and employers that maximise learning opportunities for students remains a priority. Increasing the proportion of students achieving a WACE, attaining an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank and/or a VET Certificate II or higher is essential to meet community and employer expectations of secondary schooling.
Of those Year 12 students who leave school without an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank or a VET qualification, many gain employment, enter a training course, or achieve entry to university through alternative pathways. Therefore schools may have to review their pathway offerings and ensure that students are

provided with the information they need to choose pathways that maximise their post-school options.