

WACSSO POLICY

AS AMENDED AT THE 2023 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

PARTNERING WITH P&CS
TO ADVANCE PUBLIC EDUCATION



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THE PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

This policy statement provides a summary of WACSSO's position on key elements of our Public Education System.

It is intended as a common reference point for WACSSO affiliates and stakeholders to assist us in achieving our mission.

It is written in the spirit of partnership – parents, carers and the school community, together, clarifying our position so that dialogue and collaboration with other key stakeholders can be as effective as possible.

SECTION 1

POLICY FOUNDATIONS

This section outlines the foundation that underpins all policy statements in Section 2-5.

1.1 WHY WACSSO EXISTS

WACSSO influences the direction of education for the benefit of students.

WACSSO is the peak body representing parents and carers of government school students. We aim to seek, support and represent the views of parents and carers, bringing them into partnership with schools, the Department of Education and all other stakeholders in the public school system. This work is based on an understanding that we are all responsible for the education of our children – individually and collectively.

1.2 WHO WACSSO REPRESENTS

Parents and carers bear a responsibility for ensuring that their own children receive an excellent education. As citizens we also share responsibility for ensuring that all children in our communities and our State are well educated. WACSSO works to ensure that parents and carers can meet their responsibilities effectively.

To do this we both support, and are supported by, our affiliates, namely Parents and Citizens Associations (P&Cs).

1.3 WHY EDUCATION MATTERS

Every policy statement in this document is underpinned by this recognition that education can and should serve both the individual student, and the family, community and society that they are a part of.

WACSSO strives for a public education system that ensures that:

- a. all young people develop the skills and understandings necessary to shape their own lives; and,
- b. all young Australians will be able to contribute constructively to the social, political and economic future of their communities, state and nation.

1.4 WHAT WE WANT EDUCATION TO ACHIEVE

Every policy statement in this document is underpinned by WACSSO's agreed educational aspirations, as outlined in sections 1.4.1 – 1.4.5:

FOR INDIVIDUALS

1.4.1 Inclusion of all in a Diverse society

Our vision is that the Education System will deliver equitable outcomes for all students and their families. 'All' has no exception in WACSSO policies, unless stated. It includes, for example, children, students, families or parents regardless of:

- a. ages, and developmental stages;
- b. cultural backgrounds;
- c. home languages;
- d. religious backgrounds or beliefs;
- e. sexual orientation;
- f. abilities;
- g. locality;
- h. home environments;
- i. income levels;
- j. personalities;
- k. gender identities;
- l. irrelevant criminal history; and,
- m. political conviction.

WACSSO emphasises that achieving equitable outcomes for different students often requires different strategies. 'Treating all these groups the same' can result in inequitable outcomes; responding appropriately to their particular circumstances will generally improve outcomes.

Every effort must be made (including targeted, parent specific strategies) to ensure that parents have adequate information and cultural safety to engage in decisions that relate to their children's education.

1.4.2 An excellent and broad education for all students.

Our vision is that all students will receive an education that equips them with:

- a. competency in numeracy and literacy;
- b. fluency in English;
- c. a strong and confident sense of identity - pride in who they are and where they have come from;
- d. a respect for their own cultural heritage and the cultural heritage of others;
- e. a capacity to easily navigate between their 'home culture' and the main stream culture they live in, where these are different;
- f. independence, self-efficacy and competence, so that they can strive to realise their own potential, achieve personal fulfilment, grasp opportunities and contribute to their community and nation;
- g. resilience, so that they can weather, and even grow from, the difficulties that life naturally brings; and,

- h. critical thinking and an informed and broad world view that will both enrich their experience of living, and enable them to engage as citizens and community members.

1.4.3 Physical, cultural and emotional safety.

Our vision is that all students will:

- a. be emotionally and physically safe and secure in their school environment, free from abuse, bullying, harassment, and undue risks;
- b. be safe from discrimination or ridicule based on any aspect of their identity (see 1.4.1, above);
- c. know that their home culture is valued within their school and throughout the education system;
- d. be supported to work within reasonable guidelines and rules that have been agreed and articulated by their school community; and,
- e. be supported to articulate their concerns, through sound democratic processes, in relation to any agreed rules and guidelines that may impact on the educational outcomes, or human rights, of themselves or others.

FOR COMMUNITIES AND SOCIETY

1.4.4 Citizens who have the skills and confidence to contribute.

Our vision is that all students will become well equipped to contribute to the social, cultural, economic and environmental health of organisations, communities, State and Nation that they are, or may become, a part of.

1.4.5 Citizens who have the knowledge, values and skills to help build and maintain a diverse and harmonious society.

Our vision is that all students will develop the capacity to actively engage in the democratic processes of the organisations, neighbourhoods, communities and society that they are a part of.

1.5 PRE-REQUISITES OF SUCCESS

We recognise that actions referred to in the following policy statements will be dependent on some or all of:

- a. full funding from government to meet the educational needs of all children, and to provide education, training and employment alternatives at the senior secondary level, as defined by the Objects of the Act in the WA Education Act 1999 (See also section 2.1);
- b. adequate staffing levels (See also sections 2.1 and 3.5); and,
- c. appropriate and adequate professional development for all relevant teachers and other staff as well as, in certain cases, other members of the school community;

- d. an understanding that success comes from the entire school community working together collaboratively, including parents, students, teachers, principals and other staff, as well as the wider community. Members of the school community should share in development of a vision and aims for the school, and work together - with openness, honesty and commitment - to achieve these aims; and,
- e. system wide collaboration; an understanding that an effective system of public education must be based on the notions of cooperation, support and mutual progress towards shared goals. Competition for resources, or for academic rankings, can diminish effectiveness.

These five pre-requisites underpin every policy statement in this document.

1.6 KEY FEATURES OF THE GOVERNMENT SCHOOL SYSTEM.

To achieve the Educational Vision and aims articulated above, we call for the maintenance of a Public Education system:

- a. that is fully funded at public expense to a level that ensures excellent educational outcomes for all;
- b. that is secular, where no particular religious beliefs are given preference
- c. that promotes values that contribute to rich lives, and harmonious families, communities, organisations and societies;
- d. that is compulsory;
- e. that is provided through neighbourhood or local schools as practicably as possible (including country schools);
- f. that maximises the capacity of schools to cooperate and share resources to enrich the learning experience for all students;
- g. in which equity is enhanced through adherence to a framework of agreed system-wide policies, curricula and -broad guidelines;
- h. in which schools have adequate autonomy to allow democratic processes and student focus to guide school-based policies, programs and practices (within the broad state framework outlined in 'g.');
- i. in which educational practices are targeted at the particular phase of childhood development (early, middle, adolescent, early adulthood), and at the particular needs of diverse individuals and groups;
- j. that is designed and developed through partnership between all stakeholders, including government, teachers, parents and students; and,
- k. that is evidence-based.

SECTION 2

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

2.1 APPROPRIATE RESOURCING OF EDUCATION

2.1.1 WACSSO will continue to advocate for a fully funded comprehensive public education system. Specifically:

- a. Funding should be adequate to ensure a standard of facilities and teaching quality within government schools equal to the best provided from private resources.
- b. We reject the voucher system, believing it to be inappropriate to the provision and maintenance of equity within public education.
- c. State/Commonwealth funding should reflect the need for a high, national standard of education.
- d. We oppose government financial support to establish new non-government schools, on the grounds that this will diminish the capacity of nearby government schools.
- e. All funds from sale of Department of Education assets should be distributed equitably between schools (See 2.2.4).
- f. No new curriculum should be implemented until:
 - i. associated text books/materials are available; and,
 - ii. appropriate professional development has been provided.
- g. GST should not be applied to education resources and services.

2.1.2 Where any policy statement in this document implies a need for resourcing, such funding should be provided by government, unless otherwise indicated.
See also Section 3.2 – Additional Funding Sources (At the School).

2.2 PLANNING OF SCHOOLS

2.2.1 New Schools

- a. New schools can have a significant impact on other schools within the same catchment. Therefore, any decision to develop a new school (or fund additional places in existing schools) should be done with great care, based on:
 - i. thorough community and parent consultation;
 - ii. short and long-term feasibility and impacts studies (including the impacts on existing schools); and,
 - iii. thorough analysis of whether students can be accommodated through expansion of existing schools.
- b. Funds should be fully committed to ensure adequate school resource standards at inception and in line with projected growth.
- c. In areas of rapid population growth, formulas to predict student numbers should be continually updated.

- d. New schools should include environmentally sustainable measures such as:
 - i. Water saving
 - ii. Electricity generation
 - iii. Energy efficiency
 - iv. Reducing pollution/greenhouse gas emissions
 - v. Valuing and protecting native flora and fauna
 - vi. Reducing consumption
 - vii. Managing waste
 - viii. Continuous resources for ongoing improvement

2.2.2 School closures and reorganisations

- a. The aim of any school reorganisation (including clustering, closures, amalgamation, or relocation of individual year students) should be to improve the quality of education for all students. The essential importance of neighbourhood schooling should not be compromised. Closures or reorganisations should never be proposed on the basis of cost savings.
- b. The extent to which re-organisation compromises any other part of WACSSO policy will be the extent to which WACSSO will oppose it. No closures should occur except where changes in land usage and residential population result in the loss of nexus between the school and the local community.
- c. Where closure or rationalisation of a school is being considered, the District Director or Department of Education must immediately notify WACSSO, as well as the P&Cs and school Councils of that school, and any other schools that will be impacted by the closure.
- d. A minimum of 12 months' notice must be given for any proposed closures.
- e. Any proposed closure or rationalisation should be evaluated by a comprehensive review that considers all potential impacts and outcomes¹.
- f. Where committees are established to consider reorganisation proposals, parents should be in the majority, and include at least one member of the P&C.
- g. Closures should only occur when the majority of the school community is convinced that this is in its students' best interests.
- h. Where agreement on closure or rationalisation cannot be reached, an independent arbitrator should be engaged, who will work with the entire community to reach a satisfactory solution.
- i. An appeals mechanism should be in place, independent of government, to allow adjudication of any disputed decision.
- j. Parents should receive a package of information, including all of the above, which assists them in providing informed input to the decision.
- k. Where a school has been reviewed and found to be viable, no further review will occur for at least 4 years.
- l. After any rationalisation process, there should be a thorough review of the process and its outcomes. This should be conducted by a committee that includes representatives from the school and local communities. The resulting report should contain a full cost of analysis, and be publicly available.

2.2.3 School Boundaries/Catchments

While fully accepting the Department of Education's school boundaries and catchments WACSSO supports the right of students to:

- a. enrol at their nearest school;
- b. apply to enrol at a school that has supplementary educational experiences that meet his or her individual needs or interests; and,
- c. an appeals process should be in place for applicants who wish to move across boundaries;

2.2.4 Excision Projects – Disposal of School Land and Buildings

While accepting the rationale for selling land, buildings or assets that are no longer needed for educational purposes ('excision'), WACSSO assert that such excision should:

- a. be done in partnership after full consultation with the school community;
- b. not be done merely for short term gain or to address a financial crisis;
- c. only occur if it serves the interests of present and future students, and does not compromise those interests;
- d. follow departmental guidelines on use of any funds that are generated; and,
- e. fund locally identified educational needs as a first priority.

2.3 INDEPENDENT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The expansion of Independent Public Schools (IPS) must not create a 2 tier system. All schools, including IPS, should remain part of the government system, accountable to the Minister with responsibility for school education, and subject to all elements of the Department of Education Policies.

2.4

All WACSSO policies, as outlined in this document, apply equally to Independent Public Schools.

PUBLIC COMPARISONS BETWEEN SCHOOLS

- a. WACSSO endorses the need for each school to be accountable to its community and the wider public. However, this accountability should not be based on academic outcomes alone. Other information to be made available for accountability should include all elements outlined in 1.4.2.
- b. WACSSO opposes any form of public comparison of, or ranking between, schools².

2.5

BENCHMARKING (LITERACY AND NUMERACY)

WACSSO does not specifically oppose the benchmarking of literacy and numeracy, including national measuring and reporting. However, we believe that funds used for the benchmark testing would be better spent in actively improving standards across the board.

Reservations include:

- a. WACSSO believes that teacher assessment and reporting at local school level are more important indicators of progress for parents than national benchmarks.
- b. All parents should be fully informed about benchmarking programs, including their purpose, and have the right to decide whether their child participates or withdraws.
- c. Where a child is withdrawn from the program they should be marked as 'withdrawn'.
- d. Individual children or schools should not be publicly identified in benchmarking

exercises.

- e. Sample (rather than whole cohort) testing is preferable for school systems to report achievements in relation to national goals.

2.6 VOCATIONAL TRAINING

WACSSO strongly supports the provision of Vocational Training to equip students with practical skills that are transferable to the workplace. These opportunities should be to the highest possible standard and accessible for all appropriately aged students.

2.7 ENABLING CHOICE WITHIN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

The education system, while maintaining a strong network of neighbourhood schools, should also strive to offer students a choice of curriculum options and educational philosophies. Strategies to maximise this choice might include:

- a. Maximise, within each neighbourhood school the range of curriculum options and educational styles. As always, this should be developed through joint parent-teacher-student collaboration.
- b. Investigate the potential for cooperation in 'clusters' within an accessible geographic area to increase choice. Where such clusters exist:
 - i. teachers and equipment (rather than students) should move between schools; and,
 - ii. if student movement between schools is unavoidable, it must be free of charge.

2.8 PARENTS AS PARTNERS IN EDUCATION.

As stated in Statement 1.2, parents are key partners in the education of Western Australia's children.

- a. The Western Australian Council of State School Organisations (WACSSO), with State Government support, represents and supports the collective voices of parents, P&Cs, and other affiliated school-based organisations.
- b. WACSSO is, and should be, funded to ensure that parents and carers are, collectively, a strong and effective partner in ensuring optimum outcomes for WA's students. This work includes the establishment and strengthening of as many P&Cs as possible.

See also 3.1, regarding parent involvement at school level.

SECTION 3

AT THE SCHOOL

3.1 PARENTS AS PARTNERS IN THE SCHOOL

WACSSO recognises that Parents and Carers are responsible for the well-being, and social development, of their children. As such they bear responsibility, in partnership with schools and government, to ensure that their children are educated to the levels as prescribed in legislation.

The public education sector should have strategies, policies and resources in place to engage with parents in a proactive and constructive manner. The sector has a responsibility to address barriers to parental engagement.

Parental engagement is more effective when:

3.1.1 Parents are informed.

They should:

- a. be informed on all aspects of their children's schooling, including all policies and practice guidelines of their child's school or potential school;
- b. have access to their own child's official records and files, including professional interpretation that is included or attached;
- c. have access to full information about curricula and programs that their child is involved in, to ensure that they can make informed choices about their child's schooling;
- d. have regular contact with their child's teacher(s) to discuss their child's progress; and,
- e. be informed of any specific concerns or emergencies in relation to their child's safety, wellbeing or development.

3.1.2 Parents are involved as partners

- a. Parents should inform schools of any specific expectations and requirements for their child's education.
- b. All parents should have optimum opportunity to be involved in decision making processes:
 - i. as a parent (in relation to their child); and
 - ii. as a member of the school community (in relation to school policies and practices).
- c. All parents have the right to choose the level of their child's involvement in programs or classes. This choice should be based on full information from, and dialogue with, the relevant staff.
- d. No student should be discriminated against by any staff member, either implicitly or explicitly, as a result of a parent's actions in relation to a, b or c, above.
- e. Particular issues of Diversity, Access and Equity (See Section 3.3) should be respected by all stakeholders.

3.1.3 Parents have the right to appeal

- a. Parents should have the right to appeal, through a clear, fair and equitable process, any decisions that they consider unsatisfactory.
- b. Schools should make information about the appropriate processes easily available to all parents.
- c. This includes the right to have an advocate speak or write on their behalf.

3.1.5 Parents have a collective voice and capacity

- a. Schools should recognise that it is significantly easier for parents to be partners in the school, and the education system, if they are able to reflect, speak and act collectively.
- b. Every school should support the independent establishment, operations and actions of a Parents and Citizens Association, and be responsive to any and all matters raised by that P&C.
- c. All school Boards or Councils should have parent representatives. At least one of these parent representatives should be appointed by the P&C, and should be guided by their views.
- d. WACSSO encourages P&Cs to fully support their school in practical ways, as well as through promoting the school in the local community.

See also statement 2.8 above, regarding parent involvement at a State level.

3.2 ADDITIONAL FUNDING SOURCES

3.2.1 School fees, charges and contributions.

As outlined in 2.1 above, WACSSO urges government to fund education to a level that mitigates the need for parental fees charges and contributions. However, where contributions from parents are sought we urge the following guidelines:

- a. financial contributions (other than those covered by Department of Education policy) should only be called for after consultation with, and the endorsement of, the school community and/or parent representatives;
- b. all such contributions must be recognised, and publicised as, voluntary. No child should be restricted from any activity or event due to non-payment; and,
- c. all requests for parent contributions should be accompanied by written statements on their precise use.

3.2.2 Promotional Activities and Corporate Sponsorship.

While re-affirming our commitment to full government funding of government schools (See 2.1), WACSSO accepts that promotional activities and corporate sponsorship can bring genuine benefit to students of government schools. Where such activities and sponsorship are to be undertaken, we urge schools to follow the attached guidelines.³

3.3

DIVERSITY, ACCESS AND EQUITY

In keeping with statement 1.4.1 WACSSO asserts that schools will need to give particular attention to both:

- a. highlighting and celebrating the diversity within our schools and our nation; and
- b. paying attention to the particular and varying needs of minority groups.

3.3.1 Language.

WACSSO calls on all schools (with adequate government resourcing) to provide education, including student-specific educational strategies that ensure:

- a. all students are, or become, fluent in written and spoken English;
- b. students are supported, where possible to become bi-lingual or multi-lingual; and,
- c. interpretive services (written, oral and sign) are used where necessary to ensure that non-English speaking family members can be meaningfully involved in their child's education.

3.3.2 Culture

WACSSO encourages schools to provide programs that, in collaboration with parents and community members, promote understanding in, and enjoyment of, our multicultural society.

- a. School activities, including formal activities, should encourage opportunities for: understanding, celebrating and connecting with all cultures within Australia and, particularly, within the school.
- b. Fostering harmony and connection between people of different race, and actively and explicitly rejecting racism of all forms, be it conscious or sub-conscious; personal or institutional.
- c. Monitoring the progress of students from minority backgrounds and, where necessary, providing targeted approaches to their particular educational needs. This may include culturally and/or linguistically appropriate teaching assistants.

3.3.3 Disability ⁴

Classroom and school arrangements should ensure that all people with disabilities (including students and their family members) can fully participate in all educational and school-related activities.

- a. All possible arrangements should be made to ensure that people with disabilities can receive education through their neighbourhood school.
- b. Parents should be given full information about available options to facilitate an informed choice of schools.
- c. Parents should be equal partners in determining additional educational requirements to ensure excellent education for their children with disabilities.
- d. The Department of Education should be resourced to provide direct support

to parents of students with disabilities to navigate the National Disability Insurance Scheme and assist with the setting and achieving of the student's educational goals.

- e. Early education programs should facilitate early recognition of all disabilities. Appropriate learning programs should be developed in consultation with parents.
- f. Appropriately trained educational assistants should be provided to ensure students with disabilities receive an excellent education alongside other students.
- g. This policy applies to neurodevelopmental disorders⁵, such as ADHD.⁶ Where necessary, schools should formulate policies and procedures, in line with Department of Education policy, for the administration of medication.

3.3.4 Gender

- a. All schools should ensure that all activities, including education activities, are provided in such a way as to ensure equitable outcomes for children regardless of their gender identity.
- b. Education should foster an understanding of the historic and changing role of gender in society, and emphasise the right of all people to create their own destiny, regardless of gender.
- c. Physical education should be provided in such a way that engagement of all children in all activities is encouraged. Any gender-specific activities should comply with relevant legislation.

3.3.5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

- a. Our schools and education system should recognise that Aboriginal Western Australians hold a unique place in our society.
- b. Schools need to recognise and respond to the potential need for broader community involvement (beyond parents or carers) in the education and participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- c. Curricula, from the first year of school to the last, should lead students towards a knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the history, cultural traditions and contemporary experience of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. Such curricula should be compulsory.
- d. Positive steps to assist non-Aboriginal people to understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values, cultures and decision-making processes should be undertaken.

3.3.6 Sexuality

Sexuality (heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, lesbian or any other legal sexuality) will not be a ground for discrimination in our schools.

3.4 STAGES OF SCHOOLING

Every phase of learning is of equal importance, and should be resourced accordingly. WACSSO supports focussed and specific strategies at each phase to optimise student outcomes (as outlined in Section 1.4). We recognise that optimum teaching practices differ for each phase of development, but all rely on the pre-requisites and features set out in sections 1.5 and 1.6.

In addition, some specific policy statements apply to the early and later years of secondary education:

3.4.1 Early Childhood Education (ECE) (Ages 3–8)

In addition the statements highlighted in sections 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6:

The first eight (8) years of a child's life are the most critical to their future learning and development. It is essential that their learning experiences in these years are optimised through adequate and focussed resourcing and strategies. This will include (at least):

- a. that ECE is recognised as an integrated part of the government school system (to avoid duplication, or abrupt changes);
- b. that ECE is developmentally appropriate;
- c. that ECE is staffed by appropriately (ECE) qualified teachers and staff;
- d. that all ECE facilities and equipment are age appropriate;
- e. that entry to the first year of compulsory schooling is based on readiness, rather than precise age;
- f. teachers and other staff should be trained in early identification of developmental difficulties; and,
- g. the developmental needs of the child should be met through inter-disciplinary, inter-agency services, including screening, recognition and, if necessary referral of the 'at risk' child.

3.4.2 Education and Training in Upper School.

In addition to the statements highlighted in Sections 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6:

- a. Students in Years 11 and 12 must have the widest possible choice of educational and training pathways and models of delivery, with different learning environments to suit the needs of students.
- b. Where any choices incur costs to students, financial support should be available to any students who might be excluded by financial limitations.
- c. School and college procedures should be in accordance with the legal rights of older students.

3.5 APPROPRIATE STAFF PROVISION

3.5.1 Staff Numbers/Recommended Class Sizes

Teacher/student ratios and class sizes have a significant impact on learning experience and outcomes. WACSSO recommends the maximum number of students under the direct supervision of any one teacher as follows:

PRIMARY

Kindergarten	18
pre-primary	20
years 1-2	25
years 3-6	25
Composite classes	20
practical not exceed	16
remedial not exceed	8

SECONDARY

lower school	25
upper school	20
practical not exceed	16
remedial not exceed	8

Note that:

- a. Educational assistants should be provided in addition to appropriate teacher numbers.
- b. No teachers should be required to teach more than three grades in a multigrade classroom.

3.5.2 Teachers

- a. The quality of any school is closely related to the quality of its teachers; their skills, energy and enthusiasm, imagination, professionalism tolerance, sensitivity and perceptiveness, and affinity with young people.
- b. This quality is in turn supported by:
 - i. adequate staffing levels (see 3.5.1);
 - ii. adequate assistance, and reduced teaching load, for first year teachers; and,
 - iii. ongoing, fully supported, professional development.
- c. Teacher allocations and transfers based on the specific needs of the school community; more equity - and less formula - driven.
- d. Country schools should have the capacity to employ local teachers who are not permanent employees of the Department of Education.
- e. WACSSO strongly opposes the payment of financial incentives to teachers where that incentive is predominantly linked to student academic results.

3.6 EDUCATION IN RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS

The Government has a responsibility to ensure full education for all Western Australian students. This includes those living in rural and remote areas.

WACSSO supports the following principles for Rural and Remote Education:

3.6.1 Local Provision

- a. Wherever possible, fully resourced schools should be made available within reasonable daily commuting distance of students.
- b. Every effort should be made (by the Department of Education, tertiary institutions and the local community and parents) to attract and retain excellent, committed teachers for rural and remote schools. This would include: special contractual arrangements; incentives; rural-specific training; professional development; community engagement; expanded teacher counselling and support services; service and resource sharing between schools and TAFE.
- c. Government should support research and development on alternative curriculum options for rural and remote schools.

3.6.2 Distance Education

- a. In isolated areas, students should receive educational services at or near their home using the best available distance education techniques and technologies.
- b. Opportunities to socialise, in person, and learn collaboratively should be made available to home – based students.
- c. Government should make boarding facilities available for all students who have no other alternatives.

3.6.3 Resources

Given the resource implications of these strategies, government should provide adequate loading in its funding arrangements for all remote and isolated education.

3.7 SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING

3.7.1 Formal School Based Decision-Making

Note: this section is specific to formal decision making, where formal bodies are established with specified terms of reference (e.g. School Councils; Working Parties considering operational matters). This is in addition to 1.5.d, which asserts that all decisions should be based on the widest possible consultation and collaboration.

School-based decision-making should be governed by the following principles:

- a. All decisions that are binding on the whole school community should be made by a body consisting of representatives from all stakeholders.
- b. All representatives on decision-making bodies should be elected from a recognisable constituency (including the school P&C) to which they have a binding duty to report.
- c. School based decision making should cover as many aspects of school operations as the school-community desires. However:
 - i. no school-based decisions can breach the broad curriculum and access guarantees common to all government schools, and,
 - ii. schools should actively encourage and support involvement by all members of the school community.

3.7.2 School Accountability

Schools should be accountable to their school community and the wider public.

This accountability can be achieved through:

- a. provision of statistics and auditing as a basis for financial accountability;
- b. school community involvement in decisions;
- c. submitting practices and processes to ongoing scrutiny;
- d. regular communication (e.g. newsletters, on-line updates, etc) to the school community; and,
- e. annual Reports, presented at an annual open meeting, and to the Department of Education.

3.7.3 School Councils⁷ and Boards⁸

WACSSO supports School Councils and Boards as an integral part of school governance.

However, WACSSO believes that:

- a. WACSSO and government should develop an agreement about the compositions, powers and accountability of School Councils and Boards;
- b. School Councils and Boards should have a majority of parents/carers;
- c. student representation is desirable and, in senior schools, essential;
- d. significant teacher/staff representation is important;
- e. members of the wider community should only be included on School Boards by a decision of the school community;
- f. parent representatives should be elected by the parent community;
- g. parent representatives should present the views of, and report back to school parent organisations (such as P&Cs); and,
- h. all Council/Board members should participate in relevant, endorsed and financially supported training, at least once per term.

In addition to the functions shown under the DoE's draft [Terms of Reference/Constitutions](#), WACSSO believes that School Councils/Boards should:

- a. establish curriculum priorities and objectives, and plans for its delivery;
- b. develop an annual statement of the preferred staffing profile for the school; and,
- c. control the use of school facilities outside school hours.

3.8 ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION OF STUDENTS

- a. Assessment to evaluate student progress should be non-competitive, and only for information between teacher, student and parent.
- b. Certification should be by a central authority and issued whenever the student leaves school. It should be supplemented by a local school-leaver statement and/or portfolio of achievement.
- c. All students are entitled to recognition of success in any particular aspect of the learning process.
- d. All school leavers should receive documentation of positive achievements.
- e. Certification should include information about subject content (but should not differentiate around degrees of 'difficulty').
- f. Ownership of information on assessment and certification rests with the student, and should not be published or forwarded without their consent.
- g. State systems should support the smooth transfer of academic achievement records to facilitate correct student placements when moving interstate, or between government and non-government schools.

3.9 HEALTH AND SAFETY

3.9.1 School Environment

The quality (including size) of buildings, grounds, facilities and equipment must allow for the comfort and safety of students and teachers, as well as offering a sound learning environment. In addition to the normal building codes, WACSSO emphasises:

- a. In response to WA's hot summers and associated health risks:
 - i. all schools should be air-cooled;
 - ii. in very hot weather, schools should not close, but classroom activities should be modified to suit the conditions; and,
 - iii. appropriate shading should be provided over assembly areas, sandpits and playground equipment.
- b. Asbestos must be managed – at every school, in accordance with regulatory requirements.

3.9.2 Health Care

Proper health care is essential to all students' educational progress.

- a. Integrated health services
 - i. Integrated, coordinated health services should combine in both preventing and correcting health problems, including physical and mental health.
 - ii. All students should have access to a Health Service staffed by a full time Community Health Nurse.
- b. First Aid
 - i. Every teacher should hold a current senior first aid certificate.
 - ii. Every school should be adequately equipped with first aid facilities and resources.
- c. Emergency procedures
 - i. All schools should have appropriate emergency action and crisis management policies, including procedures for provision of first aid, and incident reporting to parents and the District Office.
- d. Healthy Food and Drink
 - i. WACSSO urges all canteens to support the Department of Education's Healthy Food and Drink Policy.

3.9.3 Vaccination/Immunisation Procedures

The school community should be protected by procedures that prevent outbreaks of preventable infection diseases.

- a. Parents should be given full information on vaccination policies, and the rationale for these policies as a matter of public, as well as individual, health and take responsibility for their child's vaccination decisions, record keeping and reporting.
- b. The Department of Education and Department of Health should maintain vaccination records to assist in school community protection in the event of an outbreak of infectious disease, and provide relevant information to parents.
- c. In the event of an outbreak, unvaccinated students may be excluded. However, their education should be continued through the best possible methods.
- d. WACSSO supports government policies and procedures for controlling outbreaks, and urges all students, staff and parents to play their part in such controls.

3.9.4 Personal road use (on bike and foot)

Safe passage of students to and from school requires closer collaboration between school communities, traffic and town planning professionals and the relevant local, state and federal government authorities.

- a. WACSSO encourages the development of bike-plans for every school community which would include:
 - i. Appropriate design of:
 - roads, and optimum, well designed bike paths; and
 - school exit and entry points.
 - ii. School based bicycle education courses (including use of appropriate equipment, and choice of safe routes home).
- b. WACSSO encourages the development of pedestrian plans for every school community which would include:
 - i. sufficient parent parking and pick-up/set down facilities;
 - ii. consideration of student parking;
 - iii. a 40km/hr speed limit on all roads adjacent to schools (unless overpasses are in use);
 - iv. a 25km/hr speed limit when passing a school bus; and,
 - v. guarded pedestrian 'A' type crossing, with wardens that receive ongoing training.

3.9.5 Bus Safety

- a. All new buses used for carrying students should be fitted out and have specifications in line with road safety best practise.
- b. In addition to compliance with the [Department of Transport's](#) requirements, all buses carrying students should:
 - i. carry an adult supervisor in addition to driver, with a mobile phone' or two-way radio where necessary;
 - ii. carry distinctive identification, as well as flashing light systems – front and back; and
 - iii. be fitted with auxiliary mirrors to increase visibility of students in front of the bus.
- c. Stopping points should have marked areas designated: until the bus has left that marked area, no student may cross the road.

3.9.6 Playgrounds

- a. Playground and play equipment are important in enhancing students' learning and development. WACSSO recognises and accepts that there is a risk of injury for students using playground equipment. These risks should be minimised through:
 - i. compliance with safety standards;
 - ii. adequate and trained supervision; and
 - iii. properly maintained equipment
- b. Where equipment risks are recognised equipment should be repaired or replaced, rather than removed.
- c. Playgrounds should be shaded.
- d. WACSSO encourages the development of Nature playgrounds within school grounds, as promoted by Nature Play WA.

3.9.7 School Surveillance

- a. All schools should have appropriate security measures in place to create a safe environment for staff and students, and to protect school property.
- b. WACSSO supports the use of school surveillance and CCTV systems, but only for the purpose of criminal surveillance.
- c. WACSSO supports the Department of Education Policy on CCTV (January 13 2011).

3.10 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

WACSSO recognises the ecological footprint that schools have and encourages all schools to have programs that recognise their energy consumption and related emissions by:

- a.
 - i. reducing waste;
 - ii. recycling and reusing;
 - iii. protecting and replenishing native flora and fauna; and
- b. Implementing student-led sustainability projects.

SECTION 4

STUDENTS

WACSSO's educational aspirations for students are summarised in Section 1.4. Section 4 should be read in conjunction with that Section.

4.1 The Rights and Responsibilities of Students

- a. All children have an inherent right to education, and the State Government has a legislated responsibility to ensure every child can receive the highest quality of education, free of charge.
- b. All students have a responsibility to maximise their own education and their own emotional, physical, intellectual and social development. As well, they should contribute to the development of a happy and effective learning environment at their school.

In addition to inherent rights and responsibilities WACSSO emphasises that:

- c. Schools should recognise the importance of rest, leisure, play and recreational activities, appropriate to the age and needs of all children.
- d. Schools should be, as far as practicable, student focussed, responsive to the particular needs, capacities and learning approaches of all children.
- e. Students have a responsibility to comply, as far as possible, with school guidelines on uniform and/or dress codes. However, no student should be barred from school activities (unless for health or safety reasons), or punished in any other way, for not complying with school dress-code requirements.

4.2 Duty of Care

- a. A safe and healthy school environment is conducive to learning, and is important to the well-being of students and staff. Duty of Care guidelines should be developed and followed. Through these guidelines, schools will actively protect and enhance the physical and emotional health and safety of all students.
- b. These guidelines should include, at least:
 - i. a sun/skin protection policy;
 - ii. an excursion policy;
 - iii. programs and strategies for controlling bullying and assault;
 - iv. appropriate administration of medication policy and procedures;
 - v. an emergency action/crisis management policy, including provision of first aid;
 - vi. appropriate materials, furniture and equipment to foster physical well-being (including ergonomic design);
 - vii. regular emergency evacuation drills; and
 - viii. good design of, and maximum weights for backpacks (as recommended by professionals), as well as instruction on proper use. This is the shared responsibility of parents and schools. Where possible, provision of lockers, as well as class sets of books and other strategies, should assist in minimising the need for heavy backpacks).

- c. All students should be instructed in safety precautions and encouraged to achieve survival skills.
- d. All staff should have first aid training (including [mental health first aid](#))⁹.
- e. There should be enough fully qualified support personnel, at all times, to:
 - i. provide assistance and advice to emotionally disturbed or disruptive students and their families;
 - ii. providing pastoral care on a day-to-day basis; and
 - iii. administering emergency first aid (including [mental health first aid](#)).
- f. The Department of Education and schools should maintain confidential records of incidents and events related to health and safety in order to survey trends and determine action to limit these occurrences in the future.

4.3 Behaviour Management

- a. WACSSO acknowledges the need for effective management of student behaviour, to ensure a safe and positive learning environment. Behaviour management is most effective when based on positive encouragement, counselling, respect for one's self and for others, and when it is practiced in a spirit of collaboration.
- b. Specifically, all schools should have a behaviour management policy, in which processes:
 - i. are preventative in nature;
 - ii. promote student wellbeing and self-esteem;
 - iii. have a focus on early intervention;
 - iv. encourage engagement by students;
 - v. include fair sanctions for inappropriate behaviour;
 - vi. include staff, parents/carers and where appropriate students in the development of positive strategies; and,
 - vii. are clearly communicated to parents/carers, students, and staff, along with avenues of appeal.
- c. WACSSO supports the intent of engagement centres, as long as:
 - i. they are adequately resourced and funded;
 - ii. staff are trained specifically to cater for needs of students who attend the centre;
 - iii. adequate support services have been supplied for both staff and students;
 - iv. clear guidelines exist as to when it is warranted to relocate a student to an engagement centre; and,
 - v. students are entitled to appeal a decision, and any appeal will be heard before an independent panel consisting of, at least, a parent advocate, an independent advocate; a Department of Education representative. Other people may be involved by agreement.

- d. WACSSO strongly opposes the re-introduction of corporal punishment in schools;
- e. WACSSO acknowledges the need for clearly articulated school rules that are agreed by students, parents and staff, and that are periodically subject to collaborative review;
- f. Sexual harassment ¹⁰, by or of any member of the school community, including students, is completely unacceptable, and should be reported to the relevant authority.

4.4 Student participation in decision-making

WACSSO strongly supports (age appropriate) representative participation of students in all education decision-making. This participation should be encouraged and resourced, including through:

- a. the formation and engagement of democratically elected Student Councils in all government schools; and,
- b. the establishment of student networks at regional and State levels.

4.5 Older students

- a. Our government education system should ensure that any student who has not achieved their educational aspirations by school leaving age will:
 - i. still have access to secondary education; and,
 - ii. have access to other educational opportunities, including bridging programs to tertiary education.

SECTION 5

CURRICULUM¹¹

5.1 Western Australian Curriculum¹²

- a. WACSSO supports schools using the Western Australian Curriculum in local contexts to provide learning experiences that are relevant to the needs of their students and the communities they come from.
- b. The Western Australian Curriculum should be implemented in collaboration with all stakeholders (see sections 1.5d, and 2.8).

5.2 Literacy and Numeracy

All students should achieve functional literacy¹³ and numeracy¹⁴.

To this end WACSSO would support:

- a. greater allocation of funds to Primary Education;
- b. adequate specialist support services (e.g. remedial teachers, therapists, social workers and others);
- c. capacity to screen students' progress, identify learning difficulties and provide individual education plans and learning environments as well as specialist learning materials, where necessary; and,
- d. literacy programs made available for early school leavers and adult students.

5.3 Vocational Education and Training (VET)

- a. In equipping students for a variety of post-school situations, schools' curricula should include vocational subjects that will be valued by employers and others. VET Courses should:
 - i. be financially accessible to all eligible students;
 - ii. be developed in consultation with industry and others, balancing industry needs with broader educational outcomes. (Both are important);
 - iii. be accredited; and,
 - iv. not 'cost shift' from private industry to the public school system.
- b. Where workplace experience is included, this must be rigorously monitored to ensure it adds to students' knowledge and skills.

5.4 Careers Education¹⁵

To ensure that all students leave school with the skills, knowledge, understanding and self-esteem to achieve their vocational choice:

- a. Courses should support the development of broad competencies (rather than narrow competencies for specific jobs).
- b. Students should be provided with a range of actual or simulated career experiences
- c. Careers Education should place work and career in its social context – not as an end in itself, but a part of a rounded life.

- d. Career counselling, by people who are appropriately trained, should be available to all students.

5.5 Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

- a. Education should include development of skills in effective use of ICT for all students.
- b. High quality (including bandwidth, and operating environments) ICT should be available to all students.
- c. No student should be disadvantaged because they do not have access to ICT outside the school.
- d. One dedicated ICT support specialist should be provided for every 200 computers or equivalent devices (e.g. school-provided tablets). Where schools have less than 200 devices, local FTE sharing should occur. A 'flying squad' should be based in every regional education area.

5.6 Education for Gifted¹⁶ and Talented¹⁷ Students

- a. Governments should provide resources and opportunities to stretch all students, including those who are gifted and/or talented.
- b. The school curriculum, classroom programs and, where necessary, targeted strategies should enable outstanding abilities to emerge and be identified, at any age, and for all students.

5.7 Health Education

Comprehensive health education – a combination of learning experiences which affect the way students think, feel and act in regard to their own well-being and that of others - is an essential element of the Curriculum.

5.7.1 Sex Education

Age appropriate sex education should be available to all students within the health curriculum. Parents must have the right to withdraw their children from these programs.

5.7.2 Child Protection

- a. All students, especially the very young, should receive full instruction in approved child protection programs.
- b. Child protection policies at the school must be developed in consultation with the whole school community, and health professionals, and parents should be fully informed of the program content.

5.7.3. Moral and social education

- a. WACSSO believes that moral and social education are primarily the responsibility of the family and community. In schools, such education is delivered within a program of guidance in community relationships, health and pastoral care.

5.8 Drug Education

Comprehensive drug education should:

- a. be taught in the context of the school health curriculum, commencing in the primary years;
- b. aim to minimise harm and risk through prevention of inappropriate drug use;
- c. be evidence based;
- d. reflect an understanding of the characteristics of the individual, the social context the drug and the interrelationship of these factors;
- e. embrace harm minimisation strategies, and address interventions, including counselling services and referral procedures; and,
- f. be provided by teachers who are well trained and informed.

5.9 Religious Education

- a. Institutional religion is the province of the home and religious institutions. Programs delivered within schools should only be directed towards understanding and tolerance of all religious beliefs, and must never promote one religion over others.
- b. Where either General Religious Education or Special Religious Education are offered, parents should be fully informed of the content, and have the right to transfer their child to alternative, meaningful programs provided by the school.

5.10 Homework

WACSSO supports inclusion of homework where:

- a. it is set with regard to current, recognised best practice, including the Department of Education guidelines;
- b. it is framed by a documented whole school approach (eg a school homework policy); and,
- c. it complements and enhances classroom curricula, and is not used to replace daytime learning within the school.

5.11 Environmental Sustainability

WACSSO recognises the importance of climate change, and the effect it has on children, and supports a whole school planning framework for sustainability education.

As a standard, the curriculum should:

- a.
 - i. increase the knowledge, skills, and understanding of sustainability;
 - ii. focus on critical and innovative thinking and real-world problem-solving;
 - iii. engage with local conservation and sustainability projects; and
 - iv. use sustainability concepts and principles across the whole school community;
- b. provide resources for schools to deliver high-quality and engaging curriculum content; and,
- c. provide specialist training and peer support networks for teaching in schools.

DEFINITIONS AND GUIDELINES

¹ *Any proposed closure or rationalisation should be evaluated by a comprehensive review that considers all potential impacts and outcomes, including*

- a. students' needs;
- b. educational, social, economic, cultural, environmental, urban planning, community and historical factors;
- c. school population including future enrolment figures;
- d. geographical and safety factors (including student travelling time);
- e. availability of outside school hours care;
- f. access and accommodation for students at the nearest government school;
- g. impact on the government school system as a whole, and in particular on the programs and resources of the host schools in the area;
- h. impacts on shared resourcing of school facilities;
- i. Impacts on community groups or organisations using classrooms or facilities.
- j. availability of specialised facilities for music, art, library, etc.; and,
- k. costs incurred by parents or guardians for dress code requirements.

² *Negative impacts of public comparisons can include:*

- a. competition at the expense of collaboration;
- b. the emergence of high profile schools that attract students from other catchments, thus diminishing the resources of some schools; and,
- c. negative perceptions, and reduced resources, for schools working with students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

³ *Guidelines for Promotional activities and corporate sponsorship*

- a. School based decision making groups (inclusive of parent representatives) should consider all proposals for promotional activities and corporate sponsorship before approval.
- b. Curriculum content and school policies must not be varied as a result of such activities or sponsorship.
- c. Public acknowledgment of sponsors is acceptable.
- d. The educational outcomes of schools must not be dependent on non-Government contribution or sponsorship.
- e. Schools should take care to avoid school identification with commercial enterprises where these:
 - i. may cause community tension;
 - ii. promote competition for resources between schools; and,
 - iii. involve naming of sporting events (or other key facilities or activities).
- f. WACSSO specifically opposes:
 - i. any changes to school policies, programs or strategies resulting from a commercial relationship;
 - ii. a change of name resulting from a commercial relationship;
 - iii. advertising in or on school grounds, buildings, or uniforms;
 - iv. student involvement in commercial promotions; and,
 - v. significant differences in resource levels between public schools resulting from commercial arrangements.

⁴ **Disability**

Disability in relation to a person, means:

- a. total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or
- b. total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
- c. the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or
- d. the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or
- e. the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or
- f. a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or
- g. a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour;

and includes a disability that:

- h. presently exists; or
- i. previously existed but no longer exists; or
- j. may exist in the future; or
- k. is imputed to a person.

(From *Disability Standards for Education, 2005.*)

⁵ **Neurodevelopmental Disorder**

A disorder of brain function that affects emotion, learning ability, self-control and memory and that unfolds as the individual grows.

⁶ **ADHD**

Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder.

⁷ **School Council**

School Councils are formed with the fundamental purpose of enabling parents and members of the community to engage in activities that are in the best interests of students and will enhance the education provided by the school. They have the following functions:

To take part in:

- a. establishing and reviewing from time to time, the school's objectives, priorities and general policy directions;
- b. the planning of financial arrangements necessary to fund those objectives, priorities and directions;
- c. evaluating the school's performance in achieving them; and,
- d. formulating codes of conduct for students at the school.

⁸ **School Boards**

School Boards are similar to School Councils (above), but are at Independent Public Schools.

⁹ **Mental Health First Aid**

Teaches the same skills for mental illness as basic first aid uses for someone experiencing a physical health problem. This is the help you can give before professional treatment arrives.

¹⁰ **Sexual Harassment**

The unwelcome sexual conduct, remarks or innuendo aimed at an individual or groups of people that creates an uncomfortable environment for the recipient.

¹¹ **Curriculum**

All the planned experiences provided by the school to facilitate students' learning and development. The learning environment, which includes the school ethos and the ways in which students and staff behave towards one another, is also an important part of the curriculum. It is more than a syllabus – it includes teaching methods, learning activities, resources, assessment systems and learning environments.

¹² **The Curriculum Framework**

Establishes common educational outcomes expected of all students from K to year 12. The Curriculum Framework is used by schools to develop and implement their own curriculum according to the needs and characteristics of their students. It makes explicit the learning outcomes which all students should have the opportunity to achieve. It is currently focussed on outcomes (what we want to achieve) rather than inputs (what we will do).

¹³ **Literacy**

The power to invest words with meaning, to recognise the ideas someone else wishes to convey, and to express thoughts appropriately.

¹⁴ **Numeracy**

Numeracy involves students in recognising and understanding the role of mathematics in the world and having the dispositions and capacities to use mathematical knowledge and skills purposefully. (From National Curriculum)

¹⁵ **Careers Education**

The process whereby all students are brought to a realisation of their potential skills and abilities upon which they may base future decisions about their ways of earning and living.

¹⁶ **Gifted**

A student's outstanding ability in one or more domain (e.g. intellectual, artistic or sensorimotor).

¹⁷ **Talented**

Outstanding performance in one or more fields within these domains. (Talent emerges from ability as a consequence of the student's learning experiences).

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