

## **National Reporting on Student Outcomes – Information for Parents**

### **New Requirements for Collecting Information on Students' Background Characteristics**

The purpose of this information sheet is to advise parents (or caregivers) of new data collection requirements arising from the decisions of State, Territory and Commonwealth Education Ministers to improve the quality and national consistency of public reporting on student achievement. Ministers expect all government and non-government school systems and schools to comply with the new data collection and reporting arrangements.

#### **What is the Purpose of National Reporting?**

The primary purpose of national reporting is to improve the educational outcomes of our young people by informing the Australian public, and especially the education community and parents, about progress towards achieving the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*.

Visit the [MCEETYA website](#) for more information on the *Melbourne Declaration*.

#### **What is the Situation now with the Collection and Reporting of Information on Students' Performance?**

All school authorities must collect certain information from parents and/or students to fulfil their functions and obligations under State, Territory and Australian Government legislation, including accountability for spending public money.

Governments must provide the community with information about school performance and the steps they are taking to improve student outcomes.

#### **Where is the Information Publicly Reported?**

Information on students' performance is reported in the annual *National Report on Schooling in Australia* published by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, which comprises the State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers for Education. Go to the [MCEETYA website](#) for more information.

#### **What are the Priority Areas of Schooling for National Assessment and Reporting?**

Ministers have agreed that the priority areas for nationally comparable reporting include students' outcomes in literacy, numeracy, science, information and communication technology and civics and citizenship education.

For national reporting purposes, literacy and numeracy are assessed annually at years 3, 5, 7 and 9, with all students in these year levels participating.

Science, information and communication technology, and civics and citizenship education are assessed every three years, at Years 6 and 10.

## **What are the New Requirements for the Collection of Information on Student Background Characteristics?**

To date, accurate nationally comparable reporting of the outcomes of school students from particular groups in the community has been hampered by the variety of definitions of such groups of students used by the different school education authorities in Australia.

State, Territory and Australian Government Education Ministers have now agreed to common approaches across all States and Territories, in both government and non-government schools, to the collection and reporting of information on the sex, Indigenous status, geographic location, socioeconomic background and language background of school students.

## **What are the Benefits for Schools and Students?**

Linking student background characteristics with students' results in national assessments in priority areas of schooling will allow schools to identify individual students' strengths and weaknesses; evaluate the influence of particular factors on student performance; judge the effectiveness of policies aimed at reducing the impact of such factors; and, as necessary, take appropriate steps to improve students' performance.

The new arrangements will also provide parents with accurate and timely information on their child's progress compared with other Australian students of the same age and a measure of the child's achievement against national benchmarks or standards.

## **What Information is Required from Parents?**

Parents will be asked for information on the following:

- the sex of the student
- the Indigenous status of the student
- the parents' occupations (in very broad terms)
- the parents' educational qualifications (also in very broad terms)
- the student's country of birth, and
- the main language spoken at home by the student and each of the student's parents or guardians.

Most of this information is already collected by schools but it will now be collected in a uniform way across the country.

## **Why are Schools Now Required to Collect Information on the Educational and Occupational Background of Parents?**

Information is being collected on the educational and occupational background of parents so that school education authorities can evaluate the influence of socioeconomic background on students' educational outcomes over time.

This will allow critical evaluation of the effectiveness of policies aimed at reducing the impact of social or economic disadvantage on student performance, and assist school systems and schools in taking steps aimed at promoting an education system which is fair for all Australian students.

Ministers have been concerned to ensure that the questions asked of parents are not overly intrusive. Parents will therefore not be asked to provide specific details of their education, occupation or income but, rather, will be asked to select an appropriate response from a limited number of broad educational and occupational categories.

## **What Safeguards are There to Protect the Privacy and Confidentiality of Personal Information?**

All States and Territories have privacy or freedom of information legislation encompassing such matters as the manner and purpose of collection of personal information, storage and security of data, and access to information.

There is also Commonwealth privacy legislation, which imposes certain obligations on non-government schools in relation to the collection and handling of personal information to protect the privacy of individuals.

Schools have in place comprehensive confidentiality and security policies and procedures for the collection and handling of personal information. Such policies set out the types of information collected, used and disclosed, the purpose for which it is collected, and matters relating to access and correction of information.

All information which could identify or would reasonably identify individual students to whom particular background characteristics belong is removed for national reporting so that no personal information is reported publicly.

Strict reporting protocols and standards apply to data presentation in all publications of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs