Focus 2014
Directions for schools

An initiative of the Director General’s Classroom First Strategy
From the Director General

Focus 2014 sets out our system priorities for schools in the areas of:
• success for all students
• improved student attendance, engagement and behaviour
• high quality teaching and leadership
• a capable and responsive organisation.

These priorities reflect those in our strategic plan and the commitment in Classroom First to ensure our students are successful, our teachers are effective and our schools are good.

2014 is a year of preparation for a number of significant reforms that will take place in 2015. Actions include ongoing work for the Australian Curriculum and the Year 7 move; and building on literacy and numeracy improvements, early childhood education, school autonomy and student attendance.

A small number of new priorities is set out including those related to the development of the new student-centred funding model and changes to the WA Certificate of Education, both of which will be implemented in 2015.

Schools will continue to be supported by regions, Statewide Services, the Institute for Professional Learning and central office.

While Focus 2014 encourages us to prepare for changes in 2015, it also acknowledges that considerable work has already been done.

It reiterates the importance of continuing to ensure that classrooms are at the centre of our improvement efforts.

Sharyn O’Neill
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Success for all students

Schools
• Increase intensity of teaching and assessing mastery of phonics throughout the early years.
• Increase expectations to identify and intervene where students are at risk of not achieving above the national minimum standards in NAPLAN.
• Identify and intervene where lower secondary students are at risk of not meeting new WACE literacy and numeracy standards.
• Plan high quality and appropriately challenging ATAR and VET pathways for students in preparation for the new WACE in 2015.
• Commence implementation of the WA Curriculum and Assessment Outline, including requirements for reporting to parents.
• Teach and assess English, history, mathematics and science using the Australian Curriculum content and achievement standards in preparation for full implementation in 2015.
• Review specific teaching and assessment practices in health education, with renewed emphasis on students’ personal and social capabilities and mental health promotion.
• Use new national standards for disability to document and report levels of learning and teaching adjustments made for students.

Regions and Statewide Services
• Provide resources, support and advice to assist schools implement the new WACE in 2015.
• Coordinate Teacher Development Schools and other key professional learning activities for the introduction of the Australian Curriculum in 2015.
• Support teachers to use the ESL/ESD Progress Map.

Central
• Provide access to the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment for secondary teachers.
• Explore further access to Connect to support teachers to implement the Australian Curriculum.
• Develop a new plan for Aboriginal education for 2015, including exploring new cultural standards for schools.
• Support teachers to use national standards for disability and collate information about learning and teaching adjustments made for students.

Improved student attendance, engagement and behaviour

Schools
• Ensure case management plans for students at educational risk are addressed in the transition between primary and secondary school.
• Ensure positive “attendance careers” are established and maintained by students from day one in Kindergarten.
• Pursue and document attendance of every student not demonstrating regular attendance, bringing to the attention of relevant agencies students at risk, particularly Aboriginal students.
• Actively use Attendance Advisory Panels and Responsible Parenting Agreements where there is persistent student absence following extensive intervention.
• Increase emphasis on promoting safe and effective use of social media, acting swiftly and strongly where bullying or cyber bullying emerges.
• Work with school psychologists and interagency partners on student mental health issues including suicide and self-harm prevention.

Regions and Statewide Services
• Support schools to pursue legislative sanctions where individual student attendance plans and case management approaches have not resulted in regular attendance.
• Implement the School Psychology Service professional practice guidelines on student behaviour, mental health, learning and attendance.
• Integrate support to schools with the Schools of Special Educational Needs to manage students with challenging behaviours, disability and complex issues.

Central
• Explore amendments to streamline legislation related to sanctions for persistent student absence.
• Expand the tri-border attendance strategy across all jurisdictions.
• Provide schools with tools and resources to review and inform school planning focused on positive student engagement and behaviour.
High quality teaching and leadership

Schools
• Use a whole-school approach to peer classroom observation to provide robust, professional feedback for teachers.
• Refine workforce plans in preparation for the move of Year 7 to secondary settings.
• Plan with individual staff to manage the reduction of leave liability.
• Ensure all staff are aware of possible staffing changes and opportunities, including Switch, arising from the move of Year 7.
• Participate in school leader and registrar training in preparation for the new student-centred funding model in 2015.
• Introduce a new process for principals’ professional review in Independent Public Schools.
• Use national principal and teacher standards as a basis for performance management.
• Implement the education program and practice elements of the National Quality Standard in the early years in preparation for 2015.

Regions and Statewide Services
• Provide practical support for first-time principals.
• Support networks to share expertise among staff in literacy, numeracy and other system initiatives.

Central
• Explore eligibility requirements for first-time principals and support their development as leaders.
• Plan for the introduction of the new Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework.
• Consolidate, register, record and monitor all professional learning through the Institute for Professional Learning.
• Provide access to professional learning for Kindergarten to Year 2 school leaders and key teachers on the National Quality Standard in the early years.

A capable and responsive organisation

Schools
• Become familiar with the requirements of the new student-centred funding model for implementation in 2015.
• Manage within newly set budget and staffing levels.
• Develop plans at both primary and secondary levels for the transition of Year 7 students, ensuring access to both secondary specialist teaching and facilities in secondary schools.
• Participate in the new Independent Public Schools development program as agreed with the school community.
• Continue to use flexibility and authority to set conditions to improve teacher quality and student learning.
• Start administering the National School Opinion Surveys for parents, students and staff.
• Be well prepared for the bushfire season.

Regions and Statewide Services
• Support networks to facilitate good practice linked with teacher development and student learning.
• Work with networks to support shared transition plans for students moving from primary to secondary school.

Central
• Develop the new student-centred funding model including tools, training and systems for implementation in 2015.
• Manage within the budget allocation and staffing levels set by the State Government.
• Conduct a high quality development program for newly aspiring Independent Public Schools.
• Support schools to use their authority to develop staffing profiles and select and appoint staff.
• Monitor, coordinate and support preparation for implementation of the Australian Curriculum, new WACE and Year 7 transition in 2015.
• Continue to negotiate with State Government officials in relation to Australian Government funding and programs.
• Explore improvements in the capacity to forecast student enrolments and enrolment patterns.