



Department of  
Education

GOVERNMENT OF  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



**Focus  
2023**

# Message from the Director General

All students need access to a quality education within their environment and with the right supports they need to progress and achieve. 2023 provides an opportunity to refocus on what we know is vital to the future of our students.

Our commitment to *Building on strength* and our strategic directions means that some actions have been carried over from Focus 2022. These were deferred to enable schools to prioritise focus on keeping schools open and students learning during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the heart of this is our commitment that young people will leave school with the knowledge and skills they need to participate in the workforce and contribute to society. We know that their success depends on how these skills are taught, together with solid foundations in literacy and numeracy.

We know there are many great teachers and teaching practices across our system and we owe it to every student that they benefit from that same consistency of practice and learning impact. Our Quality Teaching Strategy is our shared understanding of what quality teaching looks like. It will stand at the heart of our work. It clearly defines the key elements that need to be in place for teaching to be most effective.

A number of supports underpinned by the Quality Teaching Strategy are already available to schools – Teaching for Impact, the School Culture Survey, the Leading Cultures of Teaching Excellence professional learning program, and QTS lead schools. I encourage all school leaders and teachers to familiarise themselves with the strategy and consider how you will use this to advance our efforts to ensure progress and achievement for every student.

In 2023 for the first time, under the Phonics Initiative every Year 1 public school student will be assessed on their proficiency in phonics. This will ensure that those students who require targeted literacy intervention are identified early and supported. There needs to be a concerted effort across all schools to support students at every year level to read.

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This material is available on request in appropriate alternative formats.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our students live and are educated.

We acknowledge parents, families and communities as the first educators of their children. Aboriginal people have a long tradition of teaching and learning through sharing their connections with the land and sea, and through their stories and lived experiences that are passed from generation to generation. We recognise and value the learning that Aboriginal children bring with them from their homes and communities into the classroom.

We know that for our students to truly maximise the quality teaching that happens in our classrooms, our other priorities need to focus on creating safe and secure learning environments, and providing a range of differentiated and specialist supports for those students who need it. All staff in schools contribute to creating the conditions for learning.

There are residual challenges of recent years with the impact of disruption on student attendance, mental health and wellbeing, and achievement. Together we will tackle these.

Work continues to create an education system that is truly culturally responsive to our Aboriginal students and to prioritise Aboriginal student wellbeing, engagement and achievement. We support our school leaders to build authentic culturally responsive schools with the ultimate goal of promoting reconciliation and strengthening Aboriginal student outcomes.

Our focus on meaningful pathways for students continues. I encourage the use of the career development resources and practitioners in our schools to help students navigate the myriad options they have ahead of them.

And these opportunities need to be available for all students. We know that secondary provision is often more challenging in regional and remote locations. We are investing in our district high schools to ensure those students have the same broad educational opportunities.

Our leaders provide a steady hand and create the conditions for others to grow, connect and achieve. At all levels of the system we continue to build leadership capability for both now and the future.

As we live with COVID-19, through the lessons we learned, we remain ready to respond with the capability and resilience to pivot should the need arise.

Focus 2023 is the opportunity to reset our efforts on our priorities for *Every student, every classroom, every day*. I urge all school staff to commit to this goal.

I encourage you to use Focus to inform your strategies and priorities for the year ahead.



Lisa Rodgers  
Director General



## 1 Provide every student with a pathway to a successful future

### Together we will:

- ensure all students are achieving year on year progress through evidence-based approaches
- create culturally safe and engaging learning environments for Aboriginal students that build on their strengths and provide opportunities for meaningful and successful pathways through and beyond school
- embed the use of the Early Years Learning Framework and National Quality Standard and share how we identify and understand our impact
- explore the use of the new senior secondary metrics to strengthen pathway planning for students
- adopt and use the career development resources to better equip students and families with careers advice
- strengthen partnerships with local TAFE Colleges, registered training organisations, and industry to maximise student pathways.

### Support for schools will:

- provide advice on evidence-based early years assessments, including phonics
- provide professional learning that strengthens the delivery of culturally responsive pedagogies that respond to the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal students.

## 2 Strengthen support for teaching and learning excellence in every classroom

### Together we will:

- ensure staff are familiar with the Quality Teaching Strategy and engage with its components
- create a school culture that encourages and supports the professional growth of teachers
- identify and address any impediments to maximising time to teach
- deliver an early years literacy approach that includes planned and structured teaching of phonics, informed by the Western Australian Kindergarten Curriculum Guidelines and Pre-primary to Year 2 English curriculum
- understand our role as education professionals in student care and wellbeing
- embed and continuously improve our sustainability practices, and care for country.

### Support for schools will:

- prioritise and align system support for schools with identified achievement challenges
- provide funding and support to strengthen secondary education in district high schools
- provide additional school psychologists and chaplains to support student mental health and wellbeing
- introduce the Leading Cultures of Teaching Excellence Program for school leaders in select schools
- provide a school culture tool to support the creation of optimal conditions for student learning and achievement
- identify expert schools to support the adoption of the Quality Teaching Strategy.

### 3 Build the capability of our principals, our teachers and our allied professionals

#### Together we will:

- understand what effective case management in schools is and enable all staff with student services responsibilities to meet this expectation
- ensure all staff recognise the importance of Aboriginal peoples' cultural strengths and identities, community leadership and ways of working
- consider and respond to the Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer survey
- build an understanding of the (complex and) diverse teaching and learning needs of students, including students with disabilities
- optimise the management expertise of managers of corporate services to support school management.

#### Support for schools will:

- provide access to professional learning that outlines effective case management in schools
- clarify the role of school staff and school psychologists in student care and wellbeing
- provide resources and advice to help schools support students with complex and diverse learning needs
- evaluate the impact of the collegiate principals.

### 4 Support increased school autonomy within a unified public school system

#### Together we will:

- prioritise the focus of school networks on student attendance, quality teaching and staff development
- provide principals with feedback and opportunities for professional growth using the Principal Professional Review
- establish a Principal Advisory Group that provides advice and feedback in the development and update of policies and initiatives.

#### Support for schools will:

- provide guidance on effective networks, how they operate, and the impact they have on student progress and achievement
- evaluate the new principal selection process and seek opportunities for improvement
- provide school leaders with workforce planning advice and support to maximise staffing flexibilities
- prioritise recruitment support for those schools with the greatest identified need.



## 5 Partner with families, communities and agencies to support the engagement of every student

### Together we will:

- continue to take a stand against violence
- work to restore school attendance to pre-COVID-19 levels
- engage with, and respond to, the voice of Aboriginal families and communities
- establish an Aboriginal Advisory Committee that contributes to system strategy and direction
- actively work to minimise vaping among students and continue to provide alcohol and other drug education programs
- expand the use of Specialist Learning Programs to support students with autism
- develop approaches that strengthen our partnerships with parents and families.

### Support for schools will:

- assist schools to strengthen approaches to restore attendance
- trial a co-designed approach to strengthening connections and partnerships with Aboriginal communities
- assist schools to implement evidence-based respectful relationships and consent education, including effective ways to engage families and communities
- establish regional processes to support identified schools to respond to education-related requests from Native Title holders.

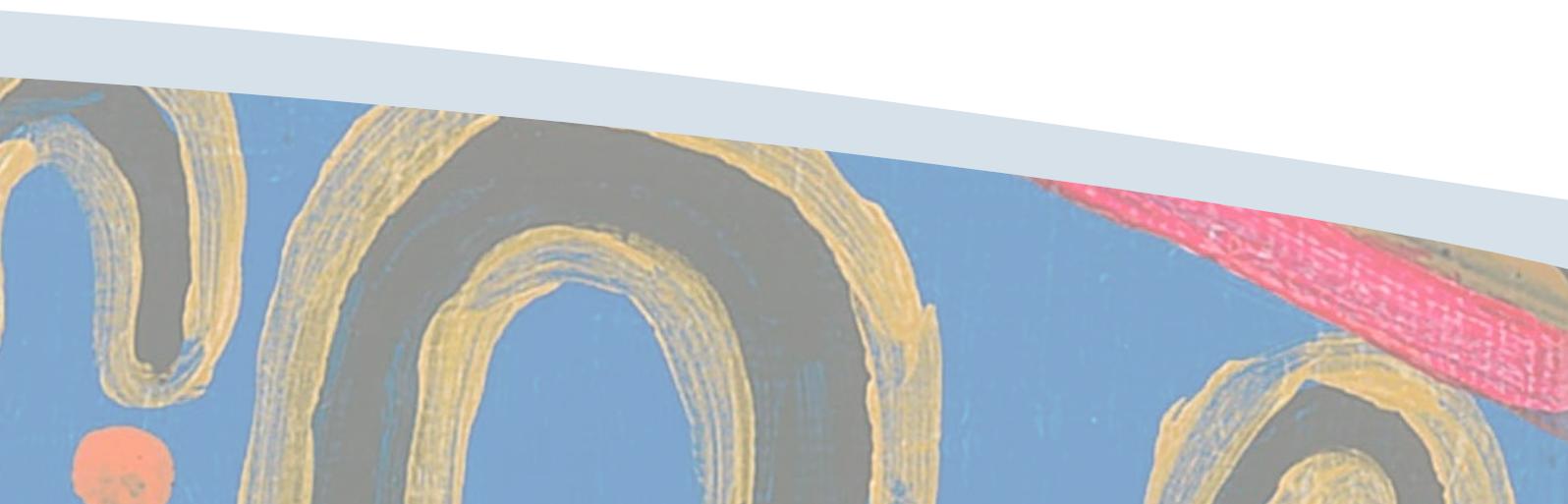
## 6 Use evidence to drive decision-making at all levels of the system

### Together we will:

- use available data and evidence to identify targeted support for students
- promote and use student voice in decision making.

### Support for schools will:

- provide training and advice on using attendance data to plan for improvement
- explore methods and tools for parents and community to raise and report concerns
- capitalise on the expertise and perspectives of the WA Student Council to inform system priorities and future initiatives
- continue to develop the new senior secondary metrics
- commence trialling the use of metrics that capture our success in enabling Aboriginal students to succeed as Aboriginal people.





**About the Artist:**

My name is Rosie Paine and I am a Yilka woman from Cosmo Newberry, an Aboriginal community in the north eastern Goldfields of Western Australia. I am a proud Noongar/ Yamatji/Wongutha woman. I currently work as a Deputy Principal at Sheoak Grove Primary School.

Explore the story behind the artwork:  
[education.wa.edu.au/artwork](http://education.wa.edu.au/artwork)

**About the artwork:**

Foundational skills – Early learning and intervention

Enabling access and engagement for students, parents and communities to quality early childhood education including intervention where required. At the bottom right of the artwork is the large circles of dots which symbolises students, parents and families coming together. The small and large 'U' shapes represent the students, parents and communities working alongside each other to enable access and engagement for students, parents and communities to quality early childhood education. The lines (straight and curved) leading in and out symbolises the interventions that may be required to enable this access and engagement.