



Department of
Education and Training

Media Statement

17/07/09

School suspensions continue to improve student behaviour

Western Australia's public schools suspended more students in 2008 as part of a move to stamp out bad behaviour in schools.

The Director General of the Department of Education Training Sharyn O'Neill said that bad behaviour in public schools would not be tolerated as the majority of students wanted to learn and did not want to be distracted by an unruly minority.

"Of the students suspended, almost 60 per cent of were suspended only once which showed that it is an effective means of managing the small number of disruptive students," Ms O'Neill said.

"The 2008 suspension figures showed an increase in the number of students suspended from 10,536 in 2007 to 11,417 last year out of a total student population of more than 240,000 students," Ms O'Neill said.

"We recorded an increase in the number of suspensions issued, from 21,934 in 2007 to 24,044 last year, but the average length of suspensions (2.1 days) stayed the same.

"Physical assault or intimidation of staff accounted for seven per cent of the suspensions and 19.5 per cent were for verbal abuse or harassment of staff.

"However, most of our students are well behaved and are never suspended.

"The number of students suspended in 2008 represents just 4.5 per cent of the total student population in public schools."

Ms O'Neill said there were 45 recommendations for exclusion in 2008 with 37 of them being approved compared with 37 recommendations and 29 approvals in 2007.

"The majority of students recommended for exclusion in 2008 were Year 9 and Year 10 males.

"All students excluded from a public school are provided with an appropriate educational program at another school or alternative education facility."

Ms O'Neill said suspensions and exclusions were not the only means of controlling unruly students in schools as the State Government had announced over \$46million in behaviour improvement strategies.

Ms O'Neill said that last month a \$1million major expansion of the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) program was announced to address behaviour problems in the early years to prevent them escalating later on.

Other behaviour improvement strategies already announced by the State Government include:

- \$18million over four years for six new behaviour centres for schools in Port Hedland, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie-Boulder and Bunbury
- \$10million over four years to ensure that every school has access to services provided by school chaplains,
- \$8.8million over four years to appoint an additional 50 school psychologists - a 25 per cent increase on current numbers
- \$252,000 to train 25 school psychologists in mental health first aid in 2009 and another 15 in 2010-2012.

ENDS

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Suspension Summary by District and Gender

	NUMBER OF STUDENTS			SUSPENSION NOTICES
	F	M	Total	
DISTRICT				
ALL DISTRICTS	2,716	8,701	11,417	24,044
ALBANY	65	246	311	672
BUNBURY	131	475	606	1,243
CANNING	513	1,454	1,967	4,289
ESPERANCE	47	141	188	492
FREMANTLE-PEEL	544	1,902	2,446	5,093
GOLDFIELDS	103	294	397	761
KIMBERLEY	102	341	443	878
MID WEST	221	419	640	1,459
MIDLANDS	89	318	407	915
NARROGIN	79	238	317	657
PILBARA	93	265	358	691
SWAN	382	1,518	1,900	4,056
WARREN-BLACKWOOD	55	154	209	427
WEST COAST	317	1021	1338	2,411