The Members of the Legislative Assembly Parliament House SYDNEY NSW 2000 In compliance with Section 38E of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, I present a report to the Legislative Assembly titled Department of Education and Training: The School Accountability and Improvement Model. A C HARRIS Sydney May 1999

# Performance Audit Report

# **Department of Education and Training**

The School Accountability and Improvement Model

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of Education and Training: the School Accountability and Improvement Model.

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Executive Summary
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### School Accountability

The School Accountability and Improvement Model (the model) introduced by the Department of Education and Training in 1997 is a major initiative designed to make schools more accountable to the community for their effectiveness. The model comprises four components:

- 1. school self-evaluation
- 2. production of an annual school report for distribution to parents and the wider community and for use by the Department for planning and resource allocation
- 3. in-depth reviews to be carried out at selected schools<sup>1</sup>
- 4. systemic monitoring and reporting.<sup>2</sup>

School self-evaluation and annual report production elements are undertaken by schools in association with a Chief Education Officer – School Improvement (CEO).

The model is only applied to Government schools. Whilst private schools are required to provide a range of information to the Government, the same performance reporting requirements have not, to date, been imposed by the Government on private schools. This is despite the Government contributing over \$400 million per annum to private schooling.<sup>3</sup>

An objective of the Department in implementing the model is that open and reliable information on public school performance be provided to parents to assist them in making decisions about their child's education, but that information not be released in a way that ranks or otherwise compares the results of particular schools.<sup>4</sup>

### The Audit

The aim of the audit was to determine the extent to which the model offers an effective, efficient and economic approach to achieving accountability to the community at the school level. A key issue for the audit was whether there was alignment between control of resources and accountability for results, particularly in matching resources with areas identified for improvement.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> School reviews need not follow sequentially from annual reports.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> School self-evaluations and annual school reports were undertaken prior to the model, but the model sought to bring more structure, rigour, school community involvement and consistency to these practices.

NSW Budget 1998-99, Budget Paper No. 3 – Volume 1, p321.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The Education Reform Regulations 1996 impose this limitation on primary school reports.

Recognising that the model is an initiative for which implementation will take some time to bed down, the audit extended over two sets of reports for primary schools (1997 and 1998) and sought the views of principals and Chief Education Officers at two different times (mid 1998 and February 1999). Only one set of secondary reports was examined because 1998 reports were not available for review before completion of the audit fieldwork (February 1999). The audit considered the efficacy of the implementation process and the manner in which the new model was perceived by its users and stakeholders to be enhancing accountability and providing a firm basis for future improvement in school performance.

### **Audit Opinion**

### The Audit Office is of the view that:

- the intention to achieve greater accountability for, and transparency in, public school performance is highly commendable. To date, these provisions have not been imposed by the Government on private schools even where public funds are provided to such schools
- the model has the potential to be an effective and efficient method to improve the
  - **♦** learning outcomes of students
  - ♦ accountability to the community for school performance
  - ♦ allocation of resources within schools and across the Department
- the Department's efforts in exploring approaches to measuring the 'value added' by schools appear to be at the leading edge of international best practice in assessing the educational performance of schools<sup>5</sup> (although this is a complex issue and one where professional opinions are divided)
- the model has fallen short of its potential because the reporting protocols allow principals and self-evaluation committees the scope to determine what, in their view, is 'significant' for their school and how they will report on it. Although the Department has set out a common reporting format to be used, and schools have been given specific directions on what information should be reported, in the reports reviewed by The Audit Office it was apparent that the definition of 'significant' and the clarity of reporting varied between schools

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> For an explanation of 'value added' see appendix 4.4.

- annual school reports would better achieve their purpose
  if schools reported more extensively and consistently on a
  common set of indicators covering student learning,
  school culture and work environment. For example,
  value added information is a key feature of the model for
  which more extensive and consistent reporting would
  achieve greater accountability to the community for
  school performance. In addition to mandatory indicators,
  schools should continue to be allowed flexibility to report
  additional information of local significance
- accountability for performance at the individual school level is constrained by the limited autonomy and control which principals have over the mix and quality of their schools' resources
- implementation of the first round of the model (culminating in the 1997 annual school reports) occurred in a compressed timeframe, which impaired the quality of self-evaluations and reports
- improved and more extensive support for schools in the second round (culminating in the 1998 reports) contributed to noticeable improvements to self-evaluations and reports. The level of resourcing for support, however, may constrain the rate and extent of further improvement.

Findings are discussed in more detail below.

### **Model Design**

The model is based on the better practices of the Quality Assurance initiative it replaced, leading practices in other school systems and workplaces and recommendations arising from community and expert consultation.

It is a potentially efficient, economical and cost effective way of assessing and improving school performance and, if implemented as designed, has the ability to:

- generate important information for users on how well schools and the system are performing
- help to identify areas where improvement in schools is necessary
- activate resources to effect improvement in schools

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> In the form of Chief Education Officers to directly assist schools in applying the model and developing strategies to generate improvement, and specialised training in planning and evaluation to those principals who may require it.

- lead to the publication of valid performance information in annual school reports covering a broad range of school and learning outcomes
- facilitate the estimation of the 'value added' to student learning
- assist parents to make decisions about their child's schooling
- reduce the public use of simplistic, misleading league tables ranking schools.

### **Implementation**

Implementation of the first round of the model (1997 reports) in public schools was delayed apparently due to an extended period of negotiation which included bans on the model and the Basic Skills Tests. Subsequently, a decision was taken by the Department not to delay implementation beyond 1997. The result of these actions meant that schools had less time than originally planned to undertake self-evaluations and prepare their 1997 annual school reports. Implementation in the compressed timeframe adversely affected the amount and quality of support provided to schools.

Annual school reports for 1997 produced under the model were generally more informative than previous annual school reports. The Department provided The Audit Office with a sample of approximately forty 1997 annual school reports. The Audit Office concluded that while some of these reports were quite good, the majority had not, in the opinion of The Audit Office, as yet fully achieved the Department's goals<sup>7</sup> of:

- providing a balanced and open account of achievements and areas for improvement
- using the full range of empirical evidence available to provide substance and validation
- providing an appropriate balance between strengths and areas for future development
- adopting a direct and unequivocal writing style.

These findings were consistent with:

- the views of principals and CEOs on the reports in general
- an assessment of the quality of 1997 annual school reports made by the School Self-evaluation and Improvement Unit.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> As outlined in the annual reporting protocols.

To assess improvement, The Audit Office also examined a sample of approximately forty 1998 primary annual school reports provided by the Department. In the opinion of The Audit Office, this sample demonstrated progress toward achieving the Department's goals. In particular, the reports examined were written more clearly and suggested a more robust underlying level of analysis than the 1997 reports. The Department believes that the 1998 primary annual school reports in general were significantly better than the 1997 primary annual school reports. The Audit Office concurs, although evidence suggests that significant variation remains between schools in what and how they report information and in report quality, and continued improvements to annual school reports are still required to reach the Department's goals.

The time frame for schools to undertake their 1998 selfevaluations and prepare 1998 reports was longer than for the previous round. For the 1998 round, guidelines, the reporting template and the training provided to schools built on and were significantly better than those provided in 1997.

In 1998, schools also benefited from greater access to CEOs, a result of the longer time frame for undertaking evaluations and preparing reports. Participants in the model also benefited from their experiences of the model in 1997. However, the ratio of CEOs to schools (1:76) continues to serve as a limiting factor in the extent and quality of support available to assist schools with the model, and with the equally challenging task of developing strategies for improvement to address the results as shown by the model.

The Department has given priority to establishing and refining two of the four components of the model (the self-evaluation and annual school reporting components). The Department's intent is that implementation of school reviews (the third component) will occur in 1999. Negotiations regarding the implementation of school reviews are now well advanced and the Department advises that an in-principle agreement has been reached with the NSW Teachers' Federation. The information collected from the annual reports has been aggregated and some pilot reports on state-wide priorities and programs have been generated for use by State Office for systemic monitoring (the fourth component). Greater emphasis will be placed on this component in 1999.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> The Department has always reviewed schools where performance issues arise, and this practice will continue until the new model is implemented fully. A considerable number of reviews of various types have been carried out.

Some schools have expressed difficulty in analysing and using data on non-cognitive student learning<sup>9</sup> and school quality, culture, etc. The Department is developing instruments and software to assist schools to capture and analyse such information. There is also an urgent need to provide additional assistance to improve skills in basic planning and evaluation in some schools.

### Scope of Information Reported to the Community

Although a common format is used for all reports, the annual school reporting protocols give principals and self-evaluation committees significant scope to determine what and how to report. This impairs comparability between reports. Annual school reports are likely to be more useful to parents and the community for judging performance, if all schools reported in a more consistent manner on a common set of indicators covering non-cognitive and cognitive learning, school culture and work environment. Flexibility could still be accommodated by allowing schools to report additional data of special local significance.

Parents will make choices about the education of their children. They will use whatever information is available to form judgments and make decisions. Likewise, the media and other commentators will use any available information to assess the performance of schools even if the information they use is inappropriate or incomplete. Recent media analysis of 1998 HSC results makes it clear that limiting publicly available information does not prevent the ranking or comparison of particular schools. Only if comprehensive data and valid interpretations are made available can the risk of the data being used in a misleading way be reduced. The data will also serve as a warning to those who otherwise would promote or publish simplistic interpretations.

### Matching Accountability and Control

The public accountability of principals for school effectiveness and improvement embodied in annual school reporting does not fully align with their autonomy and control over school resources. Some devolution has occurred, however further examination of this issue would be beneficial. For example, some principals consider that they have a limited capacity to influence the selection, deployment, professional development and performance management of teachers. <sup>10</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Examples of non-cognitive information include post-school destinations, suspension rates, behaviours, attendance, course participation rates, retention rates and participation in external competitions. Examples of cognitive information include examination results, student assessments and performance in external competitions.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Although the Department is of the view that principals are in a position to influence these things.

Further, District Office resources available to support schools are somewhat inflexible, chiefly being directed to implementation of state-wide priorities. There is currently no requirement for District Superintendents formally to endorse school improvement targets agreed between principals and CEOs, even though Superintendents are responsible and accountable for the performance of all schools in their district.<sup>11</sup>

### Resource Allocation and System-wide Monitoring

Because of the ability of principals and self-evaluation committees to determine what and how to report, some information important for resource allocation and systemic performance monitoring unlocked by self-evaluation may not be incorporated in annual school reports. This may limit the potential benefits of school self-evaluations for informing resourcing decisions at the district and State Office levels and for monitoring performance.

At present, annual school reports are attempting to meet the needs of both parents and the Department. These may not always be consistent. The type of information and level of detail desired by parents are likely to be different to that desired by the Department to assist it to monitor systemic performance and allocate resources. An enhanced management information system may assist the Department to collect information for district and state-wide planning and allow annual school reporting to focus more directly on the needs and interests of parents and the community.

Systemic responsibility for reporting is split across four separate sections of the Department. There is a need to develop system-wide guidelines on how information is gathered, how it is used, who has access to it, and the audiences and purposes in reporting such information on schools.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Although the protocols allow Superintendents to agree to targets in the annual school reports, Superintendents are not required to do this.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Schools write reports in their own way commenting only on what the principal and the school self-evaluation committee consider significant. The definition of 'significant' is not consistent between schools. CEOs are able to provide advice to the principal and committee about what they consider significant, but this need not necessarily be accepted by the principal and self-evaluation committee.

### Recommendations

- 1. Schools should report more extensively and consistently on a common set of indicators covering:
  - ♦ comprehensive measures of student achievement (both cognitive and non-cognitive)
  - ♦ school culture and work environment
  - ♦ value added measures.
- 2. The Department should afford schools greater freedom to report in a manner which reflects school context and culture. Given such freedom, however, there will also be a need to implement minimum standards for report content and quality, including a requirement for reports to incorporate:
  - ♦ clear and unequivocal statements which fully and accurately reflect performance against objectives
  - ♦ targets which clearly explain what the school intends to achieve in the coming twelve months and how this will be measured.
- 3. To support the continued implementation of the model, review the extent, application and distribution of resources for:
  - training, direct guidance and advice provided to schools and school evaluation committees in selfevaluation, reporting and school improvement
  - oversight and quality control of school self-evaluation and annual reporting
  - development of tools to assist schools to gather and analyse information on non-cognitive student learning, school culture and work environment
  - training to selected principals and other senior school staff in basic planning, data analysis and evaluation techniques
  - ♦ professional development of principals and teachers.

- 4. Commence the formalised 'school review' component of the School Accountability and Improvement Model as soon as possible.
- 5. Consider aligning all sections of the Department with responsibility for public reporting to a single executive position.
- 6. Review the level of autonomy of principals and District Superintendents for the management of resources and consider:
  - giving principals more control over the selection, deployment, professional development and performance management of teachers
  - ♦ giving District Superintendents greater flexibility in the utilisation of District Office resources
  - introducing a requirement for District Superintendents to formally endorse targets incorporated in annual school reports.

# Response from the Department of Education and Training

The Audit Report is supportive of the Department of Education and Training's efforts to implement the model and is constructive in suggesting a number of initiatives aimed at improvement.

The School Accountability and Improvement Model introduced by the Department in 1997 is being successfully implemented in schools. The model is leading to a cultural change where selfevaluation and reporting are becoming integral to the planning cycle of schools.

Cultural change requires time. Progress made in 1997 and 1998 needs to be consolidated and extended for the model to realise its full potential. In many schools there remains a need to strengthen the school self-evaluation process and link this even more strongly to the planning cycle. The Department is confident that with further experience and on-going training and development schools will continue to improve both the process of self-evaluation and the quality of annual school reports.

The Department believes that school self-evaluation is a critical part of the model. The audit report concentrates more on the annual school reports produced as one of the outcomes of this process. The review team was not able to observe the process of school self-evaluation and has not commented on this process in any depth. School self-evaluation committees have access to a great deal of information which is discussed, evaluated, interpreted and used in different ways in different shools. The annual school report is only one outcome of this process. The parent meeting which gives an opportunity for further or alternative discussion, is another. In many schools the self-evaluation process leads to critical self-reflection, shifts in emphasis and subtle changes which may not be documented in the annual school report.

The report is limited by being largely confined to the initial 1997 implementation which was completed under less than ideal circumstances. While the Audit Report does recognise changes and improvements made in 1998 the Department believes these were more substantial and significant than the Audit Report was able to indicate especially as 1998 secondary reports were not completed before audit fieldwork finished. There has been a very tangible shift in the culture of most schools to a greater focus on outcomes and the use of quantitative data.

The Department supports the recommendations made in the report. A number of actions have been taken to improve the quality of the School Self-Evaluation and Improvement process. These include:

- Common sets of indicators are being developed to complement those already provided to schools.
- The Board of Studies is developing a standards referenced framework for the new HSC and is also developing tests in Australian History, Australian Geography, Civics and Citizenship.
- There will be a new statewide numeracy assessment for year 7 students to complement the existing year 7 ELLA test. There will also be a new Basic Skills Test in writing in years 3 and 5. New statewide external Computing Skills assessments for all year 6 and 10 students are being developed.
- New 'Schoolmap' software has been designed to assist schools to gather and analyse information related to Teaching, Learning, Leadership, Culture, Planning and Management. This will improve the capacity of schools to report on these areas.
- Agreement on the protocols for school reviews has been reached. The formal School Review component of the Model will be implemented during 1999.

The Department is committed to further development of and support for the Model. Significant initiatives planned for the future include:

• Annual School Reports and the information in them will be strengthened. This will involve greater use of non-cognitive information such as suspension and course participation rates as well as cognitive information drawn from a wider range of Key Learning Areas.

- The number of Chief Education Officers (CEO's) will be reviewed as will the role of these officers in the provision of training and development, especially for schools requiring direct guidance in self-evaluation, reporting and school improvement.
- Current protocols will be revised to allow more information to be unlocked without this information contributing to the construction of simplistic and misleading league tables ranking schools.
- Schools will be able to report on outcomes in literacy and numeracy and also on school performance in terms of national benchmarks.
- Schools will be assisted to develop a clear and consistent reporting style which will strengthen the links between stated targets and program outcomes.

In conclusion, The Audit Office's report is of great value as it affirms much of the work done to implement the Model in 1997 and 1998 and suggests areas for improvement which will help the Department continue to develop the Model and improve its effectiveness. The Department is confident that schools will become highly skilled in the processes of self-evaluation and will prepare valuable and informative annual reports for their communities.

	1.	Background

### 1.1 Introduction

### This chapter:

- briefly describes the new model for school accountability and improvement
- outlines the reasons for the audit, its objective and methodology.

# 1.2 The School Accountability and Improvement Model

The Department of Education and Training (DET) administers over 2,200 schools state-wide, with an enrolment of over 750,000 students. Expenditure by the NSW State Government on school education has been increasing and is approximately \$4B per year. Figure 1 is an abridged organisation chart for the Department.

### School Performance Objectives

The Government wants schools to be publicly accountable for performance and wants parents to be involved with, and to make decisions about, the education of their children.

An objective of the Department is:

- to provide parents with more open and reliable information on school performance which would allow them to make choices about which school their children should attend, but
- not to release information in a way that ranks or otherwise compares the results of particular schools. 13

In line with this objective, a new model of school self-evaluation and reporting to the community, the School Accountability and Improvement Model (the model), was introduced in 1997 in an attempt to strengthen school accountability and improve school performance. Figure 2 is a schematic representation of the model.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Paraphrased from the Education Reform Regulations 1996. This legislation relates specifically to BST data, but DET advises that it is indicative of the Government's overall objectives for annual school reporting.

Figure 1: Abridged Organisation Chart, Depar	tment of Education & Training (1998)

School Accountability and Improvement Model -Figure 2: Schematic<sup>14</sup> School School Context Achievement Information Information School Self-evaluation Staff, Parent & Student Student outcomes understandings State Office Annual School Report District Office Community School Improvement Targets Planning for Improved Student Resource Support

Design of the Performance Accountability Model In designing the new model for school accountability and improvement, the Department drew on:

- the better practices of the Quality Assurance<sup>15</sup> initiative which the model replaced
- practices in other school systems and workplaces
- community and expert consultation.

The model is underpinned by research which indicates that:

... it is increasingly clear that both pressure and support are necessary for success ... Pressure without support leads to resistance and alienation; support without pressure leads to drift or waste of resources. <sup>16</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> In this schematic, State Office refers to the State Office of the Department of Education and Training, and District Office refers to a generic District Office of the Department. The dotted line indicates that resource support does not flow automatically from annual school reports.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> See Appendix 4.3 for a summary of the Quality Assurance Process.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Fullan M. (1991), *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, Cassell, London, page 91.

Appendix 4.4 provides an outline of some of the key principles and research that underpinned the Department's approach in developing the model. Appendix 4.5 provides a summary of school effectiveness and improvement research pertinent to maximising the effectiveness of the model.

The model aims to provide pressure through public accountability, and also to provide support through development strategies.

The model recognises that for the purposes of accountability and improvement, it is necessary to:

- gather information which shows how the system is performing
- identify which elements are and are not performing satisfactorily
- activate resources to address areas of concern. 17

### Performance Evaluation Components

The model involves four components:<sup>18</sup>

- 1. self-evaluation by the school, in association with a Chief Education Officer, School Improvement (CEO)
- 2. production of an annual school report for distribution to parents and the wider community, in association with a CEO
- 3. in-depth school reviews to be carried out at selected schools<sup>19</sup>
- 4. systemic monitoring and reporting on specific state-wide programs.

CEOs are central to the effective implementation of the model. In addition to assisting school self-evaluations and annual report preparation, CEOs provide advice to schools on opportunities and strategies for improvement and are responsible for the validation of annual school reports.

The components of the model are explained below:

### Component 1: School Selfevaluation

1. Self-evaluation by the school, in association with a CEO.

This should take place annually. Schools form a committee to conduct the evaluation. Parents, teachers and (secondary) students are involved in evaluations. The evaluation focuses on student learning, specific areas of school practice, staff and student opinions and the school's management systems.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Paraphrased from NSW Department of School Education (1996) School Accountability and Improvement in NSW Public Schools - Rationale.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> School reviews need not follow sequentially from annual reports.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> It is also planned that CEOs will have a role in school reviews.

School self-evaluation has a number of aims including:

- encouraging parental/community participation
- the development of local solutions to locally identified needs by those who know best the school's needs and culture
- fostering school ownership of, and commitment to, improvement targets and learning outcomes.

Self-evaluation is not new to schools. Schools have been required to develop planning documents for several years and to undertake this effectively schools needed to be performing some form of self-evaluation.

However, the quality and sophistication of self-evaluation varied between schools and evaluations often did not involve representatives of parents or the community.

The model sought to formalise existing self-evaluation approaches in a more structured way, and to provide additional information and guidance.

### Component 2: School Annual Reporting

2. Production of an annual school report for distribution to parents and the wider community, in association with a CEO.

These are public documents. Since the mid 1980s all NSW public schools have made available to interested parents annual reports incorporating information on the school's activities. However, those annual reports varied significantly in content and presentation between schools. The Department perceived that the quality of the reports varied markedly between schools and that most lacked meaningful performance information.<sup>20</sup>

Improved annual school reporting is the major strategy for achieving the Government's objective to provide the public with fair, reliable and objective information about the performance of schools.

The intention of the new annual school reports was that parents would be better informed about the quality and performance of individual schools to enable them to:

- be more meaningfully involved in their child's education
- ask relevant questions about school performance

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Schools also report to parents in ways other than annual reports, but the content and regularity vary between schools.

• choose schools on a more informed basis in locations where alternatives exist. 21

Reporting is to be consistent in format and to meet minimum requirements for content. Each annual report is to be written by the school principal (using a computer template to promote consistency). The information in reports is to include:<sup>22</sup>

- important features of the school and its community (such as student enrolments, statement of school purpose, features of the learning program, current school priorities, student support programs and financial information)
- school achievements (such as in sport, the arts, community activities)
- school performance information (such as performance of students in internal assessments and external examinations, attendance rates, post-school destinations)
- school improvement targets for the next year, and commentary on the previous year's targets.

Principals and the CEO sign off on the improvement targets in the annual school report.

The intent is that annual school reports would be an output of the school self-evaluation process and be 'owned' by the local evaluation committee.

The Department determined that all schools should conduct a public meeting to discuss the reports and clarify issues for parents.

The Department also saw annual reports as a vehicle for District and State Offices to gain information on school performance which was not previously available. Such information was sought to enhance systemic resource allocation decisions and also as a way of improving systemic performance information and monitoring.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> NSW Department of School Education (1996) *School Accountability and Improvement in NSW Public Schools - Rationale*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Schools are required to report under various headings and to include school performance information. However, as will be discussed later in the report, current reporting protocols allow schools to select the particular information they wish to include under these headings and to determine themselves the manner in which they will report.

In announcing the 1995 Departmental restructure, the Director-General indicated that annual school reports would replace performance agreements for principals.

# Component 3: School Reviews

3. *In-depth school reviews to be carried out at selected schools.* 

These were to be undertaken where the information from selfevaluation and/or other sources indicated capacity for a higher level of performance. These reviews were to target specific areas and focus on how student learning outcomes or management practices could be improved. In some instances high performing schools would be reviewed to identify and share those factors which contribute to their success.

None of these formalised school reviews have taken place to date. However, the Department advises that negotiations regarding the implementation of school reviews are now well advanced and an in-principle agreement between the Department and the NSW Teachers' Federation has been reached.<sup>23</sup>

### Component 4: Systemic Monitoring and Reporting

4. Systemic monitoring and reporting on specific state-wide programs.

Information on school performance is aggregated to allow assessment of systemic performance and to contribute to systemic planning and resource allocation decisions.

### Priority to Components 1 and 2

The Department has given priority to establishing and refining two of the four components of the model (ie the self-evaluation and annual school reporting components).

In 1999, the Department intends to implement the formalised school review component and place a greater emphasis on systemic monitoring and reporting.

### 1.3 Reasons for the Audit

# Significance of the Model

Reasons for selecting the model for audit included:

• it is an important initiative which seeks to improve effectiveness and accountability

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> The Department has always reviewed schools where performance issues arise, and this practice will continue until the new model is implemented fully. A considerable number of reviews of various types have been carried out.

- it is an early example (in NSW) of public reporting and accountability at the 'service delivery' level and may offer lessons for any future attempts to implement similar arrangements in other agencies
- it impacts on all schools throughout the system (even though it is not a major program in terms of resources directly applied)
- it incorporates a methodology for measuring performance in value added terms, which similarly may offer lessons for other agencies.

### 1.4 Objectives and Methodology

### **Audit Objectives**

The overall audit objective was to determine the extent to which the model offers an effective, efficient and economic approach to achieving accountability at the school level.<sup>24</sup>

To develop an opinion on the overall audit objective, the audit set out to test four specific hypotheses, that is, whether:

- there is a clear and realistic definition of who is accountable, and for what
- performance measurement and performance reporting mechanisms support accountability requirements
- meaningful and reliable information is provided to parents and the community to enable properly informed judgements about school performance
- school accountability is achieved efficiently and economically.

A key issue for the audit was whether there was alignment between control of resources and accountability for results, particularly in matching resources with areas identified for improvement.

### Audit Methodology

Recognising that the model is an initiative for which implementation will take some time to bed down, the audit extended over two sets of reports for primary schools (1997 and 1998) and sought the views of principals and Chief Education Officers at two different times (mid 1998 and February 1999).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> The focus of the audit was the accountability mechanisms as they apply to primary, secondary and central (combined primary and secondary) public schools. It needs to be recognised that there is a very small proportion of students (around 2%) with cognitive impairments and other disabilities. Different approaches to measuring and reporting on the learning outcomes of such students, and on the performance of special schools, may be required. This audit has not focused on these issues.

Only one set of secondary reports was examined because 1998 reports were not available for review before completion of the audit fieldwork (February 1999). The audit considered the efficacy of the implementation process and the manner in which the new model was perceived by its users and stakeholders<sup>25</sup> to be enhancing accountability and providing a firm basis for future improvement in school performance.

The audit methodology included:

- interviews and focus groups with
  - ♦ Department staff responsible for development and implementation of the model in schools, District Offices and State Office in both city and rural areas (in total, some 100 staff were involved)
  - ♦ independent experts
  - ♦ key stakeholders
- examination of relevant Departmental files
- review of
  - ♦ literature on school effectiveness and school improvement
  - ♦ guidelines, publications, software etc on or relevant to the model
  - ♦ data collected on school performance including data standards, collection methodologies and analysis
  - ♦ a sample of annual school reports.

Appendix 4.1 outlines the methodology in more detail and Appendix 4.2 is a bibliography of educational literature consulted.

Stakeholders consulted for this audit included the NSW Teachers' Federation, the NSW Parents' and Citizens' Association, the NSW Federation of School Community Organisations, the NSW Primary Principals' Association and the NSW Secondary Principals' Council.

### 1.5 Acknowledgements

The Audit Office gratefully acknowledges the cooperation and assistance provided by representatives of the Department to the audit team: Sonia Danzo, Henriette Zeitoun, Rod Longford and Stephen Horne.

### 1.6 Audit Costs

110 110010 0 0 0 0 0	\$
Direct salaries costs	143,152
Overhead charges	68,300
Value of unpaid staff time	16,216
Travel and incidentals	500
Printing	7,000
Total Cost	235,168

2	Implementation of the Model

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter details audit findings covering the implementation of the model. Aspects highlighted include:

- issues in the development and implementation of the model
- issues specific to both the 1997 and 1998 rounds of school self-evaluations and annual school reports
- the issue of performance reporting using league tables
- the collection and use of information.

### 2.2 Development and Implementation

# **Development of the Model**

Between 1992 and 1995 the then Quality Assurance Directorate reviewed approximately sixty percent of public schools.<sup>26</sup> The Department subsequently moved away from that approach, and developed the School Accountability and Improvement Model. Reasons included:

- under the Quality Assurance model each school would only be reviewed approximately once every five years<sup>27</sup>
- the Quality Assurance model was resource intensive
- the Department perceived a need to develop new processes for continuous improvement.

Further, the Department advises that in 1995 industrial bans were placed on Quality Assurance school reviews, reportedly as a result of concerns over some of the data being used to analyse school performance.

Development and piloting of the School Accountability and Improvement Model was scheduled for 1996, with implementation planned for the beginning of 1997.

The Department advises that an industrial agreement registered with the Industrial Relations Commission in September 1996 included in-principle agreement to introduce a new model of school accountability and improvement.

As a basis for consultation, the Department released a number of documents related to school accountability and improvement.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> See Appendix 4.3 for a synopsis of the Quality Assurance process.

Five years at the rate they were progressing. The target rate was once every four years.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> These included an overview document, a rationale document and three sample annual reports for a small primary, large primary and secondary school.

'Model' annual school reports were shown to groups of parents and community members. Evidence indicated that these focus groups were highly supportive of the reporting concept and of the approach.<sup>29</sup>

The new system was released in November 1996 and details were provided to schools through *School Education News*. Community members, who had been informed by media advertisements, requested and were provided with 1600 copies of the documents.

### Initial 'Model' Reports

The 'model' reports were broadly consistent with the rationale for the School Accountability and Improvement Model which the Department had developed and promulgated.

The 'model' reports included both quantitative and qualitative comment on empirical data. They included percentage figures on students placed in skill bands in the Basic Skills Tests, and School Certificate and Higher School Certificate results. The 'model' reports made use of graphs and statistical comment for these external tests. They incorporated and commented on the 'value added' by the school.

The 'model' reports used Basic Skills Tests data to indicate the relative standards of students, and groups of students' achievements in comparison with larger reference groups. This included the use of value added measures of achievement for different groups of students which would assist to monitor student performance over time.

The incorporation in 'model' reports of a range of information rather than a single-figure rating of performance was considered by the Department to illustrate its opposition to the creation of simplistic league tables.

### Community and Stakeholder Views

Evidence obtained by The Audit Office suggests that, whilst the peak parent groups and teacher and principal representatives were wary of the proposed accountability processes associated with annual school reports, the reports were welcomed by the general community.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Results of research conducted for the Department.

Community members had indicated that the public provision of information about the performance of schools was their right, and the system's responsibility. Community members appeared to believe that the accountability mechanisms proposed would have a positive impact on the performance of schools. Evidence indicates that community members wanted schools to:

- publish targets for improvement
- demonstrate their progress in meeting them
- explain any constraints on their progress
- celebrate their achievements.

The Audit Office also found, however, that community members expressed some concerns about the level of resources that would be provided for under performing schools, the quality of support for effecting improvement and the cost of the reports. There was also concern expressed that the initiative would increase the workload on school staff. Overall, however, the evidence indicates that there was widespread community support for the reports and the model.

### **Industrial Bans**

The Department advises that in February 1997, industrial bans were placed on the School Accountability and Improvement Model and the Basic Skills Tests (BST) due to concerns over the proposed content of annual school reports. The union view was apparently that the information could be used to compare and rank schools, contrary to the Department's objective.

The BST are a critical element of the Department's accountability system. The Department indicated that its investment in value added research would have been severely damaged by the failure to conduct the BST in 1997. All development work on the model was thus halted whilst the bans were in place, and negotiations proceeded.

Throughout the ensuing negotiations, the Department continued to emphasise the need for the reports to:

- provide a balanced and open account of the school's achievements and areas for development
- use the full range of empirical evidence, including the results of external examinations and observation, to provide substance and validation for the report and its conclusions
- provide an appropriate balance between strengths and areas for future emphasis in relation to the school
- be written in a direct and unequivocal style.

### **Protocols**

The bans were not lifted until 1 August 1997 (very close to the scheduled conduct of the BST) after a set of protocols governing annual school reporting were negotiated.

The Department had agreed that there would be no graphical representation of performance information in the annual school reports, and that school strengths and weaknesses would be reported in prose. Evidence suggests that this was a change which key stakeholders wanted and was consistent with research undertaken for the Department. This research indicated that whilst there was strong support among parents for the graphical representation of performance, they had some difficulty in interpreting the graphs.

The newly negotiated protocols built in flexibility so that principals were not directed to comment on any particular component of data or in any prescribed manner.

In line with the protocols and its research, the Department revised its 'model' reports and new versions were released in 1997. The 1997 'model' reports varied significantly from the 1996 model reports.

The extended period of negotiation about how annual reporting would be implemented meant that self-evaluations had to be conducted and the annual reports produced in a very short time frame or else be delayed for a further twelve months.

The Department's documentation showed that it had considered piloting a limited number of reports in the short time period available, with all schools to report the following year. However, a decision was ultimately taken to implement annual reporting state-wide immediately without piloting.

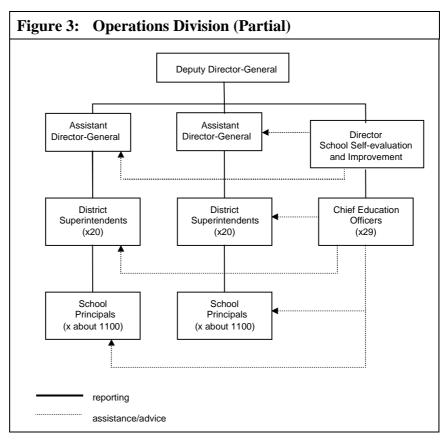
The Department asked all schools to prepare annual reports in line with the protocols for distribution in November (secondary) and December (primary) 1997.

At a later date, the Department decided that secondary schools would not be required to report by November, but rather in Term 1 of 1998. All schools were well advanced in their evaluations and report preparation when this decision was made, and many secondary schools reported as originally planned anyway.

# Supporting Schools in Evaluating Performance

The School Self-evaluation and Improvement Unit (SSEIU) was established to support the model. The Unit is located within the Operations Division of the Department. The Unit comprises a small core of centrally located staff together with 29 CEOs covering the Department's 40 districts.

Figure 3 illustrates, within the Operations Division, the relationships between the Unit and schools, District Offices and State Office.



Audit Findings on the Implementation Process To elicit information about the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation process, The Audit Office conducted an extensive process of interviews and meetings. Relevant State Office executive staff were interviewed, as well as a selection of key district staff. Most importantly, those directly involved were interviewed: being staff of the SSEIU and a range of principals themselves. In all, approximately 100 staff were interviewed. Relevant file and document research was also undertaken.

Table 1 provides a summary of responses to key topics canvassed in focus groups and interviews within the Department conducted by The Audit Office. The summary refers to the 1997 reporting round and gives an indication of the views of various levels of the Department about the model and its initial implementation.

Table 1: Summary of DET staff views on the 1997 reporting round				
Key Topics	Responses			
Evaluating school performance	Principals	CEOs	Districts	State
How effectively:				Office
<ul> <li>the performance of a school is being assessed from the statistical information provided by the CEOs</li> </ul>	• •	• •	••	• •
<ul> <li>the performance of a school is being evaluated using this information together with information available within the school</li> </ul>	••	•	• •	• •
guidelines, software and training assist schools and CEOs to evaluate school performance and develop improvement strategies	•	•	•	• •
Improving school performance	Principals	CEOs	Districts	State
How effectively:				Office
in-school evaluations identify what is required to improve school performance	• •	•	•	• •
<ul> <li>the responsibilities of the CEO and the principal for improving performance are articulated and understood</li> </ul>	•	•	••	• •
the principal is able to take specific action which will improve a school's performance	•	• •	• •	• • •
the CEO can help to improve a school's performance	• •	• • •	• • •	• • •
support from elsewhere in the Department (eg     District Office, State Office) assists in improving a     school's performance	•	•	• •	• •
Reporting school performance	Principals	CEOs	Districts	State
How effectively				Office
annual school reports are integrated into school and district planning	•	•	•	• •
annual school reports assist in determining priorities for the allocation of resources to schools	•	• •	• •	• •
annual school reports enhance the accountability of principals in practice	• • •	• •	• •	• • •

Key:

• Not satisfactory

• • Requires development • • •

Satisfactory

In addition to examining the experiences and views of departmental staff concerning implementation of the model, The Audit Office also undertook discussions with key stakeholders.

Table 2 summarises major issues raised by stakeholders about the model and its implementation in interviews with The Audit Office.<sup>30</sup>

# Table 2: Summary of Key Issues raised by Stakeholders – 1997 reporting round

- Objectives of schooling not clearly articulated so that the basis for measuring performance was not clear.
- Opposition to simplistic league tables.
- Possible misuse of value added information.
- School self-evaluation broadly supported.
- Identification of needs through the model may not lead to activation of resources to address problems.
- ♦ Support from the Department for (initial) implementation of the model was inadequate.
- Teacher quality is paramount to school effectiveness and professional development is critical to teacher quality.
- Accountability is being placed on principals without giving them sufficient autonomy and control over school resources.
- Pushing accountability to the school was being accompanied by an abdication of responsibility by the 'system'.
- Reports have too many audiences.
- Reporting framework is too restrictive and reports need to be more flexible.
- Requirement for public schools to report their weaknesses would disadvantage public schools vis a vis private schools.
- Concern that concentration on the performance of the school may detract from focus on individual needs.

### Audit Observations

It is apparent that in implementing the model in 1997, very little time was available to allow principals and self-evaluation committees to come to grips with the new policy for self-evaluation and reporting.

The compressed implementation timetable in 1997 also meant that there was little opportunity to train CEOs in the skills required for their new role. The Audit Office was advised that some CEOs were not highly skilled in the manipulation and analysis of data. There were clear indications that logistics made it difficult for CEOs to provide the desired level of support to schools.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> These comments were made during 1998, before finalisation of the 1998 round of reporting.

Each CEO was responsible for assisting between 65 and 80 schools. CEOs appear in a number of (if not most) cases to have been unable to provide a level of support necessary to assure the quality of reports. CEOs and officers of the School Self-evaluation Unit were pressed to do more than basic editing of the 1997 reports.

For the 1997 round, support materials and resources had to be developed in a very short time frame, which caused problems. For example, the computer template provided to schools for annual reporting suffered from a number of problems, including:

- incompatibility with the computer hardware in a number of schools
- lack of flexibility, which meant that reports may have had blank spaces in some sections whilst other sections could not fit all the information schools wished to put in them
- some repetition of information such as priorities and targets
- overestimation by the Department of the ability of school staff to cope with the complexities of a data base template.

The template was in part dictated by the need to report on the Government's priorities (as set out in Agenda documents). Many principals advised The Audit Office that they saw the way the template dealt with priorities as unnecessarily restrictive in three ways:

- they were required to report on Agenda items regardless of whether they were a high priority for the school, and this was allied with fixed space for reporting on Agenda priorities<sup>31</sup>
- the space allocated to Agenda priorities limited space to report on school priorities where they were outside the Agenda
- there seemed to be some duplication in requirements for reporting on priorities.

Principals and CEOs reported that the template caused disruptions in many schools during the 1997 reporting round. Some principals contend that the inadequacies of the template imposed opportunity costs<sup>32</sup> and in some cases additional support costs on their schools. The Department's costing system does not provide sufficient detail to allow an assessment of this matter.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Even though all schools are required to implement Agenda priorities.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> That is, costs in terms of what other tasks were foregone in order to deal with problems caused by the template.

The 1997 'model' reports provided assistance to principals in crafting their annual school reports. The users, however, felt that the quality of some of the 'model' reports was not as high as desired. Some principals and CEOs felt that some of the contextual information in the 'model' reports was not relevant to school performance. Associated with this issue of quality was the tendency of many schools to base their reports on the 'model' with little variation, so that the problems with the 'model' were reflected in many 'real' reports.

In the 1997 reporting round, the guidelines issued to schools were limited and focused on the template. Formal training consisted of a limited introduction to the concept of annual school reporting and self-evaluation, delivered in a standard manner. The Audit Office was advised that there was significant variation among principals in their level of skills, knowledge, experience and sophistication in planning, evaluation and report writing. There was no evidence that formal training was tailored to the individual needs of principals, although it was clear that CEOs provided some individualised, informal training within the severe time constraints placed upon them.

The model envisaged the involvement of a self-evaluation committee, but little, if any, formal training was provided to the other members of these committees.

The Audit Office also found evidence that arrangements for the printing of reports had caused a number of practical problems for schools and the SSEIU in 1997, further aggravating the difficult implementation task.

## 1998 Reporting Round

The Audit Office conducted discussions with a limited selection of primary school principals and CEOs to assess changes between the 1997 and 1998 reporting rounds.<sup>33</sup> Table 3 provides a summary of the views of primary principals and CEOs on the 1998 reporting round.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Secondary school principals were not consulted as the 1998 reporting round had not been concluded at the time.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Examination of the second round of primary school reporting did not extend to discussions with District and State Office staff, other than officers of the SSEIU.

Table 3: Summary of DET staff views on the 1998 reporting round				
Key Topics	Responses			
Evaluating school performance	Principals	CEOs		
How effectively:				
<ul> <li>the performance of a school is being assessed from the statistical information provided by the CEOs</li> </ul>	• •	• •		
<ul> <li>the performance of a school is being evaluated using this information together with information available within the school</li> </ul>	• •	• •		
guidelines, software and training assist schools and CEOs to evaluate school performance and develop improvement strategies	• •	• •		
Improving school performance	Principals	CEOs		
How effectively:				
in-school evaluations identify what is required to improve school performance	• •	• •		
<ul> <li>the responsibilities of the CEO and the principal for improving performance are articulated and understood</li> </ul>	• •	• •		
the principal is able to take specific action which will improve a school's performance	•	• •		
the CEO can help to improve a school's performance	• •	• • •		
support from elsewhere in the Department (eg District Office, State Office) assists in improving a school's performance	•	• •		
Reporting school performance	Principals	CEOs		
How effectively				
annual school reports are integrated into school and district planning	• •	• •		
annual school reports assist in determining priorities for the allocation of resources to schools	•	• •		
annual school reports enhance the accountability of principals in practice	• • •	• •		

**Key:**• Not satisfactory
• • Requires development
• • • Satisfactory

### Audit Findings on 1998 Reporting Round

For the 1998 reporting round, the time frame for schools to undertake their self-evaluations and prepare reports was longer than in 1997.

Schools knew the broad requirements of the model and were in a better position to plan their self-evaluation and reporting activities and collect information throughout the year.

Guidelines, the reporting template and training provided to schools for the 1998 round of self-evaluations and reporting built on and were significantly better than those provided in 1997. This was a result of the SSEIU consulting with users and making changes to address their concerns. Guidelines were less academic and more practical. Training was more extensive and of better quality than in the first reporting round. There were fewer technical problems with the template in the 1998 reporting round and principals and CEOs found it to be more flexible and user friendly.<sup>35</sup>

Support materials and training were provided earlier in the school year than in 1997. Schools also benefited from greater access to CEOs, a result of the longer time frame for undertaking evaluations and preparing reports. CEOs were able to draw from the experiences gained in 1997, and were more familiar with their role. As a result, their ability to carry out detailed analysis of the data was enhanced. However, the logistical problems in each CEO servicing between 65 and 80 schools remained.

Principals consider that there is some room for further improvement in the support provided for the model. In particular principals feel they would benefit from:

- the provision of training and support materials before or very early in the school year to assist in planning and data collection
- settling on a reporting timetable which is consistent from year to year
- greater access to and contact with CEOs
- further increasing the flexibility of the template to allow them to better convey important elements of the school culture and work environment to the community.

A number of principals expressed concern about two particular aspects of the model in the 1998 reporting round. They felt the funds used for mailing annual school reports to parents could have been better spent on school improvement. They preferred the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> The use of 'model' reports was discontinued in the 1998 reporting round.

strategy adopted for the 1997 reports of sending the reports home with students. Research undertaken for the Department, however, revealed that some parents did not receive a 1997 annual school report.

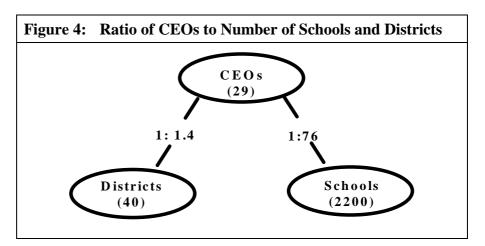
Principals were also concerned at the possible misinterpretation of the financial information in their 1998 reports. The Department advises that the requirements for reporting financial information in annual school reports were agreed by the School Funding Reference Group, which includes principal and community representatives. Nevertheless, there may be a need for more scope in reports to properly explain financial information.

### Audit Observations

The ability of the SSEIU to effectively support schools is a key factor in the effectiveness of the school reporting initiative. Evidence indicates that SSEIU resource limitations caused delays in finalising and distributing the revised computer template and revised guidelines, and in the development and implementation of improved and expanded training modules. These delays have impacted on the time available for users to familiarise themselves with revised procedures and to put into practice lessons learnt from improved training.

This is partly a result of protracted negotiations over changes to elements of the model, but largely as a result of the limited resources being applied to the task.

The ratio of CEOs to schools continues to serve as a limiting factor in the extent and quality of support available to assist schools with the model, and with the equally challenging task of developing strategies for improvement to address the results as shown by the model. The ratio of CEOs to schools (one CEO to 76 schools) and districts (one CEO to 1.4 districts) is illustrated in Figure 4.



The challenge for CEOs and the SSEIU will increase as priority is given to other elements of the model, particularly systemic monitoring and reporting and school reviews.

In response to these difficulties, some CEOs raised the possibility of a formal 'targeting' approach, such as accreditation of schools which can self evaluate and report effectively. Such schools would require less oversight. This approach, however, will take some time to introduce because it requires the level of competence of individual schools in planning, evaluation and reporting to be ascertained.

There also appears to be a strong need for targeted training and development at the school level in planning and evaluation. The budget for training and development has been reduced over recent years at all levels of the Department. Most training of this kind has been left to the cost and discretion of individuals. This can lead to a situation where those most in need of training do not avail themselves of it.

### 2.3 School Self-evaluation

Audit Findings on School Selfevaluation Processes The tight timetable for implementation of the School Accountability and Improvement Model resulted in limited efforts being directed to the school self-evaluation component in the first round.

Stakeholders interviewed were universally supportive of the concept of school self-evaluation. They did, however, express a range of concerns about the initial self-evaluations (1997), including that the:

- range of performance information considered in many selfevaluations was too narrow with limited emphasis on school culture and work environment
- self-evaluation process appeared to value what was measured, rather than measure what was valued, ie. there was some bias toward readily quantified information
- more structured and standardised approach to self-evaluation did not fit all needs and ran contrary to the notion of local solutions for local needs (although the more structured approach was clearly wanted and needed by many schools)
- conceptual underpinning of value added information was not clear and that there was a risk that it could be misunderstood and misused

- longitudinal data on some aspects of school performance on which to base assessment of trends were at present limited
- timing of the secondary school self-evaluation was dictated by the reports rather than the planning cycle or the school year.

From the evidence obtained from examination of the 1998 reporting round, it is apparent that there has been a greater emphasis on school self-evaluation and, as discussed above, an improvement in the support available.

### Audit Observations

There are indications that school self-evaluation had some limited, positive impact on school practices in the first round. The second round of self-evaluation, in the opinion of the primary principals and the CEOs consulted, was clearly better than the first round. An examination of the 1998 reports (see next section) supports this contention.

Results to date indicate, however, that there is room for further improvement to school self-evaluations. This is likely to require additional and targeted support, particularly training in planning and evaluation techniques. Less advanced schools need basic training in planning, especially in the collection and interpretation of data.

Some principals indicated that they need more assistance in assessing the quality of their systems, procedures and practices. There is a desire at the school level for instruments and software to help them to collect and analyse information on non-cognitive student learning, the school work environment, culture, etc (see Section 3.7). The Department is currently developing such instruments and software.

### 2.4 Annual School Reporting

### Audit Findings on 1997 School Reporting

The Director-General of Education and Training indicated in a speech to officers of the Department that the first full round of reports left substantial room for improvement, especially in the area of performance information:

The quality of the first batch of annual school reports has been, on the whole, disappointing. The communities we serve have a right to real information about their schools, not semi-fudges and shadow plays akin to a puppet show.

At all levels of the organisation, we have to know the outcomes we are achieving and debate them in the public domain.  $^{36}$ 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Boston K, The Role and Future of Public Education, Speech to Training and Development 'Breakfast Seminar', 20 February, 1998.

This comment accorded with the results of an examination of a sample of approximately forty 1997 annual school reports undertaken by The Audit Office. Based on this analysis, weaknesses in the 1997 reports were that they:

- incorporated prose to the exclusion of graphics and offered vague statements about performance rather than the quantitative data which could have been reported
- were not consistent in content between schools, as principals were afforded significant scope to 'pick and choose' indicators, thereby allowing them to opt not to report adverse and/or information about value added
- provided limited emphasis on data showing trends over time
- incorporated information on school finances which was open to misinterpretation
- provided contextual information of limited relevance to the school's performance which duplicated much of the information schools include in other publications.

Further, while some of the reports examined were quite good, the majority of the sample of 1997 reports examined:

- did not communicate clearly and directly and included generalised or hard to interpret statements
- did not provide a balanced and open account of student outcomes using the full range of empirical evidence available in schools, instead concentrating on relatively minor activities/results to the exclusion of important information on student learning outcomes
- did not provide an appropriate balance of quantitative and qualitative comment
- blamed others for poor performance, especially the students
- demonstrated a superficial level of analysis.

The school improvement targets set in several of the 1997 reports examined were:

- vague and difficult to measure and monitor eg 'review the school's curriculum to ensure the interests, needs and abilities of all students are being met'
- easy to achieve (if not already achieved)
- unrelated to the performance information or the areas for improvement identified in the report.

These findings were consistent with:

- the views of principals and CEOs on the reports in general
- an assessment of the quality of 1997 annual school reports made by the School Self Evaluation and Improvement Unit.

Despite these shortcomings, the annual school reports produced under the model were generally more informative than previous annual school reports, particularly in respect of performance information.

Research of parental opinions of annual school reports conducted on behalf of the Department in 1998 broadly confirms The Audit Office assessment of the 1997 annual school reports.<sup>37</sup> Table 4 summarises the results of this research.

### **Table 4: Parent Opinion of Annual School Reports**

#### **Parents**

applauded the concept of annual school reports

- wanted to use reports as an information tool, to monitor school progress and to aid in school selection
- were disappointed in the quality/presentation of reports and wanted more reader friendly reports
- found the reports verbose, overly long, repetitive and using language that is 'flowery', nebulous, non-specific and too academically oriented
- found the information contained in reports to be daunting, and felt that the style and language could serve to 'hide' a true and accurate account of school performance.

### Overall, the research concluded

- the reports, in conceptual terms, were highly appealing to parents
- report style and presentation could be enhanced to communicate better to parents.

This research was made available to The Audit Office in February 1999 and thus provides useful confirmation of The Audit Office's research.

### 1998 Reports

The Audit Office examined a sample of approximately forty 1998 primary annual school reports and held discussions with a number of primary school principals and CEOs about the model for the 1998 reporting round.

In general the 1998 primary annual school reports were written more clearly and suggested a more robust underlying level of analysis than the 1997 reports although there remains substantial variation between schools in the overall quality of reports.

The variation in report quality appears most stark in terms of performance information. There is substantial variation between schools in what and how they report information.

Transparency appears to be related to performance. Schools tend to report good performance clearly, often quantifying performance and making comparisons to the State averages. On other occasions, schools report in more vague terms. This appears to be where performance is not as good.

In the 1998 annual school reports, objectives, priorities and targets tended to be expressed more clearly than in the 1997 annual school reports. In the 1998 reports, targets were also more likely to be related to areas identified as requiring improvement. There was also a greater tendency to indicate how performance against targets would be measured.

Tables 5 and 6 present a summary of the Department's vision for annual school reporting content and benefits (as outlined in its rationale document) and The Audit Office's findings in respect of the status of implementation of this vision.

Annual school reports should include:	1997 reports	Change in 1998 reports	
Contextual and background information about the school eg a description of the main characteristics of the school and its community.	Incorporated, but some information of limited relevance to consideration of school performance.	More likely to be relevant to performance.	
Statement of school purpose, aims and objectives.	Incorporated, although alignment to other planning documents not always clear.	More likely to be aligned to other planning documents.	
Performance indicators such as examination results (charts and explanatory text).	Performance indicators vary between reports.  Explanatory text usually a description rather than an interpretation and explanation.	Performance indicators and transparency in reporting performance still varies between schools.	
	No charts. Broad statements. Sometimes unclear. Little or no trend data.	Better performance tends to be reported more transparently.	
Relative school performance information (charts and explanatory text) which shows  • how much progress has been made by students at the school in comparison with similar students across the State;  • attendance rates; and	Comparisons across State sometimes, but not consistently incorporated.  Value added information often not incorporated.  Attendance rates provided, but no disaggregation. Limited trend data only.  Post school destinations	Value added information more likely to be reported.  Greater transparency in reporting value added information by better performing schools.	
post school destinations.  Within school performance information (charts and explanatory text).	provided for years 11 and 12.  School Based Assessment and School and Student Achievements indicators vary between schools.  Schools can determine which data they wish to include.  No charts. Broad statements.  Sometimes unclear. Little or no trend data.	Performance indicators and transparency in reporting performance still varies between schools.  Better performance tends to be reported more transparently.	
School's improvement targets for the coming year within the context of the Department's priorities.	Targets often not measurable. Most better described as strategies rather than targets.	Targets more likely to be clear and aligned to areas requiring improvement.  Greater tendency to indicate how performance will be measured.	

Table 6: What Were the Expected Benefits of Enhanced Annual School Reports?			
Annual school reports should provide the following benefits:	1997 reports	Change in 1998 reports	
Contextual information is provided as a background to performance.	Yes, but link to school performance not always clear.	Information more likely to be relevant to performance.	
Qualitative as well as quantitative information is included.	Yes, but not consistent between schools (or sometimes within	Indicators still vary between schools.	
	schools) due to ability of schools to select which performance indicators they will include and absence of analytical tools. Characterised by broad rather than specific statements.	Likely to be expressed more clearly.	
A range of indicators is provided to ensure that performance is not judged on a single indicator and	Yes, but not consistent between schools (or sometimes within schools).	Indicators still vary between schools.	
judged on a single indicator and which recognise the complexity of the work of a school.	Little information on non- cognitive outcomes, school	Clarity of reporting of performance information still varies substantially.	
	culture and work environment other than broad statements.	Value added information more likely to be reported.	
	Value added information is often not provided.	, ,	
Simplistic league tables are avoided.	Yes. Difficult to make any meaningful comparisons of performance between schools.	As for 1997.	
Recurrent nature of the model encourages school improvement.	Puts pressure on for change, and provides support for identifying where improvement is required.	Some evidence that reports are contributing to planning and resource allocation in some District Offices.	
Parents are better informed about the quality and performance of individual schools.	Generally better than previous situation, but there is room for significant improvement to content, presentation and expression.	Some limited improvement, but room for further improvement and need for greater consistency remains.	
Parents are able to be meaningfully involved in child's education.	Difficult to establish the link between reports as they stand and increased involvement of parents in children's education.	As for 1997.	
Parents are able to ask relevant questions about their local school.	Varies depending upon the content, and particularly performance information, included in individual reports.	As for 1997.	
Parents are better able to choose between alternative schools.	Lack of common data and value added information mitigates informed choice. Infrastructure may limit ability to move between schools.	As for 1997.	
The Department is able to make better informed decisions concerning the strategic allocation of available resources.	Annual school reports may filter out important information on school performance that would assist in making such decisions.	As for 1997.	

### Audit Observations

Annual school reports are progressing towards the content standards the Department desires. However, they have some further improvements to make to reach these goals.

The Department negotiated reporting protocols during a period when industrial bans were in place both on annual school reporting and the BST. While schools are required to report under specific headings (and the template reflects this requirement) and guidelines indicate what information should be reported under these headings, the protocols leave decisions about what to report, and how to report, to the principal and the self-evaluation committee. <sup>38</sup> Allied to this, in 1997 principals were able to select their own self-evaluation committee. This was changed by the Department in 1998, so that principals have to now accept the nomination of parent representatives.

In effect, it is possible for principals to veto the publication of performance information they do not like. Critical to this veto was the inclusion in the protocols of a requirement that information be reported 'where relevant to the school'. The Department's intent was that schools only report statistically significant data. However, some principals took the view that certain data were not relevant to their school regardless of their statistical significance, and omitted such data from their school's self-evaluation and/or annual school report. This was particularly common for value added information and information which suggested lagging performance.

A curriculum standards framework for all key learning areas would have assisted in clarifying student learning outcomes for inclusion in annual school reports. The NSW Government has recognised the educational and accountability value of a standards framework and is committed to the implementation of such a framework in NSW. The Board of Studies is in the process of revising curriculum and assessment instruments in line with an outcomes-based approach.

Variability in reports is felt to be a problem by some stakeholders. There is an argument that annual school reports are likely to be more useful to parents and the community for judging performance if all schools reported more extensively and consistently on a common set of indicators covering both non-cognitive and cognitive learning as well as school culture and work environment. The common indicators should also

.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> The Department also encourages schools to report on a range of performance indicators – see section 3.7.

include value added measures. Individual schools could choose to supplement this common core with additional information at their own discretion.

This argument holds some appeal and is worthy of consideration. DET should consider the merits of moving to enforce minimum standards for report content and quality while allowing greater flexibility to reflect school culture and work environment. In so doing, the Department would need to ensure annual school reports:

- make clear and unequivocal statements that fully and accurately reflect performance
- include appropriate statistical and contextual caveats
- include a clear statement about school and systemic objectives, linked to school and Departmental planning documents
- include clear targets relating to these objectives and analysis of achievement of targets for the previous year.

It may also be necessary for the Department to give clear advice to principals regarding appropriate interpretation and comments regarding the school's performance in relation to the common indicators.

Even if schools were required to report on a common set of indicators, The Audit Office identified attitudinal barriers that will require ongoing efforts to modify. Significant improvement to annual school reporting is likely to occur only if there is greater commitment among principals to providing more objective information to parents and the community. Commitment is only likely to increase if principals consider that they are to be held accountable for what they can reasonably control. The concerns of principals about the level of autonomy and control that they have over school performance are discussed in Chapter 3.

A further barrier to increased principal commitment that The Audit Office identified is concern that publishing negative performance data will place their school at a competitive disadvantage. The publication of negative as well as positive school performance information was designed to place pressure on:

- public schools to improve their performance through public accountability
- private schools to report in a similar manner.

There is no evidence that private schools are moving towards reporting in the same way as public schools. There is evidence that a small number of private schools have used public annual school reports to suggest possible public school 'weaknesses' and to assert their own strengths.

This situation is not new. Private schools have long sought to advocate their strengths and this is only logical. However, with greater open reporting of Government school performance, some principals and supporters of public education see this as unfair, which may hamper more open reporting by public schools.

It has even been suggested that the Department does not report at the systemic level in a way which is as detailed or transparent as principals are being asked to report at the school level. The Department may wish to consider this.

More open reporting may also generate pressure from parents for movement of students between schools. It has been suggested that the limited flexibility of school infrastructure may provide a barrier to such movement.

### 2.5 Format of Performance Information

### **League Tables**

In NSW, from time to time commentators and the media have sought to 'rank' schools, and to this end make use of any available information to create 'league tables'. Student results in public examinations, such as the HSC, are one source of information often used in this fashion. This is a highly contentious issue at present, and avoiding league tables has played a major role in the form of school performance reporting implemented in NSW. The Audit Office considered approaches used elsewhere.

In Britain, league tables ranking schools on the basis of raw scores in external examinations are published. In the United States, there is an increasing trend towards publication of league tables that rank on the basis of public examination results adjusted for students' characteristics.

The Audit Office's research highlighted that whilst the use of league tables is not uncommon overseas, that use has had a number of negative implications including:

- focus on ranking rather than explaining and improving performance
- tests dominating the curriculum
- movement of children between schools to the advantage of higher socio-economic status students, so that the 'rich get better schooling'
- political and media criticism of schools and teachers
- increasing pressure on administrators to allow principals to select and reject students.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, reporting using league tables need say nothing about the quality of a school so much as the quality of a school's students. If reporting on a school's quality is wanted, it can currently be best provided by the capacity of the school to add value to the students it teaches.

### Audit Observations

The Department's objective to withhold information that may be used to rank or otherwise compare schools derives from legislation. Substantial change is not possible without amending the legislation, and also the reporting protocols negotiated.

In practice, this objective has presented barriers to the transparent reporting of school performance. The objective was interpreted by some stakeholders and a number of principals as support for a position that annual school reports should not incorporate, amongst other things:

- comparisons between a school's results and state averages and results
- references to the percentages or number of students operating in particular bands of the BST
- information recording 'value added.'

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Rowe, K. (1996) "Assessment, Performance Indicators, League Tables, Value Added Measures and School Effectiveness", *Incorporated Association of Registered Teachers of Victoria*.

This is at odds with the objective of providing more open and reliable information on school performance to parents and the community. This is also at odds with the Department's documentation which encourages the provision of more open and reliable information.

Parents will make choices about the education of their children. They will use whatever information is available to form judgments and make decisions. Likewise, the media and other commentators will use any available information to assess the performance of schools even if the information they use is inappropriate or incomplete. Recent media analysis of 1998 HSC results makes it clear that limiting publicly available information does not prevent the ranking or comparison of particular schools. Only if comprehensive data and valid interpretations are made available can the risk of the data being used in a misleading way be reduced. The data will also serve as a warning to those who otherwise would promote or publish simplistic interpretations.

In contrast to the current situation, requiring all schools to report more consistently and extensively on a common set of indicators covering both non-cognitive and cognitive learning as well as school culture and work environment would better inform parents and the community about school performance. It may also assist in mitigating the creation of simplistic, misleading league tables. 40

### 2.6 Collection and Use of Information

## Value of Information

It was intended that information from the annual self-evaluation of schools would:

- place principals and the school executive in a better position to identify where deployment of resources can be improved and ultimately improve school performance
- form the basis for annual school reports.

It was intended that annual school reports would, in addition to reporting school performance to parents and the community:

 be used (together with information from other sources) to inform decisions about the allocation of available resources at District and/or State Office level and to assist in targeting school reviews

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Schools in Victoria report annually on a common set of performance indicators.

• be consolidated to provide reports on aspects of performance and areas for further improvement at state and district levels.

School reviews were also a further important component of the School Accountability and Improvement Model, but have yet to be implemented as part of the model.<sup>41</sup>

At present, reporting arrangements within DET are complex. Chief responsibility for:

- annual school reporting lies with the Deputy Director General (DDG), Operations
- strategic information and reporting and the Department's annual report lies with the DDG, Policy and Planning
- assessment and reporting lies with the DDG, Development and Support.

### Audit Observations

These structural arrangements for the administration of reporting within DET present a potential barrier to improving information flows within the Department and from the Department to the public.

A shared vision is not currently apparent for gathering, using and reporting information on schools, and there are signs of inadequate communication between the SSEIU and other State Office directorates.

There is a need to develop system-wide guidelines on how information is gathered, how it is used, who has access to it and the audiences and purposes in reporting such information on schools.

The location of the School Self Evaluation Unit and the CEOs within the Operations Division creates a potential conflict of duties. The Department might wish to consider whether responsibility for promulgation of performance information should be at 'arms length' from operations.

The annual school reports are attempting to meet the needs of a number of audiences, including the school, parents, community, District Office and State Office.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> School Reviews were designed both as intensive support for schools in identifying problems and developing remedial strategies, and as a source of information for resource allocation decisions.

It is unlikely that all the information required by the Department for management decision making is wanted by the community, nor is it appropriate for the community to be provided with information which could cause harm to individuals.

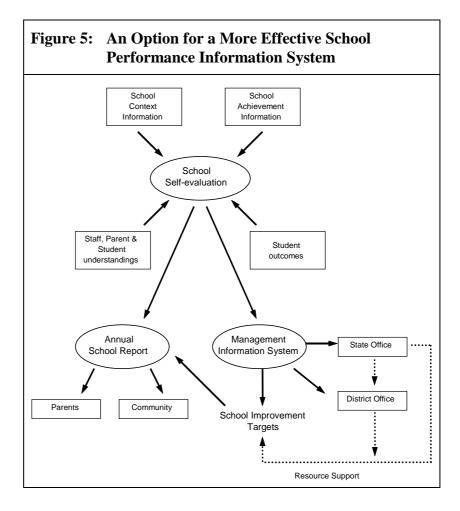
There is little evidence that annual school reports are making a substantial difference to resource allocation in the Department. Many principals could not see a correlation between reporting and DET decision-making. The absence of common performance indicators and limited details mitigate usefulness for targeting at district and systemic levels.

The information collected from the annual school reports prepared using the template has been aggregated and some reports on state-wide priorities and programs have been generated for use by State Office. These reports have presented some limited, additional information for consideration by management. District Offices also make some limited use of the annual school reports.

There is a strong argument for a management information system which provides administrators with information currently held within schools that is important for making decisions on resource allocation. It is also logical that such information is collected in a standard, computerised format.

The separation of reporting to parents and the community from Departmental information gathering would allow schools more flexibility to tailor their annual school reports to their own circumstances. Content standards in annual school reports can be maintained and improved through guidelines and CEO oversight, the latter armed with information from the management information system.

Figure 5 illustrates how the School Accountability and Improvement Model could operate if an appropriate management information system was in place.



Performance problems highlighted in annual school reports are not an automatic trigger for more resources. Principals are expected to manage within their allocated budget and to address performance problems accordingly. However, while school self-evaluations are likely to assist principals in identifying how resources should be deployed, the limitations on principals in deploying resources has the potential to impact on their ability to match resources to need (see Chapter 3).

At the district level, some resources are available to assist schools to improve their performance. The ability to effectively utilise better performance information will depend on the flexibility of resources available at the district level (see Chapter 3). Generally these resources are directed to specific areas of government priority.

3 Maximising the Potential of the M	<u>odel</u>

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter details audit findings concerning opportunities to maximise the potential of the model for improving school effectiveness. Particular aspects highlighted include:

- how the School Accountability and Improvement Model can assist schools to identify areas requiring improvement
- the ability of principals to effect improvements in their school
- support available from District Offices to help schools improve
- the school review component of the School Accountability and Improvement Model
- defining schooling outcomes
- developing comprehensive indicators of effectiveness.

### 3.2 Identifying Areas for Improvement

### Need for Quality Data on the School

Educational literature emphasises that good quality, relevant data on the performance of the school is necessary in order to understand both its strengths and weaknesses:

As a basis for adopting and establishing school improvement strategies and processes, school practitioners including principals, leadership teams, teachers and parents are very much in need of data and information that is specific to their needs. 42

### Further,

... for schools to set about the task of school improvement, they must first claim ownership of data they have generated and that describes their own students, parents, staff and processes. For this reason, change in school organisational orientation, teaching practices and school improvement has rarely been brought into existence by the mere issuance of bureaucratic edict or administrative fiat. 43

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Rowe, K.; Holmes-Smith, P. and Hill, P. W. (1993) "The Link Between School Effectiveness Research, Policy and School Improvement: Strategies and Procedures that Make a Difference" *Paper presented at the 1993 annual conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education*, Western Australia, November 22-25, 1993, p. 16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Hanuscheck, E. A. (1981) "Throwing money at schools" *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 1:19-41.

Hanuscheck, E. A. (1985) "Production functions in education" in T. Husen & T. N. Postlethwaite (eds) *The International Encyclopedia of Education (vol 7)* Oxford: Pergamon Press.

### School Selfevaluation

The school self-evaluation component of the School Accountability and Improvement Model is designed to assist schools to collect and analyse data on:

- their student learning outcomes
- the quality of learning and teaching
- school planning and management
- school leadership and culture.

Good quality and relevant data also exert pressure for improvement and, by helping to identify areas requiring development to which resources should be focused, offer support for improvement.

#### **Audit Observations**

The school self-evaluation component of the School Accountability and Improvement Model is consistent with the notions that:

- principals and teachers are best placed to determine what is needed to effect improvement (see Appendix 4.5)
- good quality data is a pre-condition of understanding where improvement is necessary
- data needs to be directly relevant to, and understood and accepted by, the school.

At present, there is a view amongst some principals that 'time' may be a major constraint to undertaking effective school self-evaluations, given the competing priorities in public schooling. This is despite the fact that they acknowledge planning is a part of their 'core business'. However, there seems to be an acknowledgment that over time and with appropriate resourcing, school self-evaluation (with the assistance of the CEOs) should increasingly enhance the ability of principals and teachers to identify appropriate improvement strategies.

## 3.3 Principals' Scope to bring about Improvement

# Principals Accountable for Performance

The School Accountability and Improvement Model places accountability for school effectiveness and improvement on principals. This is highlighted by the public nature of annual school reporting and the fact that these reports replaced performance agreements for principals.

### Focus on Leadership Development

The Department has identified 'leadership' as a critical element in improving school and system performance and is developing enhanced training in leadership skills for principals and other staff.

## **Limited Autonomy** and Control

For a principal to be held accountable for a school's performance, they must have sufficient autonomy and control over the school's resources to be able to effect improvement. The situation in NSW contrasts with that in Victoria. Principals in Victoria control about 90% of the total resources in schools, 44 whereas in NSW principals control about 5%. The public accountability of principals in Victoria and NSW arising from annual reporting is, however, similar.

As an example, NSW principals have limited say in the selection and deployment of teachers in their school.<sup>45</sup> Generally, if a vacancy arises for a teacher, this will be filled by a teacher of a similar type even if the principal wants a teacher with different skills in order to target an area requiring improvement. The principal also has limited say in the characteristics or experience of the replacement. Teacher selection is constrained by the pool of available teachers.

Staffing is by formulae which reflect student numbers. The number of students in a school determines the number of staff, with the staff/student ratios for primary and secondary schools being different. Additional factors, such as high proportion of students from non English speaking backgrounds, are also taken into account. The central staffing formulae determine not only the number of staff of each school in the State, but also the mix of staff. There is no discretion for a principal to vary the structure of leadership positions and other positions in terms of the curriculum, the needs of the school or the priorities of the local community.<sup>46</sup>

Principals also have limited say in the selection of executive staff. A range of transfer options are centrally administered for executive staff. These have to be exhausted before a selection committee is able to be formed. The principal sits as one member of the selection committee of up to five members.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Auditor-General of Victoria (1997) *Schools of the Future – Valuing Accountability*, Special Report No. 52, Victorian Government Printer.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> See Appendix 4.5 for an outline of research into school effectiveness and improvement, which emphasises the importance of teacher effectiveness in school effectiveness.

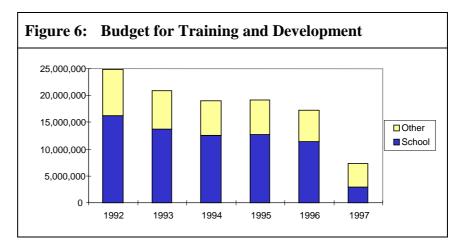
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> NSW Department of School Education (1992) Your School's Right to Choose, June 1992.

Principals have most say in the selection of casual staff. Out of their operational or global budgets,<sup>47</sup> principals can choose to utilise funding to hire additional casual teaching resources, and principals determine selection, deployment and retention of casual staff.

## **Reduced Training Budgets**

The scope of principals to enhance the effectiveness of the teachers in their school through professional development is limited by the resources available to the school for training and development. 48

Budget limitations and an increase in teacher and principal salaries have seen an overall reduction in training and development funds across the Department, including school training and development budgets. The Department's intent is that more teacher and principal professional development would occur outside school hours. Figure 6 illustrates the change in the Department's training and development budget over recent years.



### **Limited Rewards** and Sanctions

Principals are limited in their ability to offer rewards such as financial incentives, career advancement and further development opportunities to encourage improvement in teacher performance.

<sup>17</sup> Called global budgets even though they only cover about 5% of the resources provided to schools. The bulk of the expenditure of the school is on teacher salaries, and this is centrally controlled.

This is not to say that all professional development requires additional resources. Techniques such as mentoring are approaches that can be used to enhance skills on the job.

They also perceive difficulties in taking action to address poor teacher performance. Whilst there is a process to deal with unsatisfactory teacher performance and it is essential that any such process be thorough and fair, principals on the whole consider this process to be unnecessarily lengthy and time consuming. The Department has recently announced that it is refining this process to reduce its length.

### Past Proposal to Increase Autonomy

The Department has in the past recognised that there may be some benefits in devolving more autonomy and control, particularly over staffing, to principals and schools. In 1992, the Department circulated a discussion paper, *Your School's Right to Choose*, 50 which acknowledged the need for more autonomy at the school level:

At the present time, department personnel remote from the school... still make far more decisions than is necessary about where and how schools should deploy professional effort and resources.

No matter how well researched, such decisions cannot be fully responsive to the particular needs of individual schools, classrooms and students.

Change is needed. Principals, staff, parents and school councils must be given the power to make routine, systematic and responsible decisions about the use of resources based on local professional judgements and on the needs and aspirations of local communities.

Control of available resources must be given to the school.

This control, however, must be exercised within an overarching policy framework to ensure the maintenance of the public education system as a state-wide government enterprise, committed to the achievement of excellence and a fair go for all.

The discussion paper went on to propose that schools be given discretion to vary the structure of leadership positions and other positions in the school:

... we propose that all schools be given a choice: either to stay with the present formulae, and have the number and mix of staff determined centrally or to vary the number and mix of staff within their formula entitlement, as vacancies occur and within an acceptable state-wide framework.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> In primary schools, principals are concerned that invocation of a formal 'Improvement Program' on a teacher will result in a 'lost year' for the students of the teacher concerned due to the disruption it will cause to the class. If a principal decides to invoke such an 'Improvement Program' and the teacher takes sick leave this may also have implications for the management of the relief component of the school's global budget.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> NSW Department of School Education (1992) Your School's Right to Choose, June 1992.

Under the proposal, when a position fell vacant, the choices included:

- change the nature but not the level of the position, to better meet the needs of the school
- fill the vacancy at a more senior level, topping up the salary from the operating budget
- release funds for other educational purposes, by not filling the position.

More Say in the Selection and Deployment of Teachers The proposal would have given principals more say in the selection and deployment of teachers. This was not a proposal for full autonomy to be devolved, but for an increase in flexibility and autonomy whilst still maintaining a degree of central control. In any event the proposal did not proceed.

### Audit Observations

There is some validity in the views of principals that accountability has been devolved to them whilst plans for greater devolution of autonomy and control have not proceeded. Had they both proceeded, there would have been greater alignment of accountability with autonomy and control.

Some principals believe that their autonomy is actually less now than in 1992. They perceive that their limited autonomy and control restricts their ability to apply a balance of pressure and support to initiate improvement in the classroom.<sup>51</sup>

The debate about the relative importance of 'leadership' and 'autonomy and control' is likely to be ongoing and difficult to resolve. However, it is clear that good leaders can make a significant difference despite constraints on autonomy and control and the Department's introduction of structured professional development in leadership<sup>52</sup> is consistent with research findings. Nevertheless, further examination of devolution is recommended if the intended level of school accountability is to be achieved.

There is at present no systemic assessment of differential teacher effectiveness on which to base promotion. The current system operates on the basis that there is no difference in the effectiveness of teachers. This is at odds with research findings.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> It is acknowledged, however, that under new structural arrangements, each District provides support for about 55 schools on average, and that this arrangement has moved some decision making closer to the school level.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> There is an on-going debate amongst management theorists over whether leadership is an innate quality or an acquired skill, and the school effectiveness research does not draw the distinction between leadership and management skills.

The implementation of a Teacher Registration System was announced in late 1998. It offers a more streamlined approach to dealing with teacher performance and establishment of profession-determined requirements for training and professional development. <sup>53</sup>

The Department's intent for an increase in out of hours professional development is confronted with obstacles such as:

- difficulties in accessing out of hours development opportunities due to the distances that need to be travelled in some rural areas
- personal circumstances (eg family responsibilities)
- those that need the training the most may be the most difficult to motivate to attend out of hours training
- the risk that requests from principals for teachers to attend out of hours training may adversely impact on motivation.

Whilst there appears to have been some running down of operating reserves and diversion of school funds (eg from maintenance) to offset the reductions in the training budget, this may not be sustainable in the medium term.

### 3.4 Support from District Offices

## Role and Resourcing

District Offices are responsible for:

- supporting the implementation of Government and Department priorities in schools in the district
- providing curriculum, training and development and professional support to schools in order to improve the learning outcomes of students in the district.

District Offices have an average of about 20 staff. Staffing of the Office varies depending on the size and characteristics of each district.

Certain positions are mandatory due to state-wide priorities, whilst others vary depending on district circumstances.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Ministerial Discussion Paper, A Teacher Registration System for NSW.

Districts receive 'flexible consultancy' funds for those curriculum areas for which the district has no consultant.

### Chief Education Officers

CEOs operate out of some, but not all, District Offices. There are 29 CEOs across the 40 districts. School principals report to the District Superintendent, but the CEOs (and some other District Office staff) do not. This is designed to cast CEOs in the role of a 'critical friend' to principals and to promote greater consistency in CEO operating practices between districts. School improvement targets in annual school reports are agreed between the CEO and the principal, without the formal concurrence of District Superintendents.

Principals and district staff are of the view that districts make an important contribution to school effectiveness and improvement, particularly regarding state-wide priorities, but that districts are limited in their ability to address the individual and specific needs of schools.

There are examples, however, where districts have been able to use their limited resources to intervene strategically to promote school improvement.

### **Case Study**

The District Superintendent and CEO used data on the performance of schools in the district to identify that almost all secondary schools in the district were under performing. The data was also used to identify areas requiring improvement and to convince principals and teachers of the need for significant and rapid improvements in performance across the region. Principals and school executive members were brought together, common problems identified and remedial strategies developed. These strategies are now in the process of implementation within schools and there is broad commitment to the approach and outcomes.

### Audit Observations

As illustrated in the case study, District Offices are able to provide support to schools to assist in effecting improvement. However, in general, this support is considered to be somewhat inflexible.

There appears to be substantial variation in the skills and experience of staff at District Offices and support is largely tied to state-wide priorities. Within these priorities, there is some limited scope to vary the amount of time spent by consultants between schools depending on individual school needs but there is little scope to assist where school needs are outside these state-wide priorities.

There also appears little opportunity for the District Superintendent to substitute one type of consultancy for another and flexible consultancy funding has been reduced in recent years.

Whilst certain positions are mandatory due to state-wide priorities, these may not always be the highest priority for the district. There is also no guarantee that district needs will remain constant over time and that staffing arrangements will keep pace with changes in district needs.

More flexible resourcing of District Offices, with greater autonomy for District Superintendents, could be considered.

There are some advantages in the arrangement whereby CEOs are not supervised by District Superintendents. Principals should be able to discuss issues in their school in a frank manner with the CEOs. Some of these issues may not always be easy or appropriate to discuss with their supervisor, the District Superintendent.

A disadvantage of this arrangement is that it blurs responsibility and accountability for school improvement. For example, District Superintendents do not formally concur in school improvement targets, but these could have implications for district resources. In order to concur in targets, Superintendents would have to consider the implications of the targets for district resources.<sup>54</sup>

Setting of targets without the involvement of the District Superintendent also runs the risk of entrenching inequities. Without the formal involvement of the District Superintendent, it is difficult to see how it is ensured that targets are framed to meet broader system goals.

The ability of CEOs to assist in identifying improvement opportunities and developing improvement strategies is limited by the very large number of schools that they have to service.

It is also not clear what rewards and sanctions are available for use by District Superintendents to encourage improved principal performance.

<sup>54</sup> Although the protocols allow Superintendents to approve targets, Superintendents are not required to approve them.

### 3.5 School Reviews

A key component of the School Accountability and Improvement Model aimed towards school improvement is school reviews. School reviews were to be targeted to schools that were performing at a lower than expected level and at higher performing schools with a view to spreading good practices.

The annual school reports were to be an indicator of higher and lower performing schools for the purposes of targeting.

The Department has given priority to establishing and refining the self-evaluation and annual school reporting components of the model. The Department's intent is that implementation of the school review component will occur in 1999. Negotiations regarding the implementation of school reviews are now well advanced and the Department advises that an in-principle agreement has been reached with the NSW Teachers' Federation. There has apparently been protracted negotiation over the implementation of these reviews, like other components of the model.

Training of relevant staff based on the in-principle agreement has commenced. The following table outlines the main features of school reviews as planned for implementation in 1999.

Review Type	Instigation	Objective	Roles	Team	Report
Education support team	Principal and community submits proposal to the district superintendent.	To assist the school to recognise and develop a program within the school.  Generally a curriculum or welfare focus.	The principal negotiates the nature of the review with the district superintendent.	Members selected for their expertise and drawn from:  district office school other schools CEO district superintendents parents, academics etc.	No formal report.  Recommendations and strategies are provided for internal use by the school.
School program review	District superintendent nominates the school and submits proposal to the relevant assistant director-general.	To assist the school to improve a program (or programs) which has (have) been shown to require improvement.  Information collected is treated confidentially.	District superintendent negotiates the nature of the review with the principal.  School manages timetable etc.  District superintendent oversees.  Assistant director- general arbitrates.  School Self- evaluation Unit supports.	Members selected for their expertise and drawn from:  district office  school other schools CEO district superintendents parents, academics etc.	Full report provided with recommendations and strategies for internal use by the school.
School management review	District superintendent nominates the school and submits proposal to the relevant assistant director-general.	To assist the school to improve its management when there is substantial evidence of significant dysfunction in the operation of the school.  Information collected is treated confidentially.	District superintendent determines the nature of the review. School manages timetable etc. District superintendent oversees. Assistant director- general arbitrates. School Self- evaluation Unit supports.	Led by the district superintendent.  Members selected for their expertise and drawn from:  district office school other schools CEO district superintendents parents, academics etc.	Full report provided with recommendations and strategies for internal use by the school.

Source: Department of Education and Training (1999) School Program and Management Review Training.

### Audit Observations

Targeted review is a potentially efficient and cost effective way of conducting in-depth analysis of schools whose performance is either exceptional or lagging. The alternative is a rolling review program, where each school in the system will be subjected to review over a period of time. To cover every school once in three years, approximately 750 schools would have to be reviewed each year. This would not be practical.

However, there are problems with targeting reviews. If annual school reports are to be used to assist in targeting, the information in them needs to be more robust and complete than at present.

Targeting may also need to be supplemented by some form of random selection for reviews to provide an incentive to report accurately and to maintain performance levels.

### 3.6 Defining Schooling Outcomes

### **Main Purpose**

The Department has described the main purpose of public education in NSW as:

... to ensure all students achieve quality learning outcomes in a safe and stimulating environment. 55

This broad objective is supported by the publication annually of a summary of the current priorities for the public school system.<sup>56</sup> These priorities are important for planning and accountability purposes and are a significant part of annual school reports.

Curriculum documents and other publications provide further guidance as to the objectives of schooling.

### Audit Observations

While the current priorities and strategic directions for public education are documented, detailed objectives, goals and performance measures for public education are not clearly articulated. This makes it difficult to determine the outcomes of schooling and therefore to measure school effectiveness.

<sup>56</sup> Currently known as 'Agenda'.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training (1998) Leadership Strategy.

Addressing this issue is complex. It may not be practicable or desired to specify objectives at a highly detailed level. However, the more specific they can be, the better performance can be measured and accountability achieved. In Victoria, for example, schools and the education department agree on objectives for the school and these are incorporated in a 'school charter'. To further enhance the performance accountability framework, the Department might wish to consider further elaboration of objectives and goals.

## 3.7 Developing Comprehensive Indicators of Effectiveness

## Range of Indicators

There is general consensus that schools need to pursue a broad range of outcomes to prepare students for active participation in the community. The Department has recognised this need. As a result, schools are encouraged to incorporate in their self-evaluations and annual school reports:

- results of public examinations (including the Basic Skills Tests in Years 3 and 5, the School Certificate in Year 10 and the Higher School Certificate in Year 12) and teacher assessments of student learning aggregated for the school overall, in different curriculum areas and the relative outcomes for different types of students
- attendance rates, retention rates and post-school destinations
- assessments of the quality of learning and teaching, school planning and management and leadership and culture.

Whilst there appears to be general agreement that public examinations are important, there also appears to be widespread concern that they only address a narrow range of school outcomes and are considered by many to be biased toward particular aspects of learning and to favour certain cultural groups.

Certain indicators of performance are relatively easy to measure. These include results of public examinations, teacher assessments, attendance rates, retention rates and post-school destinations. Other indicators such as citizenship, social values, school quality, culture, leadership etc. are more difficult to measure directly, although some commentators suggest they may be measured indirectly through student, parent and staff behaviours, impressions and experiences.

At present there are no standard data collection instruments available to NSW schools to assist in the measurement of these 'other' indicators. Some NSW schools do undertake limited surveys of student, parent and teacher opinion as part of their self-evaluation processes. Annual school reporting in Victoria incorporates this type of information. DET is currently developing data collection instruments and software to provide schools with an enhanced capacity to measure their contribution to school quality, culture and leadership.

## **Audit Observations**

No single measure of school performance will adequately cover the full range of outcomes sought from schooling. Rather, a range of performance indicators is necessary to obtain an informative and balanced view of school effectiveness.

There is a desire in many schools to be given further assistance in measuring such outcomes as social values and citizenship of students and school quality, culture and leadership. The data collection instruments and software being developed by the Department should assist in this regard, and are an important enhancement to current techniques.

Other areas where discussions with Departmental staff indicate that further performance assessment methods would be valuable include:

- developing an approach to adjust non-cognitive learning outcomes (such as post-school destination and retention rates) for student characteristics where possible
- measuring primary school performance in imparting more comprehensive and advanced skills.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> External examinations in primary school currently focus on proficiency in basic literacy and numeracy skills. Consideration could be given to the need to measure skills in a broader range of key learning areas than literacy and numeracy, and to measure higher level thinking skills.

	4	Appendices

#### 4.1 Methodology

The methodology employed for this audit included:

- interviews with
  - ♦ Departmental staff responsible for development and implementation of the model, including the Department's methodology for estimating the 'value added' by a school
  - ♦ senior staff of the Department responsible for operations, policy, planning, resources, curriculum support, training and development, and reporting
  - ♦ District Superintendents and District Office staff, metropolitan and rural
  - ♦ self-evaluation teams
  - ♦ independent experts in school effectiveness and school improvement
  - ♦ key stakeholders, including the NSW Teachers' Federation, the **NSW** Parents' and Citizens' Association, **NSW** the Federation of School Community Organisations, **NSW Primary** the Principals' Association, **NSW** Secondary the Principals' Council
  - ♦ Council on the Cost of Government, NSW Treasury, NSW Board of Studies
- conduct, in both metropolitan and rural areas, of a series of focus groups of
  - ♦ school principals
  - ♦ Chief Education Officers
  - ♦ District Office staff
- discussions with two School Councils (one primary and one secondary)
- observation of
  - ♦ information and training sessions on aspects of the model, including pilot/development sessions
  - ♦ the model's database and information analysis systems
  - ♦ seminars delivered by experts in school effectiveness and school improvement
- examination of relevant Departmental files
- review of memoranda, guidelines, publications etc which describe:

- planning and budgeting processes within the Department
- the School Accountability and Improvement Model, including the Rationale and 'model' annual school reports
- the responsibility and autonomy devolved to the school level
- review of documentation on or relevant to the model provided to stakeholders
- review of data collected on school performance including data standards, collection methodologies and analysis
- review of evaluations and research on or relevant to the model
- review of
  - ♦ literature on school effectiveness and school improvement
  - ♦ the Victorian Auditor-General's performance audit of the Victorian school accountability framework
  - ♦ documentation on the school accountability frameworks in Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania
- review of a selection of annual school reports.

#### 4.2 References

The Audit Office is not an expert in the field of education, and has not sought to examine educational issues. However, to fully appreciate the context in which school performance assessment operates The Audit Office sought to enhance its understanding through study of a relevant range of literature, as follows:

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#### 3. Learning outcomes

- Brandt, R. "An Outcome-based Education: A Conversation with Bill Spady" *Educational Leadership*
- Carroll, C. G. (1995) "The Development and use of the Learning and teaching Outcome Statements in NSW Quality Assurance School Reviews" *Eighth International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement Leeuwarden, Netherlands, 3-6 January 1995.*
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- Cuttance, P. (1995) "A whole-of-government framework for assuring quality" Paper prepared for the conference on financial management reform Hobart 11-12 September 1995.
- Cuttance, P. (1995) "Strengthening Equity, Improvement and Performance in Government Schools" *Invitational paper* prepared for the International School Effectiveness and Improvement Centre, Institute of Education, University of London.
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- McCarthy, L. (1994) "Review Report on School Review Processes"
- Wyatt, T. (1994) "Outcomes from Quality Assurance School Reviews: Their Use in System Planning and Decision-Making" *NSW Department of School Education*.

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- Cooney, J. (1993) "Generating Recommendations to Support Sustainable School Development" *NSW Department of School Education*.

- Cooney, J. (1995) "Changing Schools from Within: School Reviews as Problem Solving and Organisational Learning" *Presented at A.C.E.A. International Conference, Darling Harbour Sydney 2-5 July 1995.*
- Hargreaves, A. (1995) "Renewal in the Age of Paradox" *Educational Leadership*, April 1995.

#### 7. Reporting

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- Mortimore, P. (1991) "School Effectiveness Research: Which Way at the Crossroads?" *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 2(3):213-229.
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- Wyatt, T. (1995) "School Effectiveness Research: dead end, damp squib or smouldering fuse? Paper prepared for Ed.D. Conference MedlowBath, September, 1995.

#### 9. School Improvement

- Hargreaves, D. & Hopkins, D. "School Effectiveness, School Improvement and Development Planning"
- Hill, P. (1995) "School Effectiveness and Improvement: Present Realities and Future possibilities" *Dean's Lecture Series* – *School Effectiveness and Improvement*, Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne.

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- White, V. & Groundwater-Smith, S. (1997) "Continuous Improvement in our primary schools: Who decides what students know, can do and understand?" *Paper presented to the Interdistrict Principals Conference 8-9 May, 1997, Sydney.*

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- Australian Council for Educational Research (1995) "Equating Existing State and Territory Testing Programs" *Australian* Council for Educational Research Limited.
- Goldstein, H. & Spiegelhalter, D. J. (1996) "League Tables and their Limitations: Statistical Issues in Comparisons of Institutional Performance" *Journal of Royal Statistical Society* 159(3):385-443.
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- Hill, P. & Rowe, K. J. (1996) "Multilevel Modelling in School Effectiveness Research" School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 7(1):1-34.

#### 11. Value-adding

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#### **Quality Assurance Reviews**<sup>58</sup> 4.3

The Quality Assurance Reviews sought to develop schools and enhance accountability by:

- allowing teachers and schools to determine how effectively they were responding to the needs of their students and the aspirations of their parents/community
- facilitating improved resource allocation
- · reporting publicly on school achievements and areas for improvement.

The Reviews examined school effectiveness, in particular whether the school was meeting its goals, and future directions. They were scheduled to be undertaken once every four years. Quality Assurance Reviews were led by an officer of the Quality Assurance Directorate, with membership comprising:

- the school's principal
- community members (1 or 2)
- Quality Assurance Directorate representatives selected from
  - ♦ a Cluster Director from another cluster
  - ♦ the school's executive staff
  - ♦ other teachers
  - ♦ a principal from another school.

The size of the review team and length of review (between 2 and 5 days) were determined by the size of the school.

There were three review stages:

Preliminary meeting: The parameters of the school review process were negotiated at this meeting. The focus was on areas identified by the school and its community.

*Review:* The methodology included:

- interviews with staff and community members
- focus groups of students
- focussed classroom observations

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Summarised from *Quality Assurance*, Video, Media Production Unit, OTEN, 1994

- key document analysis including
  - ♦ strategic plan
  - ♦ management plan
  - ♦ annual school report
  - ♦ other important documents
- daily de-briefing of emergent trends which would form the basis of recommendations
- exit meeting, led by the team leader, which shared with staff and the community (and usually the local Cluster Director) findings and recommendations.

*Report:* Responsibility for writing the report was shared between the team leader and the principal. Features of the reports were:

- school profile
- strengths and achievements
- special programs and initiatives
- review focus areas
- recommendations for future development
- methodology.

#### 4.4 Assessing Value Added

#### Unique Contribution of the School

In recent times, there has been a strong focus in the education community on assessing the 'value added' by the school. Value added can be defined as:

... the unique contribution of the school to students' learning. Estimating value added involves removing that component of student learning that can be attributed to factors other than the school, such as a student's socio-economic background, intelligence level and home environment.<sup>59</sup>

There is consensus in national and international educational literature that the calculation of the value added by a school is complex but critical in assessing the actual value education brings to student learning. However, no definitive conclusions have been reached by the education community as to the most effective and efficient way to measure the value added.

# Adjusting for Prior Performance

The Department has developed an approach to assess the progress that students make relative to what they could have been expected to make based on their prior performance.

The approach compares student performance at the beginning and at the end of a period of schooling. It utilises student results at two points in secondary school (School Certificate and Higher School Certificate), and state-wide tests of literacy and numeracy at two points in primary school (Basic Skills Tests in Years 3 and 5).

From this data, the Department argues that it is possible for an assessment to be made of the 'value added' by a school, and to examine relative outcomes for different types of students, make comparisons in different curricula areas and even examine performance down to the individual student/teacher level.

NSW has a considerable advantage over many other school systems in that comprehensive and comparable student outcomes data, which can be used to adjust for prior attainment, has been collected over a long period of time from public examinations.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Auditor-General of Victoria (1997) *Schools of the Future – Valuing Accountability*, Special Report No. 52, Victorian Government Printer, p. 46.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> Other more complex models can include data about the social, economic and cultural context of schools and their students, but it is agreed that prior performance is itself influenced by these factors.

#### Limitations of the Department's Approach

The Audit Office has not sought to validate or critique the value-adding methodology developed by DET. That is an issue best left to educational professionals, academics and conferences. However, The Audit Office did consider the approach used by DET in developing its methodology.

The Department's assessment of the value added by a school using information from public examinations and adjusting for prior student attainment is supported by international research as being an acceptable approach. However, it must be said that there is no universal professional view in these matters, and some sources argue for quite different approaches. DET acknowledges that its approach has its limitations. For example:

- the inability of examination results to cover all important aspects of schooling. Whilst examinations have some inadequacies in assessing real learning achievements, examination results are still a key performance indicator. Examination results are passports to higher education and credentials for employment and therefore are viewed as 'high stakes' by students<sup>61</sup>
- the group of students may have passed through the school before the school performance in relation to these students is assessed
- statistical limitations arguably make the assessment of value added more suitable for identifying areas for further investigation than for ranking schools. Value added computations can identify very high performing or low performing schools but are not able to differentiate between the vast bulk of schools with any certainty.<sup>62</sup> There is potential to misinform the general community if value added information is used without information on these statistical limitations
- there is difficulty in tracking transient students between schools and sampling/privacy issues with small schools
- much of the data currently available for assessing 'value added' in NSW is norm-referenced. Norm-referenced assessments show how students compare against one another. When a student's performance in a norm-referenced assessment improves it will be relative to one or more other students. When aggregated, norm-referenced data can only show how a school has added value relative to other schools.<sup>63</sup>

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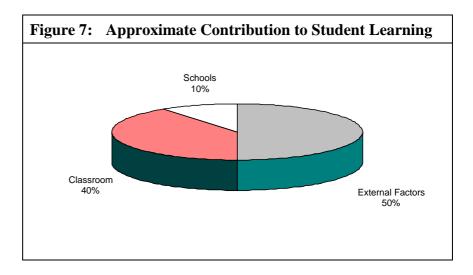
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> OECD (1995) Schools under scrutiny, Paris, OECD, P. 30.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Each value added assessment will have a confidence interval around it and for the bulk of schools confidence intervals will overlap. Studies have shown that the confidence intervals for 80% of schools overlap population means.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> DET is incorporating standards based assessments in its analysis of value added as results of standards based tests at years 3, 5, 10 and 12 become available.

# **4.5** School Effectiveness and Improvement Research

The professional educational literature consistently emphasises that the school is not the sole contributor to student learning outcomes. Whilst the exact ratios differ between studies, jurisdictions and methodologies, research shows that (broadly) the school contribution to student learning outcomes is about 10%, and the classroom (teachers) about 40%, with the balance being the result of external factors such as family and socioeconomic status. Figure 7 illustrates these relative contributions. Studies also show that differences in effectiveness between classes and faculties within a school are generally greater than differences between schools.



Research into school improvement indicates that there is no single strategy that will inevitably lead to improved learning outcomes. Schools at different stages of development require different improvement strategies, and strategies may be more likely to succeed if targeted within a school rather than broadly applied across a school.

It has also been shown that:

... at the very core of the joint enterprises of school effectiveness and school improvement lie the twin issues of quality teachers and school leadership support. <sup>65</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Victorian Department of Education "Building High Performance Schools: An approach to school improvement" *National Seminar on School Review and Accountability*, Hobart April 1998.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> Rowe, K.; Holmes-Smith, P. and Hill, P. W. (1993) "The Link Between School Effectiveness Research, Policy and School Improvement: Strategies and Procedures that Make a Difference" *Paper presented at the 1993 annual conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education*, Western Australia, November 22-25, 1993, p. 16.

It has been said that effective schools are schools with effective teachers.66 Research indicates that the key to improved educational outcomes is teacher effectiveness and that leadership support is critically important in establishing a positive teacher work environment.<sup>67</sup>

The importance of leadership support in establishing a positive work environment is of significance given the public accountability of principals and the trends in other jurisdictions toward greater self governing autonomy for schools.

Research also highlights the importance of systematic professional development programs for teachers and leadership training programs for principals, vice principals and executive staff in schools for improving school effectiveness.

Figure 8 summarises recent academic research findings regarding the key factors contributing to school performance and the resulting policy implications in terms of leadership support and teacher effectiveness.

The need for a balance of pressure and support to effect school improvement is also identified in the research.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> Fullan M. (1991), *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, Cassell, London, page 91.

Figure 8: Factors in Effecting Improvement

# SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT RESEARCH FACTORS FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS<sup>69</sup>

#### **Professional Leadership**

- · firm and purposeful
- · a participative approach
- the leading professional

#### **Shared Vision and Goals**

- unity of purpose
- consistency of practice
- collegiality and collaboration

#### **A Learning Environment**

- an orderly atmosphere
- an attractive working environment

## Concentration on Teaching and Learning

- maximisation of teaching and learning time
- academic emphasis
- focus on achievement

#### **Purposeful Teaching**

- efficient organisation
- clarity of purpose
- structured lessons
- adaptive practice

#### **High Expectations**

- high expectations all round
- communicating expectations
- providing intellectual challenge

#### **Positive Reinforcement**

- clear and fair discipline
- feedback

#### **Monitoring Progress**

- monitoring pupil progress
- evaluating school performance

## Pupil Rights and Responsibilities

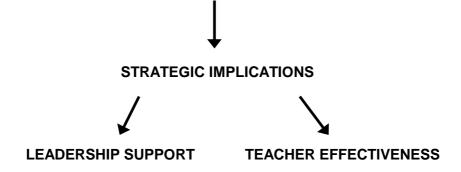
- raising pupil self esteem
- positions of responsibility
- · control of work

#### **Home-School Partnership**

parental involvement in their children's learning

#### A Learning Organisation

· school-based staff development



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> Sammons, P.; Hillman, J. & Mortimore, P. (1995) Key Characteristics of Effective Schools.

#### 4.6 Possible Mandatory Indicators

The types of indicators that might be considered for mandatory reporting in annual school reports include:<sup>70</sup>

#### Cognitive

- Student achievement in external tests against indicative levels
  - unadjusted\*
  - adjusted for student prior learning\*
  - overall and in key learning areas\*
- School based assessments against indicative levels
  - overall and in key learning areas\*

#### Non-cognitive

- Time allocation to key learning areas (where possible)\*
- Participation in elective programs, the School Certificate and the HSC\*
- Student data
  - accident/injury data
  - attendance patterns\*
  - disciplinary patterns
  - exit and destination data\*

#### **Culture and Work Environment**

- Parent, staff and student opinion
  - school performance
  - culture/environment
  - planning and management
- Staff enrolment patterns
  - staff/student ratios in key learning areas
  - staff qualifications and experience\*
  - staff participation in professional development
  - rates of staff leave
  - occupational health and safety incidents and compensation claims/leave.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> The Department currently requests schools to report on those classes of indicator marked with an asterisk if significant to them. Schools write reports in their own way commenting only on what the principal and the school evaluation committee consider significant. The definition of 'significant' is not consistent between schools.

### **Performance Audit Reports**

Agency or Issue Examined	Title of Performance Audit Report or Publication	Date Tabled in Parliament or Published
Department of Housing	Public Housing Construction: Selected Management Matters	5 December 1991
Police Service, Department of Corrective Services, Ambulance Service, Fire Brigades and Others	Training and Development for the State's Disciplined Services: Stream 1 - Training Facilities	24 September 1992
Public Servant Housing	Rental and Management Aspects of Public Servant Housing	28 September 1992
Police Service	Air Travel Arrangements	8 December 1992
Fraud Control	Fraud Control Strategies	15 June 1993
HomeFund Program	The Special Audit of the HomeFund Program	17 September 1993
State Rail Authority	Countrylink: A Review of Costs, Fare Levels, Concession Fares and CSO Arrangements	10 December 1993
Ambulance Service, Fire Brigades	Training and Development for the State's Disciplined Services: Stream 2 - Skills Maintenance Training	13 December 1993
Fraud Control	Fraud Control: Developing an Effective Strategy (Better Practice Guide jointly published with the Office of Public Management, Premier's Department)	30 March 1994
Aboriginal Land Council	Statutory Investments and Business Enterprises	31 August 1994
Aboriginal Land Claims	Aboriginal Land Claims	31 August 1994
Children's Services	Preschool and Long Day Care	10 October 1994
Roads and Traffic Authority	Private Participation in the Provision of Public Infrastructure (Accounting Treatments; Sydney Harbour Tunnel; M4 Tollway; M5 Tollway)	17 October 1994
Sydney Olympics 2000	Review of Estimates	18 November 1994
State Bank	Special Audit Report: Proposed Sale of the State Bank of New South Wales	13 January 1995
Roads and Traffic Authority	The M2 Motorway	31 January 1995

Agency or Issue Examined	Title of Performance Audit Report or Publication	Date Tabled in Parliament or Published
Department of Courts Administration	Management of the Courts: A Preliminary Report	5 April 1995
Joint Operations in the Education Sector	A Review of Establishment, Management and Effectiveness Issues (including a Guide to Better Practice)	13 September 1995
Department of School Education	Effective Utilisation of School Facilities	29 September 1995
Luna Park	Luna Park	12 October 1995
Government Advertising	Government Advertising	23 November 1995
Performance Auditing In NSW	Implementation of Recommendations; and Improving Follow-Up Mechanisms	6 December 1995
Ethnic Affairs Commission	Administration of Grants (including a Guide To Better Practice)	7 December 1995
Department of Health	Same Day Admissions	12 December 1995
Environment Protection Authority	Management and Regulation of Contaminated Sites: A Preliminary Report	18 December 1995
State Rail Authority of NSW	Internal Control	14 May 1996
Building Services Corporation	Inquiry into Outstanding Grievances	9 August 1996
Newcastle Port Corporation	Protected Disclosure	19 September 1996
Ambulance Service of New South Wales	Charging and Revenue Collection (including a Guide to Better Practice in Debtors Administration)	26 September 1996
Department of Public Works and Services	Sale of the State Office Block	17 October 1996
State Rail Authority	Tangara Contract Finalisation	19 November 1996
NSW Fire Brigades	Fire Prevention	5 December 1996
State Rail	Accountability and Internal Review Arrangements at State Rail	19 December 1996
Corporate Credit Cards	The Corporate Credit Card (including Guidelines for the Internal Control of the Corporate Credit Card)	23 January 1997
NSW Health Department	Medical Specialists: Rights of Private Practice Arrangements	12 March 1997
NSW Agriculture	Review of NSW Agriculture	27 March 1997

Agency or Issue Examined	Title of Performance Audit Report or Publication	Date Tabled in Parliament or Published
Redundancy Arrangements	Redundancy Arrangements	17 April 1997
NSW Health Department	Immunisation in New South Wales	12 June 1997
Corporate Governance	Corporate Governance Volume 1 : In Principle Volume 2 : In Practice	17 June 1997
Department of Community Services and Ageing and Disability Department	Large Residential Centres for People with a Disability in New South Wales	26 June 1997
The Law Society Council of NSW, the Bar Council, the Legal Services Commissioner	A Review of Activities Funded by the Statutory Interest Account	30 June 1997
Roads and Traffic Authority	Review of Eastern Distributor	31 July 1997
Department of Public Works and Services	1999-2000 Millennium Date Rollover: Preparedness of the NSW Public Sector	8 December 1997
Sydney Showground, Moore Park Trust	Lease to Fox Studios Australia	8 December 1997
Department of Public Works and Services	Government Office Accommodation	11 December 1997
Department of Housing	Redevelopment Proposal for East Fairfield (Villawood) Estate	29 January 1998
NSW Police Service	Police Response to Calls for Assistance	10 March 1998
Fraud Control	Status Report on the Implementation of Fraud Control Strategies	25 March 1998
Corporate Governance	On Board: guide to better practice for public sector governing and advisory boards (jointly published with Premier's Department)	7 April 1998
Casino Surveillance	Casino Surveillance as undertaken by the Director of Casino Surveillance and the Casino Control Authority	10 June 1998
Office of State Revenue	The Levying and Collection of Land Tax	5 August 1998
NSW Public Sector	Management of Sickness Absence NSW Public Sector Volume 1: Executive Briefing Volume 2: The Survey - Detailed Findings	27 August 1998
NSW Police Service	Police Response to Fraud	14 October 1998

Agency or Issue Examined	Title of Performance Audit Report or Publication	Date Tabled in Parliament or Published
Hospital Emergency Departments	Planning Statewide Services	21 October 1998
NSW Public Sector	Follow-up of Performance Audits: 1995 - 1997	17 November 1998
NSW Health	Management of Research: Infrastructure Grants Program - A Case Study	25 November 1998
Rural Fire Service	The Coordination of Bushfire Fighting Activities	2 December 1998
Walsh Bay	Review of Walsh Bay	17 December 1998
NSW Senior Executive Service	Professionalism and Integrity Volume One: Summary and Research Report Volume Two: Literature Review and Survey Findings	17 December 1998
Department of State and Regional Development	Provision of Industry Assistance	21 December 1998
The Treasury	Sale of the TAB	23 December 1998
The Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games	Review of Estimates	14 January 1999
Department of Education and Training	The School Accountability and Improvement Model	May 1999



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