



Department of
Education

Shaping the future

Draft for consultation

Regional Education Strategy

Strengthening public education in the regions



Draft for consultation

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and respect the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which our students live and are educated throughout Western Australia.

We acknowledge and understand that Elders, parents, families and communities are the first educators of their children and we recognise and value the cultures and strengths that Aboriginal children bring to the classroom.

Aboriginal people have a long tradition of teaching and learning through sharing their connections with Country, community, language and culture, and through their oral histories, stories and lived experiences that are passed from generation to generation.

We recognise and value the learning that Aboriginal children bring with them from their homes and communities into the classroom.

This statement uses the term 'Aboriginal' to respectfully mean Aboriginal, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and Indigenous.

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in appropriate alternative formats.



Minister's message

The Cook Government is committed to the children and young people of Western Australia being provided with a quality education no matter where they live or what their abilities.

That is why I have asked the Department of Education to develop a regional education strategy. We want to build on the already great work happening in our regional schools and across the system in one coordinated approach.

This draft regional education strategy has been shaped by our aspirations for regional students, after some initial consultation held earlier this year with stakeholders and regional education leaders. It looks at our work so far and also identifies key focus areas of future work.

I am now seeking your feedback on this draft regional education strategy. Members of the community are welcome to provide feedback on this draft strategy via email at regional.education.feedback@education.wa.edu.au.



Hon Dr Tony Buti MLA
Minister for Education



Our unique Western Australian geography

Western Australia is one of the most vast and isolated jurisdictions in the world. It covers almost one-third of Australia's land mass and has a population density of just one person per square kilometre.

From the clear blue beaches of the southwest to the red dirt roads and boab trees of the Kimberley, Western Australia is large and diverse.

Our state's geography and demographics present unique opportunities and challenges for how we deliver quality education and support services to students in public schools across the state.

The public school system comprises 8 education regions, 6 of which are outside the metropolitan area.

This statement of future directions for regional education is focused on the 6 non-metropolitan education regions – Kimberley, Pilbara, Midwest, Goldfields, Wheatbelt and South West.



Delivering public education in the regions

In outlining our aspirations for regional education, it's important to understand the context and the different environments across regional Western Australia and what that means for how public education is delivered to students in these communities.

Of our more than 800 public schools across Western Australia, just over 300 of these are in regional, rural and remote locations, and 37 are remote community schools. About 20% of our total student population and nearly half of our Aboriginal students attend these schools. Enrolment in these schools can range from 20 students across multiple year levels in a small primary school through to over 1,100 in a regional secondary school.

Large regional centres have a student population that supports a number of schools providing primary education from kindergarten to year 6 and secondary education from years 7 to 12.

Large country towns have district high schools catering for students from kindergarten to year 12. To enable secondary students to access a broad range of curriculum options, where the student enrolment numbers are low or where there is no specialist subject teacher, the School of Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE) delivers specialist subjects online to those students in their schools.

Other secondary school options for country students include attending a senior high school, one of the five Western Australian Colleges of Agriculture, and boarding at a residential college to attend a regional school.

Schools Of The Air also enable distance education for students living in isolated communities. These schools deliver curriculum as a combination of online learning and home tutors.

Regional schools are connected through their regional education office and also by belonging to networks of schools enabling them to solve common problems and share ideas and practices to benefit their students.



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Regardless of location or context, all Western Australian students should have access to high quality education with a range of opportunities open to them during school and beyond.



326,286

students enrolled in WA public schools



15.3%

of public school students are in regional schools



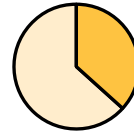
6.9%

are in remote or very remote schools



831

public schools across 8 education regions



305

public schools in regional locations

Kimberley

23 public schools
5,231 students

Pilbara

29 public schools
9,591 students

Midwest

46 public schools
7,681 students

North Metropolitan

253 public schools
120,766 students

South Metropolitan

273 public schools
136,572 students

South West

100 public schools
29,742 students

Wheatbelt

69 public schools
8,561 students

Goldfields

38 public schools
8,142 students

Our vision

Our vision is for every one of our students in the regions to have equitable educational opportunities that will enable them to achieve their potential and put them on a pathway to a successful future.

We want them to have access to the supports they need for their learning and their wellbeing so that when they finish their schooling they are well equipped and confident to take the next step in their lives whatever that may be.

Achievement for every student in every classroom is our top priority, and as regional communities evolve and change so should our provision of education to them – delivering public education that is innovative, creative and engaging. Where school staff work side by side with communities to know and understand the aspirations that they have for their future generations.

Our vision for regional education includes teaching and support staff who have the skills and attitudes that enable them to connect to their students, families and the local community in ways that advance the learning of their students, support families' aspirations for their children and make an active contribution to the local community.

We want all families to feel like they are partners in the education of their children with an important contribution to make. And we want our regional staff to experience the satisfaction of their work and for many of them to want to stay for the long term.

We value and encourage schools forming strong local partnerships with industry and the community to build career options and pathways for students that support the economic viability of our regional centres. We want our school leaders to understand the context of the schools they lead and tailor the education they offer to meet the particular needs of the students in that community.

This strategy will guide the future directions of public school education in regional settings. The current initiatives and new opportunities to deliver it are built on four pillars:

Pillar 1: Build the capability of our regional workforce

Pillar 2: Expand curriculum delivery

Pillar 3: Strengthen support for student wellbeing

Pillar 4: Develop partnerships to create opportunity

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Pillar 1: Build the capability of our regional workforce

Our continued efforts focus on attracting and retaining quality leaders, teachers and allied professionals to move to, and remain in, regional areas.

We will explore opportunities for local community members to become our workforce of the future and ensure they are able to study and pursue career pathways in their local communities.

Our current initiatives

A range of initiatives are already in place to strengthen the attraction and supply of staff to regional locations. Our current recruitment activities strongly promote opportunities in regional, rural and remote schools.

Staff in our regional schools have opportunities that would be rare in metropolitan schools, including being a leader and contributor beyond the school gate.

International recruitment of teachers has delivered high quality, experienced teachers to our regional schools. Seeing themselves as part of the community, many bring expertise and a willingness to learn about their new community and country.

Additional attraction and retention strategies have been introduced including additional salaries, locality allowances and vacation travel concessions for regional teachers. Making now an even better time to consider a rewarding regional placement.

Schools benefit from the energy and new ideas beginning teachers bring, alongside the support that experienced, accomplished teachers can provide.

There is a focus in a number of regions on building the capacity of Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers and Education Assistants in literacy programs in the early years of school.

We will continue to work with school leaders to ensure their staff have the knowledge, skills and ongoing support to assist them in the classroom. We will pursue innovative ways for staff in the regions to access resources and professional learning.

Local staff provide valuable insights into their communities. This is especially true in remote communities where local knowledge is essential for staff to be able to navigate cultural norms and customs. Work to recognise this wisdom is underway.

New opportunities

In addition to the extra incentives, new initiatives will be introduced to attract experienced and accomplished teachers and leaders to regional schools.

The *Growing great leaders in our schools* trial will provide school leaders with the opportunity to take up principal appointments in regional schools while maintaining their appointment to a city school.

Access to high quality, credible collegiate principals will be prioritised for these newly appointed principals ensuring a smooth transition to the role.

We know that many community members aspire to pursue careers that align with their community's needs and allow them to stay close to their local communities.

By developing pathways that prioritise the local workforce of the future, we will create leaders within the public school system and within the regions.

Pillar 2: Expand curriculum delivery

Our schools have an important role in engaging students in learning by offering educational pathways that build on their strengths and interests.

We want to ensure our regional schools are equipped to embrace and overcome any geographical challenges they may face in delivering a broad curriculum and meeting the learning needs and aspirations of all their students.

Ensuring access to quality education programs, taught by quality teachers, as well as access to supports and services enables students to fully participate in their learning.

Our current initiatives

Providing students with access to a broad range of curriculum subjects and tailored education programs is dependent on teachers with specialist skills or our ability to deliver these specialist skills to regional schools through alternate methods.

A commitment to ensuring high quality teaching remains a priority for all public schools. The Kimberley Schools Project, Scaling Up Success Project and Midwest Project are all components of the Quality Teaching Strategy and have seen regional schools working together to implement targeted literacy teaching approaches.

Some students need a boost in their learning and the introduction of small group tuition will provide this. This new initiative will be delivered by registered teachers who bring an understanding of what works best.

A focus on disability and inclusion will ensure our regional schools have the resources to educate students with diverse learning needs and provide them with optimal learning experiences.

Recent investment in the School of Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE) has strengthened the reach of distance education and increased online curriculum options for students in isolated, regional and remote locations. The rapid evolution of technology, including artificial intelligence, will provide our regional schools with even greater connection to curriculum and educational opportunities.

This includes delivering ATAR subjects to senior secondary students and supporting them and their teachers locally with access to independent learning coordinators in 18 regional public secondary schools and regional learning specialists who are expert subject teachers.

The SIDE registered training organisation is providing customised solutions to schools to enable students to embark on a vocational education and training pathway. Students gain nationally-recognised qualifications to prepare them for further study or develop transferrable workplace knowledge and skills for employment.

Additional funding for 6 district high schools will support their year 11 and 12 students with improved curriculum delivery, expanded access to specialist support services, school-based traineeships and workplace learning.

The Western Australian Colleges of Agriculture have a significant role in preparing secondary students for careers in the agricultural and related industries. They offer students flexible pathways such as WACE, VET and Australian curriculum delivered in an agricultural context.

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New opportunities

Under the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement an increase in funding will drive real improvements in outcomes for all students, especially for students from low socio-economic backgrounds, regional and remote students, students with disability and Aboriginal students.

The Pathways to Post-School Success review has set the course to provide more young people with the opportunity to access learning and courses that better place them for the world beyond school.

The WACE Refreshment being undertaken by the Board of the School Curriculum and Standards Authority will provide a contemporary senior certificate that aligns with the evolving needs of young people and the state.

We will build on strengthening opportunities for regional students to explore the world of work and understand the broad range of possibilities for their future. This includes access to career practitioners, career conversations, and career taster programs.

We are supporting partnerships with local Aboriginal communities to develop learning programs that connect the WA curriculum to Aboriginal knowledges.



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Pillar 3: Strengthen support for student wellbeing

Our goal is for every student to feel supported, and their learning outcomes maximised.

We aim to ensure staff and students in regional communities are empowered to address wellbeing needs through stronger connections with their communities.

Working together with families we will support students within and outside of the school gate.

Our current initiatives

We understand students come to school with a range of learning, needs. By engaging with families, we can better understand and support the interests, personalities and needs of their children.

It is important that we continue to provide in-school support such as school psychologists, chaplains and nurses and work with schools to support them connect and coordinate access for their students.

The review of the *School Education Act 1999* to strengthen disability support for students is an important first step in ensuring that schools apply inclusive approaches and are equipped to meet the needs of their students.

Since 2017, an additional 300 education assistants have been employed in regional schools. This has provided support for students and opportunities for local employment.

We have expanded the Alternative Learning Settings (ALS) to include 8 of the 12 programs in regional centres. These programs work with students to effect positive change in behaviour.

Our principals, teachers and allied professional staff in schools have always understood the contribution they can make to the wellbeing of their students. Particularly important is giving each student a sense of belonging and connectedness to their school.

New opportunities

We know that school engagement is a powerful protective factor for student mental health, and meeting the needs of vulnerable students is a complex challenge for the public school system.

Schools will continue to be encouraged to create local collaborative partnerships with community services that enable better access for students and their families.

As a system we will look at leveraging existing partnerships as well as new opportunities to build partnerships with agencies and organisations to provide specialist support services that schools cannot provide.

Regional schools want more expertise close by and in 2025, complex behaviour coordinators who live and work in the regions will be introduced. These coordinators will work alongside teachers and school leaders to embed approaches that increase student engagement and teacher efficacy.

Important work for the future will be to strengthen cooperation with other government agencies so that there are wraparound services for the students and families who need them.

Pillar 4: Develop partnerships to create opportunities

Education is a shared responsibility.

We aim to encourage regional community stakeholders and businesses to actively engage in shaping education in their community to create career pathways that include further education, training or employment opportunities for local school leavers.

Partnerships between schools, universities, TAFE, and other training providers, offer a breadth of opportunities aligned with the aspirations of regional students.

Our current initiatives

We see the establishment of partnerships between schools, the broader community and government as a strong basis for improving student outcomes, enhancing student wellbeing, and contributing to strengthening community.

Regional schools are the heart of their communities, where families and community come together. The sharing of school facilities with regional communities for sport, events and celebrations is not new. In the future this will be made easier and more accessible.

To optimise the opportunities for each region we will continue to consult and seek advice from community leaders, regional communities, and the advisory bodies that represent them.

The partnership between families and schools begins well before students walk into classrooms. Early opportunities for connection set the foundation for future success.

KindiLink programs in 58 regional communities have grown the confidence of families in providing early learning to their children.

Building on previous success, we are developing initiatives to improve wellbeing and school readiness for children aged 0 to 4 years.

Recent place-based initiatives in 4 regional locations have provided valuable insights into how agencies and service providers can listen and respond to community needs and priorities.

These approaches to service delivery have been beneficial to communities. Ways of working together with other agencies and service providers in regional schools will be explored.

Collaboration with mining, farming and agricultural communities and organisations has created a number of education partnerships in regions. These initiatives offer educational and employment opportunities for students from pre-school to senior years.

We continue to work closely with the TAFE sector, particularly regional TAFEs, to strengthen training and pathways.

Regional VET advisory groups have been established to facilitate partnerships between schools, training providers and local industries to improve student access to training opportunities and pathways.

This work is about listening to local industry and doing our part to contribute to the pipeline of local employment and prosperity.

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New opportunities

By strengthening our regional workforce and supporting schools to work collaboratively to provide a broader range of curriculum offerings and opportunities, schools will be better positioned to offer students the subjects that are important to them.

We will support schools in forming their structured employment pathways with local industry partners to provide opportunities for students to stay engaged with school and achieve recognised qualifications.

In addition to this, school leaders will be supported to develop strong connections with local industry and opportunities within their local area for students to stay living and working locally.

By leveraging more productive partnerships with higher education providers, vocational education providers and local industry, we aim to improve student achievement, ambition and access to post-school opportunities.

Partnering with the university sector will optimise the capability of their Regional University Study Hubs to help students in regional and remote areas access higher education without having to leave their community.

We will establish partnerships with regional industry, tourism, health and community groups to provide opportunities for local and non-local pre-service teachers by sharing what communities have to offer.



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