

Twelfth MCEECDYA MEETING

Friday 8 July 2011

COMMUNIQUÉ

The Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) met today in Melbourne. The Council made a number of major decisions in relation to national education reforms.

National Professional Standard for Principals

In a historic move, Ministers endorsed a National Professional Standard for Principals to support the professional preparation, development and self-reflection of aspiring and practising principals in all schools across Australia. The National Professional Standard for Principals sets out what principals are expected to know, understand and do to achieve excellence in their work. The Standard will, for the first time, unify the profession nationally by describing the professional practice of principals in a common language and in making explicit the role of quality school leadership for improved student outcomes.

The Standard was developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), following an extensive process of research and consultation involving national and international experts and stakeholders, as well as testing of the Standard in ten pilot studies. The Standard will provide a national framework that school systems can use in shaping and developing their professional learning for principals and aspiring school leaders. The National Professional Standard for Principals can be found at www.aitsl.edu.au.

The release of the Standard is supported by a Clearinghouse for school leaders. The Clearinghouse provides an interactive research repository and online tool designed to foster the exchange and development of the knowledge and skills of principals, deputies and department heads. It is a key reform under the Smarter Schools National Partnership and can be accessed at <http://clearinghouse.aitsl.edu.au/>.

Framework for School-Age Care

Ministers endorsed a framework for school-age care—*My Time, Our Place- Framework for School Age Care in Australia*—designed for use by educators in school age care settings, with the aim of extending and enriching children’s wellbeing and development. The Framework recognises the importance of social and emotional development and communication in learning through play and leisure, focussing on the planned or intentional aspects of school-age care programs, including supporting spontaneous play and leisure experiences initiated by children.

It guides educators in their program decision-making and will assist in planning, implementing and evaluating quality in school age care settings. Along with the Early Years Learning Framework, the Framework for School Age Care will underpin the *National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care*, so that for the first time Australia will have a National Quality Standard linked to national learning frameworks which recognise that children learn from birth, through play and leisure activities.

Appointment of the Chair of the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)

Ministers agreed to the appointment of Ms Rachel Hunter as Chair of the ACECQA. Ms Hunter retired from the Queensland Public Service in July 2010. She has extensive experience as a board member, chair and deputy chair. She also has extensive experience in working nationally as the CEO of a number of State government departments. Ms Hunter is an outstanding leader

and communicator who will bring to the board a broad knowledge base, an understanding of the process of systemic and organisational change and a background in negotiation with diverse stakeholders.

Assessing Early Childhood Education and Care Services

Ministers agreed to progress development of the ratings and assessment tool for early childhood education and care services and that publication of quality ratings will only occur when Ministers are satisfied results are valid and reliable.

Australian Curriculum

Ministers endorsed a position paper from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) on the whole curriculum, achievement standards and the provision of curriculum for students with disability. The paper clarified the place of the Australian Curriculum within the overall school curriculum, and the relationship between achievement standards and curriculum content within the Australian Curriculum and the link to reporting.

Ministers affirmed their commitment to an Australian Curriculum in all eight key learning areas under the Melbourne Declaration to ensure every Australian school student is taught the same core curriculum and is judged against the same achievement standards. Ministers also noted that ACARA has commenced validation of the phase one Foundation to Year 10 achievement standards and development of content descriptions for those students with intellectual or developmental disability whose learning is prior to the Foundation level.

The position paper will now be used to further revise the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum*, the next iteration of which ACARA will submit to Ministers in October, along with the validated achievement standards and curriculum support for students with disability, for endorsement.

The Council also discussed resourcing the implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

My School

Ministers considered a number of proposals from ACARA, based on user feedback, to enhance the quality of information and accessibility of the *My School* website.

Ministers reiterated their strong opposition to the publication of league tables arising from *My School* data and discussed with ACARA further actions that could be taken against breaches of the *My School* terms and conditions of use.

New national school reform initiatives

State and Territory Ministers agreed to participate in Phase One of the Australian Government's *Empowering Local Schools* initiative, subject to the successful negotiation of a National Partnership and bilateral implementation plans with States and Territories and funding agreements with non-government education authorities.

The initiative aims to deliver greater local autonomy to more schools to enable them to better respond to local school community needs and provide services to ensure their students achieve the best educational outcomes. Phase One will involve 1,000 schools across 2012 and 2013 and will focus primarily on strengthening local school decision-making in the areas of workforce, governance, funding and infrastructure.

Ministers also noted the Australian Government's intention to take a phased approach to the *National Trade Cadetship* initiative and to form an Advisory Panel to provide advice on its implementation. The National Trade Cadetship initiative will provide for greater consistency in the delivery of trade training in schools across Australia and a clearly defined pathway through school and into a further study, work or a career in the trades.

Ministers also agreed that development of a National School Improvement Framework commence as part of the Australian Government's *Rewards for School Improvement* initiative. Ministers asked senior officials to oversee development of the Framework, including the establishment of a Steering Group to inform this development work.

Ministers also discussed principles to guide the Australian Government's *Rewards for Great Teachers* initiative.

Civics and Citizenship Education Initiatives

Kerry Jones, Executive Director, and Thomas Keneally, AO, from the Constitution Education Fund Australia (CEFA) gave a presentation to Ministers on the AusCivics project. Two-hour AusCivics Film Festival sessions will be shown in cinemas across Australia in the second half of 2011 aimed at educating students from Year 5 to Year 12 about civics and citizenship education in a lively, engaging manner.

Ministers agreed to help promote the AusCivics project in their schools in support of the *Melbourne Declaration* goal of helping young Australians to become active and informed citizens, who have an understanding of Australia's system of government, history and culture.

Information about the AusCivics project, including curriculum support materials, can be found at <http://www.ausecivics.org.au>.