



## **Non-Government Reform Support Strategic Plan**

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**2019-2022**

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**The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia**

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## **Non–Government Reform Support Fund**

### **Association of Independent Schools of South Australia – Strategic Plan**

#### **Executive Summary**

The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) strategic plan outlines key initiatives and strategies to be undertaken under the Non-Government Reform Support Fund for the 2019 – 2022 quadrennium. Committed to excellence in outcomes for young people, the priorities in this strategic plan align with both national and state-based reform initiatives and the school improvement directions of Independent schools. Although the specific context of each school varies, at the heart of each is the commitment to learning excellence and equitable access to education for all students.

A model of bespoke support, undertaken by an expert consultancy team, strategically links current reform initiatives with the contextual school improvement directions of each Independent school. Senior Educational Consultants work as a team to enable school leaders to realise their vision for school improvement and progress the national reform agenda. Specialist Consultants with deep content and pedagogical knowledge support the development of instructional leaders of learning, and teachers who are committed to pedagogical improvement across their schools.

Importantly, the AISSA is committed to supporting Independent schools to drive a new era of development and growth across the full range of expectations for 21st Century learning. Opening dialogue and new ways of thinking about effective STEM education is an objective of the AISSA STEM Taskforce, with the aim of increasing the number and diversity of students participating in STEM learning. Providing opportunities for schools to design and implement school-based education and leadership innovation projects is undertaken through two key AISSA platforms - the Centre for Innovation; and the Leadership Institute. Each strategy provides schools with access to advice, consultancy support and resources that include tools to provoke, inspire and scaffold school improvement initiatives.

Whilst respecting each school's independence and autonomy, the AISSA has a proven track record for supporting Independent schools to meet their national obligations. The three national reform areas - the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability; implementation of an online National Assessment Program; and, strengthening quality governance and financial management practices, are ongoing key strategic priorities. Additionally, the three education sectors have worked together to identify strategic reform areas of impact that will build on national reform efforts and complement and support implementation of state-based initiatives. South Australia has a long-standing commitment to cross-sector collaboration and the Heads of the three sectors – Government, Catholic and Independent – work together on issues of common interest for South Australia, with a range of formal and informal structures and processes in place.

The AISSA will continue to be responsive to the needs of Independent schools in South Australia and is committed to progressing the initiatives in this strategic plan. Having regard to the objectives that underpin the Reform Support Fund, this strategic plan outlines a comprehensive sector strategy in alignment with both national and state-based reforms to enable a continued focus on, and investment in, the very best outcomes for students in South Australian Independent schools.

## Current context

The AISSA services 104 South Australian Independent schools through the Reform Support Fund. Independent schools in South Australia provide choice, diversity, innovation and excellence in education. They educate students within a curriculum underpinned by a diverse range of religious beliefs (Anglican, Baptist, Christian, Christadelphian, Greek Orthodox, Islamic, Lutheran, Seventh-day Adventist, Uniting) and educational philosophies (Montessori, Waldorf Steiner). The sector also includes a number of secular schools, special assistance schools, two special schools which educate students with severe disabilities and one Majority Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander School (MATSIS).

Nearly 20% of the State's children are educated in Independent schools, with higher percentages in the secondary and senior secondary years. Approximately one-third of Independent schools are in regional South Australia and two are in remote areas. The majority of Independent schools cater for students from Reception to Year 12, with one-third providing primary school education only.

Each Independent school has access to the support of an AISSA Senior Educational Consultant to assist in achieving their school improvement initiatives. Having regard to the objectives that underpin the Reform Support Fund, the AISSA team of consultants work strategically with school leadership to implement improvement practices and processes that meet the contextual and cultural needs of each school and contribute to progressing the overall national reform agenda. Independent schools also have access to support provided by Consultants with deep content and pedagogical knowledge in areas such as literacy, numeracy, STEM and supporting students with specific needs.

The changing local, national and global economy, and the resulting key social challenges that these changes bring, informs the improvement directions of South Australian schools across all sectors. Independent schools are places that bring families together, with opportunities to form relationships between people and services. The future of work is likely to become less reliant on mechanistic tasks, with an expanded technological role and a greater emphasis on connected, personalised, social and service-driven solutions. Skills such as literacy, numeracy and critical and creative thinking, together with a strong knowledge of subject areas, remain central to the reform work of Independent schools. Disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge is interwoven with the Australian Curriculum general capabilities and the SACE Capabilities, to prepare students to be diverse and responsive to their local and wider communities.

Independent schools in South Australia access a range of diagnostic data to inform their improvement directions. A range of data tools is accessed, such as the Phonics Screening Check, as prepared by the Department for Education, and the SA NAPLAN Analysis Tool. Additionally, Independent schools access commercial diagnostic testing available through agencies such as the Australian Council for Educational Research. Student wellbeing can be measured through access to the Department for Education's annual Wellbeing and Engagement Collection. Participation in the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data provides schools with a measure of levels of adjustment required for students with disability. The AISSA consultancy team supports the analysis of data at the school level and the formulation of plans to align with both national and state-based reform initiatives and school improvement directions.

## National Policy Initiatives

Currently, three national priorities for the Commonwealth and for Education Council have been identified for implementation by non-government representative bodies (NGRBs):

- i. quality assurance, moderation and support for the continued improvement of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD)
- ii. implementation of online delivery of the National Assessment Program (NAP)
- iii. improving governance and financial management practices in non-government schools.

The AISSA Non-Government Reform Support Strategic Plan will be updated to reflect additional national reforms as they are developed.

Each Independent school participates in the annual NCCD. The national data collection records the number of students who have been identified as meeting the definition of disability under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), and the reasonable adjustments provided for them. Over the life of this strategic plan, the AISSA will work with Independent schools to build and consolidate practices to ensure that sound mechanisms for data collection processes continue to be developed and strengthened. To assist schools to align professional judgements and to ensure a consistent understanding of the NCCD across South Australian schools is achieved, the AISSA will work with the Government and Catholic education colleagues to provide cross-sector moderation workshops for schools. These opportunities will build consistent knowledge and understanding across all South Australian schools and result in enhanced reliability of data.

Implementation of online delivery of the NAP continues to be a key sector priority for the AISSA. This includes supporting Independent schools' participation in the annual National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests, in addition to advice and support regarding school involvement in the three triennial sample assessments and additional assessment activities such as ACARA trialing and equating processes. The AISSA offers a comprehensive suite of NAP training opportunities and resources that attend to Assessment Platform training, national readiness activities and privacy obligations, as well as annual formalised opportunities for schools to review and familiarise themselves with national testing protocols. Additionally, annual opportunities for schools to analyse their school data using the SA NAPLAN Analytical Tool are provided by AISSA consultants. A formalised cross-sector NAPLAN online working group plays a key role in the smooth implementation of the NAP.

Quality governance is critical to the growth and longevity of the Independent sector. Over the course of this strategic plan, the AISSA will be responsive to the needs of Independent schools through providing expert input that supports a continuous improvement approach for governance and financial management practices. Governance of an Independent school involves unique responsibilities and, as such, the focus areas provided through the AISSA will include knowledge building on a range of critical topics, including governance workshops for new board members, effective financial management practices and the legislative and regulatory responsibilities unique to School Boards. The AISSA annual Governance Conference is designed to build the capacity of School Board members to understand and develop strategic solutions across key governance issues and to stay abreast of contemporary education and governance practice.

## State-based Reforms

The AISSA undertakes to work with the South Australian Department for Education to implement the reforms agreed in the bilateral agreement between South Australia and the Commonwealth on quality school reform. The three education sectors have worked together to identify strategic reform areas of impact that will build on national reform efforts and complement and support implementation of state-based reforms.

Three reform directions have been identified and agreed:

- A. supporting students, student learning and student achievement
- B. supporting teaching, school leadership and school improvement
- C. enhancing the national evidence base.

As such, a suite of corresponding reform initiatives has been identified by the AISSA for implementation over the duration of the Reform Support Fund.

Reform Direction A – supporting students, student learning and student achievement:

- improving student learning and achievement – supporting evidence informed practices in Independent schools through the use of the AISSA High Impact School Improvement Tool; exploring the Australian Curriculum Literacy and Numeracy Learning Progressions to enable teachers to respond appropriately to student learning needs
- STEM education - exploring and implementing opportunities for STEM Education through the AISSA STEM Taskforce
- literacy and numeracy programs – providing access for all Independent schools to phonics-based literacy screening; implementing the national ReSolve mathematical inquiry project
- middle schooling - investigating best practice in middle schooling as South Australia transitions Year 7 students into secondary school
- improving outcomes for Indigenous secondary students – building cultural connections and educational aspiration through student mentoring.

Reform Direction B – supporting teaching, school leadership and school improvement:

- the AISSA Leadership Institute - supporting governing councils, leaders and leadership teams to govern and lead in a rapidly changing education landscape; implementing school developed plans that contextually align leadership traits and an identified innovation project
- early career teacher development – implementing effective teacher induction processes as critical to the development of a high quality profession; developing authentic mentoring relationships that support early career teachers in their first 2-3 years of teaching
- the ChallenGE Project – fostering the development of school prototypes that enhance and extend outcomes for highly able learners
- the AISSA Centre for Innovation – utilising school impact hubs as collaborative spaces for school leaders to develop contextual projects that respond to future possibilities for student centred learning and teaching; developing instructional leaders through quality assessment and collaborative moderation processes, to build knowledge and understanding of the Australian Curriculum together with principles of learning and assessment design.

Reform Direction C – enhancing the national evidence base:

- school improvement initiatives – supporting each Independent school to meet their national obligations and school improvement goals through the provision of expert support from the AISSA Senior Educational Consultant team.

South Australia has a long-standing commitment to cross-sector collaboration and the Heads of the three sectors – Government, Catholic and Independent – work together on issues of common interest for South Australia.

In implementing this strategic plan these collaborations include:

- shared oversight of the transition to NAPLAN online and a formalised cross sector working group
- cross-sector co-designed NCCD moderation workshops
- a collaborative approach to the Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers
- formal and informal working groups on curriculum, child protection and emergency planning
- the SA Literacy and Numeracy Forum - a long established cross-sector forum for knowledge sharing by teachers.

Additional external collaborations are in place between the AISSA and agencies such as ACARA, AITSL, universities, professional and curriculum associations and international thought leaders.

## Objectives

The national and state-based reform activity places school improvement and student learning at the heart of reform initiatives. This is synergetic with the overall objectives of the AISSA's use of the Reform Support Fund. Moreover, the structure and timing of the AISSA strategic plan is designed to be agile and responsive to new and emerging national and local priorities.

The development of quality leadership in Independent schools, enacted through the AISSA Leadership Institute, Centre for Innovation and principled governance support, is seen as critical to enabling Independent schools to achieve high quality outcomes for those in their communities. The AISSA Senior Educational Consultant team works to foster excellence in strategic, instructional and transformational leadership attributes to progress both the school's strategic directions and national and state obligations.

Support of teachers, to create conditions for effective learning, is advanced by the AISSA through the delivery of a range of professional learning programs, externally and in schools. Central to this is the objective of developing contemporary, evidence-based practice to enable teachers to make consistent and valid judgements about student learning. The induction of teachers new to the profession aims to enable early career teachers to fully realise their professional responsibilities, be active agents in their own learning and have the opportunities and support necessary for them to make a positive difference to learners' outcomes.

The AISSA will support Independent schools to conceptualise and design new futures to amplify and scale the practices, environments and innovations required for the next wave of entrepreneurs, inventors, achievers and dreamers to be nurtured in schools. This will occur through providing advice, information and assistance, as well as leading impact hubs - innovative and collaborative spaces for school leaders to create, test, implement and grow approaches that respond to future possibilities for student centred learning and teaching.

## Measurement and Evaluation

A range of quantifiable measures to determine success will be utilised over the funding quadrennium. This includes the collation and aggregation of sector data describing participation, application and achievement of national reform initiatives. Impact of learning will be gauged through member feedback and evaluative surveys, a combination of rating-scale items and open-ended responses, with data collection exploring aspects such as organisational support and change, participants' learning and use of new knowledge and skills. Frameworks, such as the *Guskey's (2001) Professional Development Evaluation Model* will be utilised by some programs to complement the evaluative data gathered and explore the complex interactions between teacher satisfaction, knowledge and practice.