

The ABCs of an

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Jane LOMAX-SMITH
Education Minister



Jim DAVIES
SA Secondary Principals Association president



Stephen ORR
Teacher and commentator



Steve PORTLOCK
SA Primary Principals Association president



1. How do you rate the overall school education system in South Australia?

B+

B+

C

C+

2. What should be the first priority to fix across the system?

Need to skill every student for the workforce.

Refurbish, equip and furnish classrooms and give access to technology.

Need reduced class sizes and extra help for English as a second language and special needs children.

Funds for IT equipment and technicians.

3. Where should more money be spent to improve the system overall?

“The best investment we can make is in the education of our children.”

Improving the quality of teaching and school leadership.

New technology, upskilling teachers, nationally competitive teachers wage, reducing class sizes.

Extra time for primary school leaders to work with students and parents.

4. Is education an important enough priority for state and federal governments?

“South Australia has not seen such a strong state-federal effort to improve education in many decades.”

“It requires support and commitment from both sides of politics to ensure its viability across election cycles.”

“The present State Government is anti-education. The Federal Government, in contrast, is showing leadership in education.”

“It must be - the education of our children is the future of the state and the country.”

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Experts' blueprint for schools of tomorrow

LAUREN NOVAK
EDUCATION REPORTER

SMALLER class sizes, better training for teachers and cutting red tape should be the top priorities for improving South Australia's education system.

Educators, parents and independent observers have told *The Advertiser* the state's education system is struggling under excessive bureaucracy and needs to be more innovative.

While praising the efforts of school staff and the education they offer students, 10 key figures in education, surveyed by *The Advertiser*, have given the system a mediocre report card, grading it from a B+ to a C- overall.

Many felt education was not a high enough priority for state and federal governments and identified teacher training, class sizes, technology, maintenance and support for children with special needs as the areas in need of most urgent attention.

More money also should be put into lifting educators' wages and allowing teachers and principals more one-on-one time with students, they said.

Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith gave the system a B+ grade, saying: "We can always do better but we have supported our schools over the last eight years."

Dr Lomax-Smith said the Government had reduced class sizes, put more counsellors in primary schools, reformed senior secondary education and lifted school retention rates.

Principals gave the system a B+ and C+, while independent education commentators awarded a

C and C-, and the state's peak parent group marked it a C+.

The main concern was the quality of teaching staff.

Education consultant Graeden Horsell labelled it "the single most crucial variable governing the achievement of students" and called for more focus on developing the management and governance skills of school leaders.

He also wanted pay to be linked to teacher performance, to lift standards. Another major gripe was the amount of money spent on administration.



Association of Independent Schools of SA executive director Garry Le Duff called for "less (spending) on process-driven projects, where money is gobbled up by centralised administrative activity".

Opposition education spokesman David Pisoni said Dr Lomax-Smith had revealed in Parliament "that her department could be run more efficiently" and called for more funds to be "spent in schools and less on administration". Most respondents were against the idea of reporting school performance results in ranked league tables.

"League tables can never provide a complete picture and therefore lead to unfair and potentially damaging comparisons of schools," SA Primary Principals Association president Steve Portlock said.

However, parent representative and SA Association of State School Organisations director David Knuckey said it "makes sense to identify schools which are struggling, so that resources and assistance can be allocated to them".

Teacher and commentator Stephen Orr said the concept would work only if "we rank oranges with oranges", otherwise "it's just plain cruel".

Asked what percentage of pay increase teachers should receive as part of enterprise bargaining negotiations, the majority of respondents called for "competitive" wages that were "comparable" with what is paid interstate.

Australian Education Union state president Correna Haythorpe said a 21 per cent increase over three years would "lift us off the bottom of the national salary scale" and was "urgently needed" to attract and retain staff.

Mr Knuckey said many teachers deserved a 21 per cent pay rise but others "shouldn't be in the classroom".

The wage dispute is now being heard in arbitration in the Industrial Relations Commission.

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POLL: How do you rate the SA education system

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education revolution

Graeden HORSELL Education consultant and commentator	Jane SWIFT Catholic Education director	David PISONI Opposition Education spokesman	David KNUCKEY SA Association of State School Organisations director	Garry LE DUFF Association of Independent Schools of SA executive director	Correna HAYTHORPE Australian Education Union state president
C-	NO GRADE	NO GRADE	C+	NO GRADE	NO GRADE
Focus on developing the management and governance capabilities of school leaders.	No situation of neglect.	Improving the relationship between teachers and the State Government.	Improving teacher quality.	Expert support needed for teachers in classrooms.	Smaller classes and more one-on-one time needed.
“ Prune systemic elements to provide more funding to schools and particularly programs which specifically target teacher quality and measure performance.	Address teacher shortages and students with special needs	More money for schools and less on administration.	In schools instead of administration and bureaucracy.	Less money spent on centralised administration.	Same as above.
“ The short answer is basically no. At the state level the rhetoric is turgid and ambiguous, and at the federal level, inconsistent.	“ State and federal governments place a very high priority on education.	“ It is ironic that after nearly a decade of coast-to-coast Labor state governments, one of the new Federal Government's first priorities was to intervene in state education.	“ No. Federally, the Rudd Government's Education Revolution is tackling some of the issues the State Government won't touch.	“ Yes, but let's reduce the rhetoric and focus on achievements.	“ No, and the priorities of governments are all too often political ones that impede the work of the profession.



SKILLS: Teacher Maria Galouzis with students Stelios and Jade at Brighton Secondary School.

Picture: BRENTON EDWARDS

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