



Syd Stirling

MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

5 February 2005

TERRITORY STUDENTS' LITERACY SKILLS IMPROVING, MORE FOCUS NEEDED ON NUMERACY

The 2004 Reading, Numeracy and Writing results for primary school students in Years 3, 5 and 7 show steady improvement, but highlight the need for a greater focus on numeracy teaching in Years 5 and 7, Minister for Employment, Education and Training Syd Stirling said today.

The results are measured against national literacy and numeracy benchmarks. 2004 is the first time results for Writing and for Year 7 have been reported now that national benchmarks have been developed for these areas.

“The release of these results provides us with a four-year picture of Reading, Writing and Numeracy achievements of students across the Territory,” Mr Stirling said. “The overall trend throughout this period is a positive one, showing steady improvement for all age groups in all areas, particularly in Reading and Writing.

“Year 3 Reading is a highlight, especially for Indigenous students with a 15.5% increase over the four-year period. This is a significant and encouraging outcome for our education system and those teachers and support staff who are working hard to improve students’ skills in this area. Writing has also been an area of solid growth over the four-year period.”

Mr Stirling said having figures over a four-year period allowed the Department to track the progress of particular cohorts of students as they move from Year 3 to Year 5 and from Year 5 to Year 7.

“The figures show the same students’ reading and writing skills improving considerably as they move from Year 3 into Year 5 in both Reading and Writing, and also from Year 5 to Year 7 in Writing. Around 5 – 10% more students are reaching the national benchmarks between these testing periods.

“Results for non-Indigenous Territory students remain high and comparable to national averages but there are still significant challenges for teachers of Indigenous students, especially in remote areas.

“Year 3 Numeracy remains one of our areas of highest achievement with 69% of Indigenous students and 97% of non-Indigenous students reaching this benchmark. Unfortunately, the numeracy results for the same cohort of students drop as they move into Year 5 and there is a similar drop from Year 5 into Year 7.

“This means that despite excellent Year 3 results, less students are meeting the Year 5 numeracy benchmark and less students still are meeting the Year 7 benchmark, particularly Indigenous students.

“These figures are a great concern, but the benefit of conducting this sort of testing is that we are able to identify gaps in the system and where we need to increase our focus.

“In order to address concerns with numeracy learning, the Department of Employment, Education and Training is introducing a new Territory numeracy project, ‘Keep on Counting’.

“A new computer-based intervention program for numeracy will also be piloted in some selected target schools.

“The Territory Government is committed to improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students.

“We will continue to focus on quality literacy and numeracy programs in the early years of education in order to build on the progress over the past few years.

“And we will now step up our focus on programs for students in the later years of primary school, particularly numeracy programs, in an effort to turn around the decline from Year 3 to Year 5 and Year 7.

“We have already implemented a range of initiatives to improve our education system, including employing an extra 100 teachers in Territory schools and continuing the roll out of the highly successful Accelerated Literacy program into Territory schools. We will continue to invest in education to give students a better start in life and keep the Territory moving ahead.”

Comparing 2001 figures to 2004 figures, the results show:

- 8% overall increase in students achieving Year 3 Reading benchmark, from 68% (2001) to 76% in 2004. There was a 15.5% increase in Year 3 Reading for Indigenous students over the four years;
- Year 5 Reading: overall 5.5% increase from 71.7% (2001) to 77.2% (2004). Indigenous: 12.4% increase over the four years;
- Year 7 Reading: overall 4.3% increase from 69.6% (2001) to 73.9% (2004). Indigenous: 9.2% increase over the four years;
- Year 3 Numeracy: overall 1.4% increase from 86.6% (2001) to 88% (2004). Indigenous: 4% increase;
- Year 5 Numeracy: overall 2.7% increase from 68.8% (2001) to 71.5% (2004). Indigenous: 6.5% increase;
- Year 7 Numeracy: overall 0.9% increase from 65.2% (2001) to 66.1% (2004). Indigenous: 3.8% increase;
- Year 3 Writing: overall 4.7% increase from 79.1% (2001) to 83.8% (2004). Indigenous: 8.3% increase;
- Year 5 Writing: overall 3.6% increase from 77.6% (2001) to 81.1% (2004). Indigenous: 7.9% increase;
- Year 7 Writing: overall 4.3% increase from 75.1% (2001) to 79.4% (2004). Indigenous: 6.4% increase.

Contact: Mary Fall 0401 119 770