

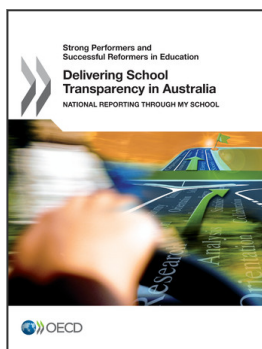


Foreword

The launch of the My School website (www.myschool.edu.au) on 28 January 2010 forms part of a set of major reforms to Australia's national education system. The federal distribution of responsibility for schooling, and the Australian Government's role in this, historically, has imposed significant limitations on the supply by government of genuinely national data about Australian schools to ministers and to the community. My School and full population national student assessments in literacy and numeracy have dramatically closed this data gap.

Several key factors were critical in achieving national school reporting through My School. Ministerial leadership and negotiation across federal-state lines was pivotal in gaining agreement from all states and territories to this Australian Government initiative. The Australian Government clearly articulated the rationale for making nationally comparable school information publicly available, and promoted greater flexibility for education expenditure in return for more accountability and transparency of outcomes through agreements which tied reporting of these outcomes to funding. Drawing on expertise in schooling and school performance from outside of ministers' departments was critical. Identifying and researching models developed here and overseas enabled a key set of principles to be developed that drew on the strengths of different models but represented what would be suitable for the Australian system. By ensuring the policy details were based on scientific evidence provided by independent experts, political interests were prevented from driving the agenda. Agreement at the highest levels of government and a long-term vision for progressing this initiative, including through well-defined and adhered-to processes, also contributed to the success of My School. The preparedness to commit to a long term development process and manage opposition to the policy remains essential.

School transparency has also placed the broader community in the same position as education officials in having access to this new national data. My School presents school data in a way that places each school at the centre of the reports and is designed to avoid the misinterpretation that often arises with school league tables. Each school report on My School contains national data in three key areas: school operating context; school performance; and school resources. This policy design is aimed at providing the community with a complete set of information on each school that enables proper interpretation of school achievement. The only comparative performance data supplied are for groups of schools whose students come from similar family background, in recognition that family background influences school results as much as the school itself.



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