

SAASSO 2010 Education Priorities

Our Vision

Local Governance and management is a 'Global Phenomenon; liberating schools from bureaucratic shackles', in countries such as the USA, China, Japan, Sweden, Thailand, Great Britain and New Zealand. 'Under the self-governing school model the governing council formulates schools policies in consultation with the principal, making him/her responsible and accountable for their implementation.'

The reasons for the success of Local Governance are clear - Parents and the local community:

- are more committed to their members than central bureaucracies
- understand their problems better than a bureaucracy
- are more flexible and creative than large bureaucracies
- are cheaper than bureaucrats, leaving more dollars for actual services.

Our Mission

Local Governance was enshrined in South Australia's Education Act in 2000. Under the Act, Governing Councils have the authority, autonomy and resources to plan, staff and operate their schools. In practice, however, Governing Councils have limited and declining scope to make decisions to impact on the school; "The Governing Council is more a policy taker, than policy maker".

A decade on, Local Governance still struggles for true implementation in our state; a result of bureaucratic resistance and a lack of commitment by the State Government to resource real support for parents in their vital governance role. Too many Governing Councils have their rights compromised or ignored. In the years since the last state election, SAASSO has seen a dramatic increase in the volume of Governing Councils experiencing ongoing opposition as they volunteer to deliver good governance to their children's schools.

We will fail our children if we abandon Local Governance; the system best suited to overcome the challenges of 21st century education. We now need a genuine commitment to its implementation and its embrace by all members of the education community.

Our Services

SAASSO has supported parent involvement in the education of their children since 1923 and provides numerous services to its members and to the SA education community:

- SAASSO's Governance Portal www.saasso.asn.au supplies resources to equip members for their role in the governance of our public schools. The website, together with the thousands of members of the SAASSO email directory, enable us to keep in continual communication with SA's parents via the weekly 'Education Update' and information bulletins.
- 'School Post' keeps Governing Councils and parents apprised of the latest news and information in public education.
- SAASSO's training sessions deliver concise inductions to Governing Councils on their vital roles in their public school.
- SAASSO offers expert advice and can act as an advocate for Governing Councils, which often experience conflict or confusion at the school or with DECS.
- A key education stakeholder and parent representative, SAASSO serves as an independent media spokesperson.

In the best interests of our public schools; to improve and enhance our children's education, we need the following action from the State Government....

Governance Review

- DECS, in partnership with SAASSO, conduct a review of Local Governance.
- Develop a framework, requiring DECS to work cooperatively with SAASSO to resolve conflicts associated with Local Governance.

Super Schools

- Conduct an audit to determine if the program will waste valuable education funds and whether the State Government would save money by constructing and managing the process independently.
- Conduct independent investigation and consultation to determine if 'Super Schools' are the best form of infrastructure investment in our children's education.
- Measure the benefits of six new schools (housing 10,000 students) against the cost to the rest of our state's schools, educating the remaining 160,000 public students, which have endured savage budget cuts to pay for them.

Special Needs Education

- Deliver adequate facilities for every special needs student to enrol in the school environment which best suits their needs.
- Update the SSO funding model for special needs units and schools to reflect the real need for SSO support for students with special needs.

Parent / Council Support

- Adequately resource SAASSO so that comprehensive and independent induction and resource services are delivered to all Governing Councils, by their Association.
- Respect the right of public school parents and their Governing Councils to be represented and supported by their Association - as the government acknowledges the right of its staff to be represented by unions and professional associations and other community groups are represented by their associations.

Education Ombudsman

- Enact an Education Ombudsman to ensure those South Australians who use public education and contribute to public education are treated fairly and with respect.

Performance Pay

- Implement performance pay in public schools - as endorsed by the Education Revolution; before the next round of enterprise bargaining.
- Confine the scope to Knowledge / Skill-Based or Certification-Based Pay models; excluding bonus systems, which are likely to do more harm than good.

Literacy & Numeracy

- Set minimum class times for literacy and numeracy above the OECD average.
- Commit to specific programs to target those South Australian children 'at risk'.
- Commit to genuine consultation with parents and stakeholders, recognising them as accurate barometers of education standards.

SunSmart

- Provide SunSmart funding to SA schools for sun smart policy implementation; equipment such as shade structures, skin and eyewear protection & education programs, for students.

Teacher Quality

- Entice top graduates into teaching, by implementing Teach for Australia.
- Ensure high calibre candidates enter teaching, by setting university entrance scores above the 75th percentile.
- Attract top maths and science graduates into teaching, by offering HECS reductions.
- Recruit and train significantly more than 155 science and maths teachers promised. Additionally, a significant number of current teachers require training to ensure they are competent in the subjects they teach.

Merit Selection

- Commission an independent White Paper, which addresses all challenges to school leadership and genuinely assesses all possible solutions.
- Involve all key stakeholders in the development of the White Paper.
- Regard the Governing Council nominated parent on Principal Selection Panels as equal to other members and renew support of SAASSO's Principal Selection Panel (PSP) training.