



Position Paper on the Need for Primary Parity

In this position paper Primary Parity is broadly defined as the resourcing which is currently needed for primary schools, especially when compared to the disparity of funding provided to schools with a secondary cohort.

The Current Situation

South Australian Government primary schools receive lower base grants, lower per student funding grants and lower breakdown maintenance funding than schools with a secondary cohort. This disparity of funding is based on historical practice.

Base Grant

The base grant for DECD schools varies, according to their category of primary, area/combined R-12 or secondary. By comparison, primary schools have a significantly lower base grant.

Primary schools:

Enrolments under 215	\$151,070
Enrolments over 215	\$391,790

Area/combined R-12 schools:

Enrolments under 600:	\$285,380
Enrolments over 600	\$1,231,070

Secondary schools:

Enrolments under 300	\$503,610
Enrolments over 300	\$626,780

Per Student Centred Funding for Tier 1

The per student funding varies depending on the student year level:

Year level	2015 funding	2016 funding	2015-2016 increase
R-2	\$5,381	\$5,708	\$327
3-7	\$4,814	\$5,107	\$293
8-10	\$7,757	\$8,230	\$473
11-12	\$8,000	\$8,487	\$487

The variation between the year level funding is considerable and based on historical practise. This funding allocation is not aligned to robust research which supports the need for intervention, strong resourcing and support for the early years.

Nationally, the Year 7 student funding is allocated according to the type of school the student attends. South Australia, with an R-7 primary structure, is the only Australian State that does not receive secondary funding for their Year 7 students. SAPPA strongly believes this is inequitable and unfair.

Leadership component

Primary schools have significantly less funding for leadership staff. For example, a primary school with a Category 6 Index of Disadvantage with 670 enrolments has a leadership team of 5.6. A secondary school with the same Index of Disadvantage and enrolment has a leadership team of 15.9. The funding disparity of the leadership allocation between these two schools is just over \$1,000,000. Similarly a primary school with a Category 3 Index of Disadvantage with 650 enrolments has a leadership team of 7.9. A secondary school with the same Index of Disadvantage and enrolment has a leadership team of 15.4. The funding disparity of the leadership allocation between these two schools is over \$800,000.

The comparatively less leadership funding in primary schools results in the primary principal undertaking low level administrative tasks, without the capacity to delegate to others.

Primary schools are community centres and are parent friendly. The students are happy for their parents to be at their school, unlike most secondary schools. Subsequently primary principals have far more interactions with parents on a daily basis. This is partly why primary schools are considered to be more caring and receptive to parents, and also why primary principals need more support and more leadership density. Parents communicate directly with the primary principals, either face-to-face, or online. This does not occur to the same degree in secondary schools.

Unlike secondary principals, primary principals generally are expected to have a strong presence in NEP meetings, suspension & exclusion meetings, meeting with new parents, accepting enrolments, induction of volunteers and negotiating with non-DECD providers.

Primary principals have ultimate responsibility for the operations of out of hours care services.

Primary principals with school based preschools have additional workload to manage, such as undertaking National Quality Assurances processes.

Primary principals are less able to delegate line management responsibilities than their secondary colleagues. They manage the Step 9 annual processes. Due to the increasing numbers of part time teachers, the primary principal has more staff to line manage.

Special Class Allocation

The special class allocation for a primary school is 1.1 FTE.

The special class allocation for a secondary school is 1.2 FTE.

There is no logical reason why there is a difference.

Breakdown Maintenance

Breakdown maintenance is funded on the following formula: Base allowance plus (total enrolment x space entitlement x locality index x rate), where:

The space entitlement is

- 7.5 square metres per primary student
- 11 square metres per secondary student
- 11 square metres per area/Aboriginal student
- 19 square meters in a special school

The rate = \$9.65/square metres based on an analysis of costs.

The base allowance for breakdown maintenance:

- \$5,720 in primary schools
- \$8,569 in area schools
- \$14,248 in special/secondary /R-12 schools

The formula of breakdown maintenance results in an exponential increase for schools with secondary enrolments, due to the base allowance and space entitlement differential allocative differences.

In Summary

As a consequence of the funding disparity, government primary schools have less resources than those schools with secondary students, especially in human resources.

Primary classes are larger than secondary classes. The available funding for primary staffing is less than schools with a secondary cohort.

Primary principals have less ability to delegate tasks due to small number of leadership staff. With increasing school autonomy, audit/review requirements and local governance, primary principals are spending a large proportion of their time with low level administrative tasks.

With the exception of very large schools, primary schools do not have the resources for a business manager or a personal assistant, unlike many secondary schools.

Additional Consideration

SASIF Accounts

An argument against increased funding is that schools already have very large SASIF accounts. On a cumulative scale for all South Australian Government schools, this is true, but not for the majority of South Australian Government primary schools with over 50 enrolments. Currently, the first 12 schools with the most SASIF funds are secondary schools, senior colleges and Anungu Schools with a total amount of over \$48m.

Of the 78 schools listed as having over \$1m in their SASIF accounts, 10 are primary schools. Primary schools with enrolments over 50, generally do not have the fiscal capacity to increase their leadership support on a recurrent, sustainable basis.

SAPPA recognises that many schools hold committed funds in their SASIF accounts.

The Opportunity

There is an opportunity for a positive step toward addressing the need for primary parity with a modest allocation to primary schools based on their enrolments, using the following formula: $58.91 \times \text{enrolments}$. SAPPA estimates that this would cost less than \$6,300,000 per year. *See Appendix A*

This suggested model could be used for extra administrative funding for primary principals, a small step toward addressing primary parity, using a model that is reasonable.

The Challenge

Primary funding continues to be a major challenge for SAPPA. We don't want to take resources from secondary schools. In fact we agree that secondary schools need adequate resourcing.

It cannot be reasonably asserted that primary resourcing is adequate for leadership staffing when the allocation for primary leadership staff is less than half of the allocation to secondary schools of the same size and disadvantage category.

This vast disparity of funding between South Australian Government primary and secondary schools is based on historical practice only.

Primary schools must be equitably resourced to implement and sustain their own site specific, evidence-based strategies through their school autonomy practices. These resources need to include administrative support, professional development, and community engagement, and not be limited to a one-off grants.

Other States, in particular NSW and Queensland have recently recognised the need to provide increased funding support for primary school leaders and have taken action to address this disparity. SAPPA will continue to lobby with politicians and DECD senior executive personnel to ensure that the current funding disparity is known, understood and addressed.

SAPPA will advocate for increased funding for primary schools in our South Australian Government schools with the intent of reaching a fairer and more equitable method of funding, for the sake of our young students.

Pam Kent
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Principals Association

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