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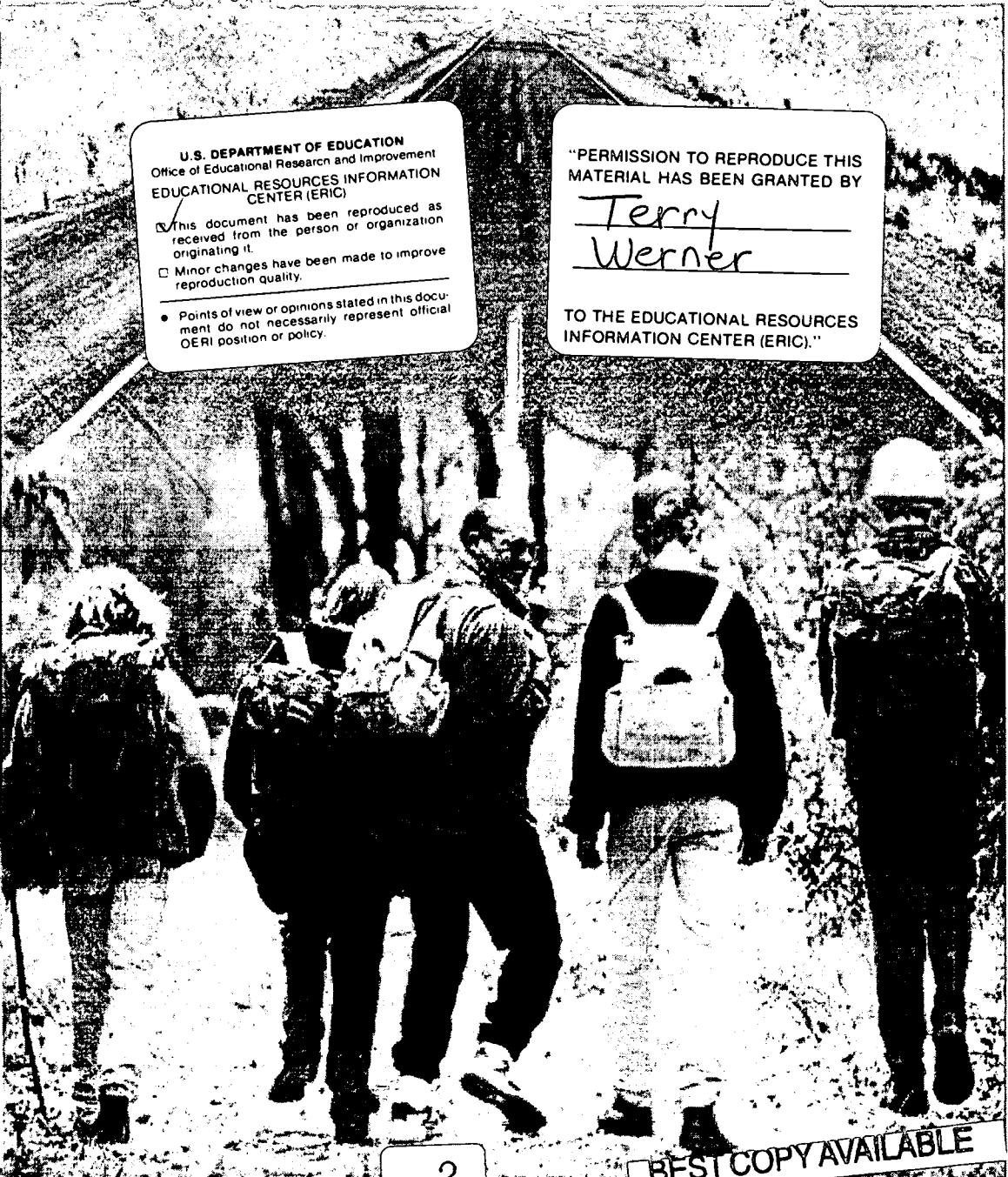
ABSTRACT
                 The Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council of Western
Australia developed a 4-year plan to improve educational access,
participation, and achievement by rural people of Western Australia. The plan
outlines seven priorities: (1) ensuring that rural students are able to
participate in quality education and training; (2) ensuring a broad
cross-sectoral partnership approach to educational provision in rural Western
Australia; (3) implementing strategies to recruit and retain qualified
educational professionals; (4) meeting the needs of rural students at risk;
(5) ensuring that cultural diversity, including Aboriginal cultural
perspectives, is recognized and supported by rural education and training
programs; (6) enhancing community involvement in and support for rural
education and training; and (7) providing appropriate resources for all rural
education and training programs. Each priority is accompanied by lists of
strategies for reaching the objective and evaluation criteria for determining
that the goal has been achieved. A glossary of terms is included. (SV)

2000 - 2003

COUNTRY ROADS

*Pathways to Better Education and Training
for Rural and Remote Western Australia 2000-2003*

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COUNTRY ROADS

FOREWORD

Country Roads is a new State Government plan for education and training in Western Australia's rural and remote areas, which include some of the most isolated communities in the world.

Rejuvenation of rural and remote communities is in the best economic and social interests of all Western Australians. It is important that people in rural and remote areas feel a sense of growing confidence in the future. *Country Roads* acknowledges the role that education and training must play in achieving this.

Despite enormous energy, goodwill and resolve by individuals and organisations over many years, students in rural and remote areas continue to lag behind their city counterparts on key educational indicators such as participation and achievement. The picture is especially disheartening in the case of Aboriginal students.

Country Roads was developed collaboratively by all the sectors that have a stake in its outcomes. It is based on extensive consultations with the people living in rural and remote areas and with those who deliver and support their education and training services. All of them now assume a responsibility for achieving the plan's projected outcomes.

The basic issues confronting the different sectors of education and training are the same and include attracting and retaining experienced staff, being able to provide a curriculum that is broad enough to meet all local needs and delivering support services for staff and students.

Country Roads recognises this and charts a new direction based on partnerships forged through negotiation and cooperative endeavour. The hallmarks of Country Roads' development - collaboration and consultation - will also be the hallmarks of its implementation.

The progress of *Country Roads* will be rigorously monitored and evaluated by the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council through reports prepared by the organisations responsible for its implementation and from feedback from the very people it is intended to benefit.

Hon Colin J Barnett MLA
Minister for Education

Hon Mike Board JP, MLA
Minister for Employment and Training

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Mr Tim Baker	Representative of School Principals
Mr John Borserio	Catholic Education Office
Mr Don Boyd	School of Isolated and Distance Education
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Mrs Faith O'Brien	Isolated Children's Parents' Association
Mrs May O'Brien	Aboriginal Education and Training Council
Ms Lesley van Schoubroeck	WA Department of Training and Employment
Mrs Margaret Williams	Representative, Higher Education
Mr David Price	Executive Officer
Ms Nola Sinden	Coordinator

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Mr Brian Lindberg	State School Teachers' Union of WA
Ms Shelley Norrish	WA Council of State School Organisations Inc
Mrs May O'Brien	Aboriginal Education and Training Council
Mrs Margaret Williams	University of Western Australia
Mr David Price	Executive Officer

MISSION

To ensure fair, reasonable and equitable education and training access, participation and achievement by people who live in rural and remote Western Australia.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to guide and coordinate the activities of all those with a role in ensuring fair, reasonable and equitable access to, and participation and achievement in, education and training by people who live in rural and remote Western Australia.

UNDERLYING PROPOSITIONS

The plan is underpinned by these propositions:
- All Western Australians of compulsory school age have the right of access to a quality education
- All Western Australians of pre-compulsory school age should have access to appropriate programs
- All Western Australians of post-compulsory school age should have access to quality education and training
- Access to quality education and training services is essential to sustain and enhance the quality of life and economic development of rural and remote Western Australia.

2000 - 2003

Building on a tradition of excellence in the provision of education and training to rural and remote Western Australia 2000-2003

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Western Australia's rural and remote regions are vital to the State's wealth, heritage and future. About one third of the state's population lives outside of Perth in environments that are diverse, challenging and inspiring. The people who choose to live there embody powerful traditions of hard work, community spirit and resourcefulness. Rural areas are some of the most exciting, innovative and caring places for students to learn.

Providing access to quality facilities
Western Australia's size and sparse population have always posed big challenges in education that demand creative responses. In rising to the challenges we have established an international reputation that is exemplified by the development of the state-of-the art School of Isolated and Distance Education; the establishment of TAFE centres and campuses across most of the state; and university campuses in places such as Kalgoorlie, Bunbury, Albany and Broome.

Attracting teachers
In order to attract quality teachers and reduce staff turnover, the Remote Teaching Service and the Country Incentives Package have been established to make postings to remote and rural areas considerably more attractive. In addition, there is an on-going upgrade and overall increase in the availability and range of affordable housing for education staff.

To help provide for the ongoing professional development of teachers in rural and remote areas, the Centre for Excellence in Teaching has established a professional support network for country graduates. The Education Department, in liaison with universities, is setting up professional development coordinating centres, the first of which will be in Narrogin.

Encouraging new graduates
A number of initiatives have been taken to help overcome a growing reluctance in newly graduated teachers to accept country postings. The two main thrusts behind these initiatives are firstly, to enable more teacher trainees to experience rural teaching first-hand before they graduate and secondly, to attract more students who have grown up in rural areas into teacher education courses.

The measures taken include the appointment of a Rural Teacher Liaison Officer, who will liaise with the universities and rural communities in the arrangement of teaching practicums and the awarding of Country Practicum Scholarships to pre-service teachers by the Education

Department, the Chamber of Minerals and Energy, the Department of Commerce and Trade and Ansett and Skywest Airlines. The Education Department has also introduced rural internships for teachers of design and technology, business education and computing in conjunction with Edith Cowan University.

Teacher education scholarships
To help attract more country students into teacher education courses, the Country High School Hostels Authority is offering 10 two-year Boarding Scholarships per annum to isolated school students committed to a teaching career in rural and remote schools.

The Education Department, in conjunction with the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business has offered 10 Cadetships to provide increased employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to study full-time for a teaching qualification.

The Western Australian Government Teaching Scholarships were introduced in 1998 to encourage high achieving TEE students and more Aboriginal people to study to become teachers. A willingness to serve in country schools is one of the selection criteria against which applicants are assessed. Upon successful completion of their course, scholarship holders have guaranteed employment with the Education Department. In 1999, nine out of the 41 scholarships were awarded to Aboriginal students and in 2000, 18 scholarships have been awarded to Aboriginal students.

Partnerships
To capitalise on the synergies and economies of scale that can be achieved through partnerships of education and training agencies and communities, joint-use education and training facilities have been established in Karratha, Esperance, Lake Grace and Manjimup.

Boarding allowances and transport
To assist families whose children have to leave home to complete their education there are allowances to help defray the costs of boarding. There are also subsidised school bus services and a network of modern, caring residential colleges in regional centres for high school students.

New challenges
Despite these advances, Government remains concerned about some of the indices of participation, retention and performance that show country students are lagging behind their counterparts in metropolitan Perth and some regional centres.

For their part, country people want to see:
• More subject choice for Year 11 and 12 students
• Improved support services for students who need extra assistance in their learning

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- Lower staff turnover rates and more experienced staff
- Better access to professional development for staff
- Higher participation rates in post-compulsory education and training
- Student achievement levels that are comparable with those of city students
- Further ways to reduce the costs of travel and boarding for students who cannot study locally
- Technology infrastructure to support alternative ways of delivering education and training.

These aspirations have been made known through such reports as Schooling in Rural Western Australia Report (Tomlinson, 1994), the Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Social Justice (Daube, 1994) and the Bush Talks Report (Human Rights Commission, 1999).

An increase in the extent of local decision-making will increase the viability of small communities and enhance their opportunities for growth.   There is a belief that the difficulties of gaining access to education and training are contributing to the decline of rural and remote communities.   The costs and dislocation associated with sending students away from home to study and a lack of reference to local communities regarding appropriate curriculum and teaching methods are both identified as problems. Technological change is also creating demands for a responsive workforce that needs to be involved in continuous, life-long learning.

Even so, the future can be very positive. Being able to capitalise on the advances in communication and information technology is very important to the achievement of the next steps in rural and remote education and training.   For example, access to quality professional development opportunities for teachers in rural and remote locations is seen as a key to attracting and retaining teachers in regional areas.

The number of computers in schools is being steadily increased through the State Government's $100 million Technology in Schools program.   In 2002, the computer to student ratio in government schools will be at least 1:5 for secondary students and 1:10 for primary students as a result of the program.

All rural government schools and district offices now have digital satellite-receiving equipment. This provides access to broadcasts from the School of Isolated and Distance Education, Westlink, and ABC television and radio. In addition, the Education Department's wide area network now links schools and district offices throughout the State.

Software designed to track students as they move from school to school has been developed to improve record keeping and continuity in students' education. This system has been successfully trialed in the Goldfields and will be extended to all other districts.

One hundred teachers from across the state, primarily in rural and remote locations, are participating in a 12-month part time Internet-based course on learning technologies delivered by Curtin University.

The growing trend towards partnerships between a whole range of agencies and communities will see more efficient use of technological resources and facilities. The rapidly increasing sophistication of these technologies, while not a complete answer to rural concerns, will open up a whole new world of information to students wherever they may be located.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Priority 1

To ensure that students who live in rural and remote areas are able to participate in quality education and training to achieve their potential

HOW WILL WE GET THERE?

1.1 Support the further expansion of telecommunications suitable for education and training needs

1.2 Expand the range of partnerships among government agencies and the community and, where appropriate, with business and industry

1.3 Expand access to residential colleges and other boarding facilities for rural and remote students

1.4 Form a greater range of effective partnerships among residential colleges, schools and other agencies.

1.5 Negotiate and expand the range of support for rural and remote students who have to live away from home for their education and training

1.6 Apply learning programs, methods of teaching and evaluation that are more in tune with the ways students learn best and with their social, cultural, language and developmental backgrounds

1.7 Improve identification and support for transient students and other students at educational risk

1.8 Further promote the value and benefits of Aboriginal children's participation in pre-compulsory schooling

1.9 Further promote the value and benefits of parents' involvement in children's pre-compulsory schooling

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE HAVE ARRIVED?

1.a. Higher participation rates are demonstrated in pre- and post-compulsory education and work-place learning

1.b. A greater number and variety of quality education and training programs/services, including technology, are available to rural and remote students

1.c. Improved levels of achievement occur in all areas of education and training

1.d. Hostels, residential colleges and other boarding facilities continue to be valued and supported

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1.e. Education programs are more appropriate to local rural and remote environments and to students' needs, interests and developmental levels

1.f. Methods of teaching are more appropriate to local rural and remote environments

1.g. Higher participation rates by Aboriginal students are demonstrated in all areas of education including pre-compulsory education

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Priority 2

To ensure a broad cross-sectoral partnership approach to the provision of education and training in rural and remote Western Australia

HOW WILL WE GET THERE?

2.1 Expand, support and promote a range of partnerships in the planning and delivery of education and training programs/services to rural and remote WA

2.2 Negotiate and expand resource-sharing arrangements, including joint-use facilities like the Esperance Community College.

2.3 Publicise benefits of successful partnerships and share best practice

2.4 Simplify the transitions that students need to make between the different phases and sectors of education and training, eg. between lower secondary and upper secondary school or between school and TAFE or university

2.5 Work together with others in the development and coordination of education and training policy

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE HAVE ARRIVED?

2.a. More effective use is made of existing facilities and resources across all agencies

2.b. Duplication of education programs, services, facilities and resources has been reduced

2.c. Gaps in the provision of programs, services and facilities have been reduced

2.d. More formal agreements exist between education and training providers and a range of Commonwealth, state and local agencies

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Priority 3

To ensure that rural and remote communities have access to and are able to retain quality education and training professionals

HOW WILL WE GET THERE?

3.1 Form a wider range of partnerships with communities and other agencies to implement incentive and benefit packages and to promote the attractions of living in different locations

3.2 Implement more recruitment campaigns which attract:
- students who live in rural and remote areas to careers in education and training
- education staff to employment in rural and remote locations
- Aboriginal students to careers in education and training

3.3 Expand the provision of a range of comfortable, appropriate and affordable accommodation for education and training staff living in rural and remote locations

3.4 Implement more orientation programs for education staff which involve partnerships between providers and communities

3.5 Initiate further staffing policies to provide a reliable source of relief staff to areas with different needs

3.6 Expand the availability and coordination of country practicums for pre-service school education staff that involve providers and communities

3.7 Increase provision of specialist education staff and programs/services

3.8 Develop a greater range of flexible delivery models, including information technology, to meet the learning needs of students and the professional development needs of education staff

3.9 Increase access to training and support for education and training staff in the application of flexible modes of delivery

3.10 Provide professional development funding which recognises a variety of needs, locations and environments

3.11 Increase the levels of appropriate professional development and range of leadership strategies for Aboriginal staff

3.12 Implement more programs that build understanding between different cultures across all education and training sectors as well as the wider local community

3.13 Implement staff transfer and promotion systems which better recognise successful tenure in rural and remote locations and institutions

3.14 Increase the range of pre-service teacher education units and modules that focus on working and living in rural and remote communities

3.15 Establish a larger range of partnerships and mechanisms designed to promote and support initiatives in pre-service teacher education that focus on rural and remote education and training

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE HAVE ARRIVED?

3.a. Increased numbers of education staff apply for positions in rural and remote areas

3.b. Increased numbers of education staff are retained in rural and remote areas

3.c. Schools have appropriate access to relief staff

3.d. There is a balance of education staffs' experience and expertise that is appropriate to local demand and circumstances

3.e. More education staff participate in professional development tailored to their needs

3.f. Increased numbers of Aboriginal students are employed at all levels of education and training, including senior levels

3.g. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff are increasingly valued, supported and developed

3.h. There is an increase in wider community support for the role of education and training staff working in settings where there is more than one culture

3.i. Appropriate training and induction takes place for education and training staff living and working in rural and remote Western Australia

3.j. Pre-service teacher education courses provide a more specific focus on teaching in rural and remote areas

Priority 4

To ensure that the educational needs of students at risk in rural and remote areas are met

HOW WILL WE GET THERE?

4.1 More effectively identify students at educational risk in rural and remote areas

4.2 Implement a wider range of policies at system and local levels for students who are at educational risk due to physical ability, specific learning needs, social and cultural alienation or geographic isolation

4.3 Participate in, expand and support more inter-agency initiatives to identify and support students at risk, especially those in the Health, Justice and Family and Children's Services portfolios

4.4 Utilise the resources of the School of Isolated and Distance Education to provide further support to students at risk in rural and remote areas

4.5 Implement local and regional programs with the aim of decreasing youth suicide rates

4.6 Incorporate more intensive student-at-risk teaching and support strategies into pre and in-service training of staff

4.7 Implement a larger variety of culturally relevant teaching and assessment methods for Aboriginal students

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE HAVE ARRIVED?

4.a. Improved participation, retention and achievement are demonstrable for students who were at educational risk due to:
* Physical ability
* Learning needs
* Social and cultural alienation
* Geographic isolation

4.b Improved education and training outcomes, participation and retention rates have been achieved for Aboriginal students

2000 - 2003

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Priority 5

To ensure that cultural diversity, including Aboriginal cultural perspectives, is recognised and supported by rural and remote education and training programs

HOW WILL WE GET THERE?

5.1 Expand and improve cross cultural awareness training for education and training staff

5.2 Expand and improve cultural studies within the education and training curriculum

5.3 Recruit greater numbers of education staff from diverse cultural backgrounds

5.4 Continue to implement more culturally appropriate teaching methods, learning materials and assessment and reporting practices

5.5 Improve education staff access to literacy training, including training to teach students who have English as a second language

5.6 Better familiarise students from diverse cultures with the structures and processes of local education and training decision-making forums and advisory groups

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE HAVE ARRIVED?

5.a. There is greater understanding, appreciation and respect for the diversity of cultures within Western Australia by rural and remote education staff and students

5.b. Increased achievement, participation and retention rates have been achieved for students from diverse cultural backgrounds

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Priority 6

To ensure continual enhancement of the value placed on rural and remote education and training by the Western Australian community

HOW WILL WE GET THERE?

6.1 Enter into more cooperative partnerships with local communities

6.2 Deliver a wider range of curriculum which takes account of local needs and environments

6.3 Further market and promote rural and remote education and training services

6.4 Facilitate greater community involvement in local decision making

6.5 Implement an expanded range of local monitoring and reporting systems that measure student achievement, participation and retention

6.6 Implement more local monitoring and reporting systems that measure:

- a range of customers' satisfaction eg students, teachers, parents, industry and general community; and
- learning outcomes

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE HAVE ARRIVED?

6.a. Fewer students leave rural and remote areas to gain access to broader subject choice

6.b. There is greater demand for education and training services in rural and remote areas

6.c. More cooperative partnerships exist between communities and education and training providers

6.d. There are improved information and communication services in rural and remote areas

6.e. More initiatives that support local education and training are originating from rural communities

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Priority 7

To ensure that all rural and remote education and training services are appropriately resourced

HOW WILL WE GET THERE?

7.1   Appropriately resource education and training in rural and remote areas by taking into account the local environment and student and community needs and priorities

7.2   Implement greater numbers of cooperative partnerships that maximise efficient use of resources and facilities

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE HAVE ARRIVED?

7.a.   Resourcing of rural and remote education is increasingly fair, reasonable and equitable

7.b.   Resources are allocated on the basis of needs to achieve fair, reasonable and equitable outcomes irrespective of where students live

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Alienation: a feeling of estrangement from, and/or hostility towards, school.

Cross-cultural awareness: having knowledge and understanding of the values, attitudes and beliefs of cultures other than your own, for example, the cultures of Indigenous Australians.

Curriculum: a statement of study expectations for a stated period of formal education. For example, a K-12 curriculum would state what is expected of teachers and students (see 'learning outcome') over all years of schooling from kindergarten through to year 12.

Developmental levels: a connected series of way points on a step-wise path to full acquisition of a skill or ability in an area of learning, for example reading.

Education staff: the entire complement of teaching and ancillary staff of a school, TAFE College or university.

Equitable: even-handed or fair.

Flexible delivery: a combination of alternative means of teaching a curriculum to students, often involving modern information and communications technologies.

Learning outcome: a concise statement of something a student is expected to know, value or be able to do as a result of schooling.

Participation (rate): the proportion of a total age cohort that is enrolled in an education program. For example, the proportion of all young people turning 17 enrolled in year 12.

Post-compulsory age: being older than the age until which you must, by law, remain enrolled in school, which is currently the end of the school year in which you turn 15 (normally the end of year 10).

Practicum: a period of supervised teaching practice (ranging from one or two weeks to a full school term) undertaken by student teacher in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award by a university of a degree or diploma in education.

Pre-compulsory age: being younger than the age at which you must, by law, be enrolled in school, which currently is 6 years.

Retention (rate): the proportion of full-time students of a given cohort who continued to a particular year/level of education. For example, the proportion of year 10s that continued to year 11.

Rural and remote: a general geographical reference to areas of Western Australia outside of Perth, including areas that are isolated and sparsely populated.

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Students (K-12): those enrolled (or eligible to be enrolled) in the total span of organised school education from kindergarten (K) through to Year 12.

Students at educational risk: Students deemed unlikely, for one or more of a range of reasons (such as health, isolation, cultural background), to achieve their educational potential, unless immediate intervention occurs.

Transition: a change from one phase of schooling or education to another (for example pre-school to primary; primary to secondary; secondary to university) or from one phase of life to another (for example, home to pre-school or school, or school to work).

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