



Australian Parents Council

Principles & Objectives

Living Document

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The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26)

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

The General Assembly of the United Nations proclaims the above as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measure, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 13)

Governments are required 'to have respect for the liberty of parents ... to choose for their children schools, other than those established by the public authorities, which conform to such minimum educational standards as may be laid down or approved by the State and to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.'



Mission Statement

The Australian Parents Council, the national federation of non-government school parents' organisations, seeks to promote choice and quality in schooling, the equitable distribution of government funds for schooling, and effective partnerships to maximise schooling outcomes.

Goals

- CHOICE** To promote choice in schooling and the recognition of parents as the primary educators of their children.
- QUALITY** To contribute to continuous improvement in the quality of education for all students in Australian schools.
- EQUITY** To achieve significant increases in government funds for education and schooling, and an equitable distribution of these funds for all students in Australian schools.
- VOICE** To enhance APC's role as the national federation of organisations representing parents of non-government school children, to develop and leverage critical external partnerships, and to work collaboratively to develop and strengthen affiliated bodies.

Key Principles

The work of the Australian Parents Council is underpinned by the following principles:

1. Parents are the primary educators of their children.
2. Parents have the right to choose the type of schooling that best suits their children.
3. Governments are obliged to support parents' capacity to exercise their right to choice of schooling.
4. All students have a right to access and receive a quality education to enable them to attain their potential.
5. All students have the right to an equitable share of government funding for their schooling.
6. The student, not the school, must be the focus for the allocation of government funds for schooling.
7. Effective partnerships are central to the success of schooling outcomes.
8. Active and empowered parent groups and parents can, and do, make a significant difference.

Note: In this document, the word 'parent' includes carers and legal guardians.



PRINCIPLE 1: Parents are the primary educators of their children

Objectives

- 1.1 To promote the role and responsibilities of parents as the first, foremost and continuing educators of their children, and the family as the first educative 'school' or 'community' to which children belong.
- 1.2 To actively support parents in their role as the educators of their children.



PRINCIPLE 2: Parents have the right to choose the type of schooling that best suits their children.

Objectives

- 2.1 To support parents' freedom of choice of school, whether government or non-government.
- 2.2 To support parents in the exercise of their right of choice of schooling for their children without undue financial or other penalty being imposed on them or their children by any government.
- 2.3 To encourage Federal and State/ Territory governments to support the basic principle that schooling policies and curriculum must meet every student's schooling requirements.
- 2.4 To encourage non-government schools to clearly define their ethos, special character and aims.
- 2.5 To promote awareness of the special character of non-government schools.
- 2.6 To encourage and support diversity in schooling.



PRINCIPLE 3: Governments are obliged to support parents' capacity to exercise their right of choice of schooling.

Objectives

- 3.1 To value and protect the autonomy and special character of each non-government school.
- 3.2 To oppose government interference with the autonomy of individuals and families where it unjustifiably limits or restricts decisions they should be free to make.
- 3.3 To oppose discrimination in the distribution of government funds available for schooling (refer also Principle 5).
- 3.4 To oppose policies that link education funding to unacceptable prescriptive requirements for non-government schools (refer also Principle 5).
- 3.5 To oppose policies that threaten a school's legitimate right to set its own education priorities.
- 3.6 To ensure that the actions, requirements and policies of governments in the planning and establishment of new schools and major expansions in existing schools do not unreasonably limit parents' capacity to exercise their right of choice of school.



PRINCIPLE 4: All students have a right to access and receive a quality education to enable them to attain their potential.

Objectives

- 4.1 To foster recognition of the needs of all children to quality education and schooling.
- 4.2 To promote awareness that each child has a range of similar schooling requirements whether they attend government or non-government schools.
- 4.3 To promote genuine needs policies that recognise many children have particular and additional requirements which may reduce their capacity to access a quality education and attain their potential if not adequately addressed.



PRINCIPLE 5: All students have the right to an equitable share of government funding for their schooling.

Objectives

- 5.1 To obtain a substantial increase in the percentage of Australia's GDP allocated by governments to schooling.
- 5.2 To oppose discrimination in the distribution of government funds available for schooling (refer also Principle 3).
- 5.3 To obtain substantial increases in the percentage of total schooling funds allocated by Governments in Australia to non-government school children.
- 5.4 To oppose policies that link education funding to unacceptably prescriptive requirements for non-government schools (refer also Principle 3).
- 5.5 To secure a Basic Funding Entitlement for recurrent schooling costs for all students in all non-government schools.
- 5.6 To secure additional funding beyond the Basic Funding Entitlement to effectively address student specific educational needs.
- 5.7 To ensure that any calculation used by governments to identify the cost of educating a student in a government school includes all the real cost components incurred by governments in educating students in those schools (refer also Principle 6).
- 5.8 To ensure that mechanisms used by the Federal government to calculate and distribute recurrent per capita funding are sufficiently flexible to enable the diversity of student needs across Australia to be identified and met.
- 5.9 To encourage Federal and State/ Territory governments to assume responsibility to provide adequate levels of financial support for the development and maintenance of capital infrastructure in the non-government school sector.
- 5.10 To promote open, transparent reporting and communication of the total quantum of funding allocations (Federal and State/ Territory) to students in government and non-government schools.



PRINCIPLE 6: The student, not the school, must be the focus for the allocation of government funds for schooling.

Objectives

- 6.1 To require governments to provide complete and accurate information on the real costs of schooling children in government schools (refer also Principle 5)
- 6.2 To reject policies in respect of the calculation and allocation of funding for non-government school students which are based on ranking of perceived needs of school communities.
- 6.3 To reject calculation and allocation of funding for non-government school students based on any categorisation of school-based education resources or similar formula.
- 6.4 To require that mechanisms used to identify and fund educational needs are related to individual student requirements and will ensure maximum educational opportunity.
- 6.5 To promote the awareness that additional schooling requirements are related to the individual and should be funded accordingly.



PRINCIPLE 7: Effective partnerships are central to the success of schooling outcomes.

Objectives

- 7.1 To be an effective national voice for parents on federal matters relating to schooling and, most particularly, for those who choose to educate their children in non-government schools.
- 7.2 To foster the establishment of structures and climates that will encourage all parents to fully participate in their school communities.
- 7.3 To provide research leadership in the areas of parental engagement and partnerships in schooling.
- 7.4 To heighten the awareness of school authorities, administrators and teachers to the needs of school communities, their obligation to be open to dialogue with these communities and the benefits that derive from effective dialogue and partnership.
- 7.5 To promote the findings of Australian and international research that partnerships between families and schools can:
 - Improve educational outcomes for students
 - Contribute to the building of social capital in the community
 - Positively alter school culture
 - Stimulate self growth among parents and
 - Enhance the professional rewards for Principals and school staff.
- 7.6 To actively encourage governments and school/ education systems to develop, implement, sustain and promote effective family – school partnership models.
- 7.7 To work with parents, Principals, teachers, school administrators and school authorities towards:
 - The improvement of two-way communication between schools and parents in order to achieve mutual understanding and respect, develop creative and sustainable partnerships and maximise schooling outcomes for students
 - The provision of mechanisms that encourage and enable a diverse range of parents to be actively involved in policy formation, curriculum development and implementation, and other key initiatives within schools and schooling systems.
- 7.8 To advocate for family-school partnerships as an integral element of pre- and in-service education and training for teachers and school leaders.
- 7.9 To ensure that adequate funding is provided by Federal and State/ Territory governments to train and develop in parents, teachers and school administrators those skills and attitudes that support parent engagement and the development of creative and sustainable partnerships.



7.10 To promote understanding that effective schools are developed and administered primarily at the local level where they are able to identify and respond to their community's particular circumstances.



PRINCIPLE 8: Active and empowered parent groups and parents can, and do, make a significant difference.

Objectives

- 8.1 To encourage parents to participate to the greatest possible extent in their chosen schools.
- 8.2 To encourage and otherwise offer assistance to affiliated and like-minded State/ Territory level non-government parent organisations to grow, innovate and effectively represent non-government school parent organisations in their State/ Territory.
- 8.3 To promote collaboration between affiliate organisations to form unified positions on issues of common interest wherever possible.
- 8.4 To promote collaboration between affiliate organisations and like-minded parent organisations to accurately discern, voice and represent the diverse perspectives of parents who choose to educate their children in non-government schools.
- 8.5 To maintain productive networks and relationships with targeted stakeholders in school and other education settings.
- 8.6 To cooperatively develop and deliver innovative research and projects.



Communication Objectives

[under development]

1. To influence governments and politicians on matters of principle outlined in APC's Principles & Objectives document.
2. To monitor and respond to those aspects of government policy that stand in contradiction to APC's principles and objectives.
3. To ensure the parent voice and parent perspectives are heard and positively influence policy development, implementation and review.
4. To use the media for the promotion of APC's goals, key principles and objectives, and to monitor and respond to media comment that contradicts, unjustifiably dismisses or ignores these.
5. To conduct and communicate research.
6. To develop respectful and productive relationships/ linkages with other national representation organisations (e.g. ACSSO, NCEC, ISCA and ICPA).

Governance Objectives

[under development]

1. To apply good governance and due diligence in the pursuit of APC's mission, goals and key principles.
2. To have an appropriate governance structure.
3. To develop and maintain internal relationships and processes that effectively facilitate communication within, and commitment to, APC.
4. To develop and implement high level strategic plans that reflect APC's goals and principles and are sharply focused on expansion and sustainability.
5. To consistently base the development of policy positions, media statements, briefing papers, working papers and other public documents on APC's principles and objectives.