

About ICSEA

The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) was created by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) specifically to enable meaningful comparisons of National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) achievement by students in schools across Australia.

Research shows that key factors of students' family backgrounds have an influence on their educational outcomes at school. ICSEA provides a scale that numerically represents the magnitude of this influence or level of educational advantage.

This index enables *My School* users to gain an understanding of the levels of educational advantage or disadvantage that students bring to their academic studies based on these factors. A value on the index corresponds to the average level of educational advantage of the school's student population.

Schools with similar ICSEA values are schools whose NAPLAN results are influenced by similar levels of educational advantage or disadvantage.

An ICSEA value is not a rating of the school institution—of its staff performance, quality of teaching programs or nature of facilities. ICSEA is not a measure of student academic performance. ICSEA does not measure school wealth.

The ICSEA calculation

The development of ICSEA involved collecting student family background data from schools and identifying, through the use of statistical

models, the combination of variables that have the strongest association with student performance in the NAPLAN tests.

The variables that make up an ICSEA value use family background information provided to schools directly by families, including parental occupation, and the school education and non-school education levels they achieved. In some cases, where this information is not available, ICSEA uses Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data on family background to determine a set of average family characteristics for the districts where students live.

The ICSEA variables also include three school characteristics: whether a school is in a metropolitan, regional or remote area; the proportion of Indigenous students; and the proportion of students with language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE). The measure of student LBOTE contributes to the calculation of an ICSEA value only when it is combined with the measure of parental school education level of Year 9 or below.

Use of ICSEA on My School

A school's ICSEA value is used to select a group of up to 60 schools serving students from statistically similar backgrounds. These schools can be located across Australia but, based on ICSEA, their students have similar levels of educational advantage. The similar schools graph provides an opportunity to compare the results of this group of schools and to identify high performing schools, or to see where a school may seek to improve.

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An average NAPLAN result is calculated for schools serving students from statistically similar backgrounds for comparison with the selected school's own NAPLAN results. This is done independently of selecting the similar schools group. This comparison can be found in all presentations of NAPLAN results on *My School*.

On the *School Profile* page, a table presented alongside the school ICSEA value shows the distribution of students in a school across four quarters representing a scale of relative disadvantage ("bottom quarter") through to relative advantage ("top quarter"). This gives contextual information about the socio-educational composition of the school's student community.

Reliability of ICSEA values

The ICSEA methodology has been refined by an expert panel that includes eminent academics external to ACARA. The panel supervised extensive statistical modelling to correlate family background data with NAPLAN data for hundreds of thousands of students.

ICSEA values for all schools have been checked with State and Territory governments, Catholic education commissions, and independent schools and their associations. ACARA worked closely with jurisdictions to review ICSEA calculations where data was not adequate or extraordinary circumstance meant the data did not properly reflect the background of students at an individual school. A secure web-portal was set up to enable school principals to see their old and new values and to request a review, accompanied by supporting data.

More information on ICSEA

ICSEA should be interpreted with the assistance of the *Guide to Understanding ICSEA*, the *2010 ICSEA Generation Report* and relevant FAQs available on the *My School* website.