**Term 1 End of term update**

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands, seas, skies and waterways across Queensland. I extend my respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

It has been a fantastic start to 2024 in Queensland state schools.

Our work to implement the *Equity and Excellence* strategy continues to gain momentum this term and we are seeing genuine signs of its positive impact.

The Queensland State School’s 2023 report identified record improvements.

There has been an increase in the number of Year 12 students achieving a QCE or a QCIA. That’s up to 98.7 per cent: our best result since 2008.

There has been an increase in the number of First Nations students achieving certification at the end of their studies to over 96 per cent.

Attendance rates have increased to over 87 per cent, reversing what has been a national trend across Australia.

And, our A-E report card data is now showing two consecutive years of across-the-board improvement, and some very positive signs of closing the gap in achievement for our First Nations learners.

I am really proud of the progress we have made and this reflects system-wide effort from all of our staff. Everyone in our system can, and does, make a difference. We have an authentic focus on learning from both our successes and the things that challenge us. I really believe we have a growing culture of sustainable improvement.

This term we rolled out the Queensland Reading Commitment, which puts the focus on consistent, evidence-informed reading pedagogy in our classrooms.

Our Twilight Reading Sessions for parents and caregivers have received overwhelming support from parents.

As a system we recognise and value the central role that parents and caregivers have in the learning of their children, and we are excited to share the evidence-based way we teach reading in our schools with the wider community.

This is just one of the many ways our profession makes a difference beyond the school gates.

For a whole term now, our students’ phones have been away for the day. I know schools are already seeing the benefits in student engagement. Principals from across the state are saying students have overwhelmingly responded positively, with more playing sports and games, or simply socialising and talking together during breaktimes.

We continue to work extensively with schools to empower young people to make healthy choices and prevent them from using vapes and e-cigarettes. The ‘Vaping and e-cigarette education and intervention for schools’ page on OnePortal outlines a wide range of specific teaching and learning resources for school staff. This includes access to the ‘Blurred Minds Academy” program and the revised years 7-12 Alcohol and other drugs education program which is due for release later this year. I’m delighted to see a downward trend in vaping related offences reflected in our student disciplinary data.

As I meet with educators and supporting professionals around the state, I hear of the successes in schools and across the system.

I also hear about where we can improve and I’ve been thrilled to see our regions and central office teams adapt to a more responsive mode of service delivery and support.

During Term 2, Associate Director-General Sharon Schimming and I will host an *Equity and Excellence* roadshow with events in every region across the state.

I’m excited to once again be meeting with system leaders and principals so we can report back on our response to previous feedback, and plan our next steps together.

We are committed to using co-design as a central part of how we implement initiatives under the *Equity and Excellence strategy.*

In May, we will mark Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month. Schools play an important role in supporting students to develop the skills they need to form healthy and safe relationships. The Respect program is a suite of high-quality teaching and learning materials, aligned to the Australian curriculum, and designed to support the delivery of respectful relationships and consent education from Prep to Year 12. Every school also has access to a Regional Principal Advisor and in Term 2 will receive an allocation of Teacher Relief Scheme funding, specifically for releasing staff to attend professional development.

I encourage all of you to visit the [Respectful Relationships Education PD Hub](https://det-school.eq.edu.au/respect-pd) for more information.

Finally, I’d like to recognise our staff who worked hard to ensure our schools were safe and operational after the severe weather events at the beginning of the year. I’d like to particularly acknowledge principals who took in students and teachers from other schools that are still under repair – it truly demonstrates our commitment to guarantee every student has access to a classroom and an education.

Thank you for all your hard work throughout Term 1. If you’re having time off over the school holiday period, I hope you have a great break and come back refreshed for the new term.