

Labor's Seven Point Plan for

Teaching Quality

South
Australian
Labor





Acknowledgment of country.

We acknowledge and respect the Traditional Custodians whose ancestral lands we live and work upon and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge and respect their deep spiritual connection and the relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to Country. We also pay our respects to the cultural authority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their nations in South Australia, as well as those across Australia.

Foreword

There is no greater influence on how well our young people learn, once they are inside the school gate, than the quality of the teaching they receive. We must make the most of every learning experience children have, and support teachers to be the best they can be. Teachers, student support officers and principals do an incredible job every day, and governments and the central department should support them to do just that. Schools are where the children are and that means educators deserve the resources they need, the respect they deserve and the autonomy that makes schools flourish as places where children learn.

Labor's approach to education starts from respect for educators, and recognition that lifting teaching quality means working with teachers and principals and respecting their professionalism.

A Malinauskas Labor government will reform the teacher placement process, respecting existing rights and commitments, to reshape it to better serve schools, students and teachers. Three crucial elements are: streamlining the performance management process for teachers while giving greater authority for principals and their selection panels to appoint teachers, increasing the percentage of permanent teachers, and reforming the country incentive scheme so people can choose to stay in the country longer and still receive the benefit. Labor in government will also create a workforce plan to have specialist teachers teaching specialist subjects: the educator teaching mathematics should be a specialised mathematics teacher.

A Malinauskas Labor government will extend the quality and diversity of people choosing to train as teachers by increasing the entry score required to get into a teaching course and offering scholarships to school graduates with high ATAR scores, women to be science and mathematics teachers, men to go into primary teaching and Aboriginal school graduates to become teachers.

Labor will clean up financial literacy education by banning banks going into schools to establish early relationships with future customers through school banking programs and offering a quality financial literacy curriculum instead.

Labor will ban mobile phones in the classroom, other than for agreed positive uses such as for medical issues, communication with parents and learning uses as defined by teachers. There is too much distraction caused by phones being easily accessible, and our young people need to opportunity to learn that sometimes the best management of technology is to turn it off for a while. Classrooms need to be about learning above all, and Labor will give control back to the teachers and students working together.



Peter Malinauskas MP
SA Labor Leader



01

Principals empowered to lead

Principals are better placed to know the skills and experience their school community needs than the education bureaucracy, and should be given more authority in making appointments and more support in managing performance. Labor will ensure principals and their leadership group are empowered to take a greater role in decisions regarding who is on their staff. When vacancies come up, the department will no longer be able to simply place teachers who are not the right fit for that school. There will be a selection process and the opportunity for principals to shape their team.

A Malinauskas Labor Government will work with principals, teachers and the teachers' union to build a recruitment and placement system that works first and foremost for children and their education.

The small number of poor-performing teachers in any school system have a disproportionately negative effect on their students, while high-performing teachers have been demonstrated to make a significant difference to the life-long outcomes of their students.¹ Firing teachers isn't needed often, but when it is, it must be able to happen in a way that is fair to the teacher and fair for the students. Most teachers in our schools are fantastic, but we have to be clear that when teachers are not performing, it is not good enough to move them around, or sit by while they don't give their best to their students.

Labor will empower the school leadership by speeding up the process to remove poor performing teachers from the classroom which will enable principals to get on with running their schools.

The process now is too slow; and speeding it up will lift the quality of teaching in the classroom. It can take an entire school year to address poor performance, and that is unacceptable. It's classroom time students cannot get back and we cannot sit by and let issues of underperformance drag on unresolved.

It is unfair on the students and unfair on teachers who can find their careers are transformed with the right support at the right time.

Too slow: the current process

- ▶ The first step with an underperforming teacher is the performance improvement process which is initiated by the principal with the support of the Department.
- ▶ The process has no firm timeline but would usually take 3 months or more.
- ▶ If the performance improvement process is not successful, the principal with the support of the Department can initiate a formal unsatisfactory performance process.
- ▶ The formal unsatisfactory process again has no firm timeline and could take up to 5 months to conclude.
- ▶ If the unsatisfactory performance process is unsuccessful, the principal, with department support, can refer the matter to the Chief Executive for a decision. Legal advice from the Crown Solicitor will often be sought as to whether there is sufficient evidence to support termination or another sanction.
- ▶ Teachers will often remain in the classroom for most of this process.
- ▶ After receiving representations from the employee or their representative the Chief Executive will make a final decision. Depending on the representations, the Chief Executive may seek further advice from the Crown Solicitor.
- ▶ This can take the cumulative process to 10 months - almost an entire school year.

1. [w19424.pdf \(nber.org\)](#) and [Ending Tenure to More Easily Fire Bad Teachers Helps Everyone - NYTimes.com](#)



02

Increase teacher permanency

Too many teachers, particularly younger teachers, are not able to get on with building families and setting up home because they cannot get permanency. Labor believes teachers with a strong commitment to their students should be shown the same commitment by the government.

Increasing the percentage of permanent teachers will contribute to the reform of the teacher placement system to give greater certainty to teachers.

A Malinauskas Labor Government will increase the percentage of permanent teachers by at least 10%

The new process

- ▶ Principal identifies poor performing teacher.
- ▶ Principal initiates a six week intensive support program with external support provided by the Department.
- ▶ If that process is unsuccessful in turning around the teacher's performance they are removed from the classroom at the end of the six-week period.
- ▶ The matter is sent to the Chief Executive of the Department who has four weeks to produce a brief of evidence and make a decision about whether to dismiss the teacher.
- ▶ The matter must be dealt with inside a school term (10 weeks) rather than 10 months.

03

Improve teaching in the country

Every school is important and every school deserves great teaching. Currently teachers choosing to go to the country have an additional allowance only for the first few years, and many teachers leave at the end of that allowance period to go back to the city. This is not fair for teachers who want to stay on, and drives more churn in the system. Making the allowance ongoing will contribute to the reform of the teacher placement process which puts children at the centre of school decisions.

A Malinauskas Labor Government will make the country loading ongoing for teachers going to work in regional schools.



04

Specialist subjects taught by specialist teachers

Too often students are being taught by a teacher who hasn't trained in that subject. This must end. Mathematics should be taught by people qualified in mathematics; this is the same for language, English and arts teachers.

A Malinauskas Labor Government will create a workforce plan that places teachers in subjects they are qualified to teach and creates incentives for teachers to gain qualifications in specialist subjects.

05

Training high calibre teachers

Teaching is a highly respected profession around the world, and we need to make sure that talented people from diverse backgrounds consider it as an option.

Labor will offer scholarships to help with the costs of starting a teaching degree to the following categories of people enrolling in initial teacher training at South Australian universities:

- ▶ High-ATAR school leavers to study teaching.
- ▶ Men to study primary school teaching.
- ▶ Aboriginal people to study teaching
- ▶ Women to study teaching STEM subjects

This is Labor's commitment to a diverse and strong teaching cohort in South Australia in action.

A Malinauskas Labor government will offer 400 university scholarships over four years at \$5,000 each to strengthen and diversify the teaching profession in South Australia.

To ensure teaching is not seen as an undesirable option for high performing school graduates, the minimum entry score needs to reflect the challenge of the qualification, and the value of the degree.

A Malinauskas Labor Government will work with the universities to set the minimum ATAR for teaching degrees at 70.



06

Financial literacy

Schools have become all too often a place where banks connect with children through school banking programs and create life-long customers. That is not what schools should be used for, and it is not the best way to teach financial literacy and savvy consumer choices.

A Malinauskas Labor government will prohibit private financial institutions providing a School Banking Program or financial literacy education in public schools.

Financial literacy should be taught free of branding and bias from banks. It should include:

- ▶ understanding money and budgeting
- ▶ making sound financial decisions
- ▶ identifying financial scams
- ▶ calculating interest and tax
- ▶ understanding consumer rights.

A Malinauskas Labor Government will task the Department for Education with creating new financial literacy teaching and learning resources in consultation with financial experts.

07

Ban mobile phones in schools to make sure learning and active play are given priority

In our busy times we know how easy it is to constantly pick up phones for work and for entertainment. Children need the opportunity to learn when it is not necessary to have mobile phones constantly at hand, to open up room for play and for learning.

The Marshall Liberal government only partially followed Labor's commitment, as under the Liberals mobile phones will only be limited in primary schools.

Knowing how teenagers can be distracted by mobile phones, and how easily they can be used for cyber-bullying, Labor remains committed to a ban across all year levels.

Given mobile phones can be necessary for parental contact, monitoring health issues and for access to learning materials, Labor believes that sensible exemptions will allow for those circumstances. The overriding message to young people needs to be, however, that a few hours without phones allows for other kinds of interactions and learning.

