

About ICSEA

The best way to compare the academic performance of schools is to locate groups of schools with students who had similar abilities when they started school. Unfortunately, no measures of starting abilities are currently available nationally. Instead, research has been undertaken to develop a set of alternative measures that are highly correlated with student performance.

The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is a special measure that enables meaningful and fair comparisons to be made across schools. It has been developed specifically for the *My School* website for the purpose of identifying schools serving similar student populations. It measures key factors that correlate with educational outcomes, as indicated by the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), unlike more general measures of socio-economic status.

ICSEA uses Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and school data to create an index that best predicts performance on NAPLAN tests. The variables that make up ICSEA include socio-economic characteristics of the small areas where students live (in this case an ABS census collection district), as well as whether a school is in a regional or remote area, and the proportion of Indigenous students enrolled at the school. More specific information about the calculation of the ICSEA is available in the ICSEA Technical Paper on the *My School* website (www.myschool.edu.au).

Statistically similar schools

The ICSEA value determines which schools are listed as statistically similar on the *My School* website. Up to 60 statistically similar schools are grouped here. On the website the school you select appears at the top of the list of statistically similar schools, and other schools appear beneath in alphabetical order.

Statistically similar schools generally have a number of factors in common such as the social and economic background of the students, whether the school is remote, the proportion of Indigenous students, or

a combination of these factors. Statistically similar schools are not necessarily located close to each other or cover the same age group of students. Not every school will have 60 statistically similar schools in their group.

What about schools that serve specific student groups and students outside their local area?

ICSEA values are calculated for schools irrespective of the proximity of students' homes to the school, so schools which draw students from a wide geographic area will still have an ICSEA value. Some schools, however, will not have an ICSEA value because of the nature of their student population. An example could be a school for children with intellectual disabilities.

To ensure that the *My School* website makes fair comparisons between schools, the ICSEA values for all schools have been checked with State and Territory governments, Catholic education commissions, and independent schools and their associations. On the basis of this feedback, ICSEA values were revised for situations in which schools had a student population with social and economic characteristics that were not well reflected in ABS census collection district data.

What information will be compared?

Comparisons are made between the average NAPLAN scores achieved by students at the school being viewed and the average for the group of schools to which it is statistically similar. Colour coding is used to indicate the differences which are notably higher or lower.