

Fails reflect school status

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SCHOOLS in Melbourne's western and northern suburbs have a higher rate of repeating students than those schools in the eastern and bayside suburbs.

Figures obtained by the Sunday Herald Sun under Freedom of Information laws reveal disadvantage in schools in the city's north and west.

And schools in country areas such as Gippsland, Stawell, Geelong and Colac are also keeping more students back on average each year.

Last year, 5626 government school students repeated a year.

Almost 60 per cent of them were boys.

Prep, with 1348 pupils, and year 11, with 915 students, produced the most students repeating.

The Grampians region fared worst -- 1.3 per cent of students staying back. In Hume, which includes Broadmeadows, 1.17 per cent repeated. In northern suburbs the figure was 1.1 per cent and in the west it was 1.05 per cent.

In eastern suburbs, 0.9 per cent of students repeated a year, while the figure was 0.96 in the bayside suburbs.

Principals assert the results show schools in so-called working class suburbs are overlooked by the Government.

Victorian Association of State School Principals president Brian Burgess said schools in lower socio-economic areas needed more funding.

Victorian Principals Association president Gabrielle Leigh said students in such suburbs were more likely to be migrants whose parents did not speak English at home.

Those students needed an extra year, particularly at prep, to adjust to school life.

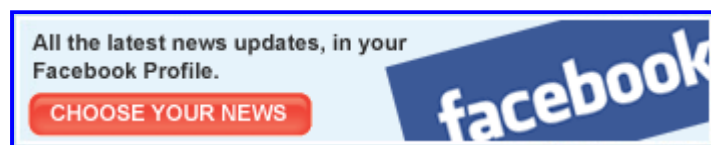
Opposition spokesman Martin Dixon said "from day one struggling schools are behind the average".

Mary Bluett, Victorian branch president of the Australian Education Union, said students in the west and north were less likely to have gone to kindergarten.

Education Department spokeswoman Jane Metlikovec said the state and federal governments had allocated \$275.3 million to improve student outcomes in low socio-economic status school communities in this month's Budget.

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