



INTERESTED: Yahan Wang is studying specialist mathematics this year.

Picture: CAMPBELL BRODIE

Number crunch falls short of mark

LAUREN NOVAK

A **TARGET** to lift the proportion of Year 12 students taking maths, physics or chemistry by 15 per cent by next year is "unlikely" to be met.

The latest progress report for the State Strategic Plan shows the number of students achieving a Tertiary Entrance Ranking in those subjects has fallen from 39 per cent in 2003 to 37 per cent last year.

While 2009 figures are not yet available, a 2008 review of the plan says it is "unlikely" the target of 45 per cent will be reached. Opposition education

spokesman David Pisoni said the figures showed "we're still not engaging kids in maths and science".

"Under the previous Liberal government, up to 44 per cent of students were studying at least one of the subjects," he said.

"If South Australia is going to reap the benefits from our emerging 'smart' industries of defence and mining, then as many students as possible need to be encouraged to study the subjects needed for careers in those industries."

SACE Board of SA chief executive Paul Kilvert said 2009 figures would not be available

until after student results were released later this year.

This morning, 1369 students will sit the specialist mathematics exam and 1153 will sit the mathematical methods exam.

International student Yahan Wang, who studied specialist mathematics this year, hopes to become a maths teacher or an engineer.

The 19-year-old, from the northeast Chinese province of Liaoning, has been a student at Charles Campbell College for two years.

"Both specialist maths and physics have helped to improve my reading skills," he said.