Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System

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Chapter 2: Improving student outcomes – including for students most at risk of falling behind
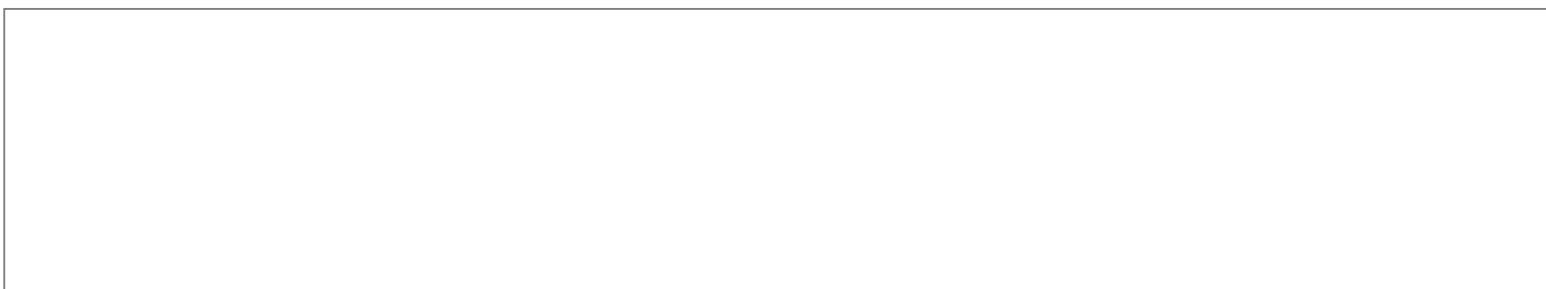
Q1. 1. What are the most important student outcomes for Australian school students that should be measured in the next NSRA? Should these go beyond academic performance (for example, attendance and engagement)?

While academic performance in literacy and numeracy is essential, it is not the panacea. A more holistic approach to student outcomes is crucial to support the overall development and success of young people in school and beyond. Over 40 years, strong, positive links between students' increased self-efficacy (belief in your capacity to achieve or perform), grit (perseverance), hope, agency, and choice versus life and academic outcomes have continued to emerge. Supported by seminal and ongoing research on self-determination, hope, motivation, and self-efficacy: * Individuals' beliefs in their abilities affects performance. * Higher self-efficacy is linked to improved academic achievement and life outcomes * Grit scale scores can better predict school completion than standardised testing * Hope is associated with higher levels of attendance, achievement, and engagement * Choice and agency improve motivation, performance, and satisfaction Therefore, focusing on students' outcomes in the following areas can provide a more holistic view to track and support students' overall growth and successes: Self-efficacy Hope Motivation to learn Engagement in learning Attendance

Q2. 2. What are the evidence-based practices that teachers, schools, systems and sectors can put in place to improve student outcomes, particularly for those most at risk of falling behind? Are different approaches required for different at-risk cohorts?

Evidence-based initiatives like high-impact teaching strategies, leadership development, and Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) benefit all students, especially disadvantaged or at-risk ones. However, for effective implementation, evidence-based coaching and mentoring are vital for all of these initiatives. Three key practices are leadership coaching and mentoring, student coaching and mentoring, and instructional coaching. Leadership coaching enhances middle and senior leaders' skills, enabling them to lead with vision and adaptability using research-backed methodologies like the GROWTH Framework. Student coaching, especially for at-risk students, yields promising results in improving learning, engagement, self-efficacy, hope, and agency. Personalized support from quality coaches boosts students' motivation and perseverance. Instructional coaching drives collaboration between teachers using an evidence-based cycle, such as The Impact Cycle, to improve teaching, learning, and engagement, resulting in enhanced student achievement - regardless of setting or background.

Q3. 3. How can all students at risk of falling behind be identified early on to enable swift learning interventions?

Q4. 4. Should the next NSRA add additional priority equity cohorts? For example, should it add children and young people living in out-of-home care and students who speak English as an additional language or dialect? What are the risks and benefits of identifying additional cohorts?

Incorporating children in out-of-home care and students with English as an additional language or dialect in the national school review is crucial. By focusing on equity, providing targeted support, using data for decision-making, and improving policies, the education system can move towards a more inclusive and effective learning environment. While being cautious about potential risks, the review should strive to achieve positive outcomes for all students. Identifying additional priority equity cohorts in the national school review underscores the commitment to address the specific needs of marginalized students, fostering equity in education. This recognition enables the design of targeted support programs and interventions, catering to the diverse educational needs of these cohorts. By collecting and analyzing data related to these students, the review gains valuable insights, informing evidence-based decisions and strategies to enhance their outcomes. Moreover, including these equity cohorts aids policymakers in identifying gaps in current policies, and driving improvements to create a more inclusive and responsive education system for all students.

Q5. 5. What should the specific targets in the next NSRA be? Should the targets be different for primary and secondary schools? If so, how? What changes are required to current measurement frameworks, and what new measures might be required?

Q6. 6. How can the targets in the next NSRA be structured to ensure evidence-based approaches underpin a nationally coherent reform agenda while allowing jurisdictions and schools the flexibility to respond to individual student circumstances and needs?

Academic and wellbeing targets in a national school review should be structured in a way that emphasizes evidence-based approaches and supports local jurisdictions and schools in achieving the desired outcomes. Recognize that different students and schools have unique needs and challenges. Develop a tiered system of targets that considers the diverse range of students and schools. For example, schools in disadvantaged areas may have different targets compared to schools in affluent regions. By differentiating targets, the reform agenda remains coherent at the national level while accommodating local variations. Provide schools and jurisdictions with the autonomy to develop strategies and interventions that are best suited to their particular context. While adhering to the evidence-based framework, schools should have the freedom to adopt approaches that align with their student's needs, cultural backgrounds, and community expectations. Offer ongoing support and capacity-building initiatives to schools and jurisdictions to help them meet targets effectively. High-quality coaching and mentoring can further individual and system-wide knowledge, capacity, and skills.

Q7. 7. How should progress towards any new targets in the next NSRA be reported on?

Establish the use of a robust, but simple system of monitoring, evaluation, and feedback to track and report on the progress towards the targets. Make the results of the national school review publicly available and recognise "Bright Spots" of successes across a range of socio-economic settings. Building up the collective belief in the teaching profession is critical. It enables parents, communities, the media, and policymakers to better understand the performance of schools and the education system as a whole.. Reporting on the new targets should be transparent and comprehensive. The reporting should not solely focus on quantitative outcomes but also consider qualitative aspects and the context in which schools operate. The reports should include both academic and wellbeing metrics to present a holistic view of student development.

Q55.
Chapter 3: Improving student mental health and wellbeing

Q8. 8. What does it look like when a school is supporting student mental health and wellbeing effectively? What is needed from school, systems, government and the community to deliver this?

A consistent, inclusive whole school approach based on evidence and research. This should be strengths-informed, with social and emotional learning prioritised for the wellbeing of students, and those who support them. What is needed to deliver this: * Explicilty integrating personal and social capabilities in all learning areas * Whole school curriculum plans placing personal and social capabilities as drivers of all wellbeing and learning * School-wide systems to create a safe and psychological safe environvment * Connecting and prioritising wellbeing to scmission, ethos and strategic plans. * Creating connected communities within schools to build positive relationships that ensure students feel connected to their peers, school and whole school community. * Ensuring basic student wellbeing needs can be met with internal resources such as counselling, a wellbeing coordinator, or team and peer support. * Engaging students in learning and development through a variety of experiences that include academic, creative, individual and teamwork. * School Wellbeing Teams made up of teachers, leaders, counsellors, allied health and students * Strong community partnerships

Q9. 9. What evidence-based wellbeing approaches currently being implemented by schools and communities should be considered as part of a national reform agenda?

A Positive Education curriculum that is underpinned by the PERMAH framework and includes a multitude of evidence-based interventions that are developmental. Social and Emotional learning curricula that are holistic and linked to learning and development. Flipping curriculum to view and value these are at the core of all learning experiences, sequences, units, and lessons. Promoting and integrating key wellbeing theories into whole school learning and wellbeing models, such as Self Determination, Hope Theory, Growth Mindset, Flow, Strengths-based interventions, and Grit. Coaching: teaching the skills and practice of coaching to staff and students that are underpinned by solution-focused thinking and goal-oriented approaches. Aligning it to National Students Wellbeing Programs in different states and territories.

Q10. 10. Should a wellbeing target be included in the next NSRA? Could this use existing data collections, or is additional data required?

Identifying specific measurements or targets for every school or system can and will be complex. Factoring in ever-changing student cohorts, affected by varying factors, including once-in-a-lifetime events, can have widespread effects on current and future students. As a result, an approach that focuses on longitudinal or trend data could assist schools, systems, and sectors in understanding the needs, changes, and growth in students' wellbeing. Importantly, identifying and knowing these trends could then drive the coaching and development of leaders and teachers. Helping leaders and teachers better understand the needs of their community, and what evidence already suggests could support them, can help them turn research and evidence into effective actions in their community. Alongside current data collection on student connection, belonging, and safety, reliable and valid assessments on self-efficacy, grit, hope, and engagement are being used in schools and systems within Australia, the UK, and the United States. The critical next step is for system leaders to intentionally collaborate, consult and support groups of teachers, leaders, wellbeing leaders to develop this space

Q11. 11. Would there be benefit in surveying students to help understand student perceptions of safety and belonging at school, subjective state of wellbeing, school climate and classroom disruption? Would there be value in incorporating this into existing National Assessment Program surveys such as NAPLAN?

Q12. 12. To what extent do school leaders and teachers have the skills and training to support students struggling with mental health?

13. 13. What can be done to establish stronger partnerships between schools, Local Health Networks and Primary Health Networks?

Empowering leaders at all levels to undertake the range of conversations that occur within their roles in increasingly complex education communities. This includes across agencies, as exemplified in the Networked Specialist Centre role and a case management approach to student support and wellbeing. In-school offices for these agencies have been beneficial in bringing services to vulnerable families. The need to expand the skills of leaders, counselors, and administrators to take a holistic, solutions-focused approach when interacting with families and providers is met by improving the quality of conversations. To do this involves professional learning in collective efficacy, leadership development, and customer service to strengthen a school's culture. Centering this training around coaching and mentoring ensures a solutions-focused approach, rather than being problem-centric which impacts positively on the wellbeing of staff who support these complex conversations and resultant decisions. Developing leaders' ways of being to be open, curious, and solutions-focused can support them to better respond to complex and emergent problems and partnership opportunities.

Q19. 14. What can be done to ensure schools can easily refer students to services outside the school gate that they need to support their wellbeing? How can this be done without adding to teacher and leader workload?

Q56.
Chapter 4: Our current and future teachers

Q20. 15. What change(s) would attract more students into the teaching profession?

Public perceptions (including those of politicians) of teachers and teaching need to be addressed proactively. However, a positive 'spin' to counteract the perennial negative commentary is not sufficient. Teacher pay, conditions, and developmental pathways need to compare much more favorably with other professions. This is about raising the perceived and actual esteem of the teaching profession.

Q32. 16. What change(s) would support teachers to remain in the profession?

There is an critical needs to address the day-to-day workload of teachers. 'Removal of admin' is often cited as an aspiration here but we need to be clear about what 'admin' means. This does not mean lesson planning, professional collaboration, assessment and professional learning. Time is the most precious commodity in education and schools need to be staffed at levels that allow teachers to engage with all of these vital activities in addition to their classroom teaching load. The work is complex and demanding and needs more sufficient non-contact time. Career-long entitlement to personalised professional learning. A commitment to ongoing professional learning is a key characteristic of being a professional. However, the reality at the moment is that the very thing that can sustain a vital profession is squeezed out. Further, when professional learning is dictated in a top-down 'one size fits all' way, we see professionals withdraw, passively comply or resist. Personalised professional learning pathways can be facilitated by the provision of high-quality coaches and mentors with increased time allowances to work one on one with leaders and teachers.

Q31. 17. What change(s) would support qualified teachers to return to the profession?

Adding on to what has been outlined in Questions 15 and 16, the ability to have prior experience and qualifications recognised by teacher registration bodies and employers would make the transition more appealing and financially viable. On-the-job support for transition back into the profession would undoubtedly help. The allocation of a coach/mentor in the first year of returning to the profession would provide support for the inevitable adjustments required in terms of professional update as well as supporting the wellbeing of the returnees.

Q30. 18. What additional reforms are needed to ensure that the schools most in need can support and retain highly effective teachers?

There is an under-utilised resource in 'experienced' teachers who are often reluctant to apply for formal leadership roles. There is a need to leverage the skills, strengths, and interests of long-serving teachers in within-school mentoring of newly appointed teachers, providing specific professional learning in mentoring and coaching to further build their capacity. Ensure leadership development includes but is not limited to instructional coaching and pedagogical practice, including taking a coaching approach to the range of conversations that occur in schools and redirecting the problem-based thinking that is endemic in helping professions to new levels of efficacy through solutions-focused decision-making. Recent movements to provide more coaches and mentors for staff at all levels have seen significant movement in the leadership of schools. With teacher-leaders operating as mentors of staff in a variety of schools, these leaders are engaged in delivering student-centered change and development. These leaders also need formal training in mentoring, individual and team coaching, and dialogic approaches to pedagogical improvement.

Q29. 19. What can be done to attract a diverse group of people into the teaching profession to ensure it looks like the broader community?

Q28. 20. What can be done to attract more First Nations teachers? What can be done to improve the retention of First Nations teachers?

Q26. 21. What reforms could enable the existing teacher workforce to be deployed more effectively?

Q25. 22. How can teacher career pathways, such as master teachers and instructional specialists, be improved to attract and retain teachers? How should this interact with the Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher (HALT) certification and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers?

These career pathways can be highly attractive and would appear to have the potential to make a positive difference to both those pursuing this additional status and the peers with whom they work. Sadly, such structures appears to falter on a number of critical factors: The rhetoric of 'the brightest and best' and recognising excellence can create unhelpful status differences within schools. Instead, consider a career pathway that opens up new ways of working with peers and contributing to the ongoing development of the profession. The scope for these positions to have a sustainable impact in their school settings depends on how staff funding and deployment - the development, allocation and role description of those following these pathways could be better articulated and more consistently funded. Done well, these are effectively in-house professional developers and peer leaders. Finally, expertise is necessary but not sufficient to be an effective leader in the professional learning of teachers. Often, pedagogical knowledge and expertise are privileged over relationship-building and communication skills. These skills can be developed through coaching and mentoring training.

Q24. 23. Are there examples of resources, such as curriculum materials, being used to improve teacher workload or streamline their administrative tasks?

Q23. 24. How should digital technology be used to support education delivery, reduce teacher workload and improve teacher effectiveness? What examples are you aware of?

Q22. 25. Are there benefits for the teaching profession in moving to a national registration system? If so, what are they?

Q57.
Chapter 5: Collecting data to inform decision-making and boost student outcomes

Q27. 26. What data are of most value to you and how accessible are these for you?

Q35. 27. Is there any data that are not currently collected and reported on that is vital to understanding education in Australia? Why is this data important?

Q34. 28. Should data measurement and reporting on outcomes of students with disability be a priority under the next NSRA? If so, how can this data be most efficiently collected?

Q33. 29. Is there a need to establish a report which tracks progress on the targets and reforms in the next NSRA? Should it report at a jurisdictional and a national level? What should be included in the report?

Q32. 30. Is there data collected by schools, systems, sectors or jurisdictions that could be made more available to inform policy design and implementation? What systems would be necessary to enable these data are made available safely and efficiently?

Q31. 31. The Productivity Commission and Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) have identified the need for longitudinal data to identify the actual students at risk of falling behind based on their performance (and not on equity groups alone) and to monitor these students' progress over time. Should this be the key data reform for the next NSRA?

Q30. 32. Should an independent body be responsible for collecting and holding data? What rules should be in place to govern the sharing of data through this body?

Q29. 33. Is there data being collected that is no longer required?

Q28. 34. How could the national Unique Student Identifier (USI) support improved outcomes for students?

Q58.
Chapter 6: Funding transparency and accountability

Q36. 35. Are there other objectives for funding accountability and transparency we have missed?

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Q39. 36. How can governments make better use of the information already collected and/or published to achieve the objectives?

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Q38. 37. What other funding accountability and transparency information regarding schools (both your school and the education system more generally) would be useful?

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Q37. 38. What are the priority gaps in the current funding transparency and accountability arrangements from your perspective?

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Q59. Do you have any additional comments? (2,000 characters)

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute our voice, experience, and perspectives as an organisation of teachers and educational leaders.

Q52. If you have more information you would like to share with the Expert Panel, please send a written response as a .docx or RTF format to NSRA.submissions@education.gov.au. An additional PDF version may also be submitted. Please make sure to note that your email is to be considered alongside your current submission.

If you have any questions about your submission or the submissions process more broadly, please contact NSRA.submissions@education.gov.au