

Q44.

Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System

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Q54.

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)?

From a primary school perspective, children want to feel included, they want the learning to be meaningful and they want to feel safe. There are many measures regarding learning outcomes however measuring school safety and measuring social wellbeing are two areas I propose would be worthy of consideration. In terms of safety I would include safety from the built and natural environment as well as the the digital and spiritual domains. I would also include student and parent behaviour in this definition of safety. Whilst I believe attendance is also important (and already easily measured) I am not sure that the setting of targets will do much to change this from the school's perspective. Promoting school attendance through the media may help. Limiting the number of days which schools can approve would assist, as some families choose to maximise their non-attendance in primary school to the detriment of the early acquisition of vital skills. A possible disincentive to travel during school term would be the repayment of State and Commonwealth grant money by the family for any non-urgent overseas travel beyond one week.

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?

Class size is continually dismissed as not having sufficient "weight" when it comes to effect size however it does have an effect, especially when it comes to flexible grouping in a primary school. Class sizes of 30 or more no longer meet the requirements of an advanced educational system, particularly not in primary schools. The teacher to student ratio in primary schools needs to be addressed urgently. Parents also need to understand how much work (other than face-to-face teaching their teachers actually do. On average teachers need to plan (and mark student work) for around 20 hours per week. The rate of syllabus change and the increasing accountability are not only adding to their workload, they are burning teachers out in the early years of their careers.

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

I believe this starts in the Early Learning area. Early identification and intervention works. It is clearly evident when neither of these have occurred by the time primary school starts and by then we are playing catch up. There are sufficient mechanisms in schools to identify students early on. Two things we need are an increase in specialist teachers to address specific learning needs and less paperwork. Currently the administration and accountability for the expenditure of the funds consumes much of that very funding.

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?

Yes, but not if it makes an additional burden on schools to collect data.

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?

We will have a continuing issue in Australia for as long as states and territories fund their schools differently and set their own targets and set their own syllabii.

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?

The data collected by NAPLAN is helpful to schools, teachers and parents. Unfortunately it is being increasingly used to measure school performance. This has changed the focus for many schools from individual performance to cohort-based performance. Whatever targets are set, both levels of government must ensure adequate funding is assigned to these priorities.

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

In a way which celebrates the efforts of teachers, administrators and school communities generally.

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?

Staffing. Case conferences in a primary school setting generally occur after hours as it is not feasible to release classroom practitioners. This adds stress. Done well, a multi-disciplinary approach, in my view, is optimum, where a counsellor, other specialist services, along with key school personnel (including leadership) work together to provide wrap-around support and connection to local services.

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

School counselling services in primary schools. At present this is an incredibly under-staffed area which adds enormous value to student wellbeing and engagement.

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

Data collection would assist however I feel this would be somewhat unreliable. Collecting statistics on the level of school counselling available would be a good first step.

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?

There is some value in this however I would urge caution. Given the subjective nature of this collection, the risk of collusion (thus exacerbating the data at either end) is high. Parent perception also has an influence on a student's perception of school, especially in the loater years of primary school. Some sectors already collect this data however it is both anonymous and in my opinion, somewhat unreliable.

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

Whilst forma qualifications in this area amongst teachers and leaders is scarce, teachers and leaders are already very active in this space. Improved training would be beneficial.

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

Local Area Health should be reaching out to all schools in their area. Police LGA's should also be doing the same. Unfortunately there are some communication issues where some agencies send only to State-funded institutions and do not follow up to find out if non-government schools have been receiving the same advice. Health and Police should connect with every school in their district and ensure there is effective communication.

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?

Increased School Counselling services.

Q56.

Chapter 4: Our current and future teachers

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

A significant change to teachers' workloads. In the primary school this is becoming the number one issue when trying to attract staff. The challenge we then face is from parent expectations that 'teachers are always on class'. We can't have both. Consideration given to teachers and school leaders being classed as "frontline workers". Disability and Aged Care workers care for people over extended periods of time. Few other professions do like-wise. R E S P E C T.

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

Increased remuneration at critical points, eg: five years, ten years, twenty years.

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

A significant change to teacher workloads.

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

Consider incentives for teachers who choose these schools.

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?

Conduct research to find out why graduates do not choose teaching. What are the perceptions/misperceptions? These are the things that then need to be addressed.

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

Scholarships, sponsorships and remuneration. Additionally I think this question is best put before an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.

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

Reduce class sizes in primary schools. Look at ways of utilising AI to create programs of work which include assessments, rubrics and resources to ensure teachers can focus more effectively on teaching.

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?

I believe the current system is adequate. I also believe that some research should be undertaken to ensure that the number of primary teachers is equivalent to the number of secondary teachers achieving these higher standards. At the end of the day these roles are leadership roles and whilst we might assume those in other leadership positions are somehow "not highly accomplished or lead" it is important that all school leadership is adequately recognised and rewarded.

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

In primary schools these resources are few and far between. Resources that align with the syllabus AND respond to the needs of students are out there and are already being used however system leaders tend to frown upon these as being too generic.

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?

I am mindful that in the early years of primary schooling technology can be seen as a second instructor. I would urge caution in these foundational years, preferring to see technology as an aid to teaching. In upper primary there are many ways to use technology to enhance teacher effectiveness. Digital portfolios, online goal setting, online adaptive diagnostic tests are but a few examples.

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

Yes, however I feel the benefits outweigh the risks.

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?

I use a diagnostic testing schedule which gives a regular snapshot of comparable data as a starting point. In addition to this a range of informal assessments, combined with teacher judgement helps sharpen the focus on each child. NAPLAN growth data is useful however on its own, is limited in its usefulness.

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?

Class sizes (which I imagine is available through the Census). This is a variable which may impact outcomes.

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?

No. Not because such data is not useful however I cannot see any way of doing this which would not cause an extra impost on schools. There is a wealth of data already available through the NCCD.

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?

Yes, however I would urge such a report to focus on how effective the staes and territories have been rather than looking to blame schools or teachers. I believe it should be national.

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?

No.

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?

Yes.

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?

No. I say this because, despite promises about data not being available to the media, it inevitably does. Teacher-bashing, school bashing and even principal bashing needs to stop and realistic conversations about the vast array of reasons why particular students or cohorts do not perform as some of their peers can be had.

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

Unsure

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

Possibly

Q58.
Chapter 6: Funding transparency and accountability

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

A national conversation about education is needed. For many education is seen as an expenditure item rather than being viewed as an investment. If we can turn this view around we will then start with outcomes in mind and then develop the costings to achieve this second. As a percentage of GDP we underspend on education, seeking savings wherever possible.

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

Visit schools.

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

It is important to my community to understand that both levels of government combine to give me less funding than the equivalent state school down the road. Systemic non-government schools save the government a lot of money. Some sectors in the political landscape seek to obliterate the non-government school sector. The cost of this would be astronomical.

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

The ICSEA scale is unhelpful. All schools need teachers and support staff. Giving school less in the hope this may address inequity is not working. Fund school adequately first.

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

For too long we have viewed schools as an expenditure item. We have lived with a funding model based on the Industrial Revolution where teacher ratios are based on a model of care rather than education. A first-class education system will only develop when the nation sees high value in educational outcomes. The rich know this and pay for it themselves (which is a source of inequity in itself). Why can't disadvantaged communities access the same opportunities to high class facilities, teachers and learning experiences as every other student in the nation. We need to name what it is we really want from our schools and then ask about how we pay for it. We were promised an Education Revolution under a previous government however nothing revolutionary happened.

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.

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