

Q44.

Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System

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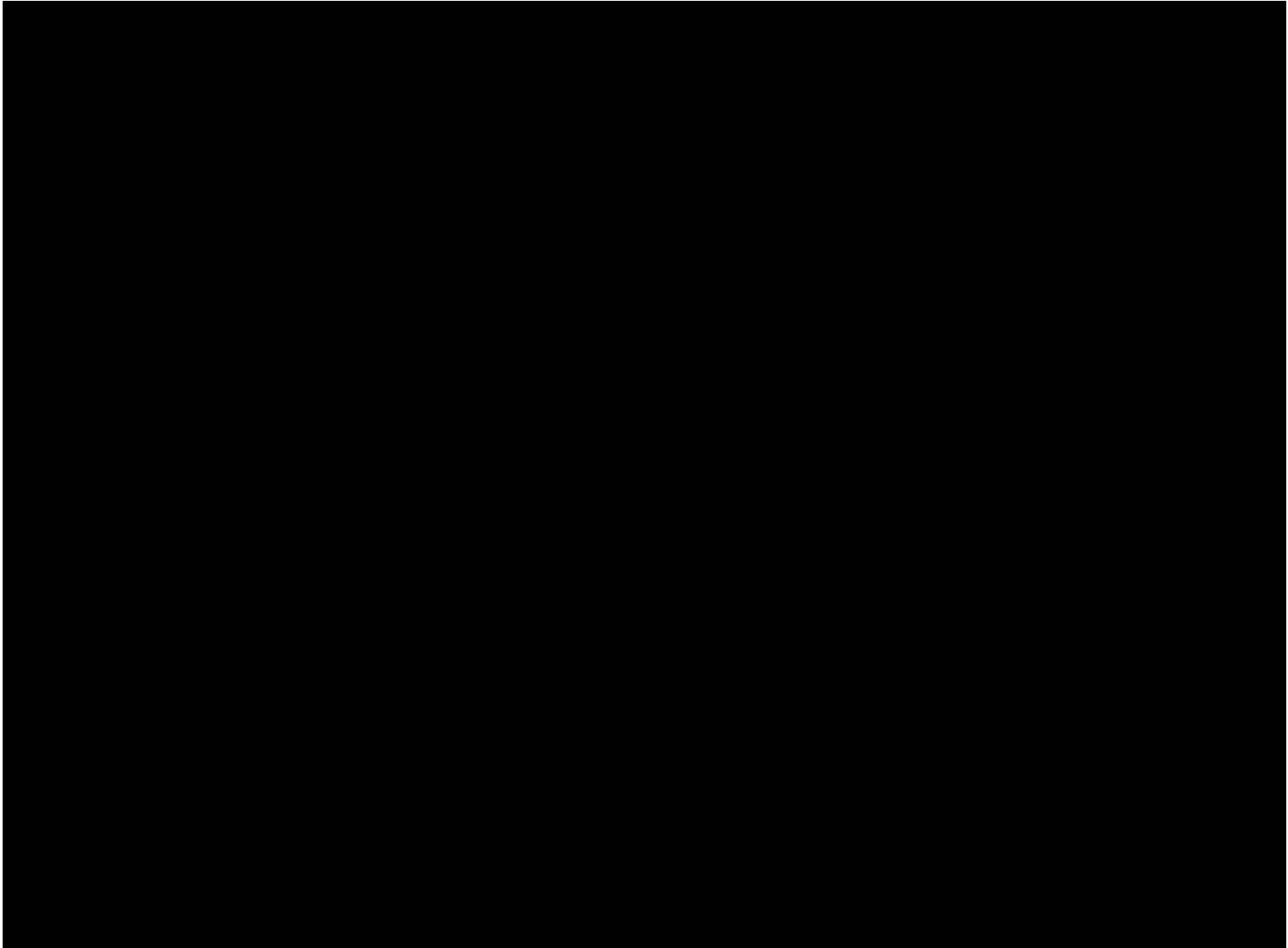
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Q54.

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)?

Yes, outcomes should go beyond academic performance. Outcomes should include student wellbeing, attitudes towards learning, and engagement. A love of learning can be fostered in all students - even those who are not innately 'academic'.

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?

Different approaches are required depending on the 'at-risk' cohort. The needs of each group (and student) are very different, and outcomes need to be flexible and responsive to the individual. Evidence shows us that a heavy academic focus in early childhood is not best practice - see Finland, much lauded for their educational approach; Waldorf Steiner education, etc - and that highly structured classroom learning can create negative school associations in students already at risk.

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

From my perspective, there is a high rate of identification of students requiring learning intervention and additional support, but very few structures/not enough funding to actually provide those students with the support they require. Students are identified through teacher observations (social, physical, emotional etc) and ongoing formal/informal testing, and those students are then submitted for review. Too much is put back on the teacher in terms of 'quality differentiated teaching practice', which can only do so much in a classroom environment - a student steadily behind is not getting the additional support they need, due to lack of public funding (and extensive waiting lists of up to years) or the family not being able to afford expensive private avenues.

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?

It would be beneficial to draw attention to additional equity cohorts, including those in out-of-home care. English as an additional language/dialect would be beneficial to acknowledge - when their English learning began (eg. did they begin school with little to no English?) and if the families are able to communicate with teachers and the school community.

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?

Wellbeing should be a priority target, as it underpins all other learning. Primary schooling targets could pertain to student wellbeing (social/emotional), access to curriculum (attendance, school type and location, additional supports) and engagement. High school could continue to follow through on wellbeing and engagement, with a focus on building personal agency and ability.

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?

Personally, I was not aware of the previous NRSAs despite being a teacher when it was assembled. A set of clear priorities that can be implemented across different curriculums would provide flexibility on a site- and student-based level. eg. Student focus: wellbeing and engagement in learning, student happiness; teacher focus: ability to deliver curriculum in fulfilling ways that are not needlessly hampered by top down directives that don't impact students' day to day learning.

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

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?

Student mental health is best supported when the school puts the learner at the centre of its planning and decision-making. As a mainstream teacher who recently moved into Steiner education (at a public site), Steiner education values each child for their unique set of abilities and circumstances, with the goal of helping each child realise their individual potential. This means diverse opportunities for students - those who may struggle with academia are given regular, intentional opportunities in the classroom to explore music, art, movement, and practical skills. Each are valued as being integral to developing well rounded learners.

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

Wellbeing approaches that focus on building connections between students and teachers are incredibly effective. The Berry Street model is popular and gives teachers permission to dedicate time to interpersonal connection between students, prioritising wellbeing, checking in with engagement and emotions throughout the day etc. These overlap with the principles of Steiner education in many ways, and the Berry Street model is implemented in main stream and Steiner schools across SA.

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

Wellbeing should be a priority target! It should be considered first above all else - how can students achieve when they are struggling to be present, to feel a part of their learning, to be a part of a community? There are some current data collections but not for all year levels. Additional data would likely be required, and would need to be simplified for early years.

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?

Yes. I am aware of a 'Wellbeing & Engagement Collection survey' for years 4 up in SA, and have read over the questions (while not having to distribute it myself). There have been issues raised with the types of questions asked/how they are phrased and the intention behind them. A more general, age-appropriate survey or other data collection method (presumably engaging child psychologists/educational experts to devise) would be beneficial. I do not think NAPLAN would benefit from having a wellbeing component, considering the divisive nature of NAPLAN testing generally.

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

This varies person by person. Mental health is a diverse category - a teacher may have some experience supporting students with trauma (trauma informed practice) but may not have experience supporting students who are living in out-of-home care or where the child is in a caretaker role. It is a huge ask of teachers to be experts on supporting specific student mental health concerns without support. I have worked with an incredibly knowledgeable inclusion coordinator at a site, and she was an exceptional resource for questions pertaining to student wellbeing, mental health, disability etc - as that was her expertise. Every school should have someone with that level of knowledge they can go to to discuss individual students.

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

From my perspective, there is very little partnership between schools and health networks. When referring parents to seek support, teachers are only able to draw on the information they know (which is generally learned through experience, not explicitly taught) - so if I am asking a parent to seek an expert opinion, I may not have the correct language or understanding of how they actually obtain that help. (eg. A student is developmentally struggling in many realms and needs assessment, the parent asks what they need to ask for specifically - do they need a reference for an educational assessment? Do they have to go through a GP or call a practice directly? I do not always have the answers for these questions). It would be amazing if there was a clear pathway for what teachers should do to recommend students to outside care - obviously not diagnosing, but some sort of flowchart that explains for teachers so teachers can explain to parents!

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?

A clear flowchart of observed concerns and what to recommend next (without the teacher diagnosing, obviously). Eg. Long processing time when looking at/copying information from the board, squinting, difficulty engaging with books from back of the room -> ask parents if they have had an eye test in the last ?? years -> ask parents for a GP referral -> GP refers on to specialist

Q56.

Chapter 4: Our current and future teachers

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

This is a challenging question, as I never wanted to be a teacher until partway through a creative degree at University. I saw teaching as a way to combine things I love - storytelling, music, drama, creativity - and to inspire a passion and excitement for life in young learners. Mainstream teaching is increasingly restrictive and increasingly prescriptive, which has stripped a lot of the joy and creativity of the field. If it was seen as a creative profession again, perhaps students would be interested in it.

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

A cap on external initiatives introduced from 'higher up' that don't directly benefit students. Bringing a level of trust back to teaching that empowers teachers to create exciting, engaging learning activities that relate to their classes - not teaching from a prewritten script from people who have never seen your site or students. A focus on core values and principles of teaching - why are we here? What is our job? Is it

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

Drastically reducing the new expectations around excessive testing (that does not directly support the teacher in their work with students), more professional/creative freedom, a reevaluating of what our priorities are as educators - we see what works in other countries and work hard to NOT emulate it. Why?

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

Lots of additional support for teachers in challenging schools - big focus on staff wellbeing, consistent support for challenging behaviours etc Greater incentives for relocation etc. I can't speak much to this - I did not want to move away from family, and then I started my own family and wanted to move even less.

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?

Having a diverse range of schools in the community! Prioritising student wellbeing while they are in school - no matter the school - so that they are inspired to create supportive learning communities going forward. A clear stance on supporting diverse teachers - those with disability, different backgrounds, gender diversity etc.

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

I can't speak much to this. Positive school experiences (especially high school), making university an accessible option financially/based on location.

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?

Teachers in the field feel overworked and overburdened day to day, with many finding weekends and out of hours time filled with teaching work. Many do not feel they have the time to pursue further education, especially as they have families of their own.

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

I don't personally find prescriptive curriculum materials/units as improving workload - they need to be reworked to be suited to the class, elaborated on for depth, adapted generally etc. If anything, I find that approach just strips away the actual enjoyable part of teaching - being creative, coming up with delivery methods that are exciting and suited to the cohort.

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?

As a former mainstream teacher who has moved into Steiner education, digital technology is not used in my classroom at all outside of my laptop. It's worth considering how schools with these values (plus schools with limited/reduced access to technology etc) can also be supported.

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

I suppose teachers could move between states with greater ease - from the experience of peers, reregistering interstate can be a very long, confusing process.

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?

The data that's most valuable to me is what I gather informally day to day - the engagement level of students, their level of understanding throughout a lesson, their wellbeing (friendships/energy levels/food intake etc). Data collection often confirms what I already know about my students. I find reading level data most generally beneficial purely from an organisational standpoint (I know where to start with their readers).

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?

To my knowledge, there is no data that represents the creativity of students - problem-solving, artistic expression, etc. This may not seem important unless you value creativity as a key part personal development for students. Are they given opportunities to innovate?

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?

As someone with little to no experience with NRSA prior to this, something more publicly accessible and friendly would be welcomed.

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?

These questions feel beyond the scope of my abilities.

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?

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

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

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

A clearer breakdown of how funding is allocated for teachers to understand. A very clear explanation of funding at a Department level - how many students are in need of funding v what they actually receive? How many students are put forward for support v the amount allocated and so on

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

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

As someone who has worked across some diverse approaches to learning (International Baccalaureate, project-based learning, EYLF, Australian Curriculum, and now Steiner education) I find a diverse range of approaches to public student education is the most valuable way to ensure a high level of student engagement. All of these approaches have taken place in publicly-funded schools: they are not behind gilded gates that the majority of families cannot access. Since switching to a Steiner stream in a public school, I have felt the most fulfilled as a teacher since I began my career. I am able to engage my students with a curriculum that is responsive to their age and stage, that values diverse learning and is not overly dependent on unnecessary testing and data collection. I get to see my students thrive as they build a genuine love for and desire to learn. In early childhood, this was the standard not so long ago. Teachers need to be empowered to be creative and passionate forces who are not bogged down with external demands that do not actively support and benefit students in a clear way.

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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