

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)?

I think continuity of measurement is important. Literacy and numeracy should still be assessed. If moves are made to measure student attitudes, engagement or motivation, the measurement properties of the assessment instruments need to be rigorously evaluated. Even if instruments are used in international assessments (e.g. PISA) or in other countries, this doesn't necessarily mean that the psychometric properties of the instruments are sound. Poor measurement can lead to invalid inferences.

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?

I think its worth noting that 'improving student outcomes' is an extremely vague goal. Raising average achievement of all students, or groups of students, is different to reducing the variance in the distribution of achievement. For example, average achievement can be raised if high achieving students improve, but this may come at the expense of students at the lower end of the achievement distribution if resourcing is finite. On the other hand, average achievement might decline if all the resources are directed to at-risk students, without considering the needs of high-ability students - its possible that this phenomenon explains the overall decline in PISA. Similarly, average scores may increase overall, but if variance also increases then this might mean that interventions aren't effectively supporting students who perhaps need the most support. I think its dangerous to assume that schools, teachers and policymakers are at the point of understanding these problems.

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

I think this is a social policy question not simply an education question. Early childhood services and schools can't solve all the problems. Governments should stop putting responsibility for all these problems onto schools and teachers. A coordinated, appropriately-funded approach between social services, local communities and educational institutions would likely be the best option.

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?

What would the purpose of these identifying variables be if there is no plan to address the inequities in society that contribute to the disadvantage experienced by these groups?

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?

This is not possible. How can you have targets and flexibility simultaneously?

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?

High academic expectations also support students' wellbeing

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

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

No

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?

Of course, you can do this, but what will you do with the data? At the national level, if you find classroom climate is poor, or disruption is common, what do you do about it if states still manage education systems?

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

They do not have this training

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

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?

You need to allow different types of staff to be employed in schools. You can't load all of this responsibility onto teachers and principals. This will obviously cost more money in government schools because these schools educate the vast majority of disadvantaged students. If the federal government is not going to fund these kinds of innovations, then there's no point asking about them because states won't allocate the money.

Q56.

Chapter 4: Our current and future teachers

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

A reduction in the role expectations for teachers. That is, teachers should be content-area and pedagogical experts. They do not need to be mental health professionals, social workers, administrative officers, data analysis experts, etc etc. Stop publishing articles in newspapers that indicate that all teachers are terrible, that education in Australia is in terminal decline and that universities are not adequately training teachers. There is no empirical evidence that these things are true. Declining average scores in PISA tests are not a very robust way to evaluate an entire education system. Endless negative narratives about teachers and teaching drives people away.

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

A reduction in the role expectations for teachers. That is, teachers should be content-area and pedagogical experts. They do not need to be mental health professionals, social workers, administrative officers, data analysis experts, etc etc.

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

The accreditation system is the major barrier to qualified teachers returning to teach. Teacher accreditation has no demonstrable effects on student outcomes, increases teacher workload, and shuts qualified teachers out of the profession. Why would an experienced teacher working in another industry go through tens of hours of accreditation, only to be paid at a graduate level? They wouldn't. Which is why they don't return once they leave.

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

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?

What I said earlier about accreditation barriers.

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?

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?

Yes. Currently its very difficult for teachers to move interstate - the accreditation process is an enormous nuisance. How many teachers drop out of the profession because of this? I doubt anyone knows

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?

Are the Productivity Commission and AERO aware that these data are already available? The problem is that matched NAPLAN data (for example) belongs to the states, not to ACARA. Of course AERO does already know this, they just elected to not believe me when I suggested it to [REDACTED]. If AERO had committed some of their considerable staffing allocation to working productively with the states and territories, they could by now have all the matched NAPLAN data for all the cohorts in all of Australia. The next problem is: what do you do with matched data once you have it? I don't think that problem has been carefully thought through as yet.

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?

I thought an independent body was responsible - ACARA? The problem is, again, that the data matching has not been set up adequately.

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?

Obviously matching students data across time would be useful. However, the data that is already matched has not yet been adequately explored. Setting up a system doesn't necessarily mean anything useful will come of it.

Q58.
Chapter 6: Funding transparency and accountability

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

Make independent schools report the amount of federal government funding they receive each year relative to the proportions of students in each ICSEA quartile.

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

There is so much data already available. Governments need to stop employing bureaucrats with minimal quantitative data analysis knowledge and skills to do data analysis. The wheel is being endlessly reinvented because the people in the agencies don't have the capability or knowledge to know what has already been done and what innovative approaches need to be applied to uncover new understandings of students' attainment and progress. There is no point collecting new data on all sorts of different things if you don't have a plan to train people adequately to analyse the data. The lack of depth in Australia's national 'research' organisation is really notable in comparison with, for example, the US. This won't be fixed if you don't partner with experts in universities.

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

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

There is some really good advice on how school funding models can be reformed in the book *Waiting for Gonski*, (Greenwell & Bonnor, 2022). I doubt any government will have the wherewithal to alter funding arrangements. Therefore educational inequities will continue, and student achievement will not improve. You can fuss all you like about teacher knowledge and pedagogy, but this by itself won't improve excellence and equity.

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

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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