

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)?

We should be assessing the POTENTIAL of Australian school students. At the present time, most of the assessment and data collection has a focus on ACHIEVEMENT or PERFORMANCE. If we are to realise the full potential of Australian school students, it is imperative that we assess their potential. In recognition of the fact that no assessment instrument is perfect, potential should be assessed in multiple different ways. Relatedly, we should be assessing the degree of underachievement of Australian school students. Underachievement may be defined as the difference between one's potential and actual performance. It may also be considered to be a measure of the degree to which a student is achieving to their potential. Underachievement may be assessed in a number of different ways (e.g., absolute split method, the nomination method, the regression method etc). My research has demonstrated the usefulness of the simple difference method to assess underachievement.

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?

We need to focus on the underachievement of Australian school students, and adopt strategies that address the underachievement of Australian school students. One key strategy, that aligns with one of the key recommendations of the Productivity Commission, is a need for lessons to be based on student progress rather than age. That is, the use of untimed syllabi to address the needs of lower achieving students, and to extend the capacity of higher achieving students. Many students are underachieving due to a curriculum that is inappropriately pitched (i.e., too fast or too slow). As students at risk come from ALL backgrounds, we need to be making assessments of, and addressing the, possible underachievement of, ALL students. It is inappropriate to be only targeting of specific sub-groups of students.

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

We need to be making assessments of BOTH potential and achievement of ALL students EARLY. This will allow us to identify students who demonstrate underachievement (i.e., the difference between potential and achievement) among the entire student body. Early identification of underachievement is imperative, as underachievement in the early years of schooling is likely to be less substantial and more reversible than underachievement in the later years of schooling.

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?

The target group of concern should be ALL underachieving students. These exist in all sub-groups of the Australian student population. Designating certain equity groups for greater focus and attention risks neglecting underachieving students in the non-selected equity categories.

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?

Some specific targets should be: 1. The assessment of the potential and the underachievement of ALL Australian students. 2. The setting of targets relating to the reduction of the level of underachievement of ALL Australian students, once the precise level of underachievement is ascertained from Target 1. There is no reason why these targets should be different for different levels of schooling. To achieve this, we need to move beyond assessing student achievement. Some measures to assess potential include IQ tests, above level tests (i.e., achievement tests designed for older students), nonverbal ability tests (e.g., Ravens Progressive Matrices and the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test) that contain no language elements, and teacher nominations. A recent study that I completed demonstrated the value of the simple difference method in assessing underachievement.

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?

A focus on underachievement is an evidence-based approach that may simultaneously underpin a national reform agenda, but by its very nature, also responds to individual student circumstances and needs.

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

A annual or a biannual report of progress of outcomes

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 positive atmosphere and culture at the school is achieved. For this to be delivered, there is a need for: 1. Regular assessment of student well-being 2. Staff training on student well-being 3. Recruitment of staff with expertise in well-being (e.g., psychologists, counsellors) 4. Support for staff well-being

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?

Well-being targets should be included in the next NSRA. Additional data is required. This data may come from a student survey on well being (which should be pilot tested for validity and reliability, and relevant to the Australian context). Such a survey should include assessments of the sense of belonging, happiness, safety, and support of students, in addition to the assessments that are traditionally made (e.g, anxiety, stress, depression etc.).

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

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

School leaders and teachers have minimal skills and training to support students struggling with mental health. As such, there is a need for current teachers to gain access to professional development in supporting the mental health of students, and for pre-service teachers to get training on supporting the mental health of students in their university programs.

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

Health professionals may be given formal part-time appointments at individual schools or groups of schools.

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 guiding reference document should be created.

Q56.

Chapter 4: Our current and future teachers

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

Incentives not offered by other professions (e.g, flexible working arrangements, regular sabbaticals, foreign exchange programs, plentiful scholarships)
Better marketing of the profession as one that is valuable, satisfying, and worthwhile
Greater remuneration
Better working conditions
Higher status as a profession

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

Incentives not offered by other professions (e.g, flexible working arrangements, regular sabbaticals, foreign exchange programs, plentiful scholarships)
Better marketing of the profession as one that is valuable, satisfying, and worthwhile Greater remuneration Better working conditions Higher status as a profession

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

Incentives not offered by other professions (e.g, flexible working arrangements, regular sabbaticals, foreign exchange programs, plentiful scholarships)
Better marketing of the profession as one that is valuable, satisfying, and worthwhile Greater remuneration Better working conditions Higher status as a profession

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

1. The identification of incentives not offered by other professions (e.g, flexible working arrangements, regular sabbaticals, foreign exchange programs, plentiful scholarships) 2. Protection of the working hours of 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?

1. The promotion of teachers from diverse backgrounds into leadership positions 2. The targeting of teachers from diverse backgrounds in recruitment programs 3. Mentorship programs with mentors from diverse backgrounds

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

1. The promotion of teachers from First Nations backgrounds into leadership positions 2. The targeting of teachers from First Nations backgrounds in recruitment programs 3. Mentorship programs with mentors from First Nations backgrounds

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?

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 consider data on student potential, student achievement, and student underachievement to be most important. Of these data, only student achievement data is readily accessible.

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?

We should be assessing the POTENTIAL of Australian school students. At the present time, most of the assessment and data collection has a focus on ACHIEVEMENT or PERFORMANCE. If we are to realise the full potential of Australian school students, it is imperative that we assess their potential. In recognition of the fact that no assessment instrument is perfect, potential should be assessed in multiple different ways. Relatedly, we should be assessing the degree of underachievement of Australian school students. Underachievement may be defined as the difference between one's potential and actual performance. It may also be considered to be a measure of the degree to which a student is achieving to their potential. Underachievement may be assessed in a number of different ways (e.g., absolute split method, the nomination method, the regression method etc). My research has demonstrated the usefulness of the simple difference method to assess underachievement.

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?

Yes

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?

There is a need to establish a report which tracks progress on the targets and reforms in the next NSRA. Such a report should report at both a jurisdictional and a national level. The report should include details on the potential of all Australian students, and the degree of underachievement of all Australian students.

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?

Most certainly. But additionally, there is a need for the longitudinal collection of data on student potential and student underachievement. Longitudinal data collection is important to track student progress over time. The underachievement of students will vary over time.

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?

Yes

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?

The USI may make it easier to track/maintain a wide range of data relating to individual students

Q58.
Chapter 6: Funding transparency and accountability

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?

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)

I would like to reiterate the importance of collecting data on student potential and student underachievement, to allow our education system to support students to fully realise their potential.

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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