

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)?

Important student outcomes should go beyond academic performance at school and tap into the student experience of learning: - Student engagement in learning - Sense of belonging - Agency - Inclusion - Independent learning skills - Transitions(to life after school) There are 42+ Big Picture Learning schools around Australia in urban, regional, rural and remote indigenous locations that actively support these outcomes. These are largely government secondary schools which either have adapted the whole school to the Big Picture learning design or run a Big Picture Academy alongside their mainstream school.

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?

Personalised learning (cost neutral) - students learning through their interests and developing Personal Learning Plans - keeping learning communities small, where each student feels 'known' - student choice and agency in what and how they learn and with whom - assessment via exhibition that recognises strength and broader capacities, rather than standardised testing that identifies limits Leaving to learn - students weekly doing internships from age 14 with expert mentors in the community - testing out interests - opportunity to learn through doing or to apply knowledge to practice - access to new skills and technologies - interacting with adults and building 'social capital' Teachers as generalist 'advisors' who remain consistently with a group of learners over time, rather than subject specialists who teach 300+ students a fortnight and have little time for relationships Building the positive and supportive culture of small learning communities - inclusion, respect, diversity for all in the group - wellbeing, belonging, strong relationships between students, peers and adults Family involvement twice a term - at Learning Plan meetings & exhibitions.

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

In smaller, personalised learning communities, such as 'advisories' of 17 students in the Big Picture Learning Design all students are known well by at least one adult, and their strengths and challenges are apparent. Organising school around the personal interests and needs of students (rather than of the subjects, timetables, classrooms) allows students at risk to work at their own pace, to work on things of relevance to them, and to achieve success (data exists) in terms of performance and engagement and attainment. Big Picture Learning schools represent an important equity initiative to a large proportion of students: from indigenous backgrounds (2022 7.6% of Yr 12 and 10.2% of Yr 11 students) with disability, with mental health issues; and communities with ICSEAs below 1000. (Out of 42 schools nationally, 29 have ICSEAs ranging from 579-997.) BPL has a high retention rate for seniors and has developed a new credential (the International Big Picture Learning Credential) warranted by the University of Melbourne which facilitates students from a range of disadvantaged backgrounds successfully transitioning to work, training or university via a non-ATAR pathway.

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 more productive to look at changing the way schooling is organised, rather than adding further categories of equity cohorts. Learning that is personalised and flexible enough to cater to the the diverse needs of all students will be more powerful than a one-size-fits-all system with adjustments for some. Big Picture Learning has evidence to support this argument. Our design supports all learners, from all sorts of communities from disadvantaged to privileged. This is not a special education program, it's a design for all. See our 2021 study into the BPL Design and students with disability here: <https://www.bigpicture.org.au/how-well-are-we-going>

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?

Targets for secondary students should involve flexibility within structures that afford students choice, independence and real-world experiences while still at school: - improved retention rates for years 11 and 12 - 100% students with a Personal Learning Plan - high levels of intrinsic motivation and agency in student learning - regular experience of learning and working in the world outside school - all students leave school with a network of mentors who can assist them post-school - opportunities for all to gain external qualifications while still at school (Cert III, for example) - successful transitions to employment, training or further study after school - assessment via portfolio and exhibition for all students Currently the reliance on aggregated attendance targets tell us little about student engagement or success. Attendance rates that don't take into account significant 'lift' by students who would otherwise no longer be attending school, or which do not compare current to past attendance rates by students cannot provide nuanced insights. BPL counts learning that does not occur in school (on-country, external courses) attendance data doesn't capture this.

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 Big Picture Learning Design is an innovative approach to working with some of our most disadvantaged schools in the country. It is a proven design (both in Australia and internationally) that is backed by numerous research projects about the benefits for students and longitudinal studies of the trajectories of its graduates. <https://www.bigpicture.org.au/research-projects> In Big Picture schools: - Attendance rates are up - Suspensions and negative incidents are down - Literacy and numeracy capacities of students are up With its new International Big Picture Learning Credential: - Students from key equity cohorts are successfully gaining entry to university and thriving - Students with disability are successfully transitioning to work, training and further study - 17+ universities around Australia have partnered with BPLA to accept its credential. The design is scalable across the country. Big Picture schools have been operating in Australia since 2007. The design contains strong structures and processes for personalised learning, but also sufficient flexibility for every school to implement it in ways that best suit its learning community and context.

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?

When a school is supporting student mental health and wellbeing effectively, measures to support these are not seen as an add-on, but an intrinsic part of the way schooling is organised. Reducing the amount of 'churn' in a day between classrooms, subjects, teachers and encounters with large numbers of other students can greatly reduce the anxiety experienced by many young people. Learning in homeroom groups can alleviate the stress experienced by many young people. Assessing students via exhibition on the basis of what they can show, do or know (their strengths), instead of via exams, reduces the often harmful pressure experienced by many students. Exhibitions allow students to present and explain their learning in-depth to an audience, to receive feedback, to deal with questions and to feel a sense of pride and accomplishment. Seeing the student as a whole person, not a name on a roll-call list. Wellbeing programs alone do not improve learning.

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

In the Big Picture design for learning, students learn in small communities of 17 - 20 (known as advisories) with a single teacher, in campuses or 'units' within a larger school no larger than 150 students. Belonging to a small community within a high school, with a consistent set of peers and teacher (much like in primary school) creates security, a sense of acceptance and belonging, and a set of positive relationships to sustain students at school while also alleviating anxiety-inducing issues associated with neuro-divergence, introversion, illness or bullying. Every student has ready and ongoing access to at least one adult who knows them well, and the opportunity to improve their social skills with their 17 peers. The nurturing advisory culture has been shown to have a significant impact on students' wellbeing and academic performance in 44 Big Picture schools around Australia. Big Picture Learning regularly interviews and documents student perceptions of how their attitude to learning has changed while in Big Picture and the quality of the relationships in advisory is nearly always at the top of the list. In stand-alone BPL schools, the 17:1 ratio does not cost more

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

No. This makes it become an 'add-on' rather than an integral part of the school culture.

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 great value in surveying students to understand their perceptions of the above issues. It would need to provide some opportunity for qualitative open-ended answers from students.

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

When you do school differently (as in the BPL design) the whole notion of wellbeing is integrated into the learning design and there is little need for special wellbeing programs. The design itself is a wellbeing program where students are helped to feel comfortable and accepted, as an important prerequisite to learning and exploring in depth.

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?

Q56.

Chapter 4: Our current and future teachers

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

A change in the learning design where teacher's professional judgement is sought and valued. Big Picture Learning does not lose teachers.

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

Teachers having more agency over their work. Teachers feeling that they are making a difference to their students' lives and learning. Teachers having more time to explore topics in depth with students, and to focus on the learning, rather than on constant assessment and collection of data. Teachers being able to form quality relationships with students when school is organised differently to the current structures of timetables and subjects and assessment dominating all. Reducing the administrative role in favour of teaching. Changing radically the way school is organised so that personalised learning led by students becomes the goal.

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

The role of Advisory teacher is seen by Big Picture Learning principals as a teacher retention strategy. It is significant that Advisory teachers do not leave the profession. In Big Picture schools, teachers regularly express a love for their role of Advisory Teacher to a group of 17 - 20 students, where they are a generalist (as opposed to a subject specialist) who uses a variety of pedagogic skills to: guide each student in the design and realisation of their learning plans, broker internships with mentors in the community, scaffold students' skills in independent learning, research, public speaking, production and time management, build relationships with every student's family, and foster a supportive learning culture in the group. These teachers thrive on the sense that they are making a real difference to their student's lives, and on the novelty of working alongside students to deepen their skills and knowledge as they explore fields of personal interest.

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

Support teachers to work in those settings including increased remuneration. Consider strategies to more evenly balance the recruitment and retention of new teaching graduates to either public or non-government sectors.

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?

Less focus on teacher quality being the source of the nation's declining educational performance and more consideration of changing the way schooling itself is organised. We are still limping a long with a system that was designed for the industrial age instead of changing our paradigm to suit the digital age.

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

Two-way learning where First Nations' people's knowledge, skills and customs are respected and integrated into day to day learning. Where the national curriculum does not preclude teachers and learners exploring texts, experiences and bodies of knowledge that are of deep cultural, or practical, or personal relevance to the learning community. Recognition that learning outcomes can also be addressed in students' first or second languages alongside English.

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

Implementing more Big Picture Learning academies in government secondary schools in key regional and urban centres around Australia will allow more teachers and young people (particularly those in disadvantaged communities) to access innovative ways of doing school and to change their perceptions of education for the positive.

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?

The Big Picture Learning design provides resources, reduces administration and gives teachers choice in the resources used and control over their professional lives.

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?

Giving teachers the agency to choose what technology best suits their professional work, rather than imposing one piece of technology to be used by all. Providing appropriate training in new forms of technology.

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

That would be very helpful for Big Picture Learning Australia, because we have schools around the country and a national registration system would facilitate the movement of teachers between different states. Currently it is very time-consuming for a teacher from one state to be registered and accredited to work in other states.

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?

Student entry and exit data that captures reasons for enrolling or departing from the school, along with retention rates Attendance data that can be compared with an individual student's previous attendance rates Demographic data - ATSI, disability and EALD status Destination data that captures a student's destination after leaving school and links to personal interest studies and internships undertaken Tracking data that captures where graduates are 12 months - 3 yrs after school Qualitative survey data from students and families about engagement, inclusion, wellbeing Mentor reports How students with disability work under the Big Picture design compared to mainstream.

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?

What young people think about their views on school, the schooling system, the way they learn best in modern world Data that counts what students are learning outside of school (ie not between the hours of 9-3)

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. By interviewing the children and their families about their experiences and ideas.

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?

Yes, as long as the teaching profession, families and students participate in the selection of the sort of data it collects.

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?

To what system do graduating teachers go to work and why?

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

Provide incentives for teaching graduates to work in the public system.

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?

Schools should be funded based on need not on which system they are in.

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

Big Picture Learning Australia would be happy to supply further material if required to explain its learning design or to support with data some of the research or claims made in our submission. We would like to point out that the BPL way of doing school is not resource-heavy or expensive. While a teaching ratio of 17:1 may seem expensive, our academies within mainstream schools in fact require fewer specialised services and supports than the mainstream. This is because the emphasis on students doing internships in the community means that the school is no longer the repository of all learning facilities, mentors and experiences. Inside school, BPL students' primary requirements are a permanent 'homeroom' and the full-time allocation of a single advisory teacher. Stand-alone schools implementing the design are the most cost-effective.

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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