

Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System

Consultation paper

Australian Government Department of Education

The following responses have been compiled for the document [Consultation Paper: Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System](#).

Background

The Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System (the Review) will make recommendations for Education Ministers to inform the next agreement to improve education outcomes in Australia and meet the current and future needs of students. The review will advise Education Minister about:

- What targets and reforms should be included in the next NSRA to drive real improvements in student outcomes, with a particular focus on students who are most at risk of falling behind and in need of more assistance - for students from low socio-economic backgrounds, regional, rural and remote Australia, students with disability, First Nations students and students from a language background other than English
- How the next agreement can contribute to improving student mental health and wellbeing, by addressing in-school factors while acknowledging the impact of non-school factors on wellbeing
- How the next agreement can support schools to attract and retain teachers
- How data collection can best inform decision-making and boost student outcomes
- How to ensure public funding is delivering on national agreements and that all school authorities are transparent and accountable to the community for how funding is invested and measuring the impacts of this investment.

Instructions

Feedback is sought for specific questions from selected chapters of the document.

Preliminary responses have been included for some of the questions - see italicised text in the following pages. **Please add your comments to those already included.**

Collective comments will be uploaded to the submission template which can be found [here](#). **The submission deadline is 2 August.**

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Chapter 2: Improving student outcomes – including for students most at risk of falling behind

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)?

School performance indicators should include academic achievement and growth, attendance (rate and level), wellbeing, engagement in schooling. The Martin [Motivation and Engagement Wheel](#) should be considered for the latter indicators. Engagement in schooling should be a rating provided by stakeholders, students, parents, teachers akin to the Learning Bar [Tell Them From Me](#) or [PIVOT](#) measures.

Student data to further inform performance of a school could include the general capabilities outlined in the NSW syllabuses (currently in reform). These include:

- Ethical understanding
- Digital literacy
- Intercultural understanding
- Personal and social capability
- Critical and creative thinking

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?

There is a wealth of evidence-based practices that teachers and school leaders already use. Consider the work of Dylan Wiliam on feedback, learning intentions and success criteria, or the work by Michael McDowell on Learning Design.

Alternative approaches are needed for different at-risk cohorts given their context and particular circumstances. Differentiation of the learning is essential to address the inequity of access to the curriculum.

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

Schools currently use a number of approaches to identify student needs and to establish interventions. For literacy and numeracy, our schools use tools such as the English Second Language/Dialect (EAL/D) progressions and the Mathematics Assessment Interview growth points, respectively. For wellbeing and engagement, tools available include the Martin [Motivation and Engagement Wheel \(noted previously\)](#) and the [New Pedagogies for Deep Learning progressions](#).

There could be earlier assessments established in the early Childhood space that can better inform the starting points for students in Kindergarten.

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?

EALD students are at varying phases of their acquisition of English. Additional funding would be required to equip schools and teachers where students are in the emerging and developing phase.

The addition of further cohorts should be reviewed cautiously and within parameters of identified vulnerability and inequity. Students who are unable to access the curriculum need to be prioritised.

Care must be taken in singling out priority groups due to wellbeing concerns. In general, schools are acutely aware of students' needs, identified through regular on- and off-site interactions with students and their families/carers.

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 encourage the use of the term 'indicators of achievement'. Targets can be associated with blunt numerical figures which, past governments have shown, have not been achieved. Instead, identify the need based on robust data, then decide on the actions to address the need, then decide on the resources needed to action the initiative, and then articulate the desired outcomes. Irrespective of the type of acronym used to state a target (e.g. [SMART](#), [HARD](#), [PACT](#)) and the claims made by proponents of a particular approach, barriers to their attainment prevail. Reasons for this include the preoccupation with short-cut claims of progress by setting low-level targets, setting broad and ambiguous targets that defy comprehension and setting targets that reduce improvement to meet basic compliance requirements (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Schildkamp, 2019). Further, the lack of monitoring of the targets at regular intervals will impede its progress and will reduce motivation levels to work towards the target (Schildkamp, 2019). Question based targets identify solutions and engender a personal responsibility to answer that question (Harvard business review). Questions can be categorised to inquire into what was done, how well something was done and the extent to which the desired change was reached. Having an agreed set of key evaluation questions makes it easier to decide what data to collect, how to analyse it, and how to report it ([Better Evaluation](#)). Alongside each evaluation question is the type of data that would be collected to provide evidence of progress.

New measures must include student wellbeing and engagement (see previous references), EAL/D, readiness for school, family circumstances.

Measures should be age and context appropriate.

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 only relevant data nationally would be NAPLAN. Its administration is slow paced and data is old once it reaches systems, schools and parents.

Include evaluation plans inquiring into process and outcome evaluation as per the [Evaluation Toolkit for government agencies](#)

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

Reports on the progress of the identified indicators of achievement should be bi-annual, coinciding with the end of each school semester in each State and Territory. Reporting to parents should always be prioritised. Further investigation of an agile 24/7 reporting process should take place to add value for parents and jurisdictions as the bi-annual process is cumbersome in preparation and administration and has limited value as data becomes old before reports are published.

Chapter 3: Improving student mental health and wellbeing

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?

Significant resources for early age eg pre-schools interventions are needed.

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

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

Yes. Existing data sources could be used to supplement new sources of data.

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?

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

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

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?

Chapter 4: Our current and future teachers

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

There needs to be further investigation nationally concerning the initial teacher education. A more flexible and responsive direction in the tertiary sector would be well-received in the schools sector. An apprentice/traineeship/learning with master teacher approach could be investigated. A less regulated system of structures that could lead to better pay and working conditions for teachers and leaders. Better working conditions with flexibility are required.

Restructuring the school day and school week. [Australian school students spend more hours at school than their OECD counterparts](#) (11,000 hours of instruction throughout primary and high school, compared to the average of 7540 hours for OECD countries). Despite this additional time, Australian school students are outperformed by other OECD countries on international tests. This raises questions about the efficacy of the extra time spent in class in terms of engagement at school and the quality of program delivery.

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

increased pay and better work conditions and scheduled opportunities to engage in the co-teaching cycle and co-evaluation cycle

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

Flexibility of work hours, better work conditions and increased pay

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

Flexibility of work hours, better work conditions and increased pay-more flexible pay scales. Principal pay scales are restrictive and based on a very old model of the number of students in the schools. This should be determined by the data and context of each school including ICSEA.

19. What can be done to attract a diverse group of people into the teaching profession to ensure it looks like the broader community?

Changes to the structure of schooling and the school day would assist this direction, including the suggestion made above. For example, school/lessons could be time-tabled across four days per week with the fifth day being dedicated to teacher professional learning activities.

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

Flexibility of work hours, better work conditions, acknowledgement of the individuals circumstances is important to attract and retain staff.

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

Incentives to staff remote and rural or hard-to-staff suburban schools, for example, financial support for accommodation and transport for the teacher and their immediate family

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?

The levels of HALT (and the teaching standards) need a greater presence in this space. Alternative pathways to teacher qualification and accreditation need further exploration.

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

Yes, the NSW Department of Education (NSW DoE) has a wealth of materials, some which are open source, others such as those on their Universal Resources Hub (URH) are not. Suggest that the NSW DoE URH be open to all schools in the non-government sector.

24 How should digital technology be used to support education delivery, reduce teacher workload and improve teacher effectiveness? What examples are you aware of?

The Covid experience forced schools and school systems to deliver education differently. The use of technology to deliver learning by more efficient means should be much more prevalent than what we now see. Suggest that the benefits of blended learning models be promoted through governments as an alternative to face-to-face holistic curriculum delivery.

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

Definitely. A national registration system would reduce inconsistencies between current authorities. It could also reduce administrative burden on States and Territories.

Chapter 5: Collecting data to inform decision-making and boost student outcomes

26. What data are of most value to you and how accessible are these for you?

Student growth and achievement data, student attendance, wellbeing and engagement data. All this data can be accessed through bespoke school-system databases, and for some data, through the NSW DoE Scout database.

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?

Exit data-where School leavers are positioned and their tenure in tertiary courses and professions beyond secondary schooling: early entry to University data

Well-being data

Pre-school data (including those who do not attend formal pre-school car arrangements)

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, because without a robust data set it is impossible and negligent of the government to determine policy for marginalised groups – or for that matter, any group of individuals.

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?

If this is done, data to track progress on the effectiveness of reforms as well as the impact of reforms should be actioned. Reports should be at both jurisdictional and at national level.

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?

'Tell them from Me' data is used in DoE and Catholic Dioceses

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?

Agree that this would be a step in the right direction. The availability of a robust longitudinal data source would give greater insight into how resources should be best deployed.

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?

Agree that an independent body be responsible for collecting and holding related data. The security of this data must be paramount, with policies and procedures in place to ensure this security.

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

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

The USI could be a tool for tracking student growth throughout schooling and post secondary participation.

Chapter 6: Funding transparency and accountability

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

The challenge is making a direct connection of attainment of learning outcomes with achievement data eg NAPLAN and HSC for schools and jurisdictions. Many other factors impact this in terms of schools and student context. Triangulating data sources with contextual data and using teachers judgement is essential to gather true reflection of learning int each school and respecting anecdotal data defined by teacher professionals.

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

Context is very important and needs to be taken into account for each school community within the sectors.

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

NA

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

Percentage contribution of National and State into the various jurisdictions/sectors being know and published more widely

Additional Comments
