

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)?

There is inconsistency between various principles underpinning education. Until these inconsistencies are resolved we are unlikely to achieve sustained improvement. An example of this is the inherent conflict between the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration on Education which calls for excellence and equity in education, with a focus on the skills that students will need to thrive in the 21st Century: critical thinking, collaboration, problem-solving and communication skills. Conflicting with this is the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia which focuses on basic skills that are easily assessed by standardised tests such as NAPLAN. Many educators point to the pervasive focus on NAPLAN as leading to a diminution of the curriculum, which has led to a narrow focus on teaching to the test which has, in turn, led to increased student disengagement, particularly in secondary school students in Years 8 and 9. Similarly, much focus is placed on improving the numbers of students achieving in the top two bands in HSC. This, however, is largely impossible due to the moderation of band distribution which ensures that the numbers of students in each performance band remains static.

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?

Improved outcomes for students in identified equity groups requires that schools where these students are enrolled have a full complement of appropriately qualified teachers. A school is unlikely to improve the numeracy outcomes for students if there is not a qualified mathematics teacher in front of the class every day. It needs to be acknowledged that intervention at both school and system level is required to close the pervasive and growing equity gap. Multiple studies, including those produced by the OECD, indicate that high performing nations tend to also be high equity. In Australia, educational inequity is increasing due to our funding of education. Until deliberate measures are taken to close the equity gap, we will be unable to improve our academic outcomes as a nation. A first step would be to ensure that every school meets the minimum School Resource Standard (SRS), as identified in the Review of School Funding Report (The Gonski Report, 2012). The interplay between wellbeing and achievement must be addressed. Ongoing failure to provide adequate health/wellbeing supports will result in a continued decline in life and educational outcomes for disadvantaged students.

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

Students in NSW public schools are already assessed frequently in order to identify those who are not meeting expected benchmarks. Additional pre-school provision must be made available to ensure that children are meeting the AEDI benchmarks as they commence primary school. Best Start assessments, Check-In Assessments, NAPLAN and other assessments including Progressive Assessment Test should continue to be used. Teacher professional judgement should not be under-estimated. A stronger focus on formative assessment practices needs to both identify those at risk and also to inform programming that meets students at their point of need. Currently, there is too much focus on summative assessment. This data should then be used to inform specific practices to address the needs of these students. Investing in high quality school and equal opportunities for all must begin in the early years of education. Students who have enriching school experiences will be more likely to stay in education and successfully transfer to the labour market. Those who struggle at early stages but receive adequate, timely support and guidance also have higher probabilities of completing their education.

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?

There is clear benefit in ensuring that all disadvantaged cohorts of students are identified, and schools are resourced to support their specific needs. The next NSRA must focus on ensuring that adequate resources are allocated to enable schools to meet the needs of all of the students enrolled in our schools. Achieving 100% SRS for all schools is fundamental to this. However, placing the responsibility on schools for addressing the inequity in educational outcomes for students in identified cohorts is unlikely to have impact unless school systems also take responsibility for addressing this issue. It is also clear to experienced educators that the responsibility for addressing the achievement gap for students in various equity cohorts lies not only with education, but also with a range of other government and non-government agencies. A more wholistic, whole of government approach to addressing a range of underlying social issues is fundamental to improving educational outcomes for these students. Adding additional equity cohorts must be matched with additional resourcing to meet the needs of these students without diminishing the focus on existing cohorts.

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?

The importance of early intervention cannot be ignored. Too many students commence their schooling without having met the Australian Early Development Index benchmarks. Additional focus needs to be placed on the supports that need to be in place prior to the commencement of primary education to ensure that children commence school ready to learn. Failure to do this means that children are not ready to commence their formal education and are at increased risk of falling further behind their peers as they progress through school. There must be a greater focus on post-school destinations as a measure of success. Whilst NSW raised the minimum leaving age to 17 over a decade ago, leading to significant changes in the nature of our senior cohort, our Stage 6 curriculum and assessment remains significantly focused on the attainment of the ATAR and matriculation to university. This is not inherently a bad thing, but it does fail to acknowledge the increased diversity of our Stage 6 students and their diverse motivations and aspirations.

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?

Given the nature of our students and schools, SPC members are disappointed that the focus on attendance, retention and attainment focuses almost entirely on "Year 12 completion". We strongly recommend that the emphasis be changed to focus on the "completion of Year 12 or equivalent" and that there is a closer examination of the Review of Senior Secondary Pathways into Work, Further Education and Training (Shergold, 2020). There are alternative pathways for 15-17 year olds in most states and ensuring access to those pathways will be critical for significant numbers of students in government schools. Alternative pathways, including HSC equivalent vocational pathways, are already available in the non-government sector increasing the range of outcomes those students can access. It is our opinion that a narrow definition of attainment and student outcomes in secondary settings will risk undermining the impact of any measures to improve student outcomes, especially for equity cohorts. SPC recommends that the Mparntwe Declaration should be the basis of determining the approaches to determining NSRA targets,

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

Any reporting on progress towards any new targets should focus clearly on student growth data, or improvement, as opposed to a simple statement of end-point achievement. Poor methods of measuring and reporting achievement tend to have the perverse impact of further entrenching disadvantage and disengagement as students, parents and schools perceive that they have failed because they have not met their benchmark or targets. Better reporting of progress towards targets, clearly identifying growth and improvement, on the other hand, have the benefit of clearly showing progress and the impact of resourcing, teaching programs and the like on student achievement. This, then, helps to dispel myths around the 'success' of schools and students alike. Any such reporting also needs to be in a format that is easy for students, parents/carers and teachers to understand, and be consistent across jurisdictions. There must be clear standards with explicit exemplars of what these standards look like to enable consistent reporting across the diverse educational settings in which our students are enrolled.

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?

SPC notes that, unlike some other factors, community, family and student factors have a profound impact on the wellbeing of students, their peers, staff and the school. Serious and critical incidents, often involving criminal behaviour have risen in recent years, and these incidents affect schools in a range of ways. It is important that the panel recognises that wellbeing is more than poor mental health. The antecedents of poor mental health also need to be addressed with intentional policy and funding. It is unacceptable that some schools still do not have access to counselling services. There needs to be deliberate strategies to address this shortfall as a priority. Whilst some wellbeing supports are appropriately located within the school gates, such as counsellors/school psychologists and student support officers, there is a clear need to ensure that similar supports are also available within the school community. Community health and wellbeing impacts directly on student health and wellbeing, and both need to be addressed strategically and holistically.

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

The NSWSPC recommends that Departments of Education: Listen to the voices of key stakeholders in determining policy and resourcing Ensure all wellbeing policies have Principal/teacher representation on the writing and consultation teams. Trial and review new policies prior to full implementation. Separate suspension/expulsion policies from student wellbeing. Ensure that School counsellors/psychologists are allocated and present in all schools Provide an appropriately trained Instructional Leader student wellbeing/behaviour in all schools with high levels of complexity All secondary schools have enhanced student adviser allocations which attract additional remuneration and increased release time All Initial Teacher Education courses should include compulsory modules of study in positive education. The courses should provide an overview of current theory e.g. Choice theory, PB4L, Restorative Practice, Trauma Informed Practice, social and emotional learning. Should implement Professional Learning for all beginning teachers around effective behaviour management practice and social and emotional pedagogy as the foundation of effective learning.

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

Student wellbeing refers to the psychological, cognitive, social and physical functioning and capabilities that students need to live a happy and fulfilling life. Student wellbeing encompasses the following areas. • Health and Physical care • Mental Health and wellbeing • Behaviour and engagement • Attendance • Child protection and safety • Student voice and participation These form the basis for which wellbeing targets could be included. Whilst some of this data is already captured, there would be a need to develop a more sophisticated set of data collection tools in order to adequately report on some of these areas,

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?

Students in NSW schools already complete annual Tell Them From Me (TTFM) Surveys which capture a range of items, including student wellbeing data. It is an attempt at longitudinal data but has some major limitations, especially in the use of only 3 items to set "wellbeing targets" for schools. Whilst engagement with this tool remains inconsistent, it could be further developed and refined to provide more reliable information for schools. SPC recommends that such surveys should not be incorporated into NAPLAN, which should maintain its focus on Literacy and Numeracy assessment. SPC members support the federal Treasurer's proposal to include wellbeing measures in economic reporting and to develop a framework that is "iterative, ongoing" and "to be updated over time...through continuous conversation with the community and developments in how we capture and collect data". As an initial recommendation, SPC members recommend that the government's initial target be to immediately put in place funding, policies and practices to decrease the rate at which Australia's concentration of educational disadvantage is growing.

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 varied levels of skills and training to support students struggling with mental health issues. SPC supports the concept of programs like Mental Health First Aid for all staff but cautions against expecting or mandating teachers to be primarily responsible for assessing and supporting the mental health of students. This is best done by appropriately qualified personnel with expertise in wellbeing and mental health. Teachers and school leaders currently face a burgeoning workload and do not have either the time or the skills to hold the primary responsibility for this. There needs, instead, to be priority placed on recruiting, training, and allocating an appropriate range of staff to support communities of schools. This is particularly important for those communities that are experiencing significant wait time in order to access a range of health professionals, including counsellors and other wellbeing services. Government secondary schools and students in NSW have limited access to a coherent health and wellbeing service outside the school. The average "wait time" for an adolescent psychiatrist is over 12 months in most parts of the state.

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

There needs to be a whole of Government approach to this, with systems level support to ensure that local connections are made and maintained. Whilst schools and education systems have a clear role to play in these partnerships, there must be systemic structures in place to enable and maintain the partnerships over time, particularly in those communities where there is a high rate of turnover of key personnel. Too often, these arrangements are informal and based on the good relationships between individuals. More needs to be done to ensure the structural support to facilitate these arrangements. Memoranda of Understanding and clear protocols around case management, communication and the like must be in place to ensure that all agencies are clear on what supports are provided, by whom, and where appropriate accountability will lie.

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?

Referral systems need to be simplified and consistent across agencies. Liaison officers responsible for facilitating referrals should be clearly identified and communication methods established as a joint responsibility. Information sharing needs to be easier, mindful of privacy concerns. Clearly identifying who is responsible and how referrals should be made are critical.

Q56.

Chapter 4: Our current and future teachers

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

The SPC's position is that immediate and impactful action must be taken on current teacher shortages. Whilst acknowledging the complexity of this task, the consequences of falling short are potentially dramatic for students, schools and the broader public education system. It is the view of the SPC that the pay and working conditions of teachers must be commensurate with those of other professions, which require equal levels of skill and qualifications, in order to attract high-quality candidates into the profession. HECS relief and scholarships need to be enhanced in order to encourage students to consider teaching as a desirable and affordable option. In relation to national initiatives to address teacher workforce issues, SPC strongly recommends a national approach to identifying future workforce demands. AITSL's Australian Teacher Workforce Demand Survey needs to be extended to provide this cross-jurisdictional data. This would facilitate greater consistency and enhance movement across jurisdictions, particularly in our communities located close to state and/or territory borders. Significant action needs to be taken to enhance the status of teaching as a respected profession.

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

Effective induction programs and support from experienced mentor teachers have been shown to enhance teacher retention. Multiple career pathways for teachers exist, but they have been confounded by the ad hoc nature of multiple initiatives. These need to be simplified and clarified so that teachers can see the options available to them. As an example, NSW recently engaged John Hattie to lead a review into Rewarding Excellence in Teaching which proposed enhanced salaries for teachers who stay in the classroom. However, this initiative did not take into account the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher pathways that already exist but are under-utilized. Teacher workload and the increased complexity of expectations on teachers must be addressed. Moves in some jurisdictions to reallocate non-teaching duties to an expanded and more appropriately qualified non-teaching staff must be expanded to free teachers to focus on their core business - teaching and learning. Additionally, school systems, the media and our politicians must pay greater respect to the profession so that teachers feel valued and supported.

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

Simplified re-accreditation procedures, a national working with children check system which does not require individuals to travel inter-state to present in person at a centre to validate their identity would be useful initiatives here. A nationally consistent teacher registration system which provided for cross-jurisdictional recognition is essential. Proactive recruitment campaigns would be useful, as would the provision of improved salaries, commensurate with other professionals with 4-5 years of tertiary education. Of course, the teacher workload issue must be addressed. It is the position of the SPC that the pay progressions for teachers must increase so as to provide incentives for qualified and experienced staff to continue in the teaching profession. It is noted that starting salaries for teachers are typically commensurate with those of other professions requiring similar skills, training and qualifications but that increases in pay based on years of service fall far short of other professions and end at what is ultimately an uncompetitive rate.

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

Schools most in need are the first to suffer in a staffing shortage as teacher choose to relocate to more desirable locations. Addressing the issues of professional pay, status and reduced administrative workload are critical to ensuring teacher supply in all of our schools, especially those 'most in need'. Systems must privilege schools 'most in need' to ensure that they are fully staffed with appropriately qualified 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?

Many of the families of government secondary students in NSW are "risk and debt averse" based on their own lived experiences. Without scholarships and intensive support, many of the students from the identified equity cohorts, will not attend and complete a university degree. SPC members support the recommendation of the Interim report to find new pathways for more students from identified equity cohorts to attend university. SPC member would also support this for those students who want to study a teaching degree. HECS relief, targeted scholarships and targeted recruitment should all be pursued as potential solutions. The differential increase in HECS for "humanities" degrees has had a negative impact on both students and potential teachers. Most secondary and all primary teaching degrees are classified as "humanities" degrees. There has been an almost immediate impact on students completing teaching degrees in critical subjects, including English. Very few graduating year 12 students from government schools in NSW plan to teach in secondary schools. This will directly impact on equity of the provision.

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

This is similar to Question 19. Targeted recruitment programs, scholarships or HECS relief are all elements. Critical, too, is improved cultural competence and cultural safety in our schools. Enhanced pathways for non-teaching Aboriginal staff should be explored and expanded. In NSW, Aboriginal support workers in schools are being actively considered for pathways into teaching as part of the 'grow your own' initiative. This is showing promising results, particularly where it allows Aboriginal people to work, learn and enter teaching on country. In terms of retention, increased awareness of cultural responsibilities and flexibility to facilitate this would be very useful. Similarly, there must be recognition of and compensation for the additional cultural load carried by Aboriginal staff, who are often expected to fulfil a number of other responsibilities for both the school and the community.

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

In addition to either national registration authority or process, cross jurisdictional recognition of qualifications and accreditation would support teacher mobility across states and jurisdictions. this may result in the workforce being better able to be deployed to point of need. There needs to be recognition that the teacher workforce is not as mobile as it previously was as the nature of the workforce has changed. Teachers now tend to enter the workforce at an older age when they may be in a permanent relationship and unwilling to move to another location. The ready availability of temporary or casual employment also means that teachers are less willing to move location in order to gain permanent employment. There needs to be consideration around a range of employment conditions and benefits (including more attractive superannuation schemes) to attract and retain teachers.

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?

SPC Supports both remuneration based on service and standards-based pay which is directly related to teacher accreditation at each of the levels under the AITSL Professional Standards for Teachers and is supported by a rigorous and consistent quality assessment process. SPC supports the remuneration for those teachers choosing to follow a promotional career path through classroom teaching based on the career stages outlined in the National Teaching Standards – Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead. It is our view that the current ad hoc arrangements of recognising teachers completing additional duties through a multiplicity of mechanisms is confusing and counter-productive. Rather than create multiple above-establishment executive positions for non-leadership roles, school systems should adopt clear pathways to support and enhance the current provisions for HALTs.

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

The NSW Department of Education Universal Resources Hub has potential to facilitate this, however, SPC warns against the danger of 'out-sourcing' the development of curriculum materials to commercial entities or external consultants that have limited professional experience. Many teachers prefer to develop their own materials with regard to their knowledge of their students, their contexts and their understanding of how their students learn. Whilst centralised resources hubs do have their place and can support consistency of teacher judgement and reduce teacher workload, there must be safeguards in place to ensure that neither teacher autonomy nor teacher professional judgement are inadvertently undermined. More effective practices have been the establishment of virtual faculties and online communities of practice to facilitate resource-sharing between teachers and school leaders.

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?

It is within the area of curriculum and ICT that school leaders are seeking the most support or guidance as they try to align their current practices with the goals of the Mparntwe Declaration and the Australian Curriculum (implemented in NSW through NSW Education Standards Authority's syllabuses). Each school's curriculum is unique, and leaders will develop programs and practices accordingly. It is critical that education systems work to ensure that principals are aware of future-focused practices enabling informed curriculum delivery. Initiatives include, but are not limited to Project Based Learning (and variations POL, PDP, SOLE ...), cross-curriculum programming, computational thinking, coding, robotics, ICT based teaching and learning including mixed reality teaching, artificial intelligence, Anytime Anywhere practices etc.) Schools increasingly use 3rd party technology systems to provide student administration solutions. There is a great need for education systems to better engage with Third Party Providers and ensure that 3PI systems are fit for purpose to reduce teacher workload and not have the perverse effect of increasing double-handling.

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

At the moment, the lack of consistent, coherent national registration processes has a negative impact on teacher mobility and, in some cases, the ability of schools, particularly those close to state or territory borders, to attract and recruit staff. A national registration system, which ensures the highest levels of compliance and is recognised nationally would support the more effective movement of staff into jurisdictions with teacher shortages and better meet our teacher supply needs as a nation. Of course, there would need to be a rigorous assessment of the registration requirements to ensure that professional standards were consistently applied across jurisdictions. SPC has concerns, however, that a national registration system would not necessarily solve the current staffing shortages being experienced across the nation, but may simply facilitate the movement of shortage from one state or territory to another. The reality is that the teacher shortage is not unique to any state or territory. Nor is it a national problem, but an international phenomenon. One recent study indicated that on current trends we will have a global shortage of some 23 million teachers by 2030.

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?

There is a plethora of data available for teachers to use. The most valuable has always been teacher professional judgement. Teachers who 'know their students and how they learn' are well-positioned to make program variations and adjustments to facilitate learning. This teacher professional judgement must be supported by a range of data, including standardised tests such as NAPLAN, Progressive Achievement Tests, Check-In Assessments and the like. Most schools and teachers have ready access to a wide range of data, but are not necessarily well-versed in the effective use of data, nor, indeed, on what constitutes 'good' data. The most valuable data provides longitudinal information, rather than a 'snapshot in time' and provides useful information on student growth and progress. Diagnostic data that can be used to inform teaching practice is highly-valued as it enables educators to adjust their teaching programs to the needs of the particular student cohort that they are about to teach. There is no problem accessing data - the problem is the varying validity of the data and the lack of 'fit for purpose' tools with which to analyse and report on the data.

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?

There is a significant focus on how funding was spent, rather than on the impact it made on student outcomes. We ought to be collecting better longitudinal data, particularly in relation to student growth and improvement to better assess the impact of educational programs on student achievement. Too often we are focused on the 'end point' data rather than the evidence of improvement or growth. A number of studies indicate that a significant proportion of Australian students are 'coasting' because they are achieving excellent results, but a deeper analysis shows that their growth is not what should be expected. Indeed, similar data shows an interesting light on the relative comparisons between schools within and across jurisdictions. National outcomes will only be improved with greater transparency and analysis of student improvement and growth, rather than simple end point measures of achievement.

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?

The lack of data on students with disability is of serious concern and must be addressed. The increasing number of students with disability requires deliberate action to ensure that they, like other equity cohorts, can achieve outcomes at least the same as other cohorts of students. Failure to collect this data is a failure of the education system to ensure equity of either access or outcomes for these students. Furthermore, failure to collect and report on this data often results in a failure to adequately allocate resources to ensure that these students have equitable outcomes compared to other students.

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?

The establishment of valid targets and reforms is the critical issue here, rather than the reporting on progress towards them. There must also be a genuine willingness to achieve the targets, which must be focused on increasing equity in order to achieve excellence. This should be collected at a national level. In terms of jurisdictional reporting, that will depend on the panel's willingness to genuinely ensure that all jurisdictions are required to report in open and transparent ways, not just on student achievement alone, but also on how resources have been allocated in relation to student achievement. The panel should consider the economic impacts that a well-funded and quality public education system brings to society. Improving equity in education and reducing school failure results in children and young people becoming active and engaged citizens and full participants in society. OECD research shows that reducing school failure contributes positively to individual and broader societal economic and social growth and wellbeing.

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?

There is an enormous amount of data collected by schools that is useful in their context but is not valid beyond the school due to the significant variation in methodology, collection techniques and the like. Data is only useful across schools, systems and jurisdictions when there is consistency and integrity in the way that it is collected and shared. The purpose behind the data collection must be clear and transparent and the integrity of the data can be impacted negatively when it is used for purposes other than for what it was collected. The consistent collection, storage and sharing of such data must be managed extremely carefully in order to ensure the safety of students and also to reduce unintended impacts on teacher workload.

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?

There is a significant focus on how funding was spent, rather than on the impact it made on student outcomes. We ought to be collecting better longitudinal data, particularly in relation to student growth and improvement to better assess the impact of educational programs on student achievement. Too often we are focused on the 'end point' data rather than the evidence of improvement or growth. A number of studies indicate that a significant proportion of Australian students are 'coasting' because they are achieving excellent results, but a deeper analysis shows that their growth is not what should be expected. Indeed, similar data shows an interesting light on the relative comparisons between schools within and across jurisdictions. National outcomes will only be improved with greater transparency and analysis of student improvement and growth, rather than simple end point measures of achievement.

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?

At the moment, school data is collected and held by a variety of bodies. In the NSW context this includes, but is not limited to the NSW Department of Education (sometimes duplicated across multiple directorates), NESAS, ACARA, AERO. Whilst it would make sense for this data to be collected and held by a single independent body, it is unlikely that this would eliminate the multiple handling of data across the various bodies. There would need to be significant protocols and safeguards in place to prevent the inappropriate use or sharing of data and to protect individual students, as well as individual schools and communities from the misuse of data. The regular media frenzy around NAPLAN and HSC league tables is a clear indication of the dangers of this.

Q29. 33. Is there data being collected that is no longer required?

There is often duplication of data that is being collected and sometimes data that is being collected centrally but that schools are required to submit manually because the collation and collection processes are not fit for purpose. Systems must be more intelligent and better designed in order to improve automation, collection and security of data. Such systems should also recognise what data is no longer required so that it can be removed from the process and reduce teacher/principal workload.

Q28. 34. How could the national Unique Student Identifier (USI) support improved outcomes for students?

The national Unique Student Identifier (USI) can be a useful tool for tracking student achievement and maintaining a record of progress over time. It can be particularly useful as students move between jurisdictions or 'levels' of education. It could support improved outcomes for students if it enables better tracking of progress and completion of credentials. SPC supports a USI for all students and acknowledges that students in government secondary schools already receive a USI when they complete a first aid course, undertake concurrent study at TAFE or undertake training as a school-based trainee. Extending the USI to years 7-9 would also encourage the opportunity for an increased use of learning portfolios and passports.

Q58.
Chapter 6: Funding transparency and accountability

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

There is enormous potential to hold all systems and jurisdictions accountable for the ways in which they use public funds to achieve the national reform targets. The impact of increased segregation in Australia's schools has been significant, with a direct (and negative) impact on the enrolment profile of many government comprehensive secondary schools, especially those in the communities serving significant numbers of equity cohorts. Government schools are not yet in receipt of 100% of the SRS while the growing number of non-government schools have been among the most advantaged by the current funding model. Every one of the government secondary schools in NSW enrolls students from the "equity cohorts" identified in the review. Our government secondary schools and settings also enrol students from other significant equity groups including students whose families are highly mobile, students in out-of-home-care, students who are carers and students with chronic health conditions that impact on their learning. SPC calls for increased transparency, accountability and equity in the allocation of public funds to all schools and a genuine commitment to closing the pervasive equity gap.

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

There should be a greater focus on practices that have a positive impact on student outcomes rather than a focus on programs and initiatives alone. In NSW, the School Excellence Framework (Version 2) defines effective practice and this enables schools to assess against the descriptors. The same is true of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers standards and descriptors. These measures, along with perception surveys like Tell Them from Me, give some indication of how well the practices are working and, over time, create patterns of evidence. This is more effective than aggregating data sets and making correlations to compare schools and cohorts of students that, while they may have reliability, lack validity in statistical terms. This reduces assessments of success to 'league tables' of results which do not add value to assessments about student or school progress and improvement. There must be better transparency and consistency in communication from governments and jurisdictions especially about patterns of performance at a state and national level on tests such as NAPLAN. This could lead to more appropriate and valid target setting for school performance measures.

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

There needs to be a 'level playing field' in relation to the ways that all schools and systems are held accountable for the expenditure of public funds. This is currently not the case. As a result of current practices, we have a pervasive and increasing equity gap between our most advantaged and our most disadvantaged cohorts of students. Whilst this gap exists, Australia will continue to struggle to improve educational outcomes. This has a negative impact on both our international reputation and also on our economic development as a nation.

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

Public funds must be spent on ensuring that all students have access to a high quality education and can achieve academic excellence regardless of ethnicity, Aboriginality, post code, family background or economic status. As a nation, we must be transparent and accountable for what we are doing to achieve the goals of the Mparntwe Declaration and hold schools, sectors, jurisdictions and governments to account for how these funds and resources are allocated to achieve this educational equity and excellence. OECD data consistently shows that high performing nations have high equity education systems that ensure this equity of access as a precursor to achieving educational excellence.

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

The advice and recommendations articulated above are representative of the views of approximately 500 principals of schools with secondary enrolments across the state of NSW. The majority of this material is drawn from extant SPC Position Papers on relevant issues, many of which have been publicly available for an extended period of time. Other material has been drawn from regular and extensive consultations with colleagues through regular surveys, reference groups and our regular State Assembly of regional delegates. SPC also regularly conducts informal research on effective practice and engages in a regular program of professional learning, informed by current research, and demonstrated effective practice. Based on these activities, SPC has continually advocated for resources and strategies to improve outcomes for students since the 1970s. It is appropriate that government and education departments seek the views of a range of interested stakeholders prior to making decisions that will impact on our nation's schools. It is critical, however, that the voice of the profession be heard and respected when making decisions which will impact on our schools and our students. Failure to seek, hear and act on professional advice has been repeatedly shown to result in ineffective practice and inefficient use of resources. SPC strongly recommends that those bodies and associations that represent teachers and principals must be consulted early and regularly and that their advice must be appropriately acknowledged and respected when informing policy relating to education.

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.

If you have any questions about your submission or the submissions process more broadly, please contact NSRA.submissions@education.gov.au