

Recipient Details

Name of organisation or individual: [O] Casterton & District Community Education Stakeholders

Reference Type: Community Group that includes all local school Principals, volunteers & parents

State or territory: Vic

Serial Identification Number: 478496

Responses

Curriculum and assessment

- In small regional communities with multiple schools (public and catholic) there needs to be more thought put into how schools can work collaboratively this can be very effective and improve access to resources for teachers and students.
- All learning areas taught in schools with a qualified teacher.
- Students to be continuously monitored to ensure they are progressing at expected levels in all learning areas. Special programs provided for students at risk. Eg mini-lit, multi-lit, reading recovery. More resourcing is required.
- Naplan results are useful in giving an overview of educational attainment it does not provide timely information for addressing individual student and/or cohort needs.
- It is difficult to be innovative/share resources between schools when telecommunications are limited (and/or unreliable) and costs associated with transporting students by bus are not viable- this needs funding.
- There needs to be specialist teachers available for polycom sessions where regional communities don't have access to them. Whether it be both for intervention lessons, languages, music or technology. Regional students are missing out on these opportunities. There also needs to be mentoring for regional teachers that want to specialise in specific areas.
- Regional students need access to Arts projects, performances and funding as 'The Arts Learning Area' enhances student learning outcomes in other learning areas. Students in rural areas should be able to access Arts performances and workshops like their urban counterparts.
- Distance and bus travel can have an impact on a student's ability to access resources outside of school – for example the local Library.
- Promote the Library as a safe and accessible space for students to undertake homework and study.

Rating: 7

Teachers and teaching

Teachers make the most difference to a child's learning and outcomes. Remote areas must have a supply of quality teachers who are prepared to work with students and the community to help build future pathways for students. The provision of a broad range of learning areas enables students more options and pathways for further study, training and employment.

- Public school employment, industrial relations experts need to review all issues smaller regional schools are having meeting their employment conditions, and how these conditions can often end up compromising students learning. Regional Principal's must be able to provide their students with consistency for all subject areas, and be able to keep and reward the teachers their schools need. In small schools when teachers are on leave for whatever reason, this should not disadvantage students because the schools can't afford to put on replacements. Smaller schools with smaller budgets would find it impossible to provide additional incentives to attract staff. How can small schools retain 'top teachers' when the constraints of school budget and fluctuating enrollments mean more experienced teachers are more expensive to employ.
- Professional development(PD) should be available to teachers and schools based on individual need and school priorities. Travel and PD costs (including replacement teachers) mean that PD is an expensive component of the budget and the smaller the school, the less flexibility they have.
- In-house/district/regional provision of PD reduce cost of presenter but costs associated with teacher replacement and travel remain. Tele-communications are unreliable. Improved access to tele-communication would enable access to PD and mentoring.
- Pre-teacher training opportunities- if students were required to experience both urban and rural schools as part of their teacher training they maybe more inclined to teach in rural areas
- Accessing teachers outside of school hours can have a beneficial impact on student's outcomes. Looking at encouraging a "seventh period" of supported study and tutoring within school grounds from 3;30-4:30pm one afternoon a week/fortnight.
- The best teachers need to be trained to run intervention programs. Early intervention in the junior primary years is essential. These teachers need to be shared amongst schools.

Rating: 7

Leaders and leadership

School leadership must support quality teachers and ensure that resources are allocated to a broad range of learning areas so that country students have access to similar resources as city students. Eg the latest ITC equipment and using community expertise.

The smaller the school, the more responsibilities the principal has in management issues in addition to student achievement. There are less experienced staff to share the workload. A principal must seek professional advancement by moving to a larger school in a larger centre. Why must a principal's educational leadership be tied to school student population only?

Mentoring- support and networks to assist Principal's manage the enormous array of issues in small communities where everyone is linked to everyone.

Rating: 7

School and Community

Strong school and community links are important as are shared values and commitment to future needs of our students Eg Paint Casterton REaD, Casterton & District Community Education Stakeholders.

Family views about education are important in students' aspirations. Where families have not experienced success at school and/or advanced past secondary schooling family and student aspirations may be irreconcilable. The costs of tertiary education will not be considered unless the

family has an understanding of its value. Linking community and developing mentoring programs is essential for long term change.

Assist with linking professionals with schools (like Artists in schools but broader) to extend the horizons of both students, parents and teachers. A number of links are made by universities and schools within cities but these need to be more accessible.

Schools currently experience issues with engaging some parents in the education of their children. These parents will not, or unable to support their children in home reading, following up on specialist programs (eg speech pathology), resist suggestions for assessment of hearing/vision/oral health perhaps fearing financial costs of treatment or the purchase of glasses or hearing aids if issues are identified.

School entry medical checks are not as rigorous as in the past and follow up by parents is not enforced. Are parents informed of programs/financial support available to them to support their children's health?

Poor dental health is a real concern for some children. It impacts their overall physical health and therefore their ability to learn. Poor dental health, missing teeth also impacts on a child's ability to present well at interviews. Dental check-ups for primary students are no longer conducted at schools and parents must travel to attend a public clinic. For some families this travel is a major disincentive (lack of transport, cost of fuel, time away from work) to obtaining treatment for their children.

Poor diet is also a concern with some children. Schools implement breakfast programs, fruit supplied for students and other programs can support but not alleviate inadequate provision of food within a family. The children are not able to change the family situation.

Rating: 7

Information and Communication Technology

We must have ready access to fast reliable broadband, and teachers and administrators must be trained. We need to share local training resources to do this. We need regional experts to come into schools and set up technology for teachers and get them comfortable with it.

Our students must be ICT literate and able to use and access a wide variety of ITC platforms as well as Apps and online social media sites.

Rural communities need access to reliable, high speed broadband both within schools and homes. Many rural properties do not have mobile phone coverage and can access internet via satellite only and speeds reduce as more people access the satellite.

The local library has internet access but for children who travel home by school bus this is not an option for them.

Stakeholders Committee is our local version of Canada's small school's network. Remote networking is not currently possible.

Rating: 7

Entrepreneurship and schools

Students (and their families) need exposure to capital and regional cities so that can feel more comfortable when considering tertiary education. We need free exchange programs and networks for students and teachers. We need to encourage, create confidence and inspire students to seek

education, skills and experience outside their regional area as they are more likely to come back to regional areas and provide leadership to others.

Regional Schools must have grants they can apply for to assist enabling.

The results do not necessarily reflect the potential ability of regional students. Universities often link with urban schools to conduct programs or research. Could they be encouraged to extend their range and target rural areas?

We need to create pathways for our students into the workplace. We need to assist getting our students skills, knowledge, networks and experience. Look at how other countries are doing this. Germany has a work placement and study program, how can regional schools develop this for students?

Develop pathways in our local industries, agriculture, viticulture and forestry. These industries have an enormous range or opportunity we need to get better at developing traineeships within them. Victoria is very behind in developing a curriculum for agriculture.

Rating: 7

Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding

- Visits to and from tertiary institutions in our area.
- Distance Education available to our students
- Student accommodation is often a problem for families and can be the reason why students don't pursue further education.
- Casterton Community Stakeholders is an attempt to combine forces across the providers of education in the town to address common needs and utilise limited funds in the most cost effective ways.
- Education needs to be seamlessly addressed from birth. Prenatal care should be the start of parent education on the importance of early childhood development.
- Shire Councils have a coordinating role in providing early childhood and maternal health services.
- Role models in the school and community
- More opportunities for work experience for students outside their community.
- Online opportunities with other schools and communities.
- Resilience Project resources, practical tools to assist everyone with mental health
- Parent PD- smaller communities have less access to parenting programs conducted by outside agencies and parents are often reluctant to travel to access these.

Rating for enrolments: 7

Rating for clusters: 7

Rating for distance education: 7

Rating for boarding: 7

Diversity

Teaching our students to be respectful and empathetic of others Eg different cultures, religions, ethnic backgrounds

Teaching our students that it is okay to be different.

Individual needs- cost of provision of additional services eg speech pathology

Reluctance of parents to have child assessed for vision and/or hearing problems due to the cost of assessment and/or the cost of spectacles or hearing aids.

Impact of poor diet and poor oral health on learning. Breakfast programs, free fruit, school gardens and healthy eating/cooking can only address some of the issue- without a corresponding response from parents schools are unable to effect change.

Rating: 7

Transitioning beyond school

Building the resilience of our students to adapt to new situations (this needs to start young), see above answers.

Eg the resilience project

Rating: 7

Additional Comments

Casterton and District Community Education Stakeholders -Group established to identify opportunities for assisting Education in the Community. Firstly we identified issues. Secondly we have come up with some initiatives to address/assist the issues. This is ongoing.

1. The main focus of our group is "To Raise the Profile of Education in Casterton" Three areas under this are formed they are:

- i. Literacy & Numeracy
- ii. Health and Wellbeing
- iii. Arts, music & Culture

Please refer to Casterton's AEDC data that not only identifies a high population of children starting school at risk and vulnerable, but a significant increase from 2009 to 2015. This group started with real concerns around this in 2015 before the data came out.

Successful education begins at birth and there needs to be coordinated approach to the delivery of services and programs for parents and children regardless of geographical location.

Is it Shire councils that have this particular role to play in this in rural areas? Community groups are willing and able to assist but there needs to be coordination of roles and responsibilities and some capacity to 'see' the gaps in service, identify specific local areas of concern and find ways to address them.

Some families do not access some Shire programs eg library, childcare, maternal health nurse, playgroup. Are there statistics kept on number of families who do not access? Are efforts made to engage them? Are some municipalities having better success with these families? What is their secret to success?

Day Care and kindergarten costs are an issue for some families. Are there efforts made to target at risk children and their families? Are parents made aware of any flexibility regarding payment for Day Care or is the responsibility theirs alone? Some families will not ask or try and negotiate. Casterton now has an excellent Centre for kindergarten and daycare to enhance early learning. However the Centrelink system for payment is too complicated and turns people off.

- An example of how local Catholic schools work together. Together they unpacking in detail what the curriculum asks teachers to teach, setting high expectations according to the curriculum, for every student to reach the curriculum standard or above. Students are tested and then lessons are designed based on student abilities. We then retest and compare students across the schools to see how effective our teaching is.

- Government schools are also working together in school networks, unpacking the intent of the curriculum, setting high expectations and expecting every student to achieve one year or more of growth in every learning area.

Students are continuously assessed before, during and after lessons so that lessons can be differentiated to the students' needs and ensure that all students are working at their Zone Of Proximal development.