

Recipient Details

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State or territory: NSW

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Responses

Curriculum and assessment

Assessment is vital to inform teachers about the learning needs of individual students. However, the increased focus on external assessment (NAPLAN) and benchmarking students (expecting them to march in lockstep through age/stage levels) is not helpful. Teachers need more support in developing their understanding of formative assessment rather than using valuable time in other forms.

As far as curriculum is concerned, there is a need to 'uncrowd' current curricula and develop plans that really address the 21st Century or Future - focused needs of our students. Curriculum that is divided into subjects and is asked to be reported against in this way does not meet the current needs of students and is not supported by current pedagogical research.

Rating: 4

Teachers and teaching

Investing in high quality teacher training and ongoing professional learning is vital. Teachers are pivotal in providing the support our students need. They need to have access to support services to ensure students are provided with individual learning pathways that meet their needs. Teaching, particularly in primary schools, is a generalist position. Expecting teachers to be experts in not only a wide range of subject, but also learning styles and learning support needs, is not realistic. For schools to function, speech and occupational therapy, counsellor and well being support and access to mental health services are all vital. Teachers need to have access to the best support and be enabled to provide pathways for learning that suit individual students and local communities, rather than being measured against national standards.

Rating: 7

Leaders and leadership

Educational leaders need to be allowed to lead education. They are not workplace health and safety managers or business managers. While welfare and well-being remain significant issues for all schools, in rural and remote areas, the management and support of families often falls to school leaders and this can, in itself, become a well being issue for these leaders. Leaders need to be given support to develop their skills in all areas of management, but also need resources to ensure they can focus on being educational leaders, first and foremost..

Rating: 7

School and Community

While many students would not admit it, and certainly wouldn't demonstrate it through their behaviour, school is the one constant in their lives. In communities that can sometimes be

marginalised, our students look to schools to provide the support that they may not be getting elsewhere. Opportunities for engaging in meaningful work placement within small communities is also an issue that could be supported with traineeships that lead to real job opportunities. Schools could be in a position to ensure these opportunities are supported within the wider community.

Rating: 7

Information and Communication Technology

Most students are active users of technology and are not intimidated by its use. However, the development of responsible digital citizenship is a real issue. Many schools do have reasonable access to technology, but many of our teachers need further support in embedding technology into teaching. This needs support through realistic professional learning and access to a greater range of technology possibilities (coding, robotics, engineering, etc)

Rating: 7

Entrepreneurship and schools

I am not sure how this would look, but I feel that this would open many opportunities for all students!

Rating: 4

Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding

Once again, I am not sure as to how this could be managed better than it already is.

Rating for enrolments: 4

Rating for clusters: 6

Rating for distance education: 7

Rating for boarding: 2

Diversity

I am not sure how to interpret your meaning of diversity. If you are meaning diversity of opportunity, then this is vital. Many students in rural and remote areas have a narrow view of the world and the possibilities that it presents. Many cannot think beyond the known and for these students, there is a family history of welfare dependence and they assume that this is the 'norm'. Providing students with a broad range of real opportunities, as well as virtual ones, may work towards creating more diverse opportunities.

If you are referring to cultural diversity, it is clear that issues of racism and sexism do impact hugely on the expectations of youth and what they may achieve in the future. Providing opportunities for all students to achieve their full potential is a major issue.

Rating: 4

Transitioning beyond school

Opportunities for rural students are hampered by access to further education because of distance and cost. Complexities of applying for support and scholarships, being burdened by debt, requiring part time employment to be able to access further studies, particularly if the student needs to move from home, are all issues that can be overcome by simplifying systems of support and also harnessing technology.

Rating: 7

Additional Comments

Having worked in education in a rural/remote area for over 30 years, the issues seem to have become greater, rather than decreased. Our students struggle with meeting the expected benchmarks from an early age and the trend for our students entering school is that they have fewer literacy and numeracy skills and their receptive and expressive language is generally poor. This is a reflection of a lower socio-economic demographic, but is also consistent with the difficulties experienced by communities in accessing health, welfare and support services in the 0-5 years age group. While this is not in our circle of influence, ensuring that support services are readily and regularly available in the first years of school is vital.