

Recipient Details

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Reference Type: Parent

State or territory: WA

Serial Identification Number: 476561

Responses

Curriculum and assessment

Successful projects such as Mypolonga Primary invariably begin with one or two dedicated staff, who give up their own time and often financial resources to start it. After success is seen, the school shifts resources to support it. At my school, our school garden is exemplary, largely through the efforts of two teachers. This year funding for additional DOTT has not been available in the budget and as a result the garden has no coordinator. A central system which identifies successful projects and resources them to assist from outside the school's limited finances would allow this and similar projects to have a greater impact on student achievement through cross-curricula experience, as seen at Mypolonga Primary.

Rating: 7

Teachers and teaching

Teachers have a huge workload, often administrative. Less funding for personnel means some administrative tasks which should be handled by administrators trickles down to the classroom. There is also a trickle up when front office staff numbers are cut from financial restrictions and teachers are required to undertake excess routine paperwork. Many of these tasks are related to the running of the school and not directly to student education. This is especially seen in small schools, where office staff are part time and administrators are also teachers. As a Level 3 principal one year, I and my 2.3 staff was required to complete 17 separate plans for my school, few of which had any relevance to my school's situation.

Rating: 7

Leaders and leadership

Systemic expectations of school leaders has lead (in my anecdotal experience) to a lessened focus on educational leadership and more toward candidates for promotion who demonstrate success as paperwork administrators. A demonstrated high level of teaching skills should still be the first criteria for promotion within our education system. For administrators looking to go above the initial promotional stage, a confidential subordinate report would also be an indicator of their ability to motivate/inspire staff involved with students - both teaching and Education Assistants.

Rating: 6

School and Community

This answer depends heavily on what form the community takes ... for example, mining towns have greater potential access to outside funding than farming communities, while farming communities, in my experience, hold their school in high regard and often donate time and expertise in lieu of financial support.

Rating: 7

Information and Communication Technology

Smaller schools (often rural) have less percentage of funds to put toward technology, often relying on volunteer expertise and time to maintain networks, run updates etc. Smaller schools offer an opportunity to match need to cutting edge technology as less outlay is required to outfit a school of 100 kids than a school of 1000, thereby making the impact greater for less funding. In reality small schools often end up with less bandwidth and cheaper machines.

Rating: 7

Entrepreneurship and schools

Opportunities for entrepreneurship are dependent on the school community. As mentioned previously, farming communities can find it harder to provide these opportunities. My current school - K-12 rural, is fortunate in its location in a country centre, with enough businesses for work experience to offer students some variety of choices. (Again, mostly through the dedication of two staff in particular, giving up much of their own time). Smaller school I have worked in do not have the same opportunities. This means that they can end up the 'poor cousins' to schools in other areas. Opportunities and additional funding to enable the establishment of programs in these school similar to Mypolonga may go some way toward alleviating this lack.

Rating: 5

Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding

In practical terms, clusters required more time and resourcing to function. Although it looks good on paper, their effectiveness may be limited. My daughter's Yr 12 Chemistry class is taught in conjunction with another school. This gives a broader student base ("It is worth thinking seriously about the potential benefits to be gained for rural students from being one in a class or group of 25 studying, for example, history or mathematics instead of say, 6 or 7) but also has meant frustration in that the other school sets testing regimes and content, which sometimes has been poorly moderated and dates of testing changed with little notice.

Rating for enrolments: 5

Rating for clusters: 4

Rating for distance education: 7

Rating for boarding: 5

Diversity

Access to diversity, as pointed out in the discussion paper, is often limited for rural students. ICT can rectify this to an extent for curriculum content. Additional funding based on distance from larger centres would assist smaller schools with excursions and travel for sporting events, inter-school connections of various sorts and access to PD opportunities for staff.

Rating: 7

Transitioning beyond school

A huge expense for families of rural students is clearly accommodation in a larger centre where extended educational opportunities are available. This can amount to well over \$10 000 which rural families have to find, while urban students and their families generally do not. Other costs, as

outlined in the discussion paper (laptops etc) are minor in comparison. 'Local foundations' are few and far between. Financial resourcing for rural families needs to be increased considerably if rural students are to achieve some degree of equity. Ongoing effects include the need to have to work to meet costs (often not required by urban students) as well as the emotional impact of leaving home and hometowns, separation from lifelong friends, etc. All of this impacts on the ability of rural students to experience equivalent success to their urban counterparts.

Rating: 7

Additional Comments

As much as there are arrangements that can assist rural schools in a position to team up with businesses, cluster with other local schools and be fortunate in having innovative staff, there is no escaping the fact that for rural students, financial resourcing for their schools and families is imperative for equality of opportunity.