



Public submission made to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

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Submitting as a: Teacher
State: NSW

Summary

Get back to basics. Let us teach.

Something's got to be done about the disrespect that students and some parents show towards teachers - it's just stopping the 'nice' kids from getting a good education.

NAPLANs got to go.

Constant assessment, PLAN data got to go. Too much accountability.

NESA is useless.

New teachers burnt out, leaving.

Experienced teachers not valued, disillusioned.

Main submission

Many moons ago it was established that the primary school curriculum was overcrowded, and yet more 'stuff' has been crammed in ever since....and expected of our students and teachers. Bob Carr was on the right track when he pinioned 'Get back to basics'. Eg There is no way an 'average' student can learn/retain everything by the end of Yr6 that the Maths syllabus prescribes. There is no time in the school day to consolidate lessons/concepts being taught. I have taught in high achieving schools where education is valued at home and children come to school with all their physical, emotional, mental needs being met. These students can keep up. I have also worked in schools of low or average achievers- children who don't have any books in their homes, or they come to school hungry or anxious because dad's in jail again.

Teacher quality - we are expected to differentiate what we teach to suit individual learning needs yet the Dept mandates the same learning programs for all teachers regardless of their experience. The yrs 3-6 Focus On Reading training is a good example of this. It's about reading strategies that should have been taught in

university teacher training. Experienced teachers don't need to do 20 + hours PD and a whopping big folder of theoretical claptrap to learn how to implement a few reading strategies when they've been doing it for years.....and to add to the ineffectiveness, any teacher who does the training becomes an expert. Experienced teachers at a school I was at were given their professional development in the FOR program by a teacher with 2 yrs experience!

Teacher workload- NESA is useless.

Added to the ridiculous workload of teachers is having a national curriculum with outcomes AND the nsw depts expectations that we assess and program with PLAN data. We are CONSTANTLY assessing and have no time to develop rich and engaging lessons.

No matter what PD we are directed to upskill in, there is never any mention of the types of students in our classes. Eg I have had similar classes myself in past schools and still hear from ex colleagues who have classes such as this one in a SYD western suburbs school - 30 students: 2 with no English, 4 with a little English. 4 diagnosed ADHD of which 1 has no medication. 7 with diagnosed learning difficulty, 1 autistic. 2 with emotional disturbance. These are all different children in the same class - this is not unusual in many schools yet the message teachers get from the DEPT is 'look at your NAPLAN results, what are you doing wrong, you're not doing enough, why aren't you differentiating, you need more professional development,.....and while you're at it can you spend about 3 or 4 hours on each student writing mid yr and end of year reports.' The general behaviour and respect in classrooms across the state has deteriorated over the years due to a number of reasons but it's not teacher quality! As a casual working in the Illawarra, I'd like to suggest any of you experts in policy and decision making come and do a day's relief teaching in a yr6 or yr 7 class and then talk about what are the barriers.

I'm glad I'm at the end of my career, and feel sorry for new teachers. I've known many young, vibrant, enthusiastic and idealistic new teachers who are left feeling so inadequate after trying to do everything that's expected of them. I've known many that leave the profession because of burnout after just a few years.

I could go on.....just ask any experienced teacher, we all seem to sing the same song but no-one seems to be listening.