



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

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Summary

Teacher training and knowledge building are essential.

Extra funding is only the answer if spent in the correct areas.

Evidence based teaching must be promoted.

Technology tends to be an expensive distraction.

Main submission

As a teacher of only 6 years experience my teacher training was one highlighting whole language and inquiry based learning. Listening to this approach and the reasons for it sounds impressive but it was very obvious early in my teaching career that this had holes.

As a teacher I didn't have the correct training for students to learn skills these approaches require and promote. Student achievement was more linked to parent education than it was to teacher instruction.

Recently our school have undertaken in explicit direct instruction training. It is through this teacher training and addressing the knowledge of a teacher that we have seen a turn around in student achievement.

An example of this is grammar. As a student who was taught with a whole language approach, I had not idea of what made a clause. I even had a bit of trouble remembering parts of speech such as adjectives and adverbs. Since our teacher PD, I have been able to build on my knowledge and through explicit direct instruction, transfer that knowledge onto the students. Our school results have grown tremendously as a result to the point we have over 50% of our students achieving high growth in grammar NAPLAN results between Grade Three and Grade Five.

In regards to school funding, it is not a case of more is better but what that money is being spent on. If schools spent a little more on teacher training and less on 21st century toys like iPads and laptops student achievement would heavily improve. Too

many schools will take extra funding and use it in ways that make no real evidence based impact on learning.

Schools are caught up in teaching students skills for technology that still doesn't exist. While this is a romantic notion, the fact remains that this has always been the case. Even before the industrial revolution, technologies and jobs were changing. The grasping of fundamental language and mathematics along with history, geography and other areas would be much more beneficial.