

Recipient Details

Name of organisation or individual: [O] NSW Primary Principals Association Rural & Remote Standing Committee

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Responses

Curriculum and assessment

Schools require curriculum experts to work alongside class teachers and leaders. We suggest more consultancy from experts working in classrooms will strength curriculum delivery, provide explicit professional learning for teachers and, address the growing issue of the mismatch between curriculum delivery and assessment expectations from systems and politicians. Teachers have limited to no quality and consistent PL in some areas of the state. There exists inequity in access to quality PL and face-to-face delivery modes have to be prioritised. Systems could explore other across-Stage measures of success including measures of student engagement and relevance of curriculum. Modernisation of learning spaces with flexibilities will enhance student and community connections to school, enhancing the climate of learning environments and provide high quality resourcing for high quality curriculum delivery.

Rating: 7

Teachers and teaching

Incentives to attract teachers to R&R are limited and need a thorough analysis for groups as well as to meet individual contexts. Enhance staffing systems so that teachers can be provided more stability via permanent appointments. Tailor incentives to the local contexts. Provide high quality PL focused on curriculum, behaviour management and working with students and their families with mental health, drug & alcohol and trauma issues. Centralise community sessions and initiatives in groups of schools so that schools can share the load, resources and develop shared documents. Prioritise whole of government approaches as education can't do it alone. Governments and Education leaders to express and show trust for schools and the hard working people working within.

Rating: 7

Leaders and leadership

Need for more administrative support in schools so that teachers and leaders can put a relentless and uninterrupted focus on Instructional Leadership and the building of teacher capacity. An annual FTE in staffing so schools have the flexibility to use this to best suit local context. Lessen system distractions coming from increasingly high level accountabilities and administration functions that are compliance-driven, repetitive and menial. Provide meaningful networking opportunities especially as R&R colleagues have to travel long distances to PL and meetings with no public transport and days either side for travel and need for accommodation. Review salary structure and provide active mentoring e.g. from retired principals. Review staffing entitlements so that there is equality between primary and high school staff ratios and support staff -- more non-teaching executive with expertise e.g. to deal with increasing student wellbeing and behaviour management

and focus on curriculum. Subsidies for further study and additional funding in schools for Leadership PL. More incentives to attract high quality leaders into R&R schools.

Rating: 7

School and Community

Prioritise early learning initiatives. Strengthen support to schools in a whole of government approach around mental health supports, student attendance and active and purposeful partnerships with businesses (but these are very limited in small rural communities). Consider models of collegiality between schools and communities. Interagency models that are purpose-developed to meet local community needs. University outreach programs - more of them. Governments to positively promote schools and education regardless of sector of education and not to just focus on the NAPLAN story -- we do so much more that needs to be celebrated as a nation building learners of the future.

Rating: 7

Information and Communication Technology

Upgrade facilities e.g bandwidths, VC resources, Wifi. Provide experts in ITC so that teachers are not constantly pulled away from teaching & learning to administrate ICT and to be the 'fixit' people. In many areas in R&R there are no teachers with these capacities and the wait time for setting up and maintenance of hardware can be long when calling in people outside the school. We don't want these tasks as they are time and resource consuming. Connectivity is patchy in areas and inconsistent services eg satellites. A need to identify people who can build teacher capacity but with a focus on technology as a teaching and learning tool. PL using ICT can be good but many providers are very costly and this mode of delivery limits flowing discussions and opportunities to model in real time classrooms to support teacher learning. There is a need for online learning for students with highly trained teachers in this mode of curriculum delivery -- for extension learning as well as expanding student experiences beyond their rural settings.

Rating: 7

Entrepreneurship and schools

Issues around crowded curriculum, not having the staff or community experts/supports to drive these initiatives and, the interest and understandings of teachers to deliver these experiences. Many students have to leave their homes and communities to move into further study, training and / work. Additional costs involved with travel, accommodations and living away from home expenses. There exists limited aspiration in students as well in many contexts. Explore possibilities to develop student skills in context of their community e.g. local painters -- making the work context 'real' and achievable.

Rating: 5

Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding

Enhance links to virtual classrooms. Use of expertise and specialised teachers. The Aurora College Model in NSW is positive but needs to expand to assist building of teacher expertise and broaden the extension learning opportunities for more children not the select few. Need for introduction of a sliding scale of staffing to provide more non-teaching positions and to enhance the salary of administration staff. More systemic opportunities and models to work together. In some areas/towns it is realistic that schools may need to combine (this is contextual to locations of course

and requires discussions) so as to enhance educational delivery, the collegiality of staffs and, maintain appropriate student enrolment numbers.

Rating for enrolments: 7

Rating for clusters: 6

Rating for distance education: 7

Rating for boarding: 4

Diversity

Curriculum to be contextual to communities with learning linked to strong Literacy and Numeracy but a focus on the types of work environments that are realistic for the R&R students. Many R&R learning environments are in deterioration and have limited aesthetic appeal to outsiders. Some school sites have the 'bells and whistles' such as high quality gyms, science labs, music programs while other have substandard facilities and resources. Postcode can determine quality of education and this needs to be addressed via needs-based funding models and upgrades to assets within schools. This translates to a lack of pride in place and certainly doesn't contribute to a sense of vibrant, quality learning environments for staff, students and their families. We need to upgrade facilities and image and develop community connection and pride in our schools. Places were students and staff and whole communities want to be in. Virtual classes would support schools/teachers to meet individual needs of students but also greater access to technology devices for students (not BYOD as many families are unable to afford this - it need to be equitable across all schools). Promotional opportunities for city-based proven high quality Instructional Leaders working across R&R schools. Promote rural communities in whole of government promotions and maintenance of the infrastructures (roads, ICT) and support businesses in R&R so that communities can remain vibrant so that youth can stay in towns and not have to move away. Universities to expand outreach study options and promotion of school and community partnerships that are practical and purpose driven. Governments to support these initiatives.

Rating: 7

Transitioning beyond school

Marketing from Universities in R&R areas but with R&R facility, support and access made easier for students and their families. Government promotion of R&R areas for businesses to base in - subsidies for businesses that want to locate in R&R. Keeping the R&R communities viable so less need to go into unemployment or move away from home. University teacher training --- 3 years at University, 1 year above establishment in schools learning their craft with strong mentoring. Expect professionals like teachers, doctors to spend part of their training in R&R areas as an encouragement to consider working in these contexts once graduated. Facilities for share-houses with specialist supports and mentoring during study years. Government financial support for R&R students in city areas - so many additional costs and stresses are experienced so to know these and to have plans to cater for needs. We need to keep R&R towns/areas viable as good places to live and work so whole of government plans will be important to keep driving initiatives.

Rating: 7

Additional Comments

Our NSWPPA R&R Standing Committee has prioritised the need for strong leadership in R&R Education with focused implementation of initiatives and high level accountabilities around

spending and proved and evidence-based links to impacts gained from this spending. It is realised the layers of complexities that are associated with R&R Education, many of which we believe are bound up in the ways in which people choose to live and work and, the wide geographical span of our nation. Needs-based funding is essential as well as addressing complexities of distance, isolation and declining services, facilities and infrastructures in many R&R areas/towns. Attracting teachers to R&R is difficult with many schools experiencing limited to no casual staff and we know of schools having to split normal classes because teachers can't be employed on some days. Student and family complexities are growing with drug and alcohol issues on the rise along with increasing mental health needs resulting in more and more challenging student behaviours and negative impacts on the wellbeing of teachers within these work environments. Many teachers are not well-equipped to work in these changing social contexts that are stressful, time consuming and dealing with the multitude of these issues takes time away from quality teaching and learning. We need to strengthen supports to schools in these areas in a whole of government and NGO model and we need to do this as a priority. Schools are also inundated with administrative tasks and more and more accountabilities and compliance tasks being expected of staff in a national context in which media and many politicians do not promote the role of teachers and schools in a positive light. In no other professional do people have the privilege and capacity to directly influence and build the youth of today into the contributing and active and informed adults of tomorrow. We are hopeful that from this review that priorities are directed at equitable, inclusive and needs-based initiatives that will recognise the complexities of R&R Education and that will delve deeply into all the issues that result in the disparity between education results in R&R schools compared to metropolitan contexts.