



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

Submitter: Origin Foundation  
Submitting as a: Other (philanthropic funder)  
State: NSW

### Summary

#### Executive Summary

The Origin Foundation is a philanthropic foundation focussed on education, largely school education.

We are excited by the prospect that this Review will lead to a greater co-ordination of the successful work being done in school education, and that it will play a role in shifting the discourse from the negative to the positive.

The intent of this submission is:

- To draw the attention of the Review to examples of work which shows how to innovate within existing resources;
- To suggest better integration of funding between philanthropy and Government at all levels; and
- How business can play a role in education.

### Main submission

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#### Submission

1. Teachers and school leadership - How best to support great teaching  
 Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills and Special Advisor on Education Policy to the Secretary General, OECD and the man responsible for PISA was in Australia recently (October 2017). Among other matters, he raised the following:

Teacher professional collaboration is the key to school and system improvement. Australian teachers have significantly more face-to-face teaching time than other OECD countries. Less face-to-face teaching time allows for more intentional collaboration with the profession e.g. lesson observation and other targeted activities such as 1-1 tutoring of students.

His point is not new. Attempts to address this issue in Australia have met with limited success. A stumbling block has been finding the resources and time in the school week to free up teachers from classroom teaching.

In 2014 we funded a piece of work by the Grattan Institute: Making Time for Great Teaching (<https://grattan.edu.au/report/making-time-for-great-teaching/>) which we commend to the Review. Within existing budgets, it looked at how six diverse schools across the country were giving teachers more time. The report provided a methodology that could be followed by other schools.

2. Parent and Community Engagement - Business' contribution

#### 2.1 Accessing parents in the workplace

Research has consistently highlighted the critical role of parental engagement in successful education outcomes for children. However, some parents do not know how to engage their children in learning and, particularly in the area of maths, feel themselves underqualified and lacking in self-confidence.

Business can play a role in helping. The workplace can provide a venue where parents, grandparents and carers can be reached and given skills. We have tested this idea in the Origin workplace. The Origin Foundation funded the development by The Smith Family of Let's Count an evidence-based early learning tool to empower parents and professionals in day-care facilities to pass on maths skills to pre-schoolers.

We requested The Smith Family develop a short-form session that could be given parents/employees in Origin during lunchtimes. So popular have these

been that sessions have taken place in Origin offices around Australia at lunchtimes and in the evenings, and employees have brought in their partners.

The Smith Family are now taking these sessions into other workplaces where the model is being replicated. The Origin Foundation has encouraged other education organisations we fund to share parenting skills in similar sessions.

## 2.2 Employee volunteering in the classroom.

Bringing the curriculum to life for pupils and linking learning to the outside world is a recognised challenge for teachers. This is particularly so in the area of STEM where so many teachers are teaching outside their core competence.

Businesses like Origin have professionals with STEM skills and experience who are often more than willing to go into the classroom and work with teachers to prepare lessons that bring the STEM curriculum to life. Through the Origin Foundation's skilled volunteer program we have mobilised STEM professionals to work with organisations such as the Beacon Foundation, the CSIRO, and Engineers Without Borders who all have school outreach programs welcomed and valued by schools.

Here are programs giving children, often from low SES backgrounds, engagement opportunities and role models they may not otherwise have access to.

## 3. Parent and Community Engagement – Philanthropy

Leading Learning in Education and Philanthropy was a long-term research project funded by the Origin Foundation. One of the findings was the disconnect between what help school principals wanted and what was on offer from program providers, and being funded by philanthropy. The creation of Schools Plus has helped to close this gap.

The fear is that this disconnect continues at a systemic level. The Holy Grail of philanthropy is to provide seed funding for an idea that is then evaluated as having impact and is taken to scale by Government. There is then frustration when this does not happen; when proven programs are not supported by Government school systems. The result is a continuing stream of new programs with no prospect of impact at scale, and which dilute funding resources.

Two initiatives are suggested to better align philanthropic funding with the priorities of Government school systems.

- a) Government school systems should share priorities with philanthropy so that philanthropy can fund in areas where there is need, and synergies may be possible.
  - b) Build a database of what is working. If philanthropy and Government share information on programs that are working then it lessens the prospect of limited resources being misdirected to new programs for which there is no prospect of scaling.
4. Starting a new discourse

The prevailing discourse around school education is largely negative. While not wishing to minimise the challenges, there are schools, teachers and programs that are working and examples of children using education to improve their opportunities in life. ( For example, how many would know that Indigenous children in the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience are completing years 10 and 12 at, or above, the national average.)

A negative discourse makes it doubly difficult for teachers and schools to engage pupils, parents and community. It is time to focus on successes. To celebrate the achievements of young people, teachers, and schools. We need to be talking about a vision for success not failure. When Martin Luther King electrified the civil rights movement in the USA he did not talk about his fears for the future, he talked about his dreams. We need Australia's children to dream of bright futures that will be made possible through engaging with learning.