



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

Submitter: Teach for Australia
Submitting as a: Other (Non profit education organisation)
State: Vic.

Summary

Educational outcomes between each socioeconomic quartile is significant, equivalent to around one year of schooling. The Review offers a timely opportunity to rethink how we can better support teachers and school leaders to address the steady decline in Australian students' outcomes, and bridge the gap between students of different backgrounds.

Teach For Australia's (TFA) experience recruiting, placing and training 550 highly effective teachers and leaders over the past eight years means we can provide a unique perspective of the challenges and opportunities across all aspects of the education system.

This submission presents our views on how to achieve both excellence and equity for students in two parts:

Part A. Driving education system reform reinforces what we know are the key areas for education system reform: initial teacher education, teacher effectiveness, school leadership and system reform. It then details three key areas that would ensure adoption and implementation across the system: providing support for targeted teaching, developing a school leadership agenda, and incentivising and recognising schools through accreditation.

Part B. How Teach For Australia can contribute to education system reform details TFA's progress towards driving reform to date and our future potential not only as a premier and innovative pathway into teaching, but as a system catalyst and a source of system change agents.

Many schools are working incredibly hard to improve outcomes for their students. Smart investments need to be made to build the capacity of all teachers and school leaders to drive excellence and bridge the education gap.

Main submission

Australia's international test results continue to fall, while the difference in educational outcomes between each socioeconomic quartile is significant, equivalent to around one year of schooling. The Review offers a timely opportunity to rethink how we can better support teachers and school leaders to address the steady decline in Australian students' outcomes, and bridge the gap between students of different backgrounds.

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PART A. DRIVING EDUCATION REFORM

As the Issues Paper notes, it is already well established that it is the quality of teachers and school leaders has the greatest impact on the performance of education systems. Governments across the country are already focused on a range of reforms to drive improvements in student outcomes.

- Initial teacher education: the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group showed that the Government was not gaining an optimal return on its \$600 million annual investment in initial teacher education. Reform is needed to more rigorously select students, increase the use of school practicum and improve assessment of classroom readiness.

- Teacher effectiveness: is more important than all other policy levers combined in driving student outcomes. Reform is needed to encourage professional learning and mentoring, provide assessment and curriculum resources, lift the status of the teaching profession and address STEM shortages.
- School leadership: is the second most powerful driver of student outcomes, but there is an impending leadership gap with many principals set to retire within a generation, and a widespread shortage of suitable candidates. Reform is needed to identify and develop leaders and improve principal preparation.
- System innovation: ultimately, mechanisms are needed to drive transformational innovation and system reform across all Australian schools. We need to encourage governments, businesses, community partners, parents and entrepreneurs to work together with schools to leverage innovative ideas that improve student outcomes.

While best practices are known, adoption is often slow, with student outcomes continuing their 15-year decline and the gap between students of different backgrounds persisting. The challenge is how to roll out system level reforms across different levels of government, and seek system adoption of best practices. TFA has three suggestions on ways to drive this change.

A1. PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR TARGETED TEACHING

The education system seeks to teach all students the same curriculum at the same time. With the typical Year 9 class having a seven-year spread in student proficiency levels, the inevitable result is that struggling students are left behind, while more advanced students are prevented from learning at a faster rate. This is a significant factor in Australia's poor performance. There are a number of areas where teachers and school leaders can be supported to target their teaching.

- Develop formative assessments

Teachers typically teach the same curriculum to all students at the same time, with limited capacity to target teaching to each student's proficiency level.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) could develop validated assessment tools against the national curriculum so teachers can readily identify each student's learning proficiency level.

This is already being done in New Zealand through a Progress and Consistency Tool (including Learning Progression Frameworks and an Assessment Resource Bank), which supports teachers to make judgements about students' progress and achievement in relation to the curriculum standards.

- Curate teaching resources for each stage of curriculum

Each of Australia's 300,000 teachers develop their own lesson plans and curriculum resources, making targeted teaching exceptionally challenging.

ACARA could curate teaching resources against the national curriculum, so that teachers are not starting from scratch in developing the materials they need to teach students by proficiency level.

- Create new roles for 'Master Teachers' or Coaches for early career teachers

Most students emerge from initial teacher education not fully prepared for the classroom, with around one-third not entering the profession within 10 months of graduating and 40-50 per cent dropping out in the first five years. Few are equipped to undertake targeted teaching.

Evidence shows classroom observation and quality feedback against an evidence-informed framework for effective teaching (such as Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching) for early career teachers is a powerful driver of improved teaching practice and retention, and can support implementation of targeted teaching. Rethinking how the school workforce is deployed – through system policies that limit crowding of both the curriculum and additional school programs, and school level decisions around class sizes and unnecessary meetings – would help the average Australian school provide this essential early career support.

- Encourage collaborative learning using a rigorous evidence base

Teachers have limited time to focus on learning with colleagues, which results in limited collaboration and adaptive change.

Rethinking how the school workforce is organised would allow teachers to work together on targeted teaching and evaluative thinking, identifying student needs and best practices to improve learning through access to a rigorous evidence base.

A national evidence body that conducts education research trials, clearly communicates the results, and supports processes in schools for continuous learning, implementation and adoption would improve access to and take up of a rigorous evidence base, as per the Productivity Commission recommendation on the Education Evidence Base and the work of Social Ventures Australia's Evidence for Learning.

A2. DEVELOP A SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AGENDA

School leadership is a major driver of student outcomes, yet over 35 per cent of principals report receiving no preparation for their role and, among those that did, only 50 per cent considered the training to be relevant and high quality. In addition, 75 per cent of our leaders are aged over 50. A program of initiatives to build leadership capacity is needed.

- Develop targeted leadership training

There are currently no substantial leadership training/experience offerings targeted at identifying and developing future school leaders exist in Australia, particularly in schools serving disadvantaged communities.

By contrast, top performing education nations identify talent early and combine formal training, promotion, mentoring and networking to develop future leaders.

At least four jurisdictions are reviewing their offerings (NSW, WA, NT, SA), indicating momentum for change.

Build compelling leadership training offerings for top talent, based on best practices including:

- competitive selection to identify leaders;
- substantial in-class training on people management, managing change, managing self, and instructional leadership;
- coaching to support in-school leadership work; and
- implementing change initiatives within current leadership roles.

- Empower leaders to lead

School leaders have limited autonomy to drive whole of school reform.

Provide school leaders with greater autonomy to:

- control pay, hiring and firing with appropriate support from the central department;
- pay more in shortage areas (including STEM fields) and disadvantaged or poorly performing schools;
- provide multiple sources of feedback for teachers; and
- develop support roles (chief operating officers) to allow principals to focus on instructional and people leadership.

A3. INCENTIVISE AND RECOGNISE SCHOOLS THROUGH ACCREDITATION

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) could be asked to develop a "simple but rigorous" accreditation model as part of a new national framework that would encourage and incentivise schools to gain accreditation as a School of Teaching Excellence.

A similar approach was developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research for Victoria in the 2000s. This was enthusiastically embraced by Victorian schools, with 96 per cent gaining accreditation from 2005 to 2009.

All schools could be encouraged to achieve accreditation by 2022—with flexibility in how to deliver the elements—with this becoming an important performance indicator for jurisdictions, across a small number of key dimensions that are demonstrated to improve student outcomes.

- Multiple forms of feedback
 - Adjusted student outcomes
 - Student feedback
 - Observation
 - Parent feedback
- Professional development linked to performance needs
- Effective induction and mentoring for all early career teachers
- Targeted teaching for all students

PART B. HOW TEACH FOR AUSTRALIA CAN CONTRIBUTE TO EDUCATION SYSTEM REFORM

After only eight years, TFA has become a strategic part of the initial teacher education and school system, attracting large cohorts of outstanding individuals through an attractive mission driven employment-based pathway into education.

Candidates are selected for their ability to lead and drive transformational change to tackle educational disadvantage as teachers, school leaders, entrepreneurs and policy leaders. By partnering with schools serving disadvantaged communities (often in regional areas) and filling vacancies in hard to staff subjects including STEM, TFA is improving student and school outcomes.

The effectiveness of the program has been demonstrated through two independent evaluations, against the six key areas of our impact model.

The most recent evaluation in 2017 found that TFA Associate teachers outperform other teachers against all the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership ‘proficient’ and ‘highly accomplished’ teacher standards, comparing each after two years in the classroom.

Along with ACARA supporting curriculum reform and AITSL improving teaching and leadership standards, TFA can act as a system reform catalyst and provide a source of system change agents.

B1. AS A SYSTEM REFORM CATALYST

TFA offers a way of demonstrating and diffusing best practice and innovative ways of improving teacher quality and leadership development across the key areas of education system reform.

- INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION
 - i) Pioneering an employment-based pathway into teaching: TFA is the first, and only currently active, employment-based pathway into teaching in Australia, with a leadership development program informed by international best practice through the Teach For All network.
 - ii) Exemplifying the TEMAG agenda:
 - Proactive national recruitment and marketing
 - Rigorous selection process, including selection days, against eight essential criteria for effective teaching and leading
 - Early career coaching and support
 - Extensive use of practicum
 - Delivering accelerated development

The future:

- i) Sharing best practices with universities: Documenting and sharing best practice, including university staff attending our selection days.

An innovative, bespoke employment-based pathway: Through our partnership with the Australian Catholic University (ACU), TFA will achieve:

- greater balance of theory with practicum and continuous skill enhancement;
 - integrated support model with TFA, ACU and School Mentor; and
 - an appropriate academic workload for employment-based pathway.
- TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS
 - i) Improving instructional leadership: TFA's Teaching and Leadership Advisers – experienced Master Teachers/Coaches who provide classroom observation and feedback – are a proven intervention, as recognised by the recent evaluation. TFA trains existing teachers in schools as mentors to provide effective coaching to Associates.
 - ii) TFA demonstrating strong retention: The latest data (TFA's 2017 survey) shows that 65 per cent of Associates remain in schools, and 80 per cent in schools or the broader education system. This is stronger than traditional pathways, with around one-third of initial teacher education students

dropping out of their degree, another third not entering the profession within 10 months of graduating, and 40-50 per cent dropping out in the first five years.

The future:

- i) Support the spread of Master Teachers and Coaches across the education system: TFA is developing a practical, evidence-based Mentor Development Program with regional professional learning communities to be rolled out in 2018. TFA could advise schools or systems on how to adopt robust coaching and mentoring in their schools, available for all teachers.
 - ii) Stronger retention among early career teachers in schools serving disadvantaged communities: TFA's work to lift retention (such as career planning support through trusted mentors) will be shared with state and territory governments to provide ideas for lifting retention across their systems.
 - iii) Improving teacher recruitment: TFA could share our model to attract top talent with schools, including how regions can 'grow their own'.
 - iv) Expanding into primary schools to improve teacher effectiveness: TFA could deploy subject specialists (STEM) into primary schools.
- > SCHOOL LEADERSHIP
- i) A pipeline of school leaders driving innovation: TFA's selection and training ensures Associates and Alumni are focused on driving change in classrooms and across the system. TFA has placed 550 Associates to date, increasing to 800-850 by 2019. The 2017 evaluation found that most Alumni are in leadership positions four years out. From Cohorts 2010-2015 (as of March 2017), 72 Victorian Alumni were in school leadership positions. In eight years, TFA has produced three principals and five assistant principals.

The future:

- i) A pipeline of school leaders for disadvantaged schools across Australia: The power of the 'Teach For' model in driving changes increases significantly over time, as Alumni leaders develop with experience and successive cohorts build critical mass in the system.
- ii) Teach To Lead: Our two-year leadership course for middle leaders in disadvantaged schools uses competitive selection to ensure only top talent is chosen, and provides comprehensive coaching that is not otherwise available.

- SYSTEM INNOVATION

- i) Using innovative tools to improve instruction: TFA provides comprehensive teacher feedback for Associates through rated classroom observations and student feedback surveys (Tripod, Pivot). Two Alumni created Maths Pathway, which delivers targeted maths teaching in 170 schools.

The future:

- i) TFA could work with AITSL and ACARA to help develop best practice models that can be adopted across the system.

AITSL – TFA could inform best practice teacher feedback models to support national reform, or undertake Australia’s first randomised control trial to measure the student progress being achieved by teachers.

ACARA – TFA’s staff and Alumni engage ACARA on how to adopt targeted teaching across the system.

B2. AS A SOURCE OF SYSTEM CHANGE AGENTS

TFA also offers a way to stimulate innovation by leveraging top talent (TFA Associates, Alumni and partners) to drive long-term system change in Australia’s education system.

- INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

- i) Attracting top talent into teaching: 8,000 applications for 550 positions; 16th in the 2016 Australian Association of Graduate Employers Top 100 graduate employers survey; average ATAR is 95. In 2017, 50 per cent had advanced degrees, 82 per cent had professional work experience and 100 per cent have leadership capability; and ~50 per cent of Teach For Australia applicants are STEM Qualified

The future:

- i) Lifting the status of the teaching profession: Successive cohorts can build a critical mass of top talent in the system and help to change perceptions of the teaching profession. International evidence shows the ability to attract top talent grows as brand awareness increases. Ten per cent of Oxford and Cambridge graduates applied to Teach First in 2012. TFA is raising the status of teaching as a career path in leading universities as students see the best and the brightest – particularly those with a STEM background – going into teaching through TFA.

- TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

- i) Lifting student outcomes: Principals report TFA Associates are lifting student outcomes. To date, this impact is in 132 schools and 6,000 classrooms, for 130,000 students.

The future:

- i) Lifting student outcomes – significant long-term system impact: The impact on student outcomes rises exponentially as new cohorts are injected into the system, Alumni are retained and improve their teaching practice, and critical mass is achieved in the system.

- SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

- i) Changing school culture: The 2017 evaluation found Associates have a positive impact on schools and peers, adding value in the both the staff room and the classroom. Their talent and training means Associates and Alumni improve school culture, through: better conversations on teaching and learning; high expectations and unconditional positive regard for students; preparedness to take on extra challenges; and energy and ideas to lift school performance.
- ii) Whole school turnarounds: As Alumni congregate in leadership roles in schools, they help to drive whole school improvement. Examples include: Mill Park, Southern River, Tuggeranong, Horsham Secondary Colleges.

The future:

- i) Major performance improvement in hundreds of schools across Australia: With time to build critical mass and congregate in leadership teams within schools, the model drives improvement in many schools across the system. Research identified Teach First as a major factor in transforming London schools from being the lowest to the highest performing schools in England between 2003 and 2011. Teach First partner schools improved by an extra third of a grade per student per subject compared to similar schools without Teach First participants.

- SYSTEM INNOVATION

- i) The seeds of whole system reform are emerging: The latest data, TFA's 2017 Alumni survey, shows 65 per cent remain in schools, and 80 per cent in schools or the broader education system including: three principals and five assistant principals; 10 Alumni in social enterprise and 14 in NGOs driving change; and Federal and State Ministerial education advisers and department of education officials.

The future:

- i) Contributing to whole system reform through extensive networks: In the longer term, TFA can be a key contributor to whole system reform. Teach First (established 2003) and Teach For America (1990) show: the model contributes to system transformation across cities – London, New Orleans, Oakland, Washington D.C., Denver; and that top talent drives change from all parts of the system, for example Teach For America has produced: 50,000 Alumni, 83 per cent still in teaching or community organisations; 1,120 principals; 1,000+ education entrepreneurs; and 500 policy/advocacy leaders and 150 elected officials.