

## Recipient Details

Name of organisation or individual: [O] Think Square: Learn Happy

Reference Type: Education consultant / Educational games developer

State or territory: Vic

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## Responses

### Curriculum and assessment

Assessment is rigid and often does not paint the full picture. I have had teachers base reports off one online test and claim a student was at Year 9 standard when in the first few weeks of teaching it was clear this Year 7 student was at about a grade four level. I think we need to change the culture of testing and assessing so that it is seen as a way of providing students with the skills they need, not as a report on their ability. A solid knowledge of curriculum will help with this as teachers then know what it is they are assessing.

Assessment should be much broader than it is currently. Think about how companies like Google hire staff and the sort of things they value (creativity, problem solving, making things) and compare that to our testing (right/wrong answers that do not value the process)

Rating: 3

### Teachers and teaching

Outside of the family, teachers have the greatest influence on a child's learning. We need to invest more into their ongoing learning (especially in rural areas where opportunities for PD are limited, or come at great cost). Less face to face contact hours would allow teachers to know the curriculum better, work together more often, reflect on their practise, observe peers, plan more effectively, know their student better...the list goes on. Reducing teachers face to face contact hours has wonderful results but are we willing to make that investment?

I think a higher academic standard is required, especially for Primary Teaching courses. Too many teachers I work with in the primary sector fail to grasp basic mathematical concepts. It is scary how many people go into education because 'they like kids' but not necessarily learning. If we are teaching students to value growth mindsets and lifelong learning we better be sure we are modelling it as a profession first.

Rating: 7

### Leaders and leadership

If we are talking leadership let's start from the very top. The minister for education and training.

I think it is ridiculous that in a country so full of qualified individuals we have people in this role who have never set foot inside a classroom as a teacher. I think this person should have at least worked for 10 years in education (preferably in, public, private, rural and indigenous settings) before they seek to lead. How do these people know what conditions for teachers are like, how do they understand the problems teachers face, how do they know what works and what doesn't unless they have tested it for themselves. I think it is laughable that someone can make policy in an area they know nothing about!

Rating: 5

### School and Community

A sense of belonging and community is important not only for students but for their families. School events provide opportunities for parents to get together, make friends and become more involved in their child's learning. Community can be a huge protective factor for students as well as a big motivator for continued schooling. Developing community is not valued for the most part, teachers who give up their lunchtime to play sport and run activities for students do so off their own bat with no extra time allowance given, no financial incentive etc. I don't know if changing that would improve things or make it worse because then teachers would be doing them for time/money. Principals should value staff who go above and beyond to develop positive relationships with students. It seems the pressure is on them to value academics first and foremost

Rating: 6

### Information and Communication Technology

Technology is incredible, but I think there is a lot of opportunity for students to use devices outside a school setting. Of course it is important and I am grateful that I know how to use a computer, create a website, edit photos etc. I think we are looking in this area for a quick fix to problems that go a whole lot deeper. Student engagement, assessment etc. In a lot of ways the technology that was supposed to free us has enslaved us.

Rating: 2

### Entrepreneurship and schools

As a teacher turned educational entrepreneur I am a bit biased about this. I love the thought of students running with an idea and learning the skills they need as they go. This is one of my strongest memories from high school. In Year 11 we had to run a business, I chose to do a cookie drive where I took orders and made biscuits for those who ordered. Over 720 cookies and 12 hours later and I had made a whopping \$36 (A massive \$3 per hour). It was a great learning experience, one I have never forgotten.

Over the past 5 years I have started 3 different companies. All three could not have existed 15 years ago but because technology enables us to search for suppliers, provide files, build apps, edit designs etc this is not only possible but easy. Technology becomes far more important/relevant to me when it has a context. I am not learning about it removed from reality but learning so I can do something I really want to.

Rating: 7

### Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding

Providing access to high quality PD and teacher training for rural schools is extremely important.

Currently most rural schools have to drive to cities or regional centres to access this which comes at a big cost both financially and in terms of staff time.

For some students distance education is all they have so for them making this a priority is the most important thing you could do.

Rating for enrolments: 6

Rating for clusters: 5

Rating for distance education: 5

Rating for boarding: 3

Diversity

I think it would be better to use the word 'recognise' or 'celebrate' rather than focus on. Growing up in country Victoria there wasn't much diversity but I'm sure celebrating and recognising diversity was important for those students who were (for lack of a better word) different.

Rating: 3

Transitioning beyond school

Rating: 4

Additional Comments

I hope my responses help build more skilled, confident and healthy young people.

Cheers,

Andrew