EVIDENCE, EQUITY + EXCELLENCE IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

NATIONAL SCHOOLS FORUM
MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY
20 NOVEMBER 2017
Labor believes that every child in every school deserves a world-class education.

Australian schools are great schools. Our principals and teachers work tirelessly to see that students reach their potential, and parents and communities play a crucial role in supporting them.

A great education is about much more than individual achievement. Nothing is more important to building our national prosperity, unlocking opportunity and reducing and abolishing inequality than education.

If we are to rise to the challenge of a rapidly changing economy, and compete globally for good and well paid jobs in Australia – we need to make sure that our schools are the best in the world.

That is why Labor is committed to properly funding our schools, and restoring every dollar of the $17 billion that the Turnbull Government has cut.

I want to offer every Australian who cares about our education system a clear choice at the next election. I’m not satisfied with leaving Australian schools and students in the middle of the pack. I want to see better schools, better results and great teachers who are highly valued, well-paid professionals.

Today’s National Schools Forum is about helping find practical ways to achieve this.

We’ve invited the people who have the most relevant experience - teachers, principals and education experts - to help identify the changes that we need to build the best education system in the world.

A Shorten Labor Government is committed to ensuring that every school, every teacher and every principal has the resources they need to ensure that every Australian child receives a quality education. They deserve nothing less.

Thank you for taking the time to join us today.

Bill Shorten
Leader of the Opposition
Worrying about our children’s education is a full-time job for many parents. As a nation, we need to put the same thought and care into building an education system that delivers for every child.

The greatest gift Australia can give all our children is an excellent education – one that helps them find their passion, make the most of their potential and be well equipped to live life and participate in the workforce.

A strong and well performing school system is the best opportunity we have to make the most of our strengths and to tackle disadvantage, giving all young people a solid foundation for the future.

A great education system is the key to national prosperity. It is more important than ever, as our economy transforms and automation reduces the number of low-skilled jobs. The jobs of the future will require a great education. We want our young people to be well equipped with literacy and numeracy skills, and we want them to be collaborative, confident, creative, adaptable and capable of facing challenges.

Every child can learn. Each child has varied strengths and development needs, and each should make good progress in their learning.

Every Australian school should be first rate. Every child needs to be learning every day. Principals, school leaders and teachers should be supported and valued – with the skills, resources and development opportunities they need to teach every child. Parents and carers should be included in partnership with schools to help children value education and make the most of their opportunities.

Our school system should foster collaboration and cooperation amongst teachers and schools, not competition. Teachers and school leaders need the time and resources to be life-long learners themselves, continually evaluating the evidence and adopting the practices that work best for the children in their classrooms.

A Labor government would work closely with principals, school leaders, teachers, and their representatives, to achieve this vision. We won’t always agree on every element of the best way forward, but we must have an open dialogue and frank discussion.

I look forward to the National Schools Forum and the opportunity to discuss the changes needed to ensure excellence, tackle educational disadvantage, and make certain all Australian children reach their full potential.

Tanya Plibersek
Deputy Leader of the Opposition
Shadow Minister for Education and Training
10:00AM  OPENING SESSION

Mary Delahunty, Facilitator

Welcome
Professor Glyn Davis AC, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne
James Merlino, Victorian Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and
Emergency Services

Opening Address
Bill Shorten, Leader of the Opposition

10:30AM  SESSION ONE: VISION FOR AUSTRALIA’S SCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM

Melbourne Declaration Goals
Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence.
Goal 2: All Young Australians become:
  • successful learners
  • confident and creative individuals
  • active and informed citizens

Do the Melbourne Declaration goals remain relevant? Are updates needed to reflect the school system we want for the future?
What are the top three reform priorities that could be driven by the Commonwealth to help achieve the Melbourne Declaration goals?

Panel members:
Tony Shaw – Principal Glen Park Primary
Susan Hopgood – President of Education International and Federal Secretary of the Australian Education Union
Darren Godwell – CEO Stronger Smarter
Professor Geoff Masters AO – CEO Australian Council for Educational Research

11:30AM  SESSION TWO: IMPROVING LEARNING OUTCOMES

How do we ensure all students are making good progress over time?
What are the barriers that prevent improvements in learning outcomes?
How do we improve the tools available to teachers to measure learning progress and respond to every child’s needs in the classroom?
How do we strengthen and improve education evidence in our classrooms and schools?
What should the priorities be for the Commonwealth in this area?

Panel members:
Shelby Papadopoulos – Principal Colac Primary School
Kevin McKay OAM – Principal Dandenong North Primary School
Matt Deeble – Director Evidence for Learning, Social Ventures Australia
Chris O’Connell – Principal, St Gerard’s Primary School
1:00PM  **LUNCH**

1:30PM  **SESSION THREE: RAISING THE STATUS OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION**

How do we ensure that teaching is valued by our community, so we attract, develop and retain great teachers?
How can we better prepare and support new entrants into teaching?
How can we recognise, strengthen and support the role of our teachers, to drive sustained change in learning outcomes?
What should the priorities be for the Commonwealth in this area?

Panel members:
Seir Holley – Leading Teacher, Keilor Heights Primary School
Professor Tania Aspland – President Australian Council Deans of Education
Samantha Thornton – Leading Teacher, Diversity and Inclusion, Iramoo Primary School
Associate Professor Larissa McLean Davies – Associate Dean, Learning and Teaching, Melbourne Graduate School of Education

2:30PM  **SESSION FOUR: SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

How can we better prepare and support aspiring principals and leaders?
How can we foster and support our school leaders to drive change in their schools?
How can we identify and support our best principals to work in hard-to-staff schools?
What should the priorities be for the Commonwealth in this area?

Panel members:
Beth Blackwood – CEO Association of Heads of Independent Schools Australia
Professor Stephen Dinham OAM – Associate Dean and Professor of Instructional Leadership, Melbourne Graduate School of Education
Rob Nairn – Executive Director, Australian Secondary Principals Association
Dennis Yarrington – President Australian Primary Principals Association
Ellie McGinness – Principal, St Joseph’s School, Sorrento

3:30PM  **CLOSING SESSION**

Summary and Next Steps
Tanya Plibersek, Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for Education and Training
The Theatre is **room 153, on level 1, North Wing**. Enter the university via Royal Parade or Grattan Street.

Additional maps can be found at: [https://maps.unimelb.edu.au/](https://maps.unimelb.edu.au/)

Any problems finding the venue please call Rachael Durrant on 0419 109 866
Mary Delahunty has high-level experience in Media, Government, and the Not-For-Profit Sectors.

A former interviewer and presenter with ABC television and commercial networks. Mary is best known for leading ABC TV News and current affairs programs, the 7.30 Report and Four Corners. She received Australia’s most prestigious award in journalism, the Gold Walkley, for her international reporting.

Mary served for seven years as a Victorian Government Minister in senior portfolios. She carried significant executive responsibility and a high media profile as Minister for Education, as Victoria’s longest serving Arts Minister and first female Planning Minister. She was Minister for Women’s Affairs and Minister responsible for the Cultural programme of the Commonwealth Games.

A Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors she is an experienced Board Director and runs her own communications and strategy business. She is the recently retired Chair of Orchestra Victoria and is a Non-Executive Director of several Not-For-Profit organisations:

- Melbourne Recital Centre Ltd
- Centre for Advancing Journalism, Melbourne University
- Chair McClelland Sculpture Park+Gallery Ltd
- National Library of Australia

Mary is a published author, her memoir *Public Life: Private Grief* was released in 2010 and her second book *GRAVITY: Inside the PM’s office during her last year and final days* was published 2014.

Mary Delahunty has a red rose, bred for, and named after her.
Labor has committed to fully restore the $17 billion the Government has cut from schools around the country. We want to make sure all our schools are properly funded so they can provide the best learning outcomes for all students.

Australian governments still invest less in education than our Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) counterparts. Public expenditure on education is 3.9 per cent of gross domestic product, below the OECD average of 4.4 per cent. Private spending on education is significantly higher than the OECD average.

The advice from the OECD is clear: governments need to “make tackling low performance a priority in their education policy agenda – and translate that priority into additional resources.” The OECD also states that student performance is better in countries where resources are distributed more equitably across schools.

A funding model that locks in a Commonwealth contribution of 80 per cent of funding for non-government schools and just 20 per cent for government schools is not fair and does not adequately target need.

Labor is committed to working with states and territories to bring all schools to their fair level of funding and to ensure disadvantaged schools receive the largest funding increases in the shortest timeframe.

Labor will work collaboratively with states, systems and key stakeholders to further refine our funding model to make sure it adequately targets need.

Restoring investment in schools can create economic growth and opportunity. The OECD notes that for countries like Australia, “ensuring all 15 year olds attain at least PISA baseline ... the gains would average out to a 16 per cent higher GDP. In other words, the gains from tackling low performance dwarf any conceivable cost of improvement.”

The Schools Forum will focus on ensuring our investment will get the biggest improvements in learning outcomes for our students.

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When making a major investment in education, it is crucial that we consider the school system we want for our future – what our most important aspirations are as a nation.

The 2008 Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians is the most recent statement from Education Ministers about our collective goals for our school education system. It states that:

*As a nation Australia values the central role of education in building a democratic, equitable and just society—a society that is prosperous, cohesive and culturally diverse, and that values Australia’s Indigenous cultures as a key part of the nation’s history, present and future.*

*Improving educational outcomes for all young Australians is central to the nation’s social and economic prosperity and will position young people to live fulfilling, productive and responsible lives.*

*Young Australians are therefore placed at the centre of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals.*

These goals are:
- Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence.
- All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens.

Labor’s proposition is that these overarching goals continue to accurately reflect our aspirations. There may be updates to these goals or secondary goals that are worthwhile considering.

It is also important to note that while some academic measures of performance can be tracked over time, the second key goal relating to confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens, does not have equally measurable outcomes. Yet it is just as important to the future success of our children and our nation.

Summarised ahead is Australia’s performance in education. It shows that we have further work to do to achieve our goals of an excellent and highly equitable school system. The community and family background of children in Australia is still a significant predictor of outcomes. We want to focus throughout the Schools Forum on how we can raise outcomes for all students, but we must recognise that this is crucially important for students who more frequently fall behind including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, children from regional and rural communities and children from low-SES communities.

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Commonwealth role in education

The Commonwealth does not run or operate schools, but plays a critical role in funding and in national leadership. Determining where national leadership is most required to help achieve our overarching goals is the defining question of the Schools Forum.

When last in Government Labor negotiated a significant reform agenda with states and territories, first through the National Education Agreement and then the National Education Reform Agreement. The Coalition Government jettisoned these reform plans. Should Labor be re-elected we want to focus on the reforms and changes that will drive the biggest change in outcomes.

The Commonwealth has a key role in shaping the national architecture for schools and in those areas where national consistency is important – such as national curriculum, data and transparency, and principal and teacher standards. To successfully drive change, Commonwealth reforms should avoid overlapping with reform work already being implemented by state and territory governments.

We also need to consider what we want our school systems and individual schools to do less of, in order to make room for important changes that will have the most impact.

Labor wants to ensure that principals, teachers and key stakeholders have a strong voice at the national level, and are active partners in determining what changes need to occur, and how those changes should be implemented.

KEY QUESTIONS:

Do the Melbourne Declaration goals remain relevant? Are updates needed to reflect the school system we want for the future?

What are the top three national reform priorities that would help achieve the Melbourne Declaration goals?
Australia’s school system must be one that delivers on equity and excellence. Overall, Australia has a high performing school system, achieving above the OECD average in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores and slightly above average on equity measures; however, we can deliver better for our students on both fronts.

Australia’s performance in PISA testing for 15 year olds has declined over time:

- In maths, the proportion of low performers has increased from 14 per cent to 22 per cent between 2003 and 2015. The proportion of high performers has halved over the same time frame.
- In science and reading, the proportion of low performers also increased but to a lesser extent.7

Many countries are consistently performing better than Australia, including Canada, Finland, Singapore, Estonia and Japan.

While the Australian school system has similar levels of equity to the OECD average, we should aspire to do far better.

Students from low SES backgrounds are five times more likely to be low performers than those from advantaged backgrounds. Some 33 per cent of disadvantaged students in Australia were low performers in mathematics in PISA 2012 compared to only eight per cent of advantaged students.7

Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are well behind those of the general population. While there have been improvements in Year 12 attainment for Indigenous students, the only area where we are on track to halve the gap in NAPLAN results is Year 9 numeracy.

Outcomes for students with disability are also significantly worse, and many parents and carers report having to battle to get their children the support they need. The latest data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) shows that for people aged 20 to 24 years, only 64.8 per cent of those with a disability had completed Year 12 or equivalent compared to 80.9 per cent of those with no disability.8

Outcomes also vary by location, with students from regional schools on average one year behind those in metropolitan schools in reading literacy and those in remote schools around one-and-a-half years of schooling behind. There are twice as many young Australians from rural and remote backgrounds who are low-achievers as those in metropolitan areas and half as many high achievers.9

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Improving learning outcomes must be at the core of any consideration of school education. While some learning outcomes, such as literacy and numeracy, can be measured and tracked over time, we must recognise schools are also equipping students with a range of other skills essential for their future – such as resilience, collaboration, creativity, cooperation and problem solving. These so-called ‘21st century’ skills are likely to become even more important in the future for our young people to access highly skilled and well paid jobs.

Many stakeholders have suggested that as a nation we need to invest more in the explicit teaching, measurement and tracking of these other capabilities.

**Readiness and willingness to learn**

Schools contend with a range of issues that impact student learning outcomes, particularly with issues in the family and home environment as well as student wellbeing and mental health issues.

Parental and family engagement and support is important. In Australia, around 30.2 per cent of Australian low performers in PISA came from schools where principals report that there is little or no pressure from parents for high academic standards.” Communication and engagement with parents as active partners in a child’s learning strengthens and supports outcomes overall.

Children’s starting points vary. The Australian Early Development Census shows that 22 per cent of Australian children are starting school developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains. This varies depending on the socioeconomic status of the community a child comes from. In the most advantaged communities less than 16 per cent of Australian children were developmentally vulnerable, rising to 33 per cent in the most disadvantaged communities.”

Access to additional services and supports such as speech therapy, occupational therapy and behavioural interventions support children with their learning, and help provide teachers and schools with the support they need to progress learning.

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«OECD, Low-performing students: why they fall behind and how to help them succeed, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2016, Table 0.5, p. 5.
«Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), Findings from the AEDC, AEDC website, 2015, accessed on 8 November 2017.
Wellbeing and mental health considerations are also critical. The Australian Child and Adolescent Mental Health Survey shows one in seven children and teenagers experiences a mental health condition. Further, the probability of children experiencing a serious mental illness has increased steadily over the past five years: Poor mental health and wellbeing among students is associated with reduced school attendance and poor engagement in the classroom. Good mental health and wellbeing is needed so that students in the classroom are ready to learn.

**Student progress**

At the beginning of their school journey and at the start of each school year, children arrive with a wide range of different starting points, capabilities and learning needs. It is the job of a skilled teacher to be able to assess, monitor and adapt or target teaching to ensure those varied needs are met.

A greater focus on the progress each individual child is making in key learning areas would ensure that varied needs are met. It would also give a more accurate measurement of change over time than ‘achievement only’ measures, which are currently the focus of our school system.

Ensuring all students make great progress in their learning is of vital importance, but there is not currently an agreed conception of what progress looks like or how we should measure it. Professor John Hattie has stated there needs to be debate and agreement amongst educators about what a year’s progress looks like, and the development of a common conception of progress among teachers.

Professor Geoff Masters has stated that we need to reconceptualise assessment, so it helps “establish and understand where learners are in their long-term learning progress, to evaluate growth over time; and to provide teachers, students, parents, school leaders, system managers and governments with quality information to promote further learning.” There has been increasing work in Australia on formative assessment, to monitor student learning and help provide targeted feedback to maximise learning.

There are a large range of different assessment tools available to systems, schools and teachers, and navigating the range of options available and determining which would be the best fit for an individual system or school can be difficult. Some have suggested the Commonwealth could have a role in assessing the efficacy of different assessment tools.

There have been calls for a greater focus on value-added measures, and providing teachers and school leaders with the tools to better analyse and then act upon their own performance data.

Some schools are increasingly using ‘small data’—mostly that which is collected at the school level—to help determine how well their students are understanding key components of literacy, writing, mathematics and science, and using that to target what students need to learn next. In this way, they are differentiating teaching based on the individual needs of students.

To embed a greater focus on progress, our schools and teachers require both time to devote to this purpose and the necessary tools. It is also important that assessment, data and greater focus on progress is seen as an enabling tool—to help maximise individual learning, not for accountability processes.

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Evidence in our education system

Teaching practice informed by evidence can help progress learning. It is important to distinguish two levels of evidence – overarching research evidence, and the evidence that teachers and schools gather about their students’ learning.

The role of evidence can be captured as:

… teachers critically engaging with educational literature as well as using their own classrooms and schools as site for investigation, to improve their knowledge and practice … This means that school leaders and teachers should be able to draw on a variety of evidence, from top-down systemic requirements to ground-level evidence from students and teachers. By adopting a broader definition and view of evidence, and integrating a less-prescriptive approach to evidence-based practice, schools and practitioners will, we argue, be better equipped to adopt, adapt and create practices that promote educational benefits for all students."

At the overarching level, there is a wealth of research and information about what works in school education, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy, but this is not always easily translated to classrooms settings. In some instances, it is taking too long for schools to phase out popular methods of instruction and replace them with alternatives that have a stronger evidence base.

In a recent paper, Peter Goss, writing for the Centre for Strategic Education, suggested Australia needs an adaptive education system in which excellence is identified and systematically spread and amplified. There are many brilliant schools and great teachers in Australia and we should be able to systematically identify what makes them great and help spread those practices to other schools.

The Productivity Commission (PC) recently undertook a review into the National Education Evidence Base and identified the following key gaps in relation to school education:
• the evaluation of policies, programs and education practices in Australian schools and early childhood education and care services to identify what works best, for whom and in what circumstances; and
• building an understanding of how to turn best practice into common practice on the ground, which is as important as evaluating what works best."

The PC also recommended that Commonwealth, state and territory governments should pursue a national policy effort to develop a high-quality and relevant Australian evidence base about what works best in school education, and recommended that the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) role be broadened to fulfil this function."

To ensure evidence-informed practice occurs on the ground, research findings need to be synthesised, summarised and presented in digestible forms. The United Kingdom has established the Education Endowment Fund to achieve this objective and to commission independent research to determine the effectiveness of different interventions. In the United States, the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) reviews the existing research on different programs, products, practices and policies in education to help provide educators with the
information they need to make evidence-based decisions.

Gathering and application of evidence is something that must be fostered at different levels in the school system. It isn’t something that can be imposed nationally, but there may be a role for the Commonwealth in fostering a national evidence base.

School-based evidence could include more opportunities for teachers to undertake action research—where teachers are evaluating their own practice and testing assumptions about what works, guided by the overarching evidence and adding to the evidence base.

Collaboration is also a key element of evidence dissemination – providing and facilitating the opportunities for schools and teachers to work together to identify what they do well, what the areas for improvement are, and supporting and driving that change. Effective collaboration “requires three vital and interrelated elements: commitment, time and trust.”

KEY QUESTIONS:

How do we ensure all students are making good progress over time?

What are the barriers that prevent improvements in learning outcomes?

How do we improve the tools available to teachers to measure learning progress and respond to every child’s needs in the classroom?

How do we strengthen and improve education evidence in our classrooms and schools?

What should the priorities be for the Commonwealth in this area?

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10OECD, Low-performing students: why they fall behind and how to help them succeed, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2016, Table 0.5, p. 5.
11Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), Findings from the AEDC, AEDC website, 2015, accessed on 8 November 2017.
20Productivity Commission (PC), National education evidence base, Report, 80, PC, Canberra, p. 2.
21PC, National education evidence base, Report, 80, PC, Canberra, pp. 31–32.
22J Harris, M Ainscow and S Carrington, ‘Speaking to Policy and Practice,’ in J Harris, S Carrington and M Ainscow, Promoting equity in schools: collaboration, inquiry and ethical leadership, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon, 2018, p. 147.
Research has repeatedly shown quality of teaching is the best in-school determinant of student learning and outcomes. It is estimated that teaching accounts for around 30 per cent of the variance in student outcomes. Students’ own characteristics and attributes account for around 50 per cent of the variance.

As stated by the OECD: “the education systems that have succeeded in improving student outcomes in our rapidly evolving landscape point the way forward: teachers must be the top priority.”

Teaching is a critically important and challenging role. It requires the ability to understand the needs of around 25 different children in each class, with varied capabilities and home environments, to diagnose where the gaps in their understanding are, to motivate them to learn, and to continually assess and refine what needs to be taught next.

The status of the teaching profession is influenced by many factors, including general respect in the community, whether it is a career people aspire to, pay and conditions, and the ongoing recognition and career advancement that teachers receive.

Some evidence in Australia suggests that teaching is not seen as a high status, aspirational profession that young people with high levels of skills and capabilities compete to enter. Only 39 per cent of teachers in Australia believe that teaching is valued as a profession by society.

Yet a recent Roy Morgan survey ranked school teachers as the fourth most respected profession in the country—respected by 81 per cent of respondents, with only nurses, doctors and pharmacists ranked higher.

Experience shows that in high-performing school systems “much is expected from teachers but much is also given in the form of professional development, autonomy, and respect.”

Yet teachers have reported that there are increasing demands and expectations placed on them, without the necessary support and facilitating structures to achieve this change. It is crucial that we make sure teachers have the support they need to get the best learning outcomes for their students.

The status of the teaching profession is something that has been shaped over many generations, and will require a sustained effort to change.

28 OECD, Results from TALIS 2013: Australia: key findings from the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), Country note, p. 1.
29 Roy Morgan Research, Roy Morgan Image of Professions Survey 2017: health professionals continue domination with nurses most highly regarded again; followed by doctors and pharmacists, Finding, 7244, 7 June 2017.
31 L Ingvarson, K Reid, S Buckley, E Kleinhenz, G Masters and G Rowley, Results from TALIS 2013: Australia: key findings from the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), Country note, p. 3.
41 Australian Education Union, State of our Schools Survey, unpublished data.
42 ACER Staff in Australia’s Schools survey, 2013, cited in F Rickards, Conversation, 31 August 2016.
Initial Teacher Education

The quality of initial teacher education (ITE) is essential to ensuring Australia has high quality, capable teachers who can help each child reach their learning potential.

Australia currently has around 373 courses providing initial teacher education, around 30,000 students commencing courses, and 18,000 students graduating each year. Around 65 per cent of recent ITE graduates were working either full-time or part-time in schools.

A common feature across all high-performing school systems is that they draw their teachers from those in the top 30 per cent of academic aptitude. Being a good teacher requires many characteristics, of which academic aptitude is just one element. Other important characteristics include a passion for learning, respect for children, empathy, and good communication. That said, it is important to consider ATAR trends for entrants, which have been gradually declining. In 2005, one in three entrants to teaching had an ATAR or equivalent of 80 or above. In 2015, that had fallen to one in five entrants. Likewise, the proportion of students with an ATAR of 70 or lower increased from 25 per cent in 2006 to 42 per cent by 2015.

It is important to note that ATAR considerations are only relevant for a sub-set of initial teacher education entrants, with 60 per cent of entrants into teacher education not coming from a secondary schooling pathway. Some in the sector have called for higher entry standards into teaching education.

Others have noted that there have been a range of recent changes introduced to initial teacher education, including revised Standards and Procedures for the accreditation of initial teacher education, a literacy and numeracy exit test prior to graduation and Graduate Performance Assessment tools being developed by two separate university consortiums.

The practicum experience and support that teacher education students and early-career teachers receive is also critical to their success in the classroom. Some stakeholders have called for the practicum experience to be increased from 80 days to 100 days for undergraduate courses. Many universities are building greater links with schools and supervisors of teaching education students to ensure teaching education students are equipped with the skills they need to succeed in the classroom.

Supporting our current teachers

We need to better support our 280,000 teachers to make sure they can maximise their impact on student learning. A key consideration for today’s Forum is how a Commonwealth Labor Government could provide the support needed to drive change in this area.

Recognising our best teachers

The Australian Professional Standards for teachers endorsed by all Education Ministers in 2010 make explicit the elements of high-quality, effective teaching that will improve educational outcomes for students.

Many have suggested that the most important way to drive increasing standing in the profession is to have teachers and principals leading their profession, defining and enforcing standards, and having the resources and evidence they need to do this effectively.

Most Australians states and systems have implemented Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers classifications to varying degrees. Highly Accomplished teachers are characterised as advocates of the profession who contribute to the professional learning of peers, act as mentors to new teachers and demonstrate strong...
engagement with the school and local community. Lead teachers are those with exceptional teaching records who are committed to quality teaching and learning and through their leadership impact on the school, their students and colleagues. Continuing to foster our best teachers and giving those teachers a greater opportunity to guide and develop other teachers, will help lift learning outcomes.

**Professional learning**

A critical way to support and develop Australia’s teachers is through professional learning. This covers both external activities such as courses or seminars, and internal activities such as reflecting on teaching practice, observing colleagues and identifying improvements necessary in the classroom. Professional development can also be facilitated by strengthening relationships between universities and schools.

In the OECD’s 2013 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), Australia had one of the highest percentages (96.6 per cent) of teachers who reported undertaking some sort of professional development in the 12 months prior to the survey. While this is positive, this higher participation rate is offset by a comparatively lower number of professional development days than the TALIS average. Further, fewer Australian teachers than the TALIS average reported that their professional development experiences had a meaningful impact on their capabilities.

Australian teachers are also far more likely than teachers in other TALIS 2013 countries to be appraised by a mentor or members of the school management team, other than the principal, yet less likely to be formally appraised by the principal.

While an Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders was endorsed by Education Ministers in 2012, there has generally been little systematic national focus on professional development and learning. There are many different types of professional development activities and commercial products that exist in this area, and at present no systematic method or approach to identifying the most effective approaches.

Each state and territory has their own teacher registration body, and professional development requirements for ongoing registration equate to around 20 hours per year. Only some states and territories appear to require formal professional development courses to be accredited through their teacher registration authority.

School systems are increasingly providing opportunities for greater collaboration amongst teachers, greater observation, feedback and analysis of performance. The extent to which this is taking place varies. The most effective forms of professional development have been found to be those that take place in the school setting, where teachers have the opportunity to learn from others and integrate that into their practices.

Supporting our teachers to get the best possible learning outcomes requires giving teachers the time and tools they need to achieve this. Nearly 92 per cent of teachers surveyed by the AEU this year reported that they had insufficient time outside of classes for lesson planning, marking, report writing and administration work within their paid working hours. 70 per cent of teachers reported that more time for lesson planning would be ‘very helpful’ in improving student outcomes whilst 67 per cent of teachers felt that more time to work collaboratively with colleagues would be ‘very helpful’ in improving students.

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2. OECD, *Results from TALIS 2013: Australia: key findings from the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS)*, Country note, p. 3.
As the table below demonstrates, Australian teachers have high contact hours in comparison to the OECD average, and compared to top performers in PISA in maths, reading and science. This means that teachers have less time to spend collaborating with other teachers, analysing and understand student learning data, and differentiating teaching based on the needs of children.

Furthermore, a reasonably high proportion of teachers are currently teaching out of their subject areas: “This is more frequent in regional and remote areas.

Better access to professional development will not only improve teaching quality but would improve teacher retention and would help lift the status of the profession.

### Table: Average teaching time in hours per year by level of education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>OECD average</th>
<th>Top 5 OECD performers average PISA Mathematics</th>
<th>Top 5 OECD performers average PISA Reading</th>
<th>Top 5 OECD performers average PISA Science</th>
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<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>866</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>778</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower secondary</td>
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<td>712</td>
<td>718</td>
<td>647</td>
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<tr>
<td>Upper secondary</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>634</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### KEY QUESTIONS:

- **How do we ensure that teaching is valued by our community, so we attract, develop and retain great teachers?**
- **How can we better prepare and support new entrants into teaching?**
- **How can we recognise, strengthen and support the role of our teachers, to drive sustained change in learning outcomes?**
- **What should the priorities be for the Commonwealth in this area?**

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*ACER Staff in Australia’s Schools survey, 2013, cited in F Rickards, ‘What are the main challenges facing teacher education in Australia?’ The Conversation, 31 August 2016*
School leadership shapes the culture of individual schools and is the second largest in-school influence on student outcomes.“School leadership is broader than the principal and deputy principal and incorporates other leadership roles, such as heads of departments, coordinators and, in some schools, instructional leaders.

School leaders have very difficult and demanding roles, being accountable to their employers and responsible for the learning outcomes, safety and wellbeing of their students. They also have a clear responsibility to teachers and support staff, and, more broadly, to parents and the broader community.

When Labor was last in government, we worked with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), principal organisations and principals to develop the Australian Professional Standard for Principals. These standards outline a shared vision for effective school leadership, so principals and school leaders can continually strive to understand and improve their impact. Unlike the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, the Principal Standard is not differentiated by levels of capability or achievement.

Supporting school leaders
The Australian Secondary Principals Association says all schools need ‘edu-preneurial’ leaders who are: creative, analytical, adaptive, imaginative, inspirational, innovative, outward looking problem solvers who create a culture of improvement / excellence in their school.”

Research has shown that different types of leadership impact on student learning in very different ways, with instructional leadership more important in influencing student outcomes. Effective principals “work relentlessly to improve achievement by focusing on the quality of instruction. They help define and promote high expectations; they attack teacher isolation and fragmented effort; and they connect directly with teachers and the classroom.”

In Leading, Learning and Teaching, Professor Stephen Dinham details how school leaders should lead the charge to improve educational outcomes, noting that “school leaders must be more than great managers ... They need to be able to harness the skills of teachers to develop and improve teaching practices and evaluation.”

While the instructional leadership role has the most impact on outcomes, it is reported that employer and government compliance and accountability is an increasing proportion of principals workloads.

In recent years, different jurisdictions have placed increased focus on principal autonomy. Yet principals’ associations and research conducted about autonomy have demonstrated it is only effective when principals and school leaders have the skills, attributes and support necessary to drive change.

There has also been increasing concern about principal wellbeing, given the range of pressures and competing demands principals face.”

“University of Melbourne, The Melbourne Newsroom, School leaders must move beyond management, media release, 5 August 2016.
“Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA), Back to balance: how policy and practice can make primary principals highly effective, 2017, p.4.
As with general professional development, there is a wide and growing range of different leadership courses and principal development programs that are available. Some states and school systems are increasing investment and resources in leadership development and support.

The Australian Primary Principals Association’s (APPA) report, Back to Balance: How Policy and Practice Can Make Primary Principals Highly Effective, identifies that effective leadership requires both trust and support. It notes that trusting and working with principals and teachers to be empowered to lead their school’s teaching and learning will be the difference between successful reform and more of the same.

Aspiring Principals

Identifying and fostering the pipeline of future leaders in Australian schools will be essential in creating an excellent and highly equitable school system. As noted by AITSL:

*The increasing complexity of the school principal role, the imminent retirement of many principals across Australia due to an ageing school workforce and the widespread shortage of suitable candidates to replace those about to retire have created an urgent need to increase the pool of high quality candidates who aspire to become school principals.*

Yet there is evidence that there are fewer teachers who are aspiring to be principals, as the workload and health and wellbeing impacts outweigh the job satisfaction and recognition that come with being a principal.

AITSL is currently developing a model that could potentially be used for pre-principal certification. While certification may assist in identifying the critical skills future leaders need, practical support and training are just as important.

APPA has put forward that high performing countries value their school leaders and provide opportunities for development. For example, Singapore prepares its school leaders by taking prospective leaders ‘off-line’ for seventeen weeks to participate in a high-level demanding leadership course. In Ontario, all school leaders must participate in a two-year preparation program outsourced to, and administered by, professional associations and universities.

**Principals in hard-to-staff schools**

There are excellent principals in schools right across Australia. To tackle equity issues in Australia, we need to ensure our best leaders are working in the schools with the children who most need high quality education. At the present time, a range of different incentives are offered by states and systems to work in hard-to-staff schools. Some stakeholders have called for greater pay, career recognition and professional development and support to help attract high quality candidates.

**KEY QUESTIONS:**

- How can we better prepare and support aspiring principals and leaders?
- How can we foster and support our school leaders to drive change in their schools?
- How can we identify and support our best principals to work in hard-to-staff schools?
- What should the priorities be for the Commonwealth in this area?

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*B. Watterston, Environmental Scan: Principal Preparation Programs, prepared for the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2015, Melbourne, p.2.*

*Australian Primary Principals Association, Back to Balance: How Policy and Practice can make Primary Principals Highly Effective, 2017, p.5.*


Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA), *Back to balance: how policy and practice can make primary principals highly effective*, 2017.


OECD, *Results from TALIS 2013: Australia: key findings from the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS)*, Country note.


