



SEPTEMBER 2024

Independent Review of Education in Tasmania

Public Consultation Paper

Independent Reviewer's Foreword

I thank you for your interest in this Review and look forward to engaging further with the various interested parties who understand that education transforms lives and that it is key to improving equality and lifting economic and social outcomes for all children and young people, their families, communities and Tasmania.

The Minister for Education has set the Terms of Reference for this Review with an expectation that a report with recommendations will be delivered in December 2024. The Terms of Reference require the Review to provide advice on evidence based, implementable and impactful reforms that will improve Tasmania's education system and educational outcomes over the next decade. This means I am looking to make a small number of findings and recommendations. I will be grateful for your input to assist me in this task.

In undertaking this work, I am mindful of the previous reviews undertaken in Tasmania and Australia as well as the improvement work that is currently in train to inform the report's findings.

Vicki Baylis

Independent Reviewer and Education Specialist

Introduction

The Tasmanian education system is critical to the future of the State, playing an important role in supporting young Tasmanians to gain the skills and knowledge they need to fully contribute to their communities, economic future and lead their best lives.

The Independent Review of Education in Tasmania was announced by the Minister for Education on Monday 24 June 2024. Ms Vicki Baylis, a nationally respected educationalist, has been appointed to lead the Review.

On 16 August 2024, the Minister issued Terms of Reference for the Review. The Terms of Reference ask that the Review include the government and non-government school sectors with a focus on Kindergarten to Year 12. More information on the Review and its Terms of Reference can be found on the Review's webpage at www.ier.tas.gov.au.

Then objectives of this Review as outlined in the Terms of Reference are for a Tasmanian School System that:

- Implements evidence-based whole of school practices and pedagogy that lead to improved student educational outcomes and behaviour;
- Delivers high quality teaching that is evidence based and meets the needs of students at all levels;
- Effectively utilises resources to improve student outcomes and attract and retain a high-quality workforce;
- Contributes to the State's productivity by supporting a highly skilled local workforce to assist local businesses and industry to grow and compete; and
- Is accountable for improved student outcomes, including in remote and rural areas.

The Review is approaching its work with an open view on how Tasmania's education system could be improved. The Review intends to hear from interested stakeholders to seek input, guidance and perspectives to help the Review's thinking on key issues. The Review has released this consultation paper to support this engagement. This consultation paper considers Tasmania's demographic profile, socio-economic characteristics and draws on an evidence base of system data, previous reviews, academic literature and research, and discussions with key stakeholders.

The Review has purposefully kept this consultation paper succinct to support engagement on its key questions. It is structured so that each of the Terms of Reference themes has a summary box section, that contains the key issues and the questions the Review is wanting to hear responses on. The sections under the summary boxes provide more detail for those interested in understanding the context behind the questions and summary.

Theme 1 - Defining educational success

We need to ensure that our education system has clearly agreed objectives that are transparently reported. What does success look like after the formal years of schooling in the Tasmanian context and how do we better encourage our young people to aspire to achieve?

Summary

Education is important. It is important for individuals, because it gives them options for what they want to do in their lives, in employment and in society. It is important for Tasmania as a whole, because education leads to higher participation in employment, higher productivity and improved social outcomes. These facts are backed by considerable evidence.

How do we know whether a child or young person is on track, so that they finish school, with the confidence, creativity, knowledge and skills that gives them this best chance to achieve for themselves, their families and to contribute to Tasmania's society and economy?

The Review has heard that this is a challenging question and that, despite previous reviews, there does not appear to be a clear answer. This question is not unique to Tasmania – other states are grappling with explaining to young people what successfully finishing Year 12, or an equivalent can mean for them. Finishing Year 12 can be more than just the next step towards university, though it is not clear that the multiple pathways available are well understood or accepted as equally worthy.

The Review believes that all young people in Tasmania have high hopes for their futures, just like young people in other parts of the country. While many are already achieving their goals, the Review wants to hear how success by the end of schooling should be defined so that all young people can be better supported to go on to achieve their hopes.

Guiding questions

- What do you think are the reasons for finishing Year 12?
- What do you think success looks like during and after the formal years of schooling in Tasmania?
- How can we better encourage young people to aspire to achieve their ambitions?
- What is working well and why?

Every student in Tasmania deserves access to a high-quality education, no matter which school they attend. The *Tasmanian Education Act (2016)* requires that students participate in an Approved Learning Program until they complete Year 12 or an equivalent qualification (Lim, 2011), such as a Certificate III or an apprenticeship, or until they turn 18. Despite these requirements, many students disengage and do not fulfil these requirements, and even if they do, some still feel unprepared for the real world, and are uncertain about how to acquire the skills needed to secure a job or undertake further education and training.

The good news for young Tasmanians is that there are many opportunities for them. Tasmania's ageing population means that there will be a large proportion of Tasmania's workforce retiring over the next few decades. In fact, unless Tasmania improves its labour force participation rate and productivity, it will not have enough workers to provide the services Tasmanians expect from Government or the private sector; technology advancements alone are unlikely to fill the gap. The job for Government, educators and trainers is to make sure young people are educated sufficiently so that they are able to take up these opportunities, as it is critical for the future of all Tasmanians.

The State's future workforce needs demand diverse learning and training pathways, including vocational education, which is just as valuable to the economy as tertiary education. Yet the Review heard that senior secondary schooling is still seen by many as only being a pathway towards university, and that if you are not on that path, there is no reason to 'stick it out' at school until the end of Year 12. This was further reinforced by a perception that other forms of learning and training are of lower value.

This is not aided by the fact that the answer to the question of what success looks like varies among stakeholders. A common challenge is the lack of a consistent, achievable narrative that defines the various forms educational success can take. Without this narrative and the appropriate measures, it is difficult for all young Tasmanians to see their future opportunities and to aspire to and achieve their full potential.

An underlying tension appears to exist when defining success. It appears that broadening the definition beyond the Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE) could be considered as 'lowering' the standard by some, whereas other perspectives argue that if other appropriate qualifications are not sufficiently recognised in the narrative of success, some young people will continue to not see value in pursuing certain pathways.

Educational systems worldwide define student success in various ways, including academic achievement, well-being, and overall educational attainment. The question of what success looks like is not isolated to Tasmania and other states are similarly grappling with it. Western Australia for example has recently had an Expert Panel look into senior secondary schooling and released a blueprint for senior secondary pathways, which emphasises recognising and celebrating the "whole student," not just their academic performance (Louden, 2023; Gabriel, 2002). A review of secondary education in the Northern Territory also included a finding to articulate and recognise a broader conception of success in secondary schooling (Deloitte, 2023).

This is not a new issue for Tasmania. The Australian Council for Educational Research's (ACER) 2016 *Review of Years 9 to 12 Tasmania* highlighted the need to share a comprehensive, inclusive definition of success with young people and their families. This definition should promote various attainment outcomes for young people into early adulthood, focusing on long-term engagement in education and multiple pathways to success (Masters, 2016). This effectively said that success should also be measured by how well the education system prepares students for various post-school pathways, whether that be higher education, training, employment, or other life pursuits.

Despite this previous review and its recommendations, public reporting of attainment outcomes continues to highlight TCE attainment. While there is some reporting of other qualifications (such as VET, Qualifications Certificates and the Tasmanian Certificate of Educational Achievement), they are generally within detailed reports and there is no clear and easy narrative about how all these fit together to demonstrate student outcomes and their status relative to the TCE. This Review understands that part of the reason for this is that systems to track student outcomes across the various pathways are fragmented, and there is currently no way in which an 'integrated' picture of student attainment can easily be formed.

The future Tasmanian workforce depends on how well prepared its young people are. Every student deserves the opportunity to pursue their chosen pathway. The Review wants to hear what you think should be expected for students by the end of Year 12.

Theme 2 - Strengthening supports and engagement for all learners at all stages of their education

How can we collectively support Tasmanian learners to get the most out of their entire education experience and ensure all students reach their potential?

Summary

To ensure that all students reach their full potential, education must be inclusive, responsive to diverse needs, and built on strong partnerships and practices which have a strong evidence base. Supporting Tasmanian learners throughout their education requires a collective effort from schools, families, communities, and policymakers.

Being clear about the purpose of education and what success looks like supports children to have hopes and aspiration. Alongside of that, sustained family engagement is essential before and throughout all stages of education to maintain high expectations and support. The focus of this Review is Kindergarten to Year 12, and the continued support throughout a student's education journey.

The Review notes that early childhood is a critical foundation for learning. Young children who are engaged in play-based learning and are read to before they start school stand a much better chance of being able to learn when they go to school – there is plenty of evidence to show its impact on future learning outcomes. The Review has already heard of the many initiatives and services in Tasmania that support families to engage in early learning.

Starting school with sufficient engagement and learning is the ideal situation for students, and many who do are set up for success. This is not always the case; some students may not have this strong start or may fall behind throughout their educational journey.

The gap in learning growth, progress and attainment with peers gets wider for many students as they get older, and not being able to keep up is a major reason some students disengage from learning. This disengagement is seen in low and irregular attendance, behaviour issues and not completing Year 12. Much effort is put into trying to get these students to re-engage with learning and to get their progress back on track. The Review wants to hear about what works to engage and re-engage children and their families in learning.

Guiding questions

- What do families do well to support their children and young people in their learning?
- What support helps families to do this?
- What can be done to better support students who are struggling or at risk of falling behind to get back on track?
- How can we ensure all Tasmanian learners get the most out of their education and reach their full potential?

Inclusive involvement in the design and implementation of educational programs can help tailor education to meet the unique needs and aspirations of learners. This participatory approach empowers students and ensures that the education system reflects their interests and goals.

In Tasmania, there is already significant investment and support in place for family engagement during the early years before school starts, aimed at better preparing children and their families for schooling. The early childhood education and care sector plays an important part in this, together with State Government initiatives and programs.

The Review's Terms of Reference ask it to focus on Kindergarten to Year 12, and examining early childhood education and care is out of scope. However, the Review highlights the important role these services and programs play in engaging families and children in learning that establishes the foundations for learning into the early schooling years. There are important lessons to be learned from Tasmania's early years engagement approach, which demonstrates how strong partnerships between families, educators and communities promote the value of education.

Kindergarten, which is part of the schooling system is a strength in Tasmania. Most Tasmanians think of it as the first year of schooling, even though it is not compulsory and in most other states it is delivered outside the schooling system. In Tasmania, enrolment in Kindergarten has for a long time been practically universal – all children of Kindergarten age generally enrol to attend. This suggests there is 'good intention' going into schooling by families and their children, whilst recognising that economic factors such as parental work or education/training factors also play a part in such decisions.

Teachers and school leaders who build effective and collaborative partnerships with parents can significantly shape the education and wellbeing outcomes of their learners. The Review heard that family engagement decreases through schooling, particularly as young people enter high school. To some extent, where students are on track in their learning, have positive social behaviours and have good wellbeing, some might argue that having less family engagement is 'normal' as students get older; and is part of their growing independence. There is undoubtedly a different level of interaction between schools and families based on students age, but regardless of how well a student is travelling, sustaining an appropriate level of family involvement throughout all stages of education is important for maintaining high expectations and support for students.

The greatest risk is when learners fall behind and/or develop behavioural and wellbeing concerns, often resulting in disengagement and sometimes school sanctions (such as suspensions). A culture of low expectation grows if parents, teachers and other education staff, such as professional support workers, are not working together to encourage and support engagement (or re-engagement). Similarly, for students who are well equipped to meet expectations comfortably, there is a question about whether they are being supported to stretch themselves to higher achievement; Tasmania's NAPLAN results for more advantaged students suggests there is room for improvement.

The Review has heard that there appears to be a narrative in Tasmania that attributes low educational aspirations to some negative family attitudes towards formal education (Masters, 2016). Many Tasmanians have strong ties to their local areas and see distance and travel as barriers. Families worry that young people may leave their communities and not return. In part, this could be due to challenges in providing education and training to a small, widely dispersed population.

On the other hand, some stakeholders question whether this narrative reflects the reality or whether it is a system-reinforced perception that overlooks the potential and aspirations of these communities (Beswick, 2019). Teacher beliefs about students and their families are crucial in influencing educational aspirations and attainment. There are many stories from people who had a teacher who believed in and supported them, to achieve things that they or others thought they could not.

Developing strategies to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds is vital for ensuring equity in education and to improve education outcomes for individuals and Tasmania as a whole. This involves providing resources, guidance, and opportunities that cater to the specific needs of these students, enabling them to reach their full potential. There is much investment and resources that already goes into such efforts, but it is difficult to see what is working well. The Review wants to hear where initiatives are having a positive impact and to see the evidence of where efforts to engage students and their families is working.

Theme 3 - Outcomes at the conclusion of the formal years of schooling

Noting the specific challenges that emerge as young people progress through schooling; how can we improve attendance, retention, attainment and student outcomes to better support choice of learning and career pathways?

Summary

It is crucial that the State's secondary education system adapts to the changing world. Future students will need a broader and different set of skills than today's. It's clear that Tasmania needs to rethink the goals of senior secondary education in particular to better match what students want and ensure schools and school systems meet the needs of all students, including those in rural and disadvantaged areas. There is a need to find the right balance between offering subjects that interest students and those that prepare them for life after school, whether in further education, training, or work.

There is no doubt that if more Tasmanian students finish Year 10 on track and engaged in their learning, more would be able to complete Year 12 or an equivalent. It is not surprising that students who have become disengaged through their schooling often do not go on to complete Year 12.

Amongst other reforms, a review in 2016 of Years 9 to 12 was intended to modernise the curriculum approach and to build or strengthen networks between schools for these senior years in Tasmania. This Review has heard that the intention of these reforms still has some way to go in terms of its outcomes being realised. While there is some networking and collaboration between colleges and high schools, the change a student experiences between Year 10 to Year 11 is not always seamless and does not prepare some of them well for the experience in Years 11 and 12.

The education debate in Tasmania has often centred on the government college system for Years 11 and 12. The expansion of Years 11 and 12 in government high schools was aimed at overcoming this transition, by allowing students to stay in their high school for their senior secondary education. For students in regional areas in particular, the initiative was designed to remove the barrier of having to move or travel long distances to attend Years 11 and 12.

The Review is open to hearing about the structure of senior secondary education. But improving attendance, retention and attainment is complex and extends to access, equity and the relevance of how what is taught and how it is assessed can be made as relevant and seamless as possible for students.

The Review would also like to hear about how students can be supported through their secondary years of schooling so they are confident to make informed choices about what they are learning and where this can lead after school.

Guiding questions

- How best can students be supported to successfully complete and achieve by the end of Year 12?
- What are the top 2 or 3 priorities or changes you believe are needed so all Tasmanian young people can complete Year 12 or an equivalent?
- What are the most important ways to support choice for students?

As outlined in Theme 1, students need a clear reason why they should complete their Year 12 or an equivalent. If that clear reason exists, and all the supports are in place to keep them engaged and their learning is on track through their schooling years, then the next question is how best can they be supported to complete and achieve by the end of Year 12?

In 2016, the ACER *Review of Years 9 to 12* identified several challenges faced by students in Tasmania, such as weak literacy and numeracy levels, low attendance rates, and high anxiety during transitions between Year 10 and Year 11 (Masters, 2016). Additionally, it highlighted issues like family, financial, health, and carer responsibilities as barriers to educational aspiration.

The overall structure of the Tasmanian senior secondary curriculum is complicated to understand (Masters, 2016). Historically, most Tasmanians think of high school as Years 7 to 10 and senior secondary school as Years 11 and 12 and delivered in colleges, unlike most other states and territories where high schools cover all secondary years (Years 7 to 12). Some Tasmanian non-government schools have different structures.

The ACER Review effectively aimed to disrupt the traditional perception of senior secondary education being 'siloes' to years 11 and 12, and instead create greater alignment across Years 9 to 12 so that students would see clear pathways to pursue across all these important years.

The Review is aware that there was much attention and effort in responding to the ACER Review by all three education sectors. The Review will be exploring further the status of the ACER Review's recommendations for the improvement in students' attendance, retention and attainment outcomes. ACER's overarching recommendations were to:

- Take a holistic approach to system and sector improvements
- Review and update the formal curriculum, assessment, reporting and accreditation requirements
- Consider the establishment of multi-campus schools
- Initiate regular long-term strategies to change public perceptions about the value of school education and VET in Schools
- Implement a development strategy to support the rejuvenation of the workforce and potentially, the implementation of multi-campus schools
- Improve the status of VET and VEL in schools through community involvement in the development of a future vision and associated implementation strategy
- Re-evaluate the nature and use of data collected (Masters, 2016).

The roll out of 'extension schools' has seen all government high schools make Years 11 and 12 available, as an alternative option to going to a college. This initiative aims to overcome the distance barrier for students in regional and rural areas, whilst also providing an alternative for urban-based students who may not have wanted to attend a college. While extension schools provide an option for completing Year 12, reported enrolments remain low as do the attendance, retention and attainment outcomes.

There are diverse views about the Year 9 to 12 curriculum, either too many to choose from or the number of choices aligns with what's offered on the 'mainland'. In recognition of the scale issues faced by most extension schools, schools and colleges in the government system work together in regional partnerships so that students have greater course offering choices they can access (including online).

Some argue that this dual system is to blame for Tasmania's apparent poor education outcomes by the end of schooling, and that abolishing colleges is the solution. Others argue that comparisons with other states are unfair because different states report different things. They argue that colleges provide the best solution for the majority of students, as they provide sufficient size to be able to provide a variety of course offerings to a relatively small population. They also argue that success in the senior secondary years is more dependent on the integration across structure, curriculum, family and student engagement, and teacher practice; particularly 'specialisation' which reduces mobility between teaching Years 11 and 12, and years 9 and 10 in particular.

The Review would like to hear stakeholder perspectives on what is working well from these and other reforms, and what more needs to be done.

Theme 4 - Support for our teaching workforce

How do we attract, support and develop teachers and school leaders to be effective and successful practitioners who can confidently deliver high quality, evidence-based teaching that meets the needs of students at all levels?

Summary

Tasmanian teachers are working hard. Improving student engagement, retention, and attainment in Tasmania relies heavily on the effectiveness of teachers, support staff and school leaders. Despite challenges such as workforce shortages and increased workloads, Tasmanian schools generally perform well when compared to similar primary and high schools across Australia.

To ensure Tasmania's future is one of prosperity and higher educational attainment, it's essential to build on current strengths and actively seek out what's missing. By fostering a highly skilled and supported education workforce, Tasmania's children will engage deeply in their learning, so they thrive and have choices beyond the formal years of school; helping to overcome barriers posed by circumstance.

There is much public commentary about the plight of teachers, particularly high workloads and expectations that are leading to burn out, teachers leaving the profession, and not making the job sound attractive to future potential teachers. Tasmania must address this if we want to continue to have great teachers and school leaders.

The fact that Tasmania has good teachers is a great place to start. The Review has already heard that Tasmania needs to make sure that all educators are well supported and provided with appropriate and relevant professional development and have reduced reporting and administrative burden. The Review heard that this was important for all, from beginning career teachers right through to senior teachers and for those who step into school leadership roles.

If Tasmania wants to make teaching an attractive profession for people to want to enter and then stay, then it must be accepted that teachers cannot do everything. The Review wants to hear what people think is the most important things teachers should focus on, and how these can be best supported.

Guiding questions

- How can we get more great teachers and school leaders and help them do their jobs well?
- How can we keep the existing workforce feeling energised and supported so they stay?

NAPLAN results over time suggests that Tasmanian teachers do in fact do a good job given the diverse range of students they teach. When comparing like schools across the country, Tasmanian schools perform reasonably well in NAPLAN results; mostly comparable to similar Australian schools, sometimes performing better. There is, however, some evidence that more advantaged students, while performing well in the Tasmanian context, do not do as well as their peers interstate.

Overall, this indicates that Tasmania has a good starting point for improvement, though like nationally, workforce shortages remain challenging. There is significant Australian and international work on the factors that contribute to these problems and the responses to address them (Australian Government, 2022).

The challenges of teacher workforce shortages and workload pressures are at the forefront of Education Ministers' concerns (Education Ministers Meeting, 2022) and there is a national strategy aimed at addressing these issues.

Teacher workloads and their complexity have increased over time (Hunter J. S., 2022). The top factors influencing teachers' intentions to leave the profession include workload and coping, recognition and reward, and classroom factors (AITSL, 2023). The Review recognises that pay and conditions are a factor in any employment market. However, the Review will not be examining teacher remuneration. There are different industrial arrangements across the different education sectors and there are existing industrial mechanisms for how arrangements are negotiated. Furthermore, the timeframe for this Review does not support an in-depth analysis of teacher remuneration in Tasmania.

According to a national survey of teachers, a feature of the Tasmanian teacher workforce is that they are older and more likely to work part time than their peers interstate. This difference is likely to explain that, when compared with their national peers, Tasmanian teachers work less hours, engage less in professional learning, have less face-to-face time with students in the classroom, and spend less time lesson planning and marking (AITSL, 2023). Time spent on administrative tasks is also less than nationally, but it has been increasing over time.

There appears to be a need for a twofold approach; the first is to reduce requirements on teachers, particularly those that are administrative in nature and provide little benefit to students (OECD, 2019). The second is to complement the simplification of what is asked of school leaders and teachers, with improved support for implementing initiatives and practical professional learning that focusses on teaching practice.

The Review has already heard of some examples in which Tasmanian teachers report increased workload. In particular, the requirements around student learning plans and reporting to families, at least in government schools. The Review is interested in hearing more about what in the Tasmanian context is expected of teachers, that appears to have little impact on student learning and progress and how it could be reduced.

Great teaching starts with great teachers, but having great teachers isn't enough. Great school systems equip those teachers with the right tools and supports to succeed (Bryant, 2024).

Top-performing education systems recruit teachers from the top quartile of their training cohort, offering multiple pathways into the profession and hiring early. Practical pre-service training, including being in the classroom, is crucial to ensuring that future teachers are well-prepared for the practicalities of what they will experience in the classroom. This training should align with professional standards and classroom practices, providing opportunities for hands-on experience, coaching, and real-time feedback.

Ongoing professional development is vital for all teachers to grow as effective educators. This development should be embedded in their daily work, aligned with the curriculum, and foster collaboration and innovation through professional learning networks. Effective professional development helps teachers stay current with the latest educational practices and enhances their ability to meet diverse student needs.

The Review has heard already that while Tasmania offers various supports to its teachers, there is a need to enhance professional learning and peer support, particularly in areas related to teaching and learning. The Review has also heard that professional learning has in recent times become increasingly focussed on administrative and compliance obligations, at the expense of a focus on teaching practice.

One of Tasmania's challenges is consistent staffing, particularly in rural and remote areas. It is often the least experienced leaders, placed in rural areas, in the most complex communities with the newest teachers (Masters, 2016). Similarly, diversity of learning needs in a classroom is a challenge for teachers. Teaching the curriculum to a classroom with some students who may be a year or more behind in their expected learning development, whilst others may be a year or more above expectations, creates challenges for teachers in being able to teach effectively and equitably to these diverse needs.

It appears that there is an opportunity for educators to be better supported centrally and/or to be able to build a professional network that connects across regions and communities. Reducing duplication across schools, particularly small schools, could help support sustainable workloads for teachers, especially in the context of workforce shortages.

School leaders, especially Principals, play a critical role in the success of both students and teachers. Effective Principals not only manage school operations but also lead teaching teams, set a clear vision, and build teachers' skills through observation, coaching, and data-driven programs. The impact of strong leadership on student learning cannot be overstated, and investing in the development of school leaders is essential for the overall success of the education system. The Review would like to hear about the challenges and opportunities for school leaders in Tasmania, particularly how they can be better supported to lead effectively, manage workloads, and drive positive outcomes for both students and teachers.

Theme 5 - Accountability for improved outcomes

How do we ensure that policy initiatives are implemented, and resources are used to improve learning outcomes?

Summary

The Tasmanian education system has a history of ambitious reforms that were well-intentioned, but they were not always effectively implemented. This situation is not unique to education, and it is not unique to Tasmania. Often the issue is a gap between policy ideas not translating to actual improvements in the classroom, and the lesson seems to be that it is equally crucial to focus on what changes are needed along with how to apply them effectively.

A strong education system depends on proven practices and clear strategies. Successful reforms need a plan that sets clear priorities, builds strong leadership, and creates support structures. Open communication with educators and families is key to building trust and backing for new initiatives.

While all of that is important, the Review has already heard that the practical help for teachers and school leaders could be better so that they can implement initiatives and sustain them. For educators, sometimes it is not enough support and other times the support is not consistent, too complex or 'not the right fit'. Sometimes the support is not sustained for long enough to help teachers and school leaders embed change. Implementing major initiatives can only hope to be successful if there is the time and space to do so, so teacher workload is a factor.

There must be accountability for outcomes to ensure confidence in what is being done is working. The Review is interested to hear what works well to make sure that policy initiatives translate to improved learning outcomes.

Guiding questions

- What helps teachers and school leaders implement initiatives so that the focus on improvement is maintained?
- How do we ensure that policy initiatives are effectively implemented and that resources are used to improve learning outcomes?

Education reform takes time, particularly where cultural change is required to support improved learning outcomes. One of the most significant barriers to success is often implementation. Many systems' well-intentioned improvement efforts fail to translate into meaningful learning gains for students. The gap between policy formulation and successful implementation is a common challenge in school systems worldwide, with many reforms losing momentum before they can make a tangible impact in the classroom (Bryant, 2024).

To ensure lasting change, leaders must not only know the right interventions to use but also how to implement them effectively at scale. Without a clear implementation strategy, even the most promising initiatives can falter in the face of political or community pushback, changing circumstances, or a lack of sustained effort (Bryant, 2024). Instead of staying committed to evidence-based reforms, policy makers often chase the next new idea to solve the same problems, and this over time can cause change fatigue and scepticism.

The Tasmanian education system has a long history of ambitious reforms, many of which were highlighted in the 2016 ACER Review (Masters, 2016). However, the question remains: how well have these recommendations been implemented and evaluated?

To improve outcomes, any initiative must be evidence-based. Education leaders must learn from both national and international success stories and consider their merits in the Tasmanian context. It is important to recognise the context in which reforms are being introduced; understanding where the system currently stands allows for a tailored approach to improve. For example, if a system is only performing 'fairly', it cannot be expected to move to 'great performance' immediately (Bryant, 2024).

Any significant long-term changes to how education is organised, structured, or delivered necessitates extensive community consultation and 'buy in' by the majority to ensure that the changes resonate with and are supported by those they aim to benefit (Masters, 2016).

Change management strategies must be carefully designed to ensure that teachers and school leaders can navigate these changes without additional stress or burnout. This requires setting fewer priorities to get more done by focusing on coherent, sustained, and evidence-based goals. Practical, 'on-the-ground' support for school leaders and teachers is also required. The Review has already heard examples such as teachers (particularly early career teachers) wanting more practical support for things like lesson planning.

Data plays a critical role in driving and adapting educational reforms and ensuring accountability for outcomes. Measuring student, school and system outcomes and making these data transparent helps create momentum for change and allows for the continuous tailoring and adaptation of policies. While it is important to stay the course on evidence-based reforms, there must also be space for innovation. Experimentation and evidence-building should go together to refine what works best in the Tasmanian context.

Holding accountability for outcomes is simple in theory but difficult in practice, because there are many factors that can influence outcomes, some of which are outside of the control of a teacher, a school, a school system or even a Government. But that is not an excuse not to assign accountability. Parents and carers expect teachers to deliver the best learning outcomes for their children and for schools to support that outcome. They and the broader community expect that school systems (in the case of Government and Catholic education sectors), and the Government, to be accountable for achieving the best education outcomes for children and young people so that Tasmania has a future capable workforce and vibrant communities.

The Review observes with interest the introduction of a minimum of one hour per day of structured literacy instruction in government schools Prep to Year 6 from 2025. This is part of a broader *Lifting Literacy Plan* that mandates that by 2026, all Tasmanian students will be taught to read in a systematic and explicit way based on the latest research and evidence. This is a fundamental reform that is evidence-based, appears to be supported with practical support (the Review notes a specific training package for teachers and school leaders is being delivered at the time this Paper was being written), and has an accountability mechanism through the independent Lifting Literacy Outcomes Monitoring Group.

The Review is interested to hear more about how to improve implementation of initiatives in Tasmanian schools.

How to make a submission

The Review welcomes evidence-based submissions or comments from all interested parties on any matter within the scope of this consultation paper. To assist with the preparation of submissions, the paper contains questions of particular interest which are located at points throughout the paper. Respondents need not feel obliged to comment on all questions, as the Review will also welcome responses to selected questions.

To promote transparency, the review intends to publish submissions on its webpage. The Review may decline to publish certain submissions (or parts of submissions) where there are issues concerning appropriateness or confidentiality. If the author of a submission wishes to claim confidentiality in relation to a submission or a part of a submission, this should be clearly indicated and justified, and will be respected.

Where only parts of a submission are requested to be confidential, they should be submitted as an attachment to that part suitable for publication.

To facilitate the publication of submissions on the website, submissions should be electronic where possible. Submissions should be lodged by Sunday 13 October 2024 and can be either emailed to contact@ier.tas.gov.au or a hard copy submission sent to GPO Box 104, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia 7001.

Where to find more information

The following suggestions are for readers who have an interest in finding more information on Tasmania's education system and its performance. These suggestions are not exhaustive of all relevant sources of information and nor should be read as ones preferred by the Review.

[Australian Council for Education Research \(https://www.acer.org/au\)](https://www.acer.org/au)

[Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority \(https://acara.edu.au/\)](https://acara.edu.au/)

[Australian Education Research Organisation \(https://www.edresearch.edu.au/\)](https://www.edresearch.edu.au/)

[Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership \(https://www.aitsl.edu.au/\)](https://www.aitsl.edu.au/)

[Catholic Education Tasmania \(https://catholic.tas.edu.au/\)](https://catholic.tas.edu.au/)

[Department for Education, Children and Young People \(https://www.decyp.tas.gov.au/\)](https://www.decyp.tas.gov.au/)

[Independent Schools Tasmania \(https://independentschools.tas.edu.au/\)](https://independentschools.tas.edu.au/)

[Peter Underwood Centre \(https://www.utas.edu.au/community-and-partners/peter-underwood-centre\)](https://www.utas.edu.au/community-and-partners/peter-underwood-centre)

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