

Reaching for more: System support in ACT public schools

AEU ACT Branch submission to
ACT Government Inquiry
into Literacy and Numeracy

February 2024



Stronger together

Executive summary

We make this submission on behalf of more than 4,200 ACT public school educators. Our members are teachers, school leaders, principals, and school assistants. They are the people who deliver public education to 50,000 students every day.

We are a small, high achieving system with a proud tradition of encouraging a diversity of approaches to meet the needs of every student. In recent years, however, teacher shortages have exposed significant inequities in our system. These include persistent under-staffing of some schools, highly skewed school staffing profiles in relation to levels of teaching experience and huge variations in workload attributable to different school-based expectations of what and how teachers teach, assess, report, and engage with parents.

This has coincided with devolution of educational and operational responsibility to such an extent that system support for schools is now very thin. In its absence or inadequacy, our principals and teachers fill the gaps by investing in or developing school specific programs and/or approaches to teaching, assessment and reporting.

Against this background, there has been a call from AEU members to establish greater consistency in teaching, assessment and reporting in ACT schools. This by no means indicates a support for one-size-fits-all prescribed approaches to what and how our teachers teach. Rather, it acknowledges a desire to retain and strengthen the many excellent features of ACT public education whereby committed teachers create environments for students to excel and thrive. Alongside this, however, there is an appetite for greater system support and resourcing.

This submission draws on input from our members complemented by an extensive review of academic research. Our members are unified in their desire to do the best for their students but no unified view exists in relation to how that is achieved. Nor is there a 'silver bullet' solution available from the research. This is of no surprise to educators for we are acutely aware of the complexity of education work. For this reason, our submission recommends specific action in areas where there is the greatest alignment of views. In areas where opinions are most divergent, we recommend actions within a limited band of options or that require further consultation. We do so in the knowledge that for system change to be effective, it must be supported by school-based staff.

Our members continuously invest in learning and reflection to improve their effectiveness. We ask that those ultimately responsible for the ACT public education system invest in system reforms that are supported by research and the teaching profession as having the greatest possible impact on improving student outcomes.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Education Directorate should:

Recommendation 1:

Establish centralised curriculum support

- Establish a centralised curriculum support unit in the Education Support Office.
- Provide a user-friendly online repository of curriculum materials.
- Align curriculum materials with the learning achievements of the Australian Curriculum, include high-level unit plans and scope and sequence documents, include adaptable lesson suggestions for differentiation; and include assessment suggestions to track student outcomes consistently and reduce workload associated with reporting.
- Provide a curated list of quality-assured programs that schools can access and that are centrally resourced.

Recommendation 2:

Implement uniform capture of student assessment data across the system

- Consult with schools to map the current use of student assessment systems and decide on a limited and targeted set of assessment pieces to use across the system.
- Ensure that assessment systems provide prompt and user-friendly supply of data and analytics to teachers so that data can inform teaching.
- Align these assessment and data systems with the curriculum materials described earlier to promote system coherency and reduce reporting workload for school-based staff.

Recommendation 3:

Free up schools to focus on education

- Assume responsibility for all non-educational tasks, alleviating schools of responsibilities such as building and other asset management, procurement, and some financial management.
- Facilitate collegiality and peer development among teachers through cross-school professional learning, networks and events.
- Invest in our specialist teachers like teacher librarians, disability inclusion specialists and EAL/D specialists to ensure they can support their colleagues to enhance teaching practice.

Recommendation 4:

Grow our system's understanding of its own people

- Procure and implement a modern HRIMS that is fit for purpose in schools.
- Map the data that the system (including schools) already holds, and identify inefficiencies, roadblocks, and pathways to better information sharing.
- Design future teacher recruitment campaigns to target known staffing needs of the system, including recruitment for specialist positions.

Recommendation 5:

Ensure support for New Educators

- Use the annual teacher transfer process to balance the New Educator to experienced teacher ratio at every school within five years, so that no school has over 20% New Educators.
- Reduce mentor face-to-face teaching hours by one hour per fortnight for every New Educator a mentor has assigned to them, to recognise their need to meet with the New Educator and support their development.
- Offer an allowance to mentors to recognise the additional work they do.

Recommendation 6:

Improve equity by resourcing small group intensive learning

- Identify the resourcing and staffing limitations that have impeded full provision of the Response to Intervention model in all schools.
- Facilitate the implementation of small group intensive learning in all schools for children at risk of falling behind in literacy and numeracy.

Recommendation 7:

Deliver greater consistency in reporting to parents

- Continue to work through the Sustainable Workload Management Committee to achieve reasonable limits on system expectations of reporting to parents.
- Embed reporting in curriculum materials and assessment to relieve workload, improve consistency and usefulness of reporting for parents.
- Review and improve its website.

Table of contents

Establishing the facts	1
ACT public schools excel and our members still want to improve outcomes	1
We need to communicate better about what happens in schools	1
Defining the problem	3
What are the most critical influences on a student’s academic performance?	4
Students must be ready to learn.....	4
Students cannot learn without a teacher	5
How to strengthen system support in ACT public schools	6
Establish centralised curriculum support	6
Implement uniform capture of student assessment data across the system	8
Free up schools to focus on education	9
Grow our system’s understanding of its own people	11
Ensure support for New Educators	13
Improve equity by resourcing small group intensive learning	14
Deliver greater consistency in reporting to parents.....	15
Gain industrial benefits by improving system coherence	16
Support schools and teachers better to help students with extra or different need	16
Invest in school libraries and teacher librarians	18
Conclusion	19
Reference list	20

Establishing the facts

ACT public schools excel and our members still want to improve outcomes

If someone knew of ACT public education only from news headlines, they may be forgiven for assuming that literacy and numeracy outcomes in the ACT are in crisis. This is not the case. The ACT is the best performing schooling system in Australia. This inquiry is an opportunity to dispel some myths about the performance of public schools in the ACT.

Standardised test results show that ACT schools excel. Several of these tests reveal that in addition to high average scores, the ACT has shown significant improvement since around 2016. For example, in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), the proportion of students not able to reach the minimum benchmark *halved* between 2016 and 2021. No other jurisdiction achieved a significant improvement over that time.¹

In some domains, the ACT's performance compared with other Australian jurisdictions is so high that it may be more instructive to compare the ACT against other international scores. Compared in this way, in PIRLS, the ACT would be fourth in the world in international rankings, beaten only by Hong Kong, Singapore, and Russia. Internationally, the ACT has the equal third lowest proportion of students at low or below low levels. The ACT has a proportion of students at very low literacy levels equal with Singapore.^{2,3}

Why does this matter? If we are to learn from success in other education systems, we need to be clear about what we mean by success, proficiency, and outcomes. We need to be precise in comparisons with other systems and appraisal of ourselves. We need to recognise the successes of our system if we are to build on them. Given so much that happens in our education system is going well, it is crucial to appraise what is working so as not to diminish that good work, inadvertently, through change.

While our system excels, our members are not complacent about improvement. The AEU's work on this inquiry has revealed the depth of care that our members feel about their students. At every school we visit and at every union meeting, it is our teachers, principals, and school assistants saying that they want to do better – even if the status quo is already very good.

We welcome this inquiry because our members tirelessly seek opportunities to improve student outcomes. It is in our nature as educators to do so. We thank the Panel for treating the teaching profession with respect.

We need to communicate better about what happens in schools

The AEU believes that the Education Directorate could improve its communication with parents and the public regarding what is taught in public schools. In the absence of clear public communication, some erroneous claims have gained traction in the media. For example, we have seen the emergence of claims that public school teachers do not engage in explicit

¹ Hillman et al., "Progress in Reading Literacy Study: Australia's Results from PIRLS 2021," 26.

² Compare international rankings in Hillman, page 26 with Australian rankings on page 25.

³ This is despite ACT and Commonwealth governments funding public schools to an amount that assumes that 80% of students will reach the NAPLAN minimum standards. In other words, our public schools are funded to a level intending for 1 in 5 students to miss out. This is a hallmark of the SRS system devised by the Gonski review. See Department of Education, Australian Government, "Schooling Resource Standard."

We need to communicate better about what happens in schools

instruction in their teaching, or that the teaching of literacy in public school classrooms does not involve phonics. These are incorrect.⁴

Teachers in ACT public schools must align their lessons to the Australian Curriculum Version 9. The learning outcomes described by the Australian Curriculum are detailed and ambitious. Teachers in ACT public schools teach to this curriculum. They plan lessons against this curriculum. They do not, indeed *cannot*, ignore any part of it.

There is a curious claim in the public conversation that our teachers are instructed against using explicit instructional methods. The Australian Curriculum is complex and comprehensive. It would be impossible to impart such a wide set of knowledge to children without clear and explicit instruction. Our teachers use explicit instruction alongside careful scaffolding and guided inquiry to make sure every child is supported to learn.

These erroneous claims are symptoms of an unfortunate collapse of nuance in the public conversation about our school system. Should we aim to further enhance outcomes for students at ACT public schools, it is essential to acknowledge the breadth and complexity of what we expect of those schools.

Zooming in to the individual teacher level can be instructive. Teachers are expected to differentiate their lessons for cultural and neurodiversity, accommodating students who have individual learning needs or personalised behavioural management strategies. They are involved in constant communication with their colleague teachers, learning support assistants, content area experts, their management team in school, parents, and the students themselves to ensure that the learning program is as tailored and targeted to each student's needs as possible. They perform frequent formative assessment and regular summative assessment to track progress against goals. They must engage with one of the most demanding professional learning regimes of any profession (more hours per year than medical doctors, pilots, engineers, lawyers, or psychologists) to keep abreast of peer-reviewed, evidence-based teaching strategies and methods.

It is crucial to have classroom experience to fully grasp the complexity of education work. It is telling that some who advocate for the most simplistic solutions in education are those who have never worked in a classroom. It is time to meaningfully listen to the most experienced experts in education: the teachers, school leaders, and principals who show up for our students every single day.

⁴ While incorrect, they have an outsized impact. Research shows that the print media is one of the most powerful ways that parents understand what happens in their child's school. See for example: Mockler, *Constructing Teacher Identities: How the Print Media Define and Represent Teachers and Their Work*.

Defining the problem

The inquiry's consultation paper asked a number of questions regarding system coherency and consistency. Our school system's commitment to diversity and innovation is celebrated and enshrined in law.⁵ However, the AEU has insight into the ways that the Education Directorate's capacity to support schools has diminished, which has been damaging to system consistency, coherence, and efficiency. This has had some detrimental impacts on AEU members and our students. This inquiry can help in carefully diagnosing those issues and listening to teachers and school leaders in devising solutions.

We must first acknowledge that in the absence of fulsome educational leadership at a system level, school principals have largely taken up the task of designing comprehensive programs of teaching and learning at their schools. They do so in close collaboration with their school's staff, parent community, students and school board. Every school has their own school plan currently in place, where a carefully articulated approach to curriculum and pedagogy is implemented and monitored. We cannot ignore this colossal body of work that principals have implemented in every school. To do so is offensive to the expertise and experience of every principal who has authored such plans, and wasteful of the time that every teacher has spent on aligning their professional practice with their school's vision. Any system reform that aims to circumvent these plans would decimate trust in the Education Directorate.

The corollary effect of school-level diversity is that we have as many learning programs and approaches in the ACT public school system as we have schools. We are a small system; we cannot claim that this is an efficient use of principal and school leader time and expertise. The lack of system coherency presents challenges to staff in the context of teacher mobility, which is a hallmark of ACT public schools. Whenever students or staff move, even to the next suburb over, they might be expected to adjust to a different approach to teaching and learning.

This diversity causes considerable anxiety for parents, who can be influenced by campaigns in the media that attempt to discredit some approaches to teaching in our schools. In the ACT, powerful voices have deployed significant resourcing to repeat claims in the media that one approach to teaching is backed by 'science' and 'evidence', and all others are not. This campaign has long roots in other countries like the United States and borrows ideological framings that discredit public school teachers, arguing that a teacher's professional discretion should be replaced with commercial programs sold for profit to public school systems.⁶

Literacy experts are clear that learning to read is much more complicated than these simple claims.⁷ The science of reading is complex, multidisciplinary, and evolving. Learning to read

⁵ The *Education Act (2004)* (ACT) states that high quality education is based on, among other things, the encouragement of "innovation, diversity and opportunity within and among schools".

⁶ Taylor, *Beginning to Read and the Spin Doctors of Science: The Political Campaign to Change America's Mind about How Children Learn to Read*; Reinking, Hruby, and Risko, "Legislating Phonics: Settled Science or Political Polemics?"; Wyse and Bradbury, "The Passion, Pedagogy and Politics of Reading"; Cervetti et al., "How the Reading for Understanding Initiative's Research Complicates the Simple View of Reading Invoked in the Science of Reading"; Creagh et al., "Commercialisation in Australian Public Education and Its Implications for the Delivery of English as an Additional Language/Dialect"; Lingard et al., "Commercialisation in Public Schooling (CIPS): Final Report."

⁷ Duke and Cartwright, "The Science of Reading Progresses: Communicating Advances Beyond the Simple View of Reading"; Burns, Duke, and Cartwright, "Evaluating Components of the Active View of Reading as Intervention Targets."

Students must be ready to learn

involves neurological, cultural, social and individual factors, and requires diverse and flexible teaching approaches utilised by the teachers who know their students.⁸ It requires teachers who are highly skilled, who have access to quality teaching materials⁹ and professional development, and who are trusted to do their job.¹⁰ Educator literacy experts emphasise the importance of teacher expertise and pedagogical flexibility in the pursuit of systematic and evidence-based teaching that considers the needs of learners and all of the complex elements of literacy.¹¹

The AEU cannot support ‘mandating’ that teachers teach in a particular way, but there is some distance between this as an extreme approach and our current situation. We suggest that a move towards strengthening centralised support in assessment, reporting and teaching will assist schools considerably. This submission describes how this could work.

What are the most critical influences on a student’s academic performance?

Students must be ready to learn

ACT public schools generally reflect the higher than average socioeconomic and educational advantage enjoyed by the whole ACT. The key word here is ‘average’, which hides the complexity and challenges of our situation.

Public schools disproportionately serve students from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the ACT we have one of the highest proportions of socioeconomic diversity within each suburb. Every public school likely serves very disadvantaged and very advantaged families because these families are neighbours. Even with improvements to ICSEA¹² (to collect parent-level data), the

⁸ Exley and Heinrichs, “When the Vocabulary Isn’t There: The Importance of Developing All the Reading Roles”; Bowers, “Reconsidering the Evidence That Systematic Phonics Is More Effective Than Alternative Methods of Reading Instruction.”

⁹ Birch et al., “A Systematic Literature Review of Decodable and Levelled Reading Books for Reading Instruction in Primary School Contexts: An Evaluation of Quality Research Evidence.”

¹⁰ Exley, “‘P Is for Pterodactyl’ and Other Considerations for the Intelligent Phonics Teacher”; Kervin and Comber, “Collaborative Inquiries in Diverse Literacy Classrooms to Understand Learning Opportunities.”

¹¹ Mantei and Kervin, “What’s Your System? Thinking about What We Mean by Being ‘Systematic’ in Our Teaching about Letter-Sound Relationships in Context”; Mantei and Kervin, “Teacher Knowledge and Student Learning”; Duke, Ward, and Pearson, “The Science of Reading Comprehension Instruction”; Aukerman and Chambers Schuldt, “What Matters Most? Toward a Robust and Socially Just Science of Reading”; Compton-Lilly et al., “Stories Grounded in Decades of Research: What We Truly Know about the Teaching of Reading”; Ryan et al., “A Reflexive Approach to Teaching Writing: Enablements and Constraints in Primary School Classrooms”; Compton-Lilly et al., “A Confluence of Complexity: Intersections Among Reading Theory, Neuroscience, and Observations of Young Readers.”

¹² ICSEA stands for Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage. It is an average value dependant on each student’s parents’ occupation and education and the school’s geographical location and proportion of Indigenous students. It is a general indicator of educational advantage.

Students cannot learn without a teacher

averaging effect of evaluating SES in aggregate means that disadvantage is significantly masked.¹³

While disadvantage goes under-detected at a system level, it is clear to teachers and principals who know and work with children and their families. The work our members do to help these students is not captured in standardised tests. We know that students are only able and ready to learn once their basic needs are met. As the Australian Primary Principals Association has said,

“The view from the ground says that unless we have whole of community, integrated, inter-agency supports for high needs families, we are unlikely to get anywhere. Abused, scared, alienated, hungry children, aren’t focussed on learning.”¹⁴

If the ACT Government wants to lift literacy and numeracy outcomes, it cannot allow any child to live in poverty. This is an ethical stance, but also a practical one. Research clearly shows that the most important influences on a student’s academic outcomes are almost entirely outside the remit of the education system. If we do not address disadvantage, we will not achieve the kinds of outcomes that we want for our public schools.

Students cannot learn without a teacher

The ACT Teacher Shortage Taskforce found that we are currently enduring an unprecedented and acute teacher shortage in ACT public schools.¹⁵

The most immediate impact of reduced staffing is ‘collapsed’, ‘split’ or ‘combined’ classes, where the policy that limits class sizes is temporarily breached to cope with the school having too few staff. This is a strategy authorised by the Education Directorate in its Daily Staffing Availability Model. It is done in an ad hoc way to mitigate slightly reduced staffing, or in manner that is ‘routine, regular, or pre-planned’ to cope with significantly reduced staffing. Other actions that are authorised by the Education Directorate include the cancellation or postponement of explicit learning programs while ‘supervision’ takes place instead.

The AEU regularly receives reports of teachers having to accept extra students to their class almost every day or having to supervise very large groups of students. This severely diminishes a teacher’s capacity to deliver lessons that effectively meet the learning outcomes of the Australian Curriculum.

These consequences are not meaningfully represented in any data that the Education Directorate collects. While it can see system-level staffing shortages via HR systems, it cannot see the classroom level impact of missed lessons, extra planning, disrupted students and overworked teachers. Because of this, it is imperative to listen to teachers when we state the gravity of the teacher shortage.

¹³ ICSEA ratings for the ACT is currently under review by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). ACARA is investigating “apparent anomalies” into the operation of ICSEA calculations for the ACT, particularly for ‘similar students’ comparison. ACARA says that this review will extend through the first half of 2024. Until we learn the outcome of this review into ICSEA, it is not constructive to speculate on how ACT students should be compared with their interstate peers.

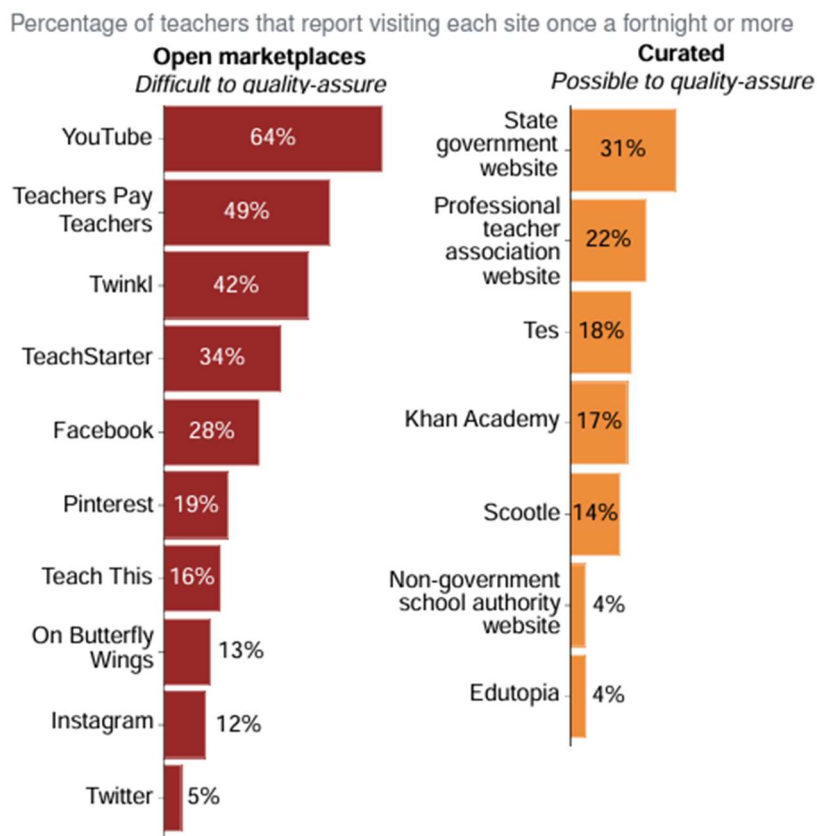
¹⁴ Australian Primary Principals Association, “Response to Interim Report.”

¹⁵ Education Directorate, ACT Government, “Teacher Shortage Taskforce: Final Report.”

How to strengthen system support in ACT public schools

Establish centralised curriculum support

Many of our members report either designing their teaching materials from scratch or purchasing materials from external sources. Grattan’s survey in 2022 of teachers across Australia showed that teachers engage with a wide range of external sources of teaching materials. In the absence of systemic guidance, teachers must evaluate quality of each resource themselves.



Notes: Total sample size is 1,991 teachers (including government and non-government teachers). The question asked: ‘Select any online resource repositories you use regularly (once a fortnight or more, on average) for ideas and/or materials to integrate into your lessons’. Tes was formerly known as The Times Educational Supplement. Percentages sum to more than 100 because teachers could select multiple responses. 16

Many of these are services that require payment for resources. Most of the teachers that the AEU has spoken to have paid, or currently pay, for resources to use in the classroom. This particularly affects early career teachers.

The 2023 State of Our Schools survey of 427 ACT public school teachers found that 88% pay for teaching resources out of their own pocket. On average, our ACT teachers report spending \$744 a year on school resources. Extrapolating these figures, we can estimate that in 2023 teachers in ACT public schools spent \$2.58 million of their own money on classroom resources.¹⁷

¹⁶ Hunter, Haywood, and Parkinson, “Ending the Lesson Lottery: How to Improve Curriculum Planning in Schools,” 31.

¹⁷ The 2022-23 Annual Report counts 3,948 teachers. If 88% of these spent \$744 in 2023 on average, we arrive at \$2,584,656.

Establish centralised curriculum support

It is plainly unacceptable that ACT public servants are having to pay out of their own pocket for resources to do their job.

We are also aware that many schools subscribe to resource services and pay for materials out of their school budget. While this does ameliorate the issue of individual employees spending their own money, it is far from ideal: the Education Directorate is thus spending some considerable amount on outsourcing the production of curriculum materials to for-profit companies, with little oversight on procurement. Given the way that financial management of the schooling system has been almost entirely devolved to schools, we would expect that the Education Directorate cannot say with any certainty how much it spends on these services, or how many services it pays for. It is thus impossible to say whether the investment represents good value for money or track the efficacy of each purchase.

In addition to cost and concerns around procurement oversight, the chaos of seeking and adapting external curriculum materials has a significant impact on a teacher's workload. Our early career teacher members are particularly affected by this. Many describe needing to write every single lesson and every unit plan from scratch, in the stage of their career when they have the least capacity to do so. If they try to source materials externally, they spend hours sifting through online repositories trying to find appropriate materials and then work more to integrate them into a plan for learning over the school year.

Other states have invested in the provision of curriculum materials for their public schools. Many of these materials are freely available online. For example, a downloadable resource using *Fantastic Mr Fox* from the NSW Department of Education includes a unit overview, learning outcomes mapped against curriculum, a teaching guide and planning framework, and lesson plans across five weeks with supporting classroom-ready resources.¹⁸ While comprehensive, the plan allows teachers to exercise their professional discernment in adapting the material to suit the needs of their class.

We do not need to reinvent the wheel when it comes to providing these materials, given many are already available to the public online, and many schools have already procured resources that are on the market. What our schools are missing is guidance from the Education Support Office that curates high quality and relevant learning materials.

This could have significant impact on teacher workload and the capacity for teachers to collaborate. We would generally agree that:

Effective collaboration requires strong curriculum leadership. Curriculum leaders need to create the conditions necessary for collaboration, by setting clear and consistent expectations, establishing common processes and practices, providing individualised support to teachers, and creating the time for teachers to share problems of practice. Only then can the workload be shared.¹⁹

In the report containing the statement above, Grattan Institute researchers praise the benefits of a 'bank of shared high-quality curriculum materials' in conditions where "shared materials were aligned to a coherent school-wide curriculum map and a shared understanding of

¹⁸ NSW Department of Education, "English Stage 2 First Year, Unit 1: Narrative - Fantastic Mr Fox."

¹⁹ Hunter, Haywood, and Parkinson, "Ending the Lesson Lottery: How to Improve Curriculum Planning in Schools," 23.

Implement uniform capture of student assessment data across the system

effective teaching” which meant that “teachers were confident in the quality of shared materials that they hadn’t created themselves.”²⁰

The key idea here is that curriculum material provision must leverage teacher professional expertise and experience, not de-skill or de-professionalise.

Recommendation 1: Establish centralised curriculum support

We recommend that the Education Directorate should:

- Establish a centralised curriculum support unit in the Education Support Office.
- Provide a user-friendly online repository of curriculum materials.
- Align curriculum materials with the learning achievements of the Australian Curriculum, include high-level unit plans and scope and sequence documents, include adaptable lesson suggestions for differentiation; and include assessment suggestions to track student outcomes consistently and reduce workload associated with reporting.
- Provide a curated list of quality-assured programs that schools can access and that are centrally resourced.

Implement uniform capture of student assessment data across the system

There is a range of student assessments used across the ACT public school system. These include those that are mandated by the system, like BASE and NAPLAN,²¹ and those that schools add for their own use.

The diversity of assessments has led to the following issues:

- High schools and colleges do not have consistency of testing among their feeder schools, which impedes their planning and resource allocation for every incoming year 7 and year 11 cohort – schools often effectively start from scratch for every new student
- Inefficiency in procurement as each school purchases its own package of tests
- Inhibited teacher and school leader mobility as staff must learn new assessments and their associated data analytics systems at every new school
- Diminished capacity for central support for reporting and parent communication, because of the diversity of the system

The AEU is told by teacher and principal members that their schools have added their own testing regimes atop those mandated by the Education Directorate for the following reasons:

²⁰ Hunter, Haywood, and Parkinson, 23.

²¹ BASE is conducted at the beginning and end of kindergarten, to assess each child’s literacy and numeracy skills, including phonics. It is purchased from an external provider, the Cambridge University Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring. NAPLAN is a test of the literacy and numeracy skills of every student in years 3, 5, 7 and 9, and is run by ACARA.

Free up schools to focus on education

- Slow provision of data analytics on BASE and NAPLAN means that those results are supplied too late to inform teaching
- Student data does not move easily between schools, given diversity of tests and accompanying analytics

This has led to a situation in which we have parallel assessment schedules in schools: one set of tests for compliance, and one set of tests which inform teaching.²²

If schools were properly supported to engage in a coherent schedule of standardised testing, it could generate considerable efficiencies. It could also reduce reporting workload, because the Education Directorate could develop materials to support reporting against the standardised assessments and the Australian Curriculum.

Recommendation 2: Implement uniform capture of student assessment data across the system

We recommend that the Education Directorate should:

- Consult with schools to map the current use of student assessment systems and decide on a limited and targeted set of assessment pieces to use across the system.
- Ensure that assessment systems provide prompt and user-friendly supply of data and analytics to teachers so that data can inform teaching.
- Align these assessment and data systems with curriculum materials described earlier, to promote system coherency and reduce reporting workload for school-based staff.

Free up schools to focus on education

Teachers want to teach. A study of 18,234 NSW public school teachers conducted by researchers from the University of Sydney and Curtin University in collaboration with the NSW Teachers Federation found that:

“[Teachers] highly value tasks that are perceived to be directly related to their teaching and to students’ learning, identifying planning and teaching lessons; meeting students’ learning needs; and communicating with students about their learning, lives and wellbeing as some of their most important work.”²³

²² ‘Evidence’ that satisfies ‘accountability’ wields considerable power but has come to diverge from the kinds of knowledge about student progress that can be used to meaningfully enhance learning. Mockler and Stacey distinguish between ‘performative’ and ‘intelligent’ accountability: see Mockler and Stacey, “Evidence of Teaching Practice in an Age of Accountability: When What Can Be Counted Isn’t All That Counts.”

²³ McGrath-Champ et al., “Understanding Work in Schools: The Foundation for Teaching and Learning,” 1.

Free up schools to focus on education

In contrast, teachers and school leaders identified a ‘tsunami’ in the amount of work demanded of them that involved collecting and reporting data for the purpose of compliance and ‘accountability’, implementing top-down department policies, and performing other administrative tasks.²⁴ Teachers identified that these did very little to improve outcomes for students. They merely satisfied a culture of management that lacked trust and respect for teachers.

Any system reform must improve the conditions that allow teachers to teach. The research clearly shows that when teachers are meaningfully involved in change and when they are more in charge of their own time, they invest time in enhancing the efficacy of their teaching practice.

Too often, attempts to improve student outcomes involve imposing increasingly onerous data collection requirements on teachers and school leaders and increasing standardised testing and assessment to surveil the work of teachers in their classrooms. Not only do these practices show a profound disrespect for teachers and principals, research demonstrates that they are not effective at improving student outcomes.

It is useful to consider all the non-teaching responsibilities that schools are currently burdened with. While the Education Directorate assumes high-level strategic decision-making, it has devolved responsibility for most implementation to schools.²⁵ It means that schools are responsible for tasks as diverse as: financial management, asset management, procurement, marketing,²⁶ internal and external communications, external stakeholder management, human resources, professional development, workforce data and analytics, student data and analytics, all levels of curriculum material development, and so on.²⁷ This is *in addition to* the work a school is best placed to do, like teaching, adapting curriculum materials, differentiation, professional collaboration, all student-facing work in instruction and pastoral care, and parent-facing communication.

The fact that system-level resourcing and support is so thin has meant that over time we have increasingly eroded the capacity of and trust in that system, incentivised competition between schools, disincentivised collaboration, sharing, and investment in the system. In the words of one principal, we currently treat schools as a collection of franchised businesses, rather than a system that is greater than the sum of its parts.

²⁴ Fitzgerald et al., “Intensification of Teachers’ Work under Devolution.”

²⁵ Thompson et al refer to the experience of this for school principals as one of ‘indentured autonomy’, “an outcome of negotiating autonomy, continued precariousness and cruel optimism”. See Thompson, Lingard, and Ball, “‘Indentured Autonomy’: Headteachers and Academisation Policy in Northern England.”

²⁶ The need to market public schools to the community has an impact on the kinds of educational programs it chooses to engage with. See Feuvre et al., “Marketing Australian Public Schools: The Double Bind of the Public School Principal.”

²⁷ The erosion of system support and rise of competition between schools has amplified workload, as teachers and principals take up responsibility for public services on a personal level. See Thompson, Mockler, and Hogan, “Making Work Private: Autonomy, Intensification and Accountability.”

Recommendation 3: Free up schools to focus on education

We recommend that the Education Directorate should:

- Assume responsibility for all non-educational tasks, alleviating schools of responsibilities such as building and other asset management, procurement, and some financial management.
 - Facilitate collegiality and peer development among teachers through cross-school professional learning, networks and events.
 - Invest in our specialist teachers like teacher librarians, disability inclusion specialists and EAL/D specialists to ensure they can support their colleagues to enhance teaching practice.
-

Grow our system's understanding of its own people

Through the work of the Teacher Shortage Taskforce in 2021-2022, the AEU worked with the Education Directorate to develop a better understanding of how teacher shortages were impacting the education system. Our findings revealed that due to decentralisation and devolution, the Education Directorate had very limited knowledge of its own employees. The employer's systems have improved since, but the AEU would consider the Education Directorate's workforce knowledge systems to be still in their infancy.

For example, the Education Directorate cannot produce data on:

- Subject specialisations of high school and college teachers
- Teacher or school assistant qualifications, completed professional learning (this is held at school-level and by TQI), or professional experience
- The proportion of teachers who have trained or have experience in particular pedagogical approaches, and their distribution across the system
- Student progress shown by the full gamut of testing used across the system, because many tests are designed and/or purchased at school level
- How funding is used to support students who receive student-based loading funding under the SRS (who may be, for example, students with disability, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, students experiencing socio-educational disadvantage or students with low English proficiency), because these loadings are pooled on a per-school basis and principals are left to design resource distribution²⁸

²⁸ For a deeper understanding on the challenges that devolution has created for principals, we recommend that the Panel read [our 2022 report on principal workload](#). It found, for example, that: "Principals are expected to manage complex budgets largely independently but are not given enough information to plan for and allocate the money they receive. ... When decisions must be made with insufficient information, our principal members report shouldering enormous stress, worrying that their decision making will impede students receiving the best quality education or will end up being the focus of a tense letter or meeting in which they are told an overspend is unacceptable. In this way, there is a

Grow our system's understanding of its own people

If we take teacher and school assistant qualifications as an example, the Education Directorate does take information on this when a teacher or school assistant is first recruited to the system, through the supply of their CV. Schools also know this information as principals communicate with individual staff to try to develop their workforce to meet student need. However, due to the lack of information sharing between schools and the system, and due to the lack of information sharing within the Education Support Office, the Education Directorate cannot analyse its own data to identify connections where there might be student need that is not met by staff expertise, where there may be opportunities for mentoring or skills sharing, or where there may be inefficiencies. The result is a piecemeal and haphazard system wherein individual school-based staff are left to fill gaps. At its most extreme, Directors of School Improvement are parachuted in once a situation has escalated to a crisis. Greater system coordination and collaboration will enable a more proactive system provision of school support.

We hope to make very clear that this kind of system knowledge does not mean linking student test performance with a teacher's professional standing, or otherwise introducing policies that aim to surveil what teachers do in their classroom. Where this has happened internationally, it has led to severely unsafe working conditions for teachers and no benefit to student outcomes.²⁹ Any developments in system knowledge must have at their core respect for teachers and desire to support all staff more effectively.

What we are arguing for is better system wide workforce management. Too many AEU members have reported on the inadequacies of system level recruitment that does not meet the needs of schools. For example, schools report being offered teachers without qualifications in the subject areas for which recruitment is sought.

Recommendation 4: Grow our system's understanding of its own people

We recommend that the Education Directorate should:

- Procure and implement a modern HRIMS that is fit for purpose in schools.
- Map the data that the system (including schools) already holds, and identify inefficiencies, roadblocks, and pathways to better information sharing.
- Design future teacher recruitment campaigns to target known staffing needs of the system, including recruitment for specialised positions.

complexity and lack of transparency that leads to high quantity of work, and a culture of fear that compounds stress." From *"Enough of the Rhetoric and Obfuscation": What Must Change to Allow Principals to Be Educational Leaders. Discussion Paper of the Principals Workload and Budget Transparency Working Group* (Australian Education Union - ACT Branch, December 2022).

²⁹ Ryan et al., "Leaving the Teaching Profession"; Hardy, "A Logic of Enumeration."

Ensure support for New Educators

Our Enterprise Agreement enshrines support for teachers in their first three years of their career (New Educators). However, implementation of this support is uneven across the system, and even with full compliance it is not sufficient.

The Enterprise Agreement entitles New Educators to a five-day induction program, fewer teaching hours than their experienced colleagues,³⁰ access to a teacher mentor, a New Educator Support Plan, and six days to engage with coaching and mentoring, provided over three years. Until recently, the only part of this suite that involves system support is the induction program. All other parts of the New Educator support infrastructure rely on individual schools (and particularly principals and mentors) to devise and implement an effective support structure.

The AEU is told by New Educators and their principals that a beginning teacher's success or failure often hinges on having access to quality mentoring. This relies on an experienced teacher being available to mentor, noting that they do not receive any reduction in their teaching hours to take on this work. In practice, the provision of this entitlement is extremely uneven and difficult to enforce.

Mentoring capacity is severely limited in schools that have a shortage of experienced teachers. From data provided by the Education Directorate as part of the Teacher Shortage Taskforce in 2022, the AEU determined that some schools had as many as 34% New Educators in their teaching staff complement, and some schools had as few as 2%.³¹ This mismatch means that some experienced teachers are stretched very thin as they attempt to mentor a large cohort of early career colleagues.

Given this thin and patchy support system, it is understandable that the most enthusiastic responses for uplifting system support for teaching has come from New Educator members of the AEU.

Recommendation 5: Ensure support for New Educators

We recommend that the Education Directorate should:

- Use the annual teacher transfer process to balance the New Educator to experienced teacher ratio at every school within five years, so that no school has over 20% New Educators.

³⁰ These reductions are provided by clause N5 of the "ACT Public Sector Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2023-2026." It is arguably only a slight reduction, ranging from 7-12% fewer teaching hours depending on career stage and sector.

³¹ This dataset showed that New Educators made up 16% of teaching employees in our system overall.

Improve equity by resourcing small group intensive learning

- Reduce mentor face-to-face teaching hours by one hour per fortnight for every New Educator a mentor has assigned to them, to recognise their need to meet with the New Educator and support their development.³²
 - Offer an allowance to mentors to recognise the additional work they do.
-

Improve equity by resourcing small group intensive learning

The Education Directorate already endorses the use of the Response to Intervention model, which involves the provision of tiered supports that intensify in proportion to student need. As long as teachers are able to use their professional discernment in applying the teaching strategies they see most suitable for the student, this can be a helpful way to operationalise the provision of extra support. This model sees students working in small groups with an educator for a limited but intensive period to improve their results, or one-on-one with an educator if the small group approach does not work.

This should work in theory, but in practice rampant under-resourcing means that it is difficult to implement. Many schools find it impossible to maintain normal educational program delivery as teacher shortages become acute. When it is a challenge to staff classrooms with a teacher as usual, it is highly unreasonable to expect schools to have capacity to spare a teacher to run intensive one-on-one or small group support. It is near impossible for many schools to implement Tier 2 (small group) or Tier 3 (one-on-one) support that would help struggling students.

Without intensive support, many students fall even further behind.
Resourcing small group intensive learning is thus a matter of equity.

Recommendation 6: Improve equity by resourcing small group intensive learning

We recommend that the Education Directorate should:

- Identify the resourcing and staffing limitations that have impeded full provision of the Response to Intervention model in all schools.
 - Facilitate the implementation of small group intensive learning in all schools for children at risk of falling behind in literacy and numeracy.
-

³² While teaching hour limits are prescribed by the Enterprise Agreement, they are maximum thresholds. The Education Directorate could reduce mentor teaching loads via policy before the next Enterprise Agreement is bargained. If it has the intended impact, we could then work towards codifying it in the EA.

Deliver greater consistency in reporting to parents

The evidence is clear that when parents partner meaningfully with schools in engaging with their child's education, academic outcomes improve.³³ Most schools and individual teachers have devised their own communication strategies in the absence of system guidance.

An easily implemented improvement could be to review and improve parts of the Education Directorate's website. The Victorian Education Department's websites are a good guide for intelligible and navigable information. For example, its page titled '[How to talk to your school about your child's learning difficulty](#)'³⁴ could be compared to the ACT equivalent '[Students with Learning Difficulties](#)'.³⁵ The former is much more user-friendly, in terms of structure, language and format, and has a clear purpose and intended audience.

We have heard from members and parents that there is sometimes a communication breakdown at the point of written reports on student progress, because teachers use complex education-specific language that is not necessarily intelligible to non-educators. The Education Directorate could improve its support to teachers and school leaders in translating education outcomes to language that parents can easily engage with, and embedding reporting into the curriculum materials and student assessment suite that it should offer centrally.

It would be helpful to reduce teacher workload for the Education Directorate to take leadership on what effective parental engagement looks like. Other than mandated letter grades, there is very little guidance given to schools, who fill in the blanks with written reports, parent-teacher interview nights, and other formal and informal communications. The AEU has found that without strong union negotiation, many schools tend towards a greater quantity of communications, without necessarily considering the quality of engagement. This presents workload challenges if teachers are asked to write long written report comments, participate in several parent-teacher interview meetings after hours every year, and engage in sometimes frequent informal parent communication via phone, email, and digital platforms like Seesaw.

Recommendation 7: Deliver greater consistency in reporting to parents

We recommend that the Education Directorate should:

- Continue to work through the Sustainable Workload Management Committee to achieve reasonable limits on system expectations of reporting to parents.
- Embed reporting in curriculum materials and assessment to relieve workload, improve consistency and enhance usefulness of reporting for parents.
- Review and improve its website.

³³ For example, PISA found that higher performing students have family members who ask them what they did at school that day, even after accounting for socio-economic difference. See OECD, *PISA 2022 Results (Volume I)*, 232. It also found that "education systems with positive trends in parental engagement in student learning between 2018 and 2022 showed greater stability or improvement in maths. This was especially true for disadvantaged students." Schleicher, *Insights and Interpretations*, 47.

³⁴ Victorian Government, "How to Talk to Your School about Your Child's Learning Difficulty."

³⁵ Education Directorate, ACT Government, "Students with Learning Difficulties."

Gain industrial benefits by improving system coherence

There are industrial implications for making some of the parts of the ACT public school system more consistent and coherent. If the Education Directorate developed and supplied curriculum materials, if teachers were supported to access curriculum materials centrally, and if they were centrally trained and supported in their use, we foresee the following potential benefits:

- A better experience for teachers new to the ACT (new educators and those recruited from outside the ACT) leading to improved teacher retention
- A better experience for teachers entering their teacher transfer round, in which they move schools and need to adapt to their new school's teaching program
- Workload reduction for principals and other school leaders, who currently must articulate their own school's particular approach to teaching and learning
- Workload reduction for teachers as they adapt curriculum materials that are made centrally available, rather than needing to start from scratch for every lesson
- Workload reduction for teachers as reporting to parents and to the Education Directorate could be streamlined and made more efficient
- Better performance conversations between employees and supervisors, as expectations are more consistent
- Workload reduction for school leaders as professional development could be delivered more efficiently centrally, and run throughout the year

The AEU's industrial expertise makes us well placed to continue to consult with the Education Directorate on these matters to leverage the improvements that change may bring.

Support schools and teachers better to help students with extra or different need

This inquiry asks us to consider how to improve learning outcomes of neurodiverse learners, students with learning difficulties and students with disability.

The Inclusive Education Strategy launched last year provides a wealth of insight here. Its consultation was wide and sustained, involving hundreds of students, staff, parents and external stakeholders from 2021 to 2023. The Panel should consider the suite of consultation and research produced by this process to guide system-wide improvements to the learning experience of neurodiverse learners, and students with learning difficulties or disability.³⁶

The Education Directorate should build on this community consultation in enhancing support to schools, because it gives us useful pathways for system improvements that are informed by educators themselves. For example, when the Education Directorate asked teachers how they would best like to receive support, 65% indicated:

³⁶ This includes Education Directorate, ACT Government, "Inclusive Education for Children and Young People with Disability in ACT Public Schools: Information Paper"; "A Community Conversation: Summary Report"; "Disability Education Evidence Review: A Review of Education Settings for Students with Disability in Australia"; "Strengthening Inclusive Education in ACT Public Schools: Discussion Paper"; "Developing an Inclusive Education Strategy for ACT Public Schools - Discussion Paper and What We Heard."

“a preference for ‘professional learning with a coach to assist the transfer of theory to classroom practice’. This suggests that class-based staff would prefer support in person rather than professional learning that takes them away from the classroom.”³⁷

We often see broad recommendations made that refer to more professional learning as a relatively easy and cheap solution to the complex challenge posed by upskilling all our staff to better support all students. The finding above is an example of the way that consultation with our educators helps the Education Directorate understand what would impact student outcomes more effectively.

While our expectations on schools to meet every student’s need has increased exponentially, this has not seen a commensurate reduction in class sizes or teaching hours per teacher. An overwhelming majority of students with disability attend mainstream public schools. Some of these students have diagnoses that attract some extra funding, but many do not. The shortfall is made up largely by individual teachers, who must plan for several different iterations of every single lesson to make sure that every student can participate in learning. A education system must make reasonable adjustments to learning to comply with the *Disability Standards for Education (2005)* (Cth), and our Education Directorate largely places the burden of compliance on individual teachers.

The Inclusion Strategy’s consultation report cites concerns around curriculum, including that there is a need to better adapt curriculum to suit the needs of neurodiverse students.³⁸ School staff talked about the need to improve Individual Learning Programs (ILP) processes so that the ILP can more effectively guide learning.³⁹ Devising and following an ILP is a labour-intensive process for teachers, involving consultation with the student, their parents, allied health professionals and/or their doctor and making detailed plans for how every part of learning will be adapted for the student. The AEU is aware of teachers who have as many as a third of their class (around 10 students) on ILPs, which massively increases teacher workload.

The inquiry’s terms of reference ask us to consider the specific needs of each ‘equity cohort’, including students with disability or learning difficulty, socioeconomic disadvantage, students who have English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. We must be careful that framing aimed to increase equity does not fall into the trap of describing the diversity of our students as deficits. We must also be careful to understand that what works for some students will be very different to what works for others.

For example, specialist EAL/D educators make clear that learning English is not the same as learning literacy, and that many aspects of our literacy education infrastructure in Australia assumes a native proficiency in English. A one-size-fits-all approach cannot work if it assumes all students have the same basic level of spoken English proficiency – and indeed, will arguably discriminate against students from language backgrounds other than English if they are

³⁷ Education Directorate, ACT Government, “Developing an Inclusive Education Strategy for ACT Public Schools - Discussion Paper and What We Heard,” 4.

³⁸ Education Directorate, ACT Government, “A Community Conversation: Summary Report,” 14.

³⁹ Education Directorate, ACT Government, 17.

Invest in school libraries and teacher librarians

implemented at the exclusion of all other approaches.⁴⁰ It follows, too, that students who experience multiple barriers to learning will be further excluded by narrow approaches.⁴¹

The Inclusion Strategy is a good place from which to set a foundation for what individualised support means, for all students – those with learning difficulty or disability, but also all other types of diversity, be it cultural or linguistic diversity, being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and so on.

Any recommendations around curriculum that are made by the Panel must take into account the legislated requirement for schools to adapt every learning area to the needs of individual students. They must also consider the significant workload implications and need for greater resourcing to meet the demands of these core parts of teaching.

Invest in school libraries and teacher librarians

School libraries are at the centre of learning, and having a well-resourced library and teacher librarian can improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students.⁴²

Teacher librarians are dual-qualified in both education and librarianship. In schools, they connect teachers with the resources they need to deliver quality learning programs, thereby reducing teacher workload. An effective investment in and partnership with teacher librarians can ensure that any systemic reform meets the needs of every school's existing resourcing and learning program.

Libraries are important at every level of schooling. Research shows that library programs can foster literacy interest, which has a positive relationship with the emergence of literacy skills in early childhood.⁴³ In later years the library not only enhances and extends academically, but often serves as a social wellbeing hub for students and the community.

We support the recommendations made by teacher librarians that the Education Directorate:

- Adopt a target that, as a matter of equity, every ACT public school student has access to a well-resourced school library run by qualified staff, to be supported by:
 - expansion of the current teacher librarian scholarship program, including the roll-out of centrally funded positions
 - opportunities for library-specific training for educational support staff, and
- Develop a central register on the provision, resourcing and staffing of school libraries to provide a source of data to track impact on literacy and numeracy outcomes.

⁴⁰ Australian Council of TESOL Associations, "Submission to the Inquiry into Adult Literacy and Its Importance."

⁴¹ See, for example, the perspectives of teachers of Indigenous students for whom English is an additional language: Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Northern Territory, "Submission to Inquiry into Adult Literacy and Its Importance."

⁴² Krashen, Lee, and McQuillan, "Is the Library Important? Multivariate Studies at the National and International Level."

⁴³ Baroody and Diamond, "Links Among Home Literacy Environment, Literacy Interest, and Emergent Literacy Skills in Preschoolers At Risk for Reading Difficulties."

Conclusion

We're proud of the work our members do every day to provide education to public school students. AEU members are tireless in their pursuit of meeting diverse student needs and ensuring educational excellence under all kinds of challenges.

We have a proudly diverse system that aims to meet every student's need. This has become a structural feature: schools have largely assumed responsibility for designing their approach to teaching, and system support has eroded commensurately. This has led to challenges in consistency and greatly increased teacher and school leader workload. Our education system can do much more to act as a system, rather than a collection of disconnected schools.

We have learned that we have as many perspectives on how to get literacy and numeracy right as we have members. This submission cannot represent the true diversity of our membership. We present in this submission the most salient conversations happening in school staffrooms across the ACT, and seven key recommendations for ways forward.

We have found that despite diversity in our membership, there is a strong desire for greater centralised consistency in approaches to teaching, assessment and reporting. In this submission we make clear that strengthening system support to schools and teachers will pay dividends for teacher workload and thus student outcomes.

Change should build on what we already do well. It should complement and extend the work already done to meet student need. Systemic support is about connecting disparate parts and leveraging the best of our people.

Partnering with the teachers is crucial. Director of PISA Andreas Schleicher has stated:

One thing is clear, where teachers are not part of the design of effective policies and practices, they won't be effective in their implementation. Education needs to do more to create a teaching profession that owns its professional practice. When teachers feel a sense of ownership over their classrooms and their profession, when students feel a sense of ownership over their learning, that is when productive learning takes place. And when teachers assume that ownership, it is difficult to ask more of them than they ask of themselves. So the answer is to strengthen trust, transparency, professional autonomy and the collaborative culture of the profession all at the same time.⁴⁴

Such a task will not be easy, but our members are ready for the challenge.

⁴⁴ Gomendio, "Empowering and Enabling Teachers to Improve Equity and Outcomes for All," 3.

Reference list

- “ACT Public Sector Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2023-2026.” ACT Government, 2023.
- Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Northern Territory. “Submission to Inquiry into Adult Literacy and Its Importance.” ATESOL NT, 2021. <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=cfb5eb91-68f3-4c4b-97aa-bc13aabb7a56&subId=711488>.
- Aukerman, Maren, and Lorien Chambers Schuldt. “What Matters Most? Toward a Robust and Socially Just Science of Reading.” *Reading Research Quarterly* 56, no. S1 (2021): S85–103. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.406>.
- Australian Council of TESOL Associations. “Submission to the Inquiry into Adult Literacy and Its Importance.” ACTA, 2021. <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=a0c41e32-fa0e-4570-a32c-366dabeed185&subId=705422>.
- Australian Education Union ACT Branch. “‘Enough of the Rhetoric and Obfuscation’: What Must Change to Allow Principals to Be Educational Leaders. Discussion Paper of the Principals Workload and Budget Transparency Working Group,” December 2022. https://www.aeuact.org.au/wp-content/uploads/_pda/2023/03/AEU-principals-working-group-discussion-paper-final.pdf.
- Australian Primary Principals Association. “Response to Interim Report.” Submission to Productivity Commission Study Report into National School Reform Agreement. APPA, 2022.
- Baroody, Alison E., and Karen E. Diamond. “Links Among Home Literacy Environment, Literacy Interest, and Emergent Literacy Skills in Preschoolers At Risk for Reading Difficulties.” *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education* 32, no. 2 (August 1, 2012): 78–87. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121410392803>.
- Birch, Rachel, Heather Sharp, Drew Miller, Denyse Ritchie, and Susan Ledger. “A Systematic Literature Review of Decodable and Levelled Reading Books for Reading Instruction in Primary School Contexts: An Evaluation of Quality Research Evidence.” Teachers & Teaching Research Centre, University of Newcastle, 2022.
- Bowers, Jeffrey S. “Reconsidering the Evidence That Systematic Phonics Is More Effective Than Alternative Methods of Reading Instruction.” *Educational Psychology Review* 32, no. 3 (September 1, 2020): 681–705. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-019-09515-y>.
- Burns, Matthew K., Nell K. Duke, and Kelly B. Cartwright. “Evaluating Components of the Active View of Reading as Intervention Targets: Implications for Social Justice.” *School Psychology* 38, no. 1 (2023): 30–41. <https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000519>.
- Cervetti, Gina N., P. David Pearson, Annemarie S. Palincsar, Peter Afflerbach, Panayiota Kendeou, Gina Biancarosa, Jennifer Higgs, Miranda S. Fitzgerald, and Amy I. Berman. “How the Reading for Understanding Initiative’s Research Complicates the Simple View of Reading Invoked in the Science of Reading.” *Reading Research Quarterly* 55, no. S1 (2020): S161–72. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.343>.
- Compton-Lilly, Catherine F., Ayan Mitra, Mary Guay, and Lucy K. Spence. “A Confluence of Complexity: Intersections Among Reading Theory, Neuroscience, and Observations of Young Readers.” *Reading Research Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (2020): 185–95. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.348>.

- Compton-Lilly, Catherine F., Lucy K. Spence, Paul L. Thomas, and Scott L. Decker. "Stories Grounded in Decades of Research: What We Truly Know about the Teaching of Reading." *The Reading Teacher* 77, no. 3 (2023): 392–400.
- Creagh, Sue, Skye Playsted, Anna Hogan, Tae-Hee Choi, and Bob Lingard. "Commercialisation in Australian Public Education and Its Implications for the Delivery of English as an Additional Language/Dialect: An EAL/D Teacher Perspective." *TESOL in Context* 32, no. 1 (November 23, 2023). <https://doi.org/10.21153/tesol2023vol32no1art1814>.
- Department of Education, Australian Government. "Schooling Resource Standard." Text, December 14, 2023. <https://www.education.gov.au/recurrent-funding-schools/schooling-resource-standard>.
- Duke, Nell K., and Kelly B. Cartwright. "The Science of Reading Progresses: Communicating Advances Beyond the Simple View of Reading." *Reading Research Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (2021): 25–44.
- Duke, Nell K., Alessandra E. Ward, and P. David Pearson. "The Science of Reading Comprehension Instruction." *The Reading Teacher* 74, no. 6 (2021): 663–72. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1993>.
- Education Directorate, ACT Government. "A Community Conversation: Summary Report," 2022.
- . "Developing an Inclusive Education Strategy for ACT Public Schools - Discussion Paper and What We Heard," 2022. https://www.education.act.gov.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0003/2338509/Listening-Report-term-4-2022-engagement.DOCX.
- . "Disability Education Evidence Review: A Review of Education Settings for Students with Disability in Australia," July 2022. https://www.education.act.gov.au/__data/assets/word_doc/0004/2098516/Disability-Education-Evidence-Review.docx.
- . "Inclusive Education for Children and Young People with Disability in ACT Public Schools: Information Paper," 2021. [/https://www.education.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1902563/Inclusive-Education-for-Children-and-Young-People-with-Disability-in-ACT-Public-Schools-Info.pdf](https://www.education.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1902563/Inclusive-Education-for-Children-and-Young-People-with-Disability-in-ACT-Public-Schools-Info.pdf).
- . "Strengthening Inclusive Education in ACT Public Schools: Discussion Paper," November 2022. https://www.education.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/2101135/Strengthening-Inclusive-Education-in-ACT-Public-Schools-Discussion-Paper-2022.pdf.
- . "Students with Learning Difficulties." ACT Education Directorate, December 7, 2023. <https://www.education.act.gov.au/support-for-our-students/students-with-learning-difficulties>.
- Education Directorate, ACT Government, Australian Education Union (ACT Branch). "Teacher Shortage Taskforce: Final Report," August 2022. https://www.education.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/2060664/Teacher-Shortage-Taskforce-Report.pdf.
- Exley, Beryl. "'P Is for Pterodactyl' and Other Considerations for the Intelligent Phonics Teacher." *Practical Literacy: The Early and Primary Years* 22, no. 2 (June 2020): 4–5.
- Exley, Beryl, and Danielle H. Heinrichs. "When the Vocabulary Isn't There: The Importance of Developing All the Reading Roles." *Practical Literacy: The Early and Primary Years* 28, no. 3 (2023): 14–16.

- Feuvre, Lauren, Anna Hogan, Greg Thompson, and Nicole Mockler. "Marketing Australian Public Schools: The Double Bind of the Public School Principal." *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 43 (August 9, 2021): 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2021.1953440>.
- Fitzgerald, Scott, Susan McGrath-Champ, Meghan Stacey, Rachel Wilson, and Mihajla Gavin. "Intensification of Teachers' Work under Devolution: A 'Tsunami' of Paperwork." *Journal of Industrial Relations* 61, no. 5 (November 2019): 613–36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022185618801396>.
- Gomendio, Montserrat. "Empowering and Enabling Teachers to Improve Equity and Outcomes for All." International Summit on the Teaching Profession. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2017.
- Hardy, Ian. "A Logic of Enumeration: The Nature and Effects of National Literacy and Numeracy Testing in Australia." In *Governing by Numbers*. Routledge, 2017.
- Hillman, Kylie, Elizabeth O'Grady, Sima Rodrigues, Marina Schmid, and Sue Thomson. "Progress in Reading Literacy Study: Australia's Results from PIRLS 2021." Australian Council for Educational Research, May 16, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.37517/978-1-74286-693-2>.
- Hunter, Jordana, Amy Haywood, and Nick Parkinson. "Ending the Lesson Lottery: How to Improve Curriculum Planning in Schools." Grattan Institute, 2022.
- Kervin, Lisa, and Barbara Comber. "Collaborative Inquiries in Diverse Literacy Classrooms to Understand Learning Opportunities." In *International Perspectives on Literacies, Diversities, and Opportunities for Learning*, edited by Cynthia Brock, Beryl Exley, and Lester-Irabinna Rigney. New York: Routledge, 2023.
- Krashen, Stephen, Syying Lee, and Jeff McQuillan. "Is the Library Important? Multivariate Studies at the National and International Level." *Journal of Language and Literacy Education* 8, no. 1 (2012): 26–36.
- Lingard, Bob, Sam Sellar, Anna Hogan, and Greg Thompson. "Commercialisation in Public Schooling (CIPS): Final Report." Sydney: NSW Teachers Federation, 2017.
- Mantei, Jessica, and Lisa Kervin. "Teacher Knowledge and Student Learning: An Examination of Teacher Pedagogies for the Same Writing Topic across Two Consecutive Grades." *The Australian Journal of Language and Literacy* 43, no. 3 (October 1, 2020): 224–34. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03652058>.
- . "What's Your System? Thinking about What We Mean by Being 'Systematic' in Our Teaching about Letter-Sound Relationships in Context." *Practical Literacy: The Early and Primary Years* 24, no. 2 (2019).
- McGrath-Champ, Susan, Rachel Wilson, Meghan Stacey, and Scott Fitzgerald. "Understanding Work in Schools: The Foundation for Teaching and Learning." Sydney: University of Sydney; Curtin University; NSW Teachers Federation, 2018. <https://www.nswtf.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Understanding-work-in-schools-the-foundations-for-teaching-and-learning.pdf>.
- Mockler, Nicole. *Constructing Teacher Identities: How the Print Media Define and Represent Teachers and Their Work*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350132917>.
- Mockler, Nicole, and Meghan Stacey. "Evidence of Teaching Practice in an Age of Accountability: When What Can Be Counted Isn't All That Counts." *Oxford Review of Education* 47 (October 6, 2020): 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2020.1822794>.

- NSW Department of Education. “English Stage 2 First Year, Unit 1: Narrative - Fantastic Mr Fox,” 2024. <https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/en/home/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/english/documents/english-s2-unit-1-fantastic-mr-fox.docx>.
- OECD. *PISA 2022 Results (Volume I): The State of Learning and Equity in Education*. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1787/53f23881-en>.
- Reinking, David, George G. Hruby, and Victoria J. Risko. “Legislating Phonics: Settled Science or Political Polemics?” *Teachers College Record* 125, no. 1 (2023): 104–31.
- Ryan, Mary, Maryam Khosronejad, Georgina Barton, Lisa Kervin, and Debra Myhill. “A Reflexive Approach to Teaching Writing: Enablements and Constraints in Primary School Classrooms.” *Written Communication* 38, no. 3 (July 1, 2021): 417–46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07410883211005558>.
- Ryan, Shannon V., Nathaniel P. von der Embse, Laura L. Pendergast, Elina Saeki, Natasha Segool, and Shelby Schwing. “Leaving the Teaching Profession: The Role of Teacher Stress and Educational Accountability Policies on Turnover Intent.” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 66 (August 1, 2017): 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.03.016>.
- Schleicher, Andreas. *Insights and Interpretations*. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2023.
- Taylor, Denny. *Beginning to Read and the Spin Doctors of Science: The Political Campaign to Change America’s Mind about How Children Learn to Read*. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 1998.
- Thompson, Greg, Bob Lingard, and Stephen Ball. “‘Indentured Autonomy’: Headteachers and Academisation Policy in Northern England.” *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 53 (December 3, 2020): 3–4. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220620.2020.1850433>.
- Thompson, Greg, Nicole Mockler, and Anna Hogan. “Making Work Private: Autonomy, Intensification and Accountability.” *European Educational Research Journal* 21 (March 9, 2021): 147490412199613. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904121996134>.
- Victorian Government. “How to Talk to Your School about Your Child’s Learning Difficulty,” December 20, 2023. <https://www.vic.gov.au/how-talk-your-school-about-your-childs-learning-difficulties>.
- Wyse, Dominic, and Alice Bradbury. “The Passion, Pedagogy and Politics of Reading.” *English in Education* 56, no. 3 (July 3, 2022): 247–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/04250494.2022.2091987>.
- XNTW and National Disability Insurance Agency [2023] AATA 759.