

[REDACTED]

Date 13 October 2024

Dear Reviewer

I asked my mid-primary school child what success looks like. Not once did she reference becoming a worker to be a productive person within the workforce or to behave in an appropriate manner. She said that success is being wanted for who you are. She said success was having solid friendships. She's not wrong. I don't know a single person who grew up thinking they wanted to be a productive member of the workforce. It was all family, inventing the cure for everything, running our own lives, and having our physical needs met and exceeded through whatever we chose to do in order to bring in the funds. For some friends, they were going to run the farm, others were going to be veterinarians because they loved animals. I was going to be a neurosurgeon. Whilst I am not a neurosurgeon, I certainly have a clearer understanding of what goes through the minds of many from our varied and different perspectives now that I have lived half a lifetime.

Basically though, defining educational success needs to be looked at with the perspective of the child who is learning and the opportunities that education provides to launch into, regain, and or continue success as an adult. That means we need to have a broader understanding of what success looks like as a young child and through our developmental stages through to and including adulthood. Absolutely, we need to look at the academic skills we are teaching our children so that they have the skills for further learning and the ability to meet necessary benchmarks for work within our society. However, we must absolutely not miss the social role that educational spaces fill. We MUST support the scaffolding and education of social and emotional wellbeing skills into daily education. We MUST make ALL our children feel safe, secure, supported and included. Our inclusion must extend not just when things are going smoothly but also when things are now. We cannot be fair-weather in our inclusion.

We send our children to school 5 days a week. We call the other children their peers. Even from a workforce point of view, and a behavioural point of view, we must acknowledge directly that the social and emotional wellbeing are crucial.

I would ask that you watch the webinar **"From Compliance to Connection: Why Social-Emotional Learning is the Missing Piece in Australian Education"**. This is by QUT Centre for Inclusive Education <https://vimeo.com/957412956/f62eb5dc0b>. This shows the evidence base for the necessity to have a proactive approach in this space.

You might also look at the SA Department of Education for explicit teaching around interoception. <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/schools-and-educators/curriculum-and-teaching/curriculum-programs/applying-interoception-skills-classroom>

### Behaviour

**"Kids do well when they can,"** (Ross Greene) **"and when they can't, it's because they are delayed in the development of crucial cognitive skills."** (article by E. Kessler) <https://www.smartkidswithld.org>. I recommend this website for resources.

We need to rethink behaviour. I cannot encourage you enough to read *The Explosive Child* and any and all work you can find of Ross W. Greene, PhD, leading authority on solutions for challenging behaviours. His website is <https://livesinthebalance.org>. There is a lot of evidence out there and a lot of free resources you can access and employ within the Tasmanian education system.

Don't send the child out of the classroom when their behaviour doesn't fit in. This just breeds low self esteem and learned behaviour that they are not heard and so they may as well do whatever. It is this type of constant exclusion and Awayism that destroys a child.

Don't remove the class of kids for the child's "dignity". The child will absolutely develop rejection sensitivity if they don't already have it as a disorder.

You don't need to share diagnoses to tell children "It's ok. You don't have to be scared of someone feeling really upset. We all have big emotions. This is how we can support that person".... SCAFFOLD

**Schools MUST provide the support to the child to validate them, match their energy, provide ATCTUAL co-regulation, let the child reinsert into the learning.**

**Schools MUST provide social and emotional wellbeing scaffolding so that children feel safe and secure and can actually play with other children and belong where their deficits may otherwise exclude them. The children without deficit also need scaffolding to support inclusive play and belonging with all children. It doesn't just happen. It needs to be in this space.**

**What is arbitrary? What is for us as teachers? What is for the child?**

### **Inclusivity**

This needs to stop being so fair-weather.

Disability needs don't disappear just because they are inconvenient. Eg in an emergency, or when safety is involved, there cannot be an expectation that disability needs disappear and the child is to respond in an able manner because it suits the staff member.

I reiterate the following:

- **Schools MUST provide the support to the child to validate them, match their energy, provide ATCTUAL co-regulation, let the child reinsert into the learning.**
- **Schools MUST provide social and emotional wellbeing scaffolding so that children feel safe and secure and can actually play with other children and belong where their deficits may otherwise exclude them. The children without deficit also need scaffolding to support inclusive play and belonging with all children. It doesn't just happen. It needs to be in this space.**
- **What is arbitrary? What is for us as teachers? What is for the child?**
- Lets look at universal learning.

I recommend QUT for resources including how to work with a child to identify their needs in an ILP. <https://research.qut.edu.au/c4ie/> not just goal focussed. We need to remove egos if it turns up safety instead of an academic goal. We need to support the child and also each and every step in self advocacy that they make.

Please also note, that safety and security is so important for many neurodiverse including those diagnosed Pathological Demand Avoidant. The key to being inclusive with many of these children, and also to support ideal behaviours, it to not have them in fight or flight. So safety is paramount yet sadly missed in many classrooms. PDA Society UK has some good resources <https://www.pdasociety.org.uk/resources-menu/>

Please, and I know that this is evidence based though you will have to find the support for it. Inclusivity needs to be inclusive eg:

- Don't sit a child on their own because they are seen as "disruptive". Give ALL children the option of sitting in a certain space in the class solely for quiet work.
- Give options with work. This doesn't have to create a lot of additional labour. Look at the task and think "what do I want the child to be learning". You might want them to write a set of instructions so they can learn to write instructions. You may state the activity as writing instructions to make a sandwich. This doesn't stop you from putting a big asterisk saying "or write instructions on ANYTHING you like". The creativity will be engaged. All kids can be engaged. The effort to adapt has been minimal.
- Scaffolded play during lunch to help neurotypical kids learn to play and enjoy play with neurodiverse kids. That kid isn't so much as bossy as some people are fixed in how they see things, you could approach it this way instead...

### **Type of Learning**

We cannot deny access to psychologists for children requiring educational assessments for dysgraphia, dyslexia etc because the child is not in the bottom 25% of the class. If a parent reaches out then we need to offer that service. We actually need to know that the parent is the expert on their child. So if a parent sees the child struggling and asks for that support then the education department needs to provide it. Otherwise, children will keep doing as well as they can but fall behind terribly and then hit an almost irreversible wall (eg spelling) that sees them unable to meet the academic needs they will have in life.

When things are identified we need to tailor education to meet that. I see my child as a visual reader rather than the 80% who are auditory. I don't know for sure but it fits the bill with everything I've researched. I cannot get access to find out. My child is hitting the wall. Literacy solutions are not meeting the mark. The education system in Tas is failing this child.

## **Access to Psychologists**

This is a must for assessments and also support. Behavioural support and working out functional equivalent behaviours etc are important IN CONTEXT. The context being the school setting. Evidence based practice (you'll have to look for that as I'm a parent so scholarly articles are hard to come by but I know this as truth).

## **Supports for children and their families**

Very briefly, there are systemic and personal issues preventing many issues being sorted within schools.

- Lack of an appeals process. Unfortunately your Inclusion Officers are only available as general advice to the school. They are not to meet with parent or child and cannot be contacted by parent or child. If the school do not see that they are not meeting the needs of the child in this instance, or ego gets in the way, then the Inclusion Officer is not even sought by the school. If the support is sought by the school it is a very one sided affair which may not represent the actual need.
- Lack of people with relational safety being able to be accessed by parents where there may be personality conflict or trauma triggers when dealing with the Principal. These can just be bog standard personality conflicts or they can arise from a parent struggling for their child to be supported and simply running into ego or lack of understanding, or protectionism to the school. This needs to be higher than the regional Wellbeing Unit if there is trauma or clash there too. Unfortunately this does happen as there is an apparent overriding desire from the Wellbeing Unit to support the schools at the expense of the child.
- Parents need to be given the outline of the learning plan each week. This is expected in most universities and schools as standard but schools in this State seem to think it's unreasonable and undue hardship. The mind boggles. Certainly there is evidence to be supportive where a parent is wanting to support a child's learning outside of the classroom but in conjunction with the space in the curriculum the child's class is learning.
- Parents need to be able to be given the description of the tasks done in a day if requested when their child is away from school. This is particularly important for children who are neurodiverse and may struggle to focus in school or even be in school (see School Can't as well increased physical and mental health problems associated with neurodiversity impacting on attendance). Honestly, teachers should have the work planned. They are likely spending less time dropping the info on an email than the time they would actually spend on the "challenging" behaviours of a child who was IN the class that day. Additionally, providing this can help a parent help a child to maintain the academic learning and keep up with their peers so their academic, emotional and social welfare is maintained.
- Stop discriminating in schools and actually believe and validate children who have concerns. Otherwise they give up or add things they are not true to have a smallest part of their concerns believed. (again – you will have to look up the child psychology on that – it's there)
- Schools need to be transparent and accountable as to what funding has been applied for and received for children requiring extra needs. They need to be able to say how it is being spent. There also needs to be review processes parents can use for this that extend to the decision makers in the Dept of Education that the parent can instigate. So many of us wonder why funding is not being applied for or where it is being spent when received and even how much as been received. It is very distressing when children are being left behind.

### **Support for teachers**

- Resource them
- Educate them
- Give them the support people
- Share the financial info of funding with parents so they can support too.

### **Final note**

I would write so much more on this however I have no further time. I welcome you consulting with me further.

This is to the Government. There is no point holding a review if you do not implement all of the recommendations. If you say you will build a ladder but don't bother to put the rungs on it, or only very few, then you are setting up the person needing to climb it to a guaranteed failure to succeed. Please invest in all the things recommended. Just like inclusion, if you don't invest then you will fail and everyone will throw hate at each other like is currently done. Lets not wait another year to implement the changes that support each individual child and teenager in our primary and secondary schools. Imagine that the child you are supporting is your own. Please lead and make those changes.