

You may have seen that the Government has released the Terms of Reference for the Independent Review of Education in Tasmania. It confirms that strong focus on the future, and about how we can work differently across our department to support strong outcomes. More information, including an update on public submissions, can be found on the [Independent Education Review https://ier.tas.gov.au/](https://ier.tas.gov.au/)

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?

• What do you think are the reasons for finishing Year 12?

As a principal in a senior secondary school I see students coming to Year 12, and completing year 12 for a range of reasons:

- Many feel focused, know their pathway, and are highly intentional in completing the course that will help them to achieve a qualification for employment, on-going training after year 12 in a career, or onto higher education. Students expressed that knowing their pathway was important for them to have a reason to 'turn up' and keep going until completion.
- Others are motivated by the social aspect, feeling that years 11/12 provides a time and a place where they can keep connecting with their peer friendship group. Some may not have great attendance, but they keep coming because it school provides a belonging to a place with their mates that they cannot get elsewhere.
- For some it is because they 'have to', and I have noticed that the change in legislation to make learning or training until the end of year 12 a source of compelling some students to turn up and have parents who are aware that this is a requirement. It doesn't seem to be the strongest motivator but it does seem to be turning 'compliance' into 'culture', a kind of swing from 'we have to' towards 'this is just what we do'.
- Connection with a subject area and or a teacher, or with supports that are provided throughout years 11/12 also seem to motivate some students to keep attending. They find for example that they like coming for the performance subjects, or the automotive course, and sometimes they turn up and keep turning up because they know they can connect with the youth worker or the social worker. For some, it is a place where they get some of their needs met as people.

• What do you think success looks like during and after the formal years of schooling in Tasmania?

- For some success looks like completing the course they signed up for that will help them go onto their next step, ether with an employer or further learning/training
- For others it is keeping their wellbeing on track or improving their wellbeing by connecting with peers, or finding their identity in a new group
- For some success is the act of discovering through out years 11/12 new ideas that they had not considered for themselves
- But for every student, success should look like connecting with peers and staff, feeling belonging to a place, coming to understand themselves as young adults, improving their wellbeing, increasing their skills, knowledge and understanding, attending to their learning and wellbeing, finding out about resources that are useful throughout life, and gaining the level of attainment that demonstrates progress in their learning over time.

• How can we better encourage young people to aspire to achieve their ambitions?

- Because ambitions are individual, and often not developed, we do need to increase the understanding of families/parents/carers, and school staff in knowing that engaging in futures information is important.
- We know that course counselling and futures education is crucial, that good information over time prior to year 10, is important for students to identify their goals and pathway, interests and ability to understand multiple opportunities
- Our students have communicated that if they feel they are falling behind or believe they will 'fail' that they do give up coming to school, without even knowing that it is possible to catch up or get help. This 'learning to fail' seems really big and the current narrative in Tasmania about failing education isn't helping this self-fulfilling prophecy it seems.
- We do need exciting opportunities post year 10 to be well funded and not a political or policy reaction. In the Gov sector we are struggling to offer preferred courses because facilities have been so under-funded for so long.
- Transport is an issue at my school of 1400 year 11/12 students as is competition with part-time jobs
- Accessibility for all kids is still an issue and requires ongoing focus on better resourcing
- requirements for students with tier 4 needs in behaviour who occasionally present significant safety concerns to others needs better resourcing

• What is working well and why?

- The students are really excited about year 11/12, and the new and exciting opportunities that exist at college level.
- In Tasmania students and families see 'going to college' as a rite-of-passage, and not so much as an obstacle as it has been made out to be. That is why the extension school policy has been so faulty and why the earlier adopter numbers appear to be in decline again.

- The legislation change to make learning compulsory until finishing year 12 helps to alter the thinking and that will become increasingly a cultural shift to in thinking
- The widening variety of courses available is exciting and should continue
- Teachers and school leaders remain dedicated despite everything such as public criticism, workload, pay issues
- The authorisation for high schools to extend to years 11 and 12 is not the solution but in networks of schools it does provide additional course provision though not comprehensively in the 7 – 12 setting.

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?

• What do families do well to support their children and young people in their learning?

- Families really care about their kids, even if they vary enormously in their capacity to engage with their kids about schooling
- Families are important all through the years of education and there is now good research around this
- Families attend future expos, enrolment evenings and welcome functions, showing that they do wish to engage
- Families are first educators and do know their kids better than anyone else usually. They also take on advice of experts if they can do so.

• What support helps families to do this?

- Having schools with the capacity to listen to families helps a lot but this requires better staffing ratios than the current use of traditional models
- Leaders who model engaging with families and who prioritise family engagement is important
- Campaigns that show families that it is important to engage and how to engage
- Having an education department leadership to guide how positive interactions occur and who are willing to be courageous in maintaining the safety of schools and their staff from aggressive family members
- Using a lot of different tools and ways to engage families
- Embedding within the school year authentic engagement strategies
- Understanding the research e.g. Karen Mapp, between engagement and participation
- Access to parent portals that a consistent, quality assured and secure

• What can be done to better support students who are struggling or at risk of falling behind to get back on track?

- Genuine funding models that recognise the needs of students
- Not having chat-fests of external agencies who have no accountability
- Early intervention practices that are robust
- Accredited a wide variety of courses that allow students to engage, learn and attain
- Less time of teachers and staff on compliance tasks that distract from the focus on students and their learning
- Continued intensive focus on teacher practice, in particular evidence-based approaches to teaching and learning

• How can we ensure all Tasmanian learners get the most out of their education and reach their full potential?

- Genuine funding models that recognise the needs of students
- Ensure facilities in all schools are fit for purpose across all sectors
- Robust teacher training
- On-going PL that is evidence based
- Less administrative load on teachers and school leaders distracting from core business
- Continued focus on early intervention
- Audit of out of school roles for effectiveness or for missing services
- Child and Youth mental health services that are accessible in a timely and ongoing way
- Courses that are engaging, varied, aspirational and well resourced
- Ensuring that all agencies are proactive in taking steps to ensure young people and children are known and well, cared for and learning, not just passing the buck around the bureaucracy
- Ensure transport services

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?

- How best can students be supported to successfully complete and achieve by the end of Year 12?

- Ensure transport services
- Inform families through education, supports and services
- Provide engaging courses
- Fund schools appropriately
- De-politicise education and use well understood data to inform decision making
- Ensure ongoing high-quality PL for teachers through external and internal PL such as spaced, inquiry-based learning and PLCs in schools
- Ensure mental health service provision, and early intervention services
- Ensure early years screening services and interventions
- Change the media narrative and give Tasmanian students a positive view of their potential
- Provide futures education from the earliest years, right through the years of schooling, by qualified staff
- Ensure access to quality data sets by school staff
- Provide the capacity for differentiated achievement
- Ensure an Education Department Leadership who are themselves experts in education

- 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?

- Ensure an understanding of 'completion' of year 12 that is contextualised and not comparative to other jurisdictions
- Continuing to shift the cultural understanding of Tasmanian families about the importance of years 11/12
- Funding schools appropriately so that energy in schools can be maintained on teaching and learning
- Quality teaching and education sector work force that is skilled and knowledgeable at every level

- What are the most important ways to support choice for students?

- To provide worthwhile things to choose from, in terms of quality schools and courses
- Have authentic opportunities for student voice
- To maintain expertise of school staff, alongside families, as shared fonts of knowledge

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?

- How can we get more great teachers and school leaders and help them do their jobs well?

- Staffing quotas that enable the work to be done well
- Funding for schools that recognises the need for modern and safe facilities and resources
- Reducing the administrative load on school leaders by ensuring highly qualified administration teams in schools
- Better support for teachers, school leaders from other agencies and business units during times of reporting safety issues
- Greater support to meet student learning needs
- Excellence in teacher training and ongoing exciting professional development opportunities
- Less focus on compliance/administration and greater focus on professional learning and respect for staff in schools

- How can we keep the existing workforce feeling energised and supported so they stay?

- Less focus on compliance/administration and greater focus on professional learning and respect for staff in schools
- Greater opportunities to engage in communities of practice
- Re-instating curriculum leaders outside of school in curriculum services
- Improvement in the expressions of support for in-school staff by out-of-school staff and business units
- Understanding and altering the current culture of enablement of aggressive and disruptive student behaviours
- More equitable funding of schools across sectors
- Reducing the admin load for teachers and school leaders
- Teacher training across all specialisations so that certain areas do not become reduced in expertise

Theme 5 - Accountability for improved outcomes

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

- What helps teachers and school leaders implement initiatives so that the focus on improvement is maintained?

- Not relying on 'grants' and funding applications to resource schools, programs, mandated policy initiatives, but rather securing appropriate funding levels to schools so that they can strategically forward plan everything from courses, to building works
- Reduce the amount of meetings related to non-teaching related PL e.g. the recent explosion in PL that is related to compliance, risk management, values – all important but these things can also be expressed as components of good teaching and leading
- Reducing reactive policies and the number of times a job must be completed due to a change in template, name, font etc etc
- Increase the requirements for qualified school business managers so that they have the capabilities to take on administrative responsibilities and delegations of lower risk
- Vastly reduce the silos across out of school business units in order to bring cohesive leadership and service provision to schools whilst reducing replication of meeting agendas and accountabilities
- Ensure out of school positions and leadership roles are knowledgeable of and share accountability for the work of schools
- Review the process whereby schools are 'supported' through a 'wait to fail' model rather than appropriate initial resourcing and mentoring

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

- Investigate structural/ system procedures and/or practices that are significant contributors to increasing principal workload and, by association, decreasing principal wellbeing and efficacy.
- Address current practices where principals are required to undertake large number of applications in relation to accessing funding
 - o Fixed models, with QA oversight e.g. NCCD funding
 - o Chance models related to high needs but no certainty e.g. Trauma funding
 - o Funding that is highly accountable, with no QA & minimal certainty e.g. Annual grant rounds Yrs 11 & 12, facility funding
 - o Applying for funding as a way of resourcing schools has increased over time. Lags in confirming application outcomes creates uncertainty and a sense of professional frustration.
- Address practices and procedures that are high bureaucracy and low trust initiatives
 - o Gaining approvals for student suspension and exclusion
 - o Acknowledging and respecting principal experience, responsibility and discernment regarding alternative education provision
 - o Accessing Tier 3 & 4 resource and provision
 - o Support for principal decision making from interagency partners
 - o Difficulties managing time administrative time lags
 - o Some processes appear intractable occurring at times of the year not aligned to other demands in a principal's calendar
- Address practices and procedures in relation to adequately meeting student needs
- Ensure procedural documents are fit for purpose and realistically actionable e.g. Managing psychosocial and risk management procedures
- Conduct an audit of current funding applications (DECYP) required to be undertaken by schools – considering factors such as Funding purpose and/or Funding Source, and Time (taken to complete funding application) and Certainty (of funding success. Examine how many of these funding applications principals are required to complete against mandated policies with an aim to reducing workload.
- Review HR systems that require additional workload with respect to length of the tenure of internal selection processes. Consider extending internal appointments from 6 months to possible 12 months.
- Review procedures currently in place that inform business units of principal workload and the cumulative impact of adding new systems and ways of working. Remove unnecessary duplication and seek opportunities for greater alignment in system workstreams that impact principal's work.

- Notice the conditions of principals' work – including the pay ceiling