

Who we are

Thrive Group Tasmania is a not-for-profit organisation governed by a volunteer Board. We have been providing education and care for children from birth to 13 years since 1975, almost 50 years of early learning. We offer families a wide range of care options throughout Tasmania, including Family Day Care, Early Learning and Care and Outside School Hours Care. Our Early Learning Services are located in regional and remote communities including Flinders Island and the East and West Coasts.

OUR VISION

To enable Tasmania's children to thrive while they explore and contribute to the wonder-filled world around them.

OUR MISSION

To create opportunities for Tasmanian children and their families to lead lives full of possibility and to thrive.

OUR VALUES

Respect

We see others as creative global citizens and value the unique perspectives they bring.
We treat others with empathy and respect.

Integrity

We see the world through an ethical lens
We take responsibility for our actions and speak up when necessary.

Collaboration

We see each child and their family as contributors and creators.
We work in teams and collaborate with others.

Excellence

We are evidence-informed and seek to lead by example.
We deliver high-quality education and care.

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

Being successful in today's society typically involves achieving a balance of skills and attributes across a range of domains and disciplines. By the end of year 12, students should be literate, numerate, digitally literate, and capable of finding information and acquiring knowledge independently. At 18, students who graduate high school with the expectation of entering the workforce needs to be able to work well in a team and understand team dynamics. They should understand the basic workplace rules and be able to differentiate work time from social time, have the ability to make sound financial decisions, and be capable of logical reasoning. It is not sufficient for students to graduate and say "Oh I'm not good at maths" or "I'm more of an empath than a logic person", these statements may be true, but they shouldn't be excuses to not learn the skills in high school, which appears to be not being adequately addressed through the current schooling system.

Students should be taught the equivalent of a Certificate III in education and care while in high school. This will facilitate better health and educational outcomes for children because parents will be better educated in how to care for children's needs.

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

Don't try to force them to have artificial ambitions before they really understand them. Be honest with students and don't tell them that they can do something if it is highly unachievable. But don't discourage them, let them know it is OK to not know what they want to do with their life, but that may mean working in less mentally stimulating jobs while they work it out, or that their ambition is great but they'll have to work really hard to achieve it etc.

Teach people the difference between wanting something and waiting for it, and wanting something and working for it. Too often, the focus of graduates is on end goals without looking at the journey to that goal.

Expose students to many different careers over the course of their schooling.

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

Most parents support their children, adequately feed and dress them. Many families engage well with ECEC services, schools and other community support services. The benefit of engagement with ECEC services from a young age is that parents quickly learn how to participate in a partnership approach to children's learning and development

What support helps families to do this?

Early intervention with families helps to get them used to forming partnerships with support services, educators and teachers – a streamlined, unified and stepped learning approach that begins in ECEC and carries on through Primary and Secondary Education would promote and foster more communication, sharing of ideas, resources and skills amongst early learning professionals in both ECEC and Schools.

ECEC services can help parents identify and address developmental issues. However, they often struggle as parents do not want to see the issue or have low opinions of the ECEC educator's value. ECEC educators are often seen as babysitters instead of education professionals. This vision of ECEC as something other than education lowers the value parents place on educators' advice. Much research has been done into how children learn best in the early years, but rather than continue a system that works, we are instead trying to keep the old system and shoehorn in new practices.

The Early Years Learning Framework is aimed at children aged from birth to 8 years of age (Grade 2), yet from Prep onwards, the focus is on the Australian Curriculum, and the Principles and Practices of the EYLF are often left aside in favour of forcing students to meet the "age

appropriate” learning outcomes in the different subjects and strands. With over 120 content descriptors of what children should know by the end of the year (and this is just the foundation year), it is no wonder teachers feel overwhelmed during a change period and trying to achieve this using age-appropriate play-based learning, child-directed learning, and child-informed learning and instead come to rely on traditional teacher-based learning only, as it is what they are used to using.

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

Early intervention – if the education system was consistent across ECEC and schools it would be much easier to assess learning gaps earlier and assist the child and family to access additional support. All children should have individual education plans that focus on the child and not the school. Waiting until they have fallen behind to start addressing their individual needs further segregates the child. An individual approach from the start, will mean more work originally but will mean less work in the long term, as all children will follow their own journeys and benefit from an approach that works for them.

It should not be a case of a child having to be “ready” for school but a school preparing to help a child. A student should only progress to another classroom when they have achieved the majority of benefits from their current classroom. School should not be split into 14 different grades but should focus on where each child would benefit the most from being placed, offering students the chance to move backwards or forwards to complete the work suitable for them. Forcing a calendar year graduation on children creates an environment that stigmatises children taking longer to learn something and reinforces the perception that there are benchmarks they need to meet, and if they don’t, they are failing and, therefore, not as good as their peers. A more fluid approach would allow children to explore and develop their strengths while continuing to provide opportunities to address their development areas.

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

Take the approach to education used in the early years, where services have teacher-initiated learning, group programs, and individual programs for each child, and expand it into all years of the education system. With a strength-based approach that focuses on children and students growing and learning, instead of achieving benchmarks at certain ages, children will continue to benefit in all areas of their education at the level that is correct for them.

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

Focus on students as individuals on a learning pathway instead of focusing on the pathway and how we can force people past all the points on it.

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?

Literacy – students struggling with literacy would find any study frustrating and time-consuming. Even among literate Tasmanians, many have slow reading speeds and tend to avoid reading long emails or articles where possible. As education progresses, the amount of reading required increases; with students already struggling to read, combining that struggle with new information and ideas would be overwhelming.

Technology – Many students seem to graduate with very little ability to use basic technology. As an employer, this is doubly frustrating as other staff have a high expectation of young employees and technology as they are frequently on social media, and their claiming to be unable to use tech is seen as laziness. There is also an expectation from young employees for the employer to fix minor issues for them rather than for them to learn the program as they would any other system they use.

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

Present vocational learning, Tertiary education and entering the workforce as equal options and celebrate them equally. Often schools will celebrate academic and sporting achievements as a whole school but not celebrate vocational or workforce achievements at all. If schools are going to congratulate students for their tertiary entrance score, they should also celebrate students for entry into or achieving vocational training, apprenticeships, permanent employment, continuing a family business or working in agriculture (or farming if that is the preferred term for farmers).

Offer it in learning outcomes. Take a strength-based approach to students' learning outcomes. Allow measurements of success to be determined in different ways – i.e. individual learning goals, outcomes and programs. This is started in ECEC and is completely achievable but suddenly ceases during traditional schooling from kindergarten onwards. If this approach was continued throughout the child's learning journey (not just abruptly stopped because they reach 5 years old) students would remain engaged and interested and continue to have autonomy over their own learning progression.

The Australian Curriculum should be offered and organised as a series of milestones for each subject. Students are told which milestones they have reached and what they are working towards, rather than being given a grade to say they have failed to pass year 8 science.

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

Make wages consistent across Early childhood, primary and secondary schools, so that teachers can make a choice to teach the years they are passionate about based on their ability and experience and not on their budget.

Some of these may already be in place, but they were concerns for a Thrive Early Childhood Teacher when they considered the Public teaching system:

Make becoming a permanent teacher easier, so university leavers do not have to constantly change schools and find term positions to secure a permanent job.

Provide more on-campus housing and social support so that new teachers can move around the state without having to organise their own housing or learn a new town and community on their own.

Implement digital systems so that students' work is entered straight onto the system or scanned in for work requiring hard copies so that students' projects and work can be seen and marked in real-time and shared with the student and their families, just like it is required in the early years.

These programs would also usually take attendance, message families about absent children and otherwise cover most administrative duties.

As stated above, schools should be student-focused, not education pathway-focused; this would mean students in a class would only be within a few bands of each other when learning, thus cutting down on the much wider banding currently seen in the age-based classroom approach.

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

More transferable qualifications – allowing the workforce to move freely between ECEC and Schools. This would prevent burn-out, stagnation and foster more skill sharing and professional growth.

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

Tie their pay to their performance in relation to achieving the initiatives.

There is no incentive for a teacher to implement reforms that they don't like. Change is always hard and trying to change current practice always ends up being more work in the short term. As teachers already feel overworked they then give up when the work gets too much and then go back to their old practices that "have always worked before"

Without teacher buy in there is no way to force a change in practice, so they need to either want it, or experience some kind of friction or discomfort from not embracing change.

Alternatively, try changing one year cohort at a time starting with the beginning years, staffed by new graduates, so that children come in to subsequent years with the expectation of the

classroom operating a certain way, and teachers will see the new system working before having to implement all of it themselves.

To enforce school leadership implementing changes, have the schools assessed by an independent outside assessor and then publicly graded and have that grade mandated to be displayed. Hold individual Principals personally and legally responsible for the grade of their school with that grade and any incidents that occur at their school following them to any other job in the sector, just like it is done in Early childhood.

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

Make Principals and teachers legally culpable for failures to follow policies or for misusing resources, with fines, cautions and breaches noted on their teacher registrations. Align the school system with ECEC – continuity and accountability are key elements in successful outcomes and all schools should be brought under a consistent national quality framework.