



Public submission made to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

Submitter: Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay
Submitting as a: Other (Catholic school system)
State: NSW

Summary

- The Broken Bay Diocesan School system includes over 40 schools and 18,000 students, their families, and 2,000 teachers. According to the publically available, nationally consistent, curriculum based, learning outcomes data, as measured in NAPLAN tests, Broken Bay is a top performing Australian school system. In particular, students in Broken Bay schools serving low socioeconomic communities, score especially well.
- Effective schools are purposeful and well-functioning communities directed by a shared moral purpose. This reality is demonstrated in the research of distinguished academics internationally, including in the work of Michael Fullan; and Helen Timperley, and expressed in the key Church documents that guide and inform the shared educational endeavour of all Catholic schools.
- The Catholic school sets out to develop the potential of all students irrespective of their abilities, interests and needs. Consequently, Catholic schooling is concerned with more than the transmission of academic knowledge and employment-focused competencies, although it is strongly committed to these goals.
- To achieve learning gains Broken Bay recommends:
 - The development of schools as learning communities engaged in student centred inquiry
 - Networking and supporting schools
 - Holistic schooling which combines cognitive, instrumental, affective, spiritual and psychomotor purposes
 - The centrality of teaching and the development of teachers

- The importance of the affective domain, school culture and purpose, including a school's religious purpose.

Potential barriers would include:

- A devaluing of systemic approaches to school administration and educational leadership.
- An overly instrumentalist approach to schooling as preparation for work
- A narrow test based approach to the monitoring of school effectiveness
- The search for single factor / methodologies / interventions to 'drive good practice and continuous improvement' (the search for the 'magic bullet')
- Any action that would derogate from a school's or system's unifying ethos and purpose including its Religious purpose.

Main submission

Submission Question 1:

A. Context for Success

A.1. The Broken Bay Diocesan School system (Broken Bay) includes over 40 schools and 18,000 students, their families, and 2,000 teachers. According to the publically available, nationally consistent, curriculum based, learning outcomes data, as measured in NAPLAN tests, Broken Bay is a top performing Australian school system. In particular, students in Broken Bay schools serving low socioeconomic communities, score especially well.

A.2. Effective schools are in essence purposeful and well-functioning communities directed by a shared moral purpose. This reality is demonstrated in the research of distinguished academics internationally, including in the work of Michael Fullan; and Helen Timperley, and expressed and elaborated in the key Church documents that guide and inform the shared educational endeavour of all Catholic schools.

A.3. Fullan reminds us that school capacity includes and requires:

1. Knowledge, skills, dispositions of individuals
2. Professional Community
3. Program Coherence
4. Technical resources
5. Shared Leadership

with all of these elements integrated through a shared moral purpose.

A.4. By way of comparison the Church documents which speak to the educational purpose of Catholic schooling, against which their educational success may be judged, are:

- Declaration on Christian Education (1965)
- The Catholic School (1977)
- The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium (1997)
- Educating Together in Catholic Schools (2007)
- Educating in Intercultural Dialogue in the Catholic School (2013)
- Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion (2014)

In the NSW context:

- Catholic Schools at a Crossroads (Bishops of New South Wales and ACT, 2007)

A.5. These Church documents speak to an educational worldview for schooling, and particularly Catholic schooling, which itself provides criteria against which the success of a school or group of schools might be best assessed. That is, the question ‘what should educational success for schools (should) look like’ begs the question ‘against what criteria?’

A.6. The Catholic worldview for the assessment of a successful school or system of schools focuses on the following criteria. The successful Catholic school is one:

- Characterized as an educating community
- Aimed at forming persons
- Supported by professionally formed teachers
- Motivated by a shared mission
- Focused on creating increasingly deeper personal relationships
- Founded on the relationship between school and family(ies)
- That supports mutual transformation
- Where people learn how to live their lives
- That values learning
- That develops in students the necessary critical skills to succeed as active citizens.

A.7. The Catholic school sets out to develop the potential of all students irrespective of their abilities, interests and needs. Consequently, Catholic schooling is concerned with more than the transmission of academic knowledge and employment-focused competencies, although it is strongly

committed to these goals. A view of education which concentrates solely on developing in students the most marketable skills for the immediate future, or which prescribes a curriculum of decreasing interest and suitability to the less able, stands in contrast to the Catholic worldview.

A.8. Since collaboration and quality combined with a clear moral purpose are critical to the realisation of school effectiveness any Government driven reform must respect the proper autonomy of a school or a system of schools to give effect to organisational principles that are based in its faith tradition.

B. The Spiral of Inquiry

In the past two decades, significant improvements in learning outcomes have been evident across the Broken Bay school system. This improvement can be attributed to skilled leadership in schools, quality pedagogy in classrooms and strong professional support from school system leaders, working 'at the elbow' of Principals and teachers. Broken Bay has worked with appropriate experts to support school improvement, including Jenny Gore (University of Newcastle) in quality pedagogy, and Helen Timperley (University of Auckland) in leading learning. We argue that innovation floats on a sea of inquiry and that curiosity is a driver for change. Creating the conditions in schools and learning settings where curiosity is encouraged, developed and sustained is essential to opening up thinking, changing practice and creating dramatically more innovative approaches to learning and teaching. (Timperley, Kaser and Halbert, 2014)

The Timperley 'Spiral of Inquiry' has been fundamental to the Broken Bay approach. The spiral is grounded in moral purpose and is informed by research on mindset, assessment, social emotional learning and meta-cognition.

The spiral of inquiry involves six key stages:

- Scanning
- Focusing
- Developing a hunch
- Engaging in new professional learning
- Taking new action
- Checking that a big enough difference has been made, and then re-engaging to consider what is next.

At every stage, inquiry teams ask these questions:

- What's going on for our learners?
- How do we know? And
- Why does this matter?

Broken Bay supports this approach with an articulation of learning principles, developed following wide consultation, and in harmony with contemporary OECD research. With the learner at the centre, we believe:

- Learning is a product of thinking
- Collaboration enhances learning
- Learners must have agency in their learning
- Learning dispositions are as important as skills and knowledge
- Learning happens at the point of challenge
- Learning is contextual

C. What capabilities, skills and knowledge should students learn at school to prepare them for the future?

C.1. The Catholic worldview speaks to the enduring purposes of schools. For each generation schooling has been and will continue to be a preparation for the future of both as individuals and for their respective communities. As stated in 'Educating Today and Tomorrow, 'Schools are places where people learn to live their lives'.

C.2. In terms of educational theory this means that the affective domain is as important to schooling as preparation for the future as the cognitive domain.

C.3. In the Catholic worldview, successful learning is not just equivalent to content assimilation but is an opportunity for self-education, commitment towards self-improvement and the common good.(Educating Today and Tomorrow, 4)

C.4. The Broken Bay school system has implemented the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) curriculum, through NSW Educational Standards Authority (NESA) syllabuses. We support the ACARA three dimensional curriculum model: explicit content, general capabilities and cross curriculum perspectives.

C.5. Consequently to prepare for the future, schools, and particularly Catholic schools, need to address the following principles for successful schooling:

- Respect for individual dignity and uniqueness
- Promotion of opportunities to young people so each can grow and develop their abilities and talents
- Promotion of a balanced focus on the cognitive, affective, social, professional, ethical and spiritual dimensions of a holistic education;

- Encouragement for every pupil to develop their talents, in a climate of cooperation and solidarity;
- Research as a rigorous foundation for teaching
- Respect for ideas, openness to dialogue and the ability to interact and work together in a spirit of freedom and care.

C.6. To operationalise these principles the following elements of successful schooling should be addressed:

(i) Capabilities

Broken Bay endorses the continued use and development of the ACARA General Capabilities:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Information and Communication Technology
- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Personal and Social Capability
- Ethical Understanding
- Intercultural Understanding

To this list Broken Bay recommends for the addition of:

- Spiritual awareness.

In this context it is relevant to note that amongst the NSW Education Act 1990 'Objects for the Administration of this Act (section 6) is 1(A) e:

'to provide a context with which schools also have an opportunity to foster the physical and spiritual development of students'.

- The "State of Early Learning in Australia 2017" report addresses the growing gap between the advantaged and the disadvantaged, in both learning and wellbeing, highlighting significant challenges to reduce the achievement gap. The need for quality, developmentally appropriate early education must underpin national investment to secure health, wellbeing and education of our children to secure positive futures.
- There is also a strong body of evidence concerning the importance of parent engagement in schools in supporting strong student learning outcomes. The review is directed to the research of the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth: <https://www.aracy.org.au/the-nest-in-action/parent-engagement>

(ii) Skills:

Broken Bay approaches the skills domain from the perspective of those skills needed to live within, and contribute to, the Australian community as an engaged citizen, including 'Employability Skills'. Various Australian Government reviews have addressed the nature of employability skills in the context of schooling':

- Young People's Participation in Post – Compulsory Education and Training (The 'Finn Review', 1991)
- The Australian Vocational Certificate Training System (The 'Camichael Report, 1992)
- Putting General Education to Work (The Key Competencies Report, Mayer 1993)
- The Australian Certificate of Education ('ACE Report May 2006)

Commonly these reports identified skill sets in respect of:

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Problem Solving
- Initiative and Enterprise
- Planning and Organising
- Self- Management
- Organisational outcomes
- Technology (AEC, p794)

Broken Bay recommends that the advice arising from these reports remains highly relevant to the purpose of the current Review.

(iii) Knowledge:

Applying the findings of two seminal NSW reviews of schooling

- Shaping their Future (McGaw 1997)
- Time to Teach: Time to Learn (Eltis 2003)

Broken Bay also strongly endorses the observations of the 2012 Grattan Institute report 'Catching Up: Learnings from the best school systems in East Asia' that effective teaching must drive knowledge acquisition by students. This requires:

- Teachers' content knowledge
- Teachers' pedagogical knowledge, both of general principles and those specific to their subject

- Teaching practices that focus on clear and well-structured lessons supported by effective classroom management
- Teaching practices that emphasise individualised instruction (Grattan p15)

D. How Should Quality and Educational Success be measured?

D.1. Catholic school authorities have developed a number of tools for assessing school effectiveness. These tools in turn take into account the ACER National School Improvement Tool.

D.2. The measurement of school success must not be limited and confined to cognitive outcomes as assessed by standardized tests. Such tests are a necessary and important element of such an assessment but they are not sufficient in and of themselves.

D.3. Education policy analyst, Blaise Joseph, outlines the importance of school investments being evidence-based and cost effective, and proposes three key investments with the potential to significantly improve Australia's lagging student literacy and numeracy results:

1. Early literacy and numeracy. Intervention to help students who are underachieving in literacy and numeracy is more effective in early primary years than in later schooling.
2. Give teachers fewer classes and more time outside the classroom.
3. Classroom management training for teachers.

Submission Question 2:

A. A Context for Improvement

A.1. Broken Bay reminds the Review that the single greatest within school influence on student outcomes, which are themselves a key indicator of school improvement, is teacher effectiveness – that is 'effective teaching', along with effective pedagogical leadership at school and system levels, is the key to school effectiveness.

A.2. The gathering and analysis of student data, concerning learning and wellbeing is fundamental to a school and school system being able to improve learning outcomes. Broken Bay analyses the data available from a range of external tests, including NAPLAN, and undertakes a learning growth based analysis of HSC outcomes across all NSW Catholic secondary schools.

A.3. As a consequence of this recognition of the critical importance of the role of the teacher(s) to the realization of any school improvement goals Broken Bay approaches the question of school improvement as inherently raising

the question of teacher development: schools and teachers function in a symbiotic relationship.

A.4. Acknowledgement of the critical importance of effective teachings leads to a recognition and endorsement of Fullan's drivers of successful school systems:

1. The learning – instruction – assessment nexus
2. Social capital to build the profession
3. Pedagogy matches technology
4. Systemic synergy (Choosing the right drivers for whole system change – Fullan, 2011)

- What actions can be taken to improve practice and outcomes? What evidence is there to support these actions?
- What works best for whom and in what circumstances?

A.5. Broken Bay argues that key interventions should be resourced that build school capacity by developing the collective power of the full staff.

A.6. In this context the effective and efficient promotion of enhanced learning outcomes for students requires the intentional development across each school of teacher capacity in the following domains:

- (i) Knowledge, skills, dispositions of individuals
- (ii) Professional community
- (iii) Program coherence
- (iv) Technical resources
- (v) Shared leadership

A.7. An intervention strategy employed by Catholic schools to drive this required teacher development matrix of developmental goals has been funding for the engagement of skilled Education Officers, working across the system, especially in schools identified as experiencing educational underperformance as assessed by a range of variables including NAPLAN outcomes.

A.8. Across NSW, this strategy has been particularly refined in the context of the Catholic sector's implementation of the NSW Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan 2012 – 2016.

A.9. Broken Bay refers the review to the recent State of Early Learning in Australia 2017 report

- B. What institutional or governance arrangements could be put in place to ensure ongoing identification, sharing and implementation of evidence-based good practice to grow and sustain improved student outcomes over time?
- B.1. Broken Bay approaches governance mindful of the principle of subsidiarity. That is, the principle that any central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed at a local level.
- B.2. Subsidiarity is a guiding principle both of Church administration and the operation of the European Union.
- B.3. Applying this to the Australian context Broken Bay advises that good governance for the purpose of implementing evidence based good practice should be based in a tri-level reform process. That is successful reform needs to dynamically engage Commonwealth, State, and School authorities in systematic collaborative processes.
- B.4. The current Review is also directed to the advice arising from the Productivity Commission Inquiry Report, 'National Education Evidence Base (No 80 December 2016)
- B.5. The Productivity report emphasises the need for 'interconnected processes' (Recommendation 2.1)
- B.6. In this context Broken Bay recommends the critical importance of System support, and the networking of schools, to educational effectiveness be acknowledged and supported.
- C. How can system enablers such as targets and standards, qualifications and accreditation, regulation and registration, quality assurance measures and transparency and accountability provisions be improved to help drive educational achievement and success and support effective monitoring reporting and application of investment?
- C.1. System enablers are most effective when they
- Adopt a continuous approach
 - Employ a common language
 - Require and acknowledge school level improvement plans
 - Implement agreed 'Indicators of Effectiveness'
- C.2. Quality assurance processes should be driven by the following school improvement questions:
- What improvements in student learning have we achieved?
 - What evidence exists?

- How well have we met the expectations of our school and wider community?
- How effective has been the leadership and management of our improvement agenda?
- What is our capacity for improvement?

C.3. There is a danger in conflating Accountability requirements and processes with School Improvement / Effectiveness requirements and processes.

C.4. Accountability by its nature is compliance driven: school improvement should be driven by inquiry, 'best practice' relevant to student need and internal accountability.

C.5. Compliance includes school Registration and Teacher Accreditation practices. These are addressed by State Regulators such as NESA and in the opinion of Broken Bay are out of scope for any Australian Government Review.

C.6. Best practice is a matter for professional dialogue and discernment.

C.7. In this context the learning of the NSW Ministerial Education Symposium 2016 'Future Reform Directions for NSW' should be actively considered by the current review.

C.8. These key system enablers identified by this Forum are:

- High standards and high expectations
- Holistic judgement, which involves a capacity to identify where students are at in their learning, what difficulties they may be experiencing and being flexible enough to meet them where they are
- A culture of evidence and analysis, where standards are seen as a common reference point and not a 'checklist'
- A culture of professionalism

D. Are there any new or emerging areas for action which could lead to large gains in student improvement that need further development or testing?

- what are they and how could they be further developed?

D.1. School improvement is a process.

D.2. The agreed influences on school capacity and school and student achievement are:

- Policies and programs for Teacher Professional Development
- School Capacity
- Instructional quality: curriculum, instruction, assessment

- Student achievement

D.3. Consequently, policies and practices to drive school improvement need to address individually or collectively the influences identified above.

D.4. Broken Bay advises that consistent with Hattie's work the best drivers of positive change with respect to these factors involve teachers being assisted to implement:

- Clear learning intentions
- Challenging success criteria
- A range of learning strategies
- Feedback to students
- Working collaboratively

E. Broken Bay Recommendations

E.1. To achieve learning gains Broken Bay recommends:

- (i) The development of schools as learning communities engaged in student centred inquiry
- (ii) Networking and supporting schools
- (iii) Holistic schooling which combines cognitive, instrumental, affective, spiritual and psychomotor purposes
- (iv) The centrality of teaching and the development of teachers
- (v) The importance of the affective domain, school culture and purpose, including a school's religious purpose.

Submission Question 3:

A.

A.1. Broken Bay advises that barriers would include:

- i) A devaluing of systemic approaches to school administration and educational leadership.
- ii) An overly instrumentalist approach to schooling as preparation for work
- iii) A narrow test based approach to the monitoring of school effectiveness
- iv) The search for single factor / methodologies / interventions to 'drive good practice and continuous improvement' (the search for the 'magic bullet')

- v) Any action that would derogate from a school's or system's unifying ethos and purpose including as appropriate its Religious purpose.