

A High-Performing Public Education System:

What needs to happen in the Western Australian public education system over the next ten years.



**WESTERN AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY
PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION**

Ideas from Research

In 2015 WAPPA published a report, '*A High-Performing Public Education System: Ideas from Research*'. This report was based on research of high-performing education systems across the world. The report provides formed the foundation of consultation undertaken to develop these recommendations.

The full report is available from the WAPPA website.

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A High-Performing Public Education System:

What needs to happen in the Western Australian public education system over the next ten years

The Western Australian education system is currently recognised as a high-performing system. However, the Western Australian Primary Principals' Association (WAPPA) notes that there are worrying signs that the gap between high-performing and low-performing schools and their students, is growing.

The Association represents over one thousand principals and deputy principals from primary schools, district high schools and from education-support postings across Western Australian public schools. WAPPA urges the Government of Western Australian (Government) to hold a long-term view for the continuous improvement of education. It is WAPPA's belief that to maintain its place as a leader in primary education, Western Australia needs to operate an innovative education system which fosters the development of the whole child.

Education systems across the world have not inherently transformed over the last fifty years. Australia has traditionally followed global trends rather than taking a position of innovation. The world that today's students are entering is rapidly evolving and it is WAPPA's belief that the current education system is not adequately preparing students for the changing global landscape. In addition to having the foundational numeracy and literacy competencies, students, as future employees will require the knowledge and skills to be able to think and create innovatively, to embrace change, delineate and disseminate a myriad of information, and work collaboratively in an inclusive and respectful environment. The process for Western Australia to become a leading state and prepare its students for their future requires a long-term plan and a commitment to continuous funding.

WAPPA notes that the Western Australian Department of Education (Department) has embarked on a number of structural reforms to ensure the system maintains its place as a high-performing system. Many of these structural reforms have developed alternate governance structures and resource implementation processes. Whilst WAPPA commends the reforms undertaken to date at this level, the Association advocates that innovation is required to facilitate the implementation of enhanced teaching and learning.

WAPPA believes that if Western Australia is to maintain its high standing in the education world we must enhance and accelerate targeted, evidenced-based educational reform over the next ten years. The change must be value-driven.

Implementing any reform must take into account the uniqueness of Western Australian education. Therefore, in developing this paper, a consultation process involving both Western Australian school leaders and education thought leaders from the community has been undertaken. These recommendations have been formed through that consultation.

"The lack of sustained progress seen in most school systems, despite their massive investments, should not be seen as the justification for abandoning the desire for educational improvement. But we believe it does demonstrate the need for adopting a different approach – one that will hopefully be guided by the experiences of school systems that have succeeded in improving over the longer term" (Gonski, 2011)¹.

Recommendations

In order to be a high performing state, WAPPA recommends that Western Australia must have a system where:

1. Schools of the future are designed and resourced based on need so as to maximise student learning and community engagement.
2. Western Australia has a clear strategy for maintaining a high-performing teaching profession through initial teacher education and ongoing professional development.
3. Western Australia develops a ten-year horizon talent identification and development pathway for school leaders who are skilled to lead a contemporary school.
4. Western Australia becomes a national and international leader by facilitating an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) education system that enables world-class teaching and learning opportunities.
5. The Department develops an early intervention strategy that is seen as fundamental within the Department and the community for the establishment of high quality outcomes for all students.
6. Provide a coordinated and localised response to meeting the needs of students.
7. Schools and networks of schools have true autonomy, responsibility and accountability to implement curriculum and learning methods that produce the best outcomes for their students.

WAPPA acknowledges that these seven recommendations are strategic and that work must be carried out in order to operationalise each of them. WAPPA therefore proposes that the Government immediately initiates a ten-year plan to ensure the ongoing development and enhancement of a world-class Western Australian education system.

The population profile of public schools in Western Australia is very broad and, in a number of dimensions, is distinctive.

- *Every twelfth student attending a public school in the state is indigenous.*
- *Every third student in a remote or very remote area in Australia is enrolled in a public school in Western Australia.*
- *There are proportionately three times as many students in remote settings in the state as in Australia as a whole.*
- *In socio-economic terms, the population of public schools in Western Australia is very diverse, and the proportion of low SES students in the state is higher than in Australia as a whole.*

These different dimensions of population diversity have implications for the comparative performance of the public school system of Western Australia” (Lamb & Teese, 2012)ⁱⁱ.

WAPPA notes that as the population of the state becomes more diverse an innovative, robust system concentrating on the development of professional capital of all staff will become more difficult unless systemic change is introduced.

WAPPA recommends that the Government establishes an *Independent Education Advisory Group* to provide guidance and direction for the development, implementation and evaluation of this ten-year plan. The group should be headed by a nationally or internationally recognised educator and include representatives from Government, the Department, universities and schools. One priority of this group

must be to initiate a study to investigate the evidence-based links between a high performing education system and economic growth¹.

To move into a more professional, directed approach to education delivery it is clear that an environment that encourages excellence, innovation, and professional dialogue is needed. However, the education delivery accountabilities and 'regulations' attached to any consequent initiatives must go hand-in-hand with school-based strategies.

The reforms initiated by the present Government and Department have given schools a level of autonomy in the areas of staffing and financial management. At the same time this autonomy has been handed to schools, the profession has become overburdened by accountabilities and 'regulations' from within and beyond the Department. WAPPA believes that many of these 'regulations' have prevented schools from innovating and from providing an environment that promotes evidenced-based and common-sense education delivery.

The recommendations in this document are referenced by the independent WAPPA commissioned report, *'A High-performing Public Education System: Ideas from Research'*.ⁱⁱⁱ

¹ In a review of the literature thus far, reports linking educational outcomes to economic growth are primarily done through modelling, calculations and statistical analysis and not through empirical, longitudinal data collection. One such report out of Stanford University, *Higher Grades, Higher GDP*, indicates that if the US raised the student test scores to the level in Canada, economic growth would increase. "We estimate that the additional growth dividend has a present value of \$77 trillion over the next eighty years." The logical argument for this estimation stems from the assumption that a country's growth rate is linked to the skills of its workers. Hanushek, E. & Peterson, P.E. (2015). *Higher Grades, Higher GDP*. Hoover Digest, No. 1, Winter 2014 by Hoover Institution.

The report, 'The High Cost of Low Educational Performance', commissioned by OECD uses a similar analysis technique. In this report, economic modelling is used to compare cognitive skills – as measured by PISA and other international instruments – to economic growth. Results indicate that if "all OECD countries boost their average PISA scores by 25 points over the next 20 years [it would imply] an aggregate gain of OECD GDP of USD 115 trillion over the lifetime of the generation born in 2010 (as evaluated at the start of reform in terms of real present value of future improvements in GDP)." Hanushek, E. A., & Woessmann, L. (2010). *The High Cost of Low Educational Performance: The Long-Run Economic Impact of Improving PISA Outcomes*. OECD Publishing.

“ The process for Western Australia to become a leading state and prepare its students for their future requires a long-term plan and a commitment to continuous funding. ”

Recommendation 1: Schools of the future are designed and resourced based on need so as to maximise student learning and community engagement.

WAPPA believes that in order to maximise engagement with families and to improve student outcomes, primary school students require 'community-family support' from their school. WAPPA believes that in the early years of formal education, an environment that facilitates a partnership between families and the school is essential. WAPPA's view is that the present school resourcing environment makes this aim difficult for primary schools to achieve.

Currently, primary schools are under an unsustainable amount of pressure due to excessive accountabilities. This undermines both time for teaching and time to coordinate the expertise that will maximise student outcomes. To ensure a healthy, skilled, and confident population and workforce, the Government must prioritise education resourcing and view this as an investment over time, rather than an 'expense'.

Resourcing of schools within the Department must be evidenced based. The allocation of resources should be regularly audited to promote transparency and to ensure that the resources spent on education by the Government are maximised and used effectively.

Suggested Actions

- » WAPPA recommends that the Government initiate a review of the Education Act 1999 and the Public Sector Management Act 1994 so as to ensure schools and the profession are enabled to prepare students for the 21st century and beyond.
- » A new '*School Planning Directorate*' be developed that will include seconded state planning officers, Department of Finance (Building Management and Works) and Department of Education personnel. The role of this directorate is to plan and model new schools on a ten-year plan, using data including that from local schools. The government needs to develop schools not for today but for the next fifty years.
- » New school sites are planned with land alongside for a community hub and a day-care centre. Private companies are invited to build and maintain day-care centres on such sites on a lease-back arrangement.
- » Primary schools and their communities are involved in designing all new schools.
- » The Government initiate an independent review of funding distribution to schools. This review should take into account evidence from high performing countries and look carefully at Western Australia's unique context. WAPPA believes that a full cost based analysis is needed to maximise outcomes for the allocation of funding of schools.
- » Schools are guaranteed a set school resourcing funding allocation for a three-year timeframe so they can be confident of program sustainability.
- » The resourcing of schools is independently reviewed on a five-year cycle, with recommendations to the government. These reviews are timed to inform the next school planning cycle.
- » A centralised data collection system is developed for all students. WAPPA believes this system should be introduced as soon as a child enters the Western Australian Education System and concluded when they finish their secondary education. Such a database would enhance targeted intervention, streamline student data-gathering, and save countless hours of teacher and school time. This data would also be integrated into the work of outside agencies such as the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) and the Teachers Registration Board of Western Australia (TRBWA).

Recommendation 2: Western Australia has a clear strategy for maintaining a high-performing teaching profession through initial teacher education and ongoing professional development.

Recent research into the quality of student outcomes in high-performing education systems around the world points to the impact of the quality of teaching. In fact, this one factor alone is seen to be the single biggest determinant of student performance. A high-performing system is therefore one that provides a focus on the quality of teaching (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Hopkins 2013)^{iv}.

It is therefore WAPPA's recommendation that the Government, the Department and schools prioritise this area in all project and program developments.

A quality teaching profession and one that is respected is one where initially, the right people are selected to enter and those people are then provided with quality training and continuous professional development throughout their career. WAPPA believes there is currently a lack of rigour in choosing applicants for teacher training courses and a lack of practitioner input into their ongoing development. The consequence is that principals, parents and students do not always have confidence in the teachers who are appointed to their schools. Teachers need a strong grounding in both the pedagogical development and in the interpersonal skills needed to manage complex social interactions with students, staff and parents.

21st century teachers need to be collaborative implementers and evidence-based practitioners. This involves a deep understanding of pedagogy, students, and the journey of education. The Western Australian system needs teachers who are able to understand and use data to improve student outcomes and therefore are skilled action-researchers on the job.

Every high-performing system studied by the McKinsey group combined policies to attract and develop a high-quality teaching force along with strategies and incentives for leaders and peers to work together. Successful countries did not get that good just by attracting different people to the profession. They also and simultaneously changed the profession on the ground by building collaborative cultures focused on developing educator commitment and competence, thereby obtaining better outcomes for all. Many leadership-driven solutions suffer from the same individualistic flaw. (Mourshed et al, 2011).^v

Implementing this recommendation will, over time, see the teaching profession become more highly-regarded. Competition to enter a university teacher training program, coupled with a high expectation of the rigour of that training, will enable Western Australia to enhance its position as operating a high-performing education system.

Structural change is needed in all organisations to develop efficiencies, however it has been seen around the world that unless there is a fundamental drive to develop professional capital and instil a unifying vision for education within the system and in the community, an education system will struggle to improve.

Put simply, WAPPA believes that:

- » To enable better outcomes for students, Western Australia needs to build the capability and capacity of teachers joining the workforce. There needs to be a state priority to future-proof the excellence of our education system and remunerate staff appropriately.
- » Greater cooperation and coordination between universities, employers and schools is essential.
- » A more rigorous teaching qualification process will lead to an enhanced standing of the profession.

- » The Department, as an employer of teachers, needs to be accountable in developing 'whole-of-system' strategies to enhance the development of professional capital.
- » All schools need to be staffed by high-performing school leaders and teaching staff.
- » Teachers placed in schools with high numbers of Aboriginal students and those in regional and remote schools must be appropriately skilled and experienced; these schools should have high-performing teachers, not the newest.

Suggested Actions

- » There are detailed strategies, plans and targets in place for high-quality investment in initial teacher training.
- » The 2015 Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) report is fully adopted, including a sophisticated entry system.
- » Teaching degrees will be consistent across all universities in the State with degrees accredited by a board that consists of university peers, registration authorities, and school-based personnel.
- » Trainee teachers spend at least thirty percent of their time in school settings and so learn to put theory into practice.
- » Within five years, all primary teacher education qualifications have moved to Masters-level degree courses with specialist areas available in Students with Educational Disabilities and Learning Difficulties and ICT.
- » A *Teacher Workforce Reference Group* staffed by workforce expertise guides universities in determining the intake numbers needed by the profession.
- » Up to fifty percent of all public primary schools are accredited as '*Teacher Training Schools*' with fully-accredited teachers appointed to coordinate the placement and supervise the teaching and evaluation of trainee teachers.
- » All schools conduct a rigorous induction program for all new and existing staff each year. The Department conducts a yearly induction process for all new and existing principals.
- » Over the life of the next two Enterprise Bargaining Agreements, negotiations take place to develop greater flexibility so as to enable classroom teachers to collaborate based on the needs of the school and the staff.
- » Within five years an actionable strategy is developed so as to ensure that high quality teachers are placed into school with high enrolments of Aboriginal students.
- » Within five years an actionable strategy is developed to increase the numbers of qualified Aboriginal School leaders and teachers working across the system.

Recommendation 3: Western Australia develops a ten-year horizon talent identification and development pathway for school leaders who are skilled to lead the contemporary school.

“Research shows that high-achieving and high-equity schooling systems typically invest in building quality and capability in school leaders and teachers. Strategic and systematic approaches are also typically in place to attract, develop, and retain the most talented teachers, and to make sure skilled teachers serve students of all socioeconomic backgrounds” (Auguste, Kihn and Miller 2010).^{vi}

After teaching, effective leadership is proven to make the most significant difference to student outcomes (Gordon, 2013).^{vii} This leadership includes educational or instructional leadership and also leadership of all activities within the school. Often School Leaders feel prepared for instructional leadership but under-prepared for change management in both instructional and operational leadership. In developing leaders for the future, an important component of the system responsibility is succession-planning, preparing new leaders well before there are vacancies to be filled.

It is extremely important that all school leaders are skilled in setting high expectations and building a school culture of learning that is supported by organisational structures. As a system moves from good to great, leaders need to be trusted to implement change and improvement. This trust can occur if talent development has been deliberate and sustained.

Talent identification and development are both important parts of the process. Great teachers don't automatically become effective school leaders. WAPPA believes that by first investing into the careful selection of people who have the capability to deal with the complexity of the role, then investing into developing these aspiring leaders will, over the next ten years, lead to a world-class principalship. This development needs to include contemporary pedagogy, a focus on leadership 'skills' and implementing an ongoing program that supports principal wellbeing.

WAPPA believes that with sustained focus at this level, the innovative changes desired and needed in education will begin to flow through the system. Highly-proficient principals, who have been developed for the role and are provided with ongoing development opportunities, will be those who lead our schools. The gap between low-performing schools and high-performing schools will be narrowed and, in terms of student outcomes, the entire sector will move in an upwards trajectory. The position of principal will also be one that more people aspire to as they see the impact a principal can make.

Suggested Actions

- » A classification system of school leaders be developed, enabling highly credentialed leaders to be placed into the most challenging schools.
- » Placement of leaders in schools should not be based on career aspirations but on the needs of schools. Therefore, flexibility is needed in human resources and remuneration systems.
- » The Department has in place a dynamic and flexible leadership strategy that enables all leaders to access relevant professional development.
- » Aspirants for school leadership positions (principal and deputy principal) complete a school leadership program. This program is mandated by the Department and implemented by the profession (with oversight by the Department).
- » Proactive strategies are in place to ensure school leaders and staff are fully protected from community violence towards school staff and support is provided.
- » All school leaders have access to face-to-face performance management in order to develop their ongoing skills and knowledge as well as their personal career development.
- » Professional learning is an integral part of all new department policy implementation.

- » All school leaders have access to mentoring and coaching services.
- » School leaders have continuous and ongoing support for their own health and wellbeing and are able to lead a resilient workforce.

“An important component of the system responsibility is succession-planning, preparing new leaders well before there are vacancies to be filled.”

Recommendation 4: Western Australia becomes a national and international leader by facilitating an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) education system that enables world-class teaching and learning opportunities.

WAPPA believes that the implementation of a cutting edge ICT system is an important part of the continuing development of our high-performing system over the next ten years. This is not technology for technology's sake, but recognition that future employment will require students to engage with technology in ways that are not currently evident. Global connectivity is a fact of life. Students of the future will need to be able to utilise and implement technology in every facet of their life.

The learning programs that enable our students to be engaged global citizens require an ICT system for schools that is superior to the one currently in place. Maximising the opportunities that such a system brings also requires that teachers are proficient in constructing ICT-rich learning experiences. Therefore, any ICT strategy needs to be partnered by sufficient development opportunities for teachers. It is also essential that any school-based ICT system be upheld and enhanced by the technical support needed for efficient and effective operation.

Implementation of a world-class ICT system will facilitate a linked education community where learning is shared between classrooms, across the State, and around the world. Students have the opportunity to develop the skills to be creative and innovative in both their schooling and in their future employment. It is WAPPA's belief that a quality ICT system can be used more effectively to engage and improve learning outcomes of the State's Aboriginal students. This ICT system can also enable more sophisticated record-keeping of a student's journey through the education system.

Suggested Actions

- » The Government fund a business plan presented by the Department so as to ensure all schools have access to reliable ICT infrastructure, connectivity and hardware.
- » The Department develop specific school-based ICT platforms for primary schools incorporating infrastructure, connectivity and hardware requirements.
- » All staff are provided with access to professional learning based around integrating technologies within the existing curriculum.
- » All primary schools have access to immediate maintenance of their ICT system.
- » All regional and remote schools are provided with ICT facilities that enable greater student and staff interaction amongst and between schools across the State.

Recommendation 5: The Department develops an *early intervention strategy* that is seen as fundamental within the Department and the community for the establishment of high quality outcomes for all students.

Western Australia is a diverse state with a range of issues that impact positively or negatively on a child's educational opportunities. WAPPA believes that a focus on 'setting-up' students for future success is fundamentally important and will in fact alleviate the system of a number of disengagement problems that occur later in a student's life. The Australian Early Development Census reports that in Western Australia, one in five students starts school with a learning difficulty. Unless intervention is successful in the first few years of schooling, a child may be negatively affected for their lifetime.

Therefore, interventions must be targeted, timely and sustainable. Schools and networks must have the ability to implement differentiated strategies and classroom support must be increased to respond to those falling behind. The social fabric of families has changed significantly over the last few decades, requiring schools to fill more of a social gap which historically was not required.

Implementation of a robust early intervention program will, in the long run, save money for the State (Lamb & Teese, 2012)^{viii}. A process that is implemented early enough will see all students leaving Year Two at their optimum level for progressing to their potential.

Suggested Actions

- » The Department recognises early intervention and its resourcing as a priority within the system's ten-year plan.
- » The Department implements an early intervention strategy for the Kindergarten to Year Two phase of schooling. The strategy identifies each student as they enter the schooling system and oversees schools in conducting a full assessment program to highlight areas of need in academic, social and physical traits. This system is integrated into existing data collection processes.
- » Each student who identifies as having a learning difficulty or disability will receive case management attention with specific targets set over the four-year period. Early intervention will include one-on-one specialist work, group interventions, and modified programs.
- » The early intervention strategy is coordinated by a fully-qualified early intervention learning specialist teacher attached to each school (or network).
- » There exists a shared understanding by teachers, parents and the community of the critical role early intervention plays in effective education delivery. An effective communication plan around the early intervention strategy enables this.

“... schools need to become a ‘one stop shop’ for the development of the whole child, ”

Recommendation 6: Provide a coordinated and localised response to meeting the needs of students.

Currently, too many children miss out on the benefits of much-needed intervention in the very important years prior to formal schooling and slip through the net at a critical time in their developmental journey. It is WAPPA's belief that schools need to become a 'one stop shop' for the development of the whole child, enabling parents and caregivers access to the services children may need. Such wrap-around services need to target children from birth to middle primary.

However, this does not mean that schools should become responsible for meeting all needs, as the fundamental role of a school is the intellectual nurturing of a child (Leithwood, Fullan, Watson, 2003).^{ix} Rather, schools become the hosts or hub for additional services that are provided in a coordinated manner. School leaders report that currently, when they are involved in these shared-services relationships they are pressured by serving many masters with very different expectations. A process that coordinates these shared services at the ministerial level, agency level and local level is a priority.

There is growing recognition that, at the local community level, many schools cannot overcome their particular schooling challenges alone and that collective action through school and community partnerships can help to strengthen efforts by governments to address educational disadvantage (Black 2009).^x There are multiple examples from around the world where this shared approach is impacting student outcomes in a positive way (Leadbeater and Wong 2010; Sahlberg, 2012).^{xi}

WAPPA believes that a coordinated and deliberate focus on developing more of these localised hubs will improve family engagement and health standards, leading to improved educational outcomes. These services will also be able to provide early and targeted intervention for students with learning difficulties and special needs.

WAPPA also acknowledges that the paradigm of what makes an effective school also needs to change. WAPPA believes that in the future, a focus must be placed on assessing 'whole of child development' rather than isolated assessments such as attendance at school and a NAPLAN result. This will require a different style of school leader who coordinates the whole experience rather than just the instructional experience.

Suggested Actions

- » The government develops a twenty-year plan to build dedicated community hubs on ALL school sites with wrap-around services and with access to professional and para-professional services (health, speech, school psychology services etc) that offer unified support with early interventions. This will be a more advanced roll out of the Child and Parent Centres, providing every school with access to a centre. The size and scope of the community hub will be dependent on the context of the school and community.
- » The wrap-around services include government agencies for parent and community access. Health nurses and school nurses are centred in these community hubs.
- » Parenting programs are delivered in each community hub to enhance parenting knowledge and skills.
- » All parents have equitable access to services at the community hubs.
- » All community hubs have an accredited early intervention coordinator working within the school and community hub to coordinate all school and interagency interventions. This person is funded through whole-of-government interagency cooperation.
- » There is provision for day-care facilities to be built on school sites. Buildings are constructed and paid for by the private sector on land leased from the Department.

Recommendation 7: Schools and networks of schools have true autonomy, responsibility and accountability to implement curriculum and learning methods that produce the best outcomes for their students.

WAPPA believes that for optimal learning outcomes to be achieved, local networks of schools need to be accountable for student performance. This requires a slightly different structure than what currently exists within the Department. WAPPA acknowledges that there is a system that allows individual schools to be autonomous but believes that more adequate network structures need to be in place to support this autonomy. There is a requirement to provide a level of support that sits between systems and schools enabling successful and sustainable processes.

The mid-tier becomes vital in supporting weaker and less-experienced school leaders, identifying development needs and providing appropriate support, managing and supporting collaborative practices across clusters of schools, and strengthening school accountability (Hopkins, 2013).^{xii}

It is WAPPA's view that our existing education drivers, including the Western Australian Curriculum, the NAPLAN national accountability tool and the *MySchool* website, will not provide the fundamentals for individual, school and national education improvement. This system suited a twentieth-century paradigm but as the information paper "*A High-performing Public Education System: Ideas from Research*"^{xiii} states, this does not match what is needed if Australia is to continue as a high-performing country.

Implementing the school curriculum needs to be reflected in the autonomy of schools, with accountability for whole of student outcomes rather than the *teaching of content*. This requires a fundamental rethink in how schools are held accountable. WAPPA believes the current system of standardised testing promotes the teaching of content rather than a contextualised-learning program. Implementing a systemic structure with this mid-tier level of support in place will drive schools towards a higher level of performance but will require different performance indicators. More appropriate indicators will be those focussed on having the appropriate culture of learning in place, a collaborative style between schools and teachers, and long-term system outcomes that acknowledge and understand a child's whole journey.

It is WAPPA's view that there needs to be a two-phase approach to the teaching of curriculum, with the broad content outcomes articulated by a curriculum authority. The school then has the autonomy and flexibility to develop that curriculum to suit their school's specific context.

Schools across Western Australia operate at and achieve various levels of performance. This may be due in part to the geographical spread and the resulting difficulties in resourcing and social infrastructure. Research shows that interventions need to be based on a school's current performance, rather than providing a system-wide intervention. A strong and appropriate correlation between central guidance to schools and their performance stage, has been noted.

Schools moving from poor to fair were provided with tight guidance and accountability measures, whereas schools moving from good to great were afforded much more autonomy. The provision of loose central guidelines was proven essential to encourage a high-level of peer-led creativity and innovation (Mourshed et al, 2011).^{xiv}

Accountability for performance outcomes is important for all schools. However it is important that the school leader is given flexibility in the delivery and assessment processes, to allow adaptation to the contextual circumstances. Accountability is still necessary, and as Leithwood, Fullan & Watson^{xv} state: "*Schools and school districts should implement systematic, ongoing data collection and feedback processes of their own, aimed at improving the actions they take to accomplish the goals of education established by the province. This would include data about effects of the educational processes they use to improve student achievement*" (2003).

WAPPA believes therefore that a more sophisticated use of data is required to measure school's outcomes and success than the system of standardised testing currently in place.

The problem with standardised testing, as identified by McKinsey & Co (Mourshed et al., 2011) & Hopkins (2013) amongst others is that this approach works well in the early stages of the improvement process, but if continued, will reduce both performance and motivation. *"The fixation on high-stakes testing hasn't moved the needle on student achievement"* (Doering, 2015)^{xvi}.

WAPPA advocates for:

- » A system that is driven by formative data to make educational decisions about localised interventions.
- » Networks responsible for outcomes and working in a collaborative nature so that collective student outcomes across schools improve.
- » Schools that are accountable for 21st century skills such as collaboration, learning how to learn, engagement, and critical thinking, rather than just content.
- » Schools that are leaders in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) implementation.

Suggested Actions

The Department of Education system be restructured to enable optimal localised outcomes.

The Department implements a two-phase program for structural change:

Within five years:

- » Schools are organised into networks based on geographical location. All schools need to be involved.
- » Each network will have a dedicated pedagogical leader who will coordinate and lead development of evidenced based practices for teachers and school leaders. This person will be seconded to the network for a set term, i.e. five years.
- » There will be a maximum of twenty-five schools in each network.
- » Networks will concentrate on implementing Department of Education priorities and developing professional capital for all teaching and non-teaching staff.

Within ten years:

- » Student outcome accountability will be the responsibility of the network and the school. Schools will need to work with each other to ensure all schools within the network are improving outcomes.
- » School leaders and staff will move for short-term placements within the network, based on need.
- » Schools have access to the Department's dedicated *Research and Teaching and Learning Directorate* to seek guidance in implementing programs and pedagogical practices for schools.

Curriculum implementation

- » Schools have the autonomy to prioritise and implementation of the Western Australian Curriculum based on their context.
- » Schools have shifted from purely teaching content to also teaching and developing the 21st century skills needed for the changing world. These skills include critical thinking, collaboration, communication and creativity.

- » All primary schools will be equipped to deliver quality STEM programs.

National testing revisited

- » Western Australia has a moderated assessment program that is based on teacher judgement for all learning areas. Government and policy makers have access to all results; parents have access to the results of the school of their children. The assessment programs will concentrate on literacy, numeracy, STEM and the 21st century skills that are developed in classrooms.
- » Western Australia will have discontinued high-stakes standardised testing.

“The future of work is changing. It’s a reality governments, industry and communities are all grappling with. The Reserve Bank of Australia has raised concerns regarding fewer working taxpayers to older people as the baby boomers retire and young people do not replace them. We will need an innovative and entrepreneurial generation of young people to maintain our standard of living.” Foundation for Young Australians, The New Work Order, 2015

Endnotes

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- ^v Mourshed, M., Chijioke, C., & Barber, M. (2011). How the worlds most improved school systems keep getting better. *Educational Studies*, (1), 7-25.
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