The Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education

Submission

1 October 2017

GOOD TO GREAT SCHOOLS AUSTRALIA

Great teachers. Effective teaching. Every child.

1 Introduction

This submission is in response to the Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education (the Independent Review) being conducted by Emeritus Professor John Halsey on behalf of the Australian Government's Department of Education and Training.

Professor Halsey released a Discussion Paper dated July 2017. This submission responds to certain of its themes.

There are two key insights we wish to highlight from this submission.

1.1 Two key insights

First, there is now evidence that certain rural and regional primary schools are among the best in the nation

Yarwun State School, Yarwun, QLD

The highest achieving primary school in Queensland's 2017 NAPLAN is Yarwun state primary school, twenty kilometres northwest of Gladstone in central Queensland. This small rural school with 51 enrolments as of 2016 is performing better than the state's most exclusive and expensive private schools in Brisbane.

In 2013, Year 5 students scored substantially above statistically similar students in reading, spelling, and grammar and punctuation. The cohort also scored above in writing and numeracy. The same students had been below the national average in writing just two years earlier. The 2014 Year 3 students at Yarwun State High School went from below the national average for writing, spelling, and grammar and punctuation to above in every domain by 2016.

Benaraby State School, Benaraby, QLD

Another small rural school near Gladstone, Benaraby, a state primary school with 91 enrolments in 2016, is number six in the Queensland's 2017 NAPLAN.

In 2012, numeracy scores for Year 3 students were average. The same students scored one band above the national average in 2014. In 2013, Year 3 reading scores were substantially below statistically similar schools. By 2014, Year 3 students were scoring substantially above. In 2015, Year 5s gained three achievement bands in reading. From 2013 to 2015, Benaraby increased achievement in every domain, and at a greater rate of improvement than students with the same starting scores, similar students, and the national average. Now in 2016, Benaraby Year 3 and 5 students scored substantially above statistically similar students, and the national average – in every domain.

There is a significant number of such rural and regional primary schools in the top 50 highest performing schools in Queensland. They share common characteristics. They are small. They often have teaching principals. The have fully rounded curricula including offering music and robotics programs.

They appear to have one common characteristic: *they have a strong focus on effective instruction utilising some form of explicit instruction.*

No comprehensive analysis has been done on the correlation between the use of explicit instruction and school improvement based on NAPLAN performance. However, this submission outlines Good to Great Schools Australia's (GGSA) preliminary survey, which shows clearly that certain regional and rural schools in Queensland utilising explicit instruction are performing very well as evidenced by NAPLAN. Case studies of such schools are set out in this submission.

This submission argues that explicit instruction is the keystone to school reform, and this is now shown in these leading regional and rural schools.

Second, Indigenous education in remote schools must be about providing a 'best of both worlds' education and not be diverted by the low expectations inherent in so-called 'red dirt' thinking

In the context of Indigenous education the Independent Review's Discussion Paper makes reference to a report, *Red dirt education: a compilation of learnings from the Remote Education Systems project*[1] *(Red Dirt).* GGSA has reviewed this report, and wishes to state that its philosophy and assumptions are diametrically opposed to it. Our work in Cape York Peninsula has been aimed at rejecting this kind of approach to thinking about Indigenous school education, particularly in remote communities. We urge the Independent Review to avoid adopting the so-called 'red dirt' approach put forward by the authors of this report.

At its core the 'red dirt' thinking is low expectations education and compounds the tragic failure in remote education. It is thinking that both accepts and explains such low expectations by existing failure. The worst aspect of this thinking is that it attempts to harness the views and expectations of Indigenous parents and communities in remote areas, as the reason to adopt 'red dirt' thinking. No government or society would use the victims of failed educational policies and poor school provisioning as support for such low and differential expectations of Indigenous students, compared to other students of the nation.

It is far too late in the day to reprise the flawed thinking of thirty and forty years ago when it concerns Indigenous remote schooling. No contemporary Australian government would inflict such poor policy thinking on mainstream students: now is not the time to compound the disadvantage of Indigenous remote students by following the flawed thinking of the authors of *Red Dirt.*

The point is to provide school education which is inclusive of Indigenous culture and ancestral languages to remote Indigenous schools – so that Indigenous students can "enjoy the best of both worlds" – without lowering expectations about Indigenous students gaining the skills and knowledge to make their way successfully in a global world.

There are two key propositions we wish to put forward in this submission.

1.2 Two key propositions

First, remote schools can make a two-stage performance shift from Poor to Fair to Good within 10 years

With effective, explicit instruction as the keystone to whole-school reform, remote schools can make a two-stage performance shift from Poor to Fair (achievable within six months from the institution of effective, school-wide pedagogical reforms) and then embark on the arduous journey from Fair to Good.

These shifts will necessitate the following elements:

- Long-term mandate and fidelity to the school reform program via a specific governance structure

[1] Guenther, J, Disbray S and Osborne S. (2016). *Red dirt education: a compilation of learnings from the Remote Education Systems project.* Alice Springs: Ninti One Limited.

- Stable teacher turnover with a minimum of three years, with teachers already experienced and skilled in explicit instruction prior to service in remote schools
- Stable school leadership turnover, with the leader being an instructional leader first and foremost
- School attendance rates above 85 per cent
- At least 2.5 hours literacy instruction per day
- Pre-Prep explicit instruction of pre-reading skills for 20 minutes per day
- Resources to attend to special needs of all students
- Maternal, baby and early childhood health

Regional and Rural schools can make a two-stage performance shift from Fair to Good to Great within 10 years

Regional and rural schools are distinct from Remote schools.

Regional and rural schools do not have the same degree of challenge with teacher and school leadership turnover as remote schools, as well as attendance and special needs. They also have less non-English speaking background students compared to Aboriginal communities. Unlike remote schools, regional and rural schools have most of the ingredients to go from Fair to Good to Great: if they adopt effective, implicit pedagogy and maintain an ongoing improvement focus and commitment to school reform.

Regional and rural schools can make the performance shifts to Great within 10 years.

1.3 Demographics of regional, rural and remote schools

Geography

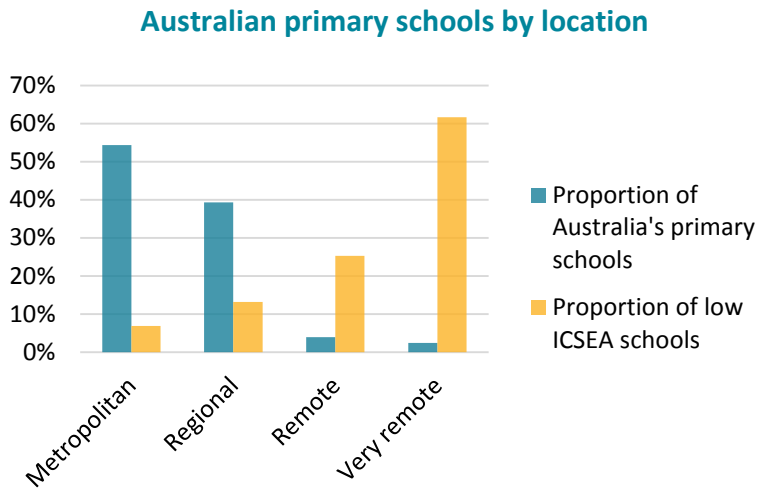
There are 6224 primary schools, 1409 secondary schools and 1323 primary/secondary combined schools in Australian systems[2]. These systems consist of state, independent and Catholic schools across the six States and two Territories.

Six per cent of Australia's primary schools are in remote or very remote locations. These schools have much greater disadvantage and weaker school service provision which lead to poorer student outcomes. The majority of very remote schools are in Aboriginal communities.

Forty per cent of schools are in regional areas. Thirteen per cent suffer disadvantage.[3]

[2] Based on the Australian of Bureau of Statistics 2015 data.

[3] Low ICSEA is defined as a score of less than 900.

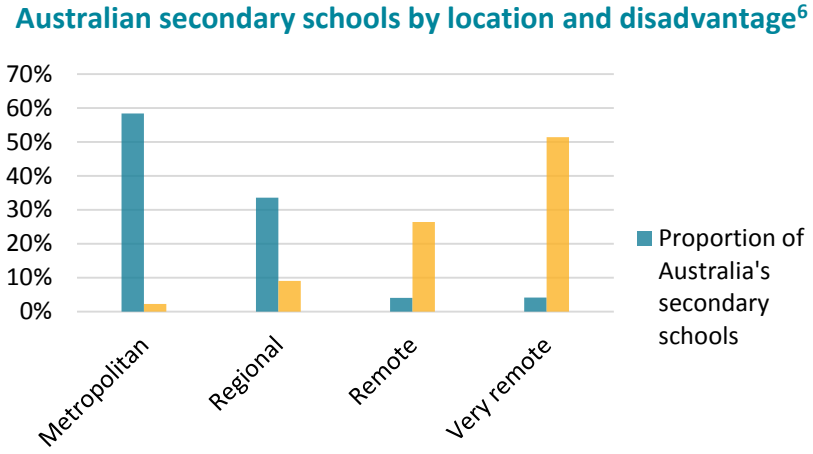


Socio-Educational Advantage scores for primary schools

There is an inverse relationship between school location and socio-educational disadvantage, as measured by the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA). Moving from metropolitan through to regional then remote and very remote, the proportion of schools with low ICSEA[4] score increases. This means remote schools are highly disadvantaged compared to metropolitan schools.

Children who are developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains[5] come to school with higher barriers to learning than those who are not.

Regional and remote schools have a high proportion of young children that are developmentally vulnerable. Nearly half of remote schools have a high proportion of children who are developmentally vulnerable.



Socio-Educational Advantage scores for secondary schools

The same story holds for secondary schools.

[4] The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) provides an indication of a school's educational advantage. The lower the ICSEA value, the lower the level of educational advantage of students. ICSEA is set at an average of 1000.

[5] Developmental domains are social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills (school-based), communication skills and general knowledge.

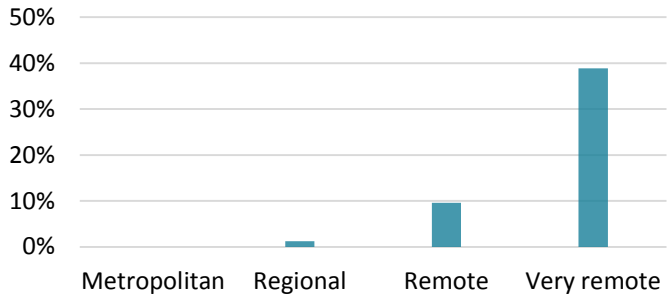
[6] Low ICSEA is defined as score of less than 900

Eight per cent of Australia's secondary schools are in remote or very remote locations. These schools also have much greater social disadvantage, weaker school service provision and poorer student outcomes.

The inverse relationship between school location and socio-educational disadvantage is also evident. The proportion of schools with low ICSEA score increases as you move away from metropolitan areas.

These secondary schools also have higher proportion of students who are developmentally vulnerable. Again, the worst are very remote schools where nearly half of the schools have a high proportion of children who are developmentally vulnerable.

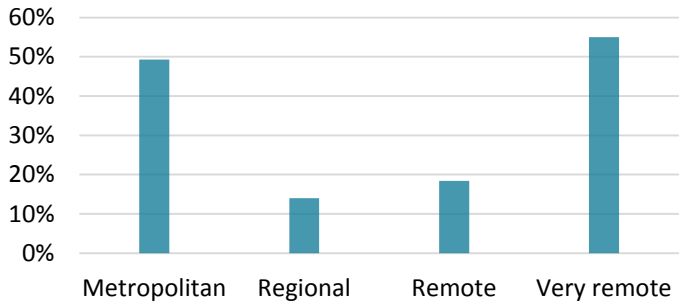
Australian primary schools with developmentally vulnerable children[7] by location



Language background other than English

Also, a greater percentage of very remote schools have a high proportion of students with language backgrounds other than English. More than half of very remote schools, eighteen per cent of remote schools and fourteen per cent of regional schools have students with language backgrounds other than English.

Australian primary schools with students with a language background other than English[8] by location

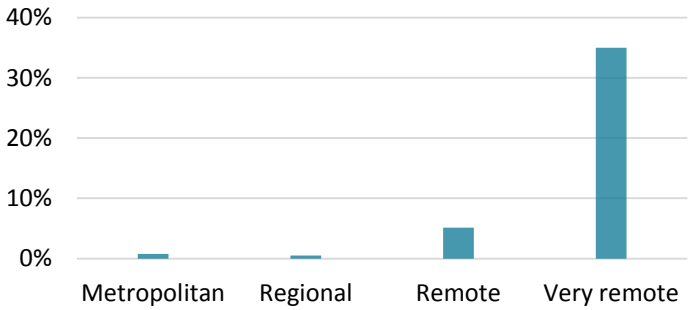


Low attendance rates

Seventy-five per cent of schools with low attendance rates are located in regional, remote or very remote locations. The impact is greatest in very remote schools with a third of schools having low attendance.

[7] High proportion of children developmentally vulnerable is defined as equal to or greater than 34.87 percent (one standard deviation from mean).
[8] High proportion of students with a language background other than English is defined as greater than 20 per cent of students in the school.

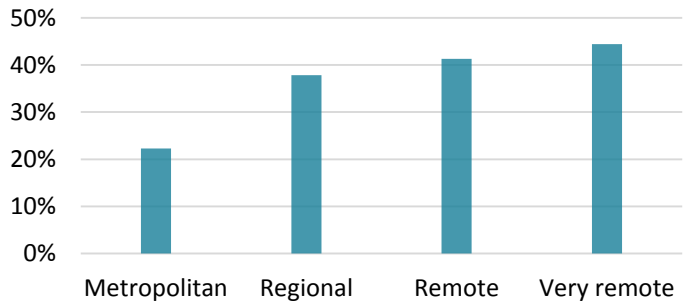
Australian primary schools with low attendance[9] by location



NAPLAN results by location

The proportion of schools ranked in the bottom third of average NAPLAN results increases with remoteness. Fifty-nine per cent of schools scoring in the bottom one third of NAPLAN are located in regional, remote or very remote locations. Thirty-eight per cent regional schools and fifty percent of very remote and remote primary schools ranked in the bottom third.

Australian primary schools in the bottom third[10] of NAPLAN results by location



2 Regional and remote schools can be transformed within a decade

Notwithstanding the story of disadvantage and inequitable education provisioning and outcomes in regional, rural and remote communities – and the enormous, longstanding achievement gap – this submission argues there is now clear evidence the gap can be closed, and it can be done promptly. What needs to be done is clear from the evidence of those rural and regional schools that have closed the gap over the past decade since NAPLAN provided the evidentiary tool to determine school progress since 2008.

This submission contends that effective instruction was the means by which these lighthouse rural and regional schools have closed the gap. The nature of this effective instruction was explicit instruction.

This is consistent with the findings of McKinsey & Company's 2007 report, *How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top*[11], which, after a survey of the highest performing school systems across the world, found that these successful systems did three things:

- Get the right people to become teachers
- Develop them into effective instructors

[9] Low attendance rate is defined as eighty per cent or less.
[10] Bottom third of NAPLAN results is defined as NAPLAN ranking in the bottom one third.
[11] Barber, M. and Mourshed, M. (2007). *How the world's best performing schools come out on top*. USA: McKinsey & Company

- Ensure the system is able to deliver the best possible instruction for each student

Great Teachers. Effective Teaching. Every Child.

Which is the tagline of our organisation. The aim of school reform boils down to these three components. These represent the apex of whole school reform: with effective instruction as the keystone.

This is the fundamental takeaway from the international evidence on school systems reform.

After their insightful 2007 report, McKinsey then produced a report that identifies *how* the world's most improved school systems kept getting better.

2.1 McKinsey Framework for school system improvement

McKinsey's 2010 report *How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better*[12] studied 20 of the most improved systems around the world, in order to identify how they improved.

They identified five performance stages for school system improvement: Poor, Fair, Good, Great and Excellent. This we will call the McKinsey Framework.

The report identifies how school systems drove performance improvement across their schools. It shows how some systems around the world started at Poor but even in the most challenging circumstances were able to progress to Fair and then Good, with some now Great, and even Excellent. Others started at Good and progressed to Great.

The McKinsey report illuminates how each system adopted a common set of improvement interventions at each performance level, which enabled them to lift their system to a higher performance stage. Interventions were common across systems despite the unique geographic, historical, economic and cultural contexts of each system.

However, context was also an important factor in relation to how these universal interventions were implemented. Context is important and unique, but it does not mean common intervention strategies are not discernible across very different contexts. There are commonalities across the various performance stages no matter the context.

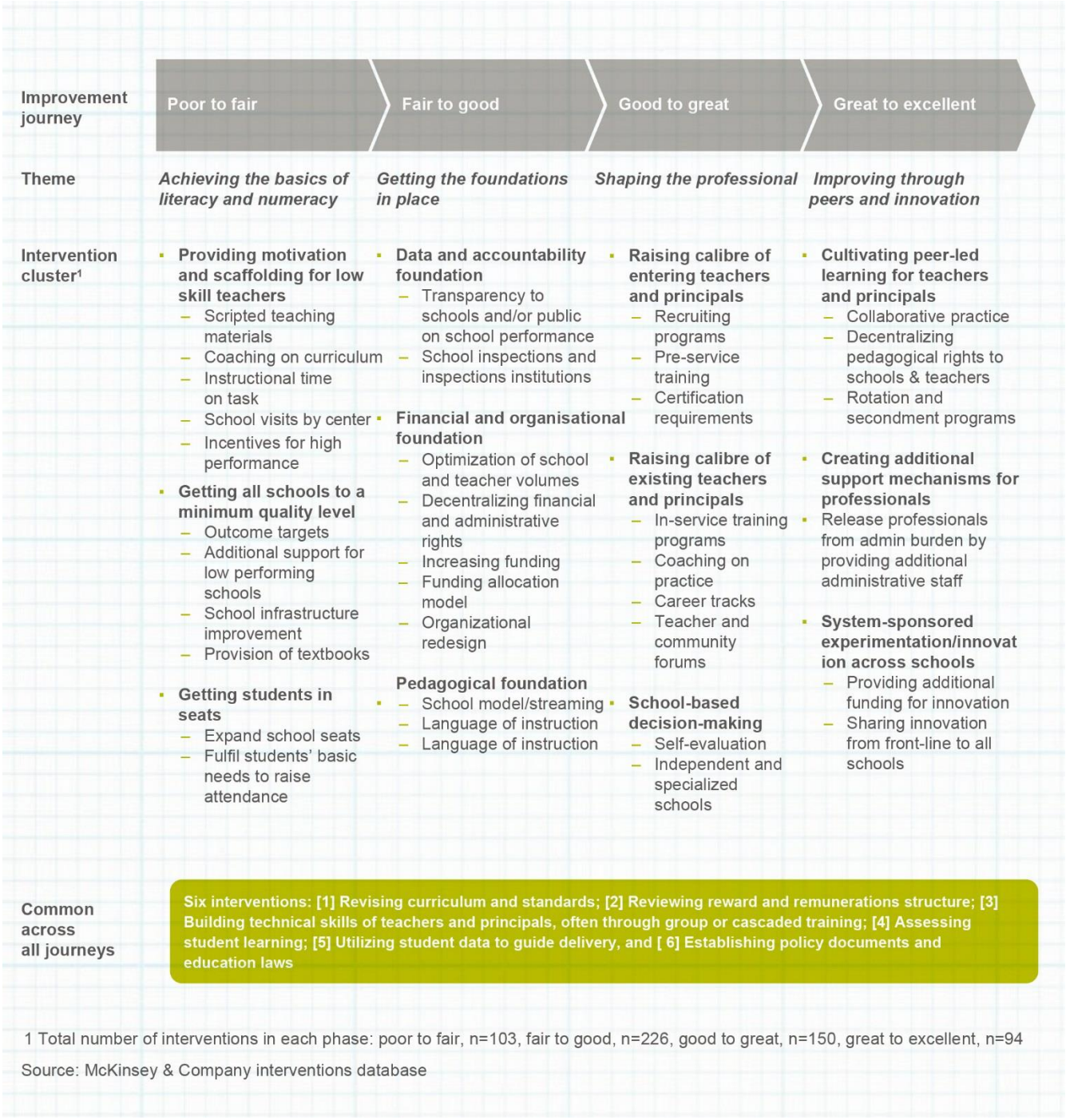
The McKinsey report debunks the idea that context is an insuperable barrier to schools improving. Context is certainly a factor but the adoption of appropriate practices enables schools to improve, even in the most challenging contexts.

Community context is a factor in Australian regional, rural and remote schools that increase the delivery challenge.

The McKinsey report is a beacon for systems grappling with stagnant performance because it shows how additional funding investment— if correctly targeted — will lead to improved results.

[12] Mourshed, M, Chijioke, C. and Barber, M. (2010). *How the world's most improved*

The 'intervention band' for each stage of school system improvement[2]



1 Total number of interventions in each phase: poor to fair, n=103, fair to good, n=226, good to great, n=150, great to excellent, n=94

Source: McKinsey & Company interventions database

Australia's federal 'system' of schools is, on average, Good, with results remaining just above the OECD average overall in PISA 2016.

However, for the past decade, Australia's standing among developed nations has been slipping and outcomes represented in standardised tests, are not keeping pace, particularly with emerging economies in Asia. In addition, the equity gap in Australia between the city and the bush, affluent and the poor, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous, is the worst of any industrialised democratic society.

Economic development is rooted in building a globally competitive education system that produces results among the best in the world.[13] For Australia to maintain its place in the industrialised world, it needs to reverse the decline and shift from a Good but highly inequitable system to a Great school system that does not have Poor and Fair schools.

This will require the Australian system to focus on lifting its long tail of poor performance. This requires a major improvement plan aimed at regional and remote Australia as this is where the poor performing schools are located.

Over seventy-five per cent of very remote schools and forty per cent of remote schools are Poor performing schools. [14] Nearly thirty per cent of regional Australia has Poor performing schools and roughly the same percentage of Fair performing schools.

Most Poor performing are state schools in all states and territories, with the majority in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania.

Metropolitan schools outperform regional and remote schools on every measure and is where the majority of Great or Excellent performing schools are. These schools show what could be achieved in regional and remote schools if the right policies are put in place.

Furthermore this submission argues that there is now evidence that a growing number of small regional and rural schools are showing what is possible.

Australian primary[15] school mapped by location and performance position (based on NAPLAN rank)

	Poor	Fair	Good	Great	Excellent
Metropolitan	13%	15%	19%	24%	28%
Regional	27%	27%	23%	14%	8%
Rural	44%	25%	18%	8%	7%
Remote	76%	12%	4%	4%	4%
# Schools	1329	1327	1331	1323	1328

Australian secondary[16] schools mapped by location and performance position (based on NAPLAN rank)

	Poor	Fair	Good	Great	Excellent
Metropolitan	15%	16%	17%	23%	28%
Regional	21%	27%	26%	17%	9%
Rural	48%	20%	18%	6%	7%
Remote	74%	16%	5%	2%	4%
# Schools	478	488	491	487	494

Australian education policy tends to focus on generic concerns across the whole system rather than the distinct performance levels of schools. Policies target 'fixing student disadvantage' rather than improving the conditions of the school that give rise to poor student performance.

The policies do not provide guidance to schools on what interventions are appropriate and within the capacity of schools to deliver.

[13] Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2012.

[14] Poor performance is defined as NAPLAN rank <20th percentile, fair performance is defined as 20th percentile <=NAPLAN rank<40th percentile, good performance is defined as 40<= NAPLAN rank<60th percentile, great performance is defined as 60th <=NAPLAN rank<80th percentile, excellent performance is described as NAPLAN rank>= 80th percentile.

[15] Percentage of schools by location only includes schools with available NAPLAN results, where results were not available they were not included in analysis, Source: The Australian: Your School Data Base, Myschool Website (2015 data), GGSA analysis.

[16] Percentage of schools by location only includes schools with available NAPLAN results. Where results were not available they were not included in analysis. Source: The Australian: Your School Data Base, Myschool Website (2015 data), GGSA analysis.

Efforts to lift the performance of schools in regional and remote Australia require support to lift entire regions and subregions of schools.

Schools that are already Great or Excellent should be given autonomy to keep doing what they are doing as they have already shown by their performance that they know how to meet the needs of their students. This is autonomy based on results. These schools collaborate and make decisions that are suited to their students and community. They do not require additional national policy to help them get from Great to Excellent.

But Poor performing schools have shown over decades they cannot get the majority of their students to the minimum education standards required of every Australian child. The way these schools operate fail the majority of their students. These schools require intervention of proven prescribed practices.

The McKinsey Framework provides both a metric for monitoring and managing school performance, as well providing a clear set of interventions that are appropriate to the performance stage of schools. It should be adopted as the nation-wide framework for oversighting schools and determining appropriate school improvement strategies and interventions.

The McKinsey Framework should be the Australian Government's framework for the administration of Australian schools. It should be adopted as the framework governing all state, territory, Catholic and independent schools funded by the Australian Government.

Why has it not occurred to Australia's school systems to utilise the McKinsey Framework as the management and performance stage matrix for Australia's schools?

The 2010 McKinsey report in fact studied *school systems* and not individual *schools within a system.* So McKinsey compared systems internationally.

In 2011 GGSA approached McKinsey and asked whether the same analytical framework and performance matrix could be applied *within* a system and to *individual schools.* Upon reflection, McKinsey confirmed that this was indeed correct.

Every school system in Australia has schools spread across the entire spectrum from Poor to Fair to Good to Great to Excellent. Yes, an Australian system might be on average – at a systems comparison level – Good, but it will have schools across the entire performance spectrum. It will not make sense to apply approaches that are appropriate for Great schools, to Poor schools. And vice versa.

GGSA believes the McKinsey Framework is the optimal monitoring and management matrix for school improvement within school systems. It should be adopted by Australian school system owners and funders.

2.2 Remote schools can make a two-stage performance shift from Poor to Fair to Good within 10 years

With the right whole-school improvement strategy and continuity in the reform mandate, remote schools can shift from Poor to Fair to Good within 10 years.

Such tectonic shifts took an average of 6 years across the systems studied by McKinsey.

Reform needs to start with the keystone of literacy and numeracy school-wide instructional reform implemented with fidelity, and based on a minimum 85 per cent student attendance. Poor schools that maintain student attendance above 85 percent and implement effective teaching can travel from Poor to Fair within their first year.

The hard stretch is to get from Fair to Good. This will not happen if attendance does not meet mainstream averages of plus 90 per cent.

Schools on the Fair to Good journey must then focus on continually improving teaching and student achievement. They must focus on effective teaching of other areas of the curriculum and stabilising the teaching team tenure to three years. Staffing stability will enable teachers to build the capacity to internalise their teaching repertoire and the way they think about teaching.

It also provides the stability for schools to focus on other contextual factors that may impact on whole school reform.

2.3 Regional and rural schools can make a two-stage performance shift from Fair to Good to Great within 10 years

Yarwun State School is now a Great School. They have made the journey from wherever they were to Great within less than 10 years. If they were Fair when NAPLAN started then they would have become Good in short order and then spent the years since making their journey from Good to Great.

They are an absolute inspiration for other regional and rural – and small (!) and public (!!) – schools everywhere. How could education policy turn its eyes from this proof and inspiration?

Yarwun State School tells us that it is possible, and what needs to be done.

3 Issues for remote Indigenous schools

The broad problem facing Indigenous students – particularly those living in remote and very remote Australia – is socio-economic disadvantage. However, the entire social and economic system does not need to be repaired in order to lift educational achievement. Rather, educational improvement for disadvantaged people is *the first step* in addressing social and economic disadvantage.

But Indigenous education has a failed historical legacy spanning decades. There is a predictable cycle of public exposure, shock and awe about failure followed by review, new policy frameworks and renewed commitment to reform.

The extraordinary problem facing Indigenous Australians is that no other Australian peoples or sub-group face the same level of extreme disadvantage. Indigenous Australians alone face the singular issue of 'a racial gap'.

In this part of our submission we set out some of the more salient issues facing Indigenous school education.

3.1 The purpose of education for remote Indigenous communities

When researchers and policymakers try to set out what education success should look like for Indigenous children, they all too quickly abandon the logical starting point and head in the wrong direction.

They assume Indigenous education failure is reflective of Indigenous people having different aspirations, hopes and dreams than other Australians. Further, that by engaging them in a certain kind of discussion, they may find the answers.

Unsurprisingly, the common response is that they want their children to be able to take up the local jobs in their communities. Of course children should expect to receive a standard of

education that will allow them to take up the kinds of service, clerical and trade jobs available in remote communities.

But shouldn't they be entitled to an education that could lead them to much more? Isn't the goal of our liberal democratic society to ensure that *all* students are prepared for the changing global economy and labour markets? Isn't the right of all Australians to be equipped with the skills and knowledge to pursue their dreams, even with the limited aspirations of their community leaders and parents?

Can the constricted context of remote community life really equip parents to hold well informed opinions on how their children can negotiate their futures in an ever–changing world? How can parents and community members who themselves are products of a failed education respond objectively to what they think the purpose of education is for their children and grandchildren? Wouldn't their own marginalised school experiences depress the hope they may hold for their children's educational opportunities?

Relying on consultation and engagement with communities to set the policy imperative for education sets up two problems. It unrealistically places the onus on the communities to solve problems they are not equipped to solve, and sets the groundwork to blame them when it doesn't work out. Of course, consultation and engagement are necessary features of any interaction with governments making policy on behalf of citizens.

But more importantly, it requires Indigenous leadership and government to determine policy questions, as these questions concern changing economies, demography and futures. The goal should remain a national goal and that is to ensure that *all* Australian students are prepared for the changing global economy and labour markets.

It is the right of all Australians to be equipped with the skills and knowledge to pursue their future dreams.

Indigenous children also have a right to speak their languages and maintain their heritage, identities, cultures. Governments have an obligation to ensure that we enable that right and our education system has a central role in this.

Indigenous students should be able to access a "best of both worlds" education that encourages the maintenance of Indigenous languages and cultures but also guarantees mainstream education proficiency.

Indigenous students need teachers that deliver quality teaching using evidence-based pedagogy. Most policy conversations about Indigenous education, neglect pedagogy. Recognising the unique challenges in remote Indigenous communities requires a focus on what teaching and learning works best to maximise learning for Indigenous children.

Indigenous education policy needs to be drawn from the substantial research that exists and the efforts that have been shown to be successful and based on evidence. Frameworks for successful education already exist as does the evidence of how they work in remote Indigenous schools.

So far education policy has done little more than lock Indigenous people in remote communities into cycles of failure and despair. Education researchers and policy makers should put aside ideology and look at the evidence of what works for students at large, including but not limited to indigenous students.

3.2 With pedagogy we need evidence not more innovation

Researchers and policy makers often call for more innovation to find new ways to think about solving the challenges facing Indigenous schools and other Poor performing schools. But there is already a large body of evidence of what teaching models work effectively for all children no matter their circumstance. More innovation is just a distraction. What is needed is the implementation of proven practices.

The McKinsey reports of 2001 and 2010 are salient.[17]

The 2005 report of the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy led by the late Professor Ken Rowe, surveyed the evidence and prescribed what should be done. It is now 12 years since then but implementation has not happened across Australian school systems.

Effective instruction is the keystone of educational reform, and should be the central organising principle of any school.

The McKinsey report shows two factors common across all performance levels is a focus on effective teaching and the development of teachers' instructional skills. [18] The evidence shows that effective instruction has the most profound effect on a student's learning in the classroom.

Visible Learning, Professor John Hattie's internationally acclaimed synthesis of research evidence on 'what actually works in schools to improve learning', showed the Direct Instruction program was a highly effective. [19]

Direct Instruction programs combine explicit instruction pedagogy with a comprehensive literacy and numeracy curriculum, student assessment and scripted lessons. Students are taught carefully sequenced and highly structured lessons, and are required to master each lesson before advancing on to the next. This ensures that advanced students can be accelerated and that no child is left behind. Students are grouped according to their levels of mastery and progress, not their age or year levels.

Direct Instruction programs were first developed by Siegfried Engelmann and his associates in the 1960s, refined over the ensuing decades, and are today published by McGraw Hill. Hundreds of Australian schools use various Direct Instruction programs, with *Spelling Mastery* and *Reading Mastery* ubiquitous in many schools.

GGSA has mapped the international Direct Instruction materials to the Australian Curriculum and NAPLAN, and built complementary classroom resources for delivery in Australian schools. Work is underway to develop an Australian content version.

Explicit instruction pedagogy encompass a number of models and programs that use different combinations of skills and practices. These include Explicit Direct Instruction which combines the pedagogy with pre-prepared lessons and explicit instruction practices advocated by John Hollingworth, Sylvia Ybarra, Anita Archer and others.

Explicit instruction is the evidence-based, structured, systematic and effective methodology for teaching academic skills. It is called 'explicit' because it is an unambiguous and direct approach to teaching that includes both instructional design and delivery procedures.

[17] Mourshed, M. & Barber. M. (2007). *How the world's best performing schools come out on top.* Social Sector Office: McKinsey & Company. <http://mckinseyonsociety.com/how-the-worlds-best-performing-schools-come-out-on-top/>

[18] Mourshed, M. & Barber. M. (2007). *How the world's best performing schools come out on top.* Social Sector Office: McKinsey & Company.

[19] Hattie, J. (2012). Visible learning for teachers: maximising impact on learning. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

When it comes to pedagogy, explicit instruction gets the quickest lift with the greatest sustained gains. Over the past decade, explicit instruction (and the program Direct Instruction) have become widely recognised as having the fundamental components of good teaching practice, and is being increasingly adopted by Australian schools across all performance levels along the Poor to Great spectrum.

The Presbyterian Ladies College in Sydney and many other Great private schools utilise Direct Instruction.

3.3 Remote schools need quality teaching long before they will get quality teachers

A large body of research supports the impact of effective teaching on student outcomes. Effective teaching far outweighs the effect of any other school policy. An Australian student with a teacher in the 75th percentile of effectiveness will learn in three quarters of a year what a student with a teacher in the 25th percentile of effectiveness would learn in a full year.[20]

The impact of effective teaching is cumulative. Evidence from the United States shows students who had an effective teacher three years in a row outperformed students who had an ineffective teacher by 49 percentile points on school assessments.

Most importantly for regional and remote schools with vulnerable students – the evidence suggests that as teacher effectiveness increases, lower-achieving students are the first to benefit, followed by average students and then, by students considerably above average.[21]

We can and should improve the quality of teachers in Australian schools. However, the situation is dire for thousands of the most vulnerable students in Poor performing schools.

By focusing on the method of instruction, we can improve the *quality* of teaching much faster than improving the teacher workforce.

Teachers can be trained in effective instruction within a week and teaching the practices in their schools the following week. And with the support of regular structured coaching and external experts to oversight the implementation and provide vital coaching and program monitoring – can start delivering effective instruction within weeks. Transforming struggling classrooms into cohesive highly effective learning environments is a matter of weeks not years.

While there are many necessary reforms required in attracting, training and retaining high-calibre candidates and teachers, these are long-term and any benefit—even if implemented today—is likely to be 20-30 years from now. That is a full generation away. We need scalable effective instruction now.

The average time it took to effect a performance shift with the systems studied by McKinsey was 6 years.

Regional and remote underperforming schools have the opportunity to experience change in the next five to six years with research-proven explicit instruction. We need to enact strategies to lift achievement in the short term whilst building towards the long-term reforms such as initial teacher training and ongoing development of the profession.

[20] Jordan, H, Mendro, R & Weerasinghe, D, 1997, *Teacher effects on longitudinal student achievement: A report on research in progress*, National Evaluation Institute.

[21] Sanders, W & Rivers, J 1996, *Cumulative and Residual Effects of Teachers on Future Student Academic Achievement*, University of Tennessee Value Added Research and Assessment Centre, Tennessee, http://news.heartland.org/sites/all/modules/custom/heartland_migration/files/pdfs/3048.pdf

3.4 Family and community engagement: Learning demand versus teaching supply

Family and community engagement is often viewed as a "magic bullet" for remote Indigenous education reform. It is, of course, important and necessary. However, it is only one side of the supply and demand tension. In GGSA's work in Cape York Peninsula we talk about *teaching supply* and *learning demand*. The key elements of teaching supply are: high quality teachers, reform in school leadership, and reform of school governance, school curriculum, and facilities. Key elements of learning demand are: school ready students keen and curious to learn, supportive parents who fulfil their responsibilities and demand a good education for their children, and a community that values education and provides good neighbourhoods for children.

There is a reciprocal tension between supply and demand where increased demand can cause increased supply. The supply of teaching to Indigenous children in remote communities is poor. There is a disproportionate number of inexperienced teachers as a result of the recruitment challenges facing remote areas. Even if teachers are contracted to work in remote Indigenous schools, they spend a limited amount of time during their careers in these locations earning credit to teach in preferred urban centres. A typical student's primary school years in a failing school is characterised by inconsistent teacher and leadership quality over time. Progress in one year is followed by stagnation and unwinding the next.

Moreover, disadvantaged student backgrounds have become an excuse for failure rather than an explanation of the challenge. In failing schools, the socio-economic and class backgrounds of students have become a justification for poor outcomes. Teachers, leaders, and administrators in failing schools are quick to identify challenges and failures as factors outside of the classroom. The problem, they say, lies in the demand – not the supply – of quality remote Indigenous education.

Educators and school systems have placed responsibility for under-achievement at the feet of Indigenous student backgrounds – rather than at the feet of those responsible for teaching them. This means that it is easier to blame failures on Indigenous communities than to accept responsibility of supplying education that engages with Indigenous communities in a meaningful way that remains focused on acceptable outcomes.

Failure as a direct result of context has been the rhetorical response to an education system that supports mediocrity among teachers and school leadership; a system that calls for "innovation" rather than using evidence-based models that have proven effective in providing students the best of both worlds.

3.5 Culture and language is about the need for the 'Best of Both Worlds'

The vision for education for GGSA's Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy is:

> *"We are determined to ensure that our younger generations achieve their full potential, talent and creativity and have the confidence and capacity for hard work so that they can orbit between two worlds and enjoy the best of both"*.

Remote Indigenous education requires an excellent mainstream education program balanced with an exemplary culture and ancestral language program. In order to fulfil the purpose of remote Indigenous education, children must be provided the best of both worlds to achieve language, land, and cultural knowledge and secure an economically viable future in a changing world.

The Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy arose out of the need to achieve a “best of both worlds” education for young Indigenous students. It prioritises a focus on literacy and numeracy and uses an extended school day to ensure all aspects of the Australian Curriculum are met.

It also allocates resources and time for language and culture, for develop teaching and learning resources for culture and language utilising explicit instruction and co-teaching with Indigenous teachers.

The vision of Cape York Peninsula is that our children be able to "orbit" between two worlds and have the best of both. It is the ultimate purpose of our reform agenda that our younger generations achieve their full potential, realise their talents and creativity, and have the confidence and capacity for hard work to enjoy the best of both worlds.

To fulfil this vision, we work to restore social order so that families can grow in good neighbourhoods, parents and community leaders demand better education, and students are supported to reach and exceed national benchmarks and make the transition to secondary and tertiary study. Higher education is our goal.

The other part of the vision for individual mobility and engagement with the wider world involves the restoration of culturally and economically sustainable Indigenous homelands: places to which economically integrated future generations can return for longer or shorter periods of time.

Because of the effects of historical and contemporary forces beyond their control, Indigenous peoples need assistance to re-establish the social mechanisms of cultural and language transmission, and to establish modem, multi-literate modes of transmission. Schools have a central role to play in securing this.

3.6 It is about the future of remote, rural and regional communities

Great schools are critical to the future of remote, rural and regional communities. The very viability of these places is dependent upon schools that fully develop the capabilities of the children who grow up in these places, and those who may decide to relocate there.

Growing the human capital of remote, rural and regional communities is inextricably tied up with their futures. If the future of these communities is to be secured, new industries opened up, and regional development to ensue – then great schools are the foundation.

Like the church and post office of a bygone era, it is now the school that will signal whether such communities have a viable future. More so than ever before.

These places are home to Australian families and their children. Strong homes need great schools first and foremost.

This is why this Review is so critical. We must get schools policies for regional, rural and remote schools right. Their futures depend upon it.

3.7 Provision of secondary education in regional, remote and very remote locations

One of the greatest disadvantages facing rural and remote communities is lack of access to high quality secondary schools. Secondary education is more complex to deliver than primary education as it requires a broad range of subjects and specialist teachers. School size is crucial and scale is necessary. Attempts to offer secondary schooling in small schools are only tokenistic, and do not offer genuine schooling opportunity for post-primary students. They

should be closed down, or defined as some other form of post-primary program, not secondary education.

Remote schools are too distant from teaching pools and have too small enrolments. Regional centres fare better but they also face significant challenges, not the least recruitment of specialist secondary teachers.

GGSA believes that two strategies are imperative in respect of secondary schools in regional, rural and remote communities:

- *Increased access to metropolitan and regional Boarding Schools*

  Access and support has increased for remote students, but this needs to be increased. Access today is largely confined to 'upper tier' schools and 'scholarship' students, and now needs to extend to 'second' and 'third' tier schools and students. Every student whose family supports them to attend boarding school needs to have a solution, and all of the necessary support to succeed.

- *Improving regional secondary schools*

  Aspirational families from remote, rural and regional communities would send many of their students to regional secondary schools – if they provided a quality education. Too many simply do not. Therefore many students are failed by these schools or they attend metropolitan boarding schools.

It is in the nation's interest to ensure students in regional, remote and very remote areas of Australia have the opportunity to attend high quality secondary schools that allow them to realise their potential on par with city schools.

4 Learning from the Literacy in Remote Schools program

4.1 The program

Background

GGSA was contracted to deliver the Australian Government's Flexible Literacy for Remote Primary Schools Program in schools over a three year period 2015-2017. The objectives of the program known as Literacy in Remote Schools (LRS) are:

- Increase teacher pedagogical skills in teaching through the use of Direct Instruction or Explicit Instruction
- Improve literacy results for students in participating schools.

The eligibility criteria for schools is that they must be:

- located in a remote or very remote area and teaching primary students
- in the bottom 30 percent of all schools in Australia as measured by NAPLAN
- have students who present with high vulnerability in their first year of schooling as measured by the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) or low socio-economic advantage – in the bottom 30 percent of either or Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA).

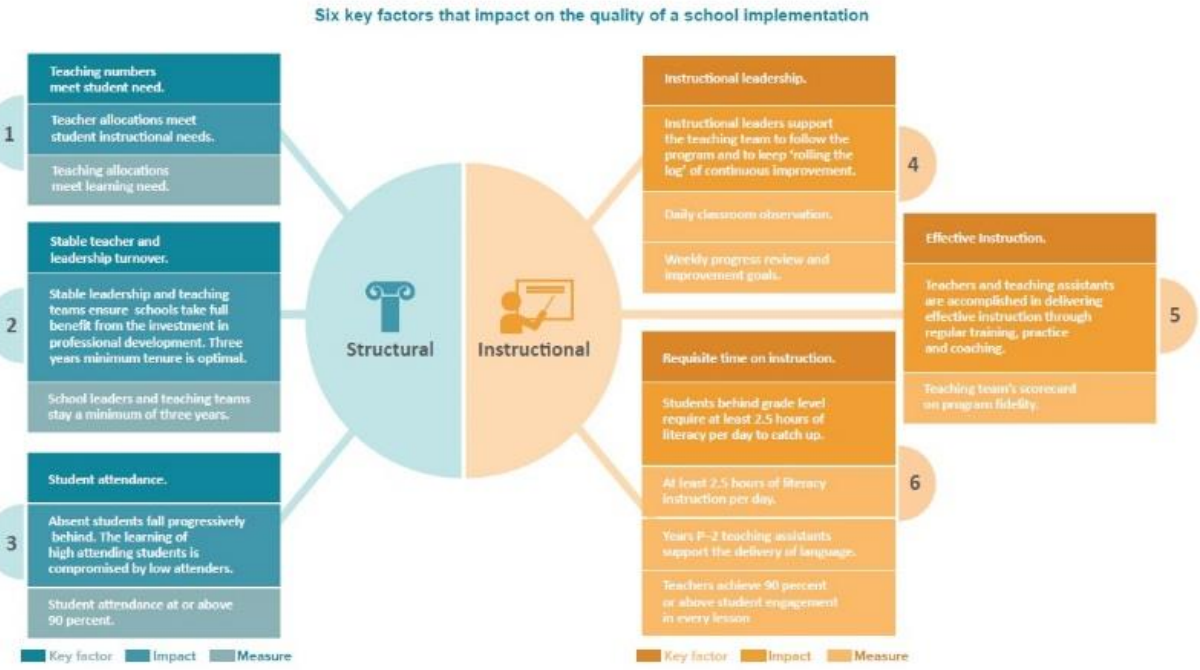
The 39 participating schools are located across Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia, within six education systems or sub-systems across state, independent and Catholic sectors.

The schools could choose from two explicit instruction models: Direct Instruction (DI) or Explicit Direct Instruction (EDI).

At the commencement, there were 20 Direct Instruction Indigenous schools, ten Explicit Direct Instruction Indigenous schools and three Explicit Direct Instruction mainstream schools.

GGSA's *Implementation Report* on the first two years of LRS implementation is provided with this submission. An independent evaluation of LRS is being conducted by the University of Melbourne.

The *Implementation Report* analyses the experience of schools participating in the LRS program along two parameters: Structural and Instructional.



The implementation shows remote Indigenous schools are grappling with significant structural factors which are impeding effective instructional reform. Structural factors fall within the bailiwick of the school system and communities, and managed through broader school policy and operations.

However, there are also significant gaps in various schools' commitment to instructional practice. Instructional factors involve teaching and learning that is within the remit of the school as their core responsibility – instructional leadership, effective instruction, and requisite time on instruction. Half of the schools showed strong commitment to delivering their program with fidelity regardless of their structural issues.

Key learning from LRS

The attached *Implementation Report* sets out in full the Key Learning from the LRS and the recommendations made, and we refer the Independent Review to the report. These will not be recapitulated in full in this submission. Rather a summary of the most salient points is set out below.

Sub-system and whole-school reform

The key learning from LRS is that Poor performing schools will only improve through sub-system and whole-school reform. Structural and instructional impediments can only be

resolved through broader school reform. It also means that the sub-systems that govern these schools and have responsibility for these structural factors must do their part. If they do not, then these schools are abandoned to ongoing failure.

Instructional reform is possible but structural factors impede schools from making student progress.

For these schools to implement more effectively and reach their potential, systems need to:

- resolve the structural impediments
- ensure school accountability for instructional quality.

DI works

The data are clear that LRS schools are showing student literacy progress where there has not been progress before. Direct Instruction works for these students in these schools.

Whilst Direct Instruction's efficacy as a teaching and learning program is undoubted, the contextual factors that characterise these schools and the systems in which they operate are what we are learning from LRS.

Schools are not making enough progress. They are not advancing fast enough for students to reach minimum benchmarks (Years 3 and 5) even though some students do.

Schools need to increase student mastery of the material first and foremost.

EDI is most appropriate for Good schools

The pedagogical features of Explicit Direct Instruction correspond with many of the features of Direct Instruction. Like all direct and explicit instruction programs, these pedagogical principles and practices are derivative of Direct Instruction[22]. The data show that Explicit Direct Instruction is successful in stable mainstream schools that have experienced leadership and teachers, and a majority of students at or close to their grade level. It has proven very effective in schools where students were not too far behind their peers and where teaching was stable, such as St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School in Carnarvon.

Explicit Direct Instruction is not suitable for the majority Indigenous schools (and is unlikely to suit other disadvantaged schools, with a large percentage of low SES, migrant or Indigenous students, or for small schools that have multiple grades in the one class). The Explicit Direct Instruction approach of teaching to grade level (a desirable approach for Good mainstream schools) does not meet the needs of students who are considerably behind grade level. Grade level instruction will fall outside of the students' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in Poor schools.

No program can work without attendance

There is a point at which low and sporadic attendance compromises a school's entire teaching and learning program to the detriment of all learning, including the learning of higher attenders.

Regular absenteeism stunts student development. When students return they are unsettled and struggle to fit into the routines and expectations of the classroom, which triggers poor behaviour.

[22] Rosenshine, B. Stevens, R. (1986). *Five Meanings of Direct Instruction*. Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation & Improvement in Wittrock, M. *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (3rd ed.). New York: Macmillan.

It also affects higher attenders as it disrupts the teacher's instructional delivery as they scramble to accommodate the needs of poor attenders.

The lesson is that, as effective as Direct Instruction is, it cannot solve chronic poor attendance and it cannot succeed in teaching students who are simply not present.

High teacher and leadership turnover disrupts school improvement

The rates at which teachers and school leaders turnover in these remote schools are debilitatingly high. Teacher turnover was equal to or exceeded 50 per cent per year for the majority of these schools. Teaching Assistant turnover exceeded 100 percent per year in one third of schools. School improvement is carried by teachers as much as students. The gains made by students from effective instruction can only be sustained by teachers who are trained in the pedagogy and continue to gain experience and improve their teaching practice. Changes in teaching faculties disrupt the continuity and growth of school improvement. The professional development invested in teachers is lost and schools get limited returns on the investment made in staff.

The high rates of turnover in too many of these schools prevents school improvement. In other words, there is no way school improvement can happen when turnover is this high.

Direct Instruction programs – because they are scripted and highly structured in their design – can help mitigate the problems of staff turnover, but they cannot cure the problems.

This is a perennial problem for staffing remote schools. Systems have been trying to find solutions to the problem of high turnover for a long time, and various initiatives have been undertaken with varying degrees of success.

The stability of teaching teams in remote schools must be revisited and the search for solutions must be redoubled. It is not just that teacher retention should be at least three years, the rate at which teachers are recruited to schools and depart from schools needs to be actively managed so that turnover is as stable as possible. This will require active management by school systems responsible for recruiting school staff.

These schools need to double the teaching supply to meet the learning demand

Schools need appropriate staffing levels that reflect the level of support for their students' learning and disability needs.

Reduction of class size does not produce gains according to evidence.

But this insight is not about reducing class size. It is about co-teaching and getting two teachers and one or two teaching assistants teaching in the one classroom.

Reducing class size without effective pedagogy is wasteful and ineffective. But adding more teaching resources is effective when combined with effective pedagogy.

Longitudinal NAPLAN data shows that if the gap is not closed by Year 3, then it never closes. If students are starting the Foundation year (Prep) way behind other students, then without intensive intervention, they will not close the gap before Year 3.

It requires a national commitment to ensure that – where students are so far behind in literacy – schools commit to 2.5 hours per day literacy instruction and use a literacy program that has a proven evidence base.

The lesson is that we need more teaching from more teachers in classrooms. The achievement gap is very large. It can only be closed by doubling the teaching effort in all disadvantaged classrooms such as those in the LRS remote schools.

Early focus on language and reading

The best literacy results are attained when students are exposed to pre-literacy programs in pre-Prep or Kindergarten.

Remedial literacy intervention is more challenging, as students have already experienced learning failure and require 'relearning'. Failure leads to reluctance to come to school, which further feeds the cycle of poor student outcomes.

The lack of English language skills of almost half the students in LRS Direct Instruction schools points to a major hurdle in addressing the language gap. Without a specialised language program, they will struggle to catch up or keep up in Kindergarten. This is the first gap that emerges between these students and mainstream Australian children.

It is hindered by the lack of pre-literacy familiarity in any language, which means their progress will be slower than children who have had some exposure to literacy before they start school. This is a disastrous combination for these students.

5 GGSA school improvement model

GGSA has developed a school improvement model that can be applied across the Poor to Fair, Fair to Good, Good to Great spectrum. The model represents the lessons learned after seven years operation of the Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy (CYAAA) in Cape York Peninsula, and almost three years of the LRS program. It is described in the LRS *Implementation Report.*

The model comprises explicit teaching of literacy and numeracy. It includes additional literacy and numeracy support during other Australian curriculum timeslots for those students who need more time to master literacy and numeracy skills.

Students develop their literacy and numeracy skills at varying paces. Under the model, students who need more time and support to consolidate those skills will receive more school time instead of time on other Australian curriculum areas.

ACARA[23] describes National Minimum Standard (NMS) for the minimum level a student must reach in literacy and numeracy to be able to effectively engage in the Australian curriculum.

[23] Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority

A student who does not reach the minimum in literacy and numeracy has not achieved the learning outcomes expected for his or her year level. ACARA states that they therefore do not have the skills to engage in other areas of the curriculum and are unable to progress satisfactorily without targeted support.[24]

These students need literacy and numeracy support to participate in other areas of the curriculum. Ensuring students master literacy skills needs to be prioritised over other parts of the Australian Curriculum.

The classroom delivery structure enables the provision of the core foundations with targeted support delivered as small groups or one on one support.

Schools with more students needing intervention will require additional staff to provide the small group and one-on-one intervention for literacy. Need for resources will be greater.

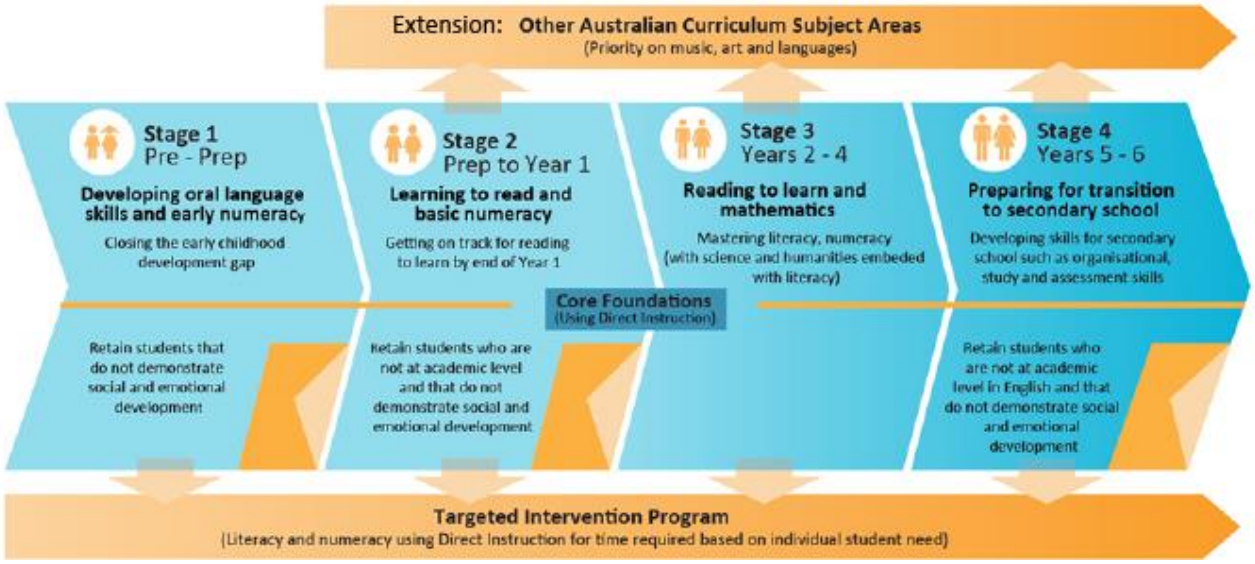
This model can be applied to all schools regardless of current achievement levels. The difference between the implementation of the model at each school is based on the numbers of students needing additional support to reach mastery of literacy.

Poor to Fair schools will generally have the most students requiring additional literacy and numeracy support. Fair to Good schools will have less, and Good to Great schools less again. All schools would prioritise literacy and numeracy using explicit instruction.

Some students will also require extra support for their social and emotional development. In this model, this support can be provided during the one-on-one and small group sessions.

The model allows for these students to be retained in a grade level following pre-prep and/or Year 1 and/or Year 6. This extra schooling will strengthen their literacy, numeracy and social and emotional development. It will enable them greater access to the Australian Curriculum and to successfully transition to secondary school.

School Improvement Model



[24] http://www.nap.edu.au/results-and-reports/how-to-interpret/standards

Early years focus on learning to read in foundation years to close the gap

Focus on acquiring firm foundations in literacy and numeracy ensures all students learn to read. Closing the gap before Year 1 is crucial to ensure students can succeed in primary school.

More time in upper years on literacy and numeracy and less on other Australian Curriculum areas

Priority on developing literacy and numeracy skills. Students exposed to other Australian Curriculum areas but with less time. Students move on to other elements of the curriculum in the second half of primary school.

Exemption from Australian Curriculum for students not maintaining age level progress in literacy and numeracy

Exemption from Australian Curriculum for students not maintaining age level progress in literacy and numeracy so that they get more time and teaching attention on the core foundations. Students receive varying access to other parts of the Australian Curriculum dependent on intervention they require to maintain literacy and numeracy progress.

All students have access to music, art and languages

A classroom music and art program and language instruction with take-home tutorials, form the basis of the additional curriculum areas. Instrumental music offered to select students as a lunchtime and extracurricular program followed by all other curriculum areas.

Milestone retention at the end of Year 1 and Year 6

All students have maximum opportunity to achieve the Learned to Read milestone at the end of Pre-Prep and Year 1. If they have not, parents are encouraged to support retention for an additional year of catch-up. Same process for Ready for Secondary School milestone at the end of Year 6.

Allied health professionals support students during timetabled intervention time

Where students' health, or social and emotional needs are impacting on learning, students access allied health professional services during targeted intervention allocated time in the timetable. This appointment time is coordinated with external agencies.

6 Exemplary regional, rural and remote schools

One of the central, even if surprising, points we make in this submission is that certain schools that fall within the scope of this inquiry, are among the best primary schools in the nation. These regional and rural primary schools are Great, if not Excellent, according to the McKinsey Framework. They are real lighthouse schools that should inspire all communities in regional, rural and remote Australia that we can have schools that match, and indeed do better, than metropolitan schools.

Here we set out a sample of case studies of exemplary regional, rural and remote schools – that show the way for the future.

6.1 Exemplary regional schools

Goondi State School, Innisfail, Queensland

Demographic information

School		Students		Teachers	
Government		Enrolments	**413**	Teaching staff	**28**
Primary		Indigenous	**24%**	Full time equivalent staff	**26.8**
Prep-6		Language other than English	**19%**		
Outer regional		Student attendance	**95%**		
School ICSEA	**943**	Indigenous student attendance	**91%**		

Goondi draws students from residential suburbs, small acreage properties and surrounding farms in the regional town of Innisfail in northern Queensland. The schools services a low SES catchment.

Pedagogy and programs

Goondi utilises explicit instruction pedagogy and programs for all key learning areas. Direct Instruction programs include Spelling Mastery.

Units of work and assessment tasks are developed by teachers across year levels which ensures consistency of concepts and content covered and moderation of student work is measured against agreed standards within year levels.

Student outcomes

Goondi has used explicit instruction pedagogy and programs for more than a decade and has had the same Principal for over two decades. They have achieved above the national average in almost all domains and all year levels since the commencement of NAPLAN testing in 2008. In all domains the school's results are substantially above the national average.

Comparison of Goondi State School's NAPLAN results 2008-2017 with the Australian Average

	3R	3W	3S	3G&P	3N	5R	5W	5S	5G&P	5N	7R	7W	7S	7G&P	7N
2017	447	461	461	499	428	533	518	539	563	534					
2016	449	449	470	492	444	534	514	552	600	520					
2015	439	435	422	486	420	527	529	530	554	541					
2014	470	483	468	494	449	507	506	517	533	525	566	569	585	576	603
2013	436	471	433	470	443	511	506	515	526	509	541	562	586	581	583
2012	445	459	435	460	437	497	483	524	519	508	552	579	584	597	560
2011	429	444	415	465	424	478	487	478	504	479	560	591	569	567	578
2010	432	433	402	445	432	489	481	484	499	484	560	575	564	574	582
2009	441	439	414	442	429	517	496	500	524	495	544	549	559	556	556
2008	413	446	394	410	400	493	509	486	513	489	516	560	541	525	557

Is above Australian average Is at Australian average Is below Australian average

White Rock State School, White Rock, Queensland

Demographic information

School		Students		Teachers	
Government		Enrolments	**522**	Teaching staff	**38**
Primary		Indigenous	**45%**	Full time equivalent teaching staff	**34.7**
Prep-6		Language other than English	**24%**		
Outer regional		Student attendance	**91%**		
School ICSEA	**873**	Indigenous student attendance	**89%**		

White Rock draws students from the rapidly expanding population in the southern corridor of Cairns. Nearly half of the students are Indigenous and White Rock service a low SES catchment. The principal previously served as deputy under the principal of Goondi.

Pedagogy and curriculum

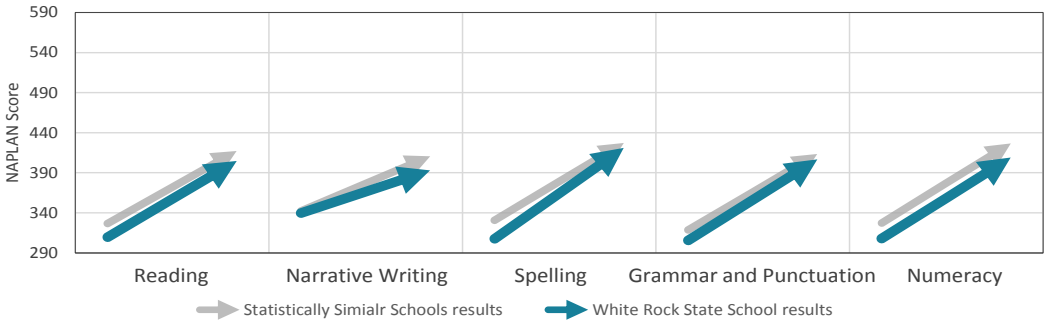
White Rock use explicit instruction pedagogy for all key learning areas. In English, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, grammar and punctuation are emphasised. The Direct Instruction program Spelling Mastery is used.

Units of work and assessment tasks are developed by teachers within year levels which ensures consistency of concepts and content covered and facilitated moderation of student work against agreed standards.

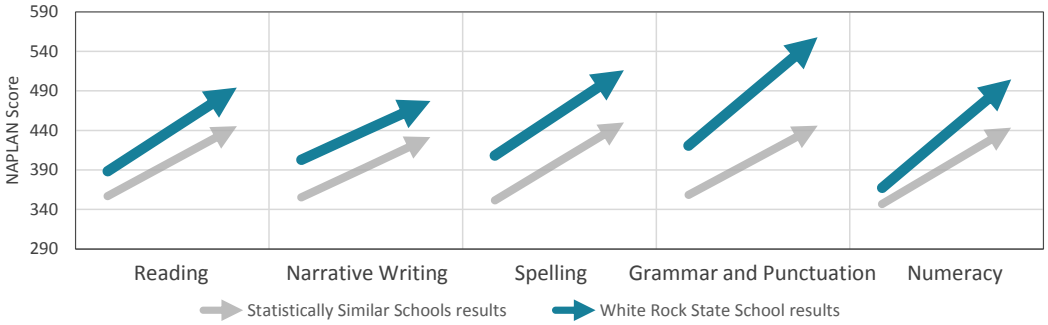
Student outcomes

White Rock have used explicit instruction pedagogy and programs for six years, starting in 2012. Prior to implementing explicit instruction the Year 3 to Year 5 student gains were below that of statistically similar schools in all NAPLAN domains. Post-implementation student gains exceeded statistically similar schools in all NAPLAN domains.

Year 3-5 NAPLAN gain at White Rock State School – prior to implementing Explicit Instruction (2008 to 2012)[25]



Year 3-5 NAPLAN gain at White Rock State School – post implementing Explicit Instruction (2013 to 2015)[26]



Yorkey's Knob State School, Yorkeys Knob, Queensland

Demographic information

School		Students		Teachers	
Government		Enrolments	**248**	Teaching staff	**20**
Primary		Indigenous	**19%**	Full time equivalent teaching staff	**14.4**
Prep-6		Language other than English	**21%**		
Outer regional		Student attendance	**93%**		
School ICSEA	**992**	Indigenous student attendance	**90%**		

Yorkeys Knob draws students from areas around the tropical beach suburb of Yorkeys Knob, north of Cairns.

Pedagogy and curriculum

Yorkeys Knob uses the key pedagogies of Explicit Instruction and Direct Instruction. Extension programs in English and Maths are provided to capable students in Years 1-6. Students

[25] Data groups used: Year 3s of 2008 and Year 5s of 2010, Year 3s of 2009 and Year 5s of 2011, Year 3s of 2010 and Year 5s of 2012

[26] Data groups used: Year 3s of 2013 and Year 5s of 2015, Year 3s of 2014 and Year 5s of 2016, Year 3s of 2015 and Year 5s of 2017 (statistically similar student gains and national minimum standards was not available for this group)

experiencing difficulties have access to support programs including Support-a-Reader and Speech and Language intervention.

DI programs Elementary and Junior Elementary Maths Mastery and Spelling Mastery are used.

Teachers are provided with additional non-contact time to support them in peer mentoring and sharing of expertise and responding to student learning data.

The 2016 school year was the first year of a systematic approach to the teaching of programs in English and Maths and the promotion of a culture of high academic achievement and consistency in the quality of teaching across the school.

Student outcomes

Yorkey's Knob have used explicit instruction pedagogy and programs for three years, starting in 2015 and has had one principal over this period. The principal worked with the principal of Goondi in Innisfail and was previously principal of East Innisfail. He implemented Direct Instruction and explicit instruction pedagogies in 2015. In general, prior to 2015 the school was rarely on par with statistically similar schools. The results over the past two years show significant improvements across all domains and year levels.

Comparison of Yorkey's Knob State School's NAPLAN results 2008-2017 with statistically similar schools

	3R	3W	3S	3G&P	3N	5R	5W	5S	5G&P	5N	7R	7W	7S	7G&P	7N
2017	468	440	457	499	452	535	502	526	543	521					
2016	418	404	426	455	401	505	491	499	512	493					
2015	406	385	392	421	374	508	478	486	511	468					
2014	376	339	369	371	350	484	438	481	479	469	524	493	537	535	531
2013	397	429	383	406	379	498	476	480	492	516	516	493	528	515	521
2012	398	386	395	390	367	466	453	441	423	451	541	523	529	537	543
2011	387	361	371	404	407	464	466	460	467	480	522	519	531	516	524
2010	346	399	335	390	410	457	478	448	472	501	526	529	523	534	534
2009	326	347	343	355	347	468	475	473	474	455	503	509	522	492	504
2008	332	3349	316	324	317	425	431	417	404	411	522	533	507	502	522

rage Is at statistically similar school average Is below s

LRS School - Saint Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School, Carnarvon, Western Australia

Demographic information

School		Students		Teachers	
Non-Government		Enrolments	**300**	Teaching staff	**19**
Combined		Indigenous	**14%**	Full time equivalent teaching staff	**18.2**
PP-10		Language other than English	**25%**		
Remote		Student attendance	**89%**		
School ICSEA	**972**	Indigenous student attendance	**84%**		

Draws students from the community of Carnarvon in Western Australia.

Pedagogy and curriculum

Uses Explicit Instruction pedagogy and programs in literacy as part of the Literacy in Remote Schools (LRS) program. The school is provided with expert training and coaching support for these programs, including reviewing student data. They are also provided with teacher guides, student readers and workbooks, and access to an online programs support portal.

Student outcomes

Has used Explicit Instruction pedagogy and programs for 2.5 years (starting in 2015) as part of the Literacy in Remote Schools (LRS) program and has had the same principal throughout this period. Since 2015 the school has seen an increase in the number of NAPLAN domains where it is above the average for statistically similar schools.

Comparison of Saint Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School's NAPLAN results 2008-2016 with statistically similar schools

	3R	3W	3S	3G&P	3N	5R	5W	5S	5G&P	5N	7R	7W	7S	7G&P	7N
2016	408	377	383	410	391	490	468	489	490	469	529	493	529	527	535
2015	389	368	364	391	370	474	424	474	481	479	528	498	536	500	526
2014	357	319	376	365	369	487	458	482	479	465	526	487	509	492	501
2013	382	359	385	397	374	477	463	484	466	421	527	527	527	522	515
2012	399	414	403	390	363	471	400	459	446	442	512	507	514	519	508
2011	354	404	360	364	338	449	419	440	453	448	520	529	528	525	510
2010	386	383	355	395	352	438	457	460	461	439	536	539	528	507	516
2009	362	383	372	363	347	460	472	455	485	440	525	509	526	518	499
2008	366	368	345	341	359	482	478	477	506	458	487	488	503	464	491

Is above statistically similar school average | Is at statistically similar school average | Is below statistically similar school average

6.2 Exemplary Remote schools

LRS School - Yipirinaya School, Alice Springs, Northern Territory

Demographic information

School		Students		Teachers	
Non-Government		Enrolments	**153**	Teaching staff	**12**
Combined		Indigenous	**100%**	Full time equivalent teaching staff	**12**
T-10		Language other than English	**100%**		
Remote		Student attendance	**59%**		
School ICSEA	**557**	Indigenous student attendance	**59%**		

Yipirinya draws students from Alice Springs in the Northern Territory, most of whom come from its town camps.

Pedagogy and curriculum

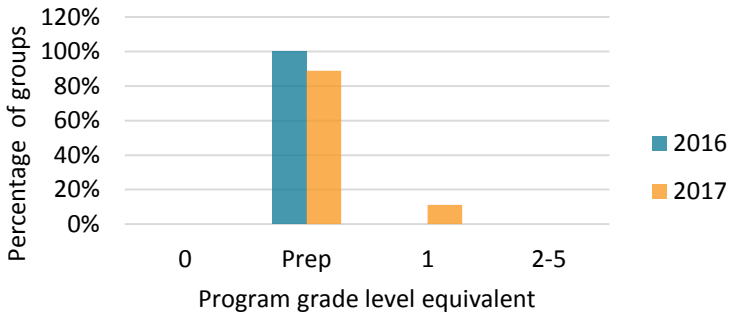
Yipirinya uses Direct Instruction pedagogy and programs as part of the Literacy in Remote Schools (LRS) program. The principal led the implementation of Direct Instruction in Rawa Independent School at Punmu, Western Australia, before taking the role at Yipirinya. The LRS program provides expert training and coaching support, including reviewing student data. They are also provided with teacher guides, student readers and workbooks, and access to an

online programs support portal. The Direct Instruction programs used include Reading Mastery Signature Edition (RMSE) and Direct Instruction Spoken English (DISE).

Student outcomes

Yipirinya have used Direct Instruction for one year as part of LRS and has had the same principal throughout this period. In 2016 the school had no students using Direct Instruction programs with a grade level equivalence of Year 1. By 2017 the percentage of students in this program increased to eleven per cent.

Comparison of groups learning at grade level equivalent programs 2015-2017 - Yipirinya School



Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy - Coen Campus, Coen, Queensland

Demographic information

School		Students		Teachers	
Government		Enrolments	**55**	Teaching staff	**8**
Primary		Indigenous	**99%**	Full time equivalent teaching staff	
Prep-6		Language other than English			
Very remote		Student attendance	**90%**		
School ICSEA	**903**	Indigenous student attendance			

The Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy ('The Academy') is a partnership between the Department of Education and Training and Good to Great Schools Australia. The Academy operates two campuses in Coen and Hope Vale. The school's vision is to deliver 'best of both worlds' educational opportunities to our students to support their bicultural identity while preparing them to succeed in high-quality secondary boarding schools.

CYAAA has a specially designed 6C 'best of both worlds education', offering a culture and ancestral language learning program, access to instrumental music, arts and sporting opportunities, as well as a focus on health and wellbeing and family engagement. This is delivered at a rich level and linked to student assessment and the Australian Curriculum.

The CYAAA governance model means GGSA has oversight over the school program, which is delivered consistently across the Academy schools, including Coen. These schools face similar structural challenges to other remote Indigenous schools, but teacher and leadership instability does not affect the teaching and learning model. The governance structure does not completely neutralise but it does mitigate the effects of turnover.

Coen has long had a specific focus on attendance. It commenced in 2002 when the community participated in the Computer Culture project operated by Cape York Partnerships

that focused on family engagement, attendance and culture. This project led to the design of education components of Welfare Reform which included Student Education Trusts, Attendance[27] Case Management and MULTILIT – which were delivered across four communities and three schools.

Pedagogy and curriculum

CYAAA has the longest running implementation of Direct Instruction literacy in Indigenous schools. Its three campuses of Coen, Hope Vale and Aurukun[28] provide strong insights. The Coen Campus of CYAAA is the implementation benchmark for the Direct Instruction Indigenous schools as it is the consistently strongest Direct Instruction performer. Some of the Direct Instruction programs used include Reading Mastery Signature Edition (RMSE), Connecting Math Concepts and Spelling Mastery.

CYAAA has an extended school day, with 1.5 hours more than other state primary schools.

This brings with it more teachers and therefore increased teaching effort. The extended school day means Coen can provide the requisite 2.5 hours of literacy per day and accommodate other areas of the Australian Curriculum.

The teaching flexibility also enables students who have missed lessons or have emerging needs to be pulled out of class and provided individual or small group instruction to bring them up to speed.

Student outcomes

Coen has used explicit instruction pedagogy and programs for six years.

In 2009 prior to the introduction of CYAAA, three students in Coen achieved the national minimum standard in all areas of literacy.[29]

By 2013, seven students achieved the national minimum standard in reading and writing.

BY 2016, Year 5 students more than doubled the average Australian growth in reading and writing and ten results achieved in the Upper 2 Band.[30]

In 2016 Coen performed better than almost all similar schools in all NAPLAN domains.

Comparison of Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy – Coen campus 2016 NAPLAN results with similar schools

School	3R	3W	3S	3G&P	3N	5R	5W	5S	5G&P	5N
Coen Campus of CYAAA	378	376	403	405	374	400	379	417	461	431
Checked these, are correct.										
Bloomfield River State School	321	373	380	345	292	^	^	^	^	^
Bwgcolman Community School	282	270	254	308	297	313	308	362	355	371
Camooweal State School	281	329	289	334	256	^	^	^	^	^
Cherbourg State School	227	255	219	284	297	365	352	402	362	350

[27] The data is for Term 1 and breaks down the CYAAA attendance data into the campuses and has previous years sourced from Department of Education and Training (DET). From 2012, DET no longer publish this data as they changed their reporting method.
[28] Following significant law and order issues in the community in 2016, the Queensland Government changed its education delivery in Aurukun, which removed the school from CYAAA.
[29] NAPLAN testing results for Coen campus of CYAAA – 2009, 2013 and 2016
[30] The NAPLAN assessment scale is divided into ten bands to record student results in the tests. Band 1 is the lowest band and band 10 is the highest. The National Minimum Standards encompass one band at each year level, and therefore represent a wide range of the typical skills demonstrated by students at this level.

Cooktown State School	418	350	396	407	361	448	402	452	465	435
Doomadgee State School	146	181	202	61	194	328	289	330	359	394
Hopevale Campus of CYAAA	284	300	268	312	302	308	298	356	261	330
Kowanyama State School	294	308	299	309	285	380	338	361	366	375
Lockhart State School	307	321	322	320	302	344	352	409	361	380
Mornington Island State School	6	320	299	305	347	309	371	359	400	366
Mossman State School	404	394	416	433	389	520	476	519	564	525
Normanton State School	368	381	375	400	386	427	387	422	431	407
Northern Peninsula Area College	345	356	391	339	325	393	418	453	413	423
Pormpuraaw State School	216	266	306	277	235	348	250	417	396	335
Western Cape College – Mapoon	^	^	^	^	^	475	441	494	500	478
Woorabinda State School	273	312	276	298	291	370	299	363	351	368
Yarrabah State School	319	334	337	342	310	372	401	443	428	406

LRS School - Ntaria School, Hermannsburg, Northern Territory

Demographic information

School		Students		Teachers	
Government		Enrolments	**133**	Teaching staff	**19**
Combined		Indigenous	**99%**	Full time equivalent teaching staff	**18.2**
P-12		Language other than English	**100%**		
Very remote		Student attendance	**65%**		
School ICSEA	**567**	Indigenous student attendance	**65%**		

Draws students from Ntaria, also known as Hermannsburg, 130km west of Alice Springs.

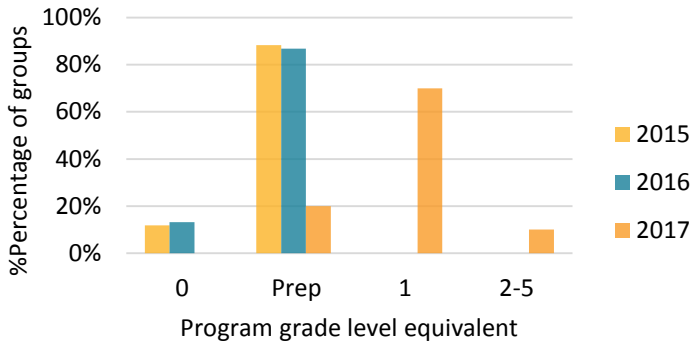
Pedagogy and curriculum

Ntaria use Direct Instruction as part of the Literacy in Remote Schools (LRS) program. The school is provided with expert training and coaching support for these programs, including reviewing student data. They are also provided with teacher guides, student readers and workbooks, and access to an online programs support portal. The Direct Instruction programs used include Reading Mastery Signature Edition (RMSE) and Direct Instruction Spoken English (DISE).

Student outcomes

Ntaria have used Direct Instruction pedagogy and programs for 2.5 years as part of the LRS program and has had the same principal throughout this period. In 2015 the school had no students using Direct Instructions programs with a grade level equivalence of Year 1 or 2-5.By 2017 the percentage of students in these programs increased to seventy per cent and ten per cent respectively.

Comparison of groups learning at grade level equivalent programs 2015-2017 - Ntaria School



LRS School - Peppimenarti School, Peppimenarti, Northern Territory

School		Students		Teachers	
Government		Enrolments	**23**	Teaching staff	**4**
Combined		Indigenous	**100%**	Full time equivalent teaching staff	**3**
Prep-9		Language other than English	**100%**		
Very remote		Student attendance	**78%**		
School ICSEA	**636**	Indigenous student attendance	**78%**		

Draws students from the community of Peppimenarti, 320km southwest of Darwin.

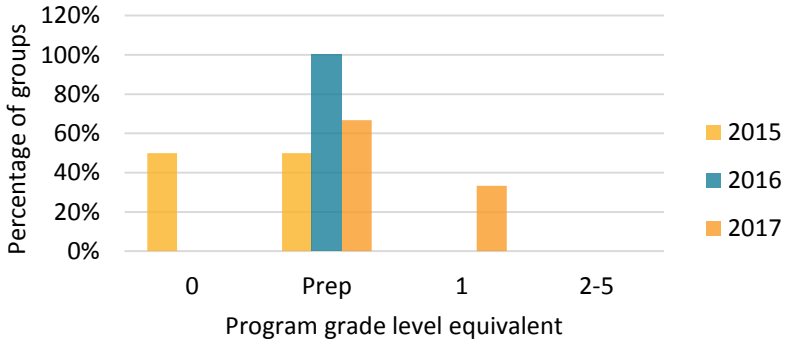
Pedagogy and curriculum

Peppimenarti use Direct Instruction as part of the Literacy in LRS program. The school is provided with expert training and coaching support for these programs, including reviewing student data. They are also provided with teacher guides, student readers and workbooks, and access to an online programs support portal. The Direct Instruction programs used include Reading Mastery Signature Edition (RMSE).

Student outcomes

Peppimenarti used Direct Instruction for 2.5 years as part of the Literacy in Remote Schools (LRS) program and has had three principals throughout this period. In 2015 the school had no students using Direct Instructions programs with a grade level equivalence of Year 1, by 2017 all students had transitioned to Prep or Year 1 level programs.

Comparison of groups learning at grade level equivalent programs 2015-2017 - Peppimenarti School



7 Conclusion

Regional, rural and remote schools in Australia are too far behind their metropolitan counterparts. The gap in student performance is unacceptable. What makes this disparity even worse is that much of this gap is unnecessary. Whilst schools in these parts of the country have more challenges and barriers that need to be confronted and resolved – we have shown in this submission that regional, rural and remote schools can close the gap, and be amongst the best in the nation. Strong and effective pedagogy is the keystone. Explicit and direct instruction is effective instruction.

How can we as a nation ignore the evidence of Goondi, Yarwun, Benaraby, White Rock, Yorkey's Knob and Coen?

The formula for success – explicit instruction – was prescribed by the National Inquiry into Reading in 2005. It was not implemented other than in a few places. Those schools that did so have made tectonic shifts in their performance.

The rest of the schools in regional, rural and remote Australia must now follow them. There is no excuse for ignoring what the evidence is plainly telling us.