
EDUCATION STATE IN SCHOOLS GUIDING COALITION

COMMUNIQUE NO. 2

2020

About

The Education State in Schools Guiding Coalition was established in 2017, as an outcome of the 2016 Education State in Schools Forum.

The Guiding Coalition is comprised of key school stakeholders and critical thinkers. Its purpose is to further the Education State in Schools reform agenda, acknowledging the vital role that our stakeholders play and pursuing the principle of shared responsibility towards improving student outcomes.

Each year, members have agreed on various working group topics of most interest to them. The working groups meet termly, and a Plenary meeting (chaired by the Secretary) is held to provide a platform for each working group to report back.

At the start of 2020, a consultation with Guiding Coalition members was carried out to plan for the 2020 round of meetings. Members said that they wanted to strengthen the purpose of both the Guiding Coalition and Education State Forum.

Each working group met in Term 1 2020 to begin developing their workplans for the year.

In Term 2, these draft workplans were further discussed and refined however, priorities for each working group are frequently changing as the COVID-19 pandemic continues, requiring fluidity of response to stakeholder priorities and priorities of the Department.

Term 2 Discussions

Health Wellbeing and Inclusion working group – chaired by Justin McDonnell (on behalf of Stephen Gniel)

- The group discussed the workplan, agreeing that it needs to be flexible, allowing opportunity to capture and build on lessons from remote learning such as student agency, improved relationships with parents and other key players in the community sector.
- It was agreed that key themes of engagement, wellbeing and inclusion should be used adaptively going forward.
- The group reflected on the work occurring across the Department during the remote learning period to promote health and wellbeing of students, maintain student engagement and support parents. Discussion included:
 - The benefits some schools have experienced as a result of using existing I.T. systems to identify students at risk.
 - The inconsistency of how engagement is measured, for example, whether students must engage in one online activity or, multiple activities throughout the day to be considered 'engaged'.
 - The need to be realistic in terms of what can be incorporated going forward without negatively impacting business as usual.

- How the language is shifting and becoming more family centric. There is much more knowledge of how families function and the linkages between the school, students and the family.

Future of Secondary Schooling working group – chaired by Katherine Whetton

- The group discussed their workplan and recommended a review of existing content and material on secondary schooling at the next meeting, focussing on bigger picture thinking of what is happening in the world and the skills required for the future.
- A discussion was also held on the positive and negative experiences of students during remote learning.
- Members then discussed what the system can adopt and adapt from the period of remote learning, whilst recognising that one singular model of schooling will not suit everyone.

Workforce, Recruitment, Retention and Support working group – chaired by David Howes

- The group considered what has changed in the role of the workforce due to COVID-19, including:
 - The profile of teachers has increased which may assist recruitment and retention going forward.
 - The strengthened partnerships between parents and teachers
 - Some students who were previously disengaged from learning, have embraced the remote learning environment. Equally, other students struggled with the remote learning environment.
 - Schooling and learning structure going forward needs to be considered, particularly the importance of personalised learning opportunities and re-conceptualising how teachers work.
- Based on the discussion, the Chair summarised priorities for this working group for 2020 as follows:
 - Recruitment – building on the increased esteem of the teaching profession
 - Re-conceptualizing how teachers work - building on the improved relationship between teachers and parents and greater use of digital technology.
- The group also discussed the disruption to pre-service teacher (PST) practicum placements caused by COVID-19 and how to resolve this important issue.

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