



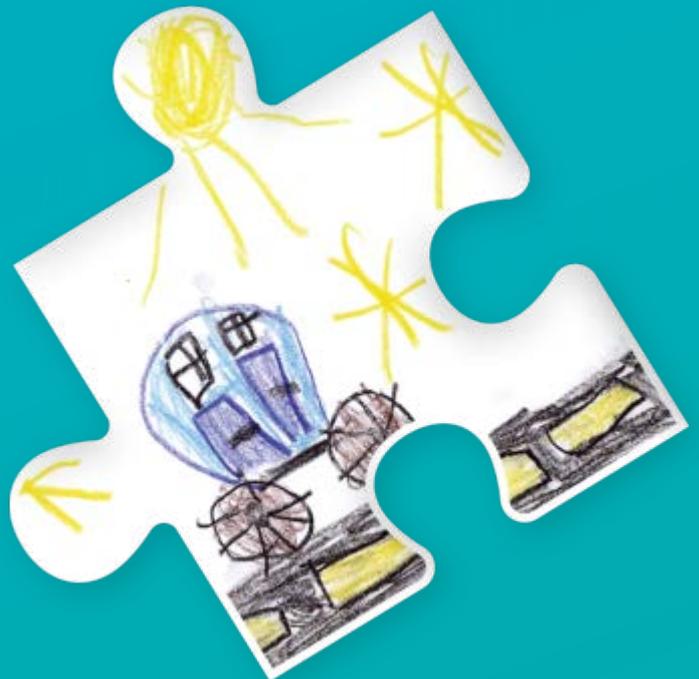
ACT
Government
Education



The future of **EDUCATION**

An ACT community conversation

**Why does educational
equity matter?**



WHY DOES EDUCATIONAL EQUITY MATTER?

When we think of a ‘good society’- one that is fair and just- one of the defining characteristics is likely to be that all individuals have equal opportunity to realise their potential, irrespective of the circumstances into which they are born. Education plays a critical role in determining whether or not individuals are given this opportunity.¹

There are a range of reasons why good educational outcomes matter, from the individual; better health and longer life, to the societal; greater social cohesion, inclusion and trust; to the economic, productivity, economic growth, innovation, social wealth and reduced welfare costs.² For a society or nation committed to ‘creating a fair and egalitarian place in which opportunities exist for all’, education is a key lever or vehicle through which this can occur.

The Melbourne Declaration (signed in 2008 by all States and Territories and the Commonwealth Government) is a declaration that outlines Australia’s agreed aims for education. This document clearly reflects Australia’s commitment to ensuring our education system works to create a fair and equitable society, with equality ‘as the central tenet of the declaration’.³

This concept of a fair and equitable society is no less applicable in the ACT than it is anywhere else in Australia. Indeed an objective in the ACT’s own legislation, the Education Act 2004, is to “over time improve the learning outcomes of students so that the outcomes are free from disadvantage because of economic, social, cultural or other causes”.

In addition, research repeatedly shows that excellence and equity in education are intertwined. Across the world, an explicit focus

on equity is one of the three common components of all the top performing school systems.⁴

The highest performing education systems across OECD countries are those that combine quality with equity.⁵

At the commencement of the Future of Education conversation, the ACT Government made clear that equity was a central focus and that in designing a way forward for our education system we had to include addressing equity across all of our schools and for all of our students.

Having heard now from over 4000 Canberrans through the Future of Education conversation, it is clear that equity also matters to our community; our students, parents and teachers and all those involved in the education system. Equity was not given its own theme in the recently released Future of Education themes document, precisely because equity underpins those themes, particularly; inclusion, supports, measuring what matters, collaboration, and personalised learning.

It is also interesting to note the value that young people in the ACT place on equity, evidenced in their feedback to the Future of Education conversation.

“I know that every child learns differently and has different things going on in their lives and so everybody needs to be supported to take into account their different needs so that they get a really great education and have fun at school”

- Student

The most recent Mission Australia *Youth Survey* (of 24,000 young Australians), also found that in the ACT, equity and discrimination was the most important issue for our young people (32.7% of respondents).⁶

So educational equity matters because it is the hallmark of a good and just society, because it is the lever to give all people ‘a fair go’ to realise

¹ Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, *Educate Australia Fair? Education Inequality in Australia*, Focus on the States Series, No. 5, June 2017, p. xvi.

² See OECD *Equity and Quality in Education, Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools*, 2012, and *Counting the Costs of Lost Opportunity in Australian Education*. Mitchell Institute, report no 02/2017.

³ S. Lamb, J. Jackson, A. Walstab, & S. Huo, *Educational Opportunity in Australia 2015: Who Succeeds and Who Misses Out*, Mitchell Institute, 2015, p. 2.

⁴ McKinsey 2007.

⁵ OECD, *Equity and Quality in Education, Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools*, 2012, p.3

⁶ Mission Australia Youth Survey 2017.



their potential, because it contributes to social harmony and economic growth and innovation and because the ACT community and our young people value and prioritise equity as important.

WHAT IS EDUCATIONAL INEQUITY

Differences in educational outcomes between individual students are normal and natural. After all, individuals have different abilities, motivations, interests and aspirations. **Differences in educational outcomes become inequalities when they are consistent between groups of students.**⁷

As indicated in the citation above, the measure of whether an education system is inequitable, lies in the analysis of whether certain **groups** of students are consistently unable to access equitable educational opportunities and are not achieving good educational outcomes.

Researchers and bodies such as the OECD often note two or three dimensions of educational inequity; the OECD refers to 'Fairness' (where personal or social circumstances, like gender, ethnicity and family background are not obstacles to achieving educational potential) and Inclusion (that all individuals reach at least a basic minimum of skills)⁸. Associate Dean of research at Monash University, Laura Perry, notes three dimensions of educational disadvantage; **opportunities** (access to resources and quality teachers and schools), **experiences** (engagement, sense of belonging, classroom interactions and relationships) and **outcomes**⁹.

While most research and discussion about educational inequity focuses on 'outcomes' it is worth outlining those other dimensions here because they become important in the ACT context we talk about later on in this paper.

EDUCATIONAL INEQUITY IN AUSTRALIA

Like most OECD countries there is a problem with educational equity in Australia in all three domains listed above. Certain groups of students are leaving schools without 'a basic level of skills to function in today's societies'¹⁰, (outcomes), groups of students who are not able to access quality educational opportunities (access) and 'relatively low retention rates by international standards which have not improved greatly over the last twenty years,¹¹ (experience).

In Australia, research and data analysis consistently reveals that we have a persistent problem in educational outcomes for three particular groups of students, notably Indigenous students, students in remote areas and those from low socio-economic backgrounds:

Low achievement in Australia as elsewhere, is disproportionately concentrated among students from low income backgrounds, those in rural and remote and Indigenous groups¹².

[In Australia] Nearly 60% of the most disadvantaged students are concentrated in schools with disadvantaged socio economic status, substantially higher than in any comparable OECD country¹³.

A major recent study found that in the achievement of 15 year old Australians, socio economic status contributed 70% of the explained variance in maths, 74% of the variance in science and 57% of the variance in reading. Indigenous status contributed almost 20% of explained variance in all three domains¹⁴.

EDUCATIONAL INEQUITY IN THE ACT

The ACT has one of the lowest levels of overall relative disadvantage in Australia, and one of the highest proportions of highly diverse socio-economic neighbourhoods, where both the most

⁷ L. Perry, *Educational Disadvantage in Australia: We Can't Just Carry on the Same*, The Conversation, 2017, p. 2.

⁸ OECD *Equity and Quality in Education, Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools*, 2012, p. 9.

⁹ L. Perry, *Educational Disadvantage in Australia: We Can't Just Carry on the Same*, The Conversation, 2017, p. 2.

¹⁰ OECD *Equity and Quality in Education, Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools*, 2012, p. 3.

¹¹ J. Polesel, M. Leahy, S. Rice, S. Gillis and K. Clarke in T. Bentley, and G. Savage (Ed) *Educating Australia. Challenges for the Decade Ahead*, 2017, p. 178.

¹² S. Rice, P. Richardson and H. Watt. 'Hard to staff Australian Schools', in T. Bentley, and G. Savage (Ed) *Educating Australia. Challenges for the Decade Ahead*, 2017, p. 281.

¹³ T. Bentley, 'Other People's Children', in T. Bentley, & G. Savage (Ed) *Educating Australia. Challenges for the Decade Ahead*, 2017, p.336.

¹⁴ T. Bentley, 'Other People's Children', in T. Bentley, & G. Savage (Ed) *Educating Australia. Challenges for the Decade Ahead*, 2017, p.337.



and the least disadvantaged individuals and families are living side by side. This situation is unique to the ACT and traditional data measures have a tendency to mask or hide the true level of disadvantage. However, a more specific individual index developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, indicates that 12.6% of ACT residents aged 15 to 64 fall into the most disadvantaged cohort.

A consequence of this unique situation is that “most schools (in Canberra) have very small numbers of highly disadvantaged students rather than disadvantage concentrated in just a few schools”¹⁵. In response we need to support our schools differently than most jurisdictions to identify the fairly small but highly diverse needs of our disadvantaged students.

These particular ACT characteristics also make it difficult to locate appropriate evidence based practice examples that address small numbers of students with diverse needs rather than whole school disadvantage. In addition, because the group of vulnerable or disadvantaged students within any given ACT school is small and always changing, it can be difficult to build in the flexibility required to target our efforts and resources appropriately as well as maintain momentum over time.

It is generally believed that a student’s overall performance will on average improve if they attend higher socio economic schools, that in particular students from low socio economic backgrounds within that school, will be lifted up as a result of the access to quality teachers, systems, resources and peers.

Irrespective of a student’s socio-economic status, their performance will on average, improve if they attend higher socio economic schools¹⁶.

However, analysis of results such as PISA when taking into account socioeconomic background

and other factors, shows that while there is little variation **between** schools in the ACT, “**within** [individual schools] students are performing very differently based on their socio-economic background”¹⁷. In fact, analysis of PISA shows that:

The ACT quickly falls to near the bottom of the nation when it comes to equity in education, with only the Northern Territory showing a greater connection between socio economic background and PISA achievement¹⁸.

Despite having some good performance data for our Indigenous students (such as the highest retention rate in Australia¹⁹, like the rest of the country we are not achieving consistent equitable outcomes for our Indigenous students. For example, Roberts and Leonard found that “there was a difference in reading ability equivalent to two to three years of learning [between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students] and that the ACT is the only jurisdiction in Australia where the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students actually widens in high school”²⁰.

So the data shows us that the ACT is not performing well in relation to educational **outcomes** for two groups in particular, students from low socio economic background and Indigenous students.

Again, the unique characteristics of the ACT present a different picture of equity in relation to **access**. The ACT doesn’t have a significant problem in relation to some of the components of access that other jurisdictions face, such as difficulty recruiting teachers to low socioeconomic or remote locations nor uneven distribution of educational resources across schools.

We do however know that there are access issues related to early childhood education. While

¹⁵ Roberts and Leonard Roberts, P. & Leonard, S., 2013, *PISA results show ACT schools fare poorly in teaching disadvantaged*, accessed November 2017. <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/comment/pisaresultsshowact-schoolsfarepoorlyinteachingdisadvantaged201312092z1xa.html>

¹⁶ T. Bentley, ‘Other People’s Children’, in T. Bentley, & G. Savage (Ed) *Educating Australia. Challenges for the Decade Ahead*, 2017, p.337.

¹⁷ P. Roberts and S. Leonard, 2013, *PISA results show ACT schools fare poorly in teaching disadvantaged*, accessed November 2017.

<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/comment/pisaresultsshowact-schoolsfarepoorlyinteachingdisadvantaged201312092z1xa.html>

¹⁸ *ibid*

¹⁹ Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, *Educate Australia Fair? Education Inequality in Australia*, Focus on the States Series, No. 5, June 2017, p. 26.

²⁰ P. Roberts and S. Leonard, 2013, *PISA results show ACT schools fare poorly in teaching disadvantaged*, accessed November 2017. <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/comment/pisaresultsshowact-schoolsfarepoorlyinteachingdisadvantaged201312092z1xa.html>



access to preschool (a fundamental platform for later educational success) in the ACT is the highest in the country²¹, analysis undertaken by the Education Directorate shows that children from disadvantaged families are disproportionately unable to access structured early childhood education experiences prior to preschool at age 4. Our work on the ACT Early Childhood strategy will work to improve this.

However, if you take a broader and equity based view of ‘**access**’ it necessarily includes access to the additional supports and expertise that disadvantaged students need to be able to perform at their best. Access to these supports necessarily relies on collaboration between schools, students, families, the community sector and other government services. An Australian research report exploring this issues notes that collaboration “plays a central and partially hidden role in the achievement of student learning outcomes”.²²

Going back to the domains of equity described above, equitable ‘**experiences**’ is reliant on teachers and schools building relationships with and knowing all their students as fundamental to good educational outcomes.

It also seems that rather than lifting disadvantaged students in ACT through our overall high performance as noted earlier, we are actually sometimes losing them amongst the larger numbers of successful students, an **experience** based issue.

A significant body of research has been established which demonstrates that positive relationships between teachers and students lead to improved student engagement, achievement and wellbeing. Students try harder and communicate more with their teachers when they think their teacher cares about them and their learning²³.

Again, a significant component of the feedback in the Future of Education conversation relates to the importance of the relationship between

teachers and students, which was particularly mentioned by students.

“A teacher who cares makes the student care.”

- Student

What is also significant in the feedback from students is the number who report that it is teachers that make them feel ‘included’ or engaged in school.

“Students felt included in class activities and felt heard.”

“All but one of the Year 3 students felt included. Many noted that they had ‘a say’ in what they learnt or in the decisions made. Three students wrote that they could choose what book they read. Others felt included because of their friends and teachers.”

“Teachers are helping me a lot and I feel I can join in with anything.”

- Students – Minister’s Student Congress feedback

Research demonstrates that the relationship that teachers build is of particular importance to children from low socioeconomic background²⁴ and Indigenous students²⁵, which makes the domain of student ‘**experience**’ and relationship building of particular importance to a conversation on equity. Again, looking at the ACT context, we have work to do to improve equity in this regard.

Students told us that in a big school setting they were able to go unnoticed and that ‘no-one’ knew what was going on for them at home²⁶.

“People are getting left behind. Students need an education that engages and supports them”

- Parent

²¹ Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, *Educate Australia Fair? Education Inequality in Australia*, Focus on the States Series, No. 5, June 2017, p. 5.

²² Lamb & Huo. *Counting the Costs of lost opportunity in Australian Education*. Mitchell Institute Report No. 02/2017, p.5.

²³ H. Cahill. ‘Creating a third place for learning in teacher education’, in T. Bentley, & G. Savage (Ed) *Educating Australia. Challenges for the Decade Ahead*, 2017, p.228.

²⁴ See for example H. Stokes, & M. Turnbull, Young People at the Margins’, in T. Bentley, & G. Savage (Ed) *Educating Australia. Challenges for the Decade Ahead*, 2017, pp.163-177.

²⁵ See for example E. McKinley, ‘From inequality to quality: Challenging the debate on Indigenous education’ in T. Bentley, & G. Savage (Ed) *Educating Australia. Challenges for the Decade Ahead*, 2017, pp191-205.

²⁶ *Schools for All Children and Young People*. Report of the Expert Panel on Students with Complex needs and Challenging behaviour.2015, p. 104.



“Build better relationships with students and actually know them and then teach them well”

- Parent

“Students can get to a point where they feel like dropping out, and teachers don’t notice it.”

- Student

So while we in the ACT are doing some things really well, we have work to do on improving the ‘outcomes’ and the ‘experience’ of our disadvantaged students as well as ensuring good and equitable access to resources (defined more broadly than purely educational resources).

The even distribution of disadvantage across our schools has the potential to be a lever for equitable success. However, at the moment it isn’t acting as that lever, rather, the even distribution is resulting in ‘hidden’ or ‘hard to see’ and ‘hard to cater for’ inequity. Feedback to the Future of Education shows that teachers want to identify their struggling students but need support to do that well.

Other feedback shows that some schools are already working well to engage with community to support their young people access what they need.

The super-schools are fantastic. They are really engaged with services and have lots of support and other programs – really open community feel to them. They are innovative, and open to new ideas and actively welcome in community groups and work with those groups to get advice and meet the needs of their CALD clients.

-Community Sector

As a city and community committed to equity and inclusion we must ensure we can better see and understand educational inequity in the ACT context. Only then can we target our resources and understand and support our schools to meet the needs of our disadvantaged students and achieve the system of equity and excellence we want for all our young people.

GETTING THE FUNDAMENTALS IN PLACE

There are a vast range of intervention, pedagogies and support strategies that have and can be successfully used to improve equity and excellence. However, for any of those classroom or school interventions to work, you have to get the fundamentals they rely on for success firmly in place to start with. Returning to the three dimensions of equity noted by Perry: you need to have good data in place to monitor and address the **outcomes** component of equity; you need quality teachers who have the single biggest effect on the **‘experience’** component for our students in schools; and you need genuine partnerships and collaboration across government and community to ensure students can **access** the supports they need to be the best they can be.

OUTCOMES - GOOD USE OF DATA

Research has shown that the use of ‘evidence’ and ‘evidence-based decision making’ is seen as essential to the shared goal of addressing equitable outcomes for all students (Johnson 2002, Hattie 2009)...there is a huge potential for intensive data use at **school level** to improve individual student outcomes²⁷.

The ability of data use to improve student outcomes was also noted in the recent ACT Auditor General report into Performance Information in ACT schools.

The effective use of student performance information is an important mechanism by which student (and school) performance can be improved²⁸.

Feedback to the Future of Education conversation shows that you, our community, also believe we need to better use our data to focus on individual student growth and progress including early identification of students with learning disabilities and/or those who are starting to fall behind.

²⁷ E. McKinley, ‘From inequality to quality: Challenging the debate on Indigenous education’ in T. Bentley, & G. Savage (Ed) *Educating Australia. Challenges for the Decade Ahead*, 2017, p. 193 italics added.

²⁸ ACT Auditor General Report, *Performance Information in ACT Public Schools*. Report no. 4/2017, p. 21.



“Need to check in with how much children are improving each year.”

- Student

“Data should be used as a diagnostic tool and teachers teach to the gaps.”

- Parent

The Auditor General report into the use of data in ACT schools noted that “it is evident that schools are using student performance data to inform differentiated teaching and learning approaches and targeted interventions”. However, they also noted that “the extent to which schools achieve this varies considerably”²⁹. This too was echoed in the comments you provided to the Future of Education conversation.

“Because the process was slow you needed to go all the way back to Year 1 to see what was happening. Teachers didn’t pick this up within any one year because the change was very small.”

- Parent

“The reason I have no idea of his [son with autism] progress is because there appears to be no formal diagnostics carried out throughout the year to see what level he is at.”

- Parent

Following the Auditor General’s report there is work being done to ensure that teachers and schools have a more consistent approach to the use of data available to them as well as ensuring they are better able to use data, particularly in relation to student growth.

In particular, this work is designed to provide a rigorous, evidence informed and consistent approach to inform decision making at all levels. This approach will focus on measuring student growth over time, developing indicators in relation to wellbeing and ensuring that we are able to measure changes in equity outcomes.

The analysis of the data will also help us paint a more comprehensive picture of our students and our schools, such as who is undertaking higher education, who is benefiting and how from early childhood education and which initiatives are having the greatest impact.

The Auditor General report also noted this shortfall in teacher confidence and skill in relation to the analysis and use of performance data.

“ACT public schools have consistently identified variability in their skills and capabilities to use performance information to drive improved student outcomes and school improvement”³⁰.

This need for teachers to have support and learning around data analysis was again echoed in the feedback we received from educators in the Future of Education conversation.

“We need support to improve inequity, including better data analysis skills.”

- Schools

“We have good data collection but not enough time to analyse and plan.”

- Schools

“What is worth measuring? What do we do with it once we measure it?”

- Schools

“Measurement sits apart from the learning and teaching cycle.”

- Schools

We have to get this right. The collection and use of student performance data is essential, not only to help us identify our disadvantaged and struggling students, but also to enable teachers and schools to use evidence based decision making to target and then monitor appropriate responses to individual student need. Additionally and critically, it is data that will allow us to properly understand our problem, benchmark it and hold ourselves to account to improve it.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE – RESTS ON QUALITY TEACHING

In his comprehensive analysis of the top performing and most improving school systems around the world, McKinsey found that there were three common elements to their success; a focus on teacher quality, teacher investment and an explicit focus on equity³¹.

²⁹ ACT Auditor General Report, *Performance Information in ACT Public Schools*. Report no. 4/2017, p. 3.

³⁰ ACT Auditor General Report, *Performance Information in ACT Public Schools*. Report no. 4/2017, p.3.

³¹ McKinsey. *How the World’s best performing school systems come out on top*. September. 2007



As discussed earlier in this paper, research also suggests that relationships with teachers and having a sense of belonging are of particular importance to vulnerable or disadvantaged students and fundamental to their improvement. Feedback to the Future of Education also noted this.

“My son [had difficulties] at school, much of it in the classroom- last year in the hands of an experienced teacher he felt safe and happy in his classroom.”

- Parent

“The teachers explain everything well. They set different tasks for people, if they need more challenging tasks or if they need an easier one so the class is doing different activities.”

- Student

“What helps me do well is my teachers because they always know how you’re feeling and they know what you like and stuff.”

- Student

This importance of positive relationships and school culture is also supported by extensive and robust local research undertaken by the ANU on behalf of the Directorate. This research notes that schools with a positive and supportive school climate are more likely to have better learning achievement and attendance, less disruptive behaviours and to be happier children and young people.

International and national research such as that by John Hattie (2015, 2017) is very clear that the impact that high quality teachers have on student learning outcomes outweighs the effect of every other factor outside of a student’s family background. In addition, there is significant evidence that students taught by a succession of high performing teachers will progress three times as fast as those placed with less-effective teachers³².

Highly skilled principals and school leaders are equally essential in creating the culture, environment, structures, systems and supports to develop high performing, expert teaching teams. Those teams are the professional bedrock of an equitable and excellent education system.

Strategies and supports are in place across all sectors in the ACT to develop the skills and abilities of our teachers throughout their careers. We acknowledge that this is an area for continued strengthening so that the very best teaching practices are acknowledged and shared more systematically across our schools.

ACCESS – TO THE SUPPORTS STUDENTS NEED

All input groups to the Future of Education conversation appear to understand the difference between equity and equality and they clearly support equity- the need to provide some students with more assistance so they can achieve to the best of their ability.

“Need to give every student a fair go. This does not mean giving every student the same thing.”

- Student

“Solution - My daughter would be better off with slightly larger average class sizes if that freed up resources to help the kid with problems. The kids with problems would be MUCH better off.”

- Parent

As one Minister’s Student Congress member said:

“There is a difference between equality and equity. For equity you need to give the short kid a taller box to stand on than the tall kid so then they are both the same height.”

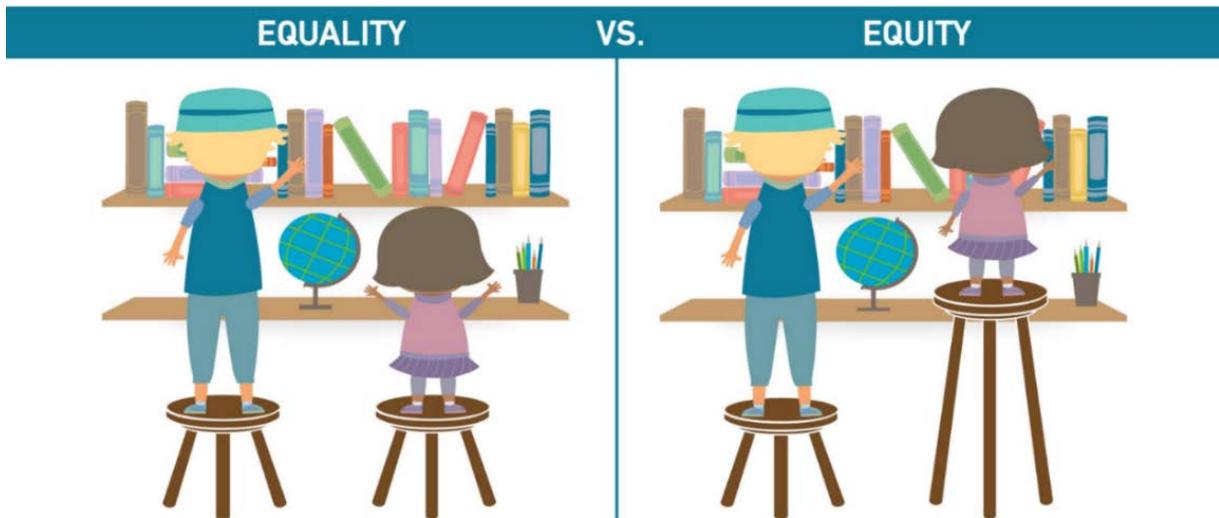
- Student

So, while we need to acknowledge that teachers and schools cannot solve poverty and disadvantage they do have a critical role to play in ‘creating the circumstances for success and removing barriers to allow the best opportunities for all’³³. Part of the removing of barriers and creating the circumstances for success, is providing access to a range of supports available through both government and non-government service providers that if targeted appropriately can provide the ‘taller box’ for the students most in need.

³² McKinsey. *How the World’s best performing school systems come out on top*. September. 2007, p.12.

³³ J. Hattie, *What doesn’t work in Education: the politics of Distraction*, Pearson. 2015, p. 6.





Feedback to the Future of Education conversation suggests we have room for improvement in the ACT in this regard. Feedback was highly supportive of collaboration and the need to work across government and community sectors.

“Education system needs to be an integrated part of the human services system.”

- Community sector

“Need schools as community - having health, financial, community services on site and providing linkages for families, ‘need a village to raise a child.’”

- Government worker

Feedback also strongly suggested there is a need to balance school autonomy within broader frameworks that outline the Directorates commitment to collaboration and the provision of community supports.

“Balance needs to be struck between autonomy and sufficient common purpose and understanding between schools and the directorate to ensue autonomy is used to be responsive and innovative within the framework proposed.”

- Community sector

“While the majority of Principals are good, some poor ones can make it impossible to work in their schools even though they may be in areas that really need community assistance and support.”

- Community sector

So while the ACT has equitable distribution of its education resources and teachers, in regards to equitable **access**, we need to better ensure we are collaborating across systems and sectors so that all our students have access to the supports they need to achieve to the best of their ability.

WHAT NEXT?

Policy creates ‘conditions of possibility’ for the ideas and practices of education³⁴.

We need to take your feedback and implement strategies to get the critical fundamentals (data, quality teaching and collaboration), strengthened and in place. Then the conditions will be set to test and initiate a range of ‘possibilities’- innovative pedagogies and interventions specific to the needs and contexts of all our students, particularly those students we know we are not currently serving well.

The revised strategic plan about to be released by the Education Directorate will start with a focus on getting the fundamentals in place as the first step. This will then allow us to consider, test and trial innovative ideas and solutions generated from the information and ideas you

³⁴ J. Hattie, *What doesn’t work in Education: the politics of Distraction*, Pearson. 2015, p. 8.



provide us in the next phase of the Future of Education conversation.

Already your information to the Future of Education conversation has told us that we cannot do this alone. Collaboration, among schools, between schools and the community sector, between schools and parents and between education, health, housing and health and community services to meet our students diverse needs, is the only way we will achieve improved outcomes for all our students. We know also that children living with disadvantage need a range of “programs that work to support young people to re-engage with education [which] are essential for ensuring positive long-term outcomes for vulnerable young people”. These are only some of the ideas you have given us that we will explore through the Future of Education.

CONCLUSION

Equity in education matters. It is the hallmark of a fair and just society, it is the vehicle by which people can improve their long term health, wealth and wellbeing and it is an issue that matters to the ACT community. We are doing some things well and we have other areas we need to improve so that no student is being left behind, so that no group of students are failing and so that all students can access what they need to achieve educational outcomes.

AND HOW WILL WE KNOW WE ARE SUCCESSFUL?

We will know how well we are succeeding because equity in education can be simply judged: it exists when you cannot predict the educational outcomes of a student based on any single characteristic of that student; Aboriginality, parental income or education etc. Each characteristic should lead to the same diversity of learning³⁵.

³⁵ J. Figgis, *Building Bridges While Crossing Them: Today's Australian School Leaders Prepare for Tomorrow's Schools*, ACER, forthcoming publication. P. 3.

