

Amplify Insights: Education Inequity

Part Two: Levers of Change

Australia's current education system is inequitable and not all students enjoy the same access and benefits that come from schooling.

While issues of equity lie with improving our current systems and structures, we do have the tools and opportunities to create a roadmap for change.

The last two years have brought into sharp focus the inequities in our education system and while the long-term impact of the pandemic is still being understood, there is no doubt that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are worse off than before, including young people with a disability, those from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, low socio-economic or low socio-educational backgrounds, young people from regional and remote communities and those from refugee or asylum seeker backgrounds.

With lost hours of learning and a lack of resources for effective remote learning, students are less likely to develop the skills needed to succeed in our changing economy.

Students' wellbeing and mental health outcomes have also been severely affected by COVID-19. The ongoing pandemic has highlighted the importance of not only acquiring foundational skills in literacy and numeracy, but also the need for young people to possess a broad range of skills that will equip them to lead productive and purposeful lives.

There is greater urgency to prepare our students for their future.

Addressing education inequity involves system-wide change, and solutions need to be approached through a systems thinking lens, as a coordinated effort between groups, rather than it being the responsibility of a single stakeholder group.

The Centre for Social Impact's *Amplify Insights: Education Inequity* reports utilise an evidence-based systems approach to propose changes in practice and policy-making which address education inequity in the early, middle and senior years of school.

The [first report](#) identified 11 drivers of inequity inside and outside education settings and this [second report](#) prioritises key levers of change.

Three activation points, 16 levers, and 22 recommendations for reducing educational inequity¹ are presented, and include actions that can be taken up by multiple groups of stakeholders, including the government, philanthropic organisations, community stakeholders and school leaders - to help us all create an inclusive and equitable education system.

¹ Activators, levers and recommendations have been developed from a systematic examination of evidence-based programs and culturally inclusive studies.

Presented by:



View the full report:
csi.edu.au/education-insights



Quality early childhood education and care

Drivers of inequity

Lack of accessible, responsive and affordable early childhood education and care



Which can be addressed by...



Laying foundations for accessible and quality early childhood care and education

Via these levers...

Set up bodies to coordinate services that appropriately meet community need in early childhood education and care

Employ an ecological and holistic approach to school readiness: one that accounts for the diverse roles of multiple stakeholders in the transition process

Improve access to early interventions in early years

Embed Indigenous histories, cultures and languages in all aspects of early childhood education and care services

Utilise a trauma-informed model targeting families experiencing significant stress and social disadvantage

Recommendations

Fund wrap-around initiatives that focus on early childhood service coordination, community embeddedness, parental involvement and service access to address unmet early childhood and health needs in hard-to-reach households

Resolve or remove arbitrary administrative boundaries and improve infrastructure and capability in remote geographic sites to establish and implement programs that have significant impact

Recognise transition to school as a critically important educational phase, and provide structured, targeted and ongoing funding to enable effective locally-driven transition programs

Replicate programs that lead towards successful transition, adopting a holistic approach framed around five elements: ready school, ready child, ready families, ready community and ready early childhood services

Provide greater individualised support for at-risk special needs students in early years of education

Increase access to more inclusive preschool settings, recognising they are one type of useful early intervention among other services

Explicitly acknowledge the limitations of Western definitions of 'school readiness' in transition programs

Develop cultural competence training for schools and service organisations on how to work and engage with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and families, and communities and students from non-English speaking backgrounds

Expand or create programs to benefit families and children who experience intersecting forms of disadvantage across a number of dimensions

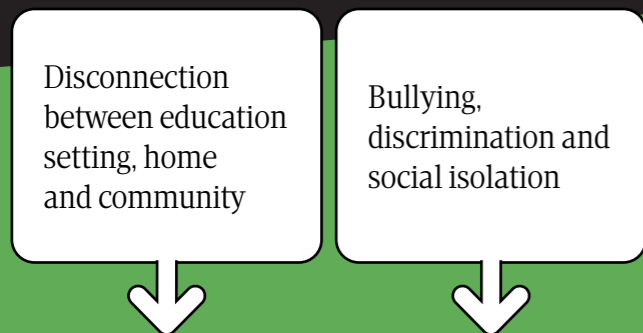
STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Government/ philanthropic organisations
Early Childhood and Education Care (ECEC) service providers
Community stakeholders and organisations working with education providers
School leaders and educators
All stakeholders
School leaders and educators; community stakeholders and organisations working with education providers



Strong partnerships

Drivers of inequity



Which can be addressed by...



Via these levers...

Establish two-way partnerships giving communities a sense of 'ownership' and involvement in education settings

Engage young people in programs that focus on building their cultural identity and taking pride in their identity

Provide students (and families) with learning opportunities which extend outside of education settings

Ensure students have access to positive role models through mentoring

Engage young people more fully into school and community life through social learning programs

Develop partnerships with community/industry/university focusing on successful transition from school

Recommendations

Develop cultural competence training for schools and service organisations on how to work and engage with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and families, and students and communities from non-English speaking backgrounds

Establish viable partnership models that leverages community members' experience and knowledge to implement whole-of-school strategies and support students towards purposeful and inclusive learning

Improve evidence base to address the gaps in high-quality longitudinal data and inconsistent approaches to program evaluation and by incorporating the voices of students and families in regular assessment and evaluation practices

Replicate or transfer successful partnership models in Indigenous education using a cautious approach to similar school contexts

Develop and implement system-level initiatives (school-based, school-linked and/or community-based) that work in partnership with external agencies to improve the range of extended services to students, schools, families and the local community

Promote and enhance the benefits of evidence-based long term mentoring programs across large communities in Australia

Create opportunities for external program facilitators and school staff to collaborate, acknowledging their complementary strengths in relation to building outcomes for students

Support, reinforce and incentivise potential partnerships between schools, universities and communities to create linkages and diverse pathways to education and employment in local and outer regions

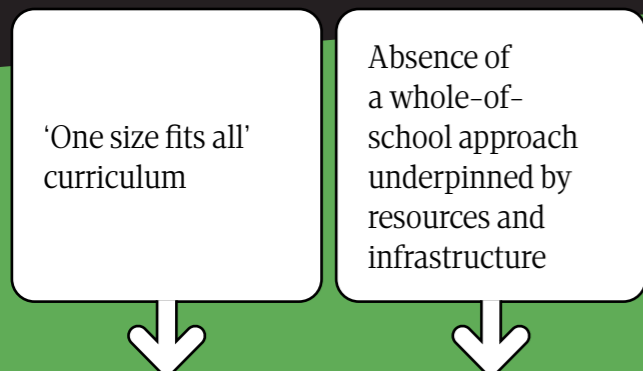
STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

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School leaders and educators
All stakeholders
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Inclusive schools

Drivers of inequity



Which can be addressed by...

Building an inclusive and holistic school culture, with adaptive and flexible learning frameworks

Via these levers...

Provide alternate learning models and flexible options for students to re-engage with learning

Adapt pedagogy to suit learners' dispositions and address learning difficulties through specific strategies and interventions

Build a school culture that promotes good teaching, trusting relationships and pastoral care

Offer welcoming, easily navigable and inclusive classrooms and school environments

Embed Indigenous perspectives, language, culture and knowledge into the curriculum and teaching practices through culturally sustaining pedagogy

Recommendations

Invest in engagement programs that have successfully demonstrated measured and reported outcomes and socio-economic benefits in order to reach more students in need

Invest in flexible education models that embed non-ATAR based learning pathways to capture general capability skills and competencies acquired outside of education settings

Systematically implement early intervention tools to address learning difficulties in a timely manner

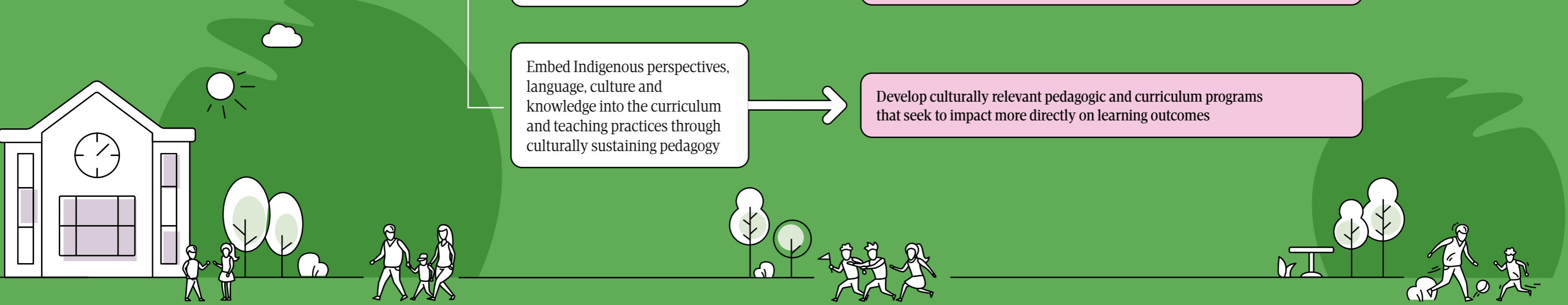
Invest in processes and training to ensure schools have culturally appropriate support systems in place to welcome and enrol students from culturally diverse backgrounds

Adapt changes in curriculum to support the multiplicity of social and cultural identities so that all students are balanced in both worlds, strong in both their Western knowledge and English and their Indigenous identity, cultural knowledge and language

Develop culturally relevant pedagogic and curriculum programs that seek to impact more directly on learning outcomes

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Barriers to implementing recommendations

ATAR continues to be the dominant metric for measuring success, and there is no systematic framework for capturing student experiences and learnings acquired outside of education settings, including general capability skills.

There is insufficient evidence to clearly identify programs as best practice models. There is also an inconsistent approach to utilising culturally appropriate program evaluation among First Nations students. This means that evaluation findings for individual Indigenous programs should be treated cautiously and may not be generalisable to other Indigenous communities.

Young people from diverse backgrounds are also not being given opportunities to be agents of their own learning.

Addressing these barriers will be an important precursor to implementing the recommendations, but there are many others to be identified.

Enablers: What are some of the tools and opportunities at our disposal?

There is a strong social purpose presence in Australia's education ecosystem that has initiated other evidence reports², outcomes measurement frameworks³, indicator banks and survey tools⁴.

Likewise, the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth's 'Nest' is an evidence-based wellbeing framework that promotes holistic, inclusive and shared ways of understanding wellbeing for specific equity groups.

Australian students are being given opportunities to engage with and deepen their knowledge about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures through their inclusion in the Australian curriculum⁵.

Finally, COVID-19 is breaking down barriers between traditional education settings, families and communities. There are opportunities for improved relationships and for young people to be actively engaged in community and service activities, enabling them to develop new skills outside of their usual learning settings.

The time is now

The Australian education landscape is changing. We must prioritise tackling inequity as a shared responsibility.

We need to redefine what counts as 'success' in learning so that westernised understandings do not inhibit other ways of knowing. Acknowledging that learning occurs both inside and outside formal education settings, we need to recognise, capture and formally document the diverse experiences, competencies and skills students acquire outside of 'traditional' education settings.

We need strong partnerships between key stakeholders that are not tokenistic and that are undertaken with a genuine sense of ownership. We also need more resources for evaluation and better mechanisms for effectively scaling successful programs.

To facilitate next steps, the Centre for Social Impact will work with stakeholders to prioritise recommendations for implementation, identify barriers that need to be overcome, and identify and address knowledge gaps. We will also take our conclusions to young people and families to determine what they see as important.

Our aim is to lay the foundations for achieving educational equity and to ensure all students have an equal opportunity to build a secure future where they can thrive.

For more information and to access our full Education Inequity reports please visit csi.edu.au/education-insights

2 Pilcher, S., Torii, K. and Andow, J. 2018. Evidence scan of educational interventions for children and young people disengaged from education. Report prepared for Social Ventures Australia. Mitchell Institute. <https://www.socialventures.com.au/assets/SVA-Perspective-Education-Evidence-scan-for-Children-and-young-people-disengaged.pdf>

3 CESE (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation) (n.d.). What works best: 2020 update [Internet]. Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation; 2020. Available from: <https://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/images/stories/PDF/What-works-best-2020-update.pdf>

4 Amplify Social Impact. <https://amplify.csi.edu.au/>

5 ACARA (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority). (n.d.). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Culture in Australian Curriculum

