STRONGER SCHOOLS

An inclusive education plan for Victoria

INCREASE RESOURCES AND SUPPORT TO STUDENTS FACING DISADVANTAGE AND THEIR SCHOOLS

Reduce the impact of disadvantage and promote an inclusive society and economy, by giving every child and young person access to a quality education.

Without needs-based funding and targeted intervention programs, students facing disadvantage are more likely to fall further behind their peers in key educational outcomes, and to drop out of education altogether.

Analysis of Victorian NAPLAN data found the "learning gap between students whose parents have low education and those with highly educated parents grows from 10 months in Year 3 to around two-and-a-half years by Year 9".[1] All political parties have a responsibility to support schools to remediate this gap.

Supporting schools to become more culturally safe and inclusive for all students will also help promote better health and wellbeing, and support students at risk of disengaging.

1

Increase equity funding to support students facing disadvantage

- Increase state government equity funding to at least 15% of school funding to support schools to employ additional staff and implement targeted learning and support programs for students with additional learning and development needs.

- Analyse how schools are using equity funding for students facing disadvantage, and increase transparency by publicly reporting outcomes and encouraging schools to share best teaching and learning practices.

2

Provide targeted interventions to address students' learning gaps

- Maintain a strong state literacy and numeracy strategy that focuses on lifting educational outcomes and closing the gaps in achievement for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.[2]

- Ensure schools deliver evidence-based literacy and numeracy programs for all children and young people who are more than one year behind their peers.

- Provide additional resources to English Language Schools and Centres to ensure young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds receive English language capability support before they enter school.

- Ensure English as an Additional Language (EAL) students in mainstream schools receive support to promote their learning and engagement, through funding the EAL program in government schools.[3] The 2018-19 Victorian Budget funds the program for two years.[4] This should be extended and incorporated into ongoing departmental recurrent funding.

3

Help all schools to become culturally safe and inclusive for all students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, CALD, LGBTIQ+ and students with disability

- Continue to implement the actions and related initiatives of DET's Education State agenda and the Marrung: Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026, to support every Koorie child to reach their full potential.[5]

- Build the cultural competency of all teachers, staff and school councils by mandating compulsory cultural understanding and safety training at all Victorian schools.

- Implement the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's recommendations in Held back: The experiences of students with disabilities in Victorian schools to address bullying of students with disability.[6]

- Continue to support the Safe Schools program to ensure schools are safe places for all students (including same sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students) and are free of discrimination.[7]

- Provide schools with tools and resources to better understand the challenges low socioeconomic status families face in fully engaging in school. This could include updating and utilising the Low Income Awareness Checklist[8] and the Social Inclusion at School guide,[9] and the development and rollout of specific training modules on working with low socioeconomic status families and/or others who face exclusion (e.g. families from CALD backgrounds).

4

Help children successfully transition between primary and secondary school

- Develop a comprehensive transition framework spanning Grade 5 to Year 8, to help children prepare for and successfully navigate the transition to secondary school. This should include strategies to identify and respond to early warning signs of disengagement and strategies for engaging with families.

- Ensure students with additional learning needs are supported during transition from primary to secondary school through tailored orientation activities and improved information flow between schools on student performance.

1. P Gross & J Sonnemann, Widening gaps: What NAPLAN tells us about student progress, The Grattan Institute, Carlton, 2016, accessed at https://grattan.edu.au/report/widening-gaps/

2. Victorian Government, Education State – Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, Version 1, accessed at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/support/litnumstrat.pdf

3. Victorian Government, English as an Additional Language, accessed at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/support/diversity/eal/Pages/default.aspx

4. Victorian Government, Victorian Budget 18/19, Getting things gone, Budget Paper No. 3, p.44, accessed at https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/budgetfiles201819.budget.vic.gov.au/2018-19+State+Budget+-+Service+Delivery.pdf

5. Victorian Government, Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan, July 2016, accessed at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/aboriginal/Marrung_Aboriginal_Education_Plan_2016-2026.pdf

6. Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, Held back: The experiences of students with disabilities in Victorian schools, September 2012, accessed at http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/our-resources-and-publications/reports/item/184-held-back-the-experiences-of-students-with-disabilities-in-victorian-schools-sep-2012

7. Victorian Government, Department Program – Safe Schools, accessed at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/safeschools.aspx

8. Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, Sample Low Income Awareness Checklist for Schools, accessed at http://www.goodshepvic.org.au/Assets/Files/Low_Income_Awareness_Checklist.pdf

9. Foundation for Young Australians, Social Inclusion at School - How to help low-income families, accessed at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/spag/management/PP_SocialInclusion.pdf