



MEDIA RELEASE

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Australian school model needs an overhaul according to Gonski-chaired review - Prime Minister Turnbull agrees.

A RESPONSE FROM FAMILY ADVOCACY [30 APRIL, 2018]

Prime Minister Turnbull supports the Gonski chaired review that recommends Australia needs to overhaul its “industrial model” of school education to a more personalised approach to education. Family Advocacy Executive Officer, Cecile Sullivan Elder, states “ When considering children with a disability, we have long advocated for the need to move away from standardised testing and specialised streaming towards more individualised learning, so the Gonski Review is a step in the right direction.”

The new report, titled Through Growth to Achievement, makes 23 recommendations around assessment and reporting regimes for federal, state and territory governments. At the core of the report is the notion that not every child learns at the same rate. It recommends a more personalised approach to education that would include individual learning plans tailored around the strengths and weaknesses of each student.

READ THE FULL REPORT HERE: [[HTTPS://WWW.EDUCATION.GOV.AU/REVIEW-ACHIEVE-EDUCATIONAL-EXCELLENCE-AUSTRALIAN-SCHOOLS](https://www.education.gov.au/review-achieve-educational-excellence-australian-schools)]

The report says Australia’s industrial model of school education, which reflects a 20th century aspiration to deliver mass education to all children, is detrimental to individual student outcomes because it focuses on trying to ensure that millions of students attain specified learning outcomes for their grade and age before moving them in lock-step to the next year of schooling.

“It is not designed to differentiate learning or stretch all students to ensure they achieve maximum learning growth every year, nor does it incentivise schools to innovate and continuously improve,” the report says.

“Australia needs to review and change its model for school education,” it says. Family Advocacy strongly agrees. An overarching recommendation would ensure each student achieves a year's worth of learning for each year at school.

“To achieve this shift to growth, the review panel believes it is essential to move from a year-based curriculum to a curriculum expressed as learning progressions independent of year or age,” the report says.

It calls for the implementation across states of a new online assessment tool that teachers would use to diagnose the exact level of literacy and numeracy a child has achieved.

Teachers could then create individual learning plans for students that would not be tied to what year group they are in.

If formative online assessments were established and reported nationally, it would downgrade the intense focus on the yearly NAPLAN tests in favour of continuous, real-time measurement of student progress.

"We need to have more of the type of focused, personalised attention that David talks about," Mr Turnbull said.

The Federal Government commissioned the report last year after the passage of its amended schools funding legislation. Mr Gonski said in his report that the structure of Australian schools reflected "a 20th century aspiration to deliver mass education to all children".

The report recommended shifting from that industrial education model to one where schools focused on achieving each individual student's "maximum potential growth in learning each year".

It found current assessment tools in schools did not provide teachers with "real-time or detailed data on a student's growth".

"I believe most teachers would agree with us, but the opportunity to do it, for example; how do you fit that in to your day, and so on?"

"In our report we're suggesting: let's take some time to allow teachers to have more time to improve their art — and not to improve it because it's not good, but to keep up-to-date with all that's happening around the world and in their profession."

While tests like NAPLAN and the international sample test PISA provided "a useful big picture view of student learning trends across Australia and the world", they provided limited assistance to teachers at the classroom level, the report said.

It also said the current "rigidity of curriculum delivery, and assessment and reporting models" were holding Australia back. Several state governments lodged submissions to the Gonski review, pointing out that current assessment tools used by teachers were not uniform across all schools.

Many schools rely on gifted and talented programs to extend bright students but the report said evidence showed that mixed-ability classes were preferable. It said streaming children by ability "has little effect in improving student outcomes and [has] profoundly negative equity effects".

It recommended overhauling the curriculum to focus on "learning progressions" that extended all students, regardless of ability.

Other key recommendations included:

- Setting up a national inquiry to review curriculum and assessment in years 11 and 12
- Establishing a national educational research institute
- Implementing greater principal autonomy
- Providing more rewards for high-performing teachers
- Overhauling the current A-E grading scale to instead measure progression gains
- Introducing a "unique student identifier" for all students that allows progress to be tracked across time, even if a student changes schools or moves interstate

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has urged state governments, teachers and parents to back the recommendations in Mr Gonski's report on achieving excellence in Australian schools.

A special meeting of the Education Council will be held on Friday to discuss the recommendations in the report, titled Through Growth to Achievement: Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools.

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