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Responses

Curriculum and assessment

The Australian Curriculum is very complex. It is difficult to provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in all areas. For both early career teachers and many experienced teachers, skills in integrating aspects of the standards of different subjects are often not well developed. Subsequently many teachers try to provide learning activities to address only one or a few aspects.

Multi year level classes and multi subjects in one class make teaching difficult - this is very challenging.

Suggestions:

Clustering schools in rural and remote areas and having students from one or two year levels clustered with one teacher (versus 1 teacher having 4 - 5 year levels).

ACARA to identify priority aspects of standards at each level so that teachers of multi-age classes can focus of the most important aspects.

Assisting teachers to realise the skills and knowledge of students for whom English is a second language is essential.

Rating: 7

Teachers and teaching

Many teachers in rural and remote locations are new or early career teachers. In these schools there are few people to support, mentor and guide these teachers. Establishing coaching programs where skilled teachers from metropolitan schools or large regional centres are identified and provide both modelling (in their own class) and regular coaching (in the developing teacher's class) would assist new staff to develop their skills as teachers.

All training and development programs undertaken should be associated with at least one follow-up session at the teacher's school and in the class to maximise learning undertaken.

The employment and support of Aboriginal staff from the communities where schools are located is essential so that teachers can really understand what students know and provide rich learning opportunities to extend and develop students. This is in particular where the local language is dominant.

Teachers need training in aligning learning to contexts - In Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal staff can assist this process.

Rating: 7

Leaders and leadership

In many rural and remote schools, leaders are in their first leadership position. Many schools are Birth to 18 years and subsequently leaders need to learn about all levels of schooling. Leaders need a personal coach/mentor. Coaches/Mentors need to work with the leaders on site, and also have regular contact including monitoring and assisting at times such as times leading to censuses and data collections.

State systems need to consider how the load on leaders in small rural and remote schools can be reduced so that they can lead the school and undertake their primary role. Some schools do not have cleaners, grounds staff and often these jobs fall to the leader. Suggestion for this is that people are employed across neighbouring schools to undertake cleaning and grounds maintenance.

Rating: 7

School and Community

The relationship between school and community is essential. Although essential to all communities, the relationships between schools and Aboriginal communities have a particular importance. Poor relationships in these communities will often have a direct impact on attendance, respect and student achievement.

Explicit expectations about behaviours, dress, language, fairness and comprehensive induction/orientation will help new staff to understand their place in community.

Rating: 7

Information and Communication Technology

ICT in many communities is not reliable.

It is a basic right of all students in rural and remote communities to have access to ICT. Given that many teachers in these schools are teaching a wide range of students, internet access is essential.

All areas need both long distance ICT support and on-ground support to ensure that systems work. We trust that once NBN or equivalent is connected to all schools, access will be more reliable. On-site technological support will continue to be needed.

Students need to be taught critical literacy in the use of and material in ICT

Rating: 7

Entrepreneurship and schools

Many students return to their communities. Given that there are few employment opportunities in many communities, it is important that schools provide students with opportunities to explore potential future activities that may provide employment

Rating: 5

Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding

Access can be improved for students through boarding and clusters. Distance education through local provision (clusters) for students living in Aboriginal communities may be a more viable option than distance education from the designated Distance Education facility. The local provision option may mean that students have more frequent face-to-face access to the teacher.

Rating for enrolments: 5

Rating for clusters: 6

Rating for distance education: 4

Rating for boarding: 4

Diversity
Rating: 5

Transitioning beyond school
Students' access to further education whilst at school will assist them in further education - Certificate courses which add to students' school assessments in senior secondary and contribute to career development are valuable.

In South Australia UniSA is currently in the process of developing courses with Bachelor College including bridging courses for Aboriginal people living in communities. Schools and the department of education need to embrace this initiative for students and for the staff who work in the schools.

Rating: 6

Additional Comments
I believe that developing / strengthening professional partnerships between AEWS and teachers, Anangu Leaders and Principals will be one of the most effective strategies in improving student outcomes.

Secondly provision of intense coaching for all new and early career teachers and their professional partners including mentoring and modelling on site will also help to provide quality teaching.

Students in rural and remote schools often have a series of new graduates in their schooling. Up-skilling these staff in their early career will give students access to quality teaching more quickly.