



NSWPPA

New South Wales Primary Principals Association

1-04/1-05 22-36 Mountain Street Ultimo 2007

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STATE COUNCIL ENDORSED POSITION PAPER

## ***EQUITY IN NSW PUBLIC SCHOOLS***

Background  
Information

At a workshop at State Council in Term 2 of 2024, around 100 primary principals who represent the 1700 members of the NSWPPA were consulted to determine **the key drivers that would support the public education plan** and amplify the achievement of equity of outcomes, experiences and opportunities for the students in NSW Public Schools.

Principals explored themes and gave insight into:

- what **equity looked like in their schools**
- what were the **barriers to equity in their schools**

They gave examples of **high quality, high impact, high equity and sustainable actions** might enable schools and our system to deliver on equity.

The **proper resourcing** of the identified themes of **Disability, Inclusion and Wellbeing, Staffing, Professional Learning and Resourcing**, including facilities, was identified as the system enabler, and **Policy and Interagency Support** were identified as the major **barrier categories**.

**Goal 1 of The Mparntwe Declaration** declares: The Australian education system promotes **excellence and equity**. We measure excellence through assessment programs such as NAPLAN. However, there are no agreed measures to measure equity. The NSW DoE position that “*NSW public schools are for everyone. Our schools reflect the diversity of our communities.*”, creates the moral imperative to resource the system to achieve the goal.

The NSWPPA knows that funding to 100% of the School Resourcing Standard is fundamental to the achievement of the NSW Plan for Public Education, but not sufficient to address the many years of inequitable funding decisions of Federal and State Governments.



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	<p>Research shows that public schools do as well as private schools after differences in students' socioeconomic backgrounds are considered (<a href="#">Pasi Sahlberg The Guardian Jan 22</a>) and that parents choose private schools because of facilities (<a href="#">Verity Firth Funding, Equity and Achievement in Australian Schools forum in April 2023</a>).</p> <p>Any work that is undertaken to achieve the plan must consider strategic and planned interagency actions and a focus on early learning and intervention (refer to the work of economist, James Heckman, <a href="https://heckmanequation.org/resource/the-heckman-equation-brochure/">https://heckmanequation.org/resource/the-heckman-equation-brochure/</a>).</p>
Rationale	<p>The NSWPPA shares the commitment of the NSW Department of Education to a promise of fairness that follows each child from early childhood education, through public schooling and into post-secondary skills and higher learning.</p> <p>We agree that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Equity is at the heart of everything we do</li><li>• Equity is the core business of public education</li><li>• Education helps to improve social, political and economic equality</li><li>• Equity is forever work</li><li>• In an equitable system, students and learners can fairly expect to enjoy comparable opportunities, outcomes and experiences</li></ul> <p>We support the goal of equity and excellence.</p>
Position	<p>Our position is based on these four drivers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Building capacity of teachers and school leaders.</b></li><li>• <b>Resourcing</b></li><li>• <b>Interagency support</b></li><li>• <b>Infrastructure</b></li></ul> <p><b>Building capacity of teachers and school leaders.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>The way we describe disadvantage, socio-economic status and educational advantage creates deficit thinking.</b> As a priority, to create a strong sense of belonging to the culture and values of</li></ol>



public education, the language we use to describe these concepts needs to change to counter deficit thinking. Wording, such as, under-resourced (*Major and Briant 2023*, p.14) describes inequality of opportunities, outcomes and experiences, without bias.

2. Develop an equity resource hub to **build teacher and leader capacity to meet student needs at the health-education interface** as described in the [NESA/Murdoch Children's Institute Report](#).
3. Develop tools, resources and professional learning for K – 2 teachers to build on the [Early Childhood Learning Trajectories](#) for students starting primary school. The **diversity and intersectionality of students in NSW Public Schools compounds disadvantage**. Our schools enrol more students from under-resourced families and we need to better understand our students to create inclusive schools with high expectations.
4. Develop and deliver **professional learning for justice and social equity** to prepare teachers and leaders to challenge beliefs and raise expectations.

### Resourcing

1. Prioritise and **resource schools to offer small group tuition** in academic and social and emotional wellbeing learning across the range of equity groups and academic potentials (students with additional needs and HPG students) to close the gaps as described by [AERO](#).
2. Implement a fully-staffed, **free school lunch program** as outlined in the [Flinders University Discussion Paper](#) and advocated by Professor Pasi Sahlberg . NSW Public Schools serve many families where food insecurity is a reality, Currently, through the goodwill of staff, schools are sourcing and staffing their own breakfast and lunch programs to increase engagement and attendance.
3. Reduce class sizes in Years 3 – 6 to no more than 25 to enable teachers to effectively plan for and teach students with disability. NCCD data shows 1 in 4 students has disability, and significant additional teacher time is taken to plan and document personalised learning and support in collaboration with families and allied health



providers. In addition, develop a fit-for-purpose factor of need model to address the increasing enrolment of students with disability in mainstream classes and the associated workload.

4. Deliver **staffing enhancements to address early intervention** e.g. A.E.O., Student Support Officer and increased School Counsellor allocations to enable co-ordination of proactive supports for family systems at school.

#### Interagency support

1. [Establish schools as community hubs](#) as described by Professor Frank Oberklaid to develop interagency support and build strong connections to a child's local public school by **extending the current Schools as Community Centres (SaCC) model to all NSW public primary schools**. A priority would be to partner with NSW Health and have access to speech pathologists in K – 2 and increase access for all schools to Wellbeing and Health In-reach Nurse (WHIN) program.
2. **Establish/re-purpose positions in the DoE Child Wellbeing Unit** to liaise with, and co-ordinate support for students and their families, following CWU recommendations to reduce the workload burden in complex schools.

#### Policy

1. Provide support, including resourcing, to enable **schools to effectively develop pre- to K transition programs** using the [Early Childhood Learning Trajectories](#) to build student profiles and family engagement. This support could also include assisting schools to set expectations and help them develop home-school agreements such as those that exist in the United Kingdom to establish mutual expectations and accountabilities.
2. **Implement a strategy in consultation with the NSWPPA and NSWSPC** to address Recommendation 3, of the *OECD Report Equity and Equality, Manage school choice to avoid segregation and increased inequities*. The current enrolment policy needs review to consider the **impact of parent choice in compounding disadvantage**.



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3. **Consider workload impact and resourcing implications** on primary schools, particularly the rural and remote and small school and SSP settings, **when developing new policies and procedures** arising from such things as royal commissions, parliamentary enquiries and audits.

#### Infrastructure

1. The NSW government should **implement the recommendation** of the 2011 Gonski report (Gonski, 2011, p.xvii) **to establish a Schools Planning Authority** to stop the establishment of non-government schools in direct competition with government schools.
2. **School facilities should be fit-for-purpose to address the challenge of educational equity.** The NSW government should undertake a **comprehensive review of existing schools** to ensure that the principles of inclusion, particularly for those students with disability, are met and the **health, safety and wellbeing of staff and students** is addressed through appropriate facility standards. Professor Verity Firth said, at the Funding, Equity and Achievement in Australian Schools forum in April 2023, that research she did showed that over 50% of parents who sent their children to a non-government high school, did so because of the facilities.

Action	The NSWPPA will: Use the consultative structures of our reference groups, working parties and standing committees to advocate for the positions as described. Think opportunity, experience and outcome.
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State Council Endorsement	Date 24 <sup>th</sup> November 2024
RG/SC/WP Chair	Name & Contact Helen Craigie hcraigie@nswppa.org.au
President	Michael Burgess President



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