

# Briefings

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## From the Executive Director

### A New Federal Schools Funding Model – Challenges and Opportunities for the Coalition

The re-elected Turnbull Government has serious challenges in terms of implementing its schools funding policies and little time to resolve them. They also have the opportunity to improve the existing funding arrangements for the benefit of schools and to ensure that increased schools funding is affordable within the budget parameters and is targeted and utilised for those students with the greatest needs.

Re-appointed Education and Training Minister, the Hon Senator Simon Birmingham, will need all of his best negotiating skills to successfully see any reforms pass through the Senate, with the Coalition needing nine additional votes for legislation to be passed by the Upper House. This will have an impact on what the Coalition can achieve in terms of their intention to have a new schools funding model from 2018 to replace the so-called “Gonski” model introduced in 2014 (the correct term for the current funding model is the Schooling Resource Standard).

Any changes to the current funding arrangements will require amendment of the *Australian Education Act 2013* as the Gillard Government legislated the technical details of the current funding model (which was somewhat unusual at the time compared to past practices).

This brings the Senate into play and in particular the cross benchers and minor parties. Given that the Australian Labor Party (ALP) has signalled a focus on education with the appointment of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Tanya Plibersek, as Shadow Minister for Education, it is unlikely the ALP will support legislative changes to abolish “their” funding model.

The prospect of the Coalition developing and implementing a new funding model is also a challenge in terms of the timeframe. Historically, significant changes in funding models take several years to research, design and implement.

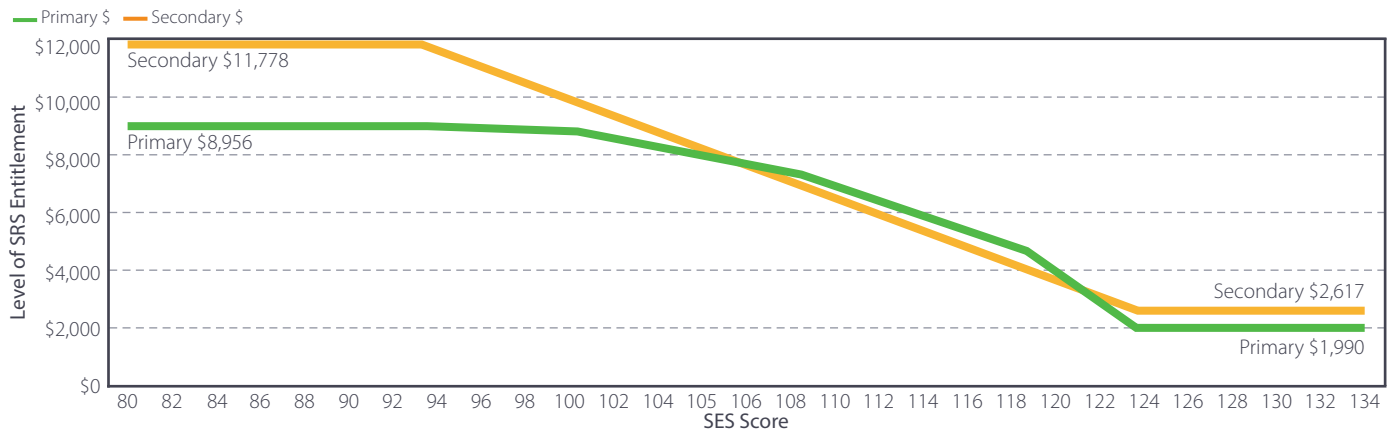
The change to the SES funding model in 2001 was at least four years in the making and even the more recent change to “Gonski” was at least three years (and a key weakness in its implementation was the failure to take an additional year to pilot and test the model in its application to schools).

Despite this, the Coalition does have the opportunity to achieve some structural and technical improvements to the existing model which hopefully would be considered by Parliament on their public policy merits rather than pure political grounds.

One significant change worthy of the Coalition’s consideration is taking Australian Government funding for state schools out of the model. Australian Government funding for state schools can simply be an outcome of Commonwealth - State financial relations. A complex funding model is not required for the Commonwealth to strike a funding amount for state schools.

**A New Federal Schools Funding Model – Challenges and Opportunities for the Coalition**

**Graph 1:** ‘Capacity to Contribute’ settings for non-government schools based on 2016 SRS



Such an approach is also supported by the fact the Commonwealth provides only about 15% of direct public funding for state schools, with state/territory governments responsible for the bulk of funding (remembering that, for example, in the case of Queensland, the Commonwealth provides about 50% of its total budget income through grants and GST revenue). Further, states/territories distribute their allocated Australian Government funding for schools according to their own distribution models, ignoring the “Gonski” allocation model.

Whilst taking public schools out of the funding model would be good public policy, given the failed attempt by the Prime Minister at a COAG meeting earlier this year to have the states/territories be entirely responsible for funding their schools, unfortunately, it is likely this issue will be avoided in any new arrangements from 2018. Any perception of the Australian Government “abandoning” funding for state schools is politically not a good look.

The Coalition does have the opportunity to make some technical adjustments that would improve the current funding model. As matters of good public policy and improved equity and efficiency, these should receive bipartisan political support.

The Capacity to Contribute (CTC) settings, which are used to determine the percentage of the School Resource Standard received by non-government schools based on their SES score, should be changed to address the current anomaly whereby primary schools with a SES between 108 and 122 receive more government funding than similar secondary schools. The current CTC settings seriously undermine the integrity of the model (see *Graph 1*).

The other significant change that could be made is to reduce the number of loadings in the model.

There are currently six loadings with schools receiving additional funding for school size, school location, the number of students from low SES backgrounds, the number of

Indigenous students, students with disability and the number of students with low English proficiency. The complexity and number of loadings makes for a volatile funding model and doesn’t guarantee that additional funding is targeted directly at the students most in need.

The low SES loading could be easily accommodated within the CTC settings. Such a change would also have the advantage of using SES scores for this loading compared to the current use of poor quality and unverified parental background data.

The best way to target additional funding for our neediest students is to take the loadings for students with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and low English proficiency out of the model and revert them to Targeted Programs or National Partnerships where schools must be accountable for the additional funding for these students. The funding should be administered by system authorities and Associations of Independent Schools who can

also add value through support services and other assistance to schools.

With these changes, the new funding model would still be based on a Schooling Resource Standard but with a greater emphasis on a valid CTC with just two loadings related to school characteristics (size and location). Additional funding for student needs would be administered through the long established and efficient school authority system.

The Coalition should also take a close look at the funding arrangements for Special Schools, Special Assistance Schools and Majority Indigenous Schools. The current funding model does not cater well for the special and acute funding needs of these schools. They should be taken outside the model with the Commonwealth determining an individual school funding amount based on the circumstances of each individual school.

A further challenge for the Coalition is how to strike a fair and equitable indexation rate for individual school funding amounts from 2018. Ideally, schools should receive indexation that keeps their Australian Government funding increasing at the same rate as education cost increases. Education cost increases are currently running at between 3 to 4%.

Coming into 2018, individual schools will be at different points in the transition to their SRS entitlement under the funding model. Some schools will still be receiving funding in excess of their entitlement (ABOVE schools), others receive their entitlement (ON schools), whilst others will still be

receiving less funding than their entitlement (UNDER schools).

Current indexation rates (as legislated in the Act) are 3% for ABOVE schools, 3.6% for ON and 4.7% for UNDER schools. The latter schools also currently receive an additional amount to speed-up their transition to entitlement.

The Government has set the indexation of the total pool of schools funding at 3.56% per annum for the four years, 2018 to 2021. The current indexation rates applied to schools will clearly have to be reduced given that the vast majority of independent schools are classified as UNDER.

The best way forward for the Government on this difficult question of indexation is to have differential indexation for schools based on their position relative to their SRS entitlement. If SRS indexation was set at 3% (this would be for ON schools), those below might receive between 3.1% and 4% with higher indexation applying to those schools that are further away from their entitlement. Similarly, for ABOVE schools indexation might be in a range from say 1% to 2.9% based on how close the school is to their SRS entitlement.

There are other challenging issues for the Government in terms of any new funding model including how to treat a number of special deals that were done around the implementation of the "Gonski" model. These include special funding arrangements for some states/territories and favourable funding rates for systemic schools.

The Government will need to move swiftly to have a new funding model in place by

2018. Schools will look for certainty about future funding arrangements, preferably a four-year-period.

The new funding model will need to incorporate good public policy parameters including fairness and equity. It will need to be simple and transparent and include a reasonable basic entitlement for all students as well as having a strong needs focus.

A good start would be a short high-level review of the existing arrangements including an examination of where the additional Australian Government funding for schools over the past three years has been allocated, what it has been used for and whether or not it has resulted in improved student outcomes. The Schooling Resource Standard itself should also be the subject of this review along with the current indexation rates.

Such a review would provide the foundation to redesign the current funding model into one that is simple, transparent and equitable. And most importantly a model which is focused on improving student outcomes in our schools.



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# Evidence and Quality Teaching

“Real improvements in teaching come when teachers have more time for studying and improving their practice with colleagues”.

(Minicci, 2014)

## The current context in Queensland

Early this month, Education Queensland committed to establishing Highly Accomplished and Lead as aspirational career stages in their workplace framework by the end of 2018. In partnership with the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT), they have commenced a trial of identifying and certifying teachers at these higher career stages. These stages are described in the [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](#).

Some independent schools and systems have also begun aligning existing reward and career pathways incentives for Highly Accomplished and Lead certifications.

This paper reviews systematic evidence gathering activities designed to determine quality teaching. It also considers the issues for schools and systems if these activities became part of the professional practice of our most qualified and effective teachers.

## Why gather evidence of quality teaching?

Dinham (2013, p. 101) has written extensively on “the need to integrate the new Australian Standards for Teachers with authentic, efficient assessment and accreditation processes and with industrial awards, to provide incentive, guidance, reward and recognition to teachers who continue their professional learning and improve their performance”.

The introduction of a nationally consistent description of what great teachers know and do, has raised the question of how does a teacher, school leader or system know when a teacher, or teaching team is working at these higher Standards?

Implementation of National Standards describing high performance should enable the profession to develop a shared and consistent understanding of quality teaching. However, to reach a shared understanding, some agreement of what constitutes genuine and defensible evidence of quality teaching is also required.

Dinham (2014, p. 4) is concerned that in schools and systems “rather than careful, collaborative planning and constructive, improvement-oriented feedback (for teachers) we see arbitrary, unfocused, impressionistic teacher ‘assessment’”.

Dinham (2013, p. 4) asserts that “the biggest equity issue in Australian education is a quality teacher in every classroom. However, to achieve this we need to address teacher quality at every key point of potential influence or ‘leverage’. Simplistic, quick-fix, populist solutions promulgated by economists, business representatives, educational advisers and politicians who are out of touch with teaching and the extant body of research on teaching and learning, capture the headlines, feed the panic and reinforce misconceptions while providing little guidance or positive substance for the profession”.

Schools and systems are now determining how they will ‘leverage’ the range of school improvement and quality teaching initiatives taking place in schools in order to identify, support and reward their most effective teachers and teaching teams.

## Using evidence to demonstrate the Standards

“Effective teaching is a complex alchemy— requiring command of subject matter, knowledge of how different children learn, and the ability to maintain order and spark students’ interest. Evaluation procedures must address this complexity—they should not only assess individual teachers but also help them continuously improve”. (Phillips & Weingarten, 2013)

This sums up the challenge of establishing meaningful and impactful evaluation processes for great teachers.

Darling-Hammond outlines the approach to teacher 'evaluation' that she recommends as a result of numerous studies. She has determined that systems that are designed to evaluate quality teaching should have three integrated and related components:

1. Standards-based evaluations of practice based on observations and curriculum plans
2. Evidence of teachers' contributions to the work of their colleagues and the school as a whole
3. Evidence of teacher's contributions to student learning based on multiple sources of information reflecting classroom work and other assessments that are appropriate and valid for the curriculum and for the students being taught. (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2012)

She states that "strong evaluation systems need principals and other evaluators with deep knowledge of teaching and learning, as well as an understanding of how to evaluate teaching, how to give useful feedback, and how to plan professional development that supports teacher learning. The lack of such knowledge and training has been a major problem for the validity, fairness, and utility of many teacher evaluation systems". (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2012, p. 28)

In her work with the Stanford Centre for Opportunity Policy in Education, Darling-Hammond has established "criterion for an effective teacher evaluation system". Some of the criteria include:

- Evaluations should include multi-faceted evidence of teacher practice, student learning, and professional contributions that are considered in an integrated fashion, in relation to one another and to the teaching context.
- Evaluators should be knowledgeable about instruction and well trained in the evaluation system, including the process of how to give productive feedback and how to support ongoing learning for teachers. The evaluation team should include experts in the specific teaching field.
- Evaluation should be accompanied by useful feedback, and be connected to professional development opportunities that are relevant to teachers' goals and needs. Including both formal learning opportunities and peer collaboration, observation, and coaching.
- The evaluation system should value and encourage teacher collaboration, both in the Standards and criteria that are used to assess teachers' work. Also in the way results are used to shape professional learning opportunities.
- Teachers and school leaders should be involved in developing, implementing, and monitoring the system to ensure that it reflects good teaching well, that it operates effectively, that it is tied to useful learning opportunities for teachers, and that it

produces valid results. (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2012, p. iii-iv)

Darling-Hammond's approach resonates strongly with the expectations outlined in the Highly Accomplished and Lead career stages. Particularly the expectations that excellent teaching requires collaboration.

Darling-Hammond says "since student learning gains are a function of teachers' collective efforts, these valuable contributions should be part of the evaluation process". (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2013, p. ii)

Teachers at these higher levels, whilst they may be very effective within their individual classrooms, are expected to be actively working with and leading the development of their colleagues and peers.

The general description of the Highly Accomplished and Lead Career stages include statements that highlight the desirable collaborative and collegial focus sought after in the best teachers:

"Highly Accomplished teachers contribute to their colleagues' learning. They may also take on roles that guide, advise or lead others. They regularly initiate and engage in educational discussions about effective teaching to improve the educational outcomes for their students.... They work with colleagues to plan, evaluate and modify teaching programs to improve student learning". (AITSL, 2012)

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“Inside and outside the school they (Lead teachers) initiate and lead activities that focus on improving educational opportunities for all students... They are skilled in mentoring teachers and pre-service teachers, using activities that develop knowledge, practice and professional engagement in others... They promote creative, innovative thinking among colleagues”. (AITSL, 2012)

Evidence in its broadest sense is anything presented in support of an assertion. The strongest type of evidence provides proof of the truth of an assertion (Evidence, 2016). Gathering evidence of collegial influence, leadership and collective impact raises some particular challenges. How will schools and systems support teachers to collect, analyse and present evidence that may ‘prove’ their willingness to work with colleagues? More challenging perhaps is determining how teachers can provide evidence that enables peers to confidently assert that their work has improved practice of colleagues and improved the outcomes of students.

### Purpose of evidence based evaluation

There are two main purposes for developing teacher evaluation according to Ingvarson (2010) “one is for all teachers to meet basic Standards of professional performance to retain their current positions. This is a school management responsibility. The other is to provide high Standards of

professional accomplishment and incentives for teachers to attain them, usually through professional certification. The latter is the responsibility of a profession-wide body”.

Ingvarson has written at length about past attempts to introduce processes to identify and acknowledge effective teachers including the Advance Skills Teacher (AST). “These schemes failed to meet the primary objective of having a major effect on most teachers’ professional learning”. (Ingvarson, 2010) He claims the failure of AST was a limited requirement for the presentation of valid evidence and therefore no way to discern the real ability of applicants, resulting in almost all who applied achieving it.

American states that have implemented new teacher evaluation systems based on testing, less than 3% of teachers are rated ‘below proficient’. “This indicates that there is more work to be done to design evaluation systems that will accurately and reliably distinguish amongst levels of teacher performance”. (Brookings Institution, 2016)

Jensen notes that “across high-performing systems, learning communities have emerged as a cornerstone program for effective professional learning. These learning communities are not, however, simply platforms for exchange and coordination of teaching plans or materials. Rather, when well organized, learning communities help to initiate a cultural shift towards

creating expectations for improvement within schools and teachers. This involves broadening the conception of what it means to be a teacher (to include continuous and genuine professional development), and improving teacher practice through exposure to peers and mentors”. (Jensen et. al. 2016, p. 33)

The challenge for an evidence based evaluation process is ensuring that it leads to the development of communities of reflective learners who are as committed to their own development as they are to the evidence gathering process. For an evidence based evaluation process to be of real value to a teacher it should provide an opportunity to deeply reflect on their practice with their peers and be a significant professional learning opportunity. Teachers in this process should receive support and substantial, futures focused feedback to guide their future development, regardless of the outcome of the evaluation.

### Impact of certification

Identification of quality teaching will add value to a school and system when the process requires teachers to gather valid and meaningful evidence, including information that illustrates the impact a teacher is having on their colleagues and students. The extension of evidence gathering is the sharing of that evidence to receive feedback and validation from peers.

The United States of America has introduced large scale processes for evidence gathering of quality teaching that is reviewed by peers. The National Board for Teaching Standards (NBTS) has implemented a national certification process that is delivered through each state. It is a voluntary, advanced professional certification for Pre K-12 educators that identifies teaching expertise through a performance-based, peer-reviewed assessment. To date, more than 112,000 teachers in all 50 states and the District of Columbia have achieved National Board Certification.

Their extensive research into the performance of certified teachers estimates an increase in learning of an additional one to two months of instruction. The positive impact of having a Board-certified teacher is even greater for minority and low income students. Research in California indicates that “National Board Certified teachers outperform other teachers with the same levels of experience”. (NBTS, 2016)

The vision that underpins the certification process for the NBTS is a desire to see “all teachers expected to demonstrate accomplished practice through National Board Certification—a rigorous, performance-based, peer-review process created by the profession”.

The Board suggests that this would change the public discussion about education. They state that:

- “There would be more deep reflection on student learning, and less divisive debate on evaluating teachers.
- We’d find new ways to support teachers as respected professionals, and give them the authority they deserve in education policy.
- We’d talk less about tenure, and more about keeping accomplished teachers in the classroom.
- Teaching would be regarded as a premier profession, drawing a greater share of top graduates seeking to make a difference and be recognized for it”. (NBTS, 2016)

Since its implementation in late 2013, nearly 300 Australian teachers have achieved national certification at the Highly Accomplished and Lead career stages of the Standards. The process was developed by Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) in consultation with teachers and leaders from every jurisdiction. It is implemented across sectors with the support of the state based regulatory authorities. Currently it is not available to Queensland teachers. However along with Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET), the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) are piloting a certification process.

AITSL describes national certification as, “a voluntary and portable process that ensures teachers have access to a rigorous and transparent process that recognises Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers. It enables you to receive feedback on your practice and have your practice evaluated by nationally trained assessors who are external to your school. It exposes you to communities of practice and supports you to further develop and grow as a professional whilst improving outcomes for your students”. (AITSL, 2016)

The voluntary nature of certification in both countries may be important to ensuring the professional learning value of the process remains the priority.

## Portfolios (evidence gathering as professional learning)

Key to the evidence process in both, the United States and Australian certification context, is the use of portfolios. The use of portfolios cuts across a wide range of disciplines and professional fields, including writing, communication, business, medicine, technology, and teacher education. (Whitworth, et al., 2011).

The University of New South Wales states that “at its simplest, a portfolio, whether in hard copy or digital form, is a collection of artefacts with a coherent structure. As a learning and assessment tool, a portfolio will normally comprise

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more than just the artefacts themselves and will include a reflective dimension". (Hughes, 2016)

ACER have outlined the reasons why they support a portfolio approach to evaluating quality teaching. They state that portfolios:

- Measure and reflect the intentions of the Standards accurately;
- Represent authentic and significant 'chunks' of a teacher's work;
- Provide a basis by which teachers can show how their students have developed in their learning over time as a direct result of their teaching;
- Are fair and do not prescribe or favour any particular style of teaching;
- They are 'context free', that is, they measure something that all teachers should be able to do no matter where they teach; and
- They are interpreted in the same way by different teachers. (ACER, 2016)

The processes of reflecting deeply about professional practice can be a "catalyst for positive change" and an "educational experience that is both professionally productive and personally meaningful". (Bass, 2014). In seeking to establish meaningful and authentic assessment, a portfolio can serve the purpose of a collection that can be reviewed by external parties but more importantly a vehicle for great teachers to investigate

and reflect on their teaching in partnership with a peer or mentor.

### Challenges to using an evidence based model

"Effective adult learning is active, where learners work toward learning goals and drive their own process of improvement. Effective professional learning involves teachers collecting, evaluating and acting on feedback to modify their teaching practices" (Jensen et al 2016, p. 8). If an evidence based process, focused on the development of a portfolio, does not also include the ongoing and rigorous conversations with mentors, peers and follow up once feedback has been received; it risks losing its meaning and limits impact as a rigorous professional development for great teachers.

Strong evaluation systems need principals and other evaluators with deep knowledge of teaching and learning, as well as an understanding of how to evaluate teaching, how to give useful feedback, and how to plan professional development that supports teacher learning. The lack of such knowledge and training has been a major problem for the validity, fairness, and utility of many teacher evaluation systems (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2012)

### How can Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) assist?

In 2015 ISQ launched the Professional Review Service to support member schools and systems interested in implementing an evidence gathering process. This service is an objective, professional process to provide teacher and school leaders with feedback about teachers who may be working at the Highly Accomplished or Lead career stages.

ISQ has modelled the Review Service on the national certification process, however the service varies from the national process as ISQ:

- trains school based mentors to support teachers to engage in the evidence based reflection of their practice;
- does not undertake external site visits or classroom observations, but does require evidence of feedback on teaching practice within each portfolio;
- principals make the final decision about the designation of participating teachers (HA/Lead);
- provides a common e-portfolio template.



The ISQ [Professional Review Service](#) will support schools to establish sustainable, scalable, comparable review processes for teachers seeking acknowledgement of their professional knowledge, practice and engagement at the Highly Accomplished and Lead career stages.

The professional review service also includes:

- online self-reflection – the Professional Growth Tool (PGT);
- e-portfolio to gather and annotate evidence of teaching;
- optional external observation of teaching;
- training for teachers and school based mentors on how to gather evidence of impact on a community; and
- Connect&Learn community to support teachers and mentors throughout the process.



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