

INSIGHTS AND ACTIONS

Great Teaching in Tough Schools
May 2013



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Setting the Scene

The Uncommon Alliance

Education is the gateway to opportunity; opportunity not only in the financial sense, but opportunity for a fulfilling life. As standards of education are directly linked to standards of health, social stability, and employment, education is therefore essential to personal wellbeing. With these trends in consideration, improving levels of education for all Australians appeals to both our social hearts and our economic minds.

Educational inequity often stems from inherited social circumstances. Students' social backgrounds account for more than 70 per cent of education performance. This inequality results in the most affluent Australian students becoming on average three years ahead of disadvantaged students in reading literacy. For too many Australian children, their fate is not in their own hands.

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"Health is important. Housing is important. But nothing is going to uplift the disadvantaged like education. Just nothing."

Bob Bryan, Chairman, Bryan Foundation

While we don't have all the answers and we acknowledge that there's no 'silver bullet' in overcoming educational inequity, there are areas where Australia can clearly do better. At SVA, we have focussed our efforts towards five key areas that, according to our research, underpin a high-performing education system:

1. **Equity:** Our education system needs to make equity one of its highest goals. The lesson from countries like Finland is that a primary focus on equity, not on high achievement, results in a better performing system.
2. **Investment in teaching and leadership:** We must invest in building the professional practices of teaching and leadership, including effective management, mentoring, observation, feedback, induction and collaboration.
3. **Smart curriculum, pedagogy and assessment:** Learning skills for the 21st century must include the development of basic and complex skills. There also needs to be recognition that a variety of pedagogical

approaches will be required to accommodate the variety of student needs.

4. **School-community partnerships:** We need to empower schools, non-profit organisations, businesses, philanthropists, and the community to develop partnerships which bring new resources and opportunities to students and families experiencing disadvantage. Critically, we need to build the capacity of schools and businesses to forge partnerships that develop the connections and pathways between school, work and ongoing learning. Only a broad coalition can develop the next generation of highly and relevantly-skilled future employees.
5. **Governance and implementation:** We need a coherent system that provides clearly and consistently for the role of the centre (including clearly defining the roles of the Federal and State systems), an intermediate layer of regional support and direction, and local school self-management. These layers must work appropriately together to ensure that schools have the support they need, that collaboration is occurring across schools and regions, and that performance is closely monitored and maintained.

These focus areas are not a 'checklist for success'; rather, they reflect a pragmatic approach to overcoming education inequality. They have shaped this Education Dialogue and have defined SVA strategy.

At SVA, we believe that postcodes should not be the determinant of life's course; that quality education should be extended to all Australian students. We also believe that to achieve this equality a heightened degree of interdependence should be acknowledged and a greater level of collaboration should be

practiced. For just as education inequity impacts all sectors of society, a solution, therefore, must reflect this collective interest. This remains the guiding principle of the SVA Education Dialogue.

As Dr Lisa O'Brien, the CEO of The Smith Family put it, *"this is a whole of society problem that needs to be solved by the whole of society"*.

To achieve these higher ideals in education, Australia will need to engage collaboratively between schools, philanthropists, social entrepreneurs and businesses, as well as governments, drawing on the skills and capabilities of each.

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"This is an Uncommon Alliance, and it has an uncommon power of advocacy and an uncommon potential to drive change."

Maxine McKew, Vice Chancellor's Fellow,
University of Melbourne

Our annual SVA Education Dialogue brings leading members of these groups – the 'Uncommon Alliance' – together to discuss what it will take to change outcomes in Australia for disadvantaged students across these five elements. At the heart of our dialogue is what we call a "Bright Spots" approach whereby we showcase practical innovative programs working to change outcomes for disadvantaged students. Furthermore, we aim to catalyse thinking and action around how best we can support these programs, learn from them, and help to spread and scale up their influence.

At its heart, the Education Dialogue is a call to action. It is a launching ground for new collaborations and initiatives, which can grow the impact of Bright Spots into the Bright Systems we need. Over time, we are building an interconnected set of initiatives and relationships that can change the face of education for disadvantaged children in Australia.

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"Philanthropy can do some important things. Pioneer. Demonstrate. Reveal models. It often can't take them to scale – that's then the job of Government, or sometimes enterprise. But philanthropy can take the risk of tackling the toughest problems and stick with it for years until we learn what we need to learn."

Ellen Koshland, Centre for New Public Education, Foundation for Young Australians

The Education Dialogue 2012 focussed on the challenge of ensuring that every child has access to the highest quality teaching and learning opportunities. There was a particular concentration on the preparation and development of new teachers. What are Australia's Bright Spot schools, universities and non-profits doing to address this issue?

We were inspired by what we saw and heard: high achieving graduates attracted to education and inspired to teach in some of Australia's most disadvantaged communities; schools and universities working together to ensure that new teachers have the skills and practical experience they need to succeed in challenging environments; non-profits working with teachers and schools to create new learning opportunities for disadvantaged students.

This Insights and Action document shares what we learnt at the Education Dialogue 2012. Using the voices of leading Australians – those at the coal face of education in the classrooms, those who train teachers, those who set the policies on quality teaching, and those who fund innovative and effective work in this area – we highlight insights and examples of what is working and how we can utilise these to improve education outcomes.

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"Whatever we've achieved [at AITSL] did not come out of a vacuum. It was based on fantastic things happening in schools now... Our job is just starting, and that is implementing more of the innovations that are emerging."

Magery Evans, CEO, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)

We look forward to your support as we work together to advance this work, and we welcome further discussions.

We want to expressly acknowledge and thank the funding support of the AMP Foundation, the Bryan Foundation and the Robertson Family Foundation for supporting the Education Dialogue 2012.

MICHAEL TRAILL AM
Chief Executive Officer
Social Ventures Australia

What is the issue?

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"As a nation we are more focused on teacher quality than at any other time...We have placed teacher quality at the heart of the national agenda."

Tony MacKay, Chair of AITSL

Australia has recognised that investing in quality teaching is one of, if not the most, important lever in improving student learning outcomes.

However, achieving a quality teacher workforce in all schools – a great teacher in front of every Australian student every day in every class – has significant and additional challenges when it comes to low-SES schools.

Importantly, recent state government policy blueprints have begun to address these challenges with some concrete initiatives. The Queensland government's action plan, Great teachers = Great results, provides for early career teachers in low-SES schools to be mentored in the classroom by 'high performing' senior teachers. Through creating 300 Master Teacher positions for 'schools most in need', low-SES schools will benefit from greater professional development to improve quality teaching practices, and greater funding support to improve the literacy and numeracy needs of the school.

The NSW government is also committing resources to ensuring teaching quality in their marginalised schools. Their focus is more directed towards the 'teacher life-cycle', which covers pre-service education, entry, early career teaching, professional development and performance management. This is to instil a culture of ongoing teacher learning and regular feedback.

While still under consideration, the Victorian government has proposed an initiative that would enable principals to provide incentives to retain or attract excellent teachers in disadvantaged schools. This could include both financial and non-financial incentives, such as mentoring and leadership roles. We encourage the Victorian government to make these needed changes.

So the goal is not to get quality teaching in low-SES schools on the agenda; it's clearly a priority for governments. The goal is to focus that agenda, and to advance it.

With respect to focus, the Education Dialogue's coalition of leading educators, academics, policymakers, philanthropists and social entrepreneurs was united in saying that we must place a significant emphasis on the challenges for low-SES schools and their teachers. We must consider comprehensively the issues that are faced by teachers and schools right along the teacher lifecycle, to have a far better chance of designing integrated and mutually-reinforcing policies that build on what is already working.

Simply put, the reality now is that kids who need great teachers the most are the least likely to get them. In terms of attraction to teaching at disadvantaged schools, many of our best teacher graduates are attracted to top schools and affluent suburbs, leaving students with a background of disadvantage to continually fall behind.

Furthermore, even if teachers do begin their careers at low-SES schools, the challenges can be immense. A teacher at a low-SES school needs to support the whole child, from social and emotional development to academic learning, and

to spark engagement where previously none may have existed (perhaps for multiple generations). They are also more likely to have to bridge cultural divides. All this requires an intelligence that is both high, and highly rounded.

However, the good news is, that when the calibre and preparation of teachers is commensurate with the challenges at low-SES schools, the results are startling. The learning of a student taught by someone in the top 10% of Australian teachers progresses at double the speed of a student with a teacher in the bottom 10% (Leigh, 2010).

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"I've been in schools where students speak 80 different languages at home, and English is their second, third or even fourth language. Students go home to no biological parents, and joblessness is intergenerational. Then you add in the use of new technologies and data – we don't realise how much we expect of our teachers."

Brian Caldwell, Managing Director, Educational Transformations

We must press for a sustained focus on the challenge of ensuring great teachers in tough schools across Australia. How can governments, working in partnership with schools, academics, universities and non-profits, better prepare, attract, place and develop high-quality teachers to engage students and put in place innovative new approaches to learning in our most under-privileged communities?

The SVA Education Dialogue took an important step towards this by;

- showcasing practical programs undertaken by schools, universities, non-profits and others that are achieving results
- catalysing thinking and action around how best we can support these programs
- learning from them and
- helping to spread and scale up their influence.



In this first part of the document, we share insights from the SVA Education Dialogue around the key issues of teacher preparation, attraction, placement and development, as well as around engagement and innovation. Our focus is on the voices of our participants – listening to their words around how they see the challenges, and the innovative solutions they have arrived at.

And in the second part, we turn to action: how, since Education Dialogue 2012, SVA together with its partners, is working towards systemic change by;

- learning more about the innovations that have worked
- supporting and spreading effective programs
- influencing government policy.

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"We know we need evidence-based practices, but we also need to be investing in the new, in the untried. And the evidence we will be gathering on new practices might not correspond to the current measures of success either, which makes driving uptake more difficult. To get a lift across the board in the current system our best bet is to get better at defining what it is that Bright Spots are doing, and learning from them."

Tony MacKay, Chair of AITSL

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INSIGHTS

1. Preparation

“Teaching today is not something you can just do. It needs to be taught. It needs to be learnt. It’s a serious business that requires serious study, serious application and serious aptitude.”

Margery Evans, CEO, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

Ben Jensen of the Grattan Institute pointed out that for decades we have treated teaching as a blue collar profession. Yet, as education has become linked to all facets of a society’s development, our expectations of teachers have outpaced our ability to adequately prepare them. This is particularly the case for teachers preparing to teach in low-SES schools. It is not enough to have teachers stamped by universities as academically proficient; disadvantaged schools need teachers fully prepared, professionally and personally, for these distinctive social, cultural and learning contexts.

“The level of skill we now expect of our teachers is phenomenal, comparable to medicine. They must analyse an extraordinary array of data on so many fronts (NAPLAN, attendance, measures of social and emotional wellbeing and many more), then formulate and execute a plan based on that analysis. In an engaging way. For 20-30 kids. On a daily basis. That’s a massive difference from just 5-10 years ago – and that’s just the present. Globalisation and technological change have and will continue to change the nature of teaching, making it ever more demanding. Yet we give them little practical experience and exposure, and train them in ways that often haven’t changed for 40 years.”

Brian Caldwell, Managing Director, Educational Transformations

At the SVA Education Dialogue, participants, especially the principals of low-SES schools, shared stories that showed how rarely we prepare teachers for this ‘new normal’. Training is often isolated in space and time from the realities teachers will be exposed to, and it requires innovation and partnership to bridge that divide.

“It’s important to prepare teachers for the realities that come with low-SES schools. I had a pre-service teacher who left the profession because she couldn’t deal with the fact that a student was living in a car. I need my teachers to understand that disadvantage stops at the school gate. When they walk in here, the kids have dreams and the teacher’s job is to make them happen. They need that moral purpose.”

Vivien Bampton, Principal, Harris Fields State School



“Where’s the feedback loop? The best person to judge whether or not a new teacher is adequately prepared is the Principal, but they are rarely consulted seriously. There are Bright Spots, but are we systematically learning from them?”

Ben Jensen, Director, Grattan Institute

BRIGHTSPOT

Schools partnering with universities

Lansvale Public School serves Cabramatta, an area where median household incomes are barely half the national median and only 6% of students have English as a first language. Yet NAPLAN results are close to or above the national average, and morale is high.

Teachers in the early stages of their career are given fortnightly coaching, mentoring and needs-based workshops by the leadership team, which includes a Highly Accomplished Teacher (through the NSW DET Program). Teaching at the school has been informed by formal research into engaging kids in low-SES schools, carried out in partnership with the University of Western Sydney through the 'Fair Go' project.

"We found that one of the keys was helping students become 'insiders' in their classrooms. This means that kids actually get a real say in how their classroom operates, and their sense of worth translates into better work."

Mark Diamond, Former Principal, Lansvale Public School

Student teachers at UWS are insiders too. They are actively involved in the research, which has produced case studies of effective teachers in their first year and in their thirtieth. The school operates like a teaching hospital, which successfully inducts these students: half the staff at Lansvale are in their first three years.

"We get teachers thinking about the classroom as the place where they can do really, really important things."

Geoff Munns, Associate Professor, University of Western Sydney

BRIGHTSPOT

Preparing great students for tough assignments

At Queensland University of Technology, Jo Lampert and Bruce Burnett, senior lecturers in the Faculty of Education wondered what would happen if they could get some of their most amazing students to teach in low-SES schools.

"I saw in tutorials the potential these students had, but I knew they'd be snapped up by private schools."

Jo Lampert, Co-coordinator, Exceptional Teachers for Disadvantaged Schools, Queensland University of Technology

QUT set up a program attracting high performing students into a customised curriculum on teaching in disadvantaged schools, providing them with a sophisticated intellectual understanding of poverty and its effect on kids. All of that group's practicums take place in low-SES schools, so the theory can be informed by the practice, and vice versa. The group is also provided with intensive mentoring and reflection opportunities. The majority of graduates go on to teach in low-SES schools, and the impact they have convinces the majority to stay there.

"One of our graduates was a University Medallist. She had so much impact in her first class, that in her second year she was given the toughest class."

Bruce Burnett, Senior Lecturer, Queensland University of Technology

2. Attraction

In an environment of stretched resources and challenging behaviours, teachers are dedicating their expertise and their time to disadvantaged schools across Australia. They embody the true virtues of education: people that teach not only for a living, but for life.

Attracting – and retaining – high quality teachers is a constant struggle for low-SES schools in Australia. Teaching in these schools is demanding, and requires personal resilience and professional rigor. The best teachers in disadvantaged communities aren't necessarily the graduates with the highest academic results or the best university entry scores; they're educators with both a deep understanding of subject matter and great emotional intelligence.

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"It doesn't matter how much Nutella you put on a cracker, it's still not a TimTam. The point? Selection of the right people is crucial. It's been part of reducing average turnover from 7 months to 2.5 years. The other thing is offering everyone the chance to be a leader, to make a difference."

Dave Faulkner, Co-Founder, Education Changemakers (NT)

Designing recruitment processes that attract the 'right' teachers is critical, and an area where many states and schools have experimented with different approaches. Participants at the SVA Dialogue emphasised the importance of galvanising a sense of social mission to attract high-quality students who may have a broad range of opportunities, including creating, as both Teach for Australia and QUT's Exceptional Teachers for Disadvantaged Schools do, a sense of being invited to take part in an endeavour which requires the best. Ensuring that the school leadership harnesses and sustains this desire to effect positive change within the school and broader community is also essential.

Factors such as staff culture, professional development, and support services are also key in attracting, and especially retaining, quality teachers in low-SES schools.



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"Teach and make a difference. That line never goes out of style. Education is a social venture that we can be engaged in as teachers."

Dan Sprange, National Partnerships Support Officer (NSW)

BRIGHTSPOT

Attracting graduates with a new model

MTeach was introduced by Melbourne Graduate School of Education in 2000 with the goal of placing a scientific model at the centre of every core teaching decision.

"80% of the variation between student outcomes in Australia will be found in a single school. So we need a paradigm shift in teaching whereby information is delivered to individual learners who are at different developmental stages."

Professor Field Rickards, Dean, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne

MTeach teaches its graduates to ask:

- What is each student ready to learn now, and what is the evidence for that judgment?
- What are the evidence-based options to deliver the learning?
- Which did you select? Why?
- What is the expected impact?
- What happened? (With the outcome adding to the evidence base).

This scientific approach, coupled with its practical "clinical" dimension (all candidates are in schools two days a week from early in their program) has been attractive to more mature candidates. Of 1,100 candidates, the average age is 27, with a very high proportion of above average academic results. 90 per cent of MTeach graduates suggested they felt "well" or "very well" prepared for the classroom.

BRIGHTSPOT

Recruiting outstanding people for the mission

Teach for Australia is a social venture that is attracting some of our country's most outstanding young individuals, and putting them on an educational career path. Impact comes from finding those with the qualities inherent to exceptional teachers and giving them the tools and mentoring to succeed in our schools.

TFA has a focus on low-SES schools, and galvanises recruits with the imperative to address inequality in Australia's education system. To date they have placed over 120 Associates across 45 schools.

"We're using alternate models to get people into the classroom – maybe people who didn't necessarily see themselves as teachers when they were 16 or 17. As such, we need to be absolutely clear what impact they are having. The best judges are Principals. At this stage we have 100% approval from them. But we also survey students to gauge teacher effectiveness, aligning their feedback with the indicators that Principals value."

Mike Witter, Director of Training and Leadership, Teach for Australia

3. Placement

“Every year we make 18,000 practical placements. These have to be supported by schools, so it makes sense to do this in a context of a partnership – and one which can start a career path.”

Leslie Loble, Chief Executive, NSW Office of Education, Department of Education and Communities (NSW)

As we have been discussing, the most prominent blemish in Australia’s education performance is the disparity in outcomes by socio-economic background. Attracting and preparing teachers are necessary actions to address this issue, but they will not be sufficient unless teachers are placed effectively in low-SES schools.

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“I only select teachers who are innovative, willing to take risks for the sake of the journey, and have a real work ethic.”

Michael Flood, Principal, Blackbutt State School

Leaders such as Victoria’s Andrée Butler (now Director, Flagship Strategies, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development) told us that giving schools and principals more autonomy in the recruitment process was critical. The Principals at the SVA Education Dialogue were vocal in their agreement.

More autonomy means more ability to manage induction as part of the placement process, including reaching into the practical placements of student teachers. Given the challenges that can accompany a low-SES environment, effective induction is critical. The top principals know this, but are largely on their own in developing systems to manage it.



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“We specifically sought out male teachers who could be the role models some of our boys needed. Successful placement needs more than the right person, though. We provide support through a hand-picked Head of Curriculum, and ‘Learning Cafés’ where ideas can be shared and new teachers mentored.”

Shirlee Gallo, Principal, Mareeba State School

BRIGHTSPOT

Internship as a win-win model

As we saw in the previous section, internships carried out in the context of a partnership between a university and a school provided excellent preparation for those entering a low-SES environment. Importantly, these internships also help place and induct promising new teachers into those schools.

Assuming they are given some autonomy, Principals get a chance to vet candidates, but also paint a vision for how they can succeed at a low-SES school as part of the teaching family. And candidates get a taste for the impact they can have.

“The QUT model was a very successful, custom made programme of internship. Across the board we are seeing that the Principals want these interns at their schools and vice versa. The issue is that we don’t have enough of them – the right teachers in the right place at the right time. We need more programs like QUT’s so that we can grow this supply.”

Leigh Schelks, Executive Director, Department of Education & Training (QLD)

4. Development

Field Rickards, Dean of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, told us that 80% of the variance in educational outcomes can be found within a single school. Our Bright Spot Principals see this as a call to arms for what improved teaching can seek to address.

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"Development can yield huge dividends. The in-school quality differences from classroom to classroom are much greater than the differences between schools."

Mark Diamond, Principal, Lansvale Public School

Professional development opportunities are critical for teachers right throughout their careers, with many low-SES principals placing a significant emphasis on their own induction programs, structured to teach new graduates their own approaches to teaching and learning in their communities, and involving ongoing mentoring and career support. We also saw how schools are using non-profit support to provide learning and development opportunities for their teachers.

There has been a reluctance to use performance management aggressively in a way that could add to an already high-stress occupation or damage the collegiality that is crucial to achieving outcomes for students. But at the same time, our SVA Education Dialogue participants felt that it was important that advancement not be a matter of right, and that those who aren't able to meet the standard required should be moved on. Margery Evans, CEO of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, told us that standards and certification for exceptional teachers was a work in progress that was receiving a lot of support from innovative schools.



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"Induction is huge. When you are a new teacher the students will test you, so the behavioural values and theories you bring to the classroom are critical. Helping new teachers is a top priority throughout the first term."

Christine Cawsey, Principal, Rooty Hill High School

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"Sometimes people aren't going to develop, and then we have tough conversations. Part of having high expectations is that we're not prepared to have just anybody teach our kids. Sometimes we make the hard choice that nobody is better than just anybody."

Sharon Barker, Principal, Tara Shire State College

BRIGHTSPOT

Teachers as learners

The Song Room (TSR) is a national non-profit venture providing free, tailored music and performing arts programs within low-SES schools and marginalised communities. Its programs are evidence-based, having been shown to provide the equivalent of a one-year gain in literacy, 65% less absenteeism and significant gains in emotional well-being.

Critically, TSR provides development support to ensure that schools can sustain these programs. This includes professional development for teachers to help them build new capabilities in teaching performing arts, but also capacity-building in less conventional areas like grant applications.

"In our school we have had some great initiatives, but sustainability can be an issue. TSR have worked with our staff to help us write funding submissions to continue valued programs, and this enabled us to buy resources. Parents were in tears when they saw their kids in the Emotionally and Behaviourally Disturbed class drumming. At the end of the year we've got 130 teachers from our community of schools attending free professional development so that we can keep the programs going."

Julie Lewis, Assistant Principal, Tregear Public School,
Western Sydney Region

Seeing continuous learning as a common theme for everyone in the classroom – teachers very much included – was a consistent theme at the SVA Education Dialogue.

BRIGHTSPOT

A learning plan for everyone

"Everyone at Rooty Hill – principal, teachers and students – has a learning plan. We've worked towards a consistent and aligned approach to learning throughout the school, and that has built a learning culture."

Christine Cawsey AM, Principal, Rooty Hill High School

With 60 out of 80 of their staff as new, young teachers, Rooty Hill High School has to focus on teacher development if student outcomes are to be improved. Principal Cawsey requires all teachers in the school to have a professional learning plan and be part of a professional learning team. A Head Teacher Mentor runs fortnightly meetings with teachers to work on their professional goals. Lesson study, collaborations, classroom observation and coaching happen year round.

5. Engagement

Students learn best when they are engaged. Engaging with students experiencing disadvantage and often with additional significant challenges related to language, learning difficulties and behaviour, can be challenging. The circumstances faced by students in low-SES communities are complex and personal. Their issues often begin long before they set foot in a classroom.

Unfortunately, there is no universal model of effective student engagement: at SVA Education Dialogue we were privileged to hear a huge variety of inspiring stories about what works for different teachers and different students in different contexts. For some, a direct instruction teaching methodology had made the difference. For others, it has been an approach centred around visible learning. We heard about innovative uses of technology, and building on student passions through inquiry-based learning. Understanding what works where (and when, and for whom) continues to be a focus of innovation and research for many participants.



"Technology can help kids see what's available beyond the community. And they can engage with it without moving away. We use video conferencing to debate and collaborate with other schools in the region and globally."

Stuart Whytcross, Highly Accomplished Teacher, Barellan Central School

"It's about having an authentic connection. My students are incredibly perceptive, and they know when your caring is genuine. My passion lies in English, and one of the reasons I got involved in teaching is that I thought it would be great for my wellbeing to share something I was passionate about. I bring that to my teaching. That passion definitely helps inspire students."

Tanya Greeves, Teacher, Lanyon High School

"We are designing experiences – crafting ways to make kids feel excited about their learning. A key notion is 'hard fun'."

Geoff Munns, Associate Professor, University of Western Sydney

"I talk about the 4 P's of engaging activities:

- *Placed: activity is located in a world that the student recognises*
- *Purposeful: activity feels authentic; makes them feel like a do-er; absorbs the student in acts of value*
- *Passion-led: activity enlists the passions of students and teachers; encouraging students to choose areas of interest that matter to them*
- *Pervasive: activity enables the student to continue learning outside classroom."*

Valerie Hannon, Board Director, Innovation Unit, UK

BRIGHTSPOT

Expanding the classroom

Valerie Hannon described the ultimate in engagement as students taking responsibility for their own learning, bringing discretionary energy to the task. Many of the Principals and Teachers at the SVA Education Dialogue agreed that this often involves locating the value of their learning outside the school gates.

Schools like Gin Gin State High School have found that there is an issue of disengagement in grades 9 and 10. They set up Gin Gin Alternative Pathways (GGAP) to provide learning opportunities through practical activities in conjunction with businesses in their community. GGAP boasts 98% attendance and significantly improved literacy and numeracy.

“A kindergarten asked us to help them lay a driveway. The sense of pride you get after delivering something like that... And afterwards I had a year eleven young man tell me he was now able to follow his maths lesson because he could relate it to concreting.”

Darren Wallwork, Principal, Gin Gin State High School

BRIGHTSPOT

One student at a time

Big Picture Education Australia is a social enterprise that is systematically making connections between schools and the community, operating a new model of individual learning in dozens of schools throughout the country. Each student works two days a week in an interest based internship with a mentor from the community on an intellectually rigorous project connected to their learning goals. The results with disadvantaged students show dramatically reduced gaps in reading, writing and numeracy.

“Through Big Picture we’ve gotten over 200 businesses and they are coming to us now. The kids get a lot out of the fact that the business gets a lot out of it. They are achieving something tangible and they know it. Do the math on this – I had one young lady whose attendance has improved 2000%!”

Mandy Reynolds-Smith, Principal, Montrose Bay High

6. Innovation

“Excellence of the few is terrific. But it is trickier to get systems to innovate. There’s a natural conservatism that resists change.”

Christine Cawsey AM, Principal, Rooty Hill High School

The SVA Education Dialogue began a conversation about how we get more great teaching and great teachers into tough schools. Without question it is going to require innovation.

Most of the innovators we heard from are confident that the best ideas are already found in the system. Innovations are usually responses to issues at hand, so we are more likely to find them by observing what happens in great schools than we are to invent them at a whiteboard.

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“The best leaders say that we will get every kid to learn at all costs. In order to achieve that they give you permission to innovate. No school is the same, so you have to be allowed to do things a little differently – as long as you’re tying the practice to results you can see and feel.”

Dan Sprange, National Partnerships Support Officer (NSW)

To maximise the impact of such innovations, however, we must get better at describing them, refining them and making it less challenging for others to adopt them. This is what it will take for us to turn Bright Spots into a Bright System.

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“How do we systematise what we are seeing from individual Bright Spots? That’s the million-dollar question, and right now we are focusing on creating enabling conditions.”

Janet Davy, Executive Director, NSW Department of Education & Communities



BRIGHTSPOT

Bottling an innovation program

Plumpton High School, in Sydney's west, had been seeking to engage an underperforming student body by linking them with a professional community outside the school gates.

"Then Beacon came along. It has existing programs designed to achieve exactly what we were looking at doing. I think it would have taken us four extra years to get to where Beacon took us. And that's if we had the expertise (which we didn't). It's had a profound effect. Before, we had 34% of students scoring above 70 in the school certificate. This year we got 79% of students above 70."

Eric Jamieson, Principal, Plumpton High School

"Most schools we deal with are busy trying to keep their heads above water. They don't have the time to create new programs – but they do have the will to implement something that is proven to work."

Scott Harris, CEO, The Beacon Foundation

Beacon runs its programs – including 'Buddy Up' mentoring, industry overviews called 'Speed Career', and 'Polish', for etiquette and interview techniques – in more than 137 secondary schools across Australia.

BRIGHTSPOT

Letting the community provide the energy for change

The Australian Business and Community Network's service offering developed organically.

"The first program we ever offered was matching business CEOs with principals and senior leaders in schools. We found that the learning flowed both ways, and there was real chemistry. Later on PWC sent their senior executive marketing and PR team into a school to sit down with the leadership to develop a community strategy."

Jacqui Jones, General Manager

ABCN found that the impetus for change can come from outside the school, with Jones commenting that "there are so many organisations looking for opportunities to engage in a real and meaningful way." ABCN now works with more than 200 schools, tapping into the energy of 30+ businesses to mentor kids and raise aspirations.

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ACTION

ACTIONS

Introduction

The SVA Education Dialogue focused on the challenge of ensuring that high-quality teachers are in front of every low-SES student, every day and in every class. Together, we developed a clearer sense of what worked in the preparation, attraction and right placement of effective teachers for low-SES classrooms. We also discussed the importance of proper induction and skills development of teachers in low-SES schools to ensure they are prepared to address on-going challenges in that environment.

Since the SVA Education Dialogue, we have been working to move from insights to action. Our purpose is to work towards systemic change by learning more about innovation that has worked, supporting and spreading these programs, and influencing government policy.

We began with a series of discussions with governments across Australia, seeking to identify the key points along the teacher life cycle where they were most in need of new insights. Governments identified initial teacher education, in terms of effectively preparing teachers for the challenges of a low-SES classroom, as a key area. They also highlighted the importance of induction and development of new and early career teachers in low-SES schools, assisting the likelihood of retention and career progression within these schools, as well as building new the effectiveness of new teachers.

From discussions with governments, sector thought leaders, philanthropic funders and others, SVA has developed three main initiatives, as follows.

Growing Great Teachers

The Growing Great Teachers (GGT) project will showcase excellent teacher support initiatives which successfully support early career teachers in low socioeconomic (SES) Australian schools.

Our aim is to provide governments, philanthropists, schools and non-profits with a fresh understanding of

- what works to support new teachers in these challenging settings so that they stay and provide quality teaching to the kids who need them most; and
- how we can replicate and scale these initiatives to ensure that we achieve a national workforce of highly-qualified teachers committed to and prepared for changing outcomes for disadvantaged children.

Focus of the project

The focus of GGT is teachers with less than three years working experience in low SES schools throughout Australia. While we will refer to international examples, Australian initiatives are the primary focus.

The purpose of the GGT project is to help improve recruitment, retention, and quality early career teaching in low SES schools.

Background

Within the education system, the most important lever to improve outcomes for disadvantaged students is outstanding teachers. Unfortunately for these disadvantaged students, few of Australia's new teachers feel adequately prepared to teach in challenging environments, where a wide range of high-level professional and personal skills are required. Few have had specific preparation for the needs of disadvantaged students and communities, or have had practical experience in these communities. The result is that many new teachers struggle to make the impact to which they aspire – and which their students need. The result is that too many move on from these schools as soon as they can, or leave the profession altogether.

Through the SVA Education Dialogue 2013 and subsequent research, Social Ventures Australia has identified a number of successful Bright Spot programs and initiatives which address these challenges head on. Whilst there is clearly significant work to be done in initial teacher education (to be explored in a second phase of this work), initiatives like the Education

Changemakers leadership program, Teach for Australia, teacher networks like TeachMeets, and mentoring and coaching programs offered by schools like Harris Fields State School and Rooty Hill High School have provided early career teachers with exceptional professional and personal support and development to enable them to meet these challenges.

For Australia to offer all disadvantaged students an outstanding teacher in front of every classroom, every day, we need to ensure that these successful initiatives, and others like them, are replicated and scaled system-wide.

Process

Support initiatives operating at the school, regional and national level can assist new teachers in curriculum design and delivery, lesson planning, working effectively with welfare services, practical knowledge exchange, and ongoing professional and personal development. Many of these involve induction programs, ongoing mentoring and coaching, peer support, and professional development initiatives. Our survey of innovative initiatives will include:

- Teacher-led projects
- School, community, and regional programs
- Government programs
- Online networks
- University and school-university initiatives.

The core methodology of compiling and reporting these case studies will require a mix of qualitative and quantitative research, including:

1. Literature review covering Australian and international examples
2. Case studies of 10–15 initiatives across Australia.

This work will be undertaken by Social Ventures Australia, in collaboration with Educational Transformations.

School–University partnerships

Our second initiative, to be commenced in Q3 2013, will focus on university partnerships with low-SES schools centred around initial teacher education. This is an area where some highly effective work has already been done, by individual schools and universities and through government-led initiatives, with much of this catalysed by the Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership.

If we are to move towards a system where all teacher trainees are able to spend a well-supported and meaningful part of their initial teacher education in the classroom, every university will need to develop close and mutually-beneficial relationships with partner schools. The gap identified has been the lack of a practical guide for universities and schools contemplating these partnership arrangements. For example, there is little guidance around the initial process of forming the partnership, identifying and avoiding the common pitfalls, and key success factors. There is also uncertainty around how to deepen the relationship over time beyond a transactional towards a mutually beneficial one. The challenge for governments, as well as philanthropists and others, is the provision of effective support for the development and sustainability of these relationships at scale.

SVA is looking to develop this practical guide from a series of case studies of successful, and not- so-successful, university–school partnerships, and to share it with universities and schools that are keen to progress in this area. We will also convene a workshop with interested governments to explore our findings and to discuss how governments can support these partnerships to grow and develop.

SVA will be commencing this project in late 2013.

The National Exceptional Teachers for Disadvantaged Schools Program

In section 1 of this document, we profiled QUT's Exceptional Teachers for Disadvantaged Communities program which works to develop high-quality teachers for disadvantaged urban, rural, regional and remote schools.

The ETDS program has graduated 43 students (2 cohorts of teachers), with a further 18 teachers graduating in a third cohort at the end of 2013. Its results have been exceptional: 87% of its graduates—the top students in their years—are now employed as teachers in schools with ICSEA scores less than 1000. ETDS remains the only mainstream 4-year Bachelor of Education program that overtly addresses teacher capacity in low-SES schools.

QUT, working together with SVA, has now seen the opportunity to share the highly successful ETDS approach with universities across Australia, working together to develop a national resource of up to 520 highly-qualified teachers who are committed and prepared to change outcomes for disadvantaged children by 2017, with another 210 additional teachers continuing to graduate annually.

This National ETDS Program has 3 core components that work to expand ETDS's reach and impact and ensure its long term viability:

1. The continued development of the QUT 'flagship' ETDS program including the extension of mentoring to graduate ETDS teachers
2. The replication of ETDS in partner universities (6 before 2016), and
3. The development of a national learning network of partner universities as champions and thought leaders, developing long term research and evaluation to better understand how to develop and retain high quality teachers in the schools that need them most.

SVA is now working with QUT to obtain philanthropic funding for this project.

Conclusion

The SVA Education Dialogue 2012 gave us the opportunity to look hard at the issue of quality teaching in disadvantaged schools, and how we can help ensure that new teachers are effectively developed to achieve this end.

We hope that the insights and actions overviewed in this document are inspiring – showing us a practical way forward to achieve scaled up solutions built on innovations that work.

Through this process, and that of the Education Dialogue 2012, SVA has been reflecting on its role as a catalyst organisation – working to identify a need and an opportunity for change, developing an understanding of what works in a particular context and how it can be effectively scaled and replicated, and to influence governments and other funders to make the policy and funding changes necessary to enable and sustain that change.

We look forward to exploring these ideas around the role of a catalyst organisation in this year's dialogue – SVA Education Dialogue 2013: Catalysing Change, with Vicki Phillips, Head of Education at the Gates Foundation, as our guest speaker and provocateur.

List of Participants

Caroline Aebersold, Chief Executive Officer, The Song Room
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Francine Barker, Principal, Kingston State College
Sharon Barker, Principal, Tara Shire State College
Chris Bonnor AM, Director, Big Picture Education Australia
Penelope Brown, Government and Community Relations Manager, Education, Social Ventures Australia
Bob Bryan AM, Chairman, Bryan Foundation
Bruce Burnett, Senior Lecturer, Queensland University of Technology, Co-Coordinator, Exceptional Teachers, for Disadvantaged Schools (ETDS)
Andrée Butler, Director, Flagship Strategies, Strategy and Review, Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD)
Karen Cain, Acting Regional Director, Gippsland Region, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (VIC)
Professor Brian Caldwell, Managing Director and Principal Consultant / Professor, Educational Transformations
Ricky Campbell-Allen, Director of the Centre for New Public Education, Foundation for Young Australians
Christine Cawsey AM, Principal, Rooty Hill High School
Sharon Cheers, Assistant Director: School Leadership, The Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales
Robin Crawford, Chairman, Goodstart Early Learning
Janet Davy, Executive Director, Office of the Director-General, NSW Department of Education and Communities
Alison Deans, Chief Executive Officer, netus, Board Member, Social Ventures Australia
Mark Diamond, Principal, Lansvale Public School
Eleanor Donovan, General Manager – Strategy, Goodstart Early Learning
Megan Enders, Program Director, Fogarty EDvance, (Fogarty Foundation)
Margery Evans, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)
Dave Faulkner, Co-Founder and Director, Education Changemakers
Jan Febey, Branch Manager, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
Emily Fuller, Program Officer, Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation
Norm Fuller, President, Queensland Secondary Principals Association
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Daisy Mallett, Senior Associate, King & Wood Mallesons
Susan Mann, Chief Executive Officer, Education Services Australia
Jack Manning Bancroft, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME)
Maxine McKew, Panel Facilitator, SVA Education Dialogue
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SVA gratefully acknowledges the support of our many generous investors and low bono and pro bono partners, without whom we would not be able to help transform the lives of so many disadvantaged Australians.



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