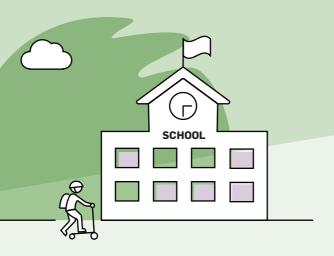**AMPLIFY INSIGHTS**

Education Inequity

HOME

Amplify Insights: Education Inequity

Part One: Drivers of Inequity

COMMUNITY

SCHOOL

Evidence shows there are specific, often overlapping, demographic groups who consistently bear the brunt of education inequity[30], perpetuated by interconnected and often discriminatory social forces, such as race, class, and gender[31].

The COVID-19 crisis has further perpetuated existing inequities in our education systems.

Belonging to a particular demographic group does not in itself equate to poor academic performance, nor is it a barrier to achieving successful educational outcomes. Rather, a range of societal and system factors can create structures that hinder the potential and growth of each student, independent of their capability or circumstances.

The Amplify Insights: Education Inequity report utilises an inclusive, evidence-based systems approach to propose changes in practice and policy making to remove education inequity in the early, middle and senior years of learning.

This report (Part One) identifies key drivers of inequity both inside and outside education settings for the selected demographic groups. Part Two examines levers of change, drawn from successful and promising evidence-based initiatives and sets out recommendations that act as a call for action to stakeholders. Together, the reports highlight where more needs to be done to create equitable opportunities and positive learning experiences for each child to thrive within and beyond education settings.
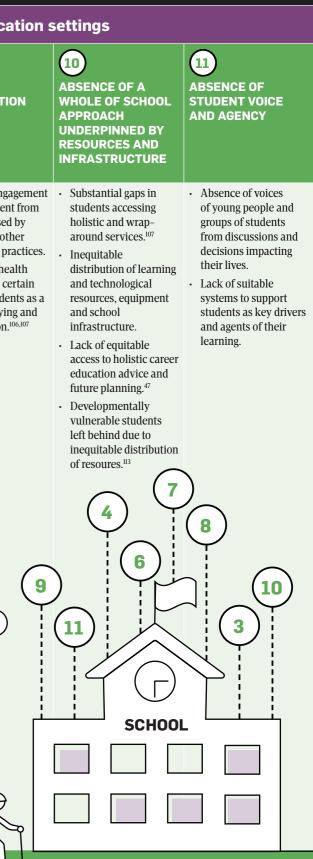
Drivers of education inequity

Key drivers of inequity OUTSIDE education settings

Key drivers of inequity INSIDE education settings

1 POVERTY, RESOURCES AND HOME ENVIRONMENT

- Meeting essential and basic familial needs. [70,71]
- Financial burden associated with meeting education needs. [69]
- Being in a vulnerable setting that is not caring or safe. [9]

2 LACK OF ACCESSIBLE, RESPONSIVE AND AFFORDABLE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE (ECEC)

- Less availability and accessibility of low-cost high-quality care in low socio-economic areas. [82]
- Lack of responsive, culturally informed ECEC services. [82]
- Challenges in meeting the school readiness needs of developmentally vulnerable children in low quality care settings.
- Widening gaps in later education arising out of ECEC disparities.

3 DISCONNECTION BETWEEN EDUCATION SETTINGS, HOME, AND COMMUNITY

- Groups of students missing out on accessing good quality academic and well-being support programs through community services and local networks.
- Lack of strong two-way partnership between education settings, communities and families, preventing active engagement with students' learning. [39]
- Absence of evidence of quality collaboration between educational agencies and wider community to support students' learning and post school aspirations.

4 SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES: SEGREGATION AND FUNDING MODELS

- Highly segregated and socially stratified school system compounding barriers for students in vulnerable contexts. [16]
- Lower proportion of students in socially mixed or average achieving schools than in other comparable OECD countries.
- Inequitable school funding model that is not aligned with agreed national educational priorities. [16]

5 PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

- Lack of awareness on impact of parent and family engagement on learning. [73]
- Lack of good guidance and appropriate support to families to be partners in learning. [73]
- Inadequate availability of positive parenting practices and strategies.

6 STANDARDISED TESTING

- Inability to fully capture the impact of engaged, authentic, and connected teaching and learning practices. [92]
- Inability to capture and record all academic and non-academic (e.g social) dimensions of learning. [27]
- Inability to provide real-time information on students current knowledge and skills and student growth over time. [23]
- Discriminatory towards certain group of students, leading to 'lower performance' as measured against western concepts of success. [53]
- Standardised testing utilised as a means to abdicate responsibility from ensuring equitable access to all students, including those with special learning needs.

7 ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL CURRICULUM

- Lack of a culturally responsive curriculum, that excludes alternative skills and knowledge.
- Fewer subject choices for schools in low socio-economic areas and those outside metropolitan areas, due to short staffing and under resourcing. [94]
- Curriculum inequality caused by segregated education model combined with high-stakes testing.

8 TEACHING AND STAFFING ISSUES

- Teacher wellbeing largely overlooked [97,98], especially in poorly resourced schools. [23]
- Persistent shortage of teachers and staff in schools that are in low socio-economic areas and those outside metropolitan areas, due to short staffing and under resourcing . [94]
- Lack of cultural literacy amongst teachers and school leaders. [101]
- Lack of recognition of teachers' roles and responsibilities and its relationship to wider systemic and structural problems. [16]

9 BULLYING, DISCRIMINATION AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

- Student disengagement and detachment from learning caused by bullying and other exclusionary practices.
- Poor mental health outcomes for certain groups of students as a result of bullying and discrimination. [106,107]

10 ABSENCE OF A WHOLE OF SCHOOL APPROACH UNDERPINNED BY RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- Substantial gaps in students accessing holistic and wrap-around services. [107]
- Inequitable distribution of learning and technological resources, equipment and school infrastructure.
- Lack of equitable access to holistic career education advice and future planning. [47]
- Developmentally vulnerable students left behind due to inequitable distribution of resoures. [113]

11 ABSENCE OF STUDENT VOICE AND AGENCY

- Absence of voices of young people and groups of students from discussions and decisions impacting their lives.
- Lack of suitable systems to support students as key drivers and agents of their learning.

AUSTRALIA DOES NOT YET HAVE AN EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION MODEL. EDUCATIONAL GAPS FOR CERTAIN DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS CONTINUE TO WIDEN AS FOLLOWS:

Children living in the most socio-economically disadvantaged areas are more than twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable compared to those in the most advantaged areas.[117]

People with disability have lower levels of educational attainment, with 1 in 3 people aged 20 and over completing Year 12 or equivalent, as compared to 2 in 3 people without disability in the same age range.[7]

By Year 9, low-achieving students are more than three years behind high-achieving students in academic performance.[6]

Only 79% of Year 9 Indigenous students living in major cities are meeting national minimum reading standards in NAPLAN, compared to 92% of non-Indigenous students, with figures worse for Indigenous students living in remote and very remote locations as compared to non-Indigenous students.[5]

A lack of education outcomes data and understanding of issues affecting refugee and asylum seeker students means vulnerabilities including isolation and exclusion are perpetuated.
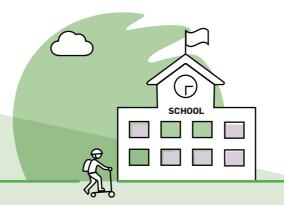
Barrier to equitable access to education services in rural, regional and remote areas results in widening gaps in learning outcomes and post-school opportunities.[52]

HOME

COMMUNITY

SCHOOL

Achieving an equitable education system not only requires improving outcomes of those who routinely perform less well than their peers, but also ensuring quality learning opportunities for all children and young people. We must consider factors inside and outside of school and think of the education journey as a partnership between different members of the community.

It's time we started measuring success in learning by looking beyond academic performance and skills. We need to move beyond commonly reported education indicators and outcomes in order to fully capture all students' characteristics, capabilities and holistic learning experiences.

Solutions are complex, and levers require genuine commitment, partnership and support from all sectors. Opportunities and experiences need to be tailored to students' circumstances to ensure they are actively and productively engaged in schooling and beyond. Evidence based successful or promising programs and interventions that work for certain demographic groups must be examined to address the drivers of inequity. Rather than following a 'what works' agenda, we must ensure that equity in education follows a 'what might work for whom, in what context and under what circumstances' agenda.

Part Two of the Education Insights Report examines selected levers of change (drawn from evidence-based programs or interventions), outcomes derived from those levers, and agents who need to activate those levers to achieve outcomes. A critical examination of the proposed levers will allow us to see where the gaps are and where more could be done to address issues and identify perceived opportunities. For instance, this could be collecting more evidence where there is little or none, or making reforms or policy changes to capture all student learnings and experiences.

Part Two of the report will suggest recommendations and calls for action to:

1. Re-think what counts as knowledge
2. Build a strong evidence base of effective practices
3. Share, scale and replicate successful learnings and interventions across education settings and in community

We can do much better in providing equitable, high-quality learning opportunities for all young people. Australia should strive to commit to achieving an equitable and excellent education system that values all students' experiences and respects student voices in shaping their destiny.

For our full Education Insights research report and references please visit csi.edu.au/education-insights.