

Amplify Insights: Education Inequity

Part Two: Levers of Change

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PRESENTED BY:



CENTRE
for SOCIAL
IMPACT



UNSW
SYDNEY

Amplify.csi.edu.au

AUTHORS

- Meera Varadharajan – Centre for Social Impact
- Pamela Buena – Centre for Social Impact
- Jack Noone – Centre for Social Impact
- Megan Weier – Centre for Social Impact
- Graham Brown – Centre for Social Impact

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Insights reports

The *Amplify Insights: Education Inequity* reportsⁱ have identified key issues causing inequity in education, and focused on the opportunities and enablers that can be activated and amplified to create positive learning experiences for all students to thrive. Covering from early to senior years, the *Education Inequity* reports have focused on five demographic groups of students: those from low socio-economic or socio-educational households; from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background;ⁱⁱ with a disability;ⁱⁱⁱ who are refugees or migrants from a non-English speaking background; and who live in rural, regional or remote areas.

Major findings

Eleven major Drivers of Inequity in education have previously been identified,^{iv} and are summarised in Table 1. These key drivers are informed by the premise that education inequity is not a siloed issue; rather it connects with other important societal issues and can have varying degrees of influence on outcomes. The effect of inequity means disenfranchised students in vulnerable contexts are likely to fare worse in participation and engagement in schooling and in achieving minimum proficiency standards in their learning compared to the national average.

Table 1: Summary of inequity drivers outside and inside education settings

KEY DRIVERS OUTSIDE EDUCATION SETTINGS	KEY DRIVERS INSIDE EDUCATION SETTINGS
1. Poverty, resources and home environment	6. Standardised testing
2. Lack of accessible, responsive and affordable early childhood education and care	7. One-size-fits-all curriculum
3. Disconnection between education settings, home, and community	8. Teaching and staffing issues
4. Systems and structures – segregation and funding models	9. Bullying, discrimination and social isolation
5. Parent and family engagement	10. Absence of a whole-of-school approach underpinned by resources and infrastructure
	11. Absence of student voice and agency

This report examines the actions or the levers that need to be activated to address five of these Drivers of Inequity in education. The report is underpinned by the principles of providing free, accessible, inclusive and quality early childhood education and care to all children; strong partnerships; and developing a shared understanding of what equitable education means. Principles were informed by the key messages that came from the report programs, levers and recommendations.

Sixteen levers were synthesised from a systematic review of 45 evidence-based programs and culturally inclusive studies based in Australia (Table 2). These levers were chosen because they focus on achieving educational and non-educational outcomes for young people through partnerships that exist both outside and inside education settings, and because they lead to actionable recommendations by key stakeholder groups. Aligned with the five chosen drivers, these levers reflect collaborative solutions between education settings, families and communities, bringing together all stakeholders working to advance outcomes for our young people.

ⁱ Refer to Appendix I for details of steps involved in report preparation.

ⁱⁱ The terms 'First Nations', 'Indigenous', 'Aboriginal' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' are used interchangeably to reflect the diversity of Indigenous peoples and their various preferences for terms of address (Moyle, 2019).

ⁱⁱⁱ Students with disability include students with intellectual, cognitive or physical disability or neurological differences.

^{iv} Details of full report (Part One) can be found on [the Centre for Social Impact website](#).

Table 2: Levers of Change

Drivers to be addressed	Levers
1. Lack of accessible and responsive early childhood education and care	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set up bodies to coordinate services that appropriately meet community need in early childhood education and care 2. Utilise a trauma-informed model targeting families experiencing significant stress and social disadvantage 3. Employ an ecological and holistic approach to school readiness: one that accounts for the diverse roles of multiple stakeholders in the transition process 4. Improve access to early interventions and provide inclusive pre-school settings 5. Embed Indigenous histories, cultures and languages in all aspects of early childhood education and care services
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Disconnection between education setting, home and community 3. Bullying, discrimination and social isolation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Establish two-way partnerships giving communities a 'sense of ownership' and involvement in education settings 7. Provide students (and families) with learning opportunities which extend outside of education settings 8. Ensure students have access to positive role models through mentoring 9. Engage young people more fully into school and community life through social learning programs 10. Engage young people in programs that focus on building their cultural identity and taking pride in their identity 11. Develop partnerships with community/industry/university focusing on successful transition from school
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. 'One size fits all' curriculum 5. Absence of a whole-of-school approach underpinned by resources and infrastructure 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Provide alternate learning models and flexible options for students to re-engage with learning 13. Adapt pedagogy to suit learners' dispositions and address learning difficulties through specific strategies and interventions 14. Offer welcoming, easily navigable, and inclusive classroom and school environment 15. Build a school culture that promotes good teaching, trusting relationships and pastoral care 16. Embed Indigenous perspectives, language, culture and knowledge into the curriculum and teaching practices (that is, culturally sustaining pedagogy)

22 recommendations were identified in response to these 16 levers. Recommendations were developed by synthesising key messages derived from the programs and studies examined, and by drawing on best practice in research and evaluation. These recommendations can be actioned by multiple groups of stakeholders including government, philanthropic organisations, community stakeholders and school leaders. The links between drivers, levers, recommendations and stakeholders can be found [here](#).

Recommendations for government/philanthropic organisations

1. Fund wrap-around initiatives that focus on early childhood service coordination, community embeddedness, parental involvement and service access to address unmet early childhood and health needs in hard-to-reach households
2. Resolve or remove arbitrary administrative boundaries and improve infrastructure and capability in remote geographic sites to establish and implement programs that have significant impact
3. Recognise transition to school as a critically important educational phase and provide structured, targeted and ongoing funding to enable effective locally driven transition programs
4. Provide greater individualised support for at-risk special needs students in early years of education
5. Expand or create programs to benefit families and children who experience intersecting forms of disadvantage across a number of dimensions
6. Support, reinforce and incentivise partnerships between schools, universities and communities for

creating linkages and diverse pathways to education and employment in local and outer regions

7. Invest in engagement programs that have successfully demonstrated measured and reported outcomes and socio-economic benefits in order to reach more students in need
8. Invest in flexible education models that embed non-ATAR based learning pathways to capture general capability skills and competencies acquired outside of education settings

Recommendations for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) service providers

9. Replicate programs that lead towards successful transition, adopting a holistic approach framed around five elements: ready school; ready child, ready families, ready community and ready early childhood services
10. Increase access to more inclusive preschool settings, recognising they are one type of useful early intervention among other services
11. Explicitly acknowledge the limitations of western definitions of 'school readiness' in transition programs

Recommendations for community stakeholders and organisations working with education providers

12. Develop cultural competence training for schools and service organisations on how to work and engage with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and families, and communities and students from non-English speaking backgrounds

Recommendations for school leaders and educators

13. Improve evidence base to address the gaps in high-quality longitudinal data and inconsistent approaches to program evaluation and by incorporating the voices of students and families in regular assessment and evaluation practices
14. Establish viable partnership models that effectively leverage community members' experience and knowledge to implement whole-of school strategies that support students towards purposeful and inclusive learning
15. Systematically implement early intervention tools to address learning difficulties in a timely manner

Recommendations for all stakeholders

16. Develop and implement system level initiatives: school-based, school-linked, community-based or a combination of these, that work in partnership with external agencies to improve the range of extended services to students, schools, families and local community
17. Invest in processes and training to ensure schools have culturally appropriate support systems in place to welcome and enrol students from culturally diverse backgrounds

Recommendations for school leaders and educators and community stakeholders and organisations working with education providers

18. Promote and enhance the benefits of evidence-based long term mentoring programs across large communities in Australia
19. Create opportunities for external program facilitators and school staff to collaborate, acknowledging their complementary strengths in relation to building outcomes for students
20. Replicate or transfer successful partnership models in Indigenous education using a cautious approach to similar school contexts
21. Adapt changes in curriculum to support the multiplicity of social and cultural identities so that all

students are balanced in both worlds, strong in both their Western knowledge and English and their Indigenous identity, cultural knowledge and language

22. Develop culturally relevant pedagogic and curriculum programs that seek to impact more directly on learning outcomes

Recommendations synthesis

There is much to do to counteract Western understandings of 'knowledge' that significantly disadvantage those from non-Western backgrounds. Skills and competencies acquired outside education settings need to be properly recognised against defined standards. Strong and robust evidence is needed to confidently prescribe the program(s) as best practice models.

We also need to address education inequity in the context of COVID-19 and the lost learning opportunities that have most impacted already disadvantaged students. On the other hand, COVID-19 has also presented new opportunities in terms of young people being more actively engaged in community and service activities; this should be considered to shift thinking about what counts as success in learning and how to create equitable education for all students.

The key messages that come from synthesising the report programs, levers and recommendations are:

- Learnings gained outside school be potentially aligned and captured under the existing sets of general capability skills within the curriculum.
- Flexible frameworks and non-traditional education models be considered as potential alternative ways for valuing outside school experiences and recognising corresponding outcomes outside the curriculum.
- Steps be taken to actively engage and encourage students to be part of the collection and documentation of relevant experiences and associated outcomes.
- A robust 'evidence-based ecosystem' be developed to generate continuous and sustained improvement in schools, systems, sectors and policy, and a consistent and cautious approach be adopted with respect to culturally appropriate program evaluation among First Nations students.
- Initiatives and programs shown to be promising or successful be adapted or scaled up to increase reach among different community settings.

What next?

While the 22 recommendations can be actioned now, it is important we build upon existing important work already being done in this space and approach solutions from a systems thinking lens as a joint and coordinated effort between different stakeholder groups. Targeted and sustainable investment in programs and people is essential to implement the recommendations.

To facilitate next steps in the process, the Centre for Social Impact will work with ecosystem stakeholders to prioritise recommendations for implementation, identify other barriers that need to be overcome, and identify and address other knowledge gaps in policies and practices.

We will take our conclusions to young people and families to determine what they see as important and incorporate what we've missed. Together, this information will be compiled to influence our national educational strategy, creating the foundation for achieving both educational equity and an excellent education system.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

Australia ranks in the bottom third of OECD countries in providing equitable access to quality education.¹⁸

We do not have an equitable and inclusive education system. While postcodes should not determine destiny, postcodes, family background, and parent income levels are persistent determinants of student performance.^{2,9} For those left behind, the achievement gap widens through the early, middle and senior years of schooling. Low achievers in Year 3 are 2 years and 8 months behind high achievers, a gap which grows to 3 years and 8 months by Year 9.³¹

There are also noticeable patterns to educational inequity. Evidence shows there are specific, often overlapping, demographic groups who are most likely to experience poorer educational outcomes, perpetuated by interconnected and often discriminatory social forces, such as race, class and gender.²¹ They include students from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background, students with a disability, who are refugees or migrants from a non-English speaking background, and who live in a rural, regional or remote area. These groups are not mutually exclusive, with some students falling into more than one category and therefore experiencing greater risk of poor outcomes.

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 structural barriers that hinder the potential and growth of each student, independent of their capability or circumstances.⁷⁷

All too often, developmental and educational outcomes follow social gradients: the more disadvantaged one's circumstances, the worse one's long-term education, health and wellbeing outcomes are likely to be.⁴ Widening disparities compromise future education, employment and other opportunities.^{31,39} Gaps between rich and poor also cause low social mobility across the different dimensions of earnings, education, occupation and health.²⁴

At the time this report was being written, the COVID-19 pandemic was continuing. The crisis has further perpetuated existing inequities in our education systems. Students who were already disadvantaged are now facing the greatest burden, with inequitable access to technology and connectivity to take part in remote learning, fewer learning resources at their disposal, and their home environments often not being conducive to learning and education preparation.⁴⁶

Digital exclusion is a significant driver of inequity for families and students experiencing lack of access to affordable devices for learning and/or without good quality consistent internet connectivity. About 1.3 million Australian households are not connected to the internet, and one in 10 households do not have a smartphone.⁷ The cost of services hits these vulnerable groups hardest, impacting their capacity to learn and achieve outcomes.

Digital poverty, when combined with a lack of face-to-face learning opportunities during lockdowns, significantly impacted the ability of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to be active participants in their education.¹⁹

Similarly, schools classified as disadvantaged prior to the pandemic faced further challenges as a result of not being equipped to provide the necessary support during the pivot to remote learning.

The crisis has therefore deeply disadvantaged students who were already in vulnerable circumstances, affecting both their education and mental health outcomes.⁷⁷ Early data from Australia suggest disadvantaged students are likely to have learnt at only about 50% of their regular rate, losing approximately a month of learning over a 2-month lockdown in early 2020.⁷³ Lost learning opportunities in turn are likely to translate into deeper losses of lifetime earnings for disadvantaged students.³⁷ While the long-term impact of the lockdowns of 2021 on students are still being examined and understood, clear evidence is starting to emerge from international studies that disadvantaged students are affected the most by school closures.^{10,36} Analysis from the UK indicates the learning loss for disadvantaged students has been the equivalent of losing between one third and two thirds of the progress made over the past decade in closing the disadvantage gap.¹⁰

There is no doubt that the learning, wellbeing and mental health outcomes of disadvantaged students in Australia have been severely affected by the current crisis. This has been compounded by the worsening of systemic issues around the housing crisis, and employment and economic instability faced by many households.⁷⁴ Parental stress can be a significant contributor to disengagement in learning, making education less of a priority.

Studies show that learning occurs best when it is contextualised to support individual students' needs and circumstances. For instance, when learning occurs in small groups, it yields far better results in improving student outcomes. This is particularly applicable for students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, or who show early signs of disengagement. Tutoring is an effective mechanism to support students and is proving to be successful in helping those catch up on lost learning due to school closures in 2020 and 2021.⁷³

Similarly, learning and pedagogy that prioritises First Nations culture, knowledge and language, is built on shared understanding and values, is culturally responsive to diverse backgrounds and approached from a strength-based lens, is shown to achieve better outcomes.¹⁶ Another crucial element in improving outcomes is to think of education as a partnership between groups of people who are invested in better outcomes for young people. Other factors exist outside of education settings that influence a young person's learning, and acknowledging the role of different stakeholders (community, educational organisations, and family members) is an important step to achieving change.

The disruptions caused by the pandemic have created opportunities to think about how and where learning occurs. With schools and classrooms no longer the sole pillar of learning, learning is now considered more ubiquitous than ever. As a result of the lockdown and school closures, young people were spending more time at home and in their community. There were more opportunities for young people to engage in activities such as volunteering to help family or neighbours, developing skills outside of their normal school settings.

Even prior to the pandemic, young people, especially from diverse backgrounds, were engaging in practices and acquiring skills in non-school settings.⁷¹ These skills could include those learnt as part of cultural practices for First Nations students on Country, and through extra-curricular and community cultural involvement. In addition, remote learning has created more opportunities for schools and families to connect with each other. Teachers reported more interaction with families during the lockdown in ways that did not exist before, creating a better understanding of each other's needs and responsibilities. This resulted in improved relationships, with greater parental engagement in their child's learning.⁷⁴ The shifts brought about by COVID-19 and the breaking down of barriers between schools, families and communities has brought these outside school learnings and experiences into even sharper focus.

The COVID-19 crisis has reminded us that the widening education equity gap must be addressed so that no student is left behind. Now more than ever, we need to invest in the future of our students to try and effectively remediate the immediate and long-term losses suffered by disadvantaged students.

We need to learn and build on the lessons in flexibility and adaptability the COVID-19 crisis has taught us, and be open to examining the opportunities that the pandemic has created over the past 2 years. We need to be committed to making Australia's education system inclusive, equitable and excellent for all its students.

2.2 Amplify Insights Education Inequity Reports

The *Amplify Insights: Education Inequity* reports have identified issues causing inequity and focused on the opportunities and enablers that can be activated and amplified to create positive learning experiences that allow all students to thrive. Covering early years, middle years and senior years, the Education Inequity reports have focused on five key demographic groups of students: those from low socio-economic or socio-educational household, from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background, with a disability, who are refugees or migrants from a non-English speaking background, and who live in a rural, regional or remote area.

The reports are guided by three interlinked questions and informed by the principles of inclusivity, a systems thinking approach, and evidence-based models.

The three research questions are covered across two reports, as outlined in Table 3.

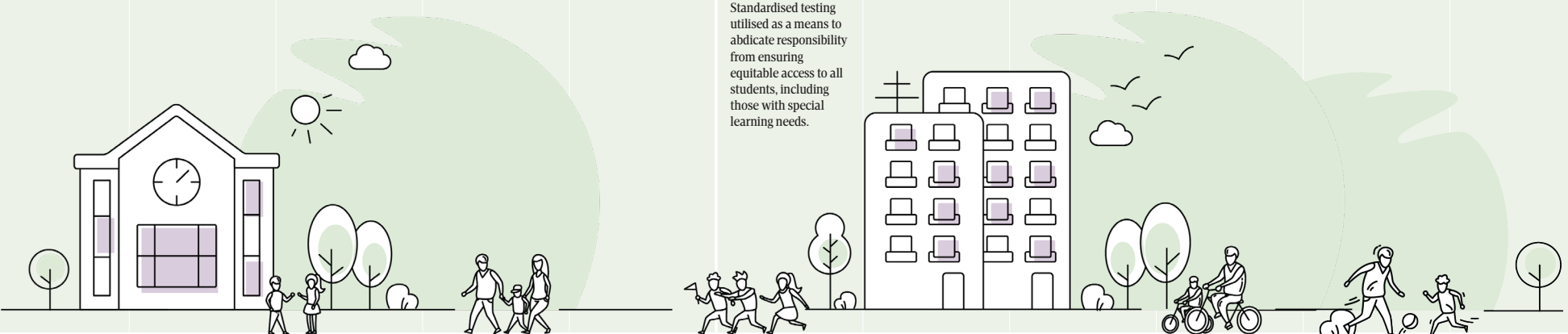
Table 3: Research questions

1 What are the key Drivers of Inequity in education?	Part One: Drivers of Inequity
2 What are the effects of inequitable learning opportunities and experiences?	
3 What can be done, both inside and outside the school gates, to reduce these inequities?	Part Two: Levers of Change

To address the drivers of education inequity, there are a range of levers that can be activated by different stakeholders to create system-level change. The Drivers of Inequity and the Levers of Change are presented in two figures below. Drivers are identified in Figure 1 and the levers are change are identified in Figure 2.

Figure 1: Drivers of Education Inequity

Key Drivers of Inequity OUTSIDE education settings					Key Drivers of Inequity INSIDE education settings					
1 POVERTY, RESOURCES AND HOME ENVIRONMENT	2 LACK OF ACCESSIBLE, RESPONSIVE AND AFFORDABLE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE (ECEC)	3 DISCONNECTION BETWEEN EDUCATION SETTINGS, HOME, AND COMMUNITY	4 SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES: SEGREGATION AND FUNDING MODELS	5 PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT	6 STANDARDISED TESTING	7 ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL CURRICULUM	8 TEACHING AND STAFFING ISSUES	9 BULLYING, DISCRIMINATION AND SOCIAL ISOLATION	10 ABSENCE OF A WHOLE-OF-SCHOOL APPROACH UNDERPINNED BY RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE	11 ABSENCE OF STUDENT VOICE AND AGENCY
<p>Meeting essential and basic familial needs.^{70,71}</p> <p>Financial burden associated with meeting education needs.⁶⁹</p> <p>Being in a vulnerable setting that is not caring or safe.⁹</p>	<p>Less availability and accessibility of low-cost high-quality care in low socio-economic areas.⁸²</p> <p>Lack of responsive, culturally informed ECEC services.⁸²</p> <p>Challenges in meeting the school readiness needs of developmentally vulnerable children in low quality care settings.</p> <p>Widening gaps in later education arising out of ECEC disparities.</p>	<p>Groups of students missing out on accessing good quality academic and well-being support programs through community services and local networks.</p> <p>Lack of strong two-way partnership between education settings, communities and families, preventing active engagement with students' learning.³⁹</p> <p>Absence of evidence of quality collaboration between educational agencies and wider community to support students' learning and post school aspirations.</p>	<p>Highly segregated and socially stratified school system compounding barriers for students in vulnerable contexts.¹⁶</p> <p>Lower proportion of students in socially mixed or average achieving schools than in other comparable OECD countries.</p> <p>Inequitable school funding model that is not aligned with agreed national educational priorities.¹⁶</p>	<p>Lack of awareness on impact of parent and family engagement on learning.⁷³</p> <p>Lack of good guidance and appropriate support to families to be partners in learning.⁷³</p> <p>Inadequate availability of positive parenting practices and strategies.</p>	<p>Inability to fully capture the impact of engaged, authentic, and connected teaching and learning practices.⁹²</p> <p>Inability to capture and record all academic and non-academic (e.g. social) dimensions of learning.²⁷</p> <p>Inability to provide real-time information on students current knowledge and skills and student growth over time.²³</p> <p>Discriminatory towards certain group of students, leading to 'lower performance' as measured against western concepts of success.³³</p> <p>Standardised testing utilised as a means to abdicate responsibility from ensuring equitable access to all students, including those with special learning needs.</p>	<p>Lack of a culturally responsive curriculum, that excludes alternative skills and knowledge.</p> <p>Fewer subject choices for schools in low socio-economic areas and those outside metropolitan areas, due to short staffing and under resourcing.⁹⁴</p> <p>Curriculum inequality caused by segregated education model combined with high-stakes testing.</p>	<p>Teacher wellbeing largely overlooked,^{97,98} especially in poorly resourced schools.²³</p> <p>Persistent shortage of teachers and staff in schools that are in low socio-economic areas and those outside metropolitan areas.</p> <p>Lack of cultural literacy amongst teachers and school leaders.¹⁰¹</p> <p>Lack of recognition of teachers' roles and responsibilities and its relationship to wider systemic and structural problems.¹⁶</p>	<p>Student disengagement and detachment from learning caused by bullying and other exclusionary practices.</p> <p>Poor mental health outcomes for certain groups of students as a result of bullying and discrimination.^{106,107}</p>	<p>Substantial gaps in students accessing holistic and wrap-around services.¹⁰⁷</p> <p>Inequitable distribution of learning and technological resources, equipment and school infrastructure.</p> <p>Lack of equitable access to holistic career education advice and future planning.⁴⁷</p> <p>Developmentally vulnerable students left behind due to inequitable distribution of resources.¹¹³</p>	<p>Absence of voices of young people and groups of students from discussions and decisions impacting their lives.</p> <p>Lack of suitable systems to support students as key drivers and agents of their learning.</p>



In Figure 2, the drivers are listed horizontally at the top of each column, with the associated levers for each driver listed below. The levers have been developed after a comprehensive review of programs, interventions and culturally inclusive studies to address education and non-education outcomes. Some of the levers have been developed after examining programs and studies that pertain to First Nations students, their families and communities. The programs and studies reviewed relate to the five key demographic groups across early, middle and senior years. For full details of the review methodology, refer to Appendix 2.

Taken together, Figures 1 and 2 summarise the overall study undertaken as part of the *Amplify Insights Education Inequity* reports.

Amplify Insights: Education Inequity, Part Two has prioritised 16 Levers of Change (highlighted in Fig.2) that are significant to addressing inequity both inside and outside education settings, and which respond to corresponding drivers.

Figure 2: Levers of Change: Education Inequity^v

Key Drivers of Inequity OUTSIDE education settings					Key Drivers of Inequity INSIDE education settings					
1 POVERTY, RESOURCES AND HOME ENVIRONMENT	2 LACK OF ACCESSIBLE, RESPONSIVE AND AFFORDABLE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE (ECEC)	3 DISCONNECTION BETWEEN EDUCATION SETTINGS, HOME, AND COMMUNITY	4 SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES: SEGREGATION AND FUNDING MODELS*	5 PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT	6 STANDARDISED TESTING	7 ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL CURRICULUM	8 TEACHING AND STAFFING ISSUES	9 BULLYING, DISCRIMINATION AND SOCIAL ISOLATION	10 ABSENCE OF A WHOLE-OF-SCHOOL APPROACH UNDERPINNED BY RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE	11 ABSENCE OF STUDENT VOICE AND AGENCY
LEVERS OF CHANGE	Facilitate access to holistic support services, both inside and outside education settings.	Set up bodies to coordinate services that appropriately meet community need in early childhood education and care.	Establish two-way partnerships giving communities a sense of 'ownership' and involvement in education settings.	Build relationships between family and education settings early and develop positive parenting skills.	Employ measurement tools that are sensitive to Indigenous cultural perspectives and ways of learning.	Provide alternative learning models and flexible options for students to re-engage with learning.	Create conditions for embedding high expectations from all teaching staff.	Engage young people more fully into school and community life through social learning programs.	Provide teachers with appropriate resources relevant to equity groups, combined with pedagogical support/training.	Provide students with skills and support to express their voice and enact leadership.
	Ensure students have access to supportive and well-resourced learning environments outside of education settings.	Utilise a trauma informed model targeting families experiencing significant stress and social disadvantage.	Provide students (and families) with learning opportunities which extend outside of education settings.	Ensure open and genuine communication between education staff, families and communities.		Adapt pedagogy to suit learners' dispositions and address learning difficulties through specific strategies and interventions.	Attract and retain high- quality educators and leaders, particularly Indigenous educators.	Implement whole school preventative measures to racism.	Incentivise students to attend school through engagement programs.	Provide opportunities for students to become peer mentors who would support other students in improving academic skills.
	Provide financial support (e.g. scholarships) to assist students to remain in education.	Employ an ecological and holistic approach to school readiness, one that accounts for the diverse roles of multiple stakeholders in the transition process.	Ensure students have access to positive role models through mentoring.	Support families in navigating the transition process from home to boarding.		Embed Indigenous perspectives, language, culture and knowledge into the curriculum and teaching practices (i.e. culturally-sustaining pedagogy).	Ensure effective leadership in education settings.	Build positive and trusting relationships between educators, staff and students.	Build a school culture that promotes good teaching, trusting relationships and pastoral care.	
		Embed Indigenous histories, cultures and languages in all aspects of ECEC services.	Engage young people through programs that focus on building cultural identity and taking pride in their identity.	Provide targeted support to ease financial burden: support for travel to education settings.		Draw on and build the expertise of local language Aboriginal educators to embed culturally responsive teaching methods.		Use targeted recruitment and training to improve staff mental health and skills to support student wellbeing.	Offer welcoming, easily navigable and inclusive classroom and school environment.	
		Improve access to early interventions and provide inclusive preschool settings.	Develop partnerships with community/ university/industry focusing on successful transition from school.			Increase bilingual educators and instruction in teaching and curriculum.			Provide individualised targeted learning for students.	
						Embed trauma-informed positive education strategies and elements into curriculum.				

^v Depending on evidence found, some drivers have several, few or no Levers of Change. Refer to Appendix 3 for a full explanation of Figure 2.

2.3 Overview of Part Two: Levers of Change

The key elements of this report are:

- **Prioritising selected levers and alignment with corresponding drivers (Section 2.4)**
- **Summary of programs and evidence for key demographic groups (with additional information for First Nations students) that led to identifying the levers, indicating areas where more can be done and by whom (Sections 3-5)**
- **Report findings summary (Section 6)**
- **What next? Creating a road map for change (Section 7)**
- **Report conclusions (Section 8)**

2.4 Prioritising selected levers: What works and why?

In this report, the Levers of Change that most impact the stated demographic groups have been prioritised to address issues of inequity inside and outside education settings. Specifically, these levers have been chosen because they:

- **Are supported by evidence-based programs and culturally inclusive studies that focus on achieving educational and non-educational outcomes for young people across early to senior years**
- **Focus on what needs to happen through partnerships outside and inside education settings**
- **Lead to actionable recommendations by key stakeholder groups**

To access the 16 prioritised levers, the report identified three activation points:

1. **Laying foundations for accessible and quality early childhood care and education**
2. **Strengthening connections between home, education setting and community**
3. **Building an inclusive and holistic school culture, with adaptive and flexible learning frameworks**

Activation points act as a reminder there are certain important elements that contribute to inclusive and equitable education. For example, accessible and quality early childhood care and education matters because early learning has lifelong consequences for health, wellbeing and future learning. It is also recognised that the education journey of a child or young person is built on strong and successful partnerships between home, school and community, all working in unison to achieve common goals for the student. There needs to be a holistic and inclusive approach in all education settings if we are to enable all students to thrive and succeed in pursuing their goals and aspirations.

Together, the activation points and the Levers of Change represent important considerations when understanding educational inequity in the context of other societal issues and when working towards achieving our future education goals beyond COVID-19.

The alignment between the five chosen drivers and the 16 Levers of Change is outlined in Table 4. Levers are matched with driver headings that closely align with the issues outlined under the relevant driver heading. The report distils specific and actionable recommendations that can build upon programs that are already being delivered.

Table 4: Drivers and levers alignment

Driver to be addressed	Activation points	Levers of Change
Lack of accessible and responsive early childhood education and care	Laying foundations for accessible and quality early childhood care and education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set up bodies to coordinate services that appropriately meet community need in early childhood education and care 2. Utilise a trauma-informed model targeting families experiencing significant stress and social disadvantage 3. Employ an ecological and holistic approach to school readiness: one that accounts for the diverse roles of multiple stakeholders in the transition process 4. Improve access to early interventions and provide inclusive pre-school settings 5. Embed Indigenous histories, cultures and languages in all aspects of early childhood education and care services
<p>Disconnection between education setting, home and community</p> <p>Bullying, discrimination and social isolation</p>	Strengthening home-education setting-community connections	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Establish two-way partnership giving communities a 'sense of ownership' and involvement in education settings 7. Provide students (and families) with learning opportunities which extend outside of education settings 8. Ensure students have access to positive role models through mentoring 9. Engage young people more fully into school and community life through social learning programs 10. Engage young people in programs that focus on building their cultural identity and taking pride in their identity 11. Develop partnerships with community/industry/university focusing on successful transition from school
<p>'One size fits all' curriculum</p> <p>Absence of a whole of a school approach underpinned by resources and infrastructure</p>	Building an inclusive and holistic school culture, with adaptive and flexible learning frameworks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Provide alternate learning models and flexible options for students to re-engage with learning 13. Adapt pedagogy to suit learners' dispositions and address learning difficulties through specific strategies and interventions 14. Offer welcoming, easily navigable, and inclusive classroom and school environment 15. Build a school culture that promotes good teaching, trusting relationships and pastoral care 16. Embed Indigenous perspectives, language, culture and knowledge into the curriculum and teaching practices (that is, culturally sustaining pedagogy)

3. ACTIVATION POINT 1: LAYING FOUNDATIONS FOR ACCESSIBLE AND QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

Levers of Change associated with this activation point are:

1. Set up bodies to coordinate services that appropriately meet community need in early childhood education and care
2. Utilise a trauma-informed model targeting families experiencing significant stress and social disadvantage
3. Employ an ecological and holistic approach to school readiness: one that accounts for the diverse roles of multiple stakeholders in the transition process
4. Improve access to early interventions and provide inclusive pre-school settings
5. Embed Indigenous histories, cultures and languages in all aspects of early childhood education and care services

Table 5 provides a summary of evidence found for each of the five Levers of Change under the activation point 'Laying foundations for accessible and quality early childhood education and care'. Evidence was drawn from an examination of specific programs and existing studies that examined programs under early childhood education and care. There is evidence that partnership models that work towards coordinating and connecting various services to families improve early childhood outcomes.

For families experiencing significant social disadvantage, a trauma-informed approach can have an important impact on children's cognitive and non-cognitive development. Early childhood settings that are inclusive and child-initiated with strong adult engagement enable children to reach their full potential. The expansion of high-quality transition programs in the early and middle years have a high chance of improving student's social and emotional skills if they are implemented with fidelity. A detailed description of how programs and evaluations worked, and examples of outcomes achieved, are provided under Appendix 4.

Table 5: Summary of evidence

Levers of Change	Program or evidence	How program works	Examples of outcomes achieved
Set up bodies to coordinate services that appropriately meet community need in early childhood education and care	<u>Communities for Children (CFC) initiative</u> ⁵⁷	1. Providing a greater number of early childhood services based on unmet community needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased community social cohesion because of higher involvement in community service activities Improved service coordination including increase in number, type and capacity of community services Improved skills including increased levels of receptive vocabulary and verbal ability Improved home environment with parents feeling more effective in their role
		2. Providing better service coordination to children and families in hard-to-reach groups	
		3. Facilitating community embeddedness in early childhood service provision	
		4. Utilising a 'Facilitating Partners Model' in asset mapping, community development, program establishment, facilitation, coordination, implementation and support	
	<u>Playgroup Development Consultants (PDCs)</u> ⁵⁴	1. Connecting families in remote communities with local early childhood services to increase the promotion of, and participation in, community playgroups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased parental awareness of alternate childhood services, like playgroups, and importance of early years learning Community capacity-building and social capital benefits because of consultants' role in establishing bonding connections
		2. Establishing primary and secondary bonding connections between families and local communities and health and early childhood service types	
Utilise a trauma-informed model targeting families experiencing significant stress and social disadvantage	<u>Early Years Education Program (EYEP)</u> ⁷⁶	1. Offering a centre-based, year-round early years care and education program for at-risk children to redress learning deficiencies and reduce family stress and its effect on children's development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased cognitive and language skills and improvement in social emotional development Positive impact on protective factors including resilience Reduced psychological distress among primary caregivers
		2. Implementing high staff/child ratios, qualified and experienced staff, inclusion of an infant mental health consultant as a member of the staff, and a rigorously developed curriculum	
Employ an ecological and holistic approach to school readiness: one that accounts for the diverse roles of multiple stakeholders in the transition process	<u>Holistic transition programs</u> (Examples: <u>FUN Friends</u> , <u>PATHS</u> , <u>Aussie Optimism</u> , <u>MINDUP Program</u>) ³³	1. Supporting play-based activities such as role-play, puppets, games, storytelling, music, movement and art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and families feeling comfortable, connected, confident and engaged with their school environment and community because of facilitation of the transition process Increased positive social behaviour, reduced conduct problems, and reduced emotional distress Improved working relationships between families, early childhood services and schools
		2. Providing strategies and lessons on self-awareness, positive mindset and helping to build a 'growth mindset', self-efficacy, academic thinking and perseverance skills	
Improve access to early interventions and provide inclusive pre-school settings	<u>Inclusive transition programs</u> (Examples: <u>Perry Pre-school</u> , <u>Building Blocks program</u> , <u>The Incredible Years Parenting program</u>) ^{15,45}	1. Providing access to a range of interventions for children with disability, such as participation in high-quality pre-school, home visits, and parent training, that support both children and their families in children's 'natural' environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved overall family functioning Increased engagement as a key measure of success
		2. Creating inclusive environments in early childhood settings that promote child-initiated activities, with strong adult engagement	
		3. Linking childhood services for children and families	
		4. Working closely with NDIS to support the needs of families	

Box 1: What more can be done for laying the foundations for accessible and quality early childhood education and care: pointers from evidence

Consider the merits of setting up wrap-around initiatives that focus on early childhood service coordination, community development, parental involvement and service access to address early childhood and health needs in hard-to-reach households.

Resolve or remove arbitrary administrative boundaries and improve infrastructure and capability in remote geographic sites to establish and implement programs that have significant impact.

Allow for a longer and extended time commitment to implement initiatives in communities to sustain benefits in the long term.

Establish roles, such as 'Playgroup Development Consultants' in more rural communities to support early childhood learning and development.

Expand or create programs, like Early Years Education Program, to benefit families and children who experience intersecting forms of disadvantage across a number of dimensions.

Provide greater individualised support for at-risk special needs students in early years of education.

Recognise transition to school as a critically important educational phase and provide structured, targeted and ongoing funding to enable effective transition programs.

Replicate programs that lead towards successful transition, adopting a holistic approach framed around five elements: ready school; ready child, ready families, ready community and ready early childhood services.

Increase access to more inclusive preschool settings, recognising they are one type of useful early intervention among other services.

In designing programs, recognise the wide range of experiences of children with disability and associated ethical challenges.

Explicitly acknowledge the limitations of Western definitions of 'school readiness' in transition programs.

Key players: Government, not-for-profit organisations, early childhood and education care service providers, community service providers.

3.1 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander groups

There is considerable evidence in early childhood studies^{vi} that support community-led and culturally inclusive programs and strategies for children from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. There is a need to build on existing evidence to support a shared understanding of education practices in early childhood education settings. Early childhood programs and services that embrace families, culture and community lead to greater engagement and ongoing positive participation. Successful transition programs are those that are flexible and designed to match family and community needs. Programs highlight the importance of ongoing and culturally appropriate training and support for Indigenous early childhood professionals and workers to engage with families. Table 6 summarises the evidence from selected programs and inclusive literature, and examines what more can be done by key players in the system for children from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.^{vii}

vi The report has, as far as possible, included evidence-based studies that have been developed by Indigenous organisations (e.g. SNAICC) or led in partnership with Indigenous organisations.

vii Levers of Change may or may not overlap with the other levers mentioned under activation point one above in Table 3, however the emphasis is on the program or evidence found for this demographic group.

Table 6: Summary of evidence

Levers of Change	<p>Embed Indigenous histories, cultures and languages in all aspects of early childhood education and care services</p> <p>Employ an ecological^{viii} and holistic approach to school readiness: one that accounts for the diverse roles of multiple stakeholders in the transition process</p>
Program or evidence	<p>1. <u>Programs that are culturally strong, responsive and include family and community (Examples found in best practice studies embedded in Indigenous values and voices)</u>^{32,40,48}</p> <p>2. <u>Programs focused on early childhood services, family support and health services, school services, parent-child learning programs involving all stakeholders (examples: Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY); Macquarie University's PreLit program, Patterning and Early Algebra Program (PEAP))</u>^{53,56}</p>
How program or evidence works	<p>1. Aligning early childhood education programs with Indigenous understandings of learning and Indigenous ways of understanding childhood, and by engaging family/community and providing opportunities for parent-led learning</p> <p>2. Utilising relationship-building, cultural competence, matching community needs, involvement of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff and a flexible child-centric approach, with most providing early childhood services or school-based programs and others providing family support or health services</p>
Examples of outcomes achieved	<p>1. High levels of attendance achieved in non-licensed early childhood services (playgroups, parent-child education programs) due to programs being physically and culturally safe and accessible</p> <p>2. Increased development across the fine and gross motor, social/emotional, cognitive, and language domains; improved health outcomes; development of positive relationships with school staff and improved confidence with the school environment, routines, staff and curriculum</p>
What more can be done by key players in the system	<p>1. Contribute to evidence that highlights the importance of cultural knowledge and respect in all early childhood settings</p> <p>2. Make childcare more accessible: increase the availability of childcare places, particularly in remote communities; ensure the availability of qualified staff to ensure doors remain open; improve access to reliable private transport, or childcare services that provide transport; make childcare more affordable</p> <p>3. Invest in adequately funded, high-quality, evidence-based and locally driven transition programs</p> <p>4. Develop cultural competence training for schools and service organisations on how to work and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, and communities</p> <p>Key players: Elders, community leaders and service organisations, government, early childhood and education care service providers, early years family support organisations</p>

viii An ecological approach supports a strength-based approach and is useful to apply for First Nations students (Moyle 2019).

4. ACTIVATION POINT 2: STRENGTHENING HOME-EDUCATION SETTING-COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Levers of Change associated with this activation point are:

1. Establish two-way partnerships giving communities a 'sense of ownership' and involvement in education settings
2. Provide students (and families) with learning opportunities which extend outside of education settings
3. Ensure students have access to positive role models through mentoring
4. Engage young people more fully into school and community life through social learning programs
5. Engage young people in programs that focus on building their cultural identity and taking pride in their identity
6. Develop partnerships with community/industry/university focusing on successful transition from school

Table 7 provides a summary of evidence found for each of the six Levers of Change under the activation point 'Strengthening home-education setting-community connections'. Levers of Change were developed by examining specific programs as well as evidence from studies that examined examples of partnerships in non-school and school settings. There is good evidence for scaling up programs that are built around active community involvement and ownership, particularly when there is strong leadership and support from local government players.

Partnership models focus on improving the outcomes for parents, students, communities and school staff, and emphasise the need for consistent evaluation criteria for sustained success. Different players in the community, such as local residents, university staff and students, can each play an important role in strengthening connections with students to improve outcomes^{ix}.

ix A detailed description of how programs and evaluations worked, and examples of outcomes achieved, are provided in Appendix 4.

Table 7: Summary of evidence

Levers of Change	Program or evidence	How program works	Examples of outcomes achieved
Establish two-way partnerships giving communities a sense of 'ownership' and involvement in education settings	The Literacy Trails project ⁶⁴	1. Engaging community members to promote the importance of reading, singing and talking to children as well as nurture and promote the wonders of literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community ownership of educational outcomes, community cohesion and spirit Greater awareness of the significance of literacy and numeracy among children and parents, resulting in changes in literacy and numeracy behaviours
		2. Involving community members to help facilitate activities that increase literacy and numeracy awareness	
	The Foundation House Schools Support program ⁷⁸	1. Assisting schools to support their work with students from refugee backgrounds and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supportive and inclusive environment that promotes the learning and wellbeing of newly arrived students and their families Enabled students to build connections beyond the school gates, e.g. community agencies, youth services, sporting clubs and homework clubs
		2. Enabling students to participate in the Refugee Education Support Program (RESP), professional learning workshops and partnerships on school-led initiatives	
Provide students (and families) with learning opportunities which extend outside of education settings	Extended Service Schools Model ⁶³	1. Providing a range of targeted and extended support services for at-risk students, their families and their communities that complement learning already experienced by students inside the classroom	<p>Impact on students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved literacy and numeracy outcomes Improved attendance and retention rates; increased participation in classroom tasks and school activities. Emotional benefits including feelings of being 'nurtured' and 'cared for' Enhancement of future prospects <p>Impact on parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of parental skills including personal skills and education levels Increased parental access to services including employment Increased socialisation and networking between parents Improved parent-teacher relationships, including fostering reciprocity and advocacy <p>Impact on community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased accessibility of services by whole community via greater integration of school and community Increased community safety Improved local economy with better-skilled workforce <p>Impact on schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved school reputation including reduction in classroom behaviour issues and vandalism Improved ability to be proactive in their strategic goals Greater sense of pride of achievement amongst staff contributing to increased focus on teaching Improved teacher retention Income generation and boosting of school funds, leading to provide additional services and resources e.g. Out of School Hours Care
		2. Building school-community integration whereby government, local providers and community members come together using different modes of service implementation to provide services to students, families, teachers and schools	
		3. Services for families and communities included parental skills enhancement program and community capacity-building initiatives	
		4. Services for school staff included professional development for school staff, specialist teacher training, online learning resources	
		5. Services for students included learning facilitation programs, food programs, attendance initiatives, social/emotional development programs, after-school sport, access to specialist services for learning difficulties or in mental health	

Ensure students have access to positive role models through mentoring	Kids Hope Australia (KHA) ⁴¹	<p>1. Providing school-based one-on-one long-term mentoring program by community members to students experiencing vulnerability and who may be disconnected and disengaged from education</p> <p>2. Adopting early intervention approach to improve social, emotional and learning outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved emotional wellbeing outcomes relating to increased confidence and self-esteem, leadership skills and demonstrating resilience Creation of value-added initiative with 'ripple effect' benefits extended to mentors and the wider community
	Refugee Action Support (RAS) ^{28,58}	<p>1. Adopting a school-university-community partnership model, providing homework and study assistance to senior refugee students, involving a combination of individualised and small group support</p> <p>2. Providing teaching opportunities for pre-service student teachers who support refugee students in meeting their literacy needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased academic engagement and classroom participation and improved language and literacy outcomes by refugee students Valuable teaching experiences for student teachers, enabling them to be better prepared to teach students from refugee backgrounds
	Classroom Connect project (CCP) ⁸⁰	<p>1. Utilising adult volunteer tutors (retired teachers) to help bridge the gap in refugee students' skills, literacy and cultural understandings in their transition from Intensive English Centres (IEC) to secondary schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long-lasting effective community-school partnerships Social and emotional benefits to participating students
Engage young people more fully into school and community life through social learning programs	The Song Room (TSR) ³⁵	<p>1. Utilising music and creative arts as a tool and working in collaboration with visiting artists to build refugee students' sense of wellbeing, belonging and engagement</p> <p>2. Using creativity tools to explore the transitional refugee settlement experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased self-esteem, sense of belonging and connectedness in school Improved sense of positive wellbeing, strengthening students' 'whole self' and cultural continuity
	The Kool Kids program ¹⁴	<p>1. Using interactive multimedia format, which includes role-plays and story involving a character (Okki the Octopus)</p> <p>2. Adopting a wrap-around team approach involving facilitators, teachers, parents, and student participants to address antisocial behavioural issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in emotional regulation skills Significant reduction in overall aggression, corresponding to a decreased risk of exclusionary discipline Enhanced student-teacher relationships
	The Titans' Learning Centre (TLC) ⁵⁷	<p>1. Adopting explicit teaching of social and emotional skills targeting students 'falling behind' or deemed 'at risk'</p> <p>2. Focusing on key developmental issues revolving around building positive relationships with peers, parents and teachers</p> <p>3. Utilising high-profile football players to help develop a positive self-image and self-esteem</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive outcomes on the attitudes and sense of belonging or connectedness for students Outcomes measured using 'Productive Pedagogies Reflection Tool (audit tool) indicated teaching within the classroom was highly focused on 'connectedness' Group work as a 'productive pedagogy' effectively supported the aims of the TLC program

Develop partnerships with community/industry/university focusing on successful transition from school	<u>Partnerships in non-school settings (Examples: Aspire High, Pathways to Success, Advance program and well-designed outreach programs)</u> ^{68,82,12,29}	<p>1. Exposing students to a variety of settings, such as local workplaces and industries, technical colleges, community organisations and higher education settings, to encourage participation in education and training in areas that directly benefit the community they live in</p> <p>2. Integrating community learning into curriculum/subjects, or communities, place and people themselves acting as 'curricula', creating linkages and real-life examples of pathways to education and employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger alignment between career pathways and local community and industry employment needs • Improved social capital and heightened community connectedness • Enhanced and direct benefit to community, with local knowledge retained locally • Affirming aspirations in marginalised communities, exposing rural young people to possible careers in rural places as well as elsewhere
	<u>Partnerships in school and non-school settings (Examples: The Foundation House Schools Support program, Ticket to Work initiative, Scientists in Schools, Science in Schools)</u> ^{78,5,81,70}	<p>1. Assisting and supporting refugee students with diverse study and career pathways, providing students with flexible learning options and information in their first language</p> <p>2. Providing students with disability with work experience, vocational education and training in school, school-based apprenticeships or training, after-school work, and customised employment</p> <p>3. University academics volunteering to act as scientists/role models for rural students, and working with teachers to build STEM literacy, develop materials, design engaging activities and set up practical laboratories</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to navigate options and affirm tertiary and career aspirations or identify other possible futures and pathways for students from refugee backgrounds • Stronger quality of life and workforce outcomes, significantly higher rates of labour market participation, school year 12 completion, post-school studying options usually combined with work, social participation and independence compared to those not in the program. • Increased literacy and awareness about science and its applications • Improved curriculum-based knowledge by teachers, sense of self-efficacy and their ability to engage in scientific inquiry

Box 2: What more can be done to strengthen home–education setting–community connections: pointers from evidence

Scale up or adapt community owned program in regional communities in response to local needs.

Encourage the formation of strength-based partnerships, with schools leveraging expert knowledge of community organisations to implement whole-of-school strategies for newly arrived students.

Improve evidence base by collecting longitudinal data from students and their families to inform strategies and policies.

Develop and implement system-level initiatives (school-based, school-linked and/or community-based) that work in partnership with external agencies to improve the range of extended services to students, schools, families and the local community.

Promote and enhance the benefits of successful evidence-based mentoring (programs that focus on long term mentoring relationships) across large communities in Australia.

Effective coordination and cross-sectoral communication to build successful partnerships between education providers, university students and schools to implement learning support initiatives, such as mentoring.

Establish viable partnership models that leverages community members' experience and knowledge to implement whole-of-school strategies and support students towards purposeful and inclusive learning.

Adopt mechanisms for systematically collecting and analysing the experiences of students participating in programs, and the incorporation of voices of students and their families into the regular assessment and evaluation of the effectiveness of programs.

Create opportunities for external program facilitators and school staff to collaborate, acknowledging their complementary strengths in relation to building outcomes for students.

Develop well-designed, strategic and collaborative outreach programs that act as early interventions for meeting desired student outcomes.

Implement seamless access to employment pathways and experiences through cross-sectoral partnerships and coordinate all relevant supports for young people with significant disability.

Support, reinforce and incentivise potential partnerships between schools, universities and communities to create linkages and diverse pathways to education and employment in local and outer regions.

Identify schools where need for specialist teachers is greatest and provide incentives to both universities and schools (for example, remote schools) to partner with each other.

Utilise outcome measurement tools to analyse the effectiveness of programs.

Key players: Government and local leaders, community members, specialist service organisations, teachers and school leaders, families, local education providers, not-for-profit organisations, program facilitators outside school, local university academics, evaluation partners.

4.1 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students

When working with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait young people, program partnerships needed to be non-tokenistic and built on trust, respect, reciprocity and shared understanding.¹⁶ Recognising families as first educators, building and sustaining leadership connections between school staff and community leaders and the learning of Indigenous culture and knowledge by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students are mechanisms to strengthen ties between home, schools and communities. Table 8 summarises the evidence from selected programs and inclusive literature, and examines what more can be done by key players in the system.^x

Table 8: Summary of evidence

Levers of Change	Engage young people in programs that focus on building their cultural identity and taking pride in their identity Establish two-way partnerships giving communities a 'sense of ownership' and involvement in education settings
Program or evidence	1. <u>Engagement in culturally relevant events and programs</u> ^{67,8} 2. <u>Parent-Elders- community-school partnerships</u> ^{34,50,59}
How program works	1. Engaging students through activities that promote traditional and contemporary Indigenous culture, Indigenous student support role models in the school, finding ways to authentically involve the local Indigenous community, and providing Indigenous cultural activities for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students 2. School authorities partnering with parents, Elders and the community to nurture and facilitate cultural perspectives and co-construct programs; marshalling resources to facilitate collaborations and establish localised social capital and build relational trust, respect and reciprocity between stakeholders; and using various forums designed to ensure the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice is heard in the school
Examples of outcomes achieved	1. Strengthened student pride in culture and leadership, and students feeling a stronger connection to and growing understanding of their Indigenous heritage 2. Shift in whole-school culture through greater recognition, understanding and valuing of Indigenous culture 3. Positive impact on students' interactions with community Elders and deepened trust between families and schools 4. Decreased dropout rates, improved attendance and improved academic outcomes
What more can be done by key players in the system	1. Develop and implement rigorous evaluation of programs to identify and scale 'what works' strategies and address the significant gaps in high-quality evidence and inconsistent approaches to program evaluation 2. Develop culturally relevant pedagogic and curriculum programs that seek to impact more directly on learning outcomes ⁵⁰ 3. Replicate or transfer successful partnership models in Indigenous education using a cautious approach to similar school contexts Key players: Elders, local community, families, Government, school leaders, teachers, school staff

^x Levers of Change may or may not overlap with the other levers mentioned under activation point two, however the emphasis is on the program or evidence found for this demographic group.

5. ACTIVATION POINT 3: BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE AND HOLISTIC SCHOOL CULTURE, WITH ADAPTIVE AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING FRAMEWORKS

Levers of Change associated with this activation point are:

1. Provide alternate learning models and flexible options for students to re-engage with learning
2. Adapt pedagogy to suit learners' dispositions and address learning difficulties through specific strategies and interventions
3. Offer welcoming, easily navigable and inclusive classroom and school environments
4. Build a school culture that promotes good teaching, trusting relationships and pastoral care
5. Embed Indigenous perspectives, language, culture and knowledge into the curriculum and teaching practices (that is, culturally sustaining pedagogy)

Schools are still considered as a key education setting for a young person's learning, and there is evidence of greater success when personalised, contextualised and flexible approaches are adopted by staff to engage students. Strategies that focus on direct and explicit instruction are found to significantly boost outcomes. In addition, when schools partner with community or not-for-profit organisations that work toward supporting specific demographic groups, it promotes an inclusive and holistic school culture, especially when youth-driven. Flexible learning options can potentially contribute to improving students' social and workforce outcomes^{xi}.

^{xi} A detailed description of how programs and evaluations worked, and examples of outcomes achieved, are provided under Appendix 4.

Table 9: Summary of evidence

Levers of Change	Program or evidence	How program works	Examples of outcomes achieved
Provide alternative learning models and flexible options for students to re-engage with learning	<u>Big Picture Education (BPE) design</u> ¹⁷	1.Utilising a personalised learning approach whereby participants have access to an Advisory Teacher (AT) whose role was to care, mould, teach, inspire, provoke, bond, organise and make the learning come to life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased understandings of themselves as learners • Improved identification of the importance of having choices and how this impacted on their engagement, academic performance, learning and wellbeing • Growing connectedness to peers and improved relationships with families
		2. Connecting students to people in the community to explore interests and future career aspirations	
	<u>BoysTown</u> ⁶⁶	1. Case managing groups of at-risk young people by offering personalised case management-style literacy and numeracy programs, job-readiness programs, extra-curricular activities, mentorship and working with local support networks that provide joined-up service responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in wellbeing, self-esteem, confidence, agency, literacy and numeracy, social ability, future goals and aspirations, with growing re-engagement in learning and attainment of qualifications
	<u>Hands on Learning (HOL) program</u> ²³	1. Students in small groups participating in creative construction projects run by artisan-teachers as a form of re-engagement and early school leaving prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated socio-economic benefits: \$12 return for every \$1 of investment • Improved health outcomes and life satisfaction; reduced criminal behaviour; and breaking the intergenerational cycle of poor participation in education • Direct benefits to community including the promotion of integrated local services, the building of community capacity and the fostering of innovative local solutions to support young people
		2. Acknowledging the different ways in which young people learn and develop skills and abilities	
	<u>Flexible Learning Options (FLOs)</u> ⁷⁵	1. Investing in alternative schools or re-engagement programs that share a common commitment to supporting disadvantaged, disengaged or disenfranchised young people to achieve school credentials, and engage in education in ways that work well for them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced community engagement through working collaboratively with employment agencies, health services, housing services and general youth agencies • Direct benefits to the wellbeing of communities and society (e.g. volunteering). Broader benefits to society including breaking the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage, reduced health-related costs, reduction in crime and reduction in (youth) unemployment
		2. Valuing the gaining of credentials and transitions into further study (including vocational) and employment alongside equity and inclusivity considerations that focus on enhancing a wide range of social and societal outcomes	
		3.Re-thinking what counts as success in flexible learning settings and how that success is demonstrated and valued	

Adapt pedagogy to suit learner dispositions and address learning difficulties through specific strategies and interventions	Explicit instruction-focused strategies and direct interventions ⁴³	<p>1. Applying direct and explicit instruction, early reading instruction, oral language intervention and phonological awareness</p> <p>2. New content being explicitly taught in sequenced and structured lessons; includes clear lesson objectives, immediate feedback, reviews of content from previous lessons, unambiguous language, frequent checking of student understanding, demonstration of the knowledge or skill to be learnt, and students practising skills with teacher guidance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant boost in the achievement and academic performance in national tests of students from low socio-economic backgrounds
	Social and emotional learning interventions (Example: Secret Agent Society or SAS) ²⁵	<p>1. Facilitated through tasks focused on emotion recognition and regulation and skills to enhance social interactions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustained improvements up to 12 months following delivery of intervention on measures of emotion regulation and social skills of young people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
Offer welcoming, easily navigable and inclusive classroom and school environment	The Foundation House Schools Support program ⁷⁸	<p>1. Assisting schools to support their work with students from refugee backgrounds and their families in recovery, resettlement, and integration processes</p> <p>2. Support from the school's wellbeing team, teachers helping to build connections with peers from same and different cultures, teachers aware of students' backgrounds and abilities and utilising appropriate teaching strategies to support students' learning outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students feeling welcome and trusting of their new environment Students being enabled to seek support in academic and non-academic contexts
		<p>1. Providing asylum seeker students in immigration detention the opportunity to attend a primary school</p> <p>2. Provision of training and support to school staff to welcome students and make school environment more inclusive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased knowledge and skills across the school environment including new understanding of global issues, critical awareness, social justice orientation and tolerance of other cultures Development of close long-lasting friendships between asylum seeker students in detention and local students Ripple effects of more positive and tolerant attitudes among the broader community
Build a school culture that promotes good teaching, trusting relationships and pastoral care	The Inverbrackie education program ²⁶	<p>1. Provision of well-facilitated programs to welcome new students from migrant and refugee backgrounds, including access to a translator, ongoing process of regularly monitoring each new student's progress both academically and socially, implementation of curriculum that explores race, culture and diversity, positive ongoing approach to diversity and implementation of support programs for parents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engendered a greater sense of independence amongst students and a sense of ownership of problems Improved strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviour, including racism
	Youth-driven mediation programs ⁵²		

Box 3: What more can be done to build an inclusive and holistic school culture, with adaptive and flexible learning frameworks: pointers from evidence

Offer flexible learning options in settings where services can be integrated, complementary services are available and where strong partnerships between education settings and service providers can be established.

Invest in flexible education models that embed non-ATAR based learning pathways to capture general capability skills and competencies acquired outside education settings and develop robust evidence around alternate frameworks.

Invest in engagement programs that have successfully demonstrated measured and reported outcomes and socio-economic benefits in order to reach more students in need.

Systematically implement early intervention tools across all disadvantaged schools to address learning difficulties in a timely manner within a formative assessment cycle. Tools should be combined with other practices, such as uniform and inclusive school behaviour policy, autonomous leadership, incentives to retain experienced staff and principals and practices that are data driven.

Recognise and work around the contextual and complex factors of schools and students, level of programmatic and system support available, including working around the limitations of standard measurement tools, such as NAPLAN.

Further research to gather stronger evidence of program for use in schools that serve young people with disability.

Adopt a whole-of-school proactive approach with a well facilitated program to engender a positive and welcoming attitude to new students from refugee backgrounds.

Take a cautious approach in collecting data from cohort who have faced trauma and persecution, being sensitive to students' circumstances and literacy levels.

Invest in processes and training to ensure schools have culturally appropriate support systems in place to welcome and enrol students from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Develop a social justice orientation and whole-of-school commitment to create and celebrate spaces of inclusion, diversity and care.

Key players: Government and other funding bodies, teachers, specialist staff including bilingual staff, school leaders, specialist service and training organisations, local education providers, evaluation partners.

5.1 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students

Recognising the strengths of Elders and local community members to increase understanding and knowledge, combined with embedding culturally responsive pedagogy and learning content, can yield program outcomes that are positive and sustaining. Offering tailored support and assistance to suit learners' needs and dispositions mean students can explore diverse study and career opportunities. Table 10 summarises the evidence from selected programs and inclusive literature, and examines what more can be done by key players in the system.^{xii}

Table 10: Summary of evidence

Levers of Change	<p>Embed Indigenous perspectives, language, culture and knowledge into the curriculum and teaching practices (that is, culturally sustaining pedagogy)</p> <p>Adapt pedagogy to suit learners' dispositions and address learning difficulties through a set of instructional strategies and interventions</p>
Program or evidence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Classroom strategies, curriculum and teaching that are culturally inclusive (examples: culturally responsive learning content, both-ways pedagogy, flexible Literacy for Remote Schools programs, Learning on Country ranger program, Stronger Smarter Communities project, Aboriginal pedagogical frameworks: NSW Quality Teaching Framework and culturally responsive pedagogies, tutoring assistance)</u>^{20,38,59,11} 2. <u>Direct and explicit instruction (example: Flexible Literacy for Remote Primary Schools Program)</u>²² 3. <u>Evidence-based literacy and numeracy teaching</u>⁵⁹
How program works	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Utilising various inclusive strategies such as local Elder and family involvement; increasing cultural knowledge; practising cultural sensitivity; making learning content engaging, accessible and culturally responsive; and ensuring rich and diverse epistemological legacy and multiple stories are reflected in curriculum, which is taught to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students 2. Using explicit techniques based on five components of reading (phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension) and training teachers in Direct Instruction (DI) or Explicit Direct Instruction (EDI) techniques, embedding cultural appropriateness 3. Developing whole-school instructional approaches to guide literacy and numeracy teaching 4. Providing students with individual tutoring assistance in their senior years to push for the aim of 'lifelong learning' and supporting students on diverse pathways to studies and employment
Examples of outcomes achieved	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Greater engagement at school 2. Improved academic self-concept 3. Improved attendance and literacy and numeracy outcomes
What more can be done by key players in the system	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prioritising and embedding Aboriginal perspectives and values in school and classroom curriculum 2. Adapting changes in curriculum to support the multiplicity of social and cultural identities so that all students are balanced in both worlds, strong in both their Western knowledge and English and their Indigenous identity, cultural knowledge and language 3. Adapting programs to school context with greater programmatic support 4. Charting a pathway of sharing and transferring learnings and identified common themes across schools 5. Ensuring resource allocation is aligned with desired teaching practices and learning outcomes <p>Key players: Government, Elders, school leaders, teachers, school staff, curriculum developers</p>

^{xii} Levers of Change may or may not overlap with the other levers mentioned above however the emphasis is on the program or evidence found for this demographic group.

6. SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS (SECTIONS 3-5)

- The prioritised levers examined in the report focus on five key demographic groups that bear the brunt of inequity. Levers of Change chart a pathway to find targeted solutions appropriate to the needs of specific student groups.
- Having access to responsive and quality early childhood care, a strong partnership between home, education setting and the community, and adopting an inclusive and flexible approach within learning settings are key to enabling all students thrive and succeed in pursuing their goals and aspirations.
- Developing and implementing more evidence-based programs around the various Drivers of Inequity, both inside and outside education settings, will enable more levers to be developed to address inequity issues faced by demographic groups.
- Education inequity cannot be addressed by activating these levers alone. Other things also need to happen, such as the provision of free universal childcare, work towards removing systemic societal issues like poverty, and establishing education models that move away from the current highly segregated and socially stratified school system.
- To be able to move forward in addressing inequity, there needs to be an explicit acknowledgement of the biases, assumptions and limitations that are present in our systems, policies and narratives and the ways in which the underlying education concepts have been fundamentally designed and shaped.
- Out of the many recommendations to activate the levers indicated in boxes 1–3, the report has identified 22 that are actionable and can be enacted by different stakeholder groups. These 22 recommendations are highlighted under the respective boxes, colour-coded based on the relevant stakeholder groups.
- These recommendations have been directly developed from the key messages that arose from the programs and studies examined. The recommendations indicate how each of the different stakeholders can play a role in helping to overcome some of the hurdles experienced in program implementation or delivery, and what specific steps should be taken by each group to contribute to improving student outcomes.
- Readers are also directed to the [report summary](#) to view the links between drivers, levers, recommendations and stakeholders.

Stakeholder groups

Government/philanthropic organisations

Early Childhood and Education Care (ECEC) service providers

Community stakeholders and organisations working with education providers

School leaders and educators

All stakeholders

School leaders and educators and community stakeholders and organisations working with education providers

7. REPORT SUMMARY

7.1 Lessons learnt from programs, levers and recommendations

The programs and studies examined in this report hold considerable promise in improving both educational and other important outcomes for young people. They demonstrate that when initiatives are well-planned and are delivered in partnership with families and communities, they have a strong impact on young people.

From the 45 programs and studies that were closely examined and the levers that were developed from them, certain key elements stood out:

1. When there is a focus on building a range of skills utilising the existing strengths of young people, the overall benefits are stronger.
2. There is a clear call for strong evidence of best practice models, especially in the case of programs for First Nations students.
3. Student agency and ownership is missing from discussions about their future.
4. When schools, families and communities work together in genuine non-tokenistic partnership, this amplifies the benefits for young people.

The studies also highlight the importance of acknowledging and including the skills, experiences and competencies developed outside traditional education settings, in ways that complement 'traditional' skills to build the 'whole' person. Strategies that build the social and emotional skills of young people in various settings, and programs that effectively utilise mentors or other support personnel to assist students' learning, wellbeing and post-school aspirations were also noted.

An examination of the programs and studies shows that student achievements are still dependent upon school-based indicators of learning, and they are not actively involved in any decision-making processes. Skills that fall outside traditional foundational skills are not yet properly recognised as part of education development.

There are some evidence-based alternative learning models and frameworks, but these are yet to be rigorously developed so that young people from different backgrounds and experiences can confidently take up diverse pathways knowing their competencies will be recognised by employers.

Finally, while education outcomes are important, there is not equal attention being given to the overall wellbeing and mental health needs of disadvantaged students in Australia. These are important gaps to be addressed, especially in light of the widening equity gaps caused by the COVID-19 crisis. The 22 recommendations provide a pathway for key stakeholder groups to act in response to Drivers of Inequity.

7.2 COVID-19: Implications for education inequity

The COVID-19 crisis has created a fundamental shift in how we live, learn and work. The long-term health, economic, wellbeing and learning impacts of the crisis will continue to be assessed for some time. It will not be easy to re-build lost learning opportunities and to create an equitable and inclusive society for all young people. The shift to remote learning has widened existing learning disparities between groups of young people. Students' social, emotional and mental health were impacted, which is likely to have long-lasting consequences for education outcomes.

To close the inequity gap that existed prior to the pandemic will be even harder and more challenging. We need to be attentive to the needs of students who are at risk and commit to providing additional targeted resources and support to start addressing their lost learning opportunities.⁶²

For instance, the role of mentoring programs and provision of individual assistance to help disadvantaged students catch up on lost learning as a result of the 2020 and 2021 lockdowns are likely to play a key role for some time to come. Similarly, social learning programs that help improve students' mental health and enhance community connectedness are equally important as part of a multi-dimensional longitudinal approach to supporting students' overall wellbeing.

Despite the widening inequity gap, COVID-19 has presented new opportunities and may have helped to break down barriers between school and family. Because of the changes to where and how learning occurred, the crisis may have inadvertently created opportunities for young people to engage outside of their usual learning settings, picking up skills and competencies they might not have acquired in a school setting. They were spending more time in their home and community, for instance through caring for their neighbours, performing volunteering work or helping family members. In addition, schools reported increased positive interaction and improved communication with parents.^{27,74}

COVID-19 broke down some of the barriers between outside and inside-school settings, paving the way for rethinking the different ways in which learning can occur for a young person.

At the same time, there is an increasing recognition of the need for young people to be adaptable, possess a broad set of general capability and employability skills, and be able to apply knowledge and learning in evolving, uncertain and diverse circumstances.⁷¹ The importance of preparing the whole person, rather than just focusing on academic achievement, is key for the education experience. The crisis has served as a reminder to think about the range of foundational and other non-cognitive capacity-building skills young people require to thrive in a COVID-19 future, with "the potential to create a new normal in integrating students' school-based learnings with capabilities gained in the wider world".⁷¹

Reconnecting and re-engaging rapidly with early learning education is especially critical for children who are generally less likely to attend early education settings such as preschool.¹³ Implementing the recommendations made in this report, for instance scaling up successful mentoring or tutoring programs, becomes even more significant to help narrow the inequity gap after COVID-19. This will help supplement the work already being done by some governments in providing intensive learning assistance to students most impacted by the pandemic.^{60,73} It is against this backdrop that the report's overarching recommendations are set out and discussed below.

7.3 Recommendations synthesis^{xiii}

Informed by the key messages that came from the 22 recommendations of what works and where gaps still exist (as indicated in boxes 1-3), this section of the report has synthesised 3 overarching recommendations:

1. Re-thinking what counts as knowledge
2. Building a strong evidence base of effective practice
3. Sharing, scaling and replicating successful learnings and interventions across education settings and in the community

^{xiii} Whilst overarching recommendations have been gathered looking at all evidence and literature sources, some of these may overlap with what has been noted under the 'What more can be done' column in Sections 3-5. The framing of overarching recommendations has primarily been guided by the review findings. Findings from the Shergold 2020 report have also helped shape the recommendations.

7.3.1 Rethinking what counts as knowledge

“ATAR privileges academic achievement above the broad range of skills and attributes that are required for life”⁷¹ (p.47).

Education success and knowledge is much more than what is learnt and gained within traditional education settings, and falls beyond commonly reported indicators and standardised testing measures. As this report has shown, students can engage in learning through participation in programs specific to their needs and context. Programs can be run in schools, but many can also be implemented in partnership with organisations outside school settings, such as in local communities, industries and tertiary settings, and with community members acting as mentors.

New knowledges are created when young people, coming from diverse backgrounds, interact and participate in diverse settings as they engage in these programs. We need to re-think, re-purpose and re-define what counts as ‘success’ in our education system. There are two ways to achieve this. The first is prioritising outside school competencies within the curriculum. The second is building a stronger case for non-traditional education models to capture these competencies.

Prioritising skills and competencies acquired outside education settings

Program evidence strongly indicates that students learn and absorb information in diverse formalised and non-formalised non-school settings; they can acquire skills though learning experiences take place either within education settings or outside, in homes, families and communities. Additionally, for the demographic groups that are the focus of this report, there are a plethora of social, environmental and cultural elements that play a far greater role than academic skills development in generating and underpinning a successful learner.^{50,71}

The outcomes or knowledge generated from these learnings help build a strong set of general capability skills, such as confidence,^{33,41} resilience,⁷⁶ personal and social responsibility,⁵² and empathy.²⁶ These skills also closely align with some of the general capabilities that inform the Australian Curriculum; these are capabilities that employers in diverse sectors are increasingly calling for as part of ‘soft skills’.

Currently, there is no systematic approach to capturing, documenting and assessing these outside school experiences and learnings within the existing school curriculum.

For these reasons, it is important that learnings gained outside school be aligned and captured under the existing sets of general capability skills within the curriculum. This report provides further evidence of the value of prioritising capability and life skills and making them count.⁷¹

Examples of learnings that occur outside school settings that will in turn help develop general capability skills include:

- Experiences and life skills gained from participating in Indigenous heritage, cultures, practices, and languages. Skills learnt through participating in culturally relevant events, undertaking traditional cultural experiences or rites of passage that occur within cultures and communities.⁷¹ Indigenous learnings and their ways of recognition and assessment should always be co-constructed in partnership with Indigenous communities, leaders and Indigenous education experts.⁵⁰
- Experiences gained in a variety of community and service activities such as part-time work, volunteering, caring responsibilities, participation in capacity-building or outreach programs, or engaging in new experiential learning and skill development.^{61,71,82} Young people from disadvantaged communities are much less likely to participate in extra-curricular after school activities such as sports and cultural

activities than those living in advantaged communities.^{1,61} Initiatives focused on facilitating community activities should seek to address increased access as part of program planning.

- Learnings acquired within families and communities; for instance, caring for vulnerable family members who may be young or old, assisting or mentoring siblings or family members with schoolwork, acting as an interpreter for family members or for their community. Some of these learnings may be more common in some families than others, for example, among refugees and migrant families who are non-English speaking.⁷¹
- Learnings that occur in other less formalised settings, such as being part of a mentoring group, in friendship groups, in language classes, on visits to museums, and at holiday destinations.

What needs to happen:

- Experiences and learnings that occur outside education settings need to be valued and acknowledged by government and education stakeholders.
- Within the existing curriculum, there needs to be a systematic approach to recognition, explicit evidencing and assessment of the 'general capabilities' skills and competencies that are generated through these experiences and learnings.^{61,71}
- For example, there could be a formal process of articulating and integrating various authentic and nuanced experiences that students gain when undertaking work experience within their local community or when being mentored by members of the community. Integration of such experiences could be addressed as part of the various learning modules within the curriculum. These experiences would transfer to skills such as confidence, time management, teamwork, students' increased understanding of themselves as learners and growing connectedness and belonging, as evidenced in outcomes gained by young people who participated in the Big Picture Education (BPE) design.¹⁷
- Steps to actively engage and encourage students to be part of the collection and documentation of relevant experiences and associated outcomes. One way of systematically documenting skills outside education settings could be in the form of creating a learner profile of each young person documented by the student themselves, which then becomes a portfolio or a 'bag' of experiences for them to retain and share with employers.^{61,71} Approaches to capture and document learnings should be codesigned with educators and community organisations who support and advocate for programs for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

It is necessary to value and recognise diverse academic and social skills and life experiences and properly assess the outcomes that flow from them, not just as an important goal in itself, but also in order to:

- Counteract the deficit narratives and Western-informed 'mainstream' understandings that stigmatise and stereotype students from certain demographic groups.
- Ensure students who are strong in these domains or engagements do not miss out on their strengths being appropriately recognised.
- Create opportunities for student voice and agency to take on a more prominent role.
- Capture competencies that young people have acquired in families and communities during lockdown periods in 2020 and 2021.
- Continue strengthening the relationships built with families and communities during the crisis.

To be counted as knowledge, all learnings and associated skills and competencies gained in non-school settings need to be fully and appropriately acknowledged, documented, evidenced and assessed.

Embedding sensitivity, inclusivity and flexibility in approaches to collecting evidence and assessing academic and non-academic skills will ensure diverse cultural learnings are captured authentically based on shared understandings.

Building a stronger case for non-traditional education models^{xiv}

There are challenges around articulating and integrating outside school experiences and learnings within the curriculum, in a manner which is easily identifiable and understood by employers. The current school system and the structures around it are not always equipped with the necessary tools and standards to accurately capture and measure competencies generated from experiences that sit outside the traditional education setting. Poorly resourced schools face further challenges in implementing these kinds of measures. With standardised assessments such as NAPLAN and ATAR continuing to be the dominant discourse within the current system, the playing field is not fair or equal for all students. With the increased likelihood of students learning in diverse settings as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, this may be an opportune time to re-evaluate our existing structures and assessment models.

Flexible frameworks and non-traditional education models provide a pathway for valuing outside school experiences and recognising corresponding outcomes. Non-cognitive skills and the credentials gained through vocational study, trainees and apprenticeships, and experiences outside school learning programs can be better captured through non-traditional education models. Flexible learning models are able to examine a wide range of competencies, such as sense of security and acceptance, confidence and self-esteem, pride, trust, self-regulation, resilience and mental health to give a holistic picture of students' capabilities and preparedness for post-school destinations.⁶⁶ The kind of learnings and experiences gained in outside school settings provide ample opportunity for generating these skills. However, few rigorous evidence-based alternative frameworks currently exist, and it can be a complex and time-consuming process to develop these frameworks.^{25,65}

The report recommends building a strong case for non-traditional education models because:

- Flexible learning models share a common commitment to supporting disadvantaged, disengaged and disenfranchised young people in achieving credentials.⁷⁵
- These models utilise a personalised approach¹⁷ and are designed to be flexible and collaborative in nature, with equity considerations woven around programs. This allows for articulating, recognising and assessing skills gained in outside school settings in a more inclusive way.⁷⁵
- Non-traditional education options support outcomes for students and the communities they live in. Examples include work and study options for students with disability⁵ and diverse career and study pathways for refugee students.⁷⁸

xiv The discussion on non-traditional education models and flexible learning frameworks are primarily examined from how this model may be useful in capturing outside school experiences of disadvantaged groups. It is not meant to be a critique on the strengths and weaknesses of the model or framework.

What needs to happen:

- Invest in flexible education models that embed non-ATAR based learning pathways to capture general capability skills and competencies acquired outside education settings with the support of government and key stakeholders.
- Offer flexible learning options in settings where services can be integrated, complementary services are available and where strong partnerships between education settings and service providers holds promise¹⁷ or scale up and adapt successful flexible learning option models where evidence is strong.
- Develop strong and robust evidence through evaluation, outcomes measurement processes and longitudinal tracking to build a strong case around alternative frameworks.^{29,75}

We must recognise and explicitly assess skills and competencies related to general capabilities derived from experiences that take place outside school settings. Steps must be taken to invest in and promote alternative frameworks and flexible learning models that share a commitment to supporting the outcomes of young people who are disadvantaged. Prioritising these two components will contribute to the process of re-defining what counts as knowledge and ensure that all student experiences and engagements in schools and communities are included.

7.3.2 Building a strong evidence base of effective practices

A systematic process of developing a robust 'evidence-based ecosystem' that generates continuous improvement in schools, systems, sectors and policy is likely to boost the learning outcomes of all students and help achieve excellence and equity in education.⁷²

Australia's education system lacks a systematic and rigorous continuous improvement process based on collecting best practice evidence of student learning from schools and outside schools. Several of the program evaluations reviewed by this report consistently and strongly recommended building evidence-based criteria and conducting high-quality external evaluations. The call for evidence-informed practice and investment in further research in this area is echoed in other literature by education stakeholders and education experts.⁶⁹

While the programs and interventions outlined in the report have been shown to be effective to a certain extent, most of them have limitations or caveats attached, which means it is difficult to draw clear conclusions on the program's effectiveness or success in improving student outcomes over a sustained period of time^{xv}. Program limitations are often attributed to the type of methodology used, the predominantly qualitative nature of data collected, sample sizes, absence of longitudinal tracking of programs or tracking of student participants, and a lack of clearly defined and consistent review processes and evaluation criteria. High-quality evidence needs to be generated to fill gaps and provide information from all children, not just those who complete standard surveys. Many of the stated limitations of these programs are directly tied to the absence of strong and robust evidence to support outcomes. This limits the ability to confidently prescribe the programs as best practice models.

Building a strong evidence base and engaging with high-quality, reliable and responsive evidence is important because it will:

- Support and empower teachers, school leaders and community organisations in their decision-making processes around program funding, implementation, outcomes achievement and program sustainability.

xv Program limitations or limitations of the evidence found are explained in detail under program descriptions in Appendix 4

- Provide important insights into successful and promising initiatives, including which ones to adopt and scale and which to discontinue.
- Ensure programs meet the needs of young people in the communities where they are based, and remain relevant with evolving circumstances.⁷⁰
- Help increase the impact of promising programs that play an even more relevant role during the COVID-19 crisis (e.g. mentoring, tutoring assistance and social learning) and which are key to supporting students in their learning and mental health needs.

What needs to happen:

In the case of First Nations students, the report found that there needs to be more of the following:

- Develop indicators and ways of collecting and sharing knowledge that take into account different worldviews, rather than being underpinned solely by Western educational values.⁵⁶
- Adopt a rigorous, empirical and consistent approach to evaluations of culturally responsive Indigenous education programs, so that successful ones can be replicated across education settings.^{50,79}
- Build more specific evidence, such as economic evaluation outcomes of successful culturally inclusive mentoring programs.^{6,41}
- Evaluate the long-term impact and effectiveness of literacy and numeracy strategies and programs that support student transition.⁸
- Develop robust, high-quality evaluation of programs that work to increase attendance or retention of students.⁶⁷

7.3.3 Sharing, scaling and replicating successful learnings and interventions in education settings and in community

There is significant potential to either scale or replicate successful or promising evidence-based programs across various communities and schools in Australia. Sharing successful initiatives increases their impact (and thus generates more evidence) while helping to improve outcomes for more students. A culture of sharing of best practice is recommended, particularly in initiatives that have proven to be effective in one community. Initiatives can be modified or adapted to suit the needs of similar communities or groups of students and, if successful, can be scaled up to increase reach. The following recommendations relating to scaling and replicating interventions have been derived from programs examined in this report.

What needs to happen:

- Expand or create programs similar to the Early Years Education Program, to benefit families and children who experience intersecting forms of disadvantage across a number of dimensions.⁷⁶
- Replicate transition programs that have been successful and adopt a holistic student-readiness approach.³³
- Scale up successful or promising 'community owned' programs that help to strengthen home-education setting-community connections in various regions across Australia.⁶⁴
- Chart a pathway for replicating or transferring learnings, successful common themes and partnership models to other similar school contexts or communities, especially in the case of programs developed for First Nations students in a particular school or community.⁵⁹
- Promote and expand the benefits of successful mentoring programs that focus on sustained long-term relationships⁴¹ or programs that utilise community members to support students' current and long term aspirations in a variety of ways, for instance through tutoring.^{28,80}
- Promote and expand programs that focus on building positive relationships with families, educators and the community to pursue ambitions and help navigate life beyond school.⁵¹
- Draw support and drive change (for instance, to counteract negative attitudes that might have been formed due to external discriminatory factors such as media portrayals) to create impact within the entire community by effectively utilising positive actions that came about through program implementation within school settings.⁴⁷

7.4 Considerations to note

The above sets of synthesised recommendations provide a strong base for identifying actions to drive equitable education outcomes. However, it is important to note that multiple factors impact education inequity. This report has not discussed all the Levers of Change identified in Table 3, and has not examined all education programs and initiatives that exist in Australia (for instance, programs and associated levers that relate to teaching and staffing issues or poverty, resources and infrastructure). This was beyond the scope of the report.

Secondly, the role of systemic societal issues such as poverty and homelessness and other factors related to the social and economic inequalities embedded in our culture cannot be underestimated, but are not often considered to be part of the equation when seeking to address education inequity.

Thirdly, structures and bureaucracies at the state and federal level and the effectiveness of partnerships and collaborations between different stakeholders in the system (from early childhood to post-secondary education) are important elements to consider in the equitable education roadmap. The suggested recommendations are part of a suite of other system-wide changes that society needs to collectively focus on^{xvi}.

xvi A discussion of the report limitations can be found under Appendix 5.

8. WHAT NEXT: CREATING A ROADMAP FOR CHANGE

8.1 Actioning the recommendations through investments in programs and people

The recommendations outlined in this report need commitment, resources and various forms of investment on the part of several different stakeholders.

Funding underpins many of the solutions proposed under the overarching recommendations. First and foremost, the provision of free, inclusive and quality early childhood care lays the foundation for equitable education. No child or family should miss out on having access to early childhood care. Funding enables high-quality programs to be developed, implemented and shared across education settings and communities. It supports the implementation of early interventions that are critical during the early education years, especially for at-risk students.

Funding is also necessary to conduct rigorous, high-quality evaluations of successful or promising initiatives so that they can be replicated or scaled to reach more students. Investment in evidence-based programs should be viewed as a long-term investment in students' learning and their future. It enables investment in flexible education models so that students' outside school competencies and skills can be captured and assessed in a systematic way.

Shifting away from traditional modes of education to investing in the creation of flexible learning models that formally and inclusively recognise the skills learnt in non-school settings will ensure all students are given opportunities to shine, succeed and thrive. Partnerships and collaborations between stakeholders are likely to generate better outcomes with investment and proper support.

At the most fundamental level, funding acknowledges the significance of embedding equity and excellence in our education system, while recognising the significance of education being a shared goal.

In addition to direct investment, government needs to invest in people, resources, infrastructure and systems. This report has highlighted key players who are essential to activating the levers and who play a critical role in the implementation and overall successes of programs. Program facilitators, educators, teachers, support staff, community members, Indigenous Elders and service providers would not be able to perform their roles efficiently and effectively without sustained investment in training (for example, cultural competence training) and other forms of support.

Finally, other stakeholder groups can themselves take ownership of some of the proposed recommendations. This can be done by promoting and sharing program practices, establishing partnership models, adapting or developing culturally relevant pedagogic and curriculum programs, and building a culture of inclusive engagement with families and communities.

8.2 Building on current work

There is a strong social purpose presence in Australia's education ecosystem, and the report recommendations aim to build upon work already being undertaken in Australia. Examples of existing work include evidence-informed education practices (for instance Evidence 4 Learning developed in partnership with Social Ventures Australia and the Education Endowment Foundation), centres and think-tanks established to address inequity issues (for instance, the Gonski Institute of Education; Research for Educational Impact and the Centre for Inclusive Education), outcomes measurement frameworks developed (for instance by the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation in NSW and the Assessment Research

Centre in Melbourne), and indicator banks and survey tools being established to provide more holistic indicators to capture student outcomes (for instance, the Centre for Social Impact's Amplify Social Impact Online tools, Indicator Engine and Yardstick).

Similarly, the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth's 'Nest' is an evidence-based wellbeing framework that promotes holistic, inclusive and shared ways of understanding wellbeing for specific equity groups. There also currently exists evidence informed interventions at the school, home and community level to support students and their families (for example, 'Strengthening families', 'Positive Parenting Program', 'Advance' and 'School Wide Positive Behaviour Support' to name a few).

There is also work being done within the school education system to incorporate inclusive learnings and shared understanding. For instance, Australian students are being given opportunities to engage with and deepen their knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture through their inclusion in the Australian curriculum³. Building upon existing work means we already have enablers and opportunities to utilise in addressing education inequity.

8.3 Stakeholder consultation

Recognising that addressing education inequity is part of a system-wide change and that achieving actions and outcomes is a partnership process, recommendations also need to be approached through a systems thinking lens as a joint and coordinated effort between groups, rather than the responsibility of a single stakeholder group.

While governments, policy makers and philanthropic organisations play a significant role in helping to achieve some of the outcomes outlined in the three overarching recommendations, other stakeholder groups also need to take responsibility and ownership of problems and solutions. Key stakeholder groups include early childhood education and care service providers, school leaders and educators, and community stakeholders and organisations working with education providers. Just as the programs and studies reviewed for this report demonstrated the benefits of partnerships in improving student outcomes, a similar shared understanding and commitment from different groups will be likely to yield far greater benefits to young people.

To facilitate the next steps in the process, the Centre for Social Impact will work with ecosystem stakeholders to prioritise recommendations for implementation informed by current work, identify other barriers to program implementation, and identify and address knowledge gaps in research on both education inequity and program effectiveness. Part of the process is also to help build the foundations for further consultation with students and young people to enable them to be active participants in the proposed solutions.

Our aim is to lay the foundations for achieving educational equity, creating an excellent education system in the process.

9. REPORT CONCLUSIONS

Education needs to be inclusive, and our education system should work for all young people, regardless of where they come from and what learning they previously possess.

As Australia is still continuing to face challenges resulting from COVID-19, education equity will help futureproof all students for a changing and more complex world and enable them to be better prepared for future unforeseen events.

The Education Inequity report is a reminder to develop a social justice orientation and a holistic commitment to creating and celebrating spaces of inclusion, diversity and care in our path to achieving education equity. Specifically, the report is a reminder to:

- Explicitly recognise and challenge the dominance of Western influence and deficit discourses in mainstream perspectives of what counts as success in learning. Only through full and proper acknowledgement of the limitations of the current approach will it be possible to move forward in removing education inequity.
- Recognise the importance of applying a cautious approach so as not to stereotype students from disadvantaged backgrounds, while being sensitive to the unique characteristics of the diverse groups of students in our society. Only when there is a full understanding of students' characteristics and backgrounds can appropriate solutions be found to tackle education inequity in the relevant context.
- Approach education inequity from a holistic and strength-based lens, with partnership as the key factor to achieving long-term, sustainable success for our young people. Partnership includes working with and empowering students to be agents of their own learning.

To achieve equitable and excellent education,^{xvii} Australia must tackle inequity as a shared responsibility. Only then can we enable all young people to be active, engaged and purposeful citizens in a post-COVID-19 society.



^{xvii} Informed by Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration Statement

APPENDIX 1: REPORT PREPARATION STEPS

The preparation of the report has involved the following stages:

1. Collecting core data and information on education inequity from expert contributors in five domains: early years, middle and senior years; Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students; children and students with a disability; culturally and linguistically diverse students with a focus on refugees and asylum seekers; rural, regional and remote students.
2. Synthesising and framing development leading to report preparation.» Identifying and synthesising Drivers of Inequity from expert contributors' reports.
3. Undertaking a comprehensive review of evidence-based successful programs and interventions.
4. Identifying leverage points and Levers of Change from evidence-based programs identified in scoping review.
5. Report finalisation.

APPENDIX 2: LITERATURE REVIEW METHODOLOGY

Review steps and research questions

To arrive at the levers, a comprehensive evidence review was conducted to identify which programs, practices and interventions in schools and communities have been most successful in improving education outcomes for children and young people, and those which correspond to the five demographic groups in early, middle, and senior years.

The review was informed by a systematic, transparent, and quality assessment process. Five steps were followed to ensure the research conducted was relevant to what we were seeking to determine in the report.^{44,42} These were:

1. Framing research questions for review
2. Identifying relevant work in various studies
3. Assessing quality of studies through the application of quality criteria
4. Extracting information
5. Summarising evidence and synthesising findings

The review was guided by the following research questions:

1. What types of programs, practices, and interventions in schools and communities have been most successful in improving education and non-education outcomes for children and young people in vulnerable contexts?
2. What factors contribute to the success of these programs/policies/interventions?

Methodology

1. Search for sources

To conduct this literature review, a search strategy (see Table II below) was established that involved identifying key concepts from the above research questions in order to find accurate results. Table II provides the keywords used in search strings across academic databases and search engines to find relevant results. Depending on the parameters of the database, minor variations were made to the search string to ensure the capture of all relevant results.

To ensure the programs examined were relevant to the current context and ensure readability for the researchers, the search was restricted to the decade of 2010 to 2020, and to studies written in English. These key search parameters were used in 3 academic databases, which resulted in a total of 2,015 articles. An additional 202 articles were found through search engines and by hand searching. Sources retrieved through hand searching include sources recommended by colleagues that were not picked up in the academic database search. After removing duplicates, there was a total of 1,896 articles.

Table 11: Search strategy

Keyword search parameters	"Aboriginal" or "Torres Strait Islander" or "First Nations" or "Indigenous" or "ATSI" or "Migrant" or "Refugee" or "Non-English Speaking Background" or "Disability" or "Rural" or "Regional" or "Remote" or "socio-economic status" or "marginalised" or "vulnerable" OR "equity" or "equitable" or "disadvantaged" AND "student" or "young person" or "youth" or "childcare" or "preschool" AND "school" or "community" or "organisation" or "home" AND "program" or "intervention" or "policy" or "practice" or "initiative" AND "evidence" or "effective" or "evaluate" or "evaluation" NOT "nursing" OR "medicine" NOT "surgery" OR "cancer" OR "diabetes"
Filters	Timeline: 2010–2020 Language: English
Sources	Academic databases: Proquest Education, A+ Education, Taylor and Francis Other sources: Google Scholar, Google search, hand search

2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for screening articles

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed to refine results, based on the research question. As the aim of the review was to map what programs, practices and interventions are successful in improving education outcomes, the review included a broad scope of literature reviews, peer-reviewed academic literature, and grey literature^{xviii} evaluation reports from an Australian context. This allowed the researchers to broadly evaluate the 'state of the field'. Studies were included that evaluated programs, practices, or interventions for improving student education outcomes for the five equity groups that were central to this report.

The next stage involved screening the sources by title and abstract. Sources were removed that were not relevant to the research question, as determined by not meeting the inclusion criteria. These criteria are provided in Table 12 below.

Table 12: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian studies • Early childhood – Senior years focus • Programs/practices/interventions with a focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students • Migrants and refugee students from a non-English speaking background • Students with a disability • Students living in regional and remote settings • Students from a low socioeconomic status household • Programs/practices/interventions with a focus on improving education outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved academic outcomes (literacy and numeracy) • Improved attitude towards learning/school (academic self-concept and resilience) • Improved engagement in schooling (attendance, participation, retention, completion and belonging) • Improved social-emotional skills • Empirical research • Grey literature evaluation reports acceptable • Literature reviews acceptable
Exclusion criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not based in Australia • Commentary or letters to editor articles • Published prior to 2010 • Outcomes not reported • Theses and/or conference abstracts • No interventions or links to education outcomes • Outcomes not related to education

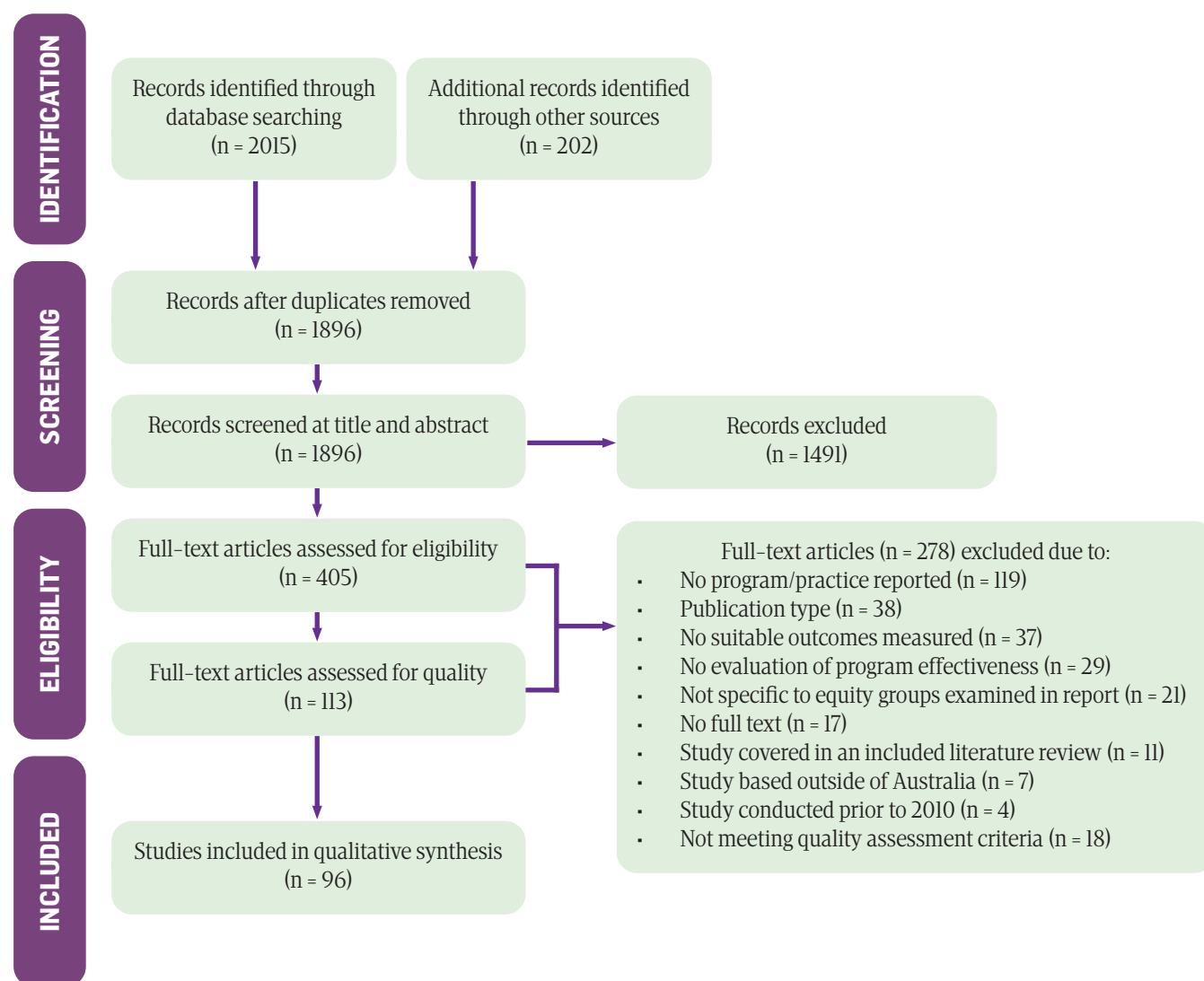
^{xviii} Grey literature refers to content produced by government departments, corporations and other organisations that has not been published in book or journal form. Examples include technical and research reports, brochures, fact sheets, press releases and white papers (Moyle, 2019).

This process resulted in the exclusion of 1,491 sources out of the total 1,896 articles, leaving 405 articles eligible for full text screening. Following this, a full text screening was conducted in which further articles were excluded due to not meeting the inclusion criteria. Eleven studies were also excluded because they were examined in an included literature review.

The application of the full text screening process further reduced the number of included articles from 405 to 113. The full screening process is captured in the PRISMA Flow Diagram (Figure 3) below.

The PRISMA flow diagram below provides an outline of the process conducted for screening evidence that resulted in the final number of articles and reports examined in the evidence review.

Figure 3. PRISMA Flow Diagram



3. Quality assessment

Papers that met the inclusion criteria based on full-text screening were then appraised according to the scoring system espoused by Long and Godfrey (2004)⁴⁹ which assesses quality in qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods studies (See Figure 4.). This scoring system has been used in systematic reviews in the field of education^{50,55}. In reviewing each paper, a score of 1 was given if the criterion was fully met, 0.5 if the criterion was partially met, and 0 if it was not met satisfactorily. Scores were calculated for each paper reviewed. Those that did not achieve a score of at least 3 out of a possible 6 were rejected. From the 113 papers, 17 were excluded based on the quality assessment criteria (see PRISMA diagram above), leaving a final 96 articles included in this literature review.

Figure 4. Quality assessment – critical appraisal checklist

Source Appraisal	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• if described, score = 1• not described, score = 0	
1.	Research design, appropriate methodology described
2.	Sources/sample, recruitment strategy described
3.	Theoretical or philosophical constructs described
4.	responds to articulare research questions, triangulation described
5.	Research utility/Implications described
6.	Unweighted score (/6)

Source: Long and Godfrey, 2004

4. Extracting information

The 96 sources were reviewed, and information was extracted and placed in an extraction table. Each paper was analysed for 13 key types of data:

- Type of article
- Aim of article
- Data collection method
- Driver(s) of education inequity addressed
- Age cohort (early, middle and senior years) and equity group examined
- Sample size
- Intervention/program/practice type and name (if reported)
- Setting in which the program is implemented (i.e. school, community or policy)
- Activities (if reported)
- Outcomes measured; outcome measurement references if included
- Results summary
- Conclusion summary
- Limitations

5. Synthesis and analysis of literature

The researchers synthesised findings from the extracted data by examining the themes that emerged through the literature. From these results, the drivers and levers of education inequity emerged in accordance with the themes that were found.

Summary of the literature review sources

This review looked at 96 articles (26 empirical studies, 51 evaluations, and 18 reviews) published in the past 10 years (2010 – 2020).

A total of 80 articles employed mixed-methods research methods, 13 employed qualitative methods exclusively, and 3 studies were randomised control trials (RCTs).

Of the articles reviewed, 37 examined programs, practices and interventions exclusively for the early years of schooling, 7 the middle years of schooling, 6 the senior years of schooling, and 21 examined all years. The rest of the articles either examined all cohort years or a combination of cohort years, such as early/middle or middle/senior years of schooling.

Out of the 96 articles, 42 examined programs targeted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families, 5 were for students with disability, 13 were for students from a migrant or refugee background, 7 focused on students from low socioeconomic households, and 20 were for students living in regional or remote locations. The rest of the articles either applied to all equity groups or intersected between different equity groups.

Results

The results of the comprehensive review included the identification of a total of 11 drivers of education inequity, and a total of 38 Levers of Change that correspond to the drivers.

This report has focused on 16 of these levers by examining 45 studies.

Total identified in review	This report
96 studies	45 studies
38 Levers of Change	16 Levers of Change

Limitations of review

Appendix 4 has a description of the limitations of each program in detail. Limitations relate to:

- The qualitative nature of most education research means that most evidence produced is also qualitative in nature. The usual limitations of qualitative research and evaluation methods, such as subjectivity and reliability, also apply to the studies examined in this review.
- The programs and evidence examined were often highly contextual, bound by demographic groups, settings, duration and other parameters. This raises questions around scalability or transferability to other settings.
- There is a lack of robust and rigorous evidence, which limits the ability to make authoritative claims of program success.

APPENDIX 3: EXPLANATION OF FIGURE 2

- Drivers are displayed across the page and levers are displayed down the page.
- Levers of Change occur either at micro level (home and families), meso level (schools, communities and non-profits) or macro level (policies and government), with most falling under meso level or meso in combination with other levels.
- Some drivers have more Levers of Change than others. This is because there is more evidence of programs or interventions that address these drivers, potentially highlighting the need to build a stronger evidence base across all drivers.
- Some levers are drawn more generally from literature outlining evidence of what works in the area, rather than an examination of specific programs. This is either because related programs or interventions do not exist, or because individual drivers are more policy-focused than issue-related (e.g. standardised testing).
- Some levers apply to all three cohorts, whereas other levers may apply only to specific cohorts, such as early years.
- Programs from which levers are drawn may focus on one or more equity group, whereas other programs are designed specifically for one equity group (e.g. Indigenous groups).
- A single program may have multiple outcomes/levers and thus can be applied across various drivers.

APPENDIX 4: FULL DETAILS OF PROGRAM AND EVIDENCE OF STUDIES

STUDY	TYPE OF METHODOLOGY	OBJECTIVE	OVERALL FINDINGS INCLUDING LIMITATIONS/LESSONS LEARNT
Laying foundations for accessible and quality early childhood education and care			
Muir, K., Katz, I., Edwards, B., Gray, M., Wise, S. and Hayes, A. 2010, 'The national evaluation of the Communities for Children initiative', <i>Family Matters</i> , no. 84, pp. 35–42.	Evaluation: surveys and interviews Sample sizes include 222 stakeholders interviewed and 442 survey respondents.	This report describes the impact of Communities for Children (CfC) on services, children and families. It discusses elements of the CfC model that contributed to its success and/or presented challenges.	<p>Implementing the CFC initiative led to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant impact on the number, types and capacity of services available in the communities in which it has been based, with increases in service coordination in those communities. Service capacity also improved in some CfC communities by addressing some service gaps, for example, establishing preventative services, and trialling innovative programs • Higher involvement in community service activities among lower-income households or households with low levels of maternal education • Improvements in mental health and children's learning, with parents reporting being more effective in their roles as parents <p>The positive change in relation to parental involvement in community activities and increased parental perception of social cohesion supports the idea that 'community embeddedness' may have an additional effect on children and families, and that provision of increased services on their own would not have achieved this aim. The evaluation suggests that the CfC model can make an important contribution to the family and community contexts in which disadvantaged children grow up, and in terms of their wellbeing (Muir et al, 2010).</p> <p>Limitations: Challenges have been particularly around the timeframe and geographic locations of the CfC sites. The timeframe has been inadequate for very disadvantaged communities and for those with limited pre-existing infrastructure or networks.</p> <p>It was noted that an innovative model, like the CfC, required a longer and extended time frame to adequately implement the initiative, particularly in very disadvantaged communities with limited pre-existing infrastructure or networks. A longer-term commitment would also ensure community trust and expectations are suitably fulfilled. While such initiatives are most valuable in remote communities, challenges need to be overcome, such as arbitrary administrative boundaries between suburbs, regions or government areas that can impede service delivery and service coordination. Remote areas face other specific issues, including limited infrastructure and difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff, which impact the establishment and implementation of the CfC initiative.</p>
McLean, K., Edwards, S., Morris, H., Hallowell, L. and Swinkels, K. 2016, <i>Community playgroups – Connecting rural families locally pilot</i> , Report prepared for Playgroup Victoria, Melbourne: Australian Catholic University.	Evaluation: Interviews, focus groups, social media documentation survey Sample sizes range from 3–17.	This report evaluates the role of Playgroup Development Consultants (PDCs). This report investigated the extent to which rural communities are likely to benefit from hosting PDCs to actively promote and connect community playgroups and early years services.	<p>The evaluation suggests social capital benefits of the PDC role in rural communities. By building professional networks in the local community and value-adding to existing service strategies, it increased awareness of playgroups in the early childhood service types and in the general community, leading to continued community playgroup participation by children and families.</p> <p>Lessons learnt: The contribution by PDCs in immediately establishing primary bonding connections and creating secondary bonding connections is indicative of community capacity-building. In this way, playgroups are increasingly connected within and across service types through shared goals and values, increasing the promotion of playgroup participation and social connectedness for families. Establishing more PDCs in rural communities could lead to supporting early childhood learning and development.</p>

<p>Tseng YP, Jordan B, Borland J., Coombs N, Cotter K, Guillou M, Hill A, Kennedy A and Sheehan J. 2019, 24 months in the Early Years Education Program: Assessment of the impact on children and their primary caregivers, <i>Changing the life trajectories of Australia's most vulnerable children: Report No. 4</i>, Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, Melbourne.</p>	<p>Evaluation: survey Sample size: 85-95 Outcomes measured related to child development and resilience, parent psychological distress and home environment.</p>	<p>This report presents findings on the impact on children and their primary caregivers of 24 months of enrolment in the Early Years Education Program (EYEP).</p>	<p>Large and statistically significant EYEP impacts are found at 24 months for several outcomes for children: (i) IQ; (ii) protective factors related to resilience; and (iii) social-emotional development. There is also a relatively large impact on children's language skills, but this estimate has limited statistical significance. By 24 months, EYEP has been found to have a variety of important impacts on children's cognitive and non-cognitive development.</p> <p>Lessons learnt: Programs like EYEP recognise the significance of respectful and responsive relationships for every child's learning and development. Expanding such programs is likely to benefit families and children who are highly disadvantaged across a number of dimensions and are more likely to experience stressful events and have higher levels of psychological distress than the general population.</p>
<p>Gregory T, Herreen D and Brinkman S. 2018, <i>Review of the quality of evidence for preschool and school-based programs to support social and emotional skills</i>, Prepared for the Department for Education and Child Development and the Telethon Kids Institute by the Fraser Mustard Centre, Adelaide.</p>	<p>Review Sample size: 11 programs Outcomes measured: AEDC social competence; AEDC emotional maturity.</p>	<p>To review the quality of evidence for preschool and school-based programs that support the development of Emotional Maturity and Social Competence (aligned to the Australian Early Development Census domains) and school-based programs that focus on building perseverance and academic self-concept.</p>	<p>Evidence shows that well-developed holistic transition programs lead to increased positive social behaviour, reduced conduct problems, reduced emotional distress, improved academic performance and improved parent-child interactions. Programs have good evidence of the potential to improve the social skills and emotional competence of students.</p> <p>Lessons learnt: the expansion of high-quality transition programs for early and middle years has a high chance of improving students' social and emotional skills if programs are implemented with fidelity. Governments need to step in to provide structured, targeted and ongoing funding to enable effective transition programs, recognising the importance of transition as a critically important educational phase.</p>
<p>1. Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation 2014, <i>Children with disability in inclusive early childhood education and care</i>, NSW Department of Education and Communities, Sydney.</p> <p>2. KPMG 2011, <i>Reviewing the Evidence on the Effectiveness of Early Childhood Intervention</i>, Report prepared for the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs by KPMG, Adelaide.</p>	<p>Literature review Outcomes measures related to engagement, childhood behaviour, communication, IQ and cost-effectiveness.</p>	<p>1. To examine the evidence in the literature of the benefits for children with disability in inclusive childcare settings and provide examples of best practice that educators and teachers can use to support the engagement and development of children with disability.</p> <p>2. To examine the evidence supporting early childhood interventions (both general and targeted) for children with a developmental disability or developmental delay.</p>	<p>Early childhood settings that are inclusive and child-initiated with strong adult engagement enable children to reach their full potential, especially those that support both children and their families in children's 'natural' environment.</p> <p>Examples are Perry Pre-school, Building Blocks program, The Incredible Years parenting program. Children with developmental delays (intellectual, emotional or behavioural) may also benefit from interventions.</p> <p>Lessons learnt: While early childhood interventions may improve educational outcomes, these are not the primary focus. It is important to note that for some children with disability, access to inclusive early childhood education and care will be just one type of useful early intervention to assist their development. Recognising the ethical difficulties involved in engaging the cohort will help to acknowledge some of the methodological limitations in studies. The wide range of experiences of disability, as well as the diversity of early childhood education and care services, make it difficult to draw broad conclusions about the early education and care of children with disability.</p>

<p>1. Grace R and Trudgett M. (2012). It's not rocket science: The perspectives of Indigenous early childhood workers on supporting the engagement of Indigenous families in early childhood settings. <i>Australasian Journal of Early Childhood</i>, 37(2), 10–18.</p> <p>2. Jackiewicz S, Saggars S and Frances K. (2011). Equity of access: Requirements of Indigenous families and communities to ensure equitable access to government-approved childcare settings in Australia. <i>Australasian Journal of Early Childhood</i>, 36(3), 100–108.</p> <p>3. Leske R, Samardin D, Woods A and Thorpe K (2015) 'What works and why? Early childhood professionals' perspectives on effective early childhood education and care services for Indigenous families'. <i>Australasian Journal of Early Childhood</i>, 40(1), pp. 109–118.</p>	<p>Qualitative</p> <p>Sample sizes range from 6 to 210.</p> <p>Outcomes measured the engagement of families and access to childcare.</p>	<p>1. To examine how Indigenous families might be better supported to engage with early childhood education and care services.</p> <p>2. To examine the interplay between Indigenous children and their families' equitable access to and participation in government-approved childcare services and their participation in such services.</p> <p>3. To interrogate currently held conceptualisations of 'effective ECEC' from practitioners in the field (the what); and to identify the underlying success factors in existing ECEC programs that sustain attendance and deliver positive learning experiences for Indigenous children and families (the why).</p>	<p>Aligning ECEC programs with Indigenous understandings of learning and with Indigenous ways of understanding childhood facilitates positive social, economic and health trajectories. The success of non-licensed early childhood services (playgroups, parent–child education programs) in achieving high levels of attendance by Indigenous families was attributed to two key features of a program's philosophy and structure: (1) family involvement and having a choice in program flexibility, and (2) effective programs are physically and culturally safe and accessible.</p> <p>The relationships between the ECEC service, family, community and child emerged as critical to initial engagement with the ECEC program and ongoing participation in it. Where early childhood services embrace families, culture and community, it leads to greater family engagement. Making childcare more affordable is essential.</p> <p>Lessons learnt: Key barriers to family participation identified were transport difficulties, family embarrassment or 'shame', and community division. Facilitation of family engagement was argued to require an acceptance of individual families as well as the embracing of culture and the wider Indigenous community. In addition, ongoing and appropriate training and support for Indigenous early childhood professionals and workers to engage families is required.</p>
<p>1. Mason-White H. (2014). <i>The journey to 'big school': Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Transition to Primary School</i>. SNAICC</p> <p>2. Moyle K. 2019, <i>Indigenous Early Childhood Education, school readiness and transition programs into primary school: literature review</i>. Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), Camberwell.</p>	<p>Qualitative</p> <p>Literature review</p> <p>Outcomes measured school readiness</p>	<p>1. To examine a high-quality program that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children transition to primary school.</p> <p>2. To provide an overview of current research about factors that support effective transitions to school for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait children.</p>	<p>Participation in a high-quality, targeted transition program provides a number of clear benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families (programs run by early childhood services and Macquarie University's PreLit program, Patterning and Early Algebra Program). Current evidence frames successful transitions around a series of five interconnected elements: ready schools, ready children, ready families, ready communities and ready early childhood services.</p> <p>Lessons learnt: Successful transition programs are uniquely designed by services and schools to match their community's needs. Crucial to the effectiveness of transition programs is that services and schools be given the flexibility to design their own programs, rather than adopting a blanket approach to transition.</p>

Strengthening home-education setting-community connections

Ollerenshaw A. 2012, 'Literacy trails: a whole-of-community program to encourage literacy and numeracy awareness for children in preschool and early primary.', <i>Australasian Journal of Early Childhood</i> , vol. 37, no. 3, pp. 147–53.	Evaluation: Interviews, survey, focus group Sample size: 45	To describe the evaluation outcomes of an innovative, community-based educational initiative to enhance and promote the awareness of literacy and numeracy in young children in regional communities.	Literacy Trails promoted and nurtured children's awareness of literacy and numeracy, as evident in the feedback received from all participant groups, including parents, community members, and partnership organisations. Actively involving the community members gave them a sense of ownership to achieve educational outcomes and led to a greater sense of community cohesion and spirit. Community members observed that the Literacy Trails had accomplished something that few other activities in the town managed—specifically whole-of-town involvement made possible by community goodwill. The success of the project was enabled by strong and active commitment by the team players, strong leadership and support from local government, in-kind contribution and support provided by the local Council, and overall goodwill by everyone involved. Lessons learnt: The Literacy Trails project clearly shows that, with good coordination, strong motives for success, hard work and community goodwill, community-owned projects can be successful. While future evaluations could benefit from wider sampling of a greater number and range of parents and children, there is clear evidence to support scaling up or improvising programs like the Literacy Trails in other regional communities by adapting to local needs.
Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture 2019, 'School is where you need to be equal and learn': <i>insights from students of refugee backgrounds on learning and engagement in Victorian secondary schools</i> , Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, Brunswick.	Qualitative Sample size: 51	The report sought the insights of students of refugee backgrounds on the barriers and facilitators to learning and engagement at school. Through this project, the Schools Support Program was able to learn directly from students of refugee backgrounds, and position them, through their lived experience, as experts on 'what works' to support them at school.	This report demonstrates the value of engaging students of refugee backgrounds in meaningful consultations. By seeking out the insights of newly arrived students with a strength-based approach, schools can promote and develop evidence-informed, inclusive strategies and policies regarding the learning and wellbeing needs of students of refugee backgrounds, and support all students to reach their potential. When teachers take a proactive approach to addressing issues of racism and bullying, they can ensure that all students feel welcome and included in the school community. Lessons learnt: Using anonymous surveys to better understand student experiences can be an important strategy but sensitivity and care are needed to manage inclusiveness and literacy challenges.
O'Donogue K and Davies C. 2014, <i>Extended Service Schools Model: Summation Report</i> , Report prepared for the Department of Education, Western Australia by TNS Australia.	Mixed method Sample sizes ranging from 25 to 4500	The project aimed to promote a shared knowledge across all jurisdictions of best practice in implementing models of extended service schooling, including describing key opportunities and risks that may apply in the national context.	Reported outcomes of the Extended Service Schools model are diverse, and extend well beyond academic results into 3 key areas relating to behavioural improvement, social skill development and school transition, and educational attainment. Outcomes related to students, parents, community, schools and school staff. Lessons learnt: The success and sustainability of the Extended Service Schools model depend on a number of factors, including the availability of consistent funding and school-based resources, how the approach was embedded in the school, an ability to understand community needs and suitably modify approaches, the capacity of schools to develop strong partnerships with external agencies, and the provision of system-level support for schools to carry through the project. Because of the significance of contextual factors in each setting, evidence supported a flexible mode of delivery, adapting services to school and community needs and available resources. Developing consistent evaluation criteria or review processes can be challenging when different agencies adopt different service delivery approaches.

Jayawardena T. 2019. Kids Hope Australia <i>Impact Evaluation (KHA): Evaluation Report</i> . Kids Hope Australia. Retrieved https://kidshope.org.au/documents/item/103	Evaluation: survey 1 program, across 535 mentors and 227 teachers Outcomes measured related to emotional, social, behavioural and academic wellbeing	To understand and measure the impact of the KHA mentoring program on the health and wellbeing of vulnerable children involved in the program.	Impact Evaluation Report findings showed Kids Hope Australia led to improvements in social, emotional, behavioural and academic outcomes for children involved in the program, and positively impacted the student, mentor, school and the wider community. Having a positive role model fostered a sense of hope, positivity, and a stable and trusted friendship in a safe space. The program was seen as a value-added initiative with 'ripple effect' benefits extended to mentors and the wider community.
Naidoo, L. 2010, 'What works? A program of best practice for supporting the literacy needs of refugee high school students', <i>Literacy Learning: The Middle Years</i> , vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 29–38. Ferfolja, T. and Naidoo, L. 2010, <i>Supporting refugee students through the Refugee Action Support Program What works in schools</i> .	Case study	To examine how the RAS (Refugee Action Support) program operates effectively in terms of providing homework and study assistance to refugee students, and what contributes to the success of the program.	The Refugee Action Support (RAS) Program led to effective school-community-university partnerships while improving student academic and non-academic outcomes. Factors contributing to the program's success included effective coordination between different partners, family and community involvement, whole-school teaching and learning support program for students, and commitment of teaching teams. Lessons learnt: Well-coordinated partnerships like the RAS provide a vital context for the development and enrichment of cultural literacy and can offer much-needed social and emotional support to young people who have been through much instability in their relatively short lives. Pre-service student teachers gain valuable learnings that can help inform their understandings and bring cultural awareness of refugee experiences to their work when they transition to become a classroom teacher.
Weekes T, Phelan L and Francis V. 2011, 'Supporting successful learning for refugee students: The Classroom Connect project', <i>Issues in Educational Research</i> , vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 310–29.	Evaluation Sample size ranging from 6 to 18	To discuss the findings of research that evaluated the benefits of the Classroom Connect Project for stakeholders: students, teaching staff in schools and volunteer tutors	Evaluation of the Classroom Connect Project (CCP) found that the program led to benefits relating to the social and emotional aspects of schooling. CCP was found to be a viable model for supporting successful learning for refugee students as they transition from Intensive English Centres (IECs) and make their way through the grades in mainstream secondary schools. Lessons learnt: The sustainability of cost-free projects like CCP is dependent upon time commitments from school staff, including coordination of tutors. Even after their transition from IECs, students are likely to continue to need individualised academic and social support as they progress through the grades.
Grossman M and Sonn C. 2010, <i>New moves: understanding the impacts of The Song Room programs for young people from refugee backgrounds</i> , Report prepared for The Song Room by Victoria University, Abbotsford.	Evaluation Sample size: 55 students plus teachers and artists	To examine the impacts and meanings of The Song Room (TSR) programs for young people from refugee backgrounds	TSR's impact on the 3 overarching domains of sense of wellbeing, sense of belonging and social inclusion and engagement with learning was overwhelmingly positive, with engagement in learning being the strongest domain reported by student participants. Lessons learnt: There was a need to combat the perception that arts-based learning is not 'legitimate' in the eyes of some parents, education and community stakeholders. Artists could be more prepared about the backgrounds of refugee students before beginning TSR program delivery.
Carrol, A. Sanders O'Connor E, Houghton SJ, Hattie JA, Donovan C and Lynn S., 2017, 'A preliminary empirical evaluation of KooLKIDS: A school-based program to reduce early onset antisocial behaviour in children.', <i>Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability</i> , vol. 42, no. 1, pp. 22–35.	Evaluation quasi-experimental 1 program across 49 children	To conduct a preliminary empirical evaluation of the KooLKIDS program, for children with early onset of antisocial behaviour and who have been suspended or who are at risk of suspension from school	Evaluation results suggest significant reduction in overall aggression, corresponding to a decreased risk of exclusionary discipline, and that KooLKIDS successfully taught emotion regulation skills, addressing a key issue for many children with antisocial behaviour. Lessons learnt: The study incorporated a high degree of implementation and treatment fidelity, which increased scientific confidence in the outcomes of the evaluation, underscoring the importance of high-quality evaluation.

Main K and Whatman S. 2016, 'Building social and emotional efficacy to (re) engage young adolescents: capitalising on the "window of opportunity"', <i>International Journal of Inclusive Education</i> , vol. 20, no. 10, pp. 1054–69.	Mixed method 1 program across 60 students	To understand 'how' the Titans Learning Centre (TLC) program was re-engaging young adolescents as a form of early intervention.	A key point of difference between the TLC and other schooling programs was the focus on key developmental issues revolving around building positive relationships with peers, parents and teachers, developing a positive interest in school, developing problem-solving skills, and developing academic competence to navigate life beyond school. The evaluation recommended further longitudinal data collection and analysis to determine the sustainability of the gains made for these students into their senior years of schooling and young adult lives.
<p>1. Reaburn R, Fraser S, Smith H, Roberts J, Fielding-Wells J and Corbett M. 2017, "Aspire High": Impacting Student Aspirations in a Regional Community', <i>Australian and International Journal of Rural Education</i>, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 73–89.</p> <p>2. Woodroffe J, Kilpatrick S, Williams B and Jago M. 2017, 'Preparing Rural And Regional Students For The Future World Of Work: Developing Authentic Career Focussed Curriculum Through A Collaborative Partnership Model.', <i>Australian and International Journal of Rural Education</i>, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 158–73</p> <p>3. Broadbent R and Papadopoulos 2010, 'Government, schools, young people and communities in partnership.', <i>Youth Studies Australia</i>, vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 52–60.</p> <p>4. Gale T, Sellar S, Parker S, Hattam R, Comber B, Tranter, D and Bills D. 2010, <i>Interventions early in school as a means to improve higher education outcomes for disadvantaged (particularly low SES) students: a design and evaluation matrix for university outreach in schools</i>, Report prepared for The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations by the University of South Australia, Canberra.</p>	Evaluation/quasi-experimental/review Sample size range: 8 to 1000 Programs range from 1 to 59	<p>1. To provide initial evidence of the effectiveness of the Aspire High educational program in a Tasmanian regional community.</p> <p>2. To consider the key opportunities and challenges for preparing rural and regional students for the future world of work through school-community partnerships (Pathways to Success).</p> <p>3. To examine 'Advance' program outcomes and impact on young people, schools and community organisations.</p> <p>4. To examine the effectiveness of early intervention outreach programs run by universities in schools.</p>	<p>Programs that were implemented in non-school settings (Aspire High, Pathways to Success, Advance program and outreach programs) were built on strong partnerships, clear alignment with local community needs, and engaged community stakeholders to take an active role in supporting students' transition to career and education pathways.</p> <p>Lessons learnt: Young people highly value the experience of exploring and learning in their local communities and engaging with diverse people, whether in a volunteering capacity, assisting others or engaging in new experiential learning and skill development. Increasing student academic and tertiary aspirations through outreach programs requires that students are targeted much earlier than senior secondary school, providing access to more communication and information and increasing university familiarisation/site experiences. Contextual factors can place specific demands on programs and may impact the effectiveness and appropriateness of different approaches.</p>

Atkinson G, Christian F, Cassidy J, Rutherford J and Hawkins, A. 2019. <i>Ticket to work post school outcomes</i> . A report for National Disability Services by ARTD Consultants, Sydney.	Evaluation quasi-experimental 1 program across 56 participants	To test what can be achieved by Ticket to Work in terms of short-term employment, school completion, wellbeing and social inclusion.	Ticket to Work participants still face difficulties entering the workforce, with over three-quarters (76%) of participants having experienced difficulties in securing work. Participants may not have been using their NDIS package to assist school transition, therefore NDIS providers were unlikely to be identified as supportive.
1. Willsher K and Penman J. 2011, 'Engaging with schools and increasing primary school students' interest in science: An intersectoral collaboration', <i>Education in Rural Australia</i> , vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 87–103. 2. Sheehan GR and Mosse J. 2013, 'Working with science teachers to transform the opportunity landscape for regional and rural youth: A qualitative evaluation of the Science in Schools Program', <i>Australian Journal of Teacher Education</i> , vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 75–96.	Evaluation Sample sizes range from 1 to 70	1. To discuss an initiative called 'Scientists in Schools' with the primary objective of raising awareness and interest in the study of sciences. 2. To report on a qualitative evaluation of the 'Science in Schools' program.	Components of the Scientists in Schools program can be extended to other small country towns. Future programs may also incorporate already existing extensive online resources available through scientific organisations. There is also the opportunity to engage male scientist role models and scientists from other cultures as this has become available at the campus.
Purdie N and Buckley S. 2010. <i>School attendance and retention of Indigenous Australian students</i> , Closing the Gap Clearinghouse (Australia), Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra.	Review	To evaluate the quality of available evidence regarding strategies for improving school attendance for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people.	Culturally relevant events were seen to be highly successful and a valuable source of encouragement and inspiration for students, teachers and community members. However, there was insufficient data to assess whether student attendance actually increased following the events and, if so, whether any effects were sustained.
Behrendt L, Barber T and Graham M. 2019, <i>AISNSW Pilot Project: Improving Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students</i> , Report prepared for the Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales (AISNSW) by the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, University of Technology Sydney.	Evaluation Sample size includes 59 students, 76 staff, 31 family/community members	The Report identifies the strategies the project schools adopted to improve academic and other relevant outcomes for Indigenous students.	Schools implemented strategies and actions to support Indigenous students' successful transition into, in and out of school; these included building strong relationships with the student, family and community, as well as providing culturally sensitive and individualised academic, personal, spiritual, social and physical support, from pre-commencement through to transition out of the school.
Griffiths A. (2011). The components of best-practice indigenous education: A comparative review. <i>The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education</i> , 40, 69–80.	Review	To draw together the existing international evidence to develop a set of best practice components for Indigenous education.	Components are underpinned by genuine partnership, relational trust, respect and reciprocity between various stakeholders, marshalling resources to facilitate collaborations, and establishing localised social capital. Identifying and replicating education initiatives that work towards best practice standards will require coordinated research in the form of rigorous program evaluation. The recording and showcasing of successful programs will provide the means to replicate this success in Australian contexts.

Lowe K, Harrison N, Tennent C., Guenther J, Vass G and Moodie N. 2019, 'Factors affecting the development of school and Indigenous community engagement: A systematic review', <i>The Australian Educational Researcher</i> , vol. 46, no. 2, pp. 253–71.	Systematic review (32 studies)	To examine issues that affect the development of Aboriginal community and school collaboration.	Authentic school–community–family partnerships challenge the reductionist approach which speaks of 'consulting', 'listening' and 'taking action', as found in government policies. There is more evidence for non–academic related benefits as a result of school–community Indigenous engagement, underscoring the importance of building more evidence on learning outcomes.
National Curriculum Services 2012, <i>What works. The work program. Success in remote schools: A research study of eleven improving remote schools</i> , National Curriculum Services, Abbotsford Vic.	Case study (11 remote schools with high Indigenous cohorts)	To observe and identify the practices the schools use to influence the various community, school, classroom, teacher and student–level factors that have potentially contributed to improved performance.	Given the commonness of the themes identified in the report, it would appear that much of what has been achieved in the 11 schools is transferable to other locations. The themes provide a strategic thinking and planning framework that could be used in the form of an 'improvement map' to identify where a school might take action to chart a pathway to improved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student outcomes.

Building and inclusive and holistic school culture, with adaptive and flexible learning frameworks

Choules K, Down B and Hogan J. 2016, <i>Promising Practices: What students, parents and teachers say about learning in a Big Picture context</i> , Murdoch University.	Evaluation Sample size: 51	To understand better how student engagement for learning and aspirations develop in a big picture context.	The evidence presented in this report challenged traditional deficit views about young people lacking aspirations, and instead focused on identifying the conditions in which aspirational capabilities can develop. Lessons learnt: Creating the conditions for alternative ways of 'doing' school is complex, requiring vision, leadership, persistence, time, and resources. Variation from school to school in the degree of fidelity to the program design are inevitable given these complex conditions, and the skills to adapt the design to suit school contexts becomes more relevant. There needs to be a recognition that there are no 'quick fixes' or 'magic bullets' to complex social and educational problems such as student engagement.
Price M. 2013, <i>Alternative education and transition pathways for early school leavers: evaluating a DECD flexible learning program for young people in regional South Australia</i> , BoysTown, Milton.	Evaluation	To examine the effectiveness of the BoysTown program, improve its current delivery and inform future directions.	The evaluation uses survey tools that contain items from validated psychometric tests such as the Rosenberg self-esteem scale. Lessons learnt: Caution needs to be exercised since it is always not possible to interpret the results as direct change in any one individual, but rather as an aggregate group only. Findings are not definitive nor representative of all populations of young people and service providers involved with flexible learning options.
Deloitte Access Economics 2012, <i>The socio-economic benefits of investing in the prevention of early school leaving</i> , Report prepared for Save the Children Australia.	Review	To describe the Hands on Learning (HOL) method and present an estimate of the socioeconomic benefits and associated costs.	The cost-benefit-analysis model on which the estimation of quantifiable socio-economic benefits is based, comes with limitations. Each participant is only able to choose one earning pathway and does not switch year on year; for example, they do not switch between employment and unemployment. The model accounts only for average payoffs that can be readily monetised and is not an all-inclusive estimation of the costs of early school leaving, nor a complete measure of the value of investing in HOL. Nevertheless, HOL has proven to be successful and sustainable and there is a need for additional targeted funding from Government to support the program in many more schools.
te Riele K, Wilson K, Wallace V, McGinty S and Lewthwaite B. 2017, 'Outcomes from Flexible Learning Options for disenfranchised youth: what counts?', <i>International Journal of Inclusive Education</i> , vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 117–30.	Review Sample: 20 grey literature reports	To contribute to enhanced understandings of what counts as success in settings which provide flexible learning options (FLOs), and of how that success is demonstrated.	Not all reports included clear and convincing evidence, due to a combination of placing emphasis on portraying the process (how the FLO works), the difficult circumstances in which FLOs operate, and difficulties in defining and measuring their product (outcomes). Lessons learnt: Claims about societal outcomes (students becoming more confident in themselves, which has positive ripple effect in society) could benefit from more systematic attempts at measurement, although many FLOs do not have the 'wherewithal'.
Joseph B. 2019, <i>Overcoming the Odds: A study of Australia's top-performing disadvantaged schools</i> , The Centre for Independent Studies.	Qualitative Sample size: 9 schools	To examine any common policies and practices that have led to the success and performance of high-achieving disadvantaged primary schools.	Early intervention literacy tools are most effective when combined appropriately to get the best results for those at risk, for instance, targeting students with low levels of language skills. Lessons learnt: The role of other common policies and practices implemented in schools that cater to the often complex needs of disadvantaged students need to be recognised for the success of early intervention tools.
Einfeld SL, Beaumont R, Clark T Clarke KS, Costley D, Gray KM, Horstead, SK, Redoblado Hodge MA, Roberts J, Sofronoff K, Taffe JR and Howlin P. 2018, 'School-based social skills training for young people with autism spectrum disorders', <i>Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability</i> , vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 29–39.	Evaluation 1 program across 84 students/families	To determine if the Secret Agent Society (SAS) program led to improvements in social skills and emotional regulation and whether any improvements were sustained 12 months after the cessation of the intervention.	Measures of emotion regulation and social skills of young people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) showed sustained improvements up to 12 months following delivery of the SAS. Lessons learnt: Programs such as the SAS warrant further research as potential adjunctive programs for use in schools that serve young people with ASD.

Every D, Thompson K, Rainbird S, Whetton S, Procter N, Abdul-Halim S and Sebben B 2014, 'We're so lucky': meeting challenges to deliver benefits to children in immigration detention', <i>Australian Educational Researcher</i> , vol. 41, no. 2, pp. 209–25.	Mixed-method Sample size: 55 interviews	To examine the social and economic impacts of the Inverbrackie education program, an alternative place of detention (APOD) when children attend local schools.	The program had significant social and economic impacts when examining the benefits to the host school and the wider local community. Success of the program depended on funding for specialised support staff, the social justice orientation of the school's leaders and staff, and a whole-school commitment to values of inclusivity and diversity. Lessons learnt: Given the current policies in relation to asylum-seeking, there is a need to determine best practice strategies that minimise risks and optimise benefits.
Mansouri F and Jenkins L. 2010, 'Schools as sites of race relations and intercultural tension', <i>Australian Journal of Teacher Education</i> , vol. 35, no. 7, pp. 93–108.	Mixed-method Sample size: 823 students	To investigate the impact of racism on the health and wellbeing of young Australians and how young people in Australia report and respond to racism.	Schools that took a whole-school preventative approach were most successful in dealing with racism. Lessons learnt: Schools and teacher education programs should work together to explore ways in which issues of race, culture and diversity can be incorporated in the content choice in school curriculum. This will positively influence the way in which graduating teachers approach diversity and inter-cultural tensions within their own classrooms and the wider school.
Craven R and Magson, N. 2014, 'Seeding success for Aboriginal primary students.', <i>Scan</i> , vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 27–40. Harrison N., Tennent C, Vass G, Guenther J, Lowe K. and Moodie N. 2019, 'Curriculum and learning in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education: A systematic review', <i>The Australian Educational Researcher</i> , vol. 46, no. 2, pp. 233–51.	Mixed-method 52 schools with Aboriginal (n=495) and non-Aboriginal (n=783) students	To identify which particular facets of quality teaching impact most on educational outcomes for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in urban and regional schools.	The findings demonstrate that academic self-concepts are associated with positive schooling engagement and achievement outcomes for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Lessons learnt: Much needs to be done to enhance Aboriginal students' academic self-concepts so that they are commensurate with their non-Aboriginal peers' academic self-concepts.
Briggs A. 2017, 'Links Between Senior High School Indigenous Attendance, Retention and Engagement: Observations at Two Urban High Schools.', <i>Australian Journal of Indigenous Education</i> , vol. 46, no. 1, pp. 34–43.	Case study Sample size: 58 students	To provide insight into the links between attendance, retention and engagement of Indigenous senior students in an urban environment.	Attendance, engagement and retention are certainly linked; however, those links are complex and the factors linking them can vary significantly. Lessons learnt: There is the need for further longitudinal studies that follow senior Indigenous students over a significant time period, to study their long-term life outcomes.
Dawson GK, Clinton J, Koelle M and McLaren P. 2018, <i>Evaluation of the Flexible Literacy for Remote Primary Schools Program Main Report: June 2018</i> , Prepared for the Australian Department of Education and Training by the Centre for Program Evaluation, University of Melbourne.	Evaluation 1 program across 34 schools	To investigate the long-term effectiveness of FLFRPSP (Flexible Literacy for Remote Primary Schools Program).	Evaluation findings indicate general support that the FLFRPSP has improved student literacy outcomes. Lessons learnt: Reasons for program not working well universally include resourcing, less programmatic and system support, use of NAPLAN as the only measure, teacher attrition, data availability and low engagement with evaluation. However, a negative impact from one factor in one school may not be negative in another. The result is a paucity of observable diffuse impact for the FLFRPSP.

APPENDIX 5: REPORT LIMITATIONS

This report comes with certain limitations:

- Firstly, the report does not cover all at-risk cohort groups. There are other groups of students who are disadvantaged or marginalised, impacting their educational outcomes.
- Secondly, limitations of the review impact on the report findings and interpretations made from those findings.
- Thirdly, the report is not purporting to claim these drivers and levers are the **ONLY** elements that play a role in education inequity. The recommendations are based on selected levers drawn from relevant studies. There are other drivers and levers of education inequity that have not been covered in this report.
- Fourthly, the report does not intend to cover in detail COVID-19 and its impact on education inequity. Components of the report were written prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The full impact of the pandemic on student outcomes, including their mental health and wellbeing, is still being understood and studied.
- Finally, while the authors have striven to maintain the three principles of inclusivity, a systems thinking approach and evidence-based models in the research and writing of this report, it may not always have been possible to achieve this.

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