

Release time high on agenda

November 16, 2019

Federation is pursuing the employment of additional permanent classroom, executive, specialist and non-school based teaching positions to:

- significantly increase the release time for all teachers across all public school settings
- reduce class sizes
- facilitate inbuilt teacher-relief arrangements to address casual teacher shortages
- provide additional systemic support for schools
- expand teaching programs and ensure a curriculum guarantee that can improve the learning outcomes of all students, including students across key areas of equity (Aboriginal background, socioeconomic status background, disability, English language proficiency) and those affected by a school's location in remote and rural areas of the state.



Such improvements are long overdue and must be a priority of the State Government and the Department of Education.

Federation will also continue to pursue with the Department discussions to address the growing demands and changes to teachers work and the Department's obsession with data collection, which is obstructing teaching and hindering student learning.

Major improvements are needed to support the work of teachers and students' learning and less of the Local Schools, Local Decisions agenda that has cut systemic support and pushed greater responsibility and workload on to schools.

Annual Conference earlier this year stated: "Local Schools, Local Decisions has been a dispiriting experience for public school teachers since its introduction in 2012. As a direct consequence of this agenda, the work and professional judgement of teachers has been undervalued. Schools have become burdened by administrative tasks that are often extraneous to teaching and learning, emanate from a burgeoning Department culture of compliance, and reflect a near meaningless preoccupation with the collection of data where the educational return is rarely commensurate with the labour required to gather and enter such data. This technocratic turn has transformed the role of the school principal from educational leader to administrative compliance manager."

The research and report commissioned by Federation, [Understanding work in schools: The foundation for teaching and learning](#), was highly critical of the Local Schools, Local Decisions reform agenda.

More than 18,000 responses from NSW public school teachers, executives, principals and consultants identified the overwhelming negative effect on teaching and learning in the form of extensive changes over a short period of time, compliance demands and excessive data collection.

Teachers want to be able to focus on teaching and student learning. But as the report highlighted: “There is also evidence that many teachers are struggling to preserve this student focus in the face of new work activities that impose additional hours, work demands and personal burdens on them.”

Additional resources to reduce workload and help provide extra release time would enhance learning and teacher professional development, with time to plan and prepare thereby achieving better learning outcomes.

The NSW public school system is in need of staffing reform that provides a curriculum guarantee for all students, space and time for teachers to focus on their teaching, confidence and stability for every public school community that they will be adequately and appropriately staffed, and departmental support at any time a school needs it.