

## Where's the respect due to the profession?



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### **Our most basic of working conditions: pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and reporting**

What we teach and how we teach it lies at the heart of our work. Protecting those core conditions from political influence is again becoming increasingly challenging as government forces, both state and federal, and departmental 'School Improvement and Education reform' seek to further impose their agendas into our classrooms.

The recent release of the Masters NSW Curriculum Review and subsequent recommendations, the NAPLAN Review and assessment and professional learning directions, including a new Professional Learning policy and NSW Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, go to the very core of these matters for our members. Couple this with attacks on our professionalism as it relates to the Performance and Development Framework, system-based targets and the associated workload implications of all of the above and one could be forgiven for thinking it was 'business as usual' during the current pandemic!



Federation members must oppose any new initiatives foisted on teachers, principals and schools by the Government without commensurate time and resources to undertake the required tasks.

### **All in the name of improvement and performance**

The primary purpose of public education is to support the pursuit of excellence and the highest standard of education for every student. The teaching profession is defined by this very pursuit.

So-called 'reform' agendas are demoralising, dangerous and represent recycled, abysmal ideas. They are underpinned by an inherent lack of respect or trust for the profession, based on a deficit model and notions that we are incapable of quality teaching and need to lift our game to better the outcomes of our students; a view challenged by recent data showing 150,000 professional learning on demand courses undertaken by our profession over the last two terms.

We reject such profound insults to our work and professionalism.

Federation supports improvement processes driven by a shared vision of schools as learning communities where the primacy of teaching and learning is understood and embraced. Central to this concept is the Department's responsibility to guarantee conditions in which students and their schools can flourish. The

systemic provision of highly qualified teachers (teaching within their specialist areas), to all our students across NSW, and a systemic approach to high quality professional learning that is research-based and developed by teachers for teachers, is central to the successful pursuit of these outcomes. Teaching and learning communities characterised by a culture of ongoing evaluation and the progressive refinement of teaching and learning thrive.

Developments such as the Department's imposition of school-based targets that have now morphed into systems-based targets and their concurrent link to the School Excellence Framework's Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP) provide the convenient architecture to implement a control and compliance culture.

The use of NAPLAN data as a measure of 'improvement and performance' is not only pedagogically unsound and will narrow the curriculum but will debilitate the growth and achievements of our students, for which principals and teachers will then be blamed. A diversion from the teaching of our syllabuses to a focus on improving student outcomes in target areas will not only fail to improve student outcomes but will be seen as the regressive education policy that it is, tried and failed by others around the world.

### **Professional growth and development**

Federation rejects any performance, development and improvement processes that are inflicted on teachers without due respect for the work they undertake, the support required both at a school and system level and the necessary time to collaborate with their colleagues in meaningful professional dialogues.

The union opposes attempts being made by the Department to modify the Performance and Development Framework without joint development and agreement with the Federation, a party to this Award matter. Any attempts to unilaterally impose the changes this on Federation members will force the union to explore all industrial options available to defend a collaborative collective culture of professional growth and development in our schools.

Federation's long-standing position has been that it is the employer's responsibility, on a systemwide basis, to provide quality professional learning and specialist teachers to support curriculum and programs in schools. The loss of such specialist support as a result of the Local Schools, Local Decisions policy has had a profound and devastating effect on our schools.

The high-jacking of Department-provided professional learning with the political agendas and reforms of government is a consistent and real threat as the curriculum and NAPLAN Reviews and improvement regimes are rolled out. Federal agendas in the literacy and numeracy areas such as the National Literacy and Numeracy Progressions and the Online Formative Assessments add to this significant risk.

The politicisation of curriculum, assessment and reporting must end. The teaching profession must be at the centre of the design, development and implementation of policies and practices necessary to create classrooms that are conducive to quality teaching and learning.

Governments fail to understand that professional responsibility is a source of great pride for teachers and principals; it sits at the very core of their work with their students each and every day.