

More evidence of unprecedented change mounts before inquiry

November 12, 2020

Teachers in classroom and executive positions shared some of the challenges faced by the profession with the Gallop inquiry panellists on 11 November.

Teaching is more complex

"I teach year 1 at the moment and I have to differentiate from a kindergarten level to a year 6 level. I have someone that still needs help getting four blocks to someone who's talking about hexadecimal."

Amy Harland, relieving assistant principal

"Some students have higher literacy [levels] than others, some students may learn better through visual materials, some students work better independently, others work better in groups.... It's really lesson 1a), lesson 1b), lesson 1c), lesson 1d), because you're ... preparing for all eventualities in the classroom."

"There's a lot more planning and documentation involved than what there would have been only a few years ago.... It used to be one sentence [descriptions] per lesson Now we do...multiple paragraphs..."

"We're collecting evidence of everything we do. You plan the lesson, you teach it and then you're recording yourself in the entire process as well."

Ademir Hajdarpasic, high school teacher



Data-driven accountability

"We never really get to talk about students in the way that we used to. In my first year of teaching I [discussed with a mentor teacher] students and planning lessons together and sharing resources and now a lot of time is spent talking about: 'Where's your evidence? How are you going to prove this on the document?' It is disheartening."

"Collegial and professional discussions with other teachers and reflection on what we do and planning time with other teachers, that's all extremely useful. The kind of thinking that underpins this process I don't think is the issue, teachers have always done that and they should be supported to do more of that. But, if there is an expectation to document it more and do it in a more formalised way and do more of it, then we should be paid more or given more time to do it."

Ademir Hajdarpasic, high school teacher

"I've had teachers constantly complaining: 'All we seem to do is test or assess the kids. We never get time to

teach. When are we going to teach them? We've got all this knowledge but we don't get time to teach them, to make them any better."

Sonja McEvoy, assistant principal

Poor implementation and support of new initiatives

"It just seems that over my career, so many times, when policies or programs ... have been released without complete testing and assurance that they're going to be successful ... again, that adds to the administration time...some of these things really hold us back from doing the job as effectively and efficiently as we can."

Cheryl McBride, public school principal

"I've been part of some [new initiatives] which literally appeared to not have been looked at very clearly and we we're building the plane as we were flying it, so we didn't know where we were going."

Sonja McEvoy, public school assistant principal

Workload

"What you might give up to support 30 other people's children, sometimes your children miss out."

Sonja McEvoy, assistant principal

Changing role of teachers

"I'm being a nurse, I'm being a psychologist, I'm being the maintenance man because something's fallen out of the roof. We're doing many more jobs than just teaching now."

Sonja McEvoy, assistant principal

Meeting the greater needs of students

"A whole-of-government support would be greatly appreciated. We fill the breach in health, in DOCS, in housing, purely because we strongly believe that for children to become confident, creative, highly successful learners, those sorts of things have to be addressed."

Cheryl McBride, principal

Rapid reduction in centralised support

"When we lost the experts in EAL/D, that was such a hit for [the district's] schools; similarly, when we lost the level of disability support..."

Cheryl McBride, principal

Difficulty in getting casuals

"We've had situations in previous years where we've had to collapse a whole grade because we didn't have enough teachers to supervise ... in classes. We had to go outside and have more of a fun day because we just didn't have the staff."

"We haven't had to do that in a while, but we still have several occasions a term where you have to split classes; and sometimes you're splitting a class in primary and infants, so it just puts more pressure on teachers."

Amy Harland, relieving assistant principal

Professional learning

"To get professional learning out here [remote NSW], the cost is just absolutely insurmountable and to actually send staff to professional learning, same thing.... If it's a one-day course, it would take three days. We don't have the casuals to cover that either, when you're having to pay flights, accommodation as well as casuals for all that time. Whereas, when we had the consultants...they came, and they were able to provide [the training] either within the school or the district itself."

Sonja McEvoy, public school assistant principal