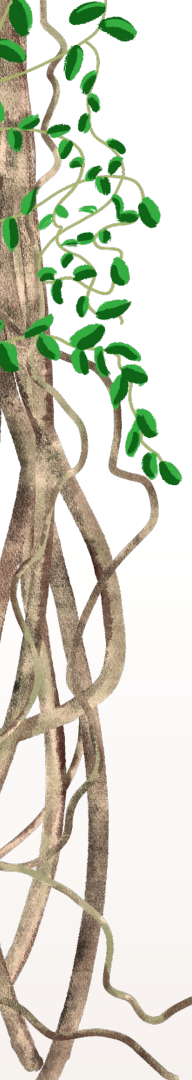




We Are More

*Insights and Implications from a
gathering of education leaders*

August 2023



INTRODUCTION

Education is key for our young people, it opens up a world of opportunity, imagination, growth and prosperity. But, currently, our learning system is stuck.

The system is constrained by its 20th Century architecture, and is unfair and underperforming in all the ways that matter - performance, participation, equity, engagement, wellbeing, identity and inclusion.

How we recognise learning, and the focus on ATAR is contributing to the problem and limiting the life trajectories of young people. It is increasingly irrelevant to post-school pathways and is often unfair, especially to those who are already starting from a position of educational disadvantage.

Our more complex world requires transformational change in education on a national scale.

On Tuesday 15 August 2023, 170+ early movers gathered in Adelaide/Tarndanya and online to participate in a convening of education leaders and innovators from across the learning ecosystem.

Our focus was on emerging practice and the shifts in purpose and power that are needed to transform how we recognise and credential learning at the end of secondary school.

Throughout the day, our diverse and remarkable group, from all Australian jurisdictions, shared insights and demonstrated our commitment to the work we have been doing and plan to do as students, educators and school leaders, government bodies, First Nations communities, tertiary groups, including higher education and admissions centres and employers.

We carry learnings built and tested across many varied settings. We have the knowledge and lessons needed to shape a new learning system that better supports young people to thrive in further learning, community, work and life.

We have come together because:

- We know we must broaden the definition of learning success
- Learning leads to lifelong opportunities and should be a right for all
- There needs to be a more integrated and connected system of learning stages and sectors
- We must listen deeply to young people as the producers of their learning - connected to community and culture
- Excellence and equity can co-exist and lead to a range of trajectories
- A new approach is necessary to unlock the change we need and Australia is ready for us to do something about it

Now is the time - to be brave and bold. To enable learnings from failures and to drive collaborative change as we build relationships across systems and settings.

The following statement marks our shared commitment to doing the work required to create equitable transformation in education so that it better meets the needs and values of our young people, communities and nation.

OUR COMMITMENT STATEMENT

We are more than one person, one school, one place.

We represent emerging practice from across Australia, including schools, students, First Nations communities, academics, employers, higher education and training, admissions centres and jurisdictions. We have each been developing responses to recognise more of what young people know and can do - inside and outside of the classroom.

This work is pushing beyond the confines and measures of learning success. As a network of early movers, we are doing the work to ensure that every young person's learning can be recognised.

We are creating a learning system that sees the full picture of every young person's contributions, attributes, skills and interests - with their languages, cultures and physical and emotional wellbeing respected and supported.

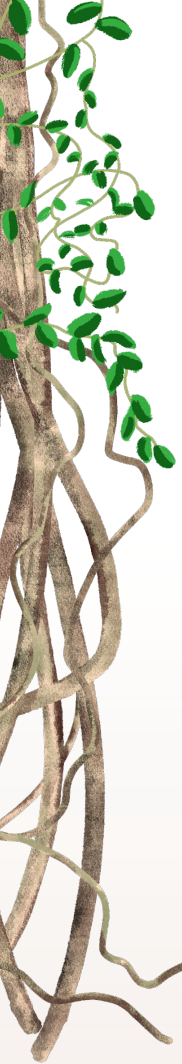
- **We will** make sure every young person has proof of their learning success beyond a single mark or score.
- **We will** ensure the whole person is valued through their schooling.
- **We will** value what matters to different communities in a learning system that functions fairly for all young people, in every state and territory.
- **We will** work together with First Nations young people and communities as providers and protectors of language, culture, history and stories as we co-create a new learning system.
- **We will** ensure that what we develop generates trust from employers, recruiters, selectors and young people themselves.

And by doing these things, we will re-generate an education and learning system that is fit for purpose - designed for young people's future and based on new partnerships and power shifts.

Join us. We are more for young people.

Everyone of us has the power to recognise more of what young people know and can do and who they are.





THE OPPORTUNITY

Recognising 'more'

In the 21st Century, it is possible to recognise achievement in far more sophisticated ways than exams, tests and scores alone. Point-in-time assessments are not the only way to reflect the breadth and depth of what young people know and can do. The focus on ATAR is contributing to the current challenges our system is facing. There is significant power in recognising more and there is growing momentum for this change.

What a young person has as their documentation or proof of learning when they finish school is important because it determines a young person's sense of self and identity and can enable health and wellbeing. It also leads to greater options, access points and the ability to apply for further paths in learning and work.

How we recognise learning success is powerful because it shapes both young people's learning experiences and their pathways to further learning and work after school.

But as a group of early movers - schools, academics, employers, universities, admissions centres and jurisdictions - we have independently been developing programs, activities and projects to recognise 'more'. Our community includes many who have been doing this work for many years, such as:

- **New Metrics** - a collaborative research venture between The University of Melbourne and selected forward-thinking schools
- **SACE Board of South Australia** - Capabilities and Learner Profile project recognises capabilities alongside academic achievement (grades)
- **Big Picture Learning Australia** - have developed The International Big Picture Learning Credential, a new personalised form of assessment
- **Mastery Transcript Consortium** - network of schools collaborating on digital secondary school transcript that reflects the unique skills, strengths and interests of each learner

This work is showing promise to improve transitions and school experiences.

Other practice across the network include: Learner Profile pilots, alternative entry pathways to Universities, peer or student self-assessment, learning experiences outside of school, assessment of complex capabilities, micro-credentialing and work integrated learning of work-ready skills.

Some of this work is still at very early stages of development, other work is further developed, some even evaluated - all are part of a growing network that seeks to create equitable transformation in education so that it better meets the modern needs and values of our young people, communities and nation.

WHAT YOU SHARED

Insights and Implications

1. New measures of learning success are already here and working
2. Wellbeing and learning are connected and key to unlocking learner engagement and success
3. Co-agency between students and educators is the future
4. The voice of employers is critical to unlock an education system that prepares young people for modern work
5. There is an economic case for change that we can't afford to ignore

New measures of learning success are already here and working

There is emerging practice across the country that shows it's possible to assess and recognise young people's skills and capabilities in and outside of the classroom to support more effective pathways to further learning and work.

Current measures don't tell us much about what young people know and can do to support an effective transition to a better pathway. Today, the most significant predictors of a young person's ability to continue learning beyond school are their socio-economic status, postcode and the school they attended.

- The ATAR remains our primary representation of success in schooling, despite only 26% of university entrants using it to pursue further learning. (Mitchell Institute, 2019)
- Young people living in the lowest SES areas are 2x more likely not to be in education, employment or training than their peers. (AIWH 2021)

Insights identified:

- New measures of learning success are already here.
- There are now proven methods for assessing the degree to which a learner has progressed in any domain, especially when depth and complexity in learning is required.
- Trust needs to be built with parents and carers by building their understanding of broader recognition
- We need to re-evaluate tertiary admissions pathways at sector level.

Implications to acknowledge:

- By our current measures, we are failing our young people. We have recorded 20 years of sliding school and student performance against OECD standards.
- It's schools who are primarily leading the work, to recognise more, in place.
- There is no one-size fits all model or assessing and credentialing learning.
- We are learning what needs to be flexible for local application and what needs to be consistent for compatibility and fairness.

Your recommendations:

- Investment in Teacher PD to support broader recognition of learning
- Accelerate sharing of innovative practices - both place based and system based practices
- Partner with government, schools and young people to explore the potential of a digital artifact for year 11/12 qualifications.
- Build on the UAC and VTAC pilot and explore other partnerships that re-evaluate tertiary admissions pathways.

Active steps we all can take:

Contribute to the creation of an effective way for sharing about place based practices across the network - We need to work together to accelerate the pace of system innovation through lifting up and connecting local-level innovation.

Contribute your insights, information and data to the Power of Recognising More action research study - on probing common, complex and challenging questions that are necessary to build robust evidence on the impact and value of broader recognition of learning.

Wellbeing and learning are connected and key to unlocking learner engagement and success

Overwhelmingly, young people are saying they feel inappropriately defined by success or failure in the examinations and assessments associated with senior secondary certificates. Currently:

- 40% of young people are disengaged in the classroom (Grattan Institute 2021)
- 40% of young people identify as having low levels of social and emotional wellbeing. (Mission 2021)
- More than 25% of young people meet the criteria for experiencing psychological distress and over 50% identify mental health as a top barrier to achieving their study or work goals. (Mission 2021)

Alongside knowledge domains, we must recognise the breadth and depth of what they know and can do in how we measure and assess them at school.

"It's about students finishing and feeling like they've achieved something without having to sacrifice anything - without losing part of themselves."

Insights identified:

- We must enable young people to bring their whole-self into their education and chart their own learning towards their chosen path.
- There is growing evidence of the deep connection between health and wellbeing and learning progress, with strong communities being an enabler for this focus.
- Curriculum flexibility to enhance student engagement.
- Provide students space to explore strengths, weaknesses and motivations, especially at senior secondary level.
- There are different ways that young people can excel and if we acknowledge this, it will lead to greater equity.

Implications to acknowledge:

- For young people to thrive in learning means seeing the full picture of who they are.
- Wellbeing and learning represent an integrated concept. You cannot be successful on one without the other. They feed each other in a way that success begets success.

Your recommendations:

- We must broaden the definition and story of success in school learning.
- Students need to make their voices heard - but they will do this only when they can trust the system will listen.
- Deepen our collective understanding of the conditions of an effective, consistent enabling environment that allows for local innovation, agency and flexibility

Active steps we all can take:

Share stories of lived experience through the We Are More platform to bring your voices into the work - Young people's lived and learned experiences need to be at the centre of the changes we want to make to our education system.

Co-agency between students and educators is the future

Teachers are overworked and undervalued, leaving the profession in record numbers. Key enablers of change they are calling for include:

- More respect for teachers and the profession
- Tackling teacher workload and administrative burden
- Creating safe work environments
- Including teachers' voices in policy recommendations
(Monash University, Oct 2022)

Equipping the teaching profession in the 21st century requires new approaches. Teachers will need to become co-agents of learning, empowering students to take active roles in their learning.

They will need to be empowered to collaborate with their students and facilitate learning that equips young people with the skills, knowledge, and mindset needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world and as lifelong learners.

Insights identified:

- The relationship between a learner and educator is changing where young people are partners in learning
- Educators need greater scope to be flexible, adaptive, student-centric and creative with ways of teaching and assessing
- Educators need to be brave and continue innovating
- The system needs to trust educators professional judgement and give room for failure when experimenting

Implications to acknowledge:

- Schools need to have autonomy to make relevant decisions that best made from in response to their unique vantage point and depth of knowledge of the learner and their family
- Communities must work alongside schools to create a learning environment that is responsive to the place they are located

Your recommendations:

Empower and liberate educators to:

- Take on a new role so they be in the classroom, not always out the front
- Innovate on how to remove constraints and rigidity eg year levels, timetables, subjects, access to VET etc
- Implement pedagogical practices that promote learner agency

Governments must go beyond consultation:

- To genuinely value lived expertise
- Take on the role of key enabler, rather than regulator
- Be bold, committing to transformation beyond their term

Active steps we all can take:

Run a campaign in your community using the We Are More Platform toolkit

The campaign toolkit can help you tell a powerful story on the need for change and the transformative benefits of recognising more of who young people's skills and capabilities in your community, particularly with parents and students

The voice of employers is critical to unlock learning that prepares young people for modern work

There continue to be transformational changes affecting the way we live and work. Technological advancement, and global trends are changing the nature of work, the structure of economies, and the types of skills needed by labour forces across the world.

- 75% of employers reporting a skills shortage. (Ai Group 2018)
- Jobs of the future demanding 21C skills 70% more than jobs of the past. (FYA, 2018)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is significantly impacting the education system, revolutionising the way education can be delivered, accessed, and personalised.

To enable our learning systems to meet the challenge of equipping young people with the skills to navigate the future of work in an AI world, a substantial shift in current approaches is needed. Credentials will need to reflect this change e.g. enable micro-credentials, skills stacking.

Insights identified:

- The employer voice needs to be louder. It will play a crucial role in shaping the education system to be relevant and effective in the modern world.
- As the job market evolves and demands for new skills increase, employers must speak up to demand change in our education systems.
- There are a growing number of tertiary institutions who are agile, forward-thinking, and responsive to the evolving needs of students, the job market and skills needed in modern work.
- Current credentials don't show the work-ready skills employers are looking for. Many companies are designing their own credentials or developing informal pathways from school to work.

Implications to acknowledge:

- Skills are the currency of the future of work, not jobs. Instead of training for a particular job or occupation and working in that area for life, some studies have estimated that Australians will make 17 job changes across 5 different careers.
- Employer voices are critical but they're not currently represented in the conversation.
- Ai is here and isn't going away.


Your recommendations:

- Identify the barriers to more and effective industry based integrated training with schools and universities - *why is this so hard to do and how does this feed into the new skills agenda?*
- Industry must signal strongly what leads to success outside of school and to link to outcomes for the economy.
- Foster collaborative learning ecosystems which encourage schools, communities, and industries to collaborate or work together in place-based partnerships.

Active steps we all can take:

Building a Modern Work Alliance

We know the employer voice needs to be louder, as it will play a crucial role in shaping the education system to be relevant and effective in the modern world.



There is an economic case for change that we can't afford to ignore

In all the discussion about our economy there has been relatively little focus on the productivity of young people in Australia. Who are they, what are their skills and capabilities? Are they prepared for an increasingly complex world in which learning needs to be lifelong?

There are some worrying signs:

- Over the past decade, productivity growth has been at its slowest in the past 60 years (Treasury, 2023)
- 1 in 4 young people are un or underemployed. (ABS, 2023)
- Almost a third of Australian businesses are having difficulty finding suitable staff. (ABS, 2022)

As our population ages and our workforce shrinks, the ability of young people to participate in, contribute to and shape our economy and society will be crucial in delivering equity and opportunity for all Australians.

Insights identified:

- We need to experiment with integration of senior, higher and vocational education to support a lifelong learning agenda.
- Tertiary institutions need to signal louder the need for change. Parents and the community will listen.
- Government needs to be bold and go beyond consultation to partnership with system, as an enabler, not a just a regulator.
- We can strive for excellence including foundational capabilities such as literacy, numeracy and digital in all learners as well as opportunities that enable them to build on their own interests, culture and experiences.

Implications to acknowledge:

- Completing school with formal recognition of their broader skills and capabilities is a critical step.
- Australia has a particularly complex set of arrangements that make up its education system, particularly at senior secondary. These have evolved over time rather than been designed with intent. They will be hard to change.

Your recommendations:

- A learner-owned, nationally recognised skills based credential, that flows through from cradle to grave.
- Cultivate a culture of trust in broader recognition credentials and the potential benefits on pathways to further learning and work.
- There is opportunity for leading jurisdictions and institutions work together to create more effective points of impact in the wider system.
- Government must work across silos of statutory bodies, jurisdictions and sectors to create an enabling environment for change. This will require the boldness to step into a networked based system characterised by high levels of local participation and collaborative activity.

Active steps we all can take:

Develop a shared policy approach

To unlock the transformation required, a coordinated effort from people and organisations at all levels of the system is needed.

We Are More



Melbourne
Assessment



LearningCreates
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Darug

Wurundjeri

Darumbal

Eora

Dja Dja Wurrung

Get in touch

For more information or questions on this work please contact bronwyn.lee@learningcreates.org.au

Lutruwita

We acknowledge.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land throughout Australia who have been learning and educating on Country for over a thousand generations. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present for they hold the memories, traditions, cultures and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia.

Terrimurigal

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to live in spiritual and sacred relationships with Australia.

Gadigal

Kaurna

Peramangk

Bunwurrung