



Our strategy for  
**PUBLIC EDUCATION  
IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA**



Government  
of South Australia  
Department for Education







## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge that the work undertaken to develop this strategy took place on the traditional lands of South Australia's First Peoples and we respect their spiritual relationship with their country.

In delivering public education in South Australia, we acknowledge the importance of understanding Aboriginal knowledge, languages, cultures and voices which provide critical contributions and value across our workplaces, classrooms, partnerships and communities.

We respect and appreciate the important input to this plan, including the feedback, advice and experiences provided from a broad range of Aboriginal students, parents and carers, teachers, leaders and support staff.

Note: The Department for Education uses the term 'Aboriginal' to refer to people who identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. This term is preferred by Aboriginal South Australians and the department.



I hope that in the future students will be excited to go to school every single day. I also hope especially Indigenous students feel as though they've finally found where they belong.

- Year 9 Aboriginal student



## Every child and young person deserves an outstanding education.

We want South Australia to be one of the best places for a child to be born - where every child receives the education they need to achieve great things no matter their circumstances or postcode.

It is in this context that the new strategy for public education in South Australia has been developed.

It's about doing things differently.

This is a visionary document, setting a new course for our education system to be world-leading.

It comes at a time when the South Australian Government has a bold vision to create a future that is smart, sustainable and inclusive. Whether it be AUKUS, expanding early childhood education to 3-year olds, growing cyber and high-tech industries, and tackling the climate emergency, South Australia is well placed to play a leading role in tackling the big challenges facing our world.

We need a workforce of resilient thinkers and problem solvers with a solid foundation in numeracy, literacy and digital to meet our state's current and future skills needs. We will continue our focus on lifelong learning for all South Australians, from the early years through schooling and further study to meaningful employment.

This strategy works to achieve just that.

Public education is so powerful. It changes lives and futures. It shapes our society and our state.

And together with our incredible workforce, through this strategy we will make our education system the best it can be.



**Hon Blair Boyer MP**

Minister for Education, Training and Skills







Our world is constantly changing and the future we're educating our children and young people for will be vastly different from today.

Public education needs to continually adapt too. We intend to stay ahead of these changing demands and support children and young people to learn and thrive as they prepare for their futures beyond the classroom.

This strategy aims to do just that. To ensure South Australia's public education system can unlock every child's potential now and in the future.

This strategy is unique – it was created by our community for our community.

We started a statewide conversation about the purpose and value of public education with our learners and then used their insights to talk with employers, NGOs, our staff, parents and community members. We also engaged with local, national and international leaders in education reform.

These collective voices were so valuable, and were used to create our purpose statement, areas of impact that will guide us into the future, and measures of success for our public education system.

In partnership with learners, students, parents, and the wider South Australian community we can build an interconnected, world-leading public education system. One that is equitable and prioritises learning and wellbeing. Where learners are actively engaged, have a say in their learning and have a strong connection to their preschool or school.

We will build upon the hard work done in recent years and celebrate our success to date, as a platform for delivering on our purpose.

We need to make sure our children and young people are ready for a future characterised by fast paced change.

When our children and young people thrive, so do our communities and our state.

*Meh Westwell*

**Professor Martin Westwell**  
Chief Executive  
Department for Education

**Public education  
is for**

**every child and  
young person**

**in South  
Australia.**

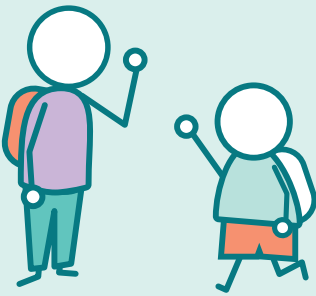


## Our purpose

To help us build a world-leading public education system for South Australia, we led a statewide conversation, starting with our learners.

We've heard from over 10,000 preschoolers and school students across the state, staff, families, the community, and employers. We also engaged with a range of local, national and international experts.

Their voices were used to create the purpose statement for South Australian public education.



## Children and students learning and thriving

Public education is for every child and young person in every community across our state.

Educators and staff work in partnership with families and communities to nurture, develop and empower all South Australian children and young people with the knowledge, skills and capabilities they need to become fulfilled individuals, active, compassionate citizens and lifelong learners.

Our preschools and schools are the heart of local communities. They are safe, inclusive, and collaborative – a place where every child and young person is encouraged to contribute, develops positive relationships, has a say in their learning, and where their needs, interests, languages and cultures are recognised and supported.

We are relentless in our ambition for all children and young people to enter the world beyond the classroom ready to learn and create opportunities to live a satisfying and fulfilling life of their choosing.

When our children and young people thrive so does South Australia.





**If you could do any job you want when you are an adult, what would it be? Why?**

I want to be a vet because dogs are there. They go to see if they are ok.

**How will coming to kindy help you?**

By learning how, by listening. I could get a book of the vets or get a teddy and tools to see if I could fix it.

- Mia





## Our areas of impact

Our areas of impact describe what we will prioritise and resource to successfully deliver on our purpose.

These areas of impact are all interrelated and are underpinned by a series of domains – the outcomes we’re aiming for.

A solid evidence base and set of success measures will help us track how we’re going and what we need to focus on to fulfil our purpose.



I would love to see literacy, numeracy and other skills embedded in practical, 'hands on' learning, emphasising real world applications.

- Teacher



## AREAS OF IMPACT





## Wellbeing

Our learners feel safe, included, and valued. They have access to support, experiences, teaching, and resources to build their resilience and social and emotional skills to positively and confidently engage in learning.

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### Belonging and safety

Learners feel they belong, are culturally safe, and are free to experiment, to raise questions and learn without feeling threatened.

### Resilience and persistence

Learners have the capacity to cope with day-to-day challenges and persevere when faced with new or complex learning situations.

### Cognitive engagement

Learners have the mental capability to engage actively in learning and feel stretched and challenged.



## Equity and excellence

We strive for excellence including foundational capabilities such as literacy, numeracy and digital literacy in all learners, by providing varied, challenging, and stimulating experiences. As well as opportunities that enable all learners to explore and build on their own abilities, interests, culture and experiences. We seek out inequity, eliminate barriers to opportunities and support all students to learn and thrive.

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### Knowledge, skills, competencies, and capabilities

Learners develop foundational knowledge, capabilities including literacy, numeracy and digital literacy, skills and values. All learners have the opportunity to develop mastery in their chosen areas of interest.

### Aboriginal learners

Aboriginal children and young people build on their cultural identity and pride, and develop the knowledge, skills, confidence and resilience needed to achieve their goals and thrive in society.

### Inclusion

Learners from all social, cultural, community and family backgrounds, and of all identities and all abilities are able to access and fully participate in learning experiences.

### Breaking the link between background and excellence

Our education system helps to overcome barriers to learning and empowers all children and young people.





## Effective learners

Education must develop children and young people who can learn, not only when they are being taught. At preschool and school and throughout their lives, learners need to develop the skills to be effective learners so that they can make the most of future opportunities and respond to changes in their worlds.

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### Curiosity

Learners ask questions to 'get to the bottom of it' and are less accepting of received wisdom until it is evidenced.

### Creativity

Learners think 'outside the box', take chances, use imagination and intuition and are receptive to hunches and inklings.

### Meaning making

Learners make connections between past information and/or experiences and new knowledge.

### Strategic awareness

Learners know what to do when they don't know what to do.

### Metacognition and self-regulation

Learners who can stop and think about what's needed to best achieve the task in front of them. Learners are able to understand and manage their behaviour and reactions to their environment.



## Learner agency

Our learners are empowered to develop a sense of identity and responsibility as they participate in their preschool and school community and are supported to play a role in shaping their learning experiences.

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### Voice to agency

Learners have a say and 'own' what they learn and how they learn.

### Partners in learning

Learners are active partners in their learning, collaborating with both teachers and peers to create a dynamic and engaging educational experience.

### Discernment and judgement

Learners are able to make considered decisions about the best ways for them to go about their learning and assessment tasks and what new learning may be necessary for them to be successful.

## Delivering on our strategy – Levers for impact

We will make change and impact through the most influential parts of our system: our people and the ways we work together.

These 7 key levers will be used to make the most impact across our work.

Our system levers support and enable our people to create the biggest impact for our learners.

**People levers: Our people are our strongest levers for impact, particularly those working alongside our learners to support their capacity to thrive.**

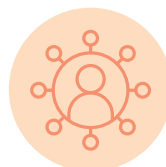


### Effective teaching

To deliver on our purpose, we need to support and empower our educators as they hone their craft, celebrate and showcase their professional identity and support the critical role they play in supporting our learners to thrive.

Effective teaching is our biggest lever in achieving our purpose. Teachers will be supported and empowered to innovate and be at their best to ensure our learners thrive.

- Networks will connect teachers with each other across the system to share their craft and learn from one another.
- Strong working relationships between our preschools, schools and service supports.
- Pedagogical learning and assessment expertise will be a focus through professional development and resources.
- Curriculum and other resources will support teaching and learning.



### Empowered leadership

Leadership in our preschools and schools takes many forms. We need our leaders to hold tight to our shared purpose but be flexible to respond to the context of their community. As a system we will support our leaders to collaborate with their communities to lead the learning and change processes aligned to our purpose and principles.

- Leader networks will work collaboratively across partnerships and sites, with shared tools and resources.
- A focus on wellbeing will ensure our preschool and school leaders can access professional supports and have the capacity to fulfil their roles.
- Workload and intensity will be a focus so leaders in our preschool and schools can concentrate on leading for impact in their community.
- Focused professional learning that best supports preschool and school leaders in the core aspects of their role.





I want schools to introduce learning in really fun ways while keeping everything simple. Classrooms can also be more active by creativity and shared ideas from children.

- Year 5 student



## Partnering with families and communities

Public education is of and for our community. Families are a child's first teacher and developing strong partnerships between preschools, schools and families is crucial.

Partnering with cultural and community organisations and employers will help our learners have connected and supported learning opportunities.

- Preschools and schools will foster the connection with their local community, by developing partnerships with cultural and community organisations.
- Partnerships with industry employers will provide improved career opportunities for our learners and help young people to develop the skills, dispositions and capabilities that support success in the workforce.
- Families will be involved in goal setting for our learners, as well as celebrating and embracing their experiences and culture as part of the learning process in our schools and preschools.



## Engaging children and young people

Our learners are the most powerful source of intelligence as we consider the biggest impact public education can have in our community. Their input and work in supporting the learning process is critical in how we achieve our purpose.

- Working with learners, as agents of change, to better understand their needs will be a driver for our decision making, teaching and learning approaches and measurement.
- We will activate our learners to ensure the work being done to drive learning co-designed with leaders, and learner development is informed by their context of student needs.

**System levers: As a system we have a strategic advantage in that we have teams and inputs that can support our preschools and schools to deliver impact for all learners in every community in South Australia.**



### **Strengthening supports**

Educators understand the needs of their learners and leaders understand their local community. We will continue to work closely with leaders and educators to provide supports that help our learners succeed.

- Greater recognition and understanding of the role non-teaching staff provide in supporting learners, preschools and schools.
- Stronger feedback loops and codesign approaches for the department's preschool and school supports to ensure optimal impact for our learners.
- More flexible approaches to support the needs of each community.
- Provision of timely and appropriate support services for learners who may need extra help in the classroom.



### **Resourcing and investment**

Building a world-leading education system requires a considered resourcing and investment program. Our investment will reflect the infrastructure and resourcing for maximum impact in each community.

- Investment in developing and sustaining fit for purpose infrastructure where it is most needed to support our ambition for equity and excellence.
- Leverage school connectivity and digital learning for educators, leaders and learners.

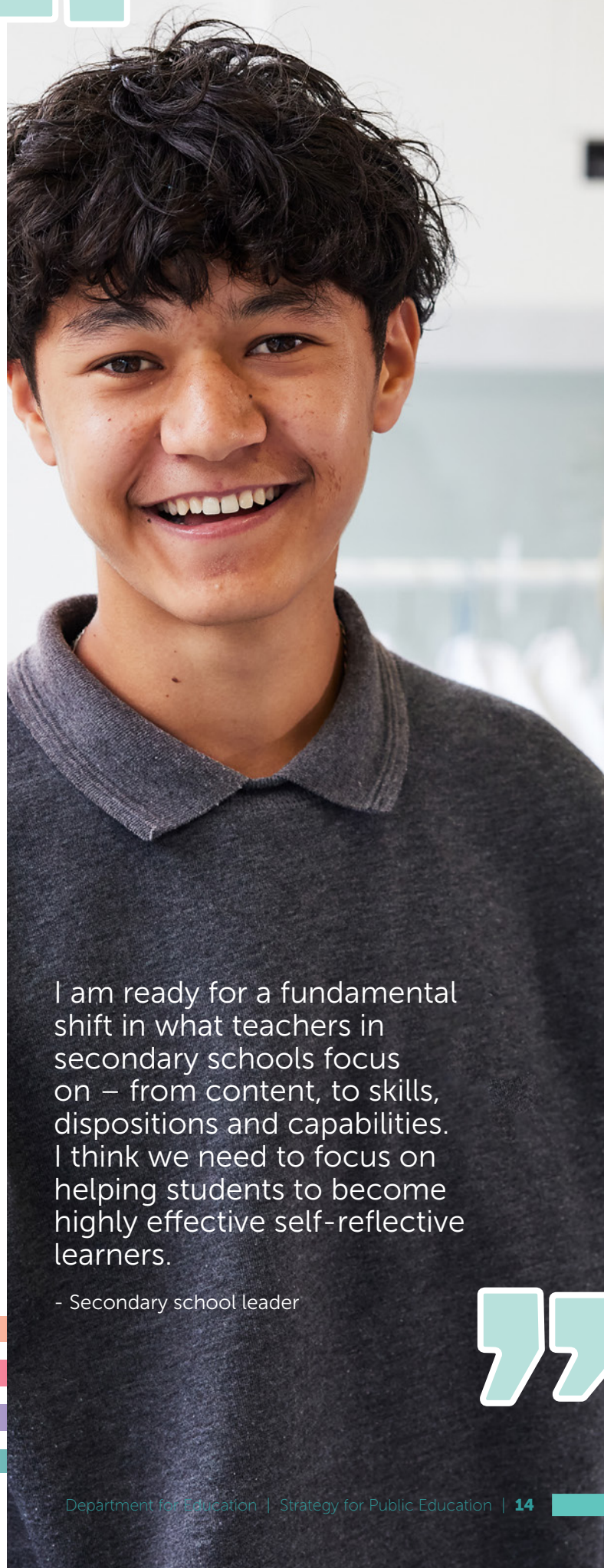




## Improvement and responsibility

Preschools and schools need to be able to make informed choices using data and evidence to respond to their learners, community, and context.

- School improvement will include a broader set of measures that recognise the success of the individual preschool or school as well as the areas of potential improvement, based on their own starting point and learners.
- Preschools and schools will use strategies for improvement that address their chosen areas of impact.
- Timely data for educators, leaders and staff for planning.



I am ready for a fundamental shift in what teachers in secondary schools focus on – from content, to skills, dispositions and capabilities. I think we need to focus on helping students to become highly effective self-reflective learners.

- Secondary school leader







As the world becomes more complex and interconnected, public education systems must be able to adapt to meet the changing societal needs and expectations among students, families, communities, and employers. This requires an agile workforce, ongoing research and innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvements in teaching and learning, with sustained engagements with communities and employers.

- UniSA





# Our guiding principles

Our guiding principles describe how we make decisions and approach our work in ways that best use the levers to achieve our areas of impact.



## Collective responsibility

We all share responsibility to help our children and young people learn and thrive, and through collaborative effort we will achieve more than the sum of the parts, break down barriers and work together to deliver on our purpose and areas of impact. This is a great strength of public education.



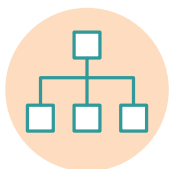
## Learning system

In public education, we learn with and from each other and have the confidence and vulnerability to try new things or change the things we think can be done better. We will leverage expertise and be open minded to expert referencing. Praiseworthy failure, through exploration and testing boundaries in the right way, will be embraced – this is how we will continually improve.



## Evaluate for impact

In public education we will keep in focus the difference we are making to our learners, through creating a culture that measures for impact using evidence, research and data and by using what we learn to inform our policy and practice at every level of the system.



## Tight and flexible

We will be tight on the purpose we have agreed to take responsibility for, and we will be flexible on how it might be best achieved in different contexts. We must be able to understand what that means for our work and within the preschool and school context and tailor accordingly. Some areas of impact will need to take priority over others, providing the ability to make a difference based on our context and our starting point.



## Trust and verify

We will empower our staff with the autonomy to do great work, without losing sight of the big picture and provide support and structures to make informed decisions to deliver on our purpose.

We will start with the premise that we trust the professional judgement of our educators, staff and leaders.

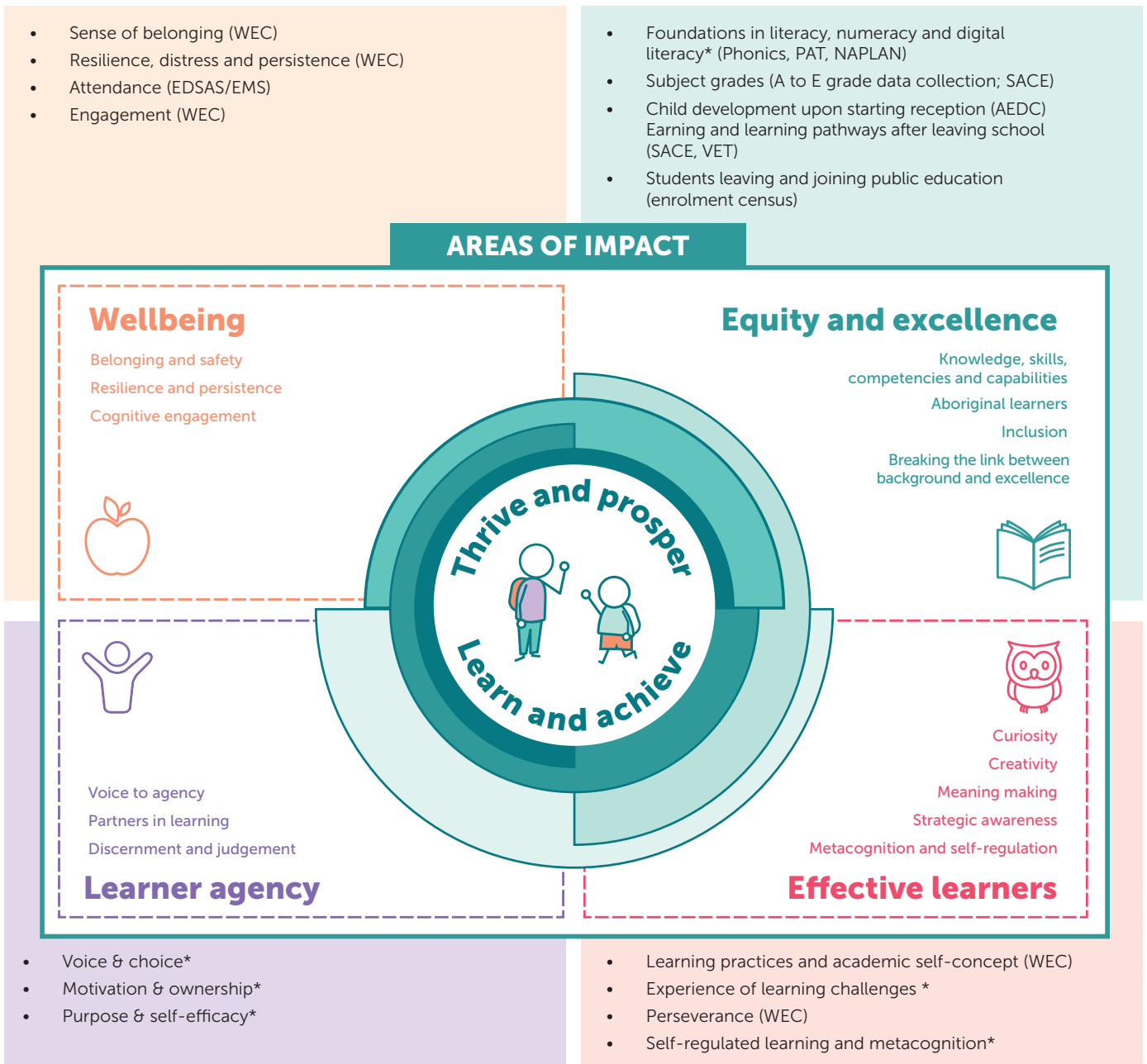
We recognise that we are accountable to the public for the trust and resources provided to public education, and to our children and young people to keep the promise articulated in our purpose statement.

# Measuring our progress

As we work towards our purpose and delivering on our areas of impact, we will create an ecosystem of high-quality evidence that supports us to learn about what works while minimising the workload for preschools and schools.

We will use success measures to guide our understanding of how the education system is working and how to adapt our strategy. Many of these measures will be collected in our schools through our existing student survey (Wellbeing and Engagement Collection (WEC)) and assessment programs including the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT), the year 1 phonics screening check and the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC).

New and adapted measures will be developed and trialled collaboratively over time.



\*To be developed



We will track our progress over time in reducing inequity in the measures above between groups, including:

- Aboriginal learners
- Learners with disabilities
- Learners who face economic disadvantage
- Learners living in regional and remote Australia
- Children in Care.

These areas of impact are designed to be interrelated in that developments in one area are likely to have a positive impact in all areas. For example, learners with a greater sense of belonging and connectedness to preschool or school have higher achievement, more engagement with learning, better attendance and improved mental health outcomes.

A broad range of measures better tells the story of every preschool and school. Each will naturally have their own 'jagged profile' with strengths in some areas of impact and others may be chosen to be a focus for improvement over time.

Over the life of the strategy, we will combine these measures with other sources of evidence to describe what is working well and for which learners, and what challenges we face across the system. We will review our measures and assessments to ensure that they are relevant to learners from a range of backgrounds and cultures. We will ensure that insights are put in the hands of learners, educators, and leaders to make the biggest difference possible in learning.



The statement is inclusive, encouraging and supportive and emphasises the importance of our children and young people but also including families and working together collaboratively.



Reminder: Swimming Les  
Next Week





sons

(week 9)

## Public Education in South Australia - Our context

Public education is for every child and young person in South Australia.

With more than 196,000 children and young people enrolled in over 900 public preschools and schools in communities across the state, we want every one of our current and future learners to be their best and achieve their best.

Each learner is unique, with different needs, interests and talents to be nurtured. Their learning, participation, connections and experiences in our preschools and schools are laying the foundations for their future, as individuals and active citizens in our community.

We aim to provide quality and equitable education and relevant opportunities for learners in and beyond their preschool and school years, aligned with current and emerging skills needs in South Australia.

We are passionate about building the skills and capacity needed now and for the future. This includes South Australia's growing career opportunities in the defence industry and the potential to increase renewable energy generation and adapt to technological innovation such as artificial intelligence.

The department has more than 30,000 staff working in communities in every part of South Australia. This is a diverse and dedicated educator workforce with a vital role in influencing learning outcomes and shaping futures for our children and young people.

Our highly skilled central teams exist to provide corporate and educational support services to preschools and schools, ensuring they have what they need to deliver for their learners and communities.

Public education is available to every child and young person in South Australia. For those that need extra help, our preschools and schools provide a range of specialised settings and support services to improve participation, engagement, and achievement, inclusive of all learners.

We continue to work alongside Aboriginal families and communities, to support Aboriginal children and young people to be proud and confident learners and achieve their highest potential. Aboriginal voices inform our policy decisions and services for our communities.

## South Australian snapshot

More than 180,000 students are enrolled in our schools and 16,000 children enrolled in our preschools. Of these:



around 50,000 or **28% of students are enrolled in country schools** and around 5,000 or almost **30% of children are enrolled in country preschools**



**over 10,000 are Aboriginal children and young people.**

There are 900 public schools, preschools and children centres in SA with:



**almost half of SA public schools (265) as well as more than 40% of public preschools (167) located in country areas**



**16 Aboriginal/Anangu Schools.**





The department has more than 30,000 staff working across all areas of South Australia, including:



over 5,000 or **27% of our teaching workforce located in country areas**



over **600 staff in public preschools and children's centres in the country**, representing 30% of our preschool workforce



**2.5% staff who identify as Aboriginal**



over **2,500 corporate employees** located centrally.

In South Australia, **70% of children attend a public preschool** in the year before formal schooling and **63% of school students are enrolled in public schools.**





# Thank you

Thank you to the more than 12,000 people and organisations who helped create this strategy by providing ideas, feedback, and facilitating discussions.

Discussions began with children and young people in November 2022, which included:

## Forums and small group discussions with more than 850 children and young people:

- 7 forums across the state
- Smaller group discussions with:
  - » Preschool children (interviews and artwork).
  - » Aboriginal students studying in metropolitan Adelaide, the Yalata and Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands.
  - » Children in care.
  - » Learners identifying as having a disability. Communication devices used included Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD), key word sign and verbal.
  - » Learners involved in the justice system.
  - » Learners with a culturally and linguistically diverse background. Cultural and language backgrounds identified by the students included Arabic, Dari/Pashto (Afghanistan), Burmese, Nepali, Kiranti (Nepal), Bangali, Urdu (Pakistan), Haryana Indian, Punjabi, Bhutanese, Burundi, Congolese, Swahili, Sierra Leone Creole, Bosnian, Philippines, Cambodia, Tedim, Lisu, Kurdish.

## Staff and stakeholder forums and discussions were held with:

- Department executives, school principals, teachers and staff
- Oversight and Advocacy Bodies
- Leader and Professional Associations
- Educators SA
- Australian Education Union (SA branch)
- Industry Skills Councils
- Force Forty members
- Aboriginal Education Directorate.



## Survey responses from more than 10,000 students, staff, parents, carers and community members.

**Written submissions and responses** were received from the following organisations. We also received submissions from individuals but have not included names for privacy reasons.

- Australian Education Union (SA)
- Australian Schools Plus
- Centre for Community Child Health, Murdoch Children's Research
- Child Death and Serious Injury Review Committee
- Child Development Council
- Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People
- Commissioner for Children and Young People
- Department for Child Protection
- Department of Human Services
- Education Standards Board SA
- Educators SA
- Flinders University
- Green Adelaide
- Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment
- Philanthropy Australia (SA)
- Preschool Directors Association of South Australia
- Purple Orange
- Rationalist society of SA
- Shine SA
- Social Ventures Australia
- South Australian Area School Leaders Association
- South Australian Association of School Parent Communities
- SA School Business Association
- South Australian Secondary Principals' Association
- SA Specific Learning Difficulties South Australia
- Teach for Australia
- Teachers Registration Board of SA
- The Smith Family
- University of Adelaide
- University of South Australia
- Youth Affairs Council of South Australia
- Youth Opportunities.







