

Educational Outcomes funding guidelines

About Snow Foundation and Educational Outcomes

Our story

Snow Foundation is a family philanthropic foundation deeply committed to place, country and community. We aim to create lasting social change by building strong communities and forging fair systems.

With trust and collaboration at the core, we take considered risks and embrace innovation — backing bold ideas, entrepreneurial solutions, and community-led approaches that create long-term, systemic change.

Established in 1991 by brothers Terry and George Snow, and led by Georgina Byron AM since 2006, we have grown from Canberra roots into a trusted philanthropic leader with national reach.

Our giving strategy

Our giving spans two complementary approaches: deep, responsive investment in the places we call home, and national partnerships that drive lasting change.

We respond to community need in Canberra and the surrounding region, Sydney, NSW South Coast and select regional NSW communities. Nationally, we back bold leaders and innovative solutions, working collectively on neglected challenges.

Our impact priorities are:



Our Youth theme

The broad goals of our work in our 'Youth theme' are to empower young people by improving opportunity, quality and equity in education, and addressing digital addictions.

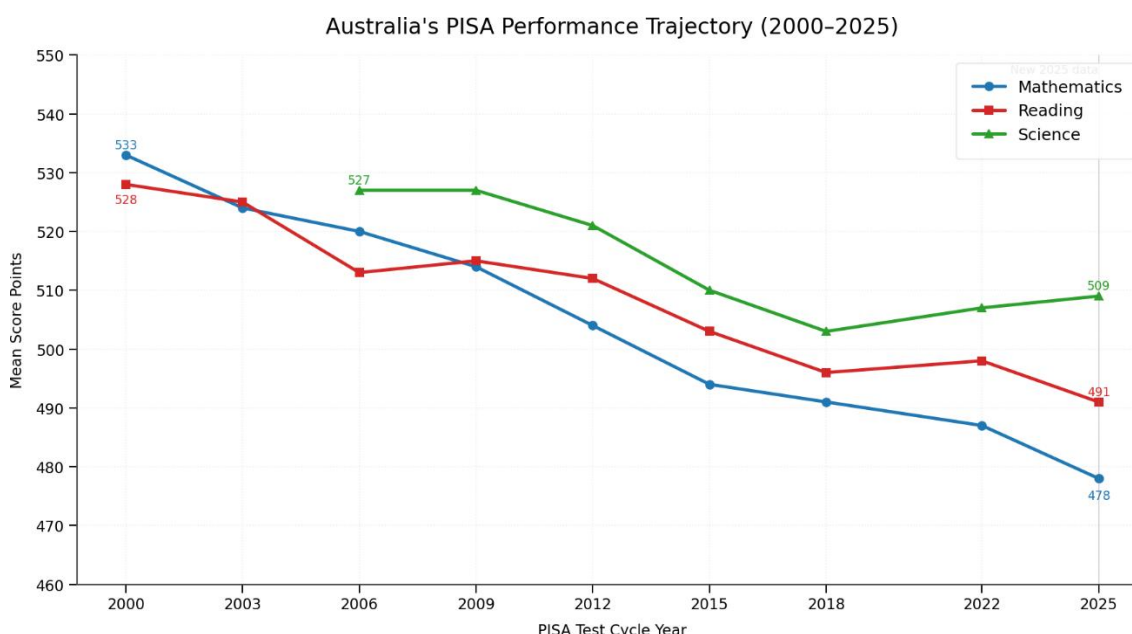
Educational outcomes – our current priorities

All school students, regardless of background, deserve high expectations and the support to achieve them. Building on our work and learnings to date as well as extensive consultation, we will focus our funding contributions on three priorities:

1. Improving the training of new teachers in evidence-based practice
2. Enabling access to a high-quality, knowledge-rich curriculum to build student knowledge and skills
3. Supporting schools to embed evidence-based instruction to lift student outcomes, especially for disadvantaged students

Why are Educational Outcomes on our agenda and what are we looking to achieve?

Education is a powerful force for breaking cycles of disadvantage. It serves as a crucial safeguard for future employment, good health, social connection and participation in society. Yet, Australia's school system is underperforming. Student outcomes have been in long-term decline, with the average Aussie student today performing *worse* in maths and reading compared to students 20 years ago, according to the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).



Around 4 in 10 of Australian 15-year-olds do not meet the national proficiency standard in mathematics or reading, missing out on essential knowledge and skills for later life.ⁱ Among developed nations, Australia has one of the largest achievement gaps between top and bottom student cohorts according to OECD data.ⁱⁱ

Why are school students missing out on basic skills?

Far too many students fall behind because they are 'instructional casualties'—students who *should* have mastered the essential skills but did not receive quality teaching instruction. This is not the fault of teachers or schools, but results from systemic challenges in the education system.

Since 2024/25, Federal policy and most state policy is now promoting research-based practice such as phonics and explicit instruction, but challenges remain in ensuring these changes are implemented in classrooms. Schools and teachers need significant support to shift to the evidence-based practice that has been shown to uplift student outcomes. This was clearly demonstrated with the 2026 NAPLAN results showing about 30 per cent of students are below proficiency benchmarks in literacy and numeracy - a finding that persists each year with little movement.ⁱⁱⁱ

Who is most affected?

All Australian children can be impacted by missed opportunities for learning, however students from lower-socio-economic backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with disability and children in regional and remote areas are most affected. By Year 9 in NAPLAN, students from these groups, on average, lag more than *five years* behind their more advantaged peers in learning outcomes.^{iv}

What does the available research say about improving educational outcomes?

a) What factors influence student outcomes?

Effective teaching has the biggest impact on student learning outside of influences in the home.^v A student with a highly effective teacher can achieve in half a year what a student without high quality teaching will achieve in a full year.^{vi} Effective teaching involves expert teachers delivering a knowledge-rich curriculum, using high-impact teaching practices, with high expectations for all learners.^{vii} This holds for all contexts, including for disadvantaged students.

b) What is effective teaching and why focus on developing teaching expertise?

Effective teaching is based on the science of learning - how students acquire, retain and apply knowledge. Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) describes effective instruction as:

- Creating learning focused classrooms
- Planning the knowledge students will acquire
- Managing the cognitive load of learning tasks by teaching explicitly
- Targeting support to ensure there are not learning gaps
- Students gradually becoming more independent at applying their learning^{viii}

High-quality training for teachers has shown strong effects on lifting the quality of teaching instruction and improving learning outcomes, through both strong initial training and ongoing professional learning in schools.^{ix} Yet several reports have called for significant improvement to teacher development in Australia, with a need to accelerate quality improvements in initial teacher education and better on-the-job professional learning.^x

c) What is quality curriculum and why focus on it?

A knowledge-rich curriculum sets out knowledge logically and cumulatively to help students build understanding over time. Research shows quality curriculum impacts on student learning, with one 'gold standard' research trial (RCT) showing students using high-quality lesson materials were more than six months ahead after two years in learning progress.^{xi} A 2023 US longitudinal study of 2,000 students taught with high-quality curriculum resources in primary school found it almost eliminated achievement gaps between least and most advantaged students in some subjects.^{xii}

Various barriers exist to delivering a quality curriculum in Australia. First, experts call for Australia's curriculum frameworks to better align with knowledge-rich principles, explicit content detail, coherent sequencing of ideas and clearer expectations.^{xiii} Second, teachers need better access to high-quality curriculum materials for lesson planning, with a 2023 Grattan Institute report showing 85% of teachers lacking access to a shared bank of quality resources.^{xiv} Teachers often spend excessive time creating their own resources which adds to workload, creating variation in quality across classrooms and making whole-school curriculum planning difficult. Third, teachers need better professional learning on how to use quality materials curriculum resources in the classroom.

What and who will we invest in?

We are looking to support partners that share our vision for improving student outcomes through evidence-based education. We are open to funding established work or supporting the development of a promising idea.

We will focus our funding in three areas in school education:

1. Improving the initial training of new teachers or early career teachers in evidence-based practice
2. Enabling access to high-quality, knowledge-rich curriculum materials to build student knowledge and skills
3. Supporting schools to embed evidence-based instruction to lift student outcomes, especially for disadvantaged students

We aim to fund a range of work that will drive both bottom-up and top-down improvements:

- Initiatives that deliver benefits directly to students and or teachers in schools
- Initiatives that deliver benefits directly to teachers in their initial training
- Advocacy work including research, policy reports, campaigns and grass roots networks

We're especially interested in work that is:

- Ambitious in driving system-change with governments and system leaders toward widespread improvements in student outcomes
- Applying new ways of thinking and working to disrupt the persistent problems affecting student outcomes, which could include seeding new initiatives, feasibility studies and pilots
- Aligns with evidence e.g. work that has been effective in other countries, can demonstrate evaluative impacts, or has a strong theory of change grounded in solid literature

We are open to work requiring one-off as well as multi-year grants.

Who are our target groups?

- Primary and secondary public-school students
- Primary and secondary public-school teachers
- Teachers in initial training

In order to focus our finite resources, we are not looking to fund initiatives focused on music, languages, creative arts, wellbeing, mental health or disability.

How to apply

Expression of Interest

If your work or idea aligns with our aims, please complete the Expression of Interest (EOI) form on our website. This is designed to give us an overview of the work you are looking to fund, without being a full application. We will consider EOIs as they come in and endeavour to get back to you within 4 weeks. If we are able to progress your EOI the next step is likely to be a discussion.

End Notes

- ⁱ ACER [\(2023\)](#)
- ⁱⁱ ACER [\(2023\)](#)
- ⁱⁱⁱ About 30% are in the 'needs additional support' or 'developing' categories, ACARA [\(2026\)](#)
- ^{iv} Grattan Institute [\(2024a\)](#)
- ^v Hanushek et al [\(2005\)](#), Rockoff [\(2004\)](#), Leigh and Ryan [\(2011\)](#), Hattie [\(2009\)](#) University of Chicago [\(2007\)](#)
- ^{vi} Leigh [\(2010\)](#)
- ^{vii} See research summaries by AERO [\(2023a\)](#), AERO [\(2023b\)](#), AERO [\(2024a\)](#), AERO [\(2024b\)](#), NSW CESE [\(2024\)](#)
- ^{viii} AERO [\(2023\)](#)
- ^{ix} Education Endowment Foundation [\(2021\)](#), Kraft et al. [\(2020\)](#), Von Hippel & Bellows, [2018](#)
- ^x Grattan Institute [\(2020, 2024b, 2025\)](#), Centre for Independent Studies [\(2024d\)](#), Department of Education [\(2023\)](#), Department of Education [\(2022\)](#)
- ^{xi} Borman et al [\(2007\)](#), Grattan Institute [\(2022\)](#)
- ^{xii} Grissmer et al [\(2023\)](#)
- ^{xiii} Learning First [\(2023\)](#)
- ^{xiv} Grattan Institute [\(2022\)](#)