



SPRINGBANK EDUCATIONAL REVIEW

Do you see what I see?



Commissioner
for Children &
Young People

May 2020



Introduction

As South Australia's Commissioner for Children and Young People, I advocate for the rights, interests and wellbeing of all children and young people in South Australia, especially those groups of children whose voices are not normally heard.

The recent public conversation about whether children should or shouldn't go to school has highlighted how important schools are as places where learning occurs and the significance of schools to the lives of all people, children, families, institutions and the economy.

Across the world, in homes and schools, workplaces and cabinet meetings parents, educators and leaders have had to think through the process of education, the role of teachers and what is required to keep children healthy, safe and learning.

Inherent in these conversations is the understanding that a good education and relevant qualifications are critical to the future of every young person and a vital ingredient to setting them up for success. For these reasons access to education is enshrined within the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** as a fundamental human right. In fact no young person should be launched into adulthood without the support of a good education.

In the course of undertaking my role to promote, protect and respect the rights of children and young people and to ensure systems are meeting their legal obligations, I am in regular contact with children and young people across the breadth of South Australia.

I consult and converse with them on a variety of topics and each of my publications, submissions and reports is directly informed by the voices and experiences of children and young people. Over the past three years I have personally had direct input from thousands of children. In addition I have attended hundreds of pre-schools, primary and secondary schools in all education sectors. My experience extends to working with students in class groups, representative groups, student leadership groups and special interest groups.

Through my regular interaction with students I have a privileged insight into students' experience of school, their views on teachers, relationships with peers, bullying, school discipline, attitude towards students, relationships between teachers. Many would be surprised by the honesty, candour and openness within my discussion groups. I have heard about great individual teachers and positive opportunities.

Students are critically aware of the impact good teachers have on their lives and educational success. Good teachers, in their experience, are ones who genuinely care about young people's wellbeing and take the time to understand the context and issue that individual young people are dealing with. Students say they enjoy spending time with teachers who are "open minded", who "listen, if you are stressed, or just need someone."

They have told me they're more likely to contribute and work more effectively when teachers show empathy and compassion towards them. This creates an environment where students feel safe and don't need to worry about being judged for saying or doing the "wrong" thing.



I also frequently hear from children, young people and their families that our education system is failing them. Young people report how school makes them feel unwelcome and actively excludes them. I have heard frequently about the inability of schools to provide a learning environment capable of adapting to their diverse and differing needs.

Students want the education they receive to be relevant to the lives they are living. For many this includes a need for more life skills to be taught in mainstream schools. These students struggled to feel motivated by what they were learning, when it felt like it didn't relate to the 'real world'. They stressed that applicable life skills are key to success outside of school and vocational careers. "Sitting in a class writing a 500 word (essay) simply feels like an irrelevant waste of time."

Students want a more personalised approach to schooling, in which educators take the time to listen and work with them to create goals that align with their chosen future and their individual leaning needs. Regular, individual check-ins regarding progress against goals has also been suggested.

The purpose of our education system is to deliver on the needs of all children and young people; where this purpose isn't being achieved, the system has to change.

Students across the State want staff within schools, particularly teachers, to receive training to be more aware of the challenges they might be dealing with while they try to get their education. Including the need for better mental health awareness, and teachers and counsellors to be able to identify students who may be struggling with other issues such as troubles at home, financial strain or relationships with peers. They want teachers to be trained to pick up on key traits and characteristics that might signify problems emerging, so they can establish support networks around students to help them through.

Students have told me they need "dedicated and qualified counsellors who aren't already part of the teaching staff", who are available and provide high quality support. They want coaches and support both inside and outside of the classroom.

I have distilled these into a series of factors that student have told me must be present for a positive learning environment. These issues have been consistently identified across sectors, schools and ages. Children and young people want schools to be places where:



1 - They are known



2 - They are valued



3 - They have a voice



4 - They can see the value in what they are doing

The collective impact of this is that children and young people feel positive about their education and their future.

I therefore consider myself qualified to discuss with confidence my perceptions and view of the educational experience of the students at Springbank School.



Background

On the 14th May I attended Springbank Secondary College at the request of the Student Representative Council to listen to their concerns about the proposed closure. I met with twenty students and listened to their hopes, dreams and fears.

The young people I talked to are in years 8 to 12, are members of the school's Student Representative Council (SRC) and have varying degrees of need. They eloquently and empathetically shared their perspectives on the quality of their education, relationships and experiences at Springbank and what the proposed closure of their school means to them.

This submission outlines the key messages I heard from Springbank students about what they think should be considered when decisions are made about the future of their school.

As the systemic representative of children and young people my purpose was to hear their concerns and present them to the Review Panel. As stakeholders with a right to have their views considered I agreed to undertake this on their behalf. The students are aware of my role in this process, to present their views and not that of any adult stakeholders. Therefore this submission is from my direct conversation and written statements with students.

It would however be remiss of me not to offer my own commentary on the experience of meeting with the Springbank Students.

The Springbank students are one of the most, if not the most, cohesive, respectful and values driven, group of students I have had the privilege to engage with. Their interactions with each other and with myself, and the way in which they spoke about their school community would be something that I imagine all school leaders would aspire to and rarely achieve.

The two student groups I met with were inclusive, respectful and collaborative. They independently offered each other encouragement and support with kindness and empathy and in doing so generated rich and considered responses to the questions I asked.

I have never experienced this to the same extent in any other secondary school I have been to visit in South Australia.

As a mark of respect to them I have decided to include in some detail what they said in response to my exploration of their concerns about the school closing.

What I saw and heard directly from these students affirms that Springbank is a unique educational environment and that closure will be truly life changing for these young people.

This submission centres on the voices of these young people in the context of the Australian and South Australian governments' commitment to educational goals through various strategies, declarations and legislation. (Appendix 2)



Submission

Since 2008, Australia has been promising children and young people a world class education where “Australian schooling will show equity and excellence” and teach all children to be successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens.ⁱ These aspirations were first embedded in the 2008 Melbourne Declaration.

More than a decade on from the Melbourne Declaration, these goals have not been achieved. In 2019, they were renewed and slightly strengthened in the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*. The *Mparntwe Declaration* has been endorsed by all states and the Commonwealth to ensure “all governments, our school systems and tertiary institutions are on the same page when it comes to what Australians expect from their education.”ⁱⁱ

The aspirational vision contained in the *Mparntwe Declaration* has been embedded in South Australian legislation and strategies in a number of ways.

The new *Education and Children’s Services Act 2019*, for example, has been described by both sides of government as “providing a contemporary framework for the delivery of high-quality children’s services and compulsory education in this state.”ⁱⁱⁱ Notably, the best interests of children and students are the “paramount consideration” in the operation, administration and enforcement of this Act.^{iv}

Embedded in the new Act are various principles that must be taken into account, including that:

The voice of children and students (and their caregivers) must be heard in decisions pertaining to the Act;

The cultural and religious diversity of the student population must be recognised and children and students should not be unlawfully discriminated against on the grounds of their gender, mental or physical impairment, religion or race, nor that of their parents;

The involvement of children, students, parents, persons other than parents who are responsible for children and other members of the community in relation to the education and development of children and students should be promoted.

The new Act is supported by the vision set out in South Australia’s Strategic Plan to develop a World Class Education for all: “growth for every child for every class in every school” by 2028. The characteristics behind this vision are supported by the 2020 Actions Plan and the Statement on Public Education in South Australia that include quality, equity, diversity and cohesion, collaboration, community and trust.

There are two more strategies that complement the above. They focus on improving Aboriginal educational outcomes and engagement and preventing bullying.

The 10 year Aboriginal Education Strategy seeks to ensure that every Aboriginal child and young person is a proud and confident learner, achieving at their highest potential. The



Bullying Prevention Strategy aims to ensure South Australian children and young people are thriving in safe environments that promote positive relationships, safety and wellbeing so that they can achieve their full potential.

All of the above appear to have consistent themes and goals that include (see Appendix 2):

1. A quality education that is inclusive for all;
2. Education that stretches and empowers students to engage, participate and improves their results;
3. A school with a positive and safe environment;
4. A school with high quality teachers and leadership; and
5. A school that proactively engages with parents, families, community and organisations.

This submission highlights that many of the goals and ideals set out in these declarations and strategic visions are already a reality at Springbank Secondary College from the perspectives of the students and families, rather than an aspiration to be achieved sometime in the future.

From them I heard how the school has provided them with opportunities and hope that they have not felt elsewhere. These students described feeling known, valued, understood and empowered to use their voice and choice at school. The school has provided them with an opportunity to participate and excel and to feel valued and included when in other schools they have felt left out and left behind.

“All of the students at spring bank are amazing students and they are all, get to know them all, so my reason for this school to stay open is 1 on 1 support and the awesome teachers and the amazing students.”

Year 8-9 group

On the whole, these children described being happy and proud of their school. They were happy with the fact they can be themselves, that they know everyone and can move around easily due to the school's size, that there is no bullying and that teachers work with them to give them the support they need.



1. A quality education that is inclusive for all

“This school allows everybody to be themselves, despite appearance, personality, race, gender, sexuality, everybody is treated like an equal. A myriad of schools squeeze students into a tiny little box, they want every individual student to act the same, dress the same, and function the same and if you go against that you’re ridiculed for it. This school allows students to be individuals and take their own direction in life.”

Year 10-12 group

Students reflected on the fact that the school is truly inclusive. Young people highlighted this when they spoke about ‘the unit’. The unit is the disability unit at Springbank and students spoke about it often and with immense pride – with students in the unit ‘being legends’ and teachers ‘being kind’.

“The unit was never merged with mainstream and now they are merged and people treat them like normal and you won’t get that at a different school.”

Year 10-12 group

The integrated nature of ‘mainstream’ education and ‘the unit’ is something the students spoke about as being unique to Springbank and important to everyone’s wellbeing and education. This approach ensures all students feel included, supported and valued. It also promotes and protects Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD): that all children living with disability have the right to access and participate in education without discrimination and on the same basis and equal terms as others (See Appendix I for a summary of the latest evidence supporting inclusive education).

The inclusive nature of the school benefits both children with and without disabilities. Those children without disabilities leave the school more rounded, empathetic and with the tools they need to work effectively for life. At the same time, those with disabilities leave the school with better skills to live in society, options for further education, more friends and better grades.

Students also spoke about the inclusivity and accessibility of the physical space at Springbank. They emphasised the small nature of the school and how it is easy for students to get around the school without getting lost.

“It is physically small – better for young people living with a disability”

Year 8-9 group



“A small school is especially beneficial for people with mental health issues such as anxiety or depression”

Year 10-12 group

They spoke about knowing their bus routes and knowing how to get to class. Students were concerned that at a different school this wouldn't be the case. Many feared that they would get lost and fall through the cracks both socially and academically in a larger school.

“Springbank being a smaller school, you get more 1 on 1 support so if you were in a super school, you would get lost in the cracks and end up learning nothing.”

Year 8-9 group

2. Education that stretches and empowers students to engage, participate and improves their results

Many students talked about their grades improving since coming to Springbank and they were worried that they will struggle academically in another environment. They attributed their success at Springbank to teachers having “*different learning styles for different people's learning styles*”. This often amounted to matching learning styles to their needs and working with their strengths rather than criticising their weaknesses.

“They focus a lot on students and creates work to your personal ability. And they have students in their best interest.”

Year 8-9 group

Many students commented about the one-on-one support that is provided by the school so that they have the opportunity to excel. Students say they have “*more attention on me to help with learning*”. This means they get the foundational skills they need before going to the next stage. As one student said, the “*school gives all the foundation necessary for me to grow*”.

Students also talked about the fact that the school provided them with clearer options and pathways for the future. The older students talked about how they had clearer options on what they could do when they left school. This appeared to be partially due to the VET options that Springbank offers and the school's partnerships with Flinders University and the Australian Science and Mathematics School (ASMS).

“A concern about the school closing is that I would fall behind and not get good grades. It would be hard to finish work.”

Year 8-9 group



3. A school with a positive and safe environment

None of the students in either age group talked about being bullied. They talked about the lack of bullying, about being able to make friends and about how teachers and staff ‘cared’.

“There is no bullying happening since I’ve been here like my old school, no one has name called me.”

Year 8-9 group

If Springbank was to close students expressed anxiety about being bullied in another school. Approximately 50% of the students I met with were bullied in previous schools and were worried that if they move to bigger schools in the surrounding areas, they would be bullied again because they ‘don’t fit in’.

Despite anti-discrimination laws that are in place to protect people with disabilities in education, my conversations with parents, service providers and children and young people continue to highlight that systemic discrimination is ubiquitous. I have heard of many instances of children being isolated from their peers and formally or informally excluded from educational settings or activities due to their disability and the adverse impacts this has on the wellbeing, relationships and education of children and young people.

The approach to behaviour management at Springbank, by contrast, appears to be unique and in line with Recommendations 12 and 13 of the 2017 Report by the Select Committee on Access to South Australian Education for Students with Disabilities.^v Students noted that they feel respected, included and that they are treated like adults. Rather than suspensions and exclusions being the default behaviour management strategy, students spoke about being provided with mental health support and support to talk about their behaviour, understand their behaviour and work towards changing it.

The importance of friends

Although this does not directly relate to the goals in strategies addressed in this submission, it applies to their outcomes and ensuring school attendance. Students spoke at length about the established relationships they have made at Springbank. The younger year level students compared their close friendships at Springbank with their experiences in Primary School where they didn’t have many friends. For older students, they were concerned about not being able to finish education with the friends they had made at Springbank.

“I was a whole different person in year 7, but coming here I realised I could be myself and now I found my real self and I’m happier than before.”

Year 8-9 group

There was a big sense amongst the students we met, that they had found their tribe at Springbank and they were scared about a future without them. There was also a uniqueness to Springbank in that students are friends in different year levels, with different interests and needs, across the school. Friendship groups aren’t exclusive in



being contained in a year level, your level of need or an interest area, which is a recognisable point of difference to other schools I have been to.

“When I go to a different school there is no relationship with a different person in a different year level and you don’t feel welcome into the school. Where at Springbank you always have people there for you.”

Year 8-9 group

Further, students said that adults do not understand how important friends are to children and young people. Having friends at school is an incentive for better attendance for children and young people and it nurtures a kinder environment where young people feel like they fit in. Students stated that Springbank has been quite deliberate in creating such an environment, as new enrolments are paired up with a friend and introduced to other students.

“Everyone get’s along really well. There isn’t nobody who doesn’t treat you like a different person/ Every person try’s to feel everyone welcomes people”

Year 10-12 group

4. A school with high quality teachers and leadership

“It’s got great teachers, it’s got great principal”

Year 10-12 group

Consistently, students said that the teachers, staff and principal were great. One younger person said that this school was actually ‘fun’. It is my belief that for a secondary school this is the highest compliment a school could receive. All children have a right to play and research shows that children learn better when they are having fun.

The children consistently said that staff would go out of the way to ask them how they were going and cared about their wellbeing. The students were positive about the smaller classes and the personalised style of teaching and support that the school offers.

“One on one teaching. Receive support from teachers. Teachers know your learning and how each child learns best. Teachers modify learning for children who struggle with their learning. Mental health support, academic support.”

Year 10-12 group



5. A school that proactively engages with parents, families, community and organisations

Students talked about teachers listening to them and caring about them. They said that they were treated like adults. Many said they could talk to the teachers about “anything”. That is to say, that adults actively listened to them and responded in a mature way to challenging situations, giving children agency and a voice.

*“Your less defined by a certain trait and more by yourself
and who you are. I can talk to teacher like an adult.
Students collaborate. You get warned.”*

Year 10-12 group

*“Relationships with teachers where we can talk about
things we care about.”*

Year 10-12 group

Although the children did not talk about how their parents engaged with their school, my office has spoken to many parents who say that their engagement with the school staff and leadership is proactive and positive. They are very happy with the level of engagement they have with teachers about how their children are going and the school’s ability to address any issues they may have.

Further, the school has links to VET training, Basketball and the Ice Factor that supports many of these children and gives them the confidence and abilities to be able to fit in and a sense of belonging.

The impacts and costs of school closure

*“Leaving primary school, you may not want to come high
school, you may feel alone. “you don’t fit in” I once felt like
this, I was horrified to come but the teachers at Springbank,
they are really different, they are kind and understanding.
They helped me fit in, they helped me be myself. It would
break my heart to be separated from the teachers who
helped me, I classify as a family of my own.”*

Year 8-9 group

The culture that has been created at Springbank through strong leadership and a therapeutic response to teaching has meant that if the school is to close, many of these children, especially those that are vulnerable, will fall through the cracks.

Some children we spoke to were afraid that they would lose their ‘family’, friends and support if they were forced to move to a large school.



*“Losing the school could mean losing apart of yourself.
Getting rid of the school could mean a lot more
angry/upset people. More upset/angry people means a
more upset, angry, unsafe society.”*

Year 10-12 group

Some were afraid that they would start to get bullied again if they moved back to what is often seen as a “normal” school, because in the eyes of society they simply do not fit in.

*“Have to start all over again at new school and might get
bullied”*

Based on the above, I recommend that the Review seriously consider the educational and social costs that would occur from the closure of the school. It might be argued that in terms of economic costs per student, it would be cheaper for these children to be absorbed into bigger schools. However, the trade-off could be great in the long-term when it comes to the impacts on these students, and the costs to their families and the broader community.

I urge this Review to take the voices of the students at this unique school seriously and consider the impacts of a school closure on their relationships and friendships, their educational outcomes, their mental health and confidence, and their future pathways and opportunities.

While students spoke extensively about what they like about Springbank and what concerns they have about the proposed closure, they were very realistic about the future. If the school was to close, they want to ensure that student’s needs and best interests in an educational context continue to be met in the same way and at the same level that Springbank is currently doing.

*“If this school were to close the peoples needs that are
accommodated for here, need to be accommodated for
elsewhere.”*

Year 10-12 group

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities emphasises the importance of recognising the difference between exclusion, segregation, integration and inclusion and highlights that “placing students with disabilities within mainstream classes without accompanying structural changes to, for example, organisation, curriculum and teaching and learning strategies, does not constitute inclusion.”^{vi} It seems unlikely that the needs of many of these students will be met in the same inclusive way in different, larger learning environments. The significance of this should not be understated when considering the feasibility and impacts of closing Springbank and placing Springbank students elsewhere.

South Australia has made a promise to keep children safe and give them every opportunity to thrive in South Australia. Closing this school could mean breaking this promise to this group of children.



Appendix I: Latest evidence supporting inclusive education

The following outlines the latest evidence on what inclusive education should look like. As South Australia is aspiring to provide all children with a world class education the following factors should be considered. It is also consistent with the 2017 [Report of the Select Committee on Access to the South Australian Education System for Students with a Disability](#) and its recommendations for developing inclusive schools, including that:

4.1. Schools should ensure a positive, inclusive culture and environment within each school which embraces and respects diversity, including students with disability.

4.2. Parents, teachers and peers should be equipped to actively avoid and challenge pessimistic attitudes about the capability and potential of students with disability. School needs to actively foster a respectful expectation of achievement.

The right to inclusive education

Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), all children have the right to an education (Article 28) and this education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full (Article 29). Article 23 of the UNCRC recognises the right of children living with any kind of disability to “enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community”.

Inclusion and equity in education feature prominently in international rights instruments and in Australia's national education policies and strategies. Inclusive education is also supported through legislation, including the *Disability Discrimination Act Cth (1992)* and the *Equal Opportunity Act SA (1984)*, which make it illegal to discriminate against a person in education on the basis of their disability. The *Disability Standards for Education 2005* clarify the rights of people with disability under the Disability Discrimination Act, and seek to ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as other students.

The 1994 Salamanca Statement advocated for inclusive education as the standard form of education for students with a disability: “Regular schools with [an] inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.”^{vii}

Australia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2008. According to Article 24 of the UNCRPD, State parties must ensure the realisation of the right of people with disabilities to education through an inclusive education system at all levels and for all students, without discrimination and on equal terms with others.

According to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, inclusive education can be understood as:

- a fundamental human right of all learners
- a means of realising other human rights and the primary means through which to achieve inclusive societies
- a principle that values students' wellbeing, dignity, autonomy, and contribution to society
- a continuing process to eliminate barriers to education and promote reform in the culture, policy, and practice in schools to include all students.



The right to inclusive education focuses on maximising “the full and effective participation, accessibility, attendance and achievement of all students, especially those who, for different reasons, are excluded or at risk of being marginalized.”^{viii} It seeks to recognise diversity and combat discrimination, and overcome barriers to learning and participation for all by focusing on wellbeing and success of students with disabilities. Inclusive education is not only about high quality education for all learners, but it is also about the making of inclusive, kind and fair societies and the social and emotional development of active and informed young citizens.

Key features of best practice in inclusive education

The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states that inclusion involves “changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision to serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences”.^{ix}

Key features of inclusive education are:

- **The active participation of learners and the voice of the child is heard:** In line with Article 12 of the CRC, children and young people have the right to actively participate and have their views taken seriously as active partners in education rather than merely recipients of education. The active involvement, engagement and participation of the child is central to inclusive education, with due consideration given to access, collaboration, recognition and acceptance.
- **Families and communities are involved:** Families are actively included as partners in their child’s education where possible and collaboration and trust between schools, families and the community is encouraged and nurtured.
- **All children are supported to make friends and to be socially successful with their peers.**
- **A flexible curriculum and individual planning in a personalised learning environment** that responds to the needs of all learners and enables diverse students to experience greater success in learning outcomes due to stronger engagement and participation.^x
- **Positive teacher attitudes, behaviour and skills**, as well as cultures, policies and practices, which transform and evolve to respond to the diversity and voices of students;
- **Information on inclusive practices and policies is made transparent and accessible** to students, parents, support staff and any others involved with students;^{xi}
- **Strong leadership and adequate resources**, staff professional development and teacher training are provided to support inclusion in the school and the community.^{xii}

Inclusion is influenced by physical and social environments, attitudes, expectations, staff behaviours, and opportunities as well as a learner’s skills and abilities. At a whole-school level, good practices include the development of support structures, the provision of and access to equitable learning opportunities, and adjustments to cultures, policies, practices, teacher behaviours and attitudes. At an in-class level, good practice incorporates



alternative, flexible curricula, a focus on quality teaching for all students, and individual planning in a personalised learning environment.

UNESCO and the International Bureau of Education have outlined eight indicators that international research suggests are associated with movement towards greater inclusion:

1. Everyone is made to feel welcome
2. Students are equally valued
3. There are high expectations for all students
4. Staff and students treat one another with respect
5. There is a partnership between staff and families
6. The school is accessible to all students
7. Senior staff support teachers in making sure that all students participate and learn
8. The school monitors the presence, participation, and achievement of all students.^{xiii}

Many of these elements of best practice appear to be reflected in what we saw at Springbank and what Springbank students told us about their experiences and relationships at school and their views about the challenges and opportunities facing their school and community.

The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities emphasises the importance of recognising the difference between exclusion, segregation, integration and inclusion and highlights that “placing students with disabilities within mainstream classes without accompanying structural changes to, for example, organisation, curriculum and teaching and learning strategies, does not constitute inclusion.”^{xiv} The significance of this should not be understated and must be factored into any review of the feasibility and impacts of closing Springbank and placing Springbank students elsewhere.

Evidence of the benefits of inclusive education

There is clear and consistent evidence that demonstrates the social and educational benefits of inclusive education for both students with and without disabilities. A recent review of 280 studies from 25 countries highlights that the benefits of inclusive education extend well beyond the school years and academic success to include social connection and enhanced development of life skills, employment and independence.^{xv} The evidence suggests that included students:

- have higher rates of attendance, stronger literacy and numeracy skills and better grades than students who have not been included;
- are more likely to complete secondary school; and
- are more likely to be enrolled in post-secondary education, to be employed or to be living independently as adults.

There is also evidence that inclusive educational environments increase the opportunities for positive peer relationships and close friendships between students with and without disabilities. These relationships benefit students socially and emotionally and have a positive impact on their learning and psychological development.^{xvi} Despite assumptions that inclusive education is resource-intensive, study after study suggests that inclusive education is cost-effective.

Inclusive education settings promotes respect for diversity and greater levels of engagement, collaboration and trust. There is evidence to suggest that there is a link



between inclusive education and broader social inclusion in communities.^{xvii} Where an inclusive culture within the school community contributes to the success of inclusive education, successful inclusive education in turn strengthens social and community cohesion.

Research shows that inclusive models of education work for students, teachers, parents, classrooms and communities in many different parts of the world. Based on what we saw and heard from students at Springbank Secondary College, Springbank appears to be an example of this success here in South Australia as a school where the diverse educational and social needs of students and the community are being met in a unique, small and inclusive learning environment.



Appendix 2: Mapping of National and State education strategies

Strategy/Plan	Vision	Details
Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration	Our vision is for a world class education system that encourages and supports every student to be the very best they can be, no matter where they live or what kind of learning challenges they may face.	<p>Goal 1: The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity</p> <p>Goal 2: All young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing stronger partnerships • Supporting quality teaching and leadership • Strengthening early childhood education • Building foundational skills through the primary school years • Enhancing middle years development • Supporting senior years of schooling • Embedding pathways for learning throughout life and supporting effective transitions • Delivering world-class curriculum and assessment • Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners to reach their potential • Supporting all young Australians at risk of educational disadvantage • Strengthening accountability and transparency with strong meaningful measure
Strategic Plan – “World Class Education”	Vision To build a stronger future for our children by making South Australia’s education system world-class.	<p>There are 5 key focus areas and our actions in these areas are underpinned by the use of best evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging learning - We are supported to confidently engage students in learning. We design learning that is challenging.



	<p>The Statement on Public Education in South Australia describes the unique role of public education in society and the characteristics we seek to preserve: • Quality • Equity • Diversity and cohesion • Collaboration and trust • Community • Democracy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality people – We are one team of professionals across many disciplines. We have high-quality leaders who drive better results and practice.• Strong engagement – We partner with parents, families, industry and the community to help children and young people to learn, develop, be healthy and prepare for life beyond school.• Better support – We work in service of children and young people, and to make the lives of people in schools and preschools easier.• Targeted resources – We align resources to support the growth of every student, in every class. We ensure targeted resourcing reaches students who need extra support to achieve their potential.
<p>Towards a World Class Education – 2020 Action Plan</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>Challenging Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improving Aboriginal Achievement – we want every Aboriginal Child to achieve their highest potential• School Improvement- Increasing learning achievements for every student. More support for teachers to deliver the Australian Curriculum.• Entrepreneurial – encourage students to learn, practice and use their enterprise skills in every area of the education curriculum. <p>Quality People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a quality leader in every school• Exemplary learning for our teachers and educational leaders – ORBIS• Good employee wellbeing• Good recruitment and selection <p>Strong engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strong parent engagement• VET in schools with strong organisational engagement



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good student attendance: Work with families to improve student attendance in schools. • Anti-bullying: Deal with bullying inside and outside the school gates in line with our Bullying Prevention strategy. <p>Better Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full participation at early learning services, preschools and schools; <p>Targeted Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to all the curriculum • High expectations of excellence and achievement
Bullying Prevention Strategy	South Australian children and young people are thriving in safe environments that promote positive relationships, safety and wellbeing so that they can achieve their full potential.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visible leadership inspires positive environments for children. Leaders of organisations providing services for children play an active role in building a positive environment where children and young people feel engaged, respected and safe. • Communities are inclusive and connected. All members of the community are active participants in building a welcoming culture that values diversity and actively supports inclusion for all children and young people. • Children and young people are active participants. Children and young people are active participants in their own learning and wellbeing, and feel engaged and empowered to use their social and emotional skills to be respectful, resilient and safe. • Educators, families, professionals and community members work together in partnership. Children and young people, families and communities collaborate as partners with educators and other professionals to support children's learning, safety and wellbeing using evidence-based resources. • Communities model, promote and support positive and respectful



		behaviour. Organisations, children and young people, and families cultivate, demonstrate and promote a shared understanding of positive and respectful behaviour
Aboriginal Education Strategy – 10 year initiative	Each Aboriginal child and young person is a proud and confident learner, achieving at their highest potential.	<p>These principles will guide the implementation of this strategy within preschools, children’s centres, schools and education services across South Australia. The department will be courageous, innovative and focused in implementing new initiatives informed by and co-designed alongside the Aboriginal community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highest expectations – We will have the highest expectations for Aboriginal children and young people’s achievement.• Accessibility and responsiveness – We will partner with families and communities to create culturally safe and inclusive learning environments, identify opportunities for growth and respond to barriers for Aboriginal children and young people.• Culture and identity – We will acknowledge, value and respect Aboriginal knowledge, wisdom and expertise, including our existing Aboriginal staff and students and we will adopt local approaches to teaching Aboriginal histories, cultures and languages.• Community engagement – We will hear, seek and respect the voices of Aboriginal people and their representative organisations, and encourage participation of Aboriginal students, parents, carers, families and communities across our services.• Accountability – We will be transparent and accountable for improving learning outcomes, using allocated resources to achieve growth and development for all Aboriginal children and young people.



<p>Wellbeing Framework for Learning and Life</p> <p>From the 2017 South Australian Government's State of Wellbeing vision statement</p>		<p>The principles underpinning the Wellbeing for Learning and Life framework are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child-centred – Incorporating the voices of children and young people at all stages of development in our education and care settings will inspire participation and decision making for learning success• Strengths-based – Strengths-based approaches effectively engage and support children, young people and their families, enabling growth and learning• Learning success – Participation in learning and experiencing learning achievement is integral to wellbeing.• Promoting wellbeing and high expectations will empower successful learning.• Relationships – Respectful relationships enhance wellbeing.• Building trust and care will inspire and engage children, young people and their families to learn, grow and achieve.• Inclusion – Valuing diversity, individual capabilities and unique interests will empower children and young people to have equal rights and opportunities in all contexts of life.
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ⁱ Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (Australia). (2008). *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*.

ⁱⁱ The Honourable Dan Tehan MP, *A new declaration for the next decade of education*, Ministers' Media Centre, 12 December 2019. Available at <https://ministers.dese.gov.au/tehan/new-declaration-next-decade-education>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hansard, Rob Lucas MP, dated <http://hansardpublic.parliament.sa.gov.au/Pages/HansardResult.aspx#/docid/HANSARD-10-24938>

^{iv} Hansard, Gardner J, dated <http://hansardpublic.parliament.sa.gov.au/Pages/HansardResult.aspx#/docid/HANSARD-11-34874>



^v Parliament of South Australia, Report of the Select Committee on Access to the South Australian Education System for Students with a Disability, 30 May 2017. Available at <https://www.parliament.sa.gov.au/Committees/Committees-Detail>

^{vi} UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General comment No. 4 (2016), Article 24: Right to inclusive education, para 11.

https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/Evidence%20%E2%80%93%20A%20Review%20of%20the%20Literature_0.pdf

^{vii} UNESCO, The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education 1994, p. ix. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000098427>.

^{viii} UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General comment No. 4 (2016) Article 24: Right to inclusive education, para 9.

^{ix} UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General comment No. 4 (2016) Article 24: Right to inclusive education, para 11.

^x Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth, 2013, “Inclusive Education for Students with Disability: A review of the best evidence in relation to theory and practice”, p. 35. Available at https://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/command/download_file/id/246/filename/Inclusive_education_for_students_with_disability_-_A_review_of_the_best_evidence_in_relation_to_theory_and_practice.pdf

^{xi} Ibid., p. 18.

^{xii} European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (EASNIE), 2011, “Key Principles for Promoting Quality in Inclusive Education: Recommendations for Practice”. Available at https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/key-principles-for-promoting-quality-in-inclusive-education-recommendations-for-practice_Key-Principles-2011-EN.pdf.

^{xiii} UNESCO and the International Bureau of Education, 2016, “Reaching out to all learners: A resource pack for supporting inclusive education,” p. 47. Available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002432/243279e.pdf>

^{xiv} UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General comment No. 4 (2016) Article 24: Right to inclusive education, para 11.

^{xv} Thomas Hehir et al. for the Alana Institute, August 2016, “A Summary of the Evidence on Inclusive Education,” Available at https://alana.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/A_Summary_of_the_evidence_on_inclusive_education.pdf.

^{xvi} Ibid., p. 18.

^{xvii} EASNIE, 2018, “Evidence of the link between inclusive education and social inclusion: A review of the literature.” Available at https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/Evidence%20%E2%80%93%20A%20Review%20of%20the%20Literature_0.pdf