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THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART, ON FRIDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 2021.

REVIEW OF AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT NO.8 OF 2018-19 STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT: YEARS 7-10

Hon. SARAH COURTNEY MP, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION WAS CALLED AND EXAMINED.

Mr TIM BULLARD, SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Welcome, Minister. As part of one of our functions, the Public Accounts Committee undertakes follow-up reviews of the Auditor-General's reports. In collaboration with the Audit Office, we decide which reports we will follow up and which ones the Auditor-General may choose to do in his office. We have chosen to follow up four this year.

The first one we will deal with is attendance and engagement for years 7 to 10. We appreciate the feedback you have already provided following a questionnaire we sent you. The plan is to go through recommendation by recommendation for you to provide any further evidence and the committee to ask questions as we work thought it.

As you know, this is a public hearing. It is being recorded and streamed on the website. The transcript of the *Hansard* will be made available and aspects of it will form part of our report. Comments made in the room are covered by parliamentary privilege, as you all understand. Unless you have any questions, we will proceed.

Thank you for your feedback in response to the recommendations made by the Auditor-General -

Ms COURTNEY - If I might, Chair, I have a few comments to make.

CHAIR - Yes, I was going to say, do you want to make an overarching comment first? Then we can move on.

Ms COURTNEY - Excellent. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the PAC. I think this is a really important topic and an important audit that was done around student attendance and engagement. Ensuring learners are attending and engaged in learning is key to improving our outcomes in Tasmania and we are committed to ensuring that every student is participating and engaged in learning and are able to pursue life opportunities, regardless of their background, culture, ethnicity, belief, gender identity or level of availability.

The Annual Student Wellbeing Survey, a data set that was not available at the time of this audit was undertaken, now provides us with measures of student engagement and learning. The data shows that across our system, 82 per cent of our students are cognitively engaged in their learning, 73 per cent of our learners report a sense of belonging to their school and, pleasingly, 96 per cent of our learners are emotionally engaged with their teachers. While this data provides a positive picture of engagement, I recognise that there is still more work to do

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to ensure we continue to increase the number of young people who are achieving the goal of attending 90 per cent or more at the time.

We recognise, however, that attendance is not an issue to address in isolation. It is a very complex issue that requires significant commitment to understand both the learning needs of the student and also the support provided inside the school as well as outside the school gate. The department's revised approach to student engagement recognises that quality teaching for learning while being an engagement are all interrelated and that only by working on all aspects simultaneously will positively impact attendance outcomes.

Evidence shows that by focusing on four key areas - quality teaching for learning; belonging and strong relationships; school culture; and student voice and agency - we will see a positive difference.

I have a document to table to outline the approach for the committee's information, which helps graphically explain what I have just said. I am excited today to be able to provide the opportunity to be able to provide the progress the department has made on the Auditor-General's report. As you are aware, this audit was tabled in 2019. All recommendations were accepted by the department and work has commenced. Obviously, COVID-19 impacted last year, so that meant that the implementation of some of the recommendations was delayed. However, we can update you on each recommendation as we go through. I can advise the committee today of the 23 recommendations, 18 are complete or substantially underway and the remaining 5 have commenced.

I look forward to providing more information. Perhaps the best way for us to go is to ask the secretary to go to substantive implementation that has been done to each recommendation.

CHAIR - Sure. I ask, minister, as you go through, if Mr Bullard could indicate which of the recommendations are completed, which are partially underway, and which are just commenced? Unless anyone has any overarching questions before we start. If you indicate when you need to ask a question, we will keep an eye on you. You are rather in the dark there. We will go to recommendation 1.

Mr BULLARD - Recommendation 1 is commenced.

CHAIR - By way of feedback, the screenshots you have included in the response you have provided are impossible to read. I am sure it is relevant to what we are trying to understand. Is it possible to provide a more user-friendly copy of it that we may be able to use in our reporting?

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, we will provide you with that.

CHAIR - It is the same with all the others. I assume these are screenshots, further over, of -

Mr BULLARD - Yes, I apologise for that. My understanding was they should have been attachments to help you reference which recommendation they sat against.

Ms COURTNEY - We can work out the format with the secretary.

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CHAIR - You said this recommendation has commenced. You note in the response you provide, 'This reporting is informing actions and initiatives aimed at improving student engagement, to which attendance is a key consideration'. Maybe it's in the document that I can't read, but I am interested in what actions are being implemented as a result of this.

Mr BULLARD - Certainly. What this recommendation is proposing, which we accept, is that we sort students and student data by educational risk category. The Auditor-General suggested categories we could use -

CHAIR - Including the low Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage?

Mr BULLARD - With the low ICSEA running underneath.

If we start with the ICSEA, the data clearly shows that the lower the ICSEA of the school, the more likely students are not to be attending. This is saying, how are you going to sort those students into categories of risk? They proposed a 60 per cent threshold for being at risk. If you were below 60 per cent in terms of attending 90 per cent or more of the time, you were considered high risk. We actually think that is too low. We think that by the time you are at 60 per cent you are in significant trouble. We'd set that threshold at 70 per cent.

It is a model that will allow us to sort students into risk categories as another way of analysing your being at risk of disengaging. I think, though, we've got to be really cognisant of the fact that the attendance rate itself is a proxy that other things are going on in your life. On the back of the sheet that the minister has tabled [attached at Appendix X] is a model that I think very succinctly summarises the fact that students who are engaging have good wellbeing, are finding the teaching and learning appropriate and are engaging at school.

We need to understand that if you're not there, which side of the model is not working, or is it both sides? Is it that you are at risk in terms of your wellbeing? Or you are not able to get to school, or you are getting to school and it is not really doing it for you, or you are not engaged in a way that you learn or on a pathway that you find of value. What that requires is something more than what the Auditor-General suggested, which brings in data analytics. So being able to take a broad range of data and make informed decisions about where the support is needed to get you engaging in learning.

In terms of the future ... we are building a new case management platform that is going to take a lot of that data which, at the moment, is long text. It is people typing in observations and putting it into a business analytics engine that is going to allow us to quickly flag on a range of measures. It might be your NAPLAN performance, it might be your attendance, it might be behaviour flags, to be quickly flagging students before they disengage; therefore being able to provide support that is needed, rather than having to try to re-engage them once they are not attending.

Mr WILLIE - On that, I have seen that some schools have set up systems like that. There are even visual displays or staff. What input have schools had into that case management?

Mr BULLARD - Schools are front and centre. You warmly mentioned Cosgrove, a school I have been to. They are doing this in Excel spreadsheets and tracking every student and giving them a risk rating in terms of how they're tracking. We want every school to have

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access to that. Cosgrove has a staff that are highly data-literate and able to do that. We need an engine that is pushing that information out, not requiring staff to be spending time cutting that.

Mr WILLIE - There is another school in my electorate that is undergoing some changes that has a similar system set up.

CHAIR - We might come back to that in a later recommendation where they specifically mention this.

Mr WILLIE - It is related to this in terms of tracking cohorts.

CHAIR - Alright.

Mr BULLARD - I think it is a good idea but recognise it is not going to be enough by itself.

CHAIR - ... Does the department have the data analytics capacity to do this? These are expensive tools and you need the skills as well as the technology to do it.

Mr BULLARD - Gaining that capacity and the change in technology over the last couple of years is helping us. Using business analytics through a Microsoft platform, for example, is providing a much more accessible way to present data that is dynamic. We also have a specialist team that is working on the system improvement. So we have a team running the old systems and we have a specialist team that is building the new system, working with schools and stakeholders to do that.

We want to minimise the expertise you need to use it at a school. Staff will need some professional learning, but if it is too complicated for you or me to understand then it is too complicated.

CHAIR - Is the back end all there, and is there adequate resourcing in the department to facilitate what do you need to do to get the results?

Mr BULLARD - To get this tranche of work done, yes. As we have gone out to business units and schools and asked what they would like it to do, we are starting to have a system in the student support area that better allows us to flag students at risk. You would have seen in PESRAC the idea of sharing data on vulnerable students with other agencies and how they are tracking them. It's really good impetus for getting that moving.

CHAIR - We can thank COVID for that.

Mr BULLARD - And we can thank COVID. In the work plan we have identified five tranches of work that go over a number of years. We are resourced to do this part of the work. I might be coming back to budget committee for some of the future tranches.

Mr WILLIE - What is the makeup of some of those teams, like FTE?

Mr BULLARD - Of the team building the system?

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Mr WILLIE - Yes.

Mr BULLARD - That is three FTE.

Dr BROAD - [inaudible].

CHAIR - Your reception is really bad, Shane. Could you try it again? You might need to email or text it to me and I will read it.

Ms WEBB - He asked if attendance is still a manual system?

Mr BULLARD - No, attendance is not a manual system. It is all running out of a data warehouse and there are apps that allow on-the-fly attendance to be marked in classes. We will get to that recommendation.

CHAIR - Anything further on recommendation 1?

Mr WILLIE - Regarding the initial stages of specific research, what are the highest risk categories for attendance that the department is looking at? The statement here says that:

The executive was presented with specific research findings using DoE's own data to deeply understand and identify attendance trends and challenges, including the link between attendance, educational outcomes and socio-economic status.

In that initial research, what trends are we seeing and which cohorts are most at risk?

Mr BULLARD - It will come as no surprise that they are students that are disadvantaged on a number of factors. The SES status of your parents has a big impact. Working through the trauma funding and identifying students there that were at risk, it is children in out-of-home care and Aboriginal children. Unfortunately family violence continues to be an issue. Where there is complexity in the home that is not allowing a student to make it to school for whatever reason, whether it be tied to poverty or personal situation, they are the students that are at risk of not engaging.

Ms WEBB - Following on from the bit that Mr Willie was asking about where it says:

This reporting, from the research, is informing actions and initiatives aimed at improving student engagement.

Are they things that we might talk about in more detail under later recommendations here? I am interested to hear a bit more about those actions and initiatives.

Mr BULLARD - Yes.

Ms WEBB - Okay. We can leave it until that engagement part.

CHAIR - We will move to recommendation 2, which is to reinforce this documentation and self-directed online training modules to increase reliability of data entry. It probably covers some of Dr Broad's question too.

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Mr BULLARD - It was pleasing to see the Auditor-General recognise that we had good systems and processes in place. It was useful that when they were in schools they were seeing that those were not always being adhered to or used. We have now introduced a number of steps to ensure there is greater data integrity. By way of example, a Help Desk: if you do not know what you are doing, ring someone. Makes perfect sense but it helps business managers who are entering data and might have particular questions. Online training modules: when you are new to a role and not sure what you're doing regarding attendance, you can have online training. A higher degree of back-end auditing of the data is coming to allow the running of analytics to see anomalies, if a child is there or not there, and then reinforcing the school's business rules that need to be applied. That has been fully implemented.

Mr WILLIE - Regarding data integrity, I hear stories of schools marking children as explained absences. That would impact the integrity of the data, even if there hadn't been contact made. How widespread is that issue? Has the department looked at that?

Mr BULLARD - It is hard to tell how widespread it is. Schools are regularly reminded about what an explained absence is. We need to constantly be ensuring that those rules are being applied otherwise, as you recognised, we don't have a proper marker of how many unexplained absences there are. We need to know where they are not explained but they are school-based decisions. The rules are clear since the Education Act came in and there was a new minister's direction. There used to be lots of categories or room for movement. They are very tight so we have to make sure they are consistently being applied.

Mr WILLIE - It is really a school-based decision and the department takes it at face value?

Mr BULLARD - Yes, it is a school-based decision but we look at the consistency of the data. We do anomaly reporting but that does not necessarily mean we will be sitting beside a business manager making sure they are coding it properly. There is a period of time that we allow parents to come back. Just as you have identified explained absences that might not really be explained. We do also need to work with schools around unexplained absences that are subsequently explained.

We do go out at the end of term and say, remember, if parents have subsequently come to you with the medical certificate that they didn't provide six weeks ago, you need to go in and change that data.

Ms WEBB - What gets classified as an absence? If a student has attended school, but then the school has contacted parents to ask them to pick that student up during the morning because of behaviour issues, is that then classified as an absence? Also, is there is a portion of the day that has to be missed for it to count as an absence?

Mr BULLARD - We might need to take that one on notice. We are getting down to accounting rules. There is a rule around part-day attendance, but off the top of my head, I am not sure which way it tips here. We might be able to find it as we are going through the others.

Ms WEBB - Part of the reason I am interested to understand that more clearly is that some of those at-risk categories of students, which we talked about just a short while ago, may be more at risk of being needed to be collected during the day and removed from the school. I want to understand how that correlates to attendance.

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CHAIR - We will see if we can get that information.

Mr WILLIE - ... When I was a teacher, some teachers would fill out a paper-based attendance sheet that would go to the office for data entry, while others who might have been more capable with ICT would do the data entry. Is that still occurring across schools? Is double-handling still happening? Is it all electronic now? Are all teachers are entering the data?

Mr BULLARD -We certainly provide the technology for teachers to have an app in class, but some is still paper-based and sent to the office. It is a change management process.

Dr BROAD - Are parents sent messages and so on? If the attendance sheet comes in, they send a text message to the parent?

Mr BULLARD -Yes.

Dr BROAD - Do you think the change to that system has had an impact? Or is that not enough?

Mr BULLARD - It is a really interesting question. There is a question in the data about truancy, which is where a child has not attended and the parents expected them to; that is a truant. That number is very low in terms of how that is coded.

I think texting is sometimes useful, as you would have seen through the report. At one of the schools, their modus operandi was to get the data in early, and text the parents of those who are not there. That would only work if the parents weren't aware that the student wasn't there. But where it has been parental choice not to send them, it has no impact whatsoever.

We do have reminder notices - again referenced in the report - for absences of five days, 10 days and 20 days. They used to be mandatory. In some cases, we found that it actually further undermined a relationship with a school that was working really hard with a parent to return a child to school, and then you get this centrally generated letter saying you are doing the wrong thing and basically putting your child at risk.

Now, you still get the trigger to send a letter, but the principal makes the decision. I think the notification is only one part of the puzzle.

CHAIR - Okay. Recommendation 3, Consider using attendance information to measure DoE and school performance. Do you want to add anything other than what you have provided here?

Mr BULLARD - No.

CHAIR - No? Is this one completed?

Mr BULLARD -This one is complete, yes.

CHAIR - What other performance information indicators have been implemented as a result of this recommendation?

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Mr BULLARD - In terms of a system, obviously we have always looked at attendance, but we have not had it as a performance measure that sits there and is monitored. Nor have we had a target attached to it. Following this report, both of those things have occurred, so it is one of the measures.

CHAIR - Is the target 90 per cent?

Mr BULLARD - The measure is the number of students attending 90 per cent or more and the target is a growth target that all schools should be able to implement. What we have found is that it is easy for schools to disengage. They think, well, I am never going to get all my students there 90 per cent of the time, so this one's not for me. Going and saying that you need to plot a trajectory about how you are going to get more students there 90 per cent of the time and give yourself that target, it might be 2 per cent for next year -

CHAIR - So, it is individualised by school.

Mr BULLARD - Individualised in terms of their school improvement planning, but with an eye to it centrally. Next year, for the department, we have set a target, an average of 2 per cent improvement across the board, which we think should be achievable.

CHAIR - That will be reported in your annual report, I assume?

Mr BULLARD - Yes, that will inform the budget papers' target and the annual report. We do report it in the budget papers as well.

Mr STREET - I can understand looking at each school and its performance, year on year, but we wouldn't be comparing schools with one another, would we, if most of the factors that influence attendance are external factors to the school, which I think you have already acknowledged they are.

Mr BULLARD - So, would we want to compare them? No, that puts them in competition. Would we want to be pointing schools toward like schools that have similar attributes that are performing at a higher level - absolutely. Trying to set up those peer-to-peer relationships, which is, I understand you are really struggling with this issue but did you know that a school that is 50 kilometres away from you with very similar attributes is hitting it out of the park? The intent would be to join those schools up in a learning partnership to see whether we can't expand that learning across the system.

Mr WILLIE - The dashboards are quite new, two to three years old. It might be useful for the committee to see a visual of Espire, of a dashboard, what school principals and other leaders in the school see.

Mr BULLARD - In terms of Espire, absolutely. You want to see what a page looks like that a school can see.

CHAIR - To be clear on that, Nat will write to the department.

Mr WILLIE - In the statement it says, 'Schools are encouraged through their school improvement plans'. So, not all schools would be using this in their school improvement plans.

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I assume with some schools that might have really high attendance it might not be an area of focus. Is that the case?

Mr BULLARD - Schools are required to set three priorities for growth in their school improvement plans. Over the past few years we've been building that culture of school improvement using data-informed decisions and leaving it to schools with support from school improvement leaders to set those targets. As we continue to discuss that target of 2 per cent we have put on ourselves for next year, there will be a higher level of expectation on schools that they are reflecting that where required. You don't want schools that say, well, we have hit the mark and now I am being told I've got to go above where I am.

Mr WILLIE - Some schools would already be way above the 90 per cent.

Mr BULLARD - Some schools are absolutely there but, likewise, some schools need to be assisted with their focus.

CHAIR - Recommendation 4, report attendance data for each year group in annual reports. I assume that one is completed.

Mr BULLARD - That is, yes.

CHAIR - I don't have any further questions, does anyone else?

Mr WILLIE - What year did that start, given that the Auditor-General said this should happen?

CHAIR - It must have only been last year because the report was in 2019.

Mr WILLIE - I think we are going back through some of the key data sets. It is in a few years of it.

Mr BULLARD - The key dataset went in this year.

CHAIR - Recommendation 5, Analyse and report absence information on a regular and systemic basis to identify any trends, and measure the effect of initiatives to improve attendance and reduce absenteeism. You have talked about some of this in your response to Recommendation 1. Is that considered commenced?

Ms COURTNEY - Commenced.

CHAIR - Do any other members have any questions about that specific recommendation?

Mr WILLIE - We have talked about the students' side, with wellbeing. There is also the other side, which is teacher development and professional learning. That is part of the puzzle for this?

Mr BULLARD - Yes, it is. Do you want me to speak to that here?

CHAIR - It is a more appropriate spot.

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Mr BULLARD - There is one to do with intervention. Mr Willie, I am happy to speak to it here, and then maybe we can go over it.

Mr WILLIE - Yes.

Mr BULLARD - There is a lot of work going on in that space. This really comes down to differentiation. How am I ensuring that I am teaching for learning for ways that meet the specific needs of learners? That can then be triaged into 'what's our general approach to professional learning and differentiation?', and so on.

We know that in some particular schools and some particular classrooms there are particular challenges that need to be addressed in that space. We have 16 inclusive practice coaches.

I'll just go back one step. For the 'universal', there are the quality teaching coaches, who are lifting your teaching practice with a specific focus on literacy and numeracy, and how you are actually teaching across the class.

We also have inclusive practice coaches. They're focused on particular attributes of students who might be more difficult to engage, or have difficulty learning. They are highly experienced in different approaches to teaching that will accommodate those students.

To use the very pointy end, a student with autism. What can we do with that particular student with autism in your class that will engage them in learning - but also kids who aren't learning from what is going on in that class? That is a change. We would have had people going in and providing an intervention. Now it is going in and working with the teacher cohort on lifting that practice, because we want to make sure it is universal in every setting.

The other part of the puzzle is, what are you teaching? We have to accept that traditional approaches to the curriculum do not work for every student. Students do not necessarily want to sit in maths class and do maths. Some do.

Looking at different approaches, especially in years 9 and 10, where you can see that disengagement starting to occur, hands-on learning - or packages of learning - is showing dividends for re-engaging students. I was fortunate to be able to sit down with a number of students at a school recently and talk to them about their experiences. They were doing Community Services studies in year 9 and then in year 10. These were students who had not been to school, or might have been but weren't engaged in learning, and they were all enthusiastic about the learning they were doing. They could see it was leading them into a pathway and they felt supported in that. That is what we have to do. We have to put more product out there that is working for the learning style.

Interestingly, I asked each of them, what do you like about it? One said, I like the fact that I can work at home more, because I don't like coming to school, but there are online components and I am supported to do that. Another boy said, I like the fact I have to come to school all the time as I have nine siblings and I don't like being at home.

What it showed to me is even when you are moving to a different way of teaching and learning, which is project focused, you still need to differentiate the way in which you are delivering that.

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Mr WILLIE - It is great to be data driven. Some of this stuff is basic - it is good relationships, good interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, good teaching practice.

How do we incentivise our best teachers to go to the greatest challenges across the system? How are you working through that? It would be a great initiative to address some of this?

Mr BULLARD - There are a number of workforce strategies through the Education Workforce Roundtable which are assisting us to look at two streams. One is about how we train teachers to be the best possible teachers they can be on entry into our system and then develop them. The other is how do we make evidence-based decisions about where those teachers go.

I think we are in a really good space regarding that. We have really good engagement from the union around things such as teacher transfers, understanding capability and need and putting teachers into different places. We have to work out the mechanics because we have to be respectful of our workforce. Our workforce has not traditionally been highly dynamic and we need to look at ways we move teachers to where they are needed most.

Something that was working in this vocational package of learning experience was that we had a career changer taking that. It was a teacher who had been an accountant who had decided he wanted to move into that space. What a great opportunity that was. It's multi-stranded and not easy but it is under active discussion and it is working. The highly accomplished lead teachers will bring a lot to that. There is a passionate group of teachers who want to stay in the classroom and want to do the heavy lifting.

CHAIR - We need them.

Mr BULLARD - Yes.

CHAIR - Moving to recommendation 6, 'Define performance measure and targets for student attendance'. You have spoken about this. Is this complete?

Ms COURTNEY - Complete.

CHAIR - Any further questions on that one? Recommendation 7, 'Monitor trends and establish improvement targets for students at highest educational risk'. Mr Bullard spoke a bit about the case management platform in recommendation 1. You might like to expand further on that?

Mr BULLARD - Think of a triangle. At the top are students who are severely disengaged and not attending. We move down four tiers so at the bottom is on them more than 90 per cent of the time. We need to understand the attendance trajectory for those students. Schools do that but we need to make sure we can see that transparently. We can see it at a system level but we need supports available to step in, especially when you are in those risk categories, under 70 per cent attendance. The work under way is taking the data and making sure we have systemic approaches that we use where we can see those students and young people disengaging.

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CHAIR - You said technology is being established and the vulnerability management module will be soon trialled in a small number of schools. Can you identify the schools it will be rolled out in?

Mr BULLARD - We would have to provide that on notice. Regarding monitoring trends and improvement targets, one thing that changed, again another COVID-19 positive, was setting up the student wellbeing teams in every school and having a wellbeing lead in every school. While schools were monitoring data, they did not have one person in the school that was accountable for that. The person was not known by the system as the intersection point. Now every school has set up a lead and a team. That provides us with the connection between the system supports and the school-based supports.

CHAIR - Other questions? We will move to recommendation 8, 'Identify and manage risks to student attendance for years 7 to 10'. Is this one commenced?

Mr BULLARD - Commenced, yes. I repeat that we need to bring together multiple datasets to do that. It happens manually at a school and system level, but we need to be able to do that better so that people are being flagged early.

CHAIR - The inclusive practice is what you were speaking about earlier?

Mr BULLARD - Yes.

Ms WEBB - In the final paragraph it says there 'provided', where it talks about the student wellbeing survey and the use of findings to inform planning; can you provide some examples of that?

Mr BULLARD - Provide some examples about how you might use it to inform planning?

Ms WEBB - Just where it has been so I can understand where that might have been a nice direct line to draw.

Mr BULLARD - The first thing I should say is when the audit was done, I think when the minister spoke about this we didn't have this dataset. We were flying blind about whether they engaged or happy at school or had the material basics that they needed. That dataset has become front and centre of wellbeing planning for the schools and systems. An example is food security. Communities Tasmania is funding us to provide greater food security to students. We can use that data to target. It asks questions like, 'I had breakfast today?' 'I regularly have lunch'. It goes to the material basics but also asks a range of questions from which we can identify whether you are cognitively engaged. 'I try hard at my learning', would be one example.

That is being used by schools to make school-based decisions, such as the need for a breakfast club or a lunch club; isn't it interesting that girls in year 9 are not engaged but boys are? What are we doing in year 9? What does our teaching and learning look like because it is not working for one gender? It is allowing those adjustments to be made.

CHAIR - Is it the opposite in year 8?

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Mr BULLARD - I have given that as an example.

CHAIR - Right.

Mr BULLARD - All of that data is online. I can see, Ms Forrest, you have a copy of that.

CHAIR - Yes, I thought it was interesting comparing 2019 and 2020, acknowledging what happened in 2019 and 2020. You can see a marked change in some of the students who rate themselves as high wellbeing. Hopefully, this is an aberration. The response is important.

Mr BULLARD - There are some positives in there which you would not expect: 'I feel more connected to my teacher', went up, whereas you would assume that it went down. The third survey has recently closed so we will be able to start getting a trend. It is a bit hard from two years to see a trend.

CHAIR - I was not expecting that. Trends are what you are looking for in this and that is what the data will be used for?

Mr BULLARD - At a system level, trend will target resources and intervention. At a school level, we'll study trend but also to what has happened for those students in the preceding year.

CHAIR - There seems to be a significant drop-off in the engagement with the survey in the older cohort. This is not unexpected but obviously it is important. From my experience, which is a long time ago at schools, the challenge is often associated with boys in year 8. They seem to go off the rails a bit and even year 9, and maybe come back in year 10.

Mr BULLARD - Not all boys.

CHAIR - Not all boys, no, and some girls can be the same. It was observable in the data generally. What measures are you taking to try to get those children to engage so you have more of an idea of what is going on with them?

Ms COURTNEY - Before Mr Bullard talks I'll say that in my Children and Youth portfolio we are hearing from young people who are disengaged. I have spoken on several occasions with the Commissioner for Children and Young People about the work she is doing on engagement with young people. When we have representative forums from schools we often get the student leaders but we don't necessarily get the highly disengaged children doing Youth Parliament, for example. They're some of the things that we are looking at more broadly.

Then there are things that DoE is doing. Many of the engagement factors, and we're talking about attendance or engagement, are very much outside the school gate. It is about how I can look at what we are doing in other parts of my portfolios, engaging those factors, so we can understand what the factors are and look at what we can do to address those.

As Mr Bullard talked about in terms of the model of learning, there are things we can do to increase wellbeing and engagement with learning when kids are here, but when they're not, we have to work through a range of different strategies. The broader work we're doing in the Youth and Wellbeing Strategy is really helpful with that.

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One of the other things that we'll see benefits of in the long term, and it will take a while, is the work we are doing with our Child and Family Learning Centres. A big part of things like Working Together for 3 Year Olds and the work we are doing investing in those organisations is about the child but a lot of it is about the family as well.

If the parent is very anxious or embarrassed or uncomfortable about being in a school, they're going to feel uncomfortable bringing their child to school. There is a lot of foundational work done in those organisations to make sure the parent doesn't feel anxious or excluded. We often see a lot of the co-locations with schools as well. The benefits of that are really big.

As Mr Bullard said earlier in response to a question about attendance, the truancy is low because you texted the parent, but for a parent who knows the child is not at school it doesn't really make a difference. We need to be working with parents, and the really big opportunity to work with parents is right at the very beginning when they're engaged with us.

We are seeing huge benefits from those types of initiatives. We've got lots of data. Mr Bullard has a lot of anecdotes from people for whom it has made a very big difference. It is going to take a long time for those things to start washing through a system, but that is where we can get that engagement.

Mr BULLARD - You must have read my mind. Absolutely, getting the voice of the students who haven't engaged is as, or more, important than those who are engaged. This year, we have tier 3 sites where there is alternative learning in schools, and tier 4, which is off-site learning. They are both included in the survey. It will be really interesting to see how those young people are tracking and what they see as the opportunities and challenges to their engagement. They are the ones who are obviously struggling to engage in mainstream schooling but are, fortunately, still with us. We need to be learning from them about what is going to help you to re-engage in a school experience.

I have spoken to the commissioner as well and we've had exactly the same discussion. If they're not with us, we need to know what their life is like and what is happening for them. She has undertaken to do that work.

Mr WILLIE - On the tier 3 and 4 programs, is there any thought to set up an alternative school, a full-on campus? You see the Indie School or Edmund Rice filling that void. A lot of those kids I meet at those schools have been in the state system and fallen out. Is there any view to expanding that?

Mr BULLARD - You might be aware that tier 4 sites, our off-site provisions were locally made decisions. Schools would get together and throw some funding in and set up an off-site provision. We have now systematised that, so they are sitting within our system under the control of the engagement team. That is now going to harmonise that provision.

The Big Picture School in Launceston, and there is provision on a number of sites down here, is an alternative learning pathway that works really well for some students. Yes, you can see the one in Launceston and touch, feel and visit it but there are schools that have a big-picture component that sits within their campus. I think that is a real opportunity for us.

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Then, I think it is about sharpening up that provision to make sure that we can provide the best experience possible in tier 3 sites. The problem with having 'a' school is it is one site that is then geographically benefiting some and not benefiting others.

The old School of the Air, and which is now eSchool, has been used for a cohort but we learnt through COVID that there is a lot more that we can do through that school. During COVID we had students engage in learning who haven't engaged in learning for a very long time because they felt comfortable being at home sitting behind a screen. What is that offering looking like?

Ms COURTNEY - I have spoken to some of the regional high schools that have extended to year 12 in terms of the types of enrolments we have for that cohort. We have captured the kids who would not usually continue through to year 12. When you talk to the teachers, there is a bespoke model for each student. Some will do shared enrolments at that school and another high school, or that school and a college. I spoke recently to a teacher who has a child who is effectively learning and going through to year 12 but who is doing it mainly online from home. It works well for that student. It is more and more how we can look at the individualisation of what we are doing for a student.

CHAIR - I will move as I am trying to get through all the recommendations. We have covered a lot of the information anyway.

Dr BROAD - Are you seeing any impact in the data from child and family centres? When a child and family centre opens up, can you see any impact on engagement of the parents and students?

Mr BULLARD - Anecdotally, yes. In terms of data, we don't track students in child and family centres. There is a range of reasons around that in terms of related in part to parent view and anxiety about who knows they are there or not.

In the early days, when we first went in, and with my Premier and Cabinet hat on, it became clear that it was like a student identifier on all of them so we could do some data tracking. I was told it won't work because some parents are anxious about even writing a name in a physical book. Over time, probably retrospectively, what we will want to do is say, 'Did you attend?'

Dr BROAD - Can you see improvements in a school so that you can infer it? Not by directly tracking a student, but infer it by increased attendance at a school over a period of time?

Mr BULLARD - We can see that from data such as NAPLAN provides, year 3 and our early years are strengths for us. We track Launching into Learning where you do get a unique student identifier. When you are in the school we can see that it is a benefit in terms of education outcomes.

I think that, moving forward, we will be wanting to better understand that impact. The best impact I see is when I am in the centres hearing stories, and not only from parents. I was at the 10-year anniversary of the Child and Family Centre at New Norfolk. I met a woman who said to me, 'I don't know what my life would have been like if I hadn't found this place'.

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Their daughter was enrolled in Bayview, actively participating and having a great time, and the mother had become a teacher.

CHAIR - There are huge benefits from child and family centres.

We will move to recommendation No. 9: Providing further clarity to schools regarding the inclusion of targeting school improvement plans to improve parent, community and student engagement. You have covered a lot of that already.

Mr BULLARD - I will briefly say that we have had a project underway with families. We know in school improvement - if you look at the National School Improvement Tool, which is a nationally endorsed document, that family engagement is a big driver of education outcomes. It makes perfect sense. We hadn't been explicit around what we expected the schools to do. We have now got it together with a families approach which has expectations of schools in relation to engaging with families. It is not a 'nice to do', it is a 'must do'. Then we have the support in place to assist them to do it again. Some do it incredibly well; others are still on a growth curve.

CHAIR - The Family Engagement Project Officer is the person engaged to facilitate that?

Mr BULLARD - Yes.

CHAIR - Is there only one for the state?

Mr BULLARD - There is one. There is a lot of material and professional learning available but that person is out and about in schools. It is not something that I am going to come back 52 weeks of the year and talk to you about.

CHAIR - No.

Mr BULLARD - They are one-off explaining.

Ms COURTNEY - We have a schematic of it that we can provide.

Mr BULLARD - You can see it has shared expectations about what we will do as a system, which includes building strong, trusting relationships to nurture effective partnerships for learning.

CHAIR - Okay. So recommendation 9 is complete.

Mr WILLIE - Some schools have done interesting stuff in that space. I went to a Dark Montrose one night. It was great. They had the most parental engagement they'd had since the school started.

Mr BULLARD - We need to adjust our system to meet the needs of parents. Parent-teacher in some communities is very confronting but a barbecue is not. You can have the same discussions at both.

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CHAIR - Even as a fairly confident parent it was still a bit daunting turning up for parent-teacher with my children sometimes. Recommendation 10, 'Complete the implementation of initiative to revise or review the school improvement framework'. Is this complete?

Mr BULLARD - It is underway.

CHAIR - Any questions on that from anyone, or any further comment?

Mr BULLARD - A very brief comment. Coming back to where we are as a system and in relation to a question asked earlier by Mr Willie, every school has to undertake a data-informed school improvement process. This approach means being more explicit in some of those things, such as a focus on attendance and engagement that we will need to see in those plans. I think culturally it has worked really well for us to allow schools to test, try and learn. We wouldn't have any school that says they do not believe in data-based decision making. Five years ago we would have. Now is the time to be explicit in our expectations and open in the support we can provide.

CHAIR - They will start in the next school year to put out documentation to support that?

Mr BULLARD - Yes.

CHAIR - Recommendations 11 and 12 both relate to that, 'Include development and performance targets and measures as part of the revision of the school improvement framework,' and 12, 'Include targets and measures for attendance rates and levels, years 7 to 10 for Tasmania in school improvement plans'.

Ms COURTNEY - Both of those are substantially underway.

Mr WILLIE - That would be across all grades too, not just years 7 to 10?

Mr BULLARD - Yes. I think we have limited our response. That is a good point. I am saying years 7 to 10 but we don't say prep to year 6, but I think you can infer that it is systemic.

CHAIR - Yes. It is important to point that out. It is not limited to years 7 to 10. It is across the whole education spectrum. Recommendation 13, 'Continue to develop ASPIRE focusing on further details, setting targets for improved attendance in years 7 to 10'. You have already responded to that. This one is completed too?

Mr BULLARD - Yes.

CHAIR - And that would be from prep to year 10?

Mr BULLARD - Yes. Every school has access to that dashboard. We're now looking to move to an updated version of that which will allow greater interrogation of the data to show growth trends, et cetera.

CHAIR - Number 14, 'Develop a system to identify signs of disengagement and tools to be used by schools for structured analysis of information'. We have talked about this during previous responses. We have covered those student wellbeing surveys. Where is this one at?

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Mr BULLARD - This one relates to the case management platform and being able to take multiple datasets that will set flags up.

Mr WILLIE - To clarify that, that is being trialled in some schools next year and then rolled out across -

Mr BULLARD - One part of it. It is rolling out in tranches. My understanding is that the student support component for vulnerable students is going to be piloted.

CHAIR - That is what we referred to earlier thought, wasn't it?

Mr BULLARD - Yes.

CHAIR - That you are going to get the schools for us.

Mr BULLARD - Yes, at the start of next year, term four.

CHAIR - Term four this year. Okay, so if we can go to recommendation 15: Consider undertaking further work to clarify and agree on the information to be recorded, reported and monitored regarding student engagement and establishing improvement targets.

Ms COURTNEY - It's substantially underway. When we provide the other information we will also provide a summary of completed, substantially underway, underway for you, so you will have that.

CHAIR - You may have already addressed this but has it been agreed? What information has been recorded or reported and monitored yet, or is that part of the work that is ongoing?

Mr BULLARD - In terms of attendance, yes, because we have come out and said it is students above 90 per cent of attendance whom we measure our success by, rather than the rate, which would be number of days all students could have attended, divided by number of days they did. I don't think that gives you enough transparency. So, we have absolutely done that work.

As I said, we have set the growth measure as well. We have pulled out the parts of the survey about student engagement and highlighted them back to schools; the questions that show whether you are cognitively and behaviourally engaged and you think the school has a good culture. They are our measures of engagement, so they are out there as well. So, that one is substantially underway. I wouldn't want to say it is completed because I want to see what other data sets we can be loading in to provide a basket of measures that schools can then use to specifically identify students at risk.

CHAIR - We will go to recommendation 16: Overtake a benefit analysis to determine the level of success of interventions and determine where best to invest funds, using measurable performance targets. You provided the information in the embedded document suggesting this will address that recommendation. Can you describe how that will be achieved?

Mr BULLARD - I think that was one example. I am happy to expand on it. Really, this is asking us: can you see pockets of good practice which sit outside the norms? So, which schools have got higher levels of attendance and engagement than like schools and what are

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they doing? We have referenced there one aspect of that, which is the support for trauma, which has gone out to schools to fund the initiatives that they have come up with around supporting students that are at that pointy end. Because that is being run systemically and systematically, we are now able to go back and look at the success of those interventions, or otherwise. So, it has been an action research project across those schools. So, that is one element for those very pointy ends.

Through the course of this response being developed we have been out through the Child and Student Wellbeing Unit and the student engagement team to identify specifically the high schools that demonstrated above-expected improvement in student engagement using the student wellbeing data. Where we have seen that levels 7 to 10 have increased cognitive and behavioural engagement - i.e., there is more school belonging, more engagement with teachers, more persistence with classroom tasks and I feel more valued at school. We are going in and saying, 'What are you doing?'

Mr WILLIE - It is just one example, but to my mind it does not necessarily address the recommendation specifically. It is saying, 'Undertake a benefit analysis to determine the level of success of interventions and determine where best to invest funds using measurable performance targets'. There could be any manner of interventions, whether it is a literacy program, adjustments model for students, PL for teachers, whatever it may be. I think the recommendation suggests setting up a system to understand the benefit analysis across all of those sorts of interventions and working out the best place to invest. Has the department set up a system to do that benefit analysis?

Mr BULLARD - Going right back to the beginning when I was talking about the power of business analytics, we are starting to be able to do that using technology, through data analytics and business intelligence. At the moment, what we are able to do is flag where you are best in class, and then asking what they are doing.

Working backwards, what we need to be better at is understanding each of the interventions in there. This is really complicated - because what is the multiple impact of multiple interventions? Which one actually made the difference in a setting on a particular day for a student who had particular attributes? That is where we have to go, because that shows your value-for-money proposition.

Mr WILLIE - Yes. So, picking out best examples may lead you astray, because there may be other factors at play that are providing that outcome?

Mr BULLARD - That's right. We are very interested in this, and we're putting energy into it, but we can't understate the complexity. Going back to the Child and Family Centres, a few years ago we asked the Telethon Kids Institute to evaluate how that's going. They thought, we'll do a longitudinal analysis and we'll tell you.

Professor Kate Taylor came back very early to say that this is very, very hard. What was your dosage? Were you there half-a-day, or five days? What was happening to you? Were you seeing the CHaPS nurse and that was a benefit? Or you liked having a cup of tea and meeting friends? What were the attributes of the child before they were in there? There are so many variables.

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CHAIR - There are also variables outside your control, I would suggest, such as what is happening in their family. One of the major causes of trauma may have disappeared out of their life, or a new one might have appeared.

Mr WILLIE - What you are saying is that it is very hard to put an accounting standard over education.

CHAIR - That's right.

Mr BULLARD - Yes, but data is also important, and we do need to run a value-for-money lens over it. The research is clear. You are not going to harm children and young people from an evidence-based education intervention, but is that dollar the best dollar you could spend?

CHAIR - That is a work in progress, is it?

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, we have commenced it. We are not suggesting this one is complete.

CHAIR - We will move to Recommendation 17, Consider how information regarding student engagement can be monitored and analysed to better support DoE and school decisions and processes. I think we have covered a lot of that already. Is there anything else you wanted to add?

Mr BULLARD - No. We didn't have the student wellbeing and engagement survey, and they quite rightly came back and said you have no way of knowing whether students are engaged or not.

Mr WILLIE - How many states are using that now? I think we were the second, weren't we, after South Australia?

Mr BULLARD - Yes.

Mr WILLIE - Quite a number of other states?

Mr BULLARD - There are a number of surveys, but it is us and South Australia using this survey.

Mr WILLIE - It probably shows the value of these surveys if other states are adopting it.

CHAIR - We will move to Recommendation 18, Ensure schools use information that identifies issues that most affect student engagement when preparing school improvement plans. You have provided a response, and we have talked about a lot of this with the other matters we've covered. Are there any other comments or questions?

Mr BULLARD - It is providing more datasets to schools. It is providing accountability for schools to be using those, which we have through the Child and Student Wellbeing leads, and then it is actually providing the support to interpret it. At the moment, it is interpretation.

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A lot of that is done one-to-one, so a school improvement leader or a student support leader is in there discussing it with you.

We need to be better using technology, so you don't have to go looking for it. Wouldn't it be great if a classroom teacher could open up their iPad and see that there are two kids in their class at risk of not doing well in NAPLAN in year 5?

Mr WILLIE - They probably already know, I reckon.

Mr BULLARD - But then you go to the next stage, and here are some possible supports you can put in place that would assist.

CHAIR - That is where this is heading? That is the sort of outcome you are seeking to achieve?

Mr BULLARD - Absolutely. We were talking about Espire. Part of the next manifestation of that will be allowing that data to go system, school, classroom.

CHAIR - We have just about run out of time. Recommendation 19, Align satisfaction survey questions to issues that most affect student engagement, provide meaningful information to determine actions. We have talked a lot about this one too. Any other comments?

Mr BULLARD - At the time we had a student satisfaction survey. We now have the child wellbeing survey. We've said 'substantially underway', because we need to keep learning from that survey. We don't want to close it off and say there is no more work to be done there.

CHAIR - Recommendation 20, Complete the implementation of the initiative to revise and review school improvement framework. That goes back to Recommendation 10. Are there any comments or questions on that?

Mr BULLARD - No. That relates back to the school improvement approach.

CHAIR - Recommendation 21, Ensure teachers are provided with professional learning and development and focus on maintaining student engagement. Could you talk about that as well?

Mr WILLIE - Yes, it's interesting. Reading the online modules listed on the PLI website, my assumption is that coaching staff and leadership teams in schools would lead that PL with the assistance of the module - not go away and do this?

Mr BULLARD - We found, during COVID-19, that 'just in time' professional learning works a lot better than coming out for two days and having dose of something that you might think is of interest and trying to modularise that. Sometimes it might be pre-recorded, but more and more we will move into having, say, professional learning on trauma-informed practice 10 times during this year, and then the coaches are out there saying, 'I think it might be something that will benefit you for where you are at the moment with the student cohort that you are supporting, and the student engagement team'.

CHAIR - Do you monitor the number of teachers who take up that opportunity?

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Mr BULLARD - Yes, absolutely. If it is a 'push' - i.e. I need to enrol - all of that data is collected; some of these would be on the website. There is a small vignette - or '15 minutes of your day'; I don't know that we monitor who has done those.

Dr BROAD - Is there any funding attached to 2020 and 2021?

Mr BULLARD - There is funding attached to both of those, in both people and resources.

Mr WILLIE - How many staff are in the PLI at the moment?

Ms COURTNEY - We will take that on notice.

CHAIR - We'll move to Recommendation 22, Provide opportunities for less effective teachers to observe more effective teachers in the classroom; provide mentoring opportunities with a view to improving teacher performance.

There was some discussion about aspects of this earlier. Is there anything you want to add specifically on this, whether it is the coaching, how much has been taken up for coaching, and what outcomes you have been able to measure thus far?

Mr BULLARD - Even though it has been in place for a couple of years, the coaching is still in its early days. We have had to learn quickly regarding approaches that will ensure that teachers continue to feel supported in their practice, rather than being scrutinised or criticised for the work they are doing.

CHAIR - Same with health professionals.

Mr BULLARD - Yes. It is confronting for teachers to have someone else in their classroom. We quickly discovered that coming in with your little vignettes of advice, from when I was a teacher, didn't work. The lead coaches are trained in adult coaching methodology, but it is the 'show me', I will show you, I will do it with you and now I will watch you do it' that we are putting in place. That seems to work culturally and we're seeing some positive improvements in practice.

Getting teachers to work with the teacher in the next-door room has benefits. In schools now you'll see professional learning communities where you're sitting with the other grade 5 teachers, planning and talking about your approach and what you're going to do and working with them on delivery. Mr Willie has spoken about high-performing teachers. They are fantastic. We need to lift the whole profession to that standard. It is an ongoing process.

CHAIR - How are you monitoring and reporting on the outcomes of this?

Mr BULLARD - With the lead coaches, it is around feedback and working together. We're not at the point where we would be monitoring particular teacher performance in their class.

CHAIR - No, I'm not talking about monitoring teacher performance - I suppose it is in a way - are you monitoring, or observing for improvement, as a result of this?

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Mr BULLARD - Yes.

CHAIR - How are you measuring that then?

Mr BULLARD - It is through the coaches who are looking at what work is going on. It is through the school improvement leaders going into schools and seeing what is going on. It is also through external school review. We have a team that goes around schools on a revolving cycle. I have been on one of those and it is a very comprehensive process, looking at data, looking at teacher performance and talking to students about what their experience is. Over time we will build that.

CHAIR - The outcomes of students?

Mr BULLARD - Outcomes of students front and centre. A lot of quantitative analysis is done back at base, but it is the qualitative stuff that you hear when you are out on the ground, which is of benefit.

CHAIR - That is what I was looking for.

Mr BULLARD - They are held to standards too, which is constantly reviewed.

Mr STREET - My biggest concern with this program would be students are much more perceptive than you realise. How do they explain the presence of another teacher in the classroom? I reckon it undermines the authority of the teacher. As a student, when we had senior teachers come in and watch younger teachers we knew automatically what was going on at our school. Kids being kids they'd then use it against the teacher.

Mr BULLARD - I think, Mr Street, you would see a difference now in delivery in schools. It is not unusual to have co-teaching or team-teaching going on. So, they would not be as uncomfortable with seeing -

Mr STREET - Are you saying I am old?

Mr BULLARD - Multiple teachers. You're younger than me. Things have changed since both of us were at school.

Ms COURTNEY - The way classrooms work and the participants that are in a classroom are very different from when we were at school, where there were always 30 kids and one teacher. That was for every class for my entire schooling. You go in now and there are often multiple teachers, or teacher aides in a classroom delivering learning. The kids are used to multiple adults working together.

Mr BULLARD - We are also a lot more explicit about the fact that everyone is growing and learning. We use exit surveys and teachers will be quite explicit, like, 'I want to know how did you find today's lesson?' You can have an exit ticket on an app or physically where you say, 'You talk too much, you didn't ask enough questions, I didn't know what you were going on about'. We never would have done that. This idea of growing and learning together is a core value of the department. We want teachers to say, 'I am learning the same time as you are learning'.

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Mr WILLIE - There are some good things that happen in schools in this regard but there are some cultural issues too, where some teachers shut the door and teach the same year, 30 years in a row. What sort of initiatives are there to try to change those cultures and behaviours?

Mr BULLARD - 'I like penguins and so I am always doing penguins even though we don't do penguins any more', is an example given to me.

We are requiring the school improvement team and school improvement leaders to change their approach to be classroom-focused, so not just go to the principal's office and have the discussion. Some principals don't feel confident going into other teachers' classrooms so the school improvement leader can say, 'We are doing a walk through, let's go and see what is going on. Let's have a chat to the teachers. Let's talk to the children'.

It's starting to shake that up. We will get to a point where there is a pointy end that they still have the door shut and put posters up on the glass so no one can see what is going on. That is going to be a harder discussion. But we're going in with a mindset that everyone wants to do it, there are just some people who don't know how to do it at the moment, or feel confident.

Mr WILLIE - I went to a very good school on the mainland and the principal did not have an office. He just wandered around the school and made use of wherever the space was. That's the sort of culture you want.

Mr BULLARD - Yes, out and about.

CHAIR - Yes. So, recommendation 23 which is response is in number 14: 'Ensure the development of a risk register, identifies risk to student engagement which also develops mitigation strategies for any identified risks'. Have you developed the risk register?

Mr BULLARD - We are doing a whole-of-agency reset of the strategic risk register. This is part of it. I have a couple of answers.

CHAIR - Some answers, yes.

Ms COURTNEY - We will make sure that we work with the secretary.

CHAIR - When you've done that, I will come back to one other thing I would like to ask.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes.

Mr BULLARD - Sorry, I will just come up.

CHAIR - While Tim is looking at that, minister, in the Auditor-General's report there are a number of figures, eight, and a table in here. I wonder if it is -

Ms COURTNEY - What page are you on there, sorry?

CHAIR - This is on page 14. Is it possible to get updated tables with the next two years' data because that will show improvement or not? These tables are generated by the Auditor-General, but predominately using information from the department or other sources.

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Ms COURTNEY - We can have a look at them and see whether we can replicate that and do the next data set. We will see what we can provide.

Mr BULLARD - Just being cognisant that COVID-19 wipes 2020 for any trend.

CHAIR - So you think there might be little value in that?

Mr BULLARD - The 2020 year, where we had 10 weeks where you had to be at home, makes that data set not useful at the moment.

CHAIR - Probably not so relevant then.

Mr BULLARD - There is no national data. So no Australian trend. We have an anomaly and we have to see what happens in terms of trend.

CHAIR - All right, that is fine. So a thing for a later time.

Mr BULLARD - On part-day attendance, Ms Webb. If a school asks a student to leave or be collected then they are then absent for the remainder of the day gets recorded, whether there is an explained reason for their collection or an unexplained. That will go in as an absence for that part day.

I'm sorry that I'm jumping around the technology because people have sent me answers in different ways.

That is a very long list. That was the list about where we were going to be piloting. I'm not going to sit here and read that out.

CHAIR - The schools. That's all right. Can you provide that to us later? Is that all?

Mr WILLIE - If there was a follow-up audit by the Auditor-General, you are very confident he would agree with the 18 that you stated had been completed?

Mr BULLARD - Am I confident? Yes. I am conservative in the way that we mark this. Hopefully you've heard from me that there are a couple you might want to close off, such as continuing to use the student wellbeing data. I am not going to close it off because is that ever finished? Where there was a tangible tidy up of systems, I'm very confident in saying completed. Where it says have a system to measure engagement, we do have one now but we also need to keep revisiting, updating and upgrading it.

Ms COURTNEY - We'll provide that summary for you as well.

CHAIR - Thank you. We will write to you to confirm those matters. Thank you, minister. Mr Bullard is free to go.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW