


Learning through COVID-19

Maximising educational outcomes for Australia's children and young people experiencing disadvantage



Pillar 3 Report:
What can be done to maximise
educational outcomes for children
and young people experiencing
disadvantage?

Title:	Pillar 3 Report: What can be done to maximise educational outcomes for children and young people experiencing disadvantage?
Prepared for:	Paul Ramsay Foundation
Prepared by:	Lisa McDaid, Anne Cleary, Mark Robinson, Melissa Johnstone, Mathew Curry, Tyrone Ridgway, Mark Western
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Executive Summary

In response to COVID-19, most of the world's student population was impacted by transitions to remote learning. COVID-19 has also significantly affected families' health and socio-economic circumstances. Some children and young people already experiencing disadvantaged circumstances may be at greater risk of poorer educational outcomes than they would have been had the pandemic not occurred.

The *Institute for Social Science Research* (ISSR) at the University of Queensland undertook a study, funded by the Paul Ramsay Foundation, to explore the impact on learning through COVID-19. The *Learning through COVID-19* project was structured across three interrelated stages of work (Pillars 1 to 3) that were designed to inform solutions to address worsening educational disadvantage. Pillar 1 provided a rapid assessment of educational disadvantage in Australia prior to the pandemic, and Pillar 2 examined the lived experience of COVID-19 on Australia's children, young people and families experiencing disadvantage, its impact on their educational outcomes and engagement with school, and the response to COVID-19 of service providers. Pillars 1 and 2 showed that COVID-19 has had varying multifaceted impacts on educational disadvantage.

This Pillar 3 Report presents evidence-based options for action to inform policy and programmatic solutions. The solutions identified throughout the *Learning through COVID-19* project target those elements of the system of educational disadvantage directly impacted by COVID-19 and are thus most likely to be successful in countering the disruptive effects of the pandemic.

Approach

The Pillar 3 study design incorporated an integrative synthesis across complementary information sources to produce a framework to locate Promising Programs, higher-level system design features to promote educational equity, and knowledge gaps requiring further investigation.

The influence of COVID-19 on educational disadvantage was mapped onto a Driver Tree that show a set of pressures on existing factors influencing disadvantage, which in turn expose children and young people to experiences that have an impact on their educational outcomes. The Driver Tree is essentially a map that allows effort to be targeted to modifiable risk factors that may mitigate the effects of COVID on educational disadvantage. The Driver Tree also allows the effect of the effort to be monitored without oversimplifying the complex causes. While the Driver Tree was comprehensive at time-of-writing, it will require ongoing monitoring and updating as new information arises.

A 'What Works' review, that was supported by stakeholder consultation, was conducted to understand existing interventions and programs that address priority

Action Areas. This was used to identify evidence-based interventions and programs (termed Promising Programs) across core actions within four priority Action Areas. These Promising Programs were assessed for their evidence base and implementation readiness for the Australian context.

Core actions

Three to five core actions were identified across four priority Action Areas.

Priority Action Areas	Core Actions
Student mental health, wellbeing and hope	1a Provide mental health programs
	1b Integrate flexible learning models
	1c Engage parents/carers on mental health
	1d Build teacher capacity on mental health
Future role of teachers, schools and communities	2a Provide high dose tutoring
	2b Engage parents/carers in student education
	2c Integrate flexible learning models
	2d Build teacher capacity
	2e Provide free school meals
Digital equity	3a Build digital literacy among students
	3b Build digital literacy among parents
	3c Support teachers to develop and implement online learning
	3d Facilitate access to digital devices and connectivity
Protections for the most vulnerable students	4a Provide targeted services for the most vulnerable students
	4b Provide targeted family support
	4c Strengthen support networks for children at risk

Promising Programs

Sixty-five Promising Programs were identified and assessed across the four priority Action Areas. Within the four Action Areas, the greatest number of Promising Programs existed for the *future role of teachers, schools and communities*, followed by *student mental health, wellbeing and hope*. Very few Promising Programs were available for *protections for the most vulnerable students*, and no Promising Programs were currently available for *digital equity*.

Of these, the most robust evidence comes from programs that have only been implemented overseas, and there is not a robust evidence base indicating the effectiveness of programs in Australia. Any attempts to implement these programs will need strong evaluations to build the Australian evidence base. Implementation in new contexts with new populations will also need community engagement and appropriate customisation and co-design of implementation approaches.

Student mental health, wellbeing and hope

There are clear trade-offs between effectiveness and implementation readiness and the Australia-based programs with high implementation readiness all only have mixed effectiveness. While overseas programs are effective, they are less ready to implement in the local context and will therefore take longer to apply. Most of the Australia-based programs attempted to build teacher capacity on mental health or integrate flexible learning to support mental health and well-being, with only one program engaging parents/carers.

Future role of teachers, schools and communities

There are clear trade-offs between effectiveness and implementation readiness and only one Australian-based program that provided free school meals is ready to implement and effective. Several other Australia-based programs are also effective, but they will take longer to implement, and may require further development and piloting to transfer to new contexts. Three overseas programs that are effective and ready to implement are not currently available in Australia.

Digital equity

There is not currently an evidence base of tested programs either in Australia or overseas, and any programs in this Action Area will require strong piloting and evaluation to assess program effectiveness.

Protections for the most vulnerable students

There are no Australian-based programs supporting vulnerable students with any evidence of effectiveness. Overseas programs have shown positive effects and are implementation ready but they would need to be adapted to an Australian context by working collaboratively with targeted populations.

Impact of COVID-19 on educational disadvantage

It is still too early to have a complete understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on educational disadvantage in Australia and there is no robust evidence base indicating the effectiveness of programs currently operating in Australia. Ongoing monitoring efforts will be needed to obtain this understanding and those efforts will be improved by better data systems.

Addressing the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on educational disadvantage will require building the capacity and skills of Australian schools and social service providers to adopt and implement evidence-informed approaches and to monitor and evaluate their effectiveness.

That said, the greatest need is likely to be experienced by those children and young people with existing vulnerabilities and cumulative multiple risk factors living in places experiencing disadvantage. Efforts to address the effects of COVID-19 on educational disadvantage should prioritise these groups.

Finally, it is important to highlight that the effects of COVID-19 are playing out against an existing system of educational disadvantage in Australia, and efforts to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on disadvantage may not address all the underlying drivers of educational disadvantage.

Background

In response to COVID-19, most of the world's student population was impacted by transitions to remote learning (United Nations, 2020). COVID-19 disrupted schooling and significantly affected families' health and socio-economic circumstances. The *Institute for Social Science Research* (ISSR) at The University of Queensland undertook the *Learning through COVID-19* project, funded by the Paul Ramsay Foundation, to explore the impact on learning among children and young people experiencing disadvantage in Australia. The study aimed to understand the experience and needs of children and young people already at risk for poorer wellbeing, educational outcomes and future employment prospects, and provide an evidence-based platform to respond to their needs.

Based on previous studies, three cohorts of children and young people were identified as likely to be most affected by the educational disruption of COVID-19. These three cohorts are the main focus of this report:

- **Cohort 1: Young children who started school already behind;** defined as children who have been identified as developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains by the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) for children in their first year of formal compulsory schooling (or appropriate proxies where AEDC data are not available).
- **Cohort 2: Older students who were already at risk of disengagement;** who may not return to school, but whose employment prospects have worsened. Defined as Year 10, 11 and 12 students with school attendance below a 90% threshold (or appropriate proxies where detailed attendance data is not available), except for those who do so to take up employment or alternative learning or training opportunities.
- **Cohort 3: Children and young people who have had contact with the child protection system;** defined as children who have had at least one referral to the child protection system due to abuse or neglect, or because of involvement in the youth justice system.

Internationally, in the context of varied but often extended periods of remote learning, there are concerns about learning loss and potential expansion of educational achievement gaps by socio-economic status (Education Endowment Foundation, 2020a; Grewenig et al., 2020; Kuhfeld et al., 2020). However, as reported in McDaid et al. (2021), there is currently little available evidence of actual learning loss from the pandemic. The emerging evidence points to variable and unpredictable effects of COVID-19 on educational disadvantage, highlighting the need for solutions to be grounded in a research-based understanding of the impacts and targets for intervention.

In Australia, recent insights point to the impact of the lack of digital access, the challenges of learning from home, lack of social connections, mental health impacts, and uncertainties around future study, training and employment opportunities (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020; Commission for Children and Young People, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c; The Smith Family, 2020). The second lockdown in Victoria (from 9 July to 26 October 2020) created additional challenges to children, young people, and families there, and extended home schooling increased the risk of disengaging from school, but the impact of this has yet to be explored.

The *Learning through COVID-19* project was structured across three interrelated stages of work (Pillars 1 to 3) designed to inform solutions to address worsening educational disadvantage (Figure 1). Educational disadvantage is disadvantage with respect to the learning outcomes and educational milestones that need to be achieved to ensure satisfactory onward progression in school and beyond.

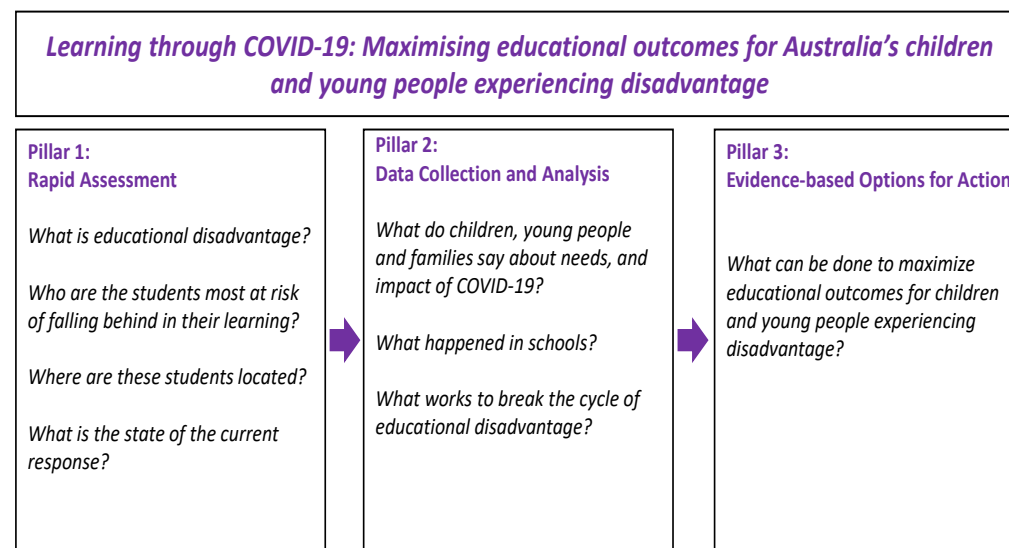


Figure 1. Learning through COVID-19 project architecture.

Pillar 1 provided a rapid assessment of educational disadvantage in Australia to identify the children and young people most at risk of falling behind in their learning (McDaid et al., 2020). The Pillar 1 Report confirmed that the three focus cohorts of children and young people are already at risk of poorer educational outcomes, and that their educational disadvantage could worsen as a direct result of COVID-19.

Within and across cohorts, boys, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and young people, students with limited English language proficiency, and students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds are at even greater risk. Having health or mental health conditions, facing challenges in education environment (such as parents having difficulty supporting home learning or weaker student connectedness to teachers and schools), financial hardship and food insecurity in families heighten risks further.

The cohorts were unevenly distributed geographically, with the highest prevalence rates (but small numbers) in rural and remote areas, and higher than average prevalence rates and larger numbers in the inner and outer regions of most capital cities, and the non-metropolitan regions of some states. **Within these cohorts, the children and young people in greatest need are those with multiple risk factors who live in places and communities with high levels of socioeconomic disadvantage.**

The risk factors for educational disadvantage that are likely to be exacerbated by COVID-19 reflect individual, family, school and community circumstances, and characteristics of the places where children and young people live. The Pillar 1 Report set out an understanding of educational disadvantage in the context of this ecological system and the life course over which human development and educational trajectories progress (Figure 2).

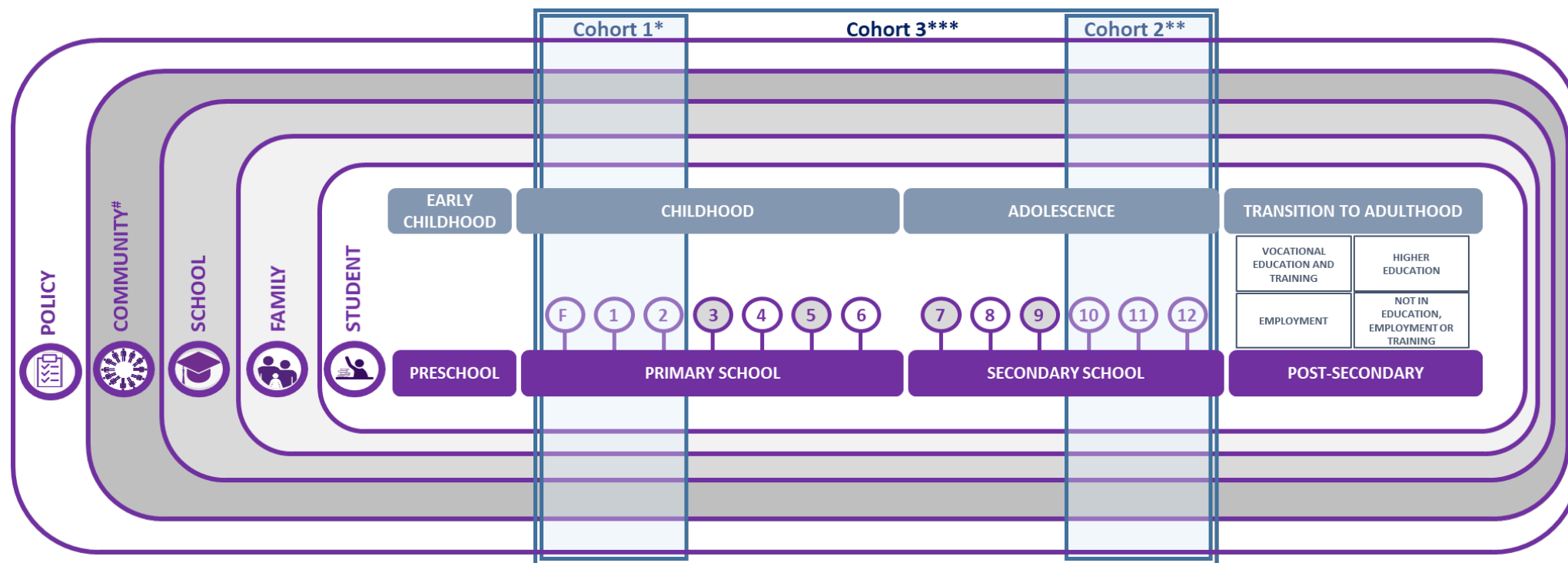
Pillar 2 examined the lived experience of COVID-19 on Australia's children, young people and families experiencing disadvantage, its impact on their educational outcomes and engagement with school, and the response to COVID-19 of service providers (McDaid et al., 2021). **The Pillar 2 Report found that educational disadvantage did not substantially worsen during the pandemic.** The disadvantage gap in school attendance increased in Cohorts 1 and 2 and was reported by others to rise in Victoria (Learning First 2020), but educational disadvantage associated with student engagement in learning (positive behaviours and relationships at school, homework, effort, sense of school belonging) did not change. The best available achievement study (Gore et al., 2021) found Year 3 and 4 students achieved the same growth in maths and reading during the pandemic as their matched peers did before it, although Year 3 students in the most disadvantaged schools achieved slightly less maths growth.

The children and young people interviewed struggled with remote learning, but also learned to adapt during lockdown. This finding was also observed in a Victorian study of the experience of remote learning during Terms 1 and 2 in 2020 (Learning First, 2020). Learning loss was described as a multifaceted and dynamic experience. Children and young people talked of feeling 'stuck' in one location, losing social, family and peer connections, and missing important milestones or events, which affected their mental health and wellbeing. Feelings of anxiety were palpable, but strengths and resilience were evident. The *American Voices* study of US adolescents' experiences of COVID-19 (Jackson et al., 2020) reports almost identical findings using the term 'still' to refer to

what was describe as being 'stuck' in Pillar 2.

Why COVID-19 did not greatly worsen educational disadvantage is unclear. The relatively short periods of school closures outside Victoria, coupled with rapid and comprehensive reforms, including widespread support for online learning, substantially increased income support through JobKeeper and JobSeeker, national initiatives to stabilise housing, and greatly increased crisis response by service providers, could have overwhelmed potential disruptions caused by COVID-19, leading to the findings the *Learning through COVID-19* project and others have observed. At this point it is not known why, **but pre-pandemic assertions of greatly increased educational inequality appear overstated.**

At the same time, the findings suggest an immediate need to re-engage at-risk students whose attendance has fallen substantially; particularly those in Cohort 2, who might be at risk of early dropout. There is also a need for a more extended robust national study with a fit-for-purpose research design of longer-term COVID-19 impacts on student engagement, attendance and achievement.



Notes:

* Cohort 1: Young children who started school already behind.

** Cohort 2: Older students who were already at risk of disengagement, who may not return to school, but whose employment prospects have worsened.

*** Cohort 3: Children and young people who have had contact with the child protection system.

Community reflects the immediate community where the child or young person resides and includes the socio-economic circumstances of that community and the available social and support networks, services and opportunities. Broader societal systemic influences are considered separately in the narrative discussion of this report.

F = Foundation Year; Grey circles represent NAPLAN testing.

Figure 2. The ecological life course model.

Purpose of this report

Pillar 1 and 2 showed that COVID-19 has had varying multifaceted impacts on educational disadvantage and a multifaceted response is therefore similarly required. Pillar 3 presents **evidence-based options for action** to inform policy and programmatic solutions. The COVID-19 drivers of disadvantage, Priority Action Areas and Promising Programs in this Report are grounded in the evidence of Pillars 1 and 2, and have been validated with stakeholders and external experts. The solutions identified here target those elements of the system of educational disadvantage directly impacted by COVID-19, and are thus most likely to be successful in countering the disruptive effects of the pandemic.

Methodological approach

Study design

The Pillar 3 study design incorporates an integrative synthesis across complementary information sources to produce a framework to locate Promising Programs, higher-level system design features to promote educational equity, and knowledge gaps requiring further investigation. The report centres COVID-19 as a driver of educational disadvantage. The solutions are embedded in the social-ecological systems model, the life course perspective of educational trajectories (Figure 2), and the evidence-based understanding of the effects of COVID-19 on educational disadvantage.

Learning through COVID-19 Driver Tree

The Driver Tree illustrates how the COVID-19 pandemic disrupts existing educational disadvantage. **Understanding where these disruptions occur and how they exacerbate educational disadvantage is key to identifying and targeting effective solutions.**

The Driving-Forces-Pressures-States-Exposures-Effects-Actions (DPSEEA) framework approach (Gentry-Shields and Bartram, 2014) was used to derive and present the Driver Tree. DPSEEA describes the likely cause-and-effect linkages of effects back to their driving forces and, by separating out exposures from state changes, helps identify areas for interventions that may seek to reduce exposures or remedy the state changes (World Health Organization Office of Global and Integrated Environmental Health, 1997).

Driving forces (D) associated with the COVID-19 pandemic create pressures (P) on the educational system of disadvantage, which change the state (S) of that underlying system. These expose (E) the study cohorts in ways that potentially lead to new effects (E) on educational outcomes, which would not have occurred without the drivers associated with the pandemic. Actionable solutions (A) and policy recommendations can prevent or treat the effects by intervening at different points in the causal chain.

Pillars 1 and 2 identified the context, problem, and existing interventions across the five levels (student, school, family, community, policy or whole-of-system settings) of our defined system of education disadvantage. Four priority Areas of Action were also identified and validated: *student mental health, wellbeing and hope; future role of teachers, schools and communities; digital equity; and protections for the most vulnerable students*. An iterative review across the project team and with key stakeholders and education specialists was used to clarify the mechanisms of change within the system, and interdependencies, feedback loops, and gaps.

‘What Works’ review

A ‘What Works’ review was conducted to understand existing interventions and programs that address the priority focused Action Areas. The review identified relevant programs and interventions and assessed their evidence base and implementation readiness for the Australian context. This was supported by a stakeholder consultation.

Evidence review

The evidence review focused on selected sub-topics that were aligned with modifiable risk factors exacerbated by COVID-19 for the three study cohorts, which were identified in Pillar 1.

The review targeted information sources including Evidence for Learning and the Australian Council for Educational Research. Studies had to be relevant to the Australian education context (this included international work with similar education systems, such as the USA, UK, Canada, New Zealand); consist of programs, interventions or reviews; be confined to primary or secondary school years (early childhood/birth to five years old and tertiary education were excluded); and be published in the past 10 years for programs and interventions, and the past five years for reviews.

Data on study relevance, cohort, population, and life course and system level were extracted and the evidence of effectiveness was examined. Findings were synthesised by Action Area and informed the identification of Promising Programs.

Stakeholder consultation

Stakeholders (Appendix 1), representing non-government organisations that provide education and support services for children and young people experiencing disadvantage in NSW, TAS, and QLD (including four which provide services across Australia) took part in a second round of stakeholder consultations. Australia-based academic experts in the fields of education and disadvantage, who participated in Pillar 2, were also consulted. The options proposed are grounded in the stakeholders’ expertise about what works for disadvantaged students in the Australian context.

Promising Programs

Promising Programs are interventions and programs targeted according to the Driver Tree.¹ A Promising Programs template was developed by the Paul Ramsay Foundation and refined with the ISSR project team.

The template contains an overview and a brief description of the nature, content, target group, and setting of each insight, along with its relevance to COVID-19, as identified by the conceptual framework, Driver Tree, and modifiable risk factors for

¹ Multiple scoping reviews were identified in the ‘What Works’ review. However, while they provide useful and important insights into apparent success features of a broad range of approaches, they have not been included in the mapping tables, which are focused on specific programs and interventions. Instead, the most pertinent information from the reviews is included in the narrative of the report.

educational disadvantage. For those that had been evaluated, implementation and reported effectiveness were also assessed.

For Promising Programs that were relevant to the impact of COVID-19, and which had demonstrated effectiveness (or have not yet been evaluated), summary ‘mapping tables’ were produced (Appendix 2). These tables present key high-level information from the Promising Programs, including core actions – activities that describe a key focus or feature of the Promising Program. Example Promising Programs are further included throughout this Pillar 3 Report. Based on the project scope, the **mapping tables suggest Promising Programs that may be of most immediate interest to potential funders, governments, service providers, and other interested decision-makers.**

The level of evidence for each Promising Program varies: some are based on national and state level programs, which have been developed and evaluated at scale; others are based on pilot studies conducted on a much smaller and exploratory scale. **It is important to recognise this when considering the level of evidence available.** Further work will be required to translate these Promising Programs into the practical application of new program responses and solutions to COVID-19.

Implementation readiness

Pillar 3 also assessed the extent to which the Promising Programs were ready to be deployed. Assessing implementation readiness required an understanding of:

- What the program is (intervention components and causal mechanisms).
- Who it has been delivered to.
- The context in which it was delivered.
- How it was delivered.
- Whether it worked.

While a number of different approaches were considered for this purpose, the REAIM (Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation and Maintenance) Framework for Implementation Evaluation was considered most appropriate to the *Learning through COVID-19* project needs (Glasgow et al., 2019).

The Promising Programs were given an Implementation Readiness score from 025 for programs or interventions.² Higher scores indicate that the program or intervention is more ready to be implemented in a new setting. Programs or interventions with a score of less than ten were considered not to have the information required to be ready to be implemented in a new setting in accordance with the RE-AIM Framework.

Only programs or interventions with available outcome evaluations were assessed for implementation readiness.

RE-AIM Framework

RE-AIM is a well-established approach used to support implementation of effective and evidence-based interventions. RE-AIM includes five dimensions:

Reach – the number, proportion, and representativeness of individuals who participate in a given intervention, along with reasons why or why not.

Effectiveness – the impact of an intervention on individual outcomes, including potential negative effects, broader impact on quality of life and economic outcomes (where relevant); and variability across subgroups.

Adoption – the number, proportion, and representativeness of settings and those delivering the intervention, which are willing to initiate a program, and why.

Implementation – fidelity of delivery of the intervention’s key components, including consistency of delivery as intended, adaptations, implementation strategies, and the time and cost of the intervention.

Maintenance – long-term effects, and the extent to which an intervention becomes part of routine practices and policies.

Further information on RE-AIM is available at <https://www.re-aim.org/>.

Evidence of effectiveness

Evidence of effectiveness as reported in the materials reviewed for the Promising Programs was grouped across four levels:

- **No effect** – Non statistically significant/no positive findings reported from an evaluation.
- **Mixed** – Statistically significant findings reported, but inconsistent across different measures or populations, and/or the effects may not be sustained over time.
- **Effective** – Statistically significant findings reported from an evaluation.
- **No evidence** – When there is not yet an evaluation completed or publication from an evaluation available (recognising that new programs or interventions that are still in development or testing could not be scored for implementation or evaluation readiness, but could still be of interest and use in the immediate response to COVID-19).

² For each of the 25 indicators, a score of 0 (= no evidence provided) vs 1 (= evidence provided) was assigned and combined to calculate the total score. Indicator questions are included in Appendix 3.

Only Promising Programs with mixed, effective or no evidence were included in the Action Area Mapping Tables (Appendix 2). This approach supports identification of tested and new programs or interventions, which could be developed further to extend the evidence base on how to counter the impact of COVID-19 on educational disadvantage.

Evaluation is essential for assessing the impact of an intervention. **The implementation of interventions should be accompanied by appropriate rigorous evaluations.** The extent to which a program or intervention had information available on evaluation was assessed using the following questions:

- Are the program outcomes/Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)/routine reporting items defined and measurable?
- Is there an outcome evaluation?
- Is there a process evaluation?
- Is there a monitoring and evaluation plan/evaluation framework available?
- Is there a Program Theory, Theory of Change, or Logic Model?

The availability of this information is noted in the mapping tables due to its relevance to informing how programs and interventions could be implemented and evaluated in new settings.

Learning through COVID-19 Driver Tree

The collective insights from the Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 Reports have built the understanding of how COVID-19 has impacted the system of educational disadvantage in Australia. Figure 3 is a *Learning through COVID-19* Driver Tree that depicts how COVID-19 has placed specific pressures on the education system, leading to changes across system levels. The changes expose children and young people to factors that may lead to adverse and interrelated effects on educational and wellbeing outcomes.

The framing of Figure 3 is from the perspective of *adverse* effects experienced by the individual student. It is based on our current understanding of pathways linking exposures to immediate or short-term effects on children and young people. Broader contextual factors and longer-term perspectives on educational disadvantage are considered in the final section of this Report.

The Driver Tree is a map, showing how COVID-19 disrupts educational disadvantage to worsen educational outcomes for disadvantaged students. Like a map, it contains many routes or pathways from the various starting points to the different destinations associated with worsening educational disadvantage.

For example, the pressure of school closures resulted in a change to the school system with a sudden dominance of online learning. This is likely to have resulted in increased exposure to digital equity risks as those with limited access to digital technologies may have disproportionately experienced detrimental effects on learning experience and outcomes (Figure 4).

By following different routes, from starting pressures through system changes to exposures to effects, decision-makers can identify sites for intervention, where they can prevent or treat exposures that lead to educational disadvantage. The later stages of this Report, Appendices 2 and 4, and the associated Promising Programs Template list relevant preventative and treatment programs for different exposures.

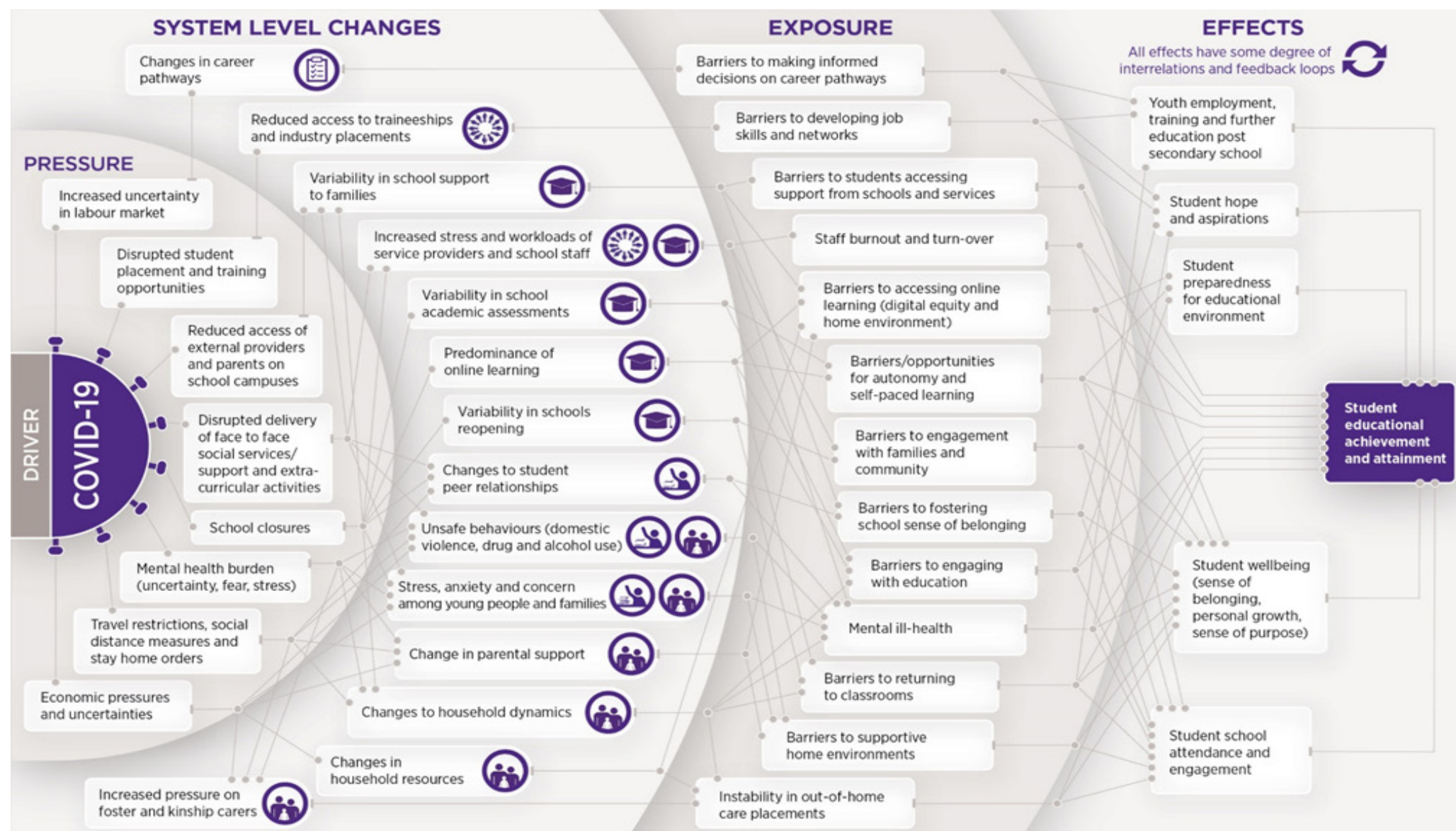
Decision-makers can also contrast their understandings or mental maps of COVID-19 impacts on disadvantage against the Driver Tree to inform actions and advance understandings of how COVID-19 disrupts disadvantage. For example, a decision-maker might believe that some of the connections in the Driver Tree are not valid, ruling out the need for particular interventions if certain pressures or state changes occur. Conversely a decision-maker might believe that causal connections exist that are not shown, requiring interventions that would not be suggested simply by following the Driver Tree. In both cases, well designed research projects can also help adjudicate between these different expectations providing a way to update the map and advance decision-makers' knowledge of the phenomena they are trying to influence.

The Driver Tree also contains interdependencies and feedback loops. For example, a decrease in student wellbeing would likely decrease student engagement with school,

which might further reduce student wellbeing. The impact for different students will depend on the characteristics of their learning environment, their own capabilities and resources, and where they are in their educational life course. Similarly, system-level changes do not occur in isolation; they are amplified or diluted in response to changes in other parts of the system, and they have intended and unintended consequences elsewhere in the system.

Although the adverse effects of drivers are emphasised, not all changes associated with COVID-19 are negative. For example, as noted in the Pillar 2 Report, more direct and one-on-one remote contact between students and schools during school closures may have led to improved engagement among students who previously had poor attendance at school. When considering the Driver Tree, it is important to consider the differential direction of effects and how these may vary within different student contexts, as this may influence the nature and scale of intervening action.

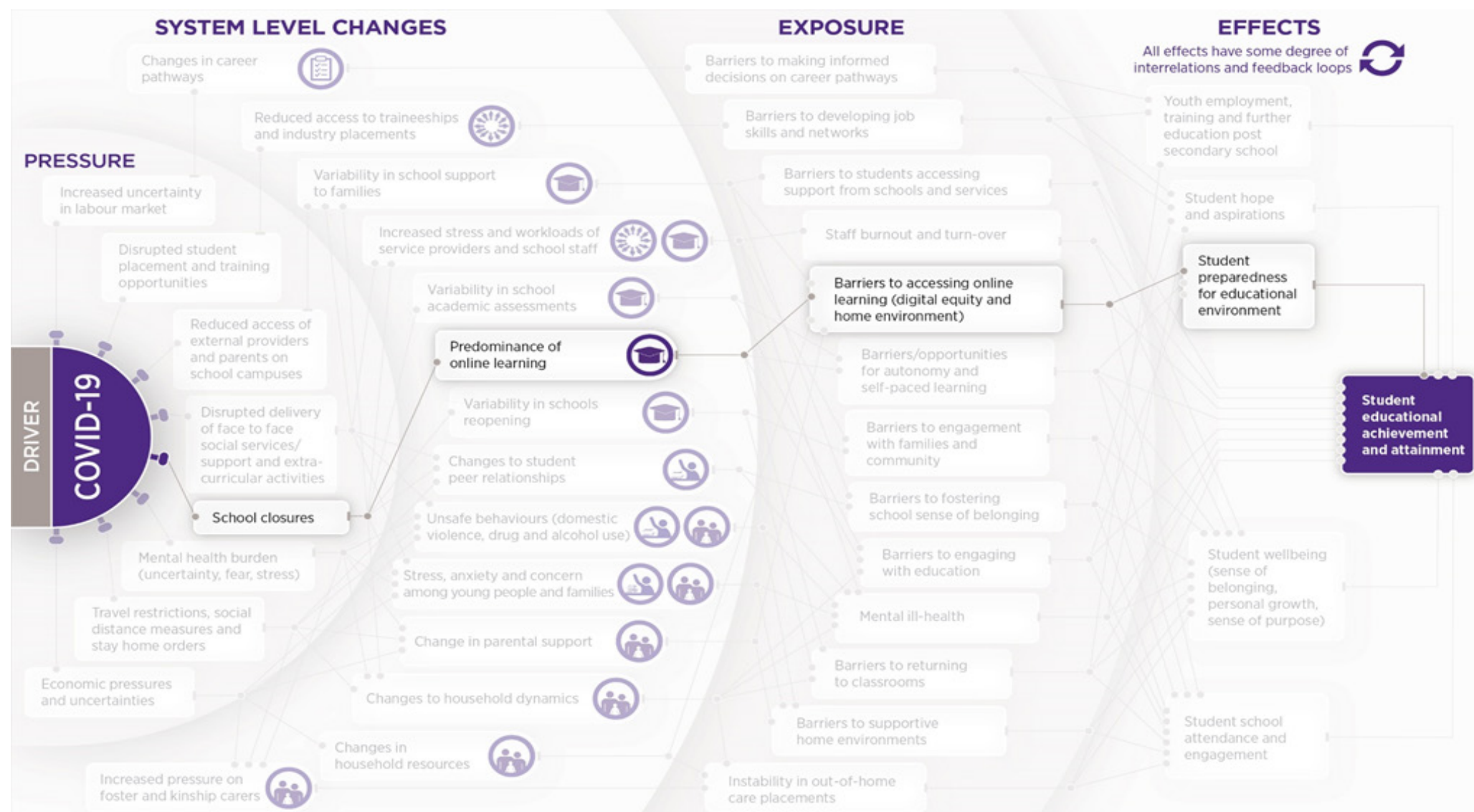
This Driver Tree is also not static. New pressures, system changes and exposures are likely to emerge as the pandemic proceeds. Similarly, the potential re-emergence of COVID-19 in Australia could lead to increased pressures, or create new pressures, depending on how different jurisdictions respond. **Like any map, the Driver Tree needs to be monitored and updated to ensure it continues to be relevant for targeting solutions.**



Note:

Icons in System Level Changes reflect those presented in the ecological life course model in Figure 2.

Figure 3. Learning through COVID-19 Driver Tree using the DPSEEA (Driving Forces-Pressures-States-Exposures-Effects-Actions) framework approach.



Note:

Icons in System Level Changes reflect those presented in the ecological life course model in Figure 2.

The Driver Tree contains many routes or pathways from the various starting points to the different destinations associated with worsening educational disadvantage. In this example, the pressure of school closures resulted in a sudden dominance of online learning, which likely resulted in increased exposure to digital equity risks, which may have resulted in detrimental effects on learning experience and outcomes.

Figure 4. Learning through COVID-19 Driver Tree showing an example path for school closures.

Priority Action Areas

The *Learning through COVID-19* project identified four priority Action Areas in Pillars 1 and 2 that were tested in the stakeholder and academic expert roundtables and informed the 'What Works' review. The four Action Areas are:

- Student mental health, wellbeing and hope.
- Future role of teachers, schools and communities.
- Digital equity.
- Protections for the most vulnerable students.

For each, the 'What Works' review identified programs and interventions that could be solutions in the response to the pandemic. Many potential solutions could be included under these Action Areas. By focusing on those Promising Programs that had immediate relevance to the theorised effects of COVID-19; were relevant to at least one of the three cohorts; and which either had evidence of positive effect from evaluation studies, or had not yet been evaluated; *core actions* of the selected interventions were identified. These represent a prominent aspect (or aspects) of the intervention that need to be maintained in order to preserve its distinctiveness and potential efficacy. Figure 5 outlines the four priority focused Action Areas and their associated core actions.

One core action, integrate flexible learning models, appears across two priority Action Areas. Flexible learning models in this context, are programs inside and outside schools that are designed to address the diverse needs of students, by tailoring what is taught and ways of teaching and learning to respond to those needs, whether these be related to mental health or educational outcomes.

While the Promising Programs have been identified as relevant to the context of COVID-19, the existing evidence base pre-dates COVID-19 and none of these Promising Programs have therefore been specifically tested in this context. The core actions with which the Promising Programs align have been validated through stakeholder consultation.

The core actions allow linkage of the detailed 'What Works' review findings to the Driver Tree (Figure 6). Core actions are mapped across the exposures potentially leading to adverse and interrelated effects on educational and wellbeing outcomes. These represent the points in the system at which to intervene.

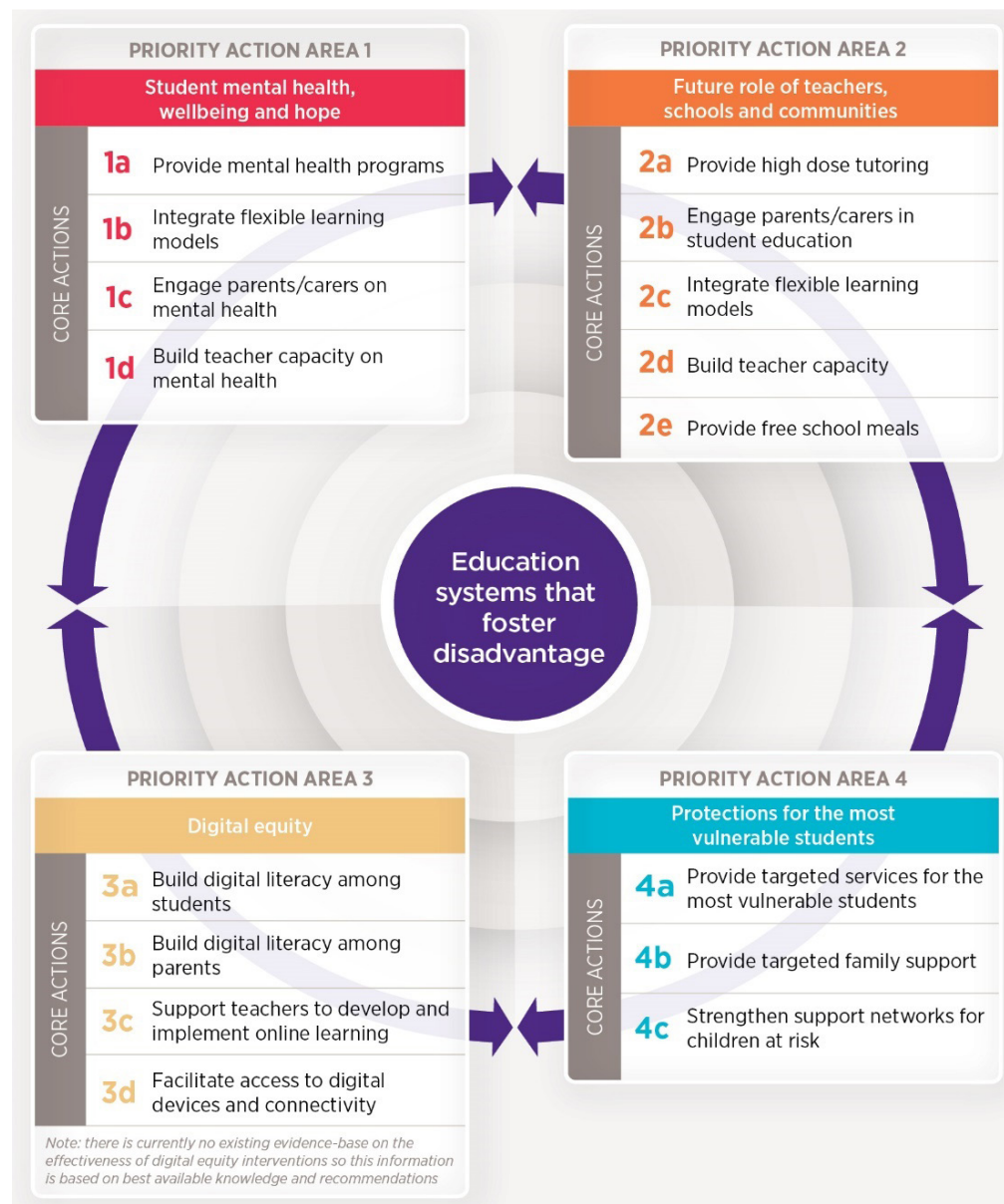
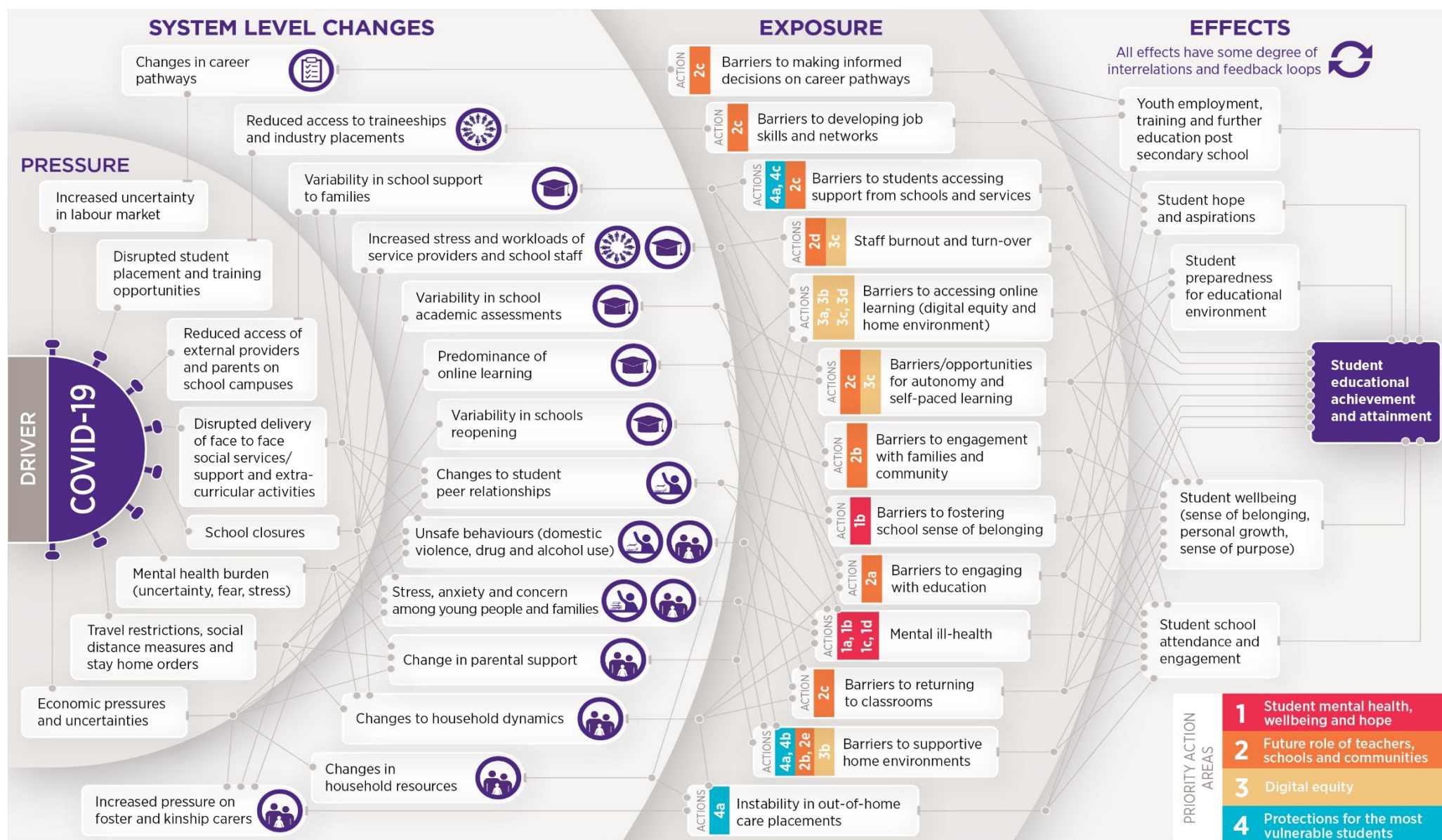


Figure 5. Priority focused Action Areas and core actions.



Note:

Icons in System-Level Changes reflect those presented in the ecological life course model in Figure 2.

Figure 6. Learning through COVID-19 Driver Tree using the DPSEEA (Driving Forces-Pressures-States-Exposures-Effects-Actions) framework approach and Action Areas and core actions.

Each core action has programs and interventions available that could be piloted and tested in the context of COVID-19 in Australia. Selected examples are included below and in Appendix 5.

While the Promising Programs are presented separately for each priority Action Area, stakeholders emphasised that in practice these Action Areas overlap, and **addressing multiple Action Areas is required as part of an integrated approach**.

The current government response to the educational needs of children and young people experiencing disadvantage

Solutions put in place will also be impacted by responses enacted elsewhere by government and other agencies. The Pillar 1 Report (McDaid et al., 2020) included a detailed review of the immediate government response to COVID-19 across Australia's States and Territories. The initial response largely focussed on developing online information, tools and resources for home learning, providing funding and resource support, and adapting school assessments and reporting.

Additional, relevant government responses announced since publication of the Pillar 1 Report include:

- The introduction of tutoring programs by the Victoria and NSW governments.
- An increase in funding directed towards general mental health and youth mental health in particular across a number of states.
- Federal trial to support the design and delivery of tailored pre-employment pathways to support young people to get into work.

Priority Action Area 1: Student mental health, wellbeing, and hope

COVID-19 has presented a direct mental health challenge to children and young people through being a source of fear, anxiety and uncertainty, and sometimes long periods of isolation. It has also indirectly impacted student mental health and wellbeing by causing changes in peer relationships and social connections, changes in family household dynamics and finances, and changes to career pathways and future plans.

Twelve relevant Promising Programs were identified for the priority Action Area of student mental health, wellbeing and hope (Figure 7).

PRIORITY ACTION AREA 1

Student mental health, wellbeing and hope

What the **What Works Review** told us:

No. of **relevant** Programs **12**

No. of Programs with **positive effect** **11**

No. of Programs **based in Australia** **6**

COHORT 1:	COHORT 2:	COHORT 3:
4	8	1

 **11**
STUDENT

 **1**
FAMILY

 **10**
SCHOOL

 **2**
COMMUNITY

 **0**
POLICY

5 Provide mental health programs

6 Integrate flexible learning models

1 Engage parents/carers on mental health

7 Build teacher capacity on mental health

75% score 10+ on RE-AIM implementation readiness scale

Figure 7. Student mental health, wellbeing and hope priority Action Area.

Eleven of these had some evidence of effectiveness and six had been delivered in Australia. Nine Promising Programs were targeted at more than one system level and all had alignment at the student level.

Promising Programs were distributed across the following core actions:

- Provision of mental health programs.
- Integration of flexible learning needs.
- Engaging parents/carers on mental health.
- Building teacher capacity on mental health.

Across the core actions there is a clear trade-off between implementation readiness and effectiveness (Figure 8). Most programs with high levels of implementation readiness (> 10) have only mixed effectiveness, and none of the three effective programs that are also implementation ready are available in Australia. In contrast, the Australia-based effective programs are not yet implementation ready, although one (*Children's University Australasia*) does approach the threshold.

Four Promising Programs involved the provision of specific mental health programs (e.g. therapeutic or psychological interventions). All involved teachers delivering classroom-based mental health promotion programs based on cognitive and behavioural strategies and psycho-education. All programs show mixed effectiveness results (except *Healthy Minds*, which was effective), and had moderate implementation scores. Three were delivered in Australia: the *Aussie Optimism: Positive Thinking Skills Program* delivered in primary schools in Western Australia; the *FRIENDS for Life* program (and its extension *Fun FRIENDS*, which has been trialled in Catholic Education primary schools in Brisbane); and the *Children's University Australasia*.

Given the adverse impact of COVID-19 on student mental health and wellbeing, such programs warrant further exploration for their appropriateness in addressing COVID-19 impacts. However, all programs involved teacher training and relied upon teachers for the implementation - **highlighting how Action Areas are interlinked. Effectively supporting student wellbeing (Action Area 1), may require linked interventions to support teacher capacity and resourcing (Action Area 2).**

PRIORITY ACTION AREA 1

Student mental health, wellbeing and hope



Notes:

Promising Programs can be represented more than once if they fall across different core actions.

The data points (+ and o) themselves reflect the implementation readiness score but the numbers alongside them are a key to the names of the Promising Programs (see Appendix 4 for numeric list).

Figure 8. AA1: Implementation readiness versus effectiveness of Promising Programs.

A number of Promising Programs sought to integrate flexible learning models with the aim of improving student mental health, wellbeing and hope (n=6). The approaches to flexible learning were diverse, varying from classroom based, positive reinforcement, behaviour management interventions (e.g. **The Good Behaviour Game**); to building social skills via weekly creative drama sessions (e.g. **Speech Bubbles**); to incorporating animation shows within the curriculum (e.g. **Incorporation of Little J & Big Cuz; Climate Schools**). The evidence of effectiveness is mixed for most of these Promising Programs.

Children's University

The *Children's University* program in the UK has evidence of effectiveness as well as a high implementation readiness score. The *Children's University* aims to enhance students' aspirations and social responsibility by providing after-school clubs, visits to universities, museums, and libraries, and 'social action' opportunities such as volunteering in the community.

Children's University Australasia is managed by the University of Adelaide and offers educational and volunteering programs to promote awareness and aspirations for university study to children and young people who might otherwise not consider this educational pathway. At the University of Adelaide, *Children's University* is funded under the Department of Education's Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP), which funds strategies to improve access to university for children and young people experiencing disadvantage. All public universities have HEPPP funded initiatives.

Given the disruptions to labour markets and uncertainties in career pathways caused by COVID-19, providing children and young people with diverse experiences and skill development opportunities may be beneficial. However, it is worth noting that programs such as *Children's University* are vulnerable to disruptions caused by potential future lockdowns and social distancing restrictions.

The majority of Promising Programs included building teacher capacity on mental health as a key component of the intervention design (n=7).

The **Healthy Minds** program, delivered by Bounce Forward in the UK, involved comprehensive teacher training (19 days of teacher training across four year levels) to enable teachers to deliver a 14-module evidence-based life skills course within the Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) curriculum over four years in secondary schools. The evaluation reports higher average student self-assessed general health compared to the control group after four years.

Programs to enhance teacher capacity to deliver mental health content at schools need to consider a 'build in' as opposed to 'bolt on' approach to adapting the curriculum. For example, the **Healthy Minds** program built mental health content into the curriculum

by adapting the existing PSHE curriculum. This is an important design feature that introduces new material without overly 'crowding out' the curriculum or increasing teacher workloads, each of which can compromise intervention effectiveness, and lead to unintended exposures such as staff turnover, as raised by the stakeholders engaged in the *Learning through COVID-19* project and illustrated in the Driver Tree (Figure 3).

Only one Promising Program, the **Resilient Families** program, sought to engage parents/carers in student mental health and wellbeing.

Resilient Families

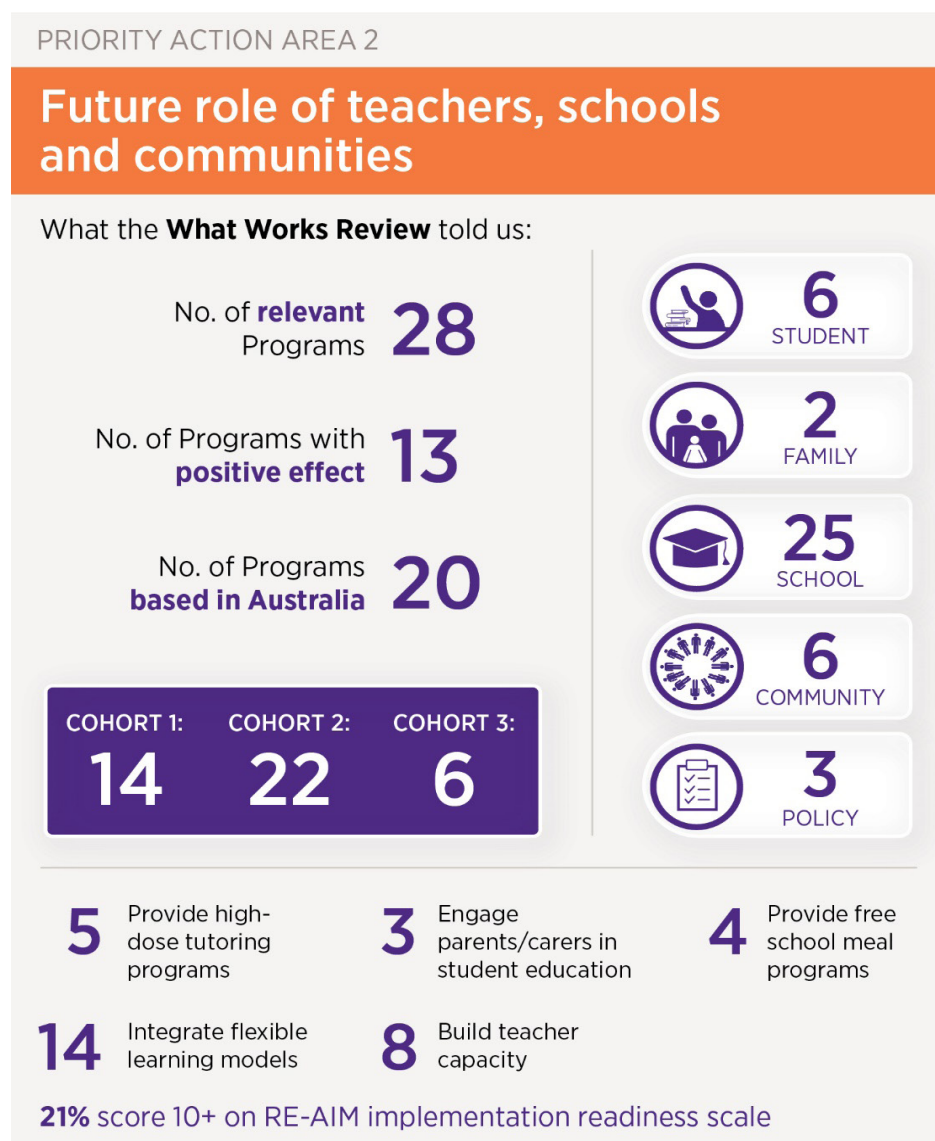
The *Resilient Families* program, delivered across Australia by Positive Choices, applies a strengths-based approach that, in addition to delivering teacher training and a ten-session student social relationship curriculum, also engages parents in an eight-week professionally facilitated program hosted at participating schools. While the evidence base for the *Resilient Families* program is mixed, it does have a relatively high implementation readiness score (16) and full evaluation information available. Given the mental health burden that COVID-19 has placed on both children and young people and their families, the *Resilient Families* program may be worth exploring as a potential approach to addressing the mental health impacts of COVID-19.

Priority Action Area 2: The future role of teachers, schools and communities

COVID-19 restrictions disrupted education by directly impacting schools and the wrap-around education and social support services accessed by children and young people.

Twenty-eight Promising Programs were identified for the Priority Action Area of the future role of teachers, schools, and communities (Figure 9).

Thirteen had some evidence of effectiveness and twenty had been implemented in an Australian context. The majority of Promising Programs were targeted at more than one system level, with the 'proximal' system context (i.e. students and schools) being the most common.



Promising Programs were distributed across the following core actions:

- Provision of high-dose tutoring.
- Engaging parents/carers in student education.
- Integration of flexible learning models.
- Building teacher capacity.
- Provision of free school meals.

It was most common for the Promising Programs to align with either one (n=22) or two (n=6) core actions. Six were scored at 10 or above in terms of implementation readiness.

There are also clear trade-offs here between effectiveness and implementation readiness (Figure 10), with only one Australian-based program (*School Breakfast Clubs*) being implementation ready and effective. The two school-based tutoring programs and a single flexible learning program that are effective and implementation ready are not available in Australia. The effective Australian programs that engage families, promote flexible learning or teacher capacity all need more work to be implementation ready. Decision-makers who prioritise effectiveness and are focused on engaging families, supporting flexible learning, or building teacher capacity have a number of programs available that could be customised and scaled for implementation.

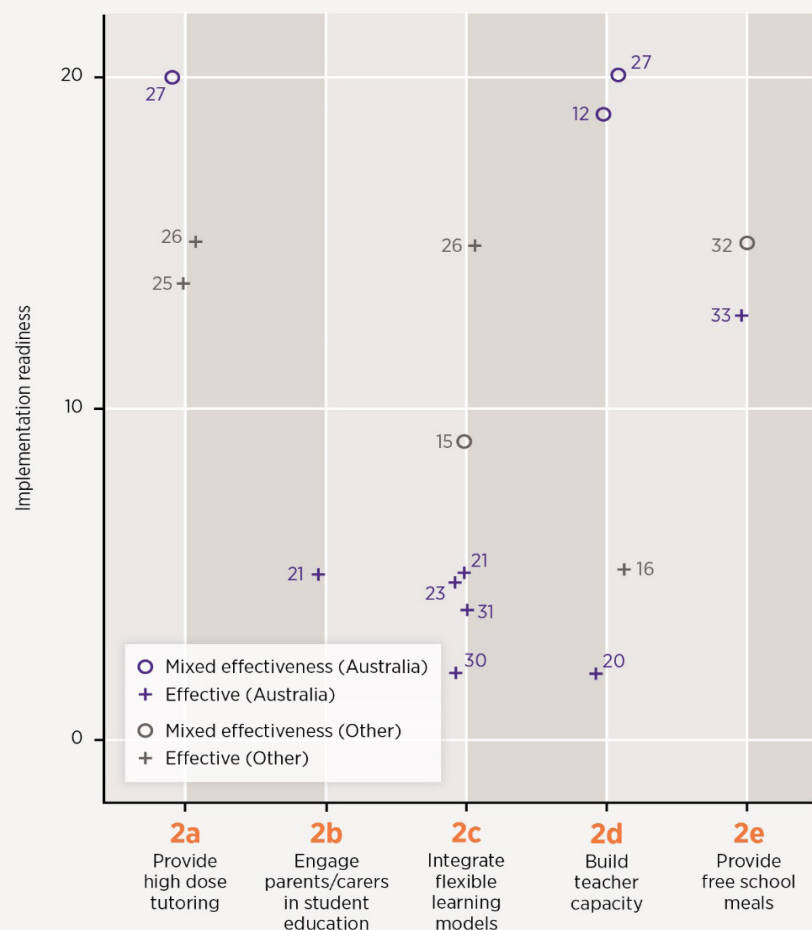
The majority of Promising Programs in this priority Action Area sought to integrate flexible learning models for the purpose of enhancing student education engagement, attainment and achievement (n=14).

Diverse approaches were used to increase educational outcomes among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, for example through using email writing programs (e.g. *Tell me the Goss*), astronomy programs (e.g. *Astronomy and Scientific Literacy Program*) and community partnerships and co-design initiatives (e.g. *The Kimberley Projects*). While there is some evidence to suggest effectiveness, these examples have considerable variation in scale and the implementation readiness of these programs is very low (< 5) or not available, suggesting that development and piloting would be required to transfer these programs to new contexts.

Figure 9. The future role of teachers, schools and communities priority Action Area.

PRIORITY ACTION AREA 2

Future role of teachers, schools and communities



Notes:

Promising Programs can be represented more than once if they fall across different core actions.

The data points (+ and o) themselves reflect the implementation readiness score but the numbers alongside them are a key to the names of the Promising Programs (see Appendix 4 for numeric list).

Figure 10. AA2: Implementation readiness versus effectiveness of Promising Programs.

Other Promising Programs aimed to build job skills (e.g. **BackTrack**) and foster social action in students (e.g. **Community Apprentices**), but evaluations of these approaches are yet to be conducted.

Provision of high-dose tutoring programs tended to show effectiveness for improving numeracy and literacy skills among students. The **Combined Tutoring and Non-academic Program** and the **Intensive Reading Remediation**, both from the USA, both showed evidence of effectiveness.

Interest in tutoring programs is growing as a proposed solution to addressing potential lost learning as a result of COVID-19. However, **the evidence base on how best to deliver tutoring programs is far from established, with much remaining unknown about the optimal frequency, duration and mode of delivery for tutoring programs, particularly for children and young people from diverse backgrounds** (for example Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people). There is also no evidence for how to deliver tutoring programs in rural and remote areas of Australia.

A number of Promising Programs sought to build teacher capacity (n=8) with interventions aimed at building teacher skills and capacity in teaching science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) (e.g. **Aspire to STEM**, **Thinking Maths**) and literacy skills (e.g. **MiniLit**). **Quality Teaching Rounds** attempts to support teachers to improve their overall practice by working together in structured ways in a professional learning community.

Other Promising Programs sought to build teacher capacity through providing targeted support for teachers working in disadvantaged schools (e.g. **Teach for Australia**), in rural or remote areas (e.g. **Quality Remote Teaching Service Program**), or for teachers in the early stages of their careers (e.g. **RETAIN: Early Career Teachers**).

The **RETAIN: Early Career Teachers** program in the UK provides targeted professional development to help support and retain early career teachers by building their knowledge and capacity to deliver evidence-informed practices that have the potential to improve outcomes for children and young people experiencing disadvantage. While the program has shown evidence of effect, the implementation score was low, suggesting that the information required to adapt and implement the program in a new setting was not available.

MiniLit

In Australia, *MiniLit* aims to improve literacy skills through delivering 80-sessions in small groups to Year 1 students whose reading ability is in the bottom 25th percentile of readers. The sessions are delivered by *MiniLit* tutors, who are often classroom teachers, who are required to attend a two-day professional development course prior to delivering *MiniLit*. An evaluation of the *MiniLit* program across nine schools in Greater Sydney showed mixed results for effectiveness, with some measures of reading ability showing no impact and others showing significant improvements at 6 and 12 months following delivery of the program. Gains in reading outcomes tended to be related to the level of attendance and exposure of the student to the program. However, schools identified challenges in ensuring adequate levels of exposure to the *MiniLit* program owing to resource constraints and student absences. This finding points to the need for interventions to be adequately resourced and supported in order to achieve the intended outcomes, and avoid unintended effects, such as increasing teachers' workloads.

Pillar 2 findings suggested that COVID-19 had placed substantial pressure on teachers, which may lead to staff burn-out and potentially teachers leaving the profession. **Programs that support teachers, in particular early career teachers and those working in disadvantaged schools, may prove effective in addressing some of the negative impacts of COVID-19 on educational disadvantage. There is also potential, although it makes implementation and evaluation more complex, to combine programs in other Action Areas with teacher support programs in this Action Area.**

Parental support and engagement in student education is positively associated with educational attainment. This was reaffirmed with Pillar 2 findings where young people and stakeholders talked about the importance of parental support during school closures and home learning. Three Promising Programs aimed to engage parents/carers in student education.

The *Beacon* program in Australia works within participating schools to increase connections between children and young people, school staff, parents, and community. The *Navigator* program delivered in Australia by the Victorian Department of Education and Training works with young people, their families, and support networks to address issues underlying disengagement to help young people re-engage with their education. The *Parent Engagement Toolkit* aims to build the capacity of schools to deliver effective parent engagement through delivering an online module containing content on effective parent-school-community engagement strategies and practices. The *Parent Engagement Toolkit* is currently being piloted across eight schools in Australia.

Four Promising Programs targeted the provision of free school meals.

Magic Breakfast Club

The *Magic Breakfast Club* in the UK provides schools with support and resources to offer a free, universal, before-school breakfast club. Evaluation results suggest improved behaviour and attendance among students participating in the breakfast club. There is growing interest in the UK around provision of free schools meals, such as breakfast club pilots and the introduction of universal infant free school meals across the UK (e.g. Holford and Rabe, 2020). The *Magic Breakfast Club* model is being scaled up for national implementation in the UK via the National School Breakfast Programme (currently being implemented and evaluated), and has been trialled overseas in Victoria, Australia via the School Breakfast Clubs Program delivered by Foodbank Australia.

Evaluation of the Victorian School Breakfast Clubs Program has shown evidence of effectiveness although the implementation score for this program was 13, suggesting further work is needed before implementing this program elsewhere. There is a growing evidence base of the effectiveness of free school programs for improving school attendance and engagement among students. However, free school meal programs need to be responsive to COVID-19 related disruptions and adapt quickly to ensure children and young people can have continued food relief services during future periods of remote learning.

Priority Action Area 3: Digital equity

During school closures, education was predominantly delivered via online learning. This change in delivery mode highlighted existing issues around digital equity. Not all children and young people had equal access to the materials (devices and internet), the digital literacy (among parents, teachers and students), the IT support, the parental support, or an appropriate home learning environment required for effective home online learning.

Although school closures have largely ceased, in sectors like business and higher education, research suggests that COVID-19 has accelerated the digital transformation of organisations and business processes (Twilio 2021). Regardless of whether there are further school closures, the Pillar 2 Report re-identified digital equity as a key requirement for educational equity. To the extent that schools and education systems maintain and increase the focus on digital and online learning in 'normal operating conditions', **enhancing digital equity should be a priority for addressing educational inequality.** If there are future school closures, particularly for extended periods of time, digital equity will be a pressing priority.

Pillar 2 suggested harnessing the benefits of online learning going forward through blended approaches, combining online and face-to-face learning but also recognised that online approaches will not work for everyone, and ongoing barriers to digital equity

would need to be addressed. **Sustained access to digital devices and connectivity is required, but so is support for parents/carers' and children and young people's digital and technical literacy.**

Despite the attention to digital equity during the pandemic, the 'What Works' review found little evidence for interventions or programs to promote digital equity that have been evaluated. Instead the evidence included reviews of digital inclusion and online learning, or prospective reports about the move to online distance education in response to COVID-19. These sources provided a range of often overlapping recommendations, which are categorised into four broad areas:

- Supporting students to build digital literacy.
- Supporting parents to build digital literacy
- Supporting teachers to develop and implement online learning.
- Provision of access to digital devices and the internet.

Table 1 lists these recommendations by these four broad areas, but **evidence of how to implement the recommendations is lacking**. The absence of evidence in this area was confirmed by the academic experts who took part in the stakeholder consultation.

Table 1: Digital equity core actions and recommendations.³

Support students to build digital literacy	Support parents to build digital literacy	Support teachers to develop and implement online learning	Access to digital devices and the internet
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction between student and teacher and peer to peer • Secure environment, including cyberbullying • Confidence and capability to use technology • Providing strategies and supporting independent learning • Students working on a timetable that is compatible with parent/home supervisor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence and capability to use technology • Attitudes to screen time (e.g. 'quality' of screen time is important; all screen time is not necessarily negative) • Internet use from 'narrow' uses to 'broad' uses, i.e., using the internet for a diverse range of uses • Communication between teachers and parents key to successful online learning for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible models • Use of check ins, live student responses • Wrap around supports (e.g. support services being built into online learning environment) • Scaffolding content • Interactivity and feedback • Professional support to develop online learning suitable for their students and context • Support to deal with ICT issues like cyberattacks, data security, student privacy, etc. • Targeting teachers most in need of professional development (e.g., teachers with little tech confidence/experience) • Strong monitoring to build evidence base going forward 	<p>At home and at school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Device access • Affordable, reliable, and fast internet access • Technical support • Resourcing • Privacy and security • Efficient management of and investment in technology infrastructure over time • Optimise content for low bandwidths (e.g. downloadable pdf's, short videos rather than long) • Accessible for users with disabilities, language needs, other special needs

³ ACER. 2020. *Remote Learning Rapid Literature Review*.

Australian Digital Inclusion Alliance. 2020. *A National Digital Inclusion Roadmap*

Brown, N., te Riele, K., Shelley, B., & Woodroffe, J. 2020. *Learning at home during COVID-19: Effects on vulnerable young Australians*. Hobart: University of Tasmania, Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment.

Centre for Program Evaluation, Melbourne Graduate School of Education. 2020. *Supporting Vulnerable Children in the Face of a Pandemic*.

Educational Endowment Fund. 2020. *Remote Learning: Rapid Evidence Assessment*.

Lamb, S., Huo, S., Walstab, A., Wade, A., Maire, Q., Doecke, E., Jackson, J. & Endekov, Z. (2020). *Educational opportunity in Australia 2020: Who succeeds and who misses out*. Centre for International Research on Education Systems, Victoria University, for the Mitchell Institute: Melbourne.

Lamb, S. 2020. Impact of learning from home on educational outcomes for disadvantaged children. Centre for International Research on Education Systems, Victoria University, for the Mitchell Institute: Melbourne.

Rapid Research Information Forum. 2020. *Differential Learning Outcomes for Online versus In-Class Education*.

Selwyn, N. 2020. *Is there evidence for differential educational outcomes for online versus in-class schooling?*

Thomas, J, Barraket, J, Wilson, CK, Holcombe-James, I, Kennedy, J, Rennie, E, Ewing, S, MacDonald, T, 2020, Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2020.

There is some evidence from reviews of remote learning programs (Education Endowment Foundation, 2020b). While these are evaluations of interventions for remote learning instead of digital equity per se, building digital literacy among teachers and schools and designing engaging and effective online learning content will be important. However, the Pillar 2 Report noted that government funding for online learning is limited to schools with distance education school accreditation. For most schools, government would not currently provide additional funds to implement the types of reforms currently being recommended.

Priority Action Area 4: Protections for the most vulnerable students

COVID-19 has heightened educational risk factors by placing increased pressure on children and young people already experiencing educational disadvantage, as well as exposing children and young people to educational disadvantage who previously may not have been considered vulnerable. This particularly applies to children and young people in out-of-home care and in contact with the child protection system.

Five Promising Programs were identified in this priority Action Area (Figure 11). Four had some evidence of effectiveness. The majority were targeted at more than one system level, and one Promising Program was targeted at the policy level.

Promising Programs were distributed across the following core actions:

- Provision of targeted services for the most vulnerable students.
- Provision of targeted family support.
- Strengthened support networks for children at risk.

Two of the Promising Programs aligned with all three core actions. Three were scored at 10 or above in terms of implementation readiness.

There are no Australian-based programs supporting vulnerable students with any evidence of effectiveness (Figure 12). The overseas programs that are both implementation ready and effective are spread relatively evenly across the core actions. If transferred, these programs would need to be trialled in Australia, but sufficient information is available about implementation to support decision-makers who may be choosing among them.

PRIORITY ACTION AREA 4

Protections for the most vulnerable students

What the **What Works Review** told us:

No. of **relevant** Programs **5**

No. of Programs with **positive effect** **4**

No. of Programs **based in Australia** **1**

COHORT 1: **0** COHORT 2: **0** COHORT 3: **5**

 **2**
STUDENT

 **2**
FAMILY

 **2**
SCHOOL

 **2**
COMMUNITY

 **1**
POLICY

3 Provide targeted family support

4 Strengthen support networks for children at risk

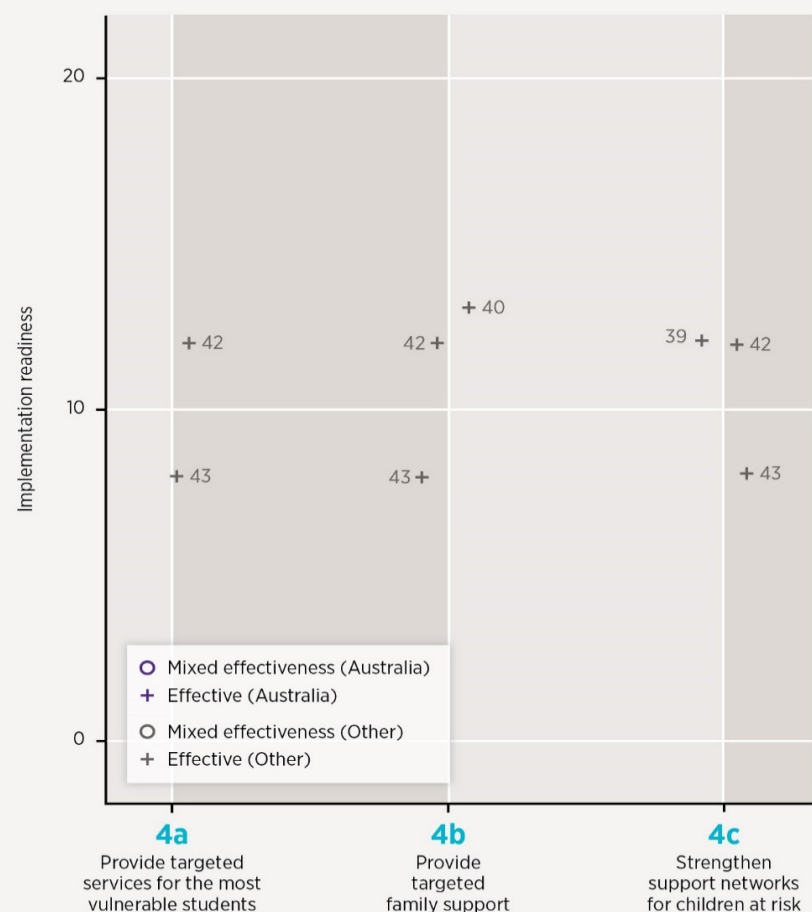
3 Provide targeted services for the most vulnerable students

60% score 10+ on RE-AIM implementation readiness scale

Figure 11: Protections for the most vulnerable students priority Action Area.

PRIORITY ACTION AREA 4

Protections for the most vulnerable students



Notes:

Promising Programs can be represented more than once if they fall across different core actions.

The data points (+ and o) themselves reflect the implementation readiness score but the numbers alongside them are a key to the names of the Promising Programs (see Appendix 4 for numeric list).

Figure 12. AA4: Implementation readiness versus effectiveness of Promising Programs.

Only one program to support vulnerable students had been implemented in an Australian context (**LOOKOUT Education Support Centres**). **LOOKOUT Education Support Centres** aim to improve the educational outcomes of children and young people living in out-of-home care, but this program has yet to be evaluated.

Programs from the USA that also support students in out-of-home care include the **On the Way Home Transition** Program and the **Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care Model**. While both programs show evidence of effectiveness, both had implementation readiness scores of 12 or less, suggesting that further work would be needed to adapt these approaches to the Australia context. Similarly, **Social Workers in Schools** and **Devolved Budgets** from the UK also showed evidence of effectiveness, but had implementation readiness scores of 12 and 13 respectively, which signals the need for further work and adaptation prior to implementation in Australia.

The *Learning through COVID-19* project stakeholder interviews suggested that COVID-19 has led to increased placement breakdowns and increased numbers of young people entering residential care. While this suggests that action is needed to address these adverse impacts of COVID-19, **none of the Promising Programs identified in this report would be appropriate for immediate implementation and would first need to be adapted and piloted in an Australian context.**

The 'What Works' review identified a number of review papers that captured insights across a diverse range of interventions in this Action Area (Hambrick et al., 2016; Krakouer et al., 2017; Nurmatov et al., 2020; Sheehan et al., 2018). However, the quality of the studies included in the reviews was generally low. Several reviews emphasised the need for more rigorous development of evaluation of programs and interventions aimed at reducing the need for out-of-home care.

Support for vulnerable children and young people in Australia

There are already a number of organisations within Australia that deliver a range of services and interventions aimed at supporting society's most vulnerable children and young people. For example, Create Foundation supports young people in out-of-home care through advocating for youth-led, lived experience approaches to informing care system improvements. Based in Victoria, Foundation House supports recently arrived young people of refugee background through initiatives such as education and settlement programs. Also in Victoria, the Safe Steps program provides specialist support services for young people experiencing or afraid of family violence. A number of national mental health advocacy and service providers such as Headspace, Mind, and Beyond Blue provide a range of resources and initiatives tailored for young people. Independent evaluations of the implementation and effectiveness of these organisations (e.g. Hilferty et al., 2015; Miller, 2018), and programs and initiatives they design and deliver e.g. (Headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation, 2020) (Kahl et al., 2020) demonstrate a clear need for such organisations that deliver targeted support for the most vulnerable children and young people.

A number of the organisations that provide additional and targeted supports for children and young people experiencing disadvantage were interviewed as part of the Learning through COVID-19 stakeholder engagement, for example, Clontarf Foundation, the Smith Family, FOGS ARTIE, the Brotherhood of St. Laurence (for full list see Pillar 2 Report). Continuing discussion, input and involvement of these organisations in the development of COVID-19 solutions is warranted.

Knowledge gaps and other opportunities

The previous sections of this report identified priority Action Areas and Promising Programs but also highlighted the limitations of the existing evidence base that should be addressed going forward.

The full and ongoing impact of COVID-19 on educational disadvantage is not yet known. As a result, the continuing response to the pandemic requires:

- Better data systems and longitudinal monitoring of the trajectories of children and young people across school and beyond as they move into employment, training and further education, to understand the impact of COVID-19 on educational disadvantage. The pandemic is not over and COVID-19 infections and related intermittent lockdowns or other policy responses will continue and the impact of these should be monitored.

Unpacking this impact in detail will require ongoing research into the way different forms of COVID-19 disruption interact with the underlying system of educational disadvantage. State and Territory Department of Education data is likely to be critical for this research. All states were attempting to monitor COVID-19 impacts on education throughout 2020. In other policy domains in which ISSR works, COVID-19 responses drove system innovations, such as improved data sharing across sectors and agencies, but also highlighted bottlenecks to collaboration and sharing.

There may be opportunities for the interested parties to support data system improvements and new research projects that would not previously have been possible, given widespread recognition of the importance of data and research for addressing COVID-19 impacts and preparing for future events.

- Considered and ongoing research into the identification of new solutions. The *Learning through COVID-19* Driver Tree is based on a very rapid assessment of how COVID-19 drives educational disadvantage. As new research insights emerge, the Driver Tree will need to be modified and new solutions may need to be found.
- Greater focus on the implementation and evaluation of programs designed to address the impacts of COVID-19 on educational outcomes. It is not yet clear how interventions conceived, designed, implemented, and evaluated in a pre-COVID world (as almost all of the Promising Programs were) might work in the current context of the pandemic. Regardless of this, no Promising Program is ready at scale. All will need piloting and evaluation, and in some cases co-development with relevant stakeholders, including children and young people themselves.

Much of the evidence base for solutions has not been tested directly in Australian contexts, particularly in regional or remote contexts. Partnering and co-development are central to effective implementation, particularly in complex environments with vulnerable populations.

- Building the capacity of schools and service providers to implement evidence-informed practices and promoting partnerships across education, non-government and academic sectors to support best practice in implementation and evaluation. Capacity building involves training and skill development to generate and use evidence, and also resourcing. While the immediate response to COVID-19 primarily focused on schools and teachers, some actions could put additional and unsustainable pressure on them. Solutions need to be system informed but schools and teachers are centrally placed to identify local needs and solutions.
- Recognition that the greatest need is likely to be experienced by those children and young people with existing vulnerabilities and cumulative multiple risk factors living in disadvantaged places (including groups other than those included in the three predefined study cohorts). It may be necessary to prioritise solutions for them.
- Capacity building and skills development among service providers to support evidence and evaluation-informed approaches to service delivery.

The remaining gaps in knowledge identified across Pillars 1 to 3 will ideally need to be filled to provide a stronger evidence base from which to address the impact of COVID-19 on educational disadvantage. These include:

- Investigations of school-level strategies for mitigating effects of COVID-19 and heterogeneity among students within schools.
- Research into attendance levels of children and young people at risk of disadvantage and disengagement.
- Development and evaluation of approaches to online and mixed learning and assessment of their effects on students' emotional, cognitive and behavioural engagement.
- Solutions to promote digital equity, with a systemic and sustainable response to access, affordability and ability.
- Efforts to harness the positive impacts of COVID-19 (e.g. benefits of remote learning for students experiencing mental and physical ill health, increased contact between service providers and some previously disengaged children and families) and to capitalise on the strengths and

resilience of children and young people experiencing disadvantage that have been evident during the pandemic.

- A focus on teacher mental health and wellbeing. While beyond the scope of the *Learning through COVID-19* project, ongoing monitoring of teachers' workloads and stress and the impact of these will be important.

What else should be done to reduce educational disadvantage in Australia?

The *Learning through COVID-19* project's ecological life course model and Driver Tree point to broader action that may be required to reduce educational disadvantage in Australia. In 2019, the Education Council (comprising all Australian Education Ministers) released the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (Department of Education, 2019). Goal 1 of the Declaration is "*the Australian education system promotes excellence and equity*", but the policy focus in recent years has been heavily weighted towards promoting excellence.

There is also little acknowledgement that some system design features, such as a parental choice model based on the private provision of schooling, are not only inequitable, but undermine excellence, because they lead to worse outcomes for disadvantaged students. The design features noted below are associated with high-performing high equity education systems. Addressing them in the right ways would improve system performance, improve life outcomes for students experiencing disadvantage, and potentially make Australian education more robust in face of future disruptive shocks, similar in scale and comprehensiveness to COVID-19.

Design features associated with high-performing high equity education systems (OECD 2012, 2018) include:

- Create a positive school climate that actively supports children and young people experiencing disadvantage. The overall goal of building strong, secure relationships at school and whole-school efforts to promote inclusivity is to provide children and young people and staff with a strong sense of belonging, which in turn allows them to feel safe and supported to achieve their educational goals.
 - Address inequities in families, including income poverty and material deprivation that limit the educational opportunities of children and young people experiencing disadvantage.
 - Ensure access to high-quality early childhood education and care to reduce the impact of children's low school readiness on later educational outcomes.
 - Reframe the popular and policy discourse away from failing children and young people to enhancing advantage for all children and young people.
- Attempt to minimise school segregation, which occurs when children and young people experiencing disadvantage are concentrated in disadvantaged schools. Minimising school segregation improves educational outcomes for children and young people experiencing disadvantage. Strategies to minimise school segregation include needs-based funding and resourcing, and regulated school choice models that support children and young people and families experiencing disadvantage (Bonnor et al., 2021).
 - Maintain multiple pathways for success, including allowing children and young people in mainstream schooling greater choice and variability in how they learn, and incorporating academic, non-academic and vocational pathways, and strong school-to-work links into the education system.
 - Support and equip school leaders and teachers with the skills and capabilities they need to effectively teach children and young people experiencing disadvantage.
 - Provide resources to build and sustain strong links between schools, parents and communities.

Ways forward

A comprehensive response to COVID-19 impacts on educational disadvantage will need to contain a number of elements:

- A multi-pronged set of solutions including solutions from more than one priority Action Area, accompanied by thoughtful and rigorous implementation and evaluation.
- Ongoing research into the immediate and longer-term impacts of COVID-19 on the educational outcomes of children and young people and on the system of educational disadvantage.
- Ongoing development and monitoring of the *Learning through COVID-19* Driver Tree.
- Building data assets, systems/platforms and sectoral capabilities to further support research and evaluation.
- Promotion of a public understanding of the systemic nature of educational disadvantage, and the reasons for promoting excellence and equity as goals of the system.

Tailoring these solutions to work *in situ* with vulnerable children and young people will require partnering and co-design methodologies with communities and stakeholders. Co-design approaches should consider the different requirements for effective solution development and implementation in context, and teams and methodologies should be informed by these requirements.

Interventions should be evaluated for positive and negative outcomes, including negative outcomes elsewhere in the system. Considering sets of interventions may be one way to address unintended system effects.

The greatest need for support occurs in cohorts and sub-cohorts with multiple risk factors for disadvantage, particularly when these cohorts are concentrated in disadvantaged schools and disadvantaged places. These circumstances are also the ones in which it is hardest to effect change.

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Appendix 1: Stakeholder consultations

Table A1.1. Academic experts involved in roundtable.

Name	Organisation
Professor Helen Cahill	The Youth Research Centre, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne
Associate Professor Jess Harris	School of Education, University of Newcastle
Dr Lesley-Anne Ey	Education Futures, University of South Australia
Professor Lucas Walsh	Education Policy and Practice, Youth Studies, Monash University
Associate Professor Mark Rickinson	Faculty of Education, Monash University
Dr Nina VanDyke	Mitchell Institute, Victoria University
Dr Jennifer Skattebol	Arts and Social Sciences, University of New South Wales
Professor Martin Mills	School of Teacher Education and Leadership, Queensland University of Technology
Professor Kitty te Reile	Peter Underwood Centre, University of Tasmania
Professor Tim Reddel	Institute for Social Science Research, the University of Queensland

Table A1.2. Service provider stakeholders involved in roundtable.

Name	Organisation
Dale Murray	Director Education, Life without Barriers
Anne Hampshire	Head of Research and Advocacy, The Smith Family
Shelly Mallett	Director, Research and Policy Centre, Brotherhood of St Laurence
Matthew Cox	Director, Logan Together
Steven Page	General Manager, FOGS / ARTIE Academy
Craig Brierty	Chief Operations Officer, Clontarf Foundation
Sally Lasslett	Principal, Hester Hornbrook Academy
Ebony Bridle	School Engagement Manager, Beacon Foundation

Appendix 2: Priority Action Area mapping tables

Table A2.1. Mapping student mental health, wellbeing and hope.

Promising Program	Country	Provide mental health programs	Integrate flexible learning models	Engage parents/carers on mental health	Build teacher capacity on mental health	System level	Cohort	Implementation Readiness (0-25)	Information available on evaluation design (Y/N)	Evidence of effectiveness
Healthy Minds	UK	X			X	Student, School	Cohort 2	14	Y	Effective
Speech Bubbles	UK		X			Student, School	Cohort 1	N/A	Y	No evidence
Supporting Teachers And children in Schools (STARS): Incredible Years® Teacher Classroom Management	UK				X	Student, School	Cohort 1	14	Y	Mixed
Incorporation of Little J & Big Cuz	Australia		X		X	Student, School	Cohort 1	7	Y	Effective
Resilient Families Program (RFP)	Australia		X	X	X	Student, Family, School	Cohort 2	16	Y	Mixed
Aussie Optimism Programme-Positive Thinking Skills (AOP-PTS)	Australia	X			X	Student	Cohort 2	11	Y	Mixed
Friends for Life	Australia	X			X	Student	Cohort 2	14	Y	Mixed
Good Behaviour Game (GBG)	Worldwide		X			School	Cohort 1	17	Y	Mixed
Penn Resiliency Program (PRP), with a Dutch adaptation called the Op Volle Kracht (OVK), and an adaptation in the UK called UK Resilience Program	Netherlands, USA, UK	X			X	Student, School	Cohort 2	15	Y	Mixed
Children's University	UK		X			Student, School, Community	Cohort 2	18	Y	Effective
Children's University Australia	Australia		X			Student, School, Community	Cohort 2	9	Y	Effective
Climate Schools	Australia, UK, USA	X				Student, School	Cohort 2 Cohort 3	16	Y	Mixed

Table A2.2. Mapping future role of teachers, schools and communities.

Promising Program	Country	Provide high-dose tutoring	Integrate flexible learning models	Engage parents/carers in student education	Build teacher capacity	Provide free school meals	System level	Cohort/risk group	Implementation Readiness (0-25)	Information available on evaluation design (Y/N)	Evidence of effectiveness
Thinking Maths	Australia				X		School	Cohort 2	19	Y	Mixed
Community Apprentice	UK		X				School, Community	Cohort 2	N/A	Y	No evidence
Aspire to STEM	UK				X		School	Cohort 2	N/A	Y	No evidence
Challenge the Gap	UK		X				School	Cohort 1 Cohort 2 Cohort 3	9	Y	Mixed effectiveness
RETAIN: Early Career Teachers	UK				X		School	Cohort 1	5	Y	Effective
Quality Remote Teaching Service Program	Australia				X		School, Policy	Cohort 1 Cohort 2	N/A	N	No evidence
Backtrack	Australia	X	X				School, Community	Cohort 2	N/A	N	No evidence
The Kimberley Schools Project	Australia		X				School, Community	Cohort 1 Cohort 2	N/A	N	No evidence
Teach for Australia	Australia				X		Policy	Cohort 2	2	Y	Effective
Beacon Program (evaluation of program implemented at Cressy District High School)	Australia		X	X			School, Community	Cohort 2	5	Y	Effective
Townsville Flexible Learning Centre	Australia		X				School, Community	Cohort 2	N/A	Y	No evidence
SEDA Sports Development Program Darwin	Australia		X				School, Community	Cohort 2	5	Y	Effective
SKYS 2FAZE and Young Parents Program	Australia		X				School	Cohort 2	N/A	Y	No evidence
Intensive Reading Remediation	USA	X					Student, School	Cohort 1	14	Y	Effective
Combined tutoring and non-academic program	USA	X	X				Student, School	Cohort 2	15	Y	Effective
MiniLit	Australia	X			X		Student, School	Cohort 1	20	Y	Mixed

Promising Program	Country	Provide high-dose tutoring	Integrate flexible learning models	Engage parents/carers in student education	Build teacher capacity	Provide free school meals	System level	Cohort/risk group	Implementation Readiness (0-25)	Information available on evaluation design (Y/N)	Evidence of effectiveness
Parent engagement toolkit	Australia			X			School, Family	Cohort 1 Cohort 2 Cohort 3	N/A	Y	No evidence
Navigator	Australia		X	X			Student, Family	Cohort 2	N/A	Y	No evidence
Astronomy and scientific literacy of Aboriginal students	Australia		X				School	Cohort 2	2	Y	Effective
Tell me the goos OK: Message Writing Program	Australia		X				Student	Cohort 2	4	Y	Effective
The Magic Breakfast Project	UK					X	School	Cohort 1	15	Y	Mixed
School Breakfast Clubs Program (Adaptation of the Magic Breakfast Project in Victoria, Australia)	Australia					X	School	Cohort 1 Cohort 3	13	Y	Effective
National School Breakfast Programme (Upscaling of the Magic Breakfast Project across UK)	UK					X	School, Policy	Cohort 1 Cohort 2 Cohort 3	N/A	Y	No evidence
The effect of improved nutrition on student performance and wellbeing	Australia					X	School	Cohort 1 Cohort 2 Cohort 3	N/A	N	No evidence
High dose reading and numeracy tutoring	Australia	X					School	Cohort 1 Cohort 2	N/A	N	No evidence
Response to Intervention	Australia		X		X		Student, School	Cohort 1	N/A	N	No evidence
The Adrenaline Project	Australia		X				School	Cohort 2	N/A	N	No evidence
Quality Teaching Rounds	Australia				X		Student, School	Cohort 1 Cohort 2 Cohort 3	N/A	N	Effective

Table A2.3. Mapping protections for the most vulnerable students.

Promising Program	Country	Provide targeted family support	Strengthen support networks for children at risk	Provide targeted services for the most vulnerable students	System level	Cohort/risk group	Implementation Readiness (0-25)	Information available on evaluation design (Y/N)	Evidence of effectiveness
Social workers in Schools[†]	UK		X		School, Community	Cohort 3	12	Y	Effective
Devolved Budgets[†]	UK	X			Policy	Cohort 3	13	Y	Effective
LOOKOUT[¥]	Australia		X	X	School, Community	Cohort 3	N/A	Y	No evidence
Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care Model[¥]	USA	X	X	X	Student, Family	Cohort 3	12	Y	Effective
On the Way Home Transition Program[¥]	USA	X	X	X	Student, Family	Cohort 3	8	Y	Effective

Notes:

[†] Primary outcome of the studies included here is number of children and young people entering and re-entering out-of-home care, rather than educational outcomes.[¥] Primary outcome=educational engagement.

Appendix 3: Implementation readiness score indicators

Table A3.1. RE-AIM framework indicators.

Dimension	Indicators
Reach	Method to identify target population
	Inclusion criteria
	Exclusion criteria
	Participation rate
	Representativeness
Effectiveness	Results for at least one follow-up
	Intent-to-treat analysis utilized
	Quality-of-life or potential negative outcomes
	Moderation analysis
	Percent attrition
Maintenance: individual	Assessed outcomes ≥ 6 months post intervention
	Qualitative measure of individual-level maintenance
	Measures of cost of maintenance
Adoption	Description of intervention location
	Description of staff who delivered intervention
	Method to identify staff who delivered intervention (target delivery agent)
	Level of expertise of delivery agent
	Inclusion/exclusion criteria of delivery agent or setting
	Adoption rate of delivery agent or setting
Implementation	Intervention duration and frequency
	Extent protocol delivered as intended
	Measures of cost of implementation
Maintenance: organisational	Indicators of program-level maintenance
	Alignment with organisational mission
	Measures of cost of maintenance

Note:

Some elements (especially adoption and maintenance) can be reviewed prospectively and relate to jurisdiction, context and settings where an intervention might be deployed in the future. For the purpose of this study, all indicators were reviewed with respect to the organisation through or in which the intervention/program was being delivered.

Appendix 4: Promising Programs key to Figures 8, 10, 12

Table A4.1. Priority Program identification of programs that were considered effective or had mixed effectiveness.

Number	Program identification	Number	Program identification
1	Healthy Minds	21	Beacon Program (implemented at Cressy District High School)
3	Supporting Teachers And children in Schools: Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management	23	SEDA Sports Development Program Darwin
4	Incorporation of Little J & Big Cuz	25	Intensive reading remediation
5	Resilient Families Program	26	Combined tutoring and non-academic mentoring program
6	Aussie Optimism Programme-Positive Thinking Skills	27	MiniLit
7	Friends for Life	30	Astronomy and scientific literacy of Aboriginal students
8	Good Behaviour Game	31	Tell Me the Goss, OK: Message Writing Program
9	Penn Resiliency Program	32	The Magic Breakfast Project
10	Children's University	33	School Breakfast Clubs Program
11	Children's University Australasia	39	Social Workers in Schools: An Evaluation of Pilots in Three Local Authorities in England
12	Thinking Maths	40	Devolved Budgets: An Evaluation of Pilots in Three Local Authorities in England
15	Challenge the Gap	42	Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care Model
16	RETAIN: Early Career Teachers	43	On the Way Home
20	Teach for Australia	44	Climate Schools

Note:

Program numbers relate to Figures 8, 10, 12 in the Report.

Appendix 5: Example Promising Programs

Student mental health, wellbeing and hope

Example Promising Program: Children's University Australia



Aims to encourage a love of learning, by providing extra-curricular learning opportunities for students.

A **primary goal** is to encourage aspirations for higher studies.



The **core** of the program is a Passport to Learning (years 3-5), and Passport to Volunteering (years 6-9), where hours completed for extra-curricular activities are recorded. When a certain number of hours are accumulated, students 'graduate'.

58% of years 6-9 students, and **37%** of years 3-5 students planned to go to university after high school.

>93% of years 6-9 students felt supported through the program and thought it was interesting.

>95% of all students thought the program was fun.

Core action:
Integrate flexible learning models

Student mental health, wellbeing and hope

Example Promising Program: Resilient Families Program



Aims to promote social, emotional and academic competence and prevent health and social problems during the early years of secondary school.

Works to enhance family connectedness and to improve relationships between families and schools.



Involves:

- Teacher-led student curriculum.
- Parent education evenings.
- A parenting handbook.
- Extended parent education sessions.
- Establishing a community support system for parents.

Core actions:
Engage parents/ carers on mental health
Integrate flexible learning models
Build teacher capacity on mental health

No effect on social-emotional skills.

Reduced depressive symptoms for students whose family attended parent education events.

Reduced increases in anti-social behaviour when parents attended the parent-education activities over a 12 month period.

Student mental health, wellbeing and hope

Example Promising Program: Healthy Minds



Aims to improve health related outcomes for teenagers through embedding curriculum content on social and emotional learning, relationships and healthy living.



14 mental health modules delivered over the first four years in **34** secondary schools.

Higher average student self-assessed general health compared to control group after four years.

Mixed effects on the impacts on student self-esteem, mental health and emotional well-being.

Core action:
Provide mental health programs

Student mental health, wellbeing and hope

Example Promising Program: Incorporation of Little J & Big Cuz



An animated children's show **aimed at** engaging with and embedding Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

Designed as part of the School Readiness Initiative, with a strong basis in **social-emotional learning**.



This program involves the incorporation of the show into the **curriculum**, and **educational resources** for Early Years (K-2) educators, with ideas for including Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander knowledge, understanding and skills in their classes.

Core actions:
Build teacher capacity on mental health
Integrate flexible learning models

Drawing from 6 case studies:

- Teachers described incorporating the series into their planned curriculum, and improved pedagogical approaches.
- The audience viewing data statistics showed that the series and the associated resources were being accessed.
- There was no data on child outcomes.

The future role of teachers, schools and communities

Example Promising Program: School Breakfast Clubs



Adequate nutrition is vital for students' health and development, particularly in the early years.

Breakfast skipping prevalent in students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.



500 breakfast clubs established in Victorian government primary schools.
50,000 breakfasts are served every school week.

Core action:
Provide free school meals

Most teachers report positive impacts on student learning outcomes.

85% of teachers report increased attendance and punctuality to class.

Accessing more than the **one in five** children identified by welfare agencies who arrive at school without eating breakfast.

Staffing was a barrier to frequency of program delivery.

The future role of teachers, schools and communities

Example Promising Program: Beacon

Aims to inspire and motivate secondary students to increase their educational engagement and attainment and enable successful transition to employment, further education or training.

Program features:

- Student counselling for goal-setting, upskilling.
- Learning-curriculum geared towards employment and career options.
- Community networks & partnerships
- Parental engagement.
- Reflexiveness.



Harnesses the support of the community to get marginalised young people to complete secondary schooling (Year 9-12 or equivalent) through innovative, flexible and/or alternative learning programs.

Core actions:
Engage parents/ carers in student education
Integrate flexible learning models

Qualitative case study on perspectives of students, staff and stakeholders noted:

- Positive pathways and planning.
- Enhanced employability.
- Student engagement.
- Confidence and raised aspirations.
- Strong school-community connection.

The future role of teachers, schools and communities

Example Promising Program: SEDA



Aims to 'engage, educate and empower young people' as they transition from school to work or further study.

Targeted towards those at **high risk of disengagement** and especially for young people who engage better with an applied and context-relevant learning curriculum.



Sports-focused program for senior secondary students; 3.5 days of educational curriculum per week, with intensive training/sports the other times.
Collaborative approach with partner organisations.

Core action:
Integrate flexible learning models

>80% of Victorian graduates were in **education, training or employment**.

Most popular courses for graduates were in sport (including combined with business, health and/or education).

The future role of teachers, schools and communities

Example Promising Program: Teach for Australia



Aims to break the cycle of educational inequity, by recruiting and developing leaders in education.

Funded by the Australian Government.

High-achieving university graduates recruited nationally & subject to a rigorous recruitment process.



Six weeks of initial residential intensive education.

Associates placed in disadvantaged secondary schools for two years at 0.8 FTE and paid ~ 80% of graduate teacher salary.

Core action:
Build teacher capacity

In the first year out of placement:

- **65%** are still teaching.
- **45%** in schools below the national median.

In the second year out of placement:

- **60%** are still teaching
- **36%** in schools below the national median.

In the third year out of placement:

- **50%** are still teaching
- **30%** in schools below the national median.

The future role of teachers, schools and communities

Example Promising Program: Intensive Reading Remediation

Aimed to improve the reading ability of young children struggling with reading.



50 mins/day totalling ~ 100 hours.

RCT evidence for 2nd/3rd graders:

Improved reading of real words and non-words.

Improved reading rate, passage reading and spelling.

Sustained gains at 1 year follow-up.

Delivered in New York City, so population density and availability of tutors **different to regional/remote Australia**.

Core action:
Provide high-dose tutoring

Protections for the most vulnerable students

Example Promising Program: On the Way Home Transition Program



Aims to support youths, families and schools during the reintegration of youth into home, school and community settings following a stay in out-of-home care.

12-month transition program administered to youths and their families by trained Family Consultants.



3 integrated school and family-centred components:

- Check & Connect (monitor school engagement, and intervene to reconnect).
- Common Sense Parenting (parent training of critical skills to support adolescents).
- Homework support.

Core actions:
Provide targeted services for the most vulnerable students
Strengthen support networks for children at risk
Provide targeted family support

Small-scale study of 44 youths

Youths participating remained in the home or community.

No school dropouts at the last time point.

Protections for the most vulnerable students

Example Promising Program: Social Workers in Schools



Schools major sources of referrals to Children's Social Care.

Need for social workers to **work more closely with schools** to address safeguarding concerns and do statutory work.



21 social workers embedded across
37 primary and secondary schools in
3 pilot areas in UK.

All pilots successful in embedding social workers within schools.

Some evidence of reduction in Section 47 (Child Protection) enquiries but not consistent across all pilot sites.

Many interagency working challenges but evidence that collaborative model helped to overcome these issues.

Core action:
Strengthen support networks for children at risk

Protections for the most vulnerable students

Example Promising Program: Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care Model



Aims to create opportunities for youth to live successfully in the community.

MTFC is based on **social learning theory** and aims to capitalise on the potentially positive socializing influence of the family.



Multiple intervention components:

- Individualised therapy sessions
- Parent training
- One-on-one skills training for students

Core actions:
Provide targeted services for the most vulnerable students
Strengthen support networks for children at risk
Provide targeted family support

Improved homework completion.

Improved school attendance.

Reduced relapse back into juvenile justice.



CRICOS Provider 00025B

Institute for Social Science Research

The University of Queensland
Long Pocket Precinct
Level 2, Cycad Building (1018)
80 Meiers Road, Indooroopilly 4068,
Queensland, Australia

+61 7 3346 7471
issr.research@uq.edu.au | issr.uq.edu.au