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MELBOURNE

Brave School Leadership: What is the work that high achieving school leaders prioritise?

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FOCUSED

Understanding, Negotiating,
and Maximizing Your
Influence as a School Leader

Jim Watterston • Yong Zhao

CORWIN



Today's Presentation

Rethinking sustainable school leadership

- Rethinking the **Purpose** of Schooling
- Rethinking the **Curriculum**: Improving Accessibility and Creating Space
- Rethinking **Assessment**: Measure What Matters
- Rethinking **Learners**: Self-determination, Autonomy, Agency, and Voice
- Rethinking the **Basics**: Digital literacy
- Rethinking **Teaching** and **Teachers**: Creating Options for Students

A dramatic landscape featuring a long, straight asphalt road that stretches from the foreground into the distance, vanishing at the horizon. The road is flanked by green fields. The sky is dark and stormy, with heavy clouds and several bright lightning bolts striking down. The overall mood is ominous and futuristic.

**We have children starting
school this year who will be
probably still be wanting to work
in.....**

2085

The Challenge:
How are you leading your
school's response to our
rapidly changing landscape?





We live in a turbulent and unpredictable world that is constantly changing.



Including.....

Climate change

Reglobalisation

COVID 19

Trade wars

Rise of the far-left

Trade wars

Cost of living – equity gap

Anti-immigration

Fake news

Challenges to democracy

Generative AI

Social media and digital safety

Mental health and wellbeing

Changing nature of employment

Capacity to create your own job

Have v have-nots

Access to professional health services

Disengagement

Owning your own home

Increasing juvenile and adult crime

'We're killing education'

Fears pressure is swamping pupils and teachers

BRITTANY VONOW

A QUEENSLAND state school teacher has become so disillusioned with the education system she has quit after 30 years, saying she fears for the mental health of teachers and students.

Kathy Margolis said she had quit after seeing the education system decline with overcrowding of classrooms and the curriculum. "Never

have I experienced a time in my profession where teachers are this stressed and in fear for the mental health of not only themselves, but the children that they teach," she said.

"Classrooms are overcrowded, filled with individuals with all sorts of needs, both educational and social. Teachers are told we must differenti-

ate and cater to each individual. Good teachers try to do that, but it is near impossible and we feel guilty that we are not doing enough to help the children in our care."

Ms Margolis (right) spoke out after quitting her position with Education Queensland (EQ). Her post on Facebook attracted more than 15,000

shares. "I just wanted to start a conversation and make people aware of how difficult it is for teachers and kids these days. I never in a million years expected it to become so popular," she told The Courier-Mail. "No one is asking teachers at the chalk face and there is no one else who knows what's going on in the classroom like us." Ms Margolis said she was devastated to leave the classroom,

but could not continue to watch "the joy slowly being sucked out of learning".

She said teaching graduates were becoming disillusioned as they are forced to be data-driven in the classroom.

EQ declined to comment.



Stress is pushing our teachers to the brink

I AGREE with so much of what Kathy Margolis has written in her letter on why she quit teaching after 30 years (C-M, Feb 5).

She was obviously a wonderful and dedicated teacher and it's true that our education system is headed for "crisis". The line that stood out most for me, as a teacher of 14 years, was: "Good teachers try desperately ... but it is near impossible and we feel guilty that we are not doing enough."

Yes, we do try desperately. We put our heart and soul into every child in our class. We put our students before ourselves, our health and our families - and this is part of the problem.

The teaching workforce (particularly in primary

schools) is mostly female. We have allowed our power to be taken over by a system that is constantly striving for more and setting the bar higher with expectations that are increasingly unattainable.

I don't see men allowing their power to be taken from them as easily as we have.

those of us who remain must take our power back.

Emma Waters, Ocean Shores, NSW

EDUCATION Minister Kate Jones' pledge of extra teachers for the classroom (Letters, Feb 6) is a welcome, but perhaps simplistic, response.

As far back as 2012, the World Health Organisation warned Western governments of a mental health pandemic. Corporate values and economic rationalism have created a culture of long work hours and tenuous job security, along with global volatility, which all contribute to stress in society.

An increasing number of students are presenting with complex behavioural problems, learning difficulties, self-harm and suicide ideation, trauma and attachment issues, bullying and harassment issues, sleep disorders, early

symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress. Mental health statistics indicate 20 per cent of 13-year-olds exhibit signs of depression and anxiety.

and stressed themselves.

Increasing teacher numbers will not, by itself, necessarily address the complexity of challenges facing teachers.

G.M. Collins, Cairns



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Artificial intelligence and automation are coming, so what will we all do for work?

Lateline By Margot O'Neill

Updated 10 Aug 2017, 5:24am

What jobs will still be around in 20 years?
Read this to prepare your future

Jobs won't entirely disappear; many will simply be redefined. But people will likely lack new skillsets required for new roles and be out of work anyway

Artificial intelligence revolution is here and right now, Silicon Valley holds the power

OPINION

Lateline

By Toby Walsh

Posted 10 Aug 2017, 7:02am

The 'digital mine' is here as technology gallops ahead

Could a robot do your job?

New data from research house AlphaBeta provides a glimpse of what your job — if you're gamified — could look like

By Joshua Byrd, Ben Spraggon, Margot O'Neill

Artificial intelligence and automation threaten jobs also at risk

By Catherine Hanrahan and Lin Evlin

Updated 4 Sep 2017, 2:59pm

News

These are the jobs most at risk of automation according to Oxford University: Is yours one of them?

Individual and societal factors affecting disengagement

- Personal attributes such as boredom, identity, school connectedness, academic motivation, sense of belonging and low self esteem
- Socio-economic status including financial resources, parent occupation and neighbourhood
- Family factors including family dysfunction, mental illness and disability
- Race, ethnicity, religion and gender

The covert factors that facilitate detachment

- National Testing
- ATAR
- Lack of system accountability
- School reputation perceptions
- Inappropriate and dangerous behaviour of student(s)
- Parent expectations
- Staff expectations
- Lack of alternatives or options
- Leadership career trajectory concerns
- ***“The school down the road would suit you much better.....”***





Student and Teacher Retention



In 2023 86.4% of students from year seven to 10 regularly attended school, down from 91.2% in 2015. By year 12 the retention rate for full-time students was just 79% – the lowest in the past 10 years of data being reported.

5 Feb 2024

**Victoria's teacher crisis: 1200 jobs still unfilled
More than 380 government schools are still searching for staff in what's been described as a “deeply concerning start to the school year”.**



Transformational

Autocratic

Stewardship

Goal orientated

Charismatic

Principal centred
leadership

Delegated

Transactional

Servant Leadership

Participative

Consultative

Democratic

Bureaucratic

Distributed

Enlightened
leadership

Relational

Laissez-faire

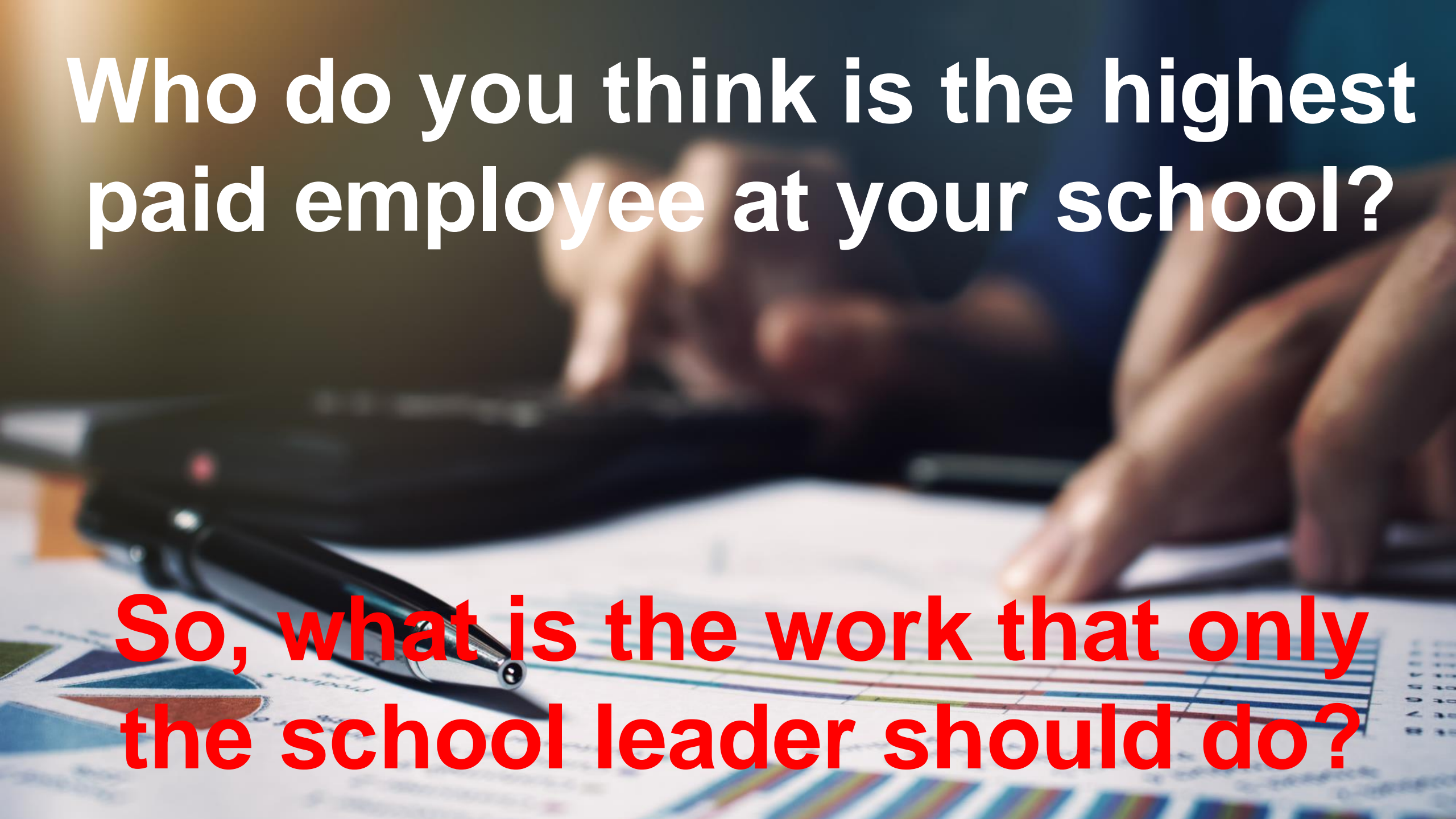
Instructional

Task
orientated

LEADERSHIP

What do these people all have in common?



The background image is a blurred photograph of a person's hands working on a laptop. The person is wearing a dark blue shirt. In the foreground, there are several documents with colorful bar charts and line graphs. A black pen is resting on one of the documents. The overall scene suggests a professional or educational setting.

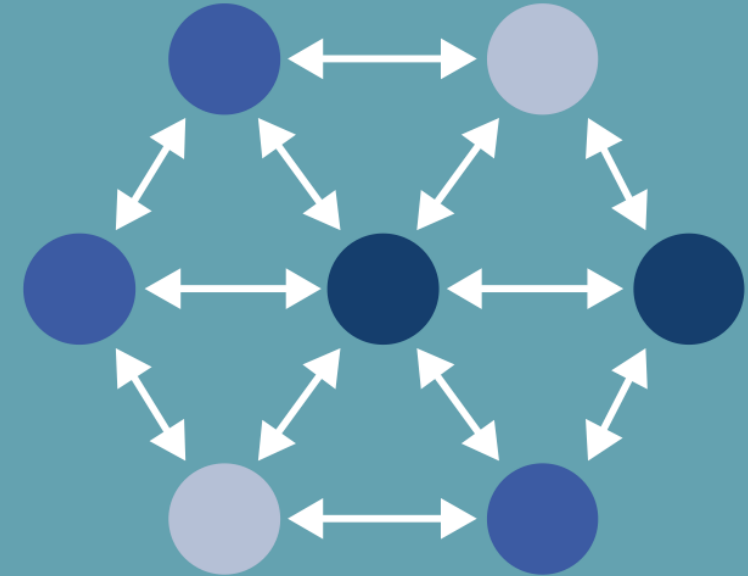
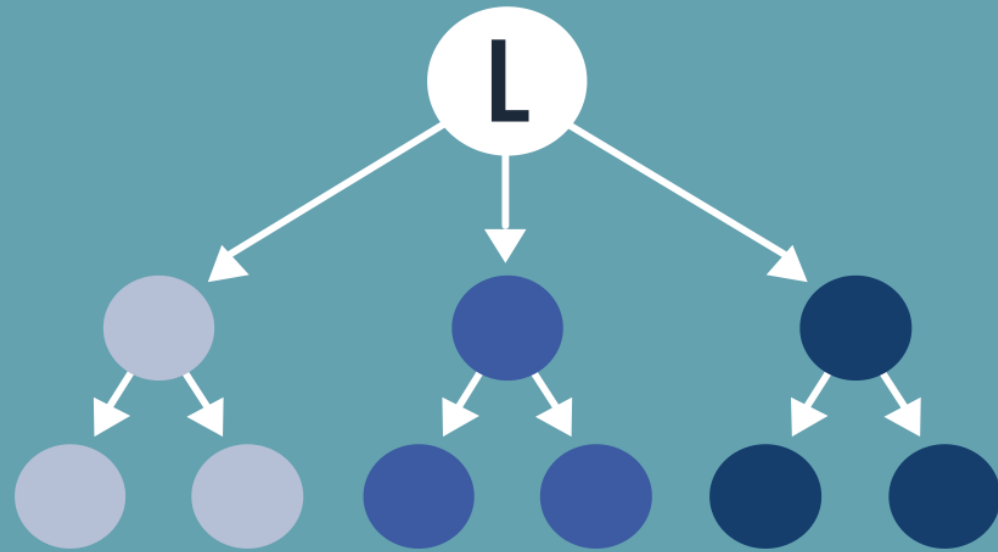
Who do you think is the highest paid employee at your school?

So, what is the work that only the school leader should do?



**It's my view (from experience) that
Departments of Education do compliance,
resourcing and systemic policy **but they
do not do bespoke innovation!****



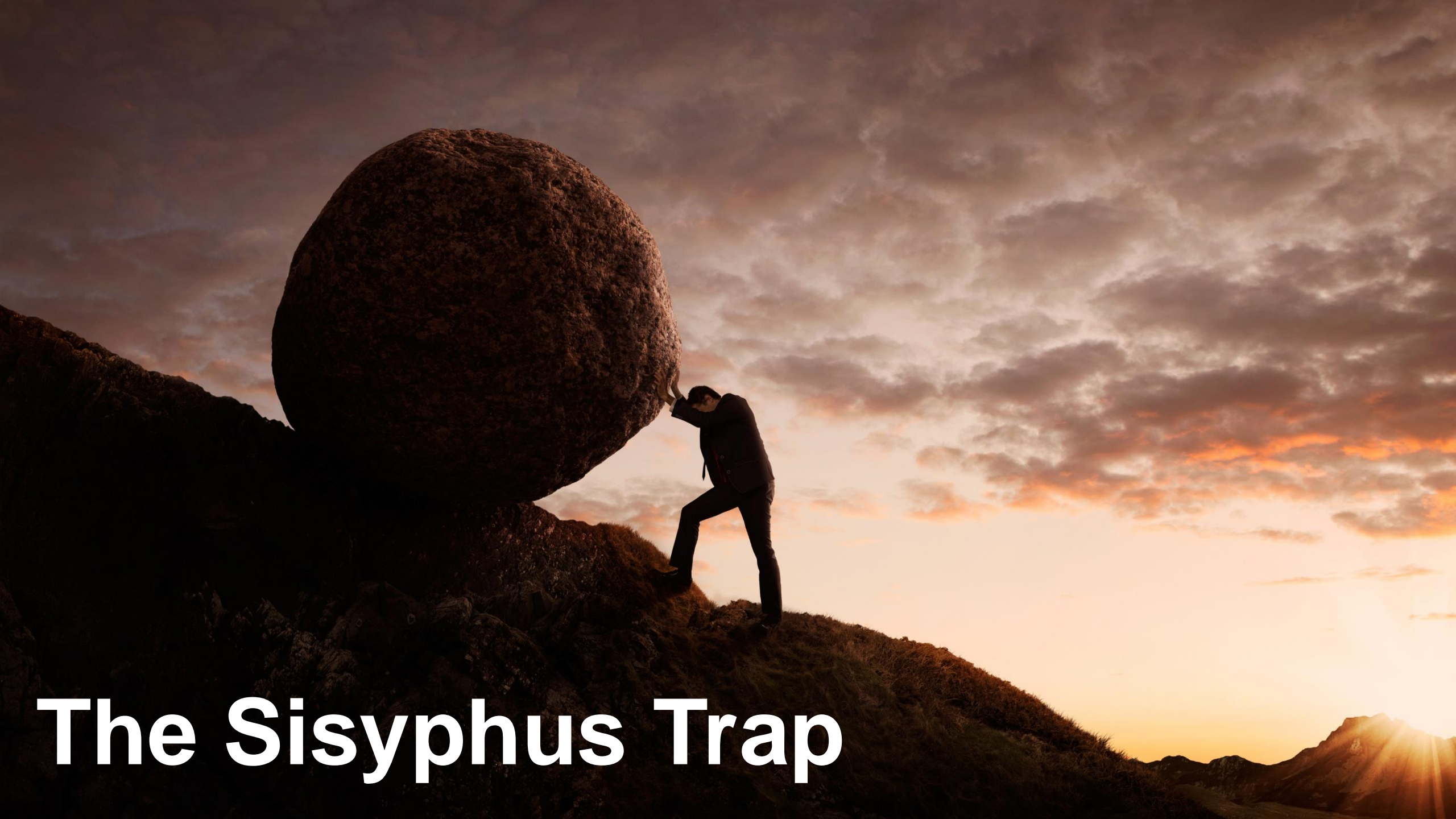


Observations about school leadership


- high performing schools have been led by a high performing leader who collaboratively **empowers** a diverse leadership team
- those identified high performing school leaders go about their work **differently** from their equally hard-working colleagues in other schools
- when asked what additional leadership support would be most useful, almost everyone says they need **more time**

A large, messy stack of papers and folders on a desk, with a person blurred in the background. The text is overlaid on the image.

There is always too much to do. Your job as a leader is to stop your organisation focusing on practices that don't make a difference.



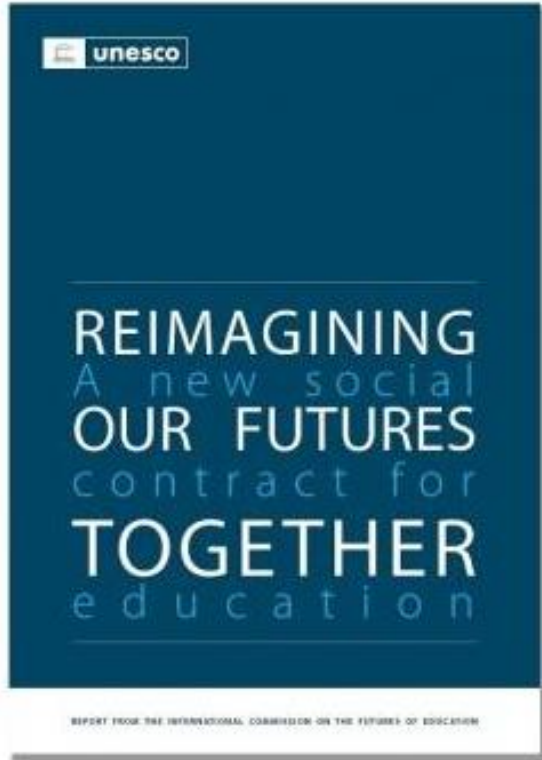
The Sisyphus Trap



“The principal of the future has to be much more attuned to the big picture, and much more sophisticated at conceptual thinking, and transforming the organisation through people and teams.”

Michael Fullan

UNESCO FUTURES OF EDUCATION: SCHOOLS



FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DIALOGUE AND ACTION:

- Schools should be protected as spaces where students encounter challenges and possibilities not available to them elsewhere.
- Building collective capacity should guide the redesign of schools.
- Digital technologies should aim to support – and not replace – schools.
- Schools should model the futures we aspire to by ensuring human rights and becoming exemplars of sustainability and carbon neutrality.

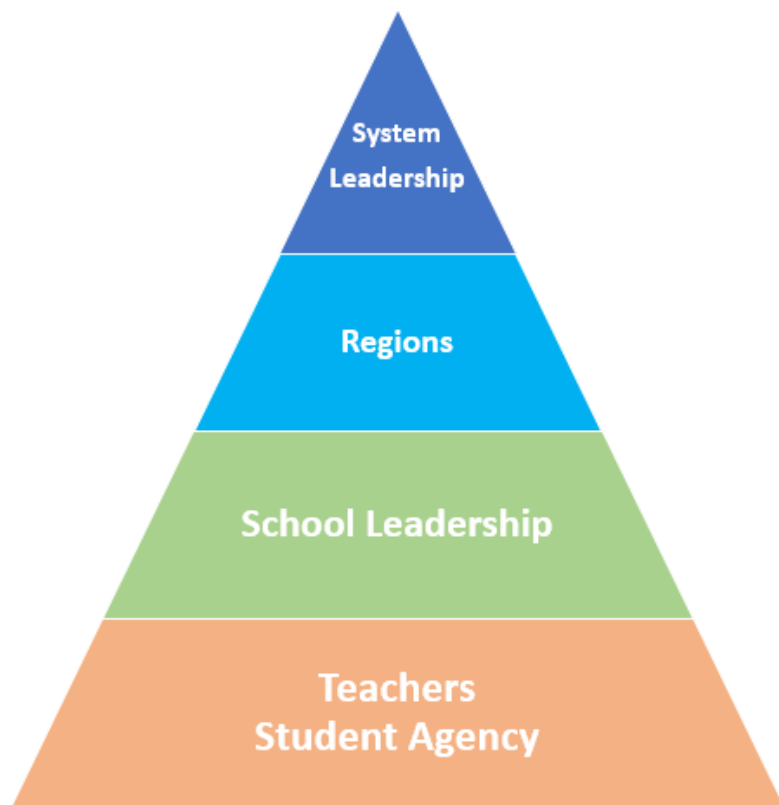
The Art of School Leadership



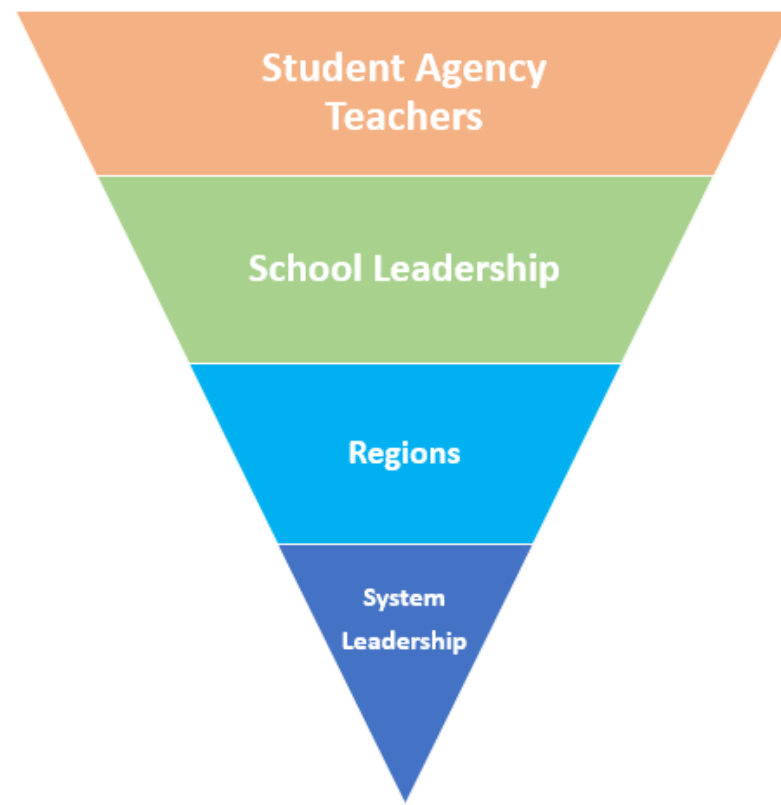
Internationally effective school leadership is increasingly seen as key to large scale education reform and to improved educational outcomes. (OECD)

...Great leaders make others believe that it was their idea all along!

Traditional Top Down Decision Making



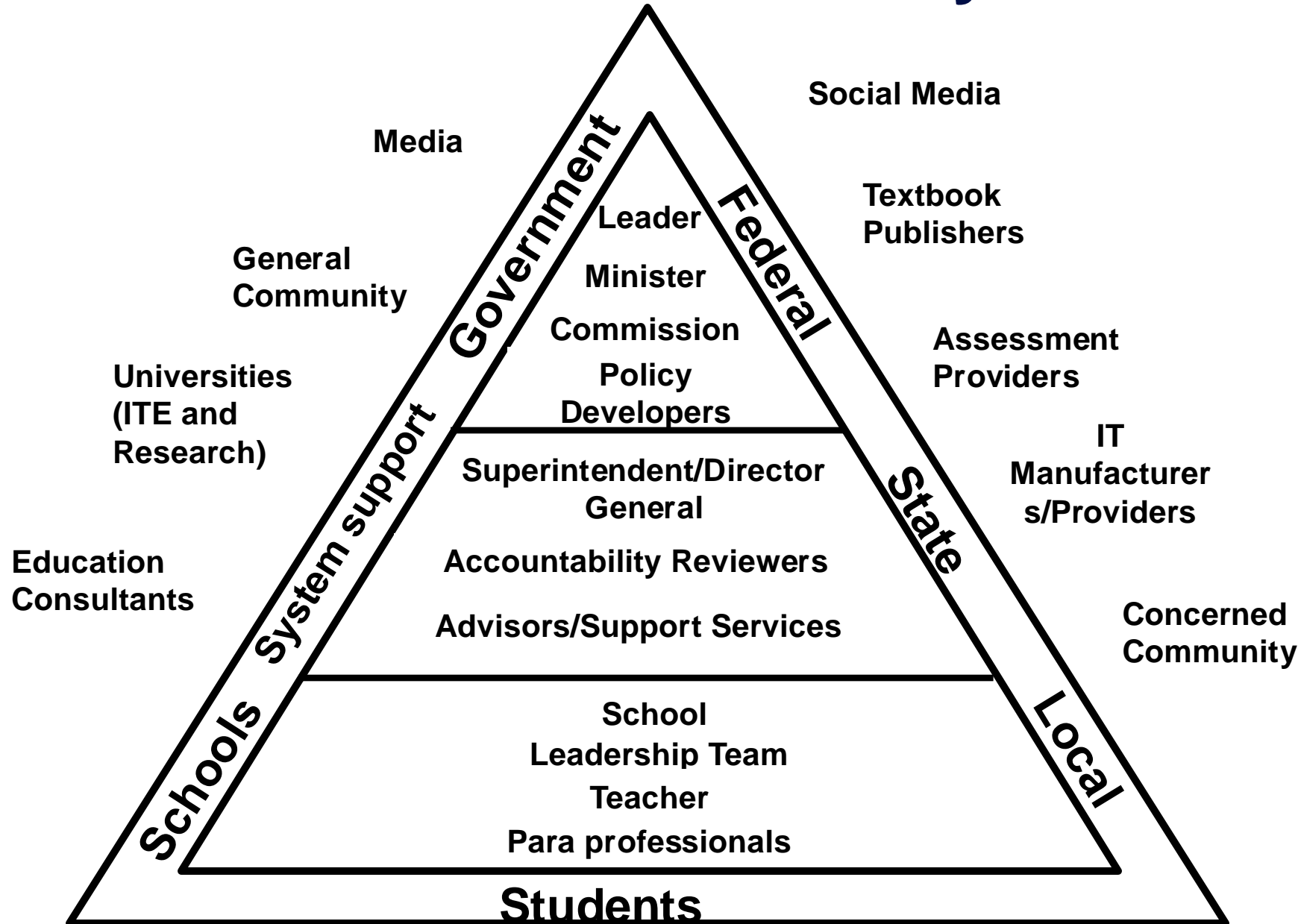
Empowering Students and Teachers to Innovate and Lead Change





Empower those closest to the service delivery to make the most important decisions.

The Education Power Pyramid



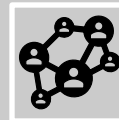
What is the work that high achieving school leaders should prioritise?



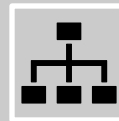
Spend time ‘on the balcony’ observing and building a deep understanding of the culture in place and to make sure that systems are in place and that they work (Heifetz and Linsky).



Creating a proactive and high performing culture that embraces diversity, inclusion and equity.



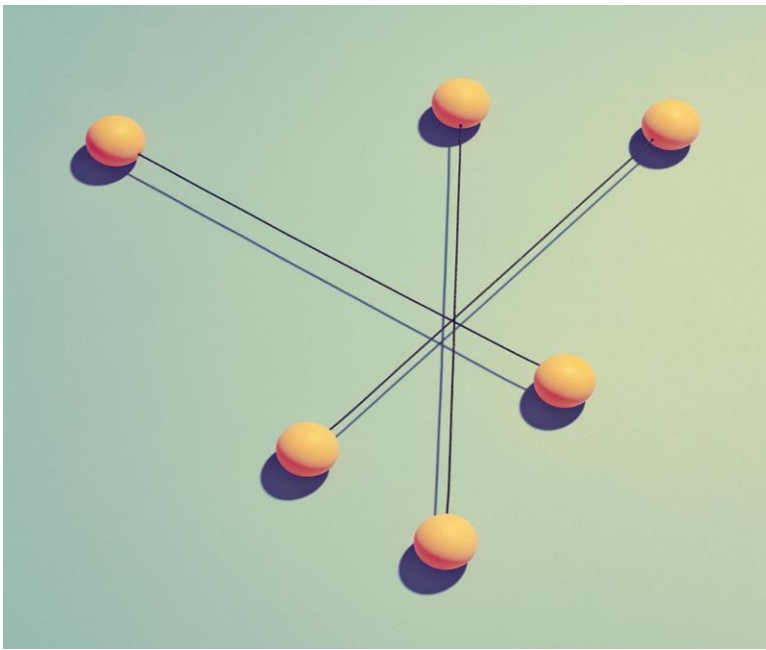
Empowering others to solve problems of practice by ensuring that everyone is committed to the game plan and ‘the way we do things around here’.



Don’t singularly create the school’s strategy, structures, policies and practices but they do quality assure every moving part of the organisation so that they can devote resources to priorities and pressure points.



High performing leaders don’t strive to be the best at everything. They certainly don’t need to be the best teacher or present the professional development to staff on every issue and topic.



As the highest paid employee in the school, they ensure that they provide value for money by not taking the lead on all issues and in all circumstances.

- They also don't delegate or distribute jobs tasks, **they support team members to take on leadership roles** by working together, coaching, providing feedback and by acknowledging.
- High performing leaders are accountable and responsible for the quality of practice within the organisation, but they **trust others to do their best and support staff to explore, innovate and do things differently**
- They understand that formative accountability is much better than summative judgements and that **regular constructive feedback is a gift that keeps on giving.**
- Act as the gate-keeper to ensure staff are **not distracted** by expectations that don't make a difference.
- Build leadership **capability and density** in all others.



Understand and appreciate what others do and how well they do it.

Liberally provide acknowledgement and praise to those who deserve it.

Utilise resources to support others to make their jobs more doable.

Eradicate duplication and repetition.

Develop high performing staff which can only be done in two ways. Either get rid of them (which is impossible), or preferably, proactively performance manage them to become the best they can be.

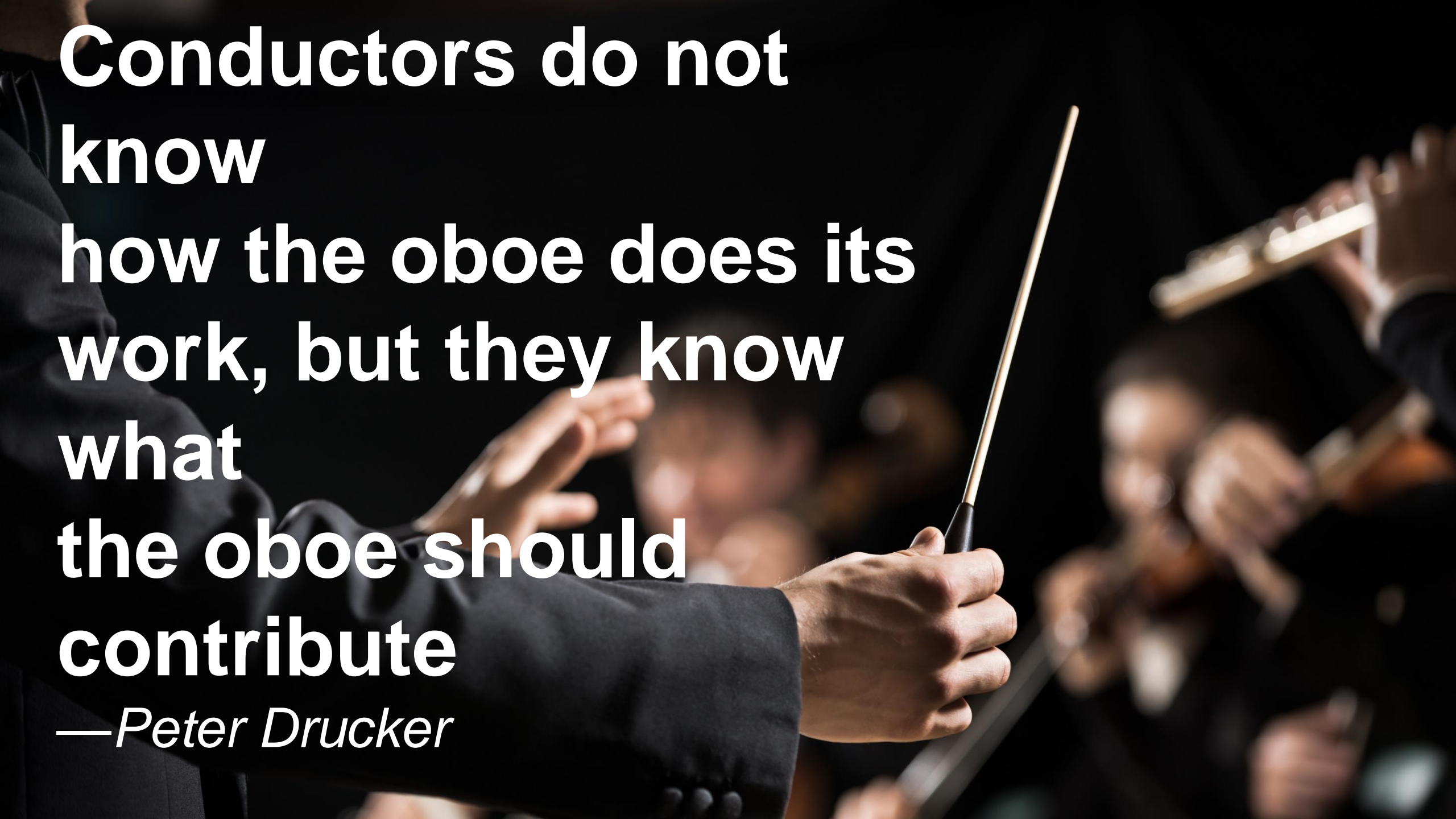
Engage the whole village by building community connectiveness and the willingness to share (but lead) the direction setting.

- **Measuring and monitoring team effectiveness.**
- **Sustainable leadership through succession planning.**



What is the work that high performing school leaders should **not do?**

- They do not do the work of others but know what others do.
- As the highest paid employee in the school, they ensure that they provide value for money by not taking the lead on all issues and in all circumstances.
- They do not ‘instruct’, ‘delegate’ or ‘distribute’, they empower.
- They do not bury themselves in the office doing “leadership work” while others are engaged in collaborative learning experiences.
- They set the culture by not being the first car in the carpark and the last to leave.
- They do not fail the pronoun test. Team before self.



**Conductors do not
know
how the oboe does its
work, but they know
what
the oboe should
contribute**

—Peter Drucker

Post COVID-19 education reform

- **Rethinking Outcomes:** The Purpose of Schooling
- **Rethinking the Curriculum:** Improving Accessibility and Creating Space
- **Rethinking Assessment:** Measure What Matters
- **Rethinking Learners:** Self-determination, Autonomy, Agency, and Voice
- **Rethinking the Basics:** Digital literacy
- **Rethinking Teaching and Teachers:** Creating Options for Students



1. Rethinking the Purpose of Schooling



We need to prepare students for a world without certainty

- Education is more than preparing for work or an economic lever
- For Example: *“We need to prepare resilient students to be lifelong learners, proactive citizens and problem solvers who have life options and good health”.*
- Skills and knowledge will continue to become less important and capabilities more important

Intercultural understanding and capability

Creativity

Curiosity

Entrepreneurship

Communication

Resilience

Innovation

Personal capabilities

Critical thinking

Collaboration

Growth mindset

Cultural literacy

For humans to thrive in the age of smart machines it is essential they do not compete with smart machines. Instead, we need to focus on what it means to be more human.

A photograph of a crowded marathon race. In the foreground, the lower legs and feet of several runners are visible as they stride forward on a paved city street. The runners are wearing various athletic gear, including shorts, tank tops, and running shoes. Some have race bibs with numbers like 1169, 682, and 8956. The background shows a large number of other runners stretching into the distance, with city buildings and spectators visible on the sides. The overall scene is one of intense physical activity and a large-scale public event.

The crowded curriculum

The Aust Curriculum

- Eight discipline-based learning areas
- Three cross- curriculum priorities
- Seven general capabilities

2. Rethinking the Curriculum

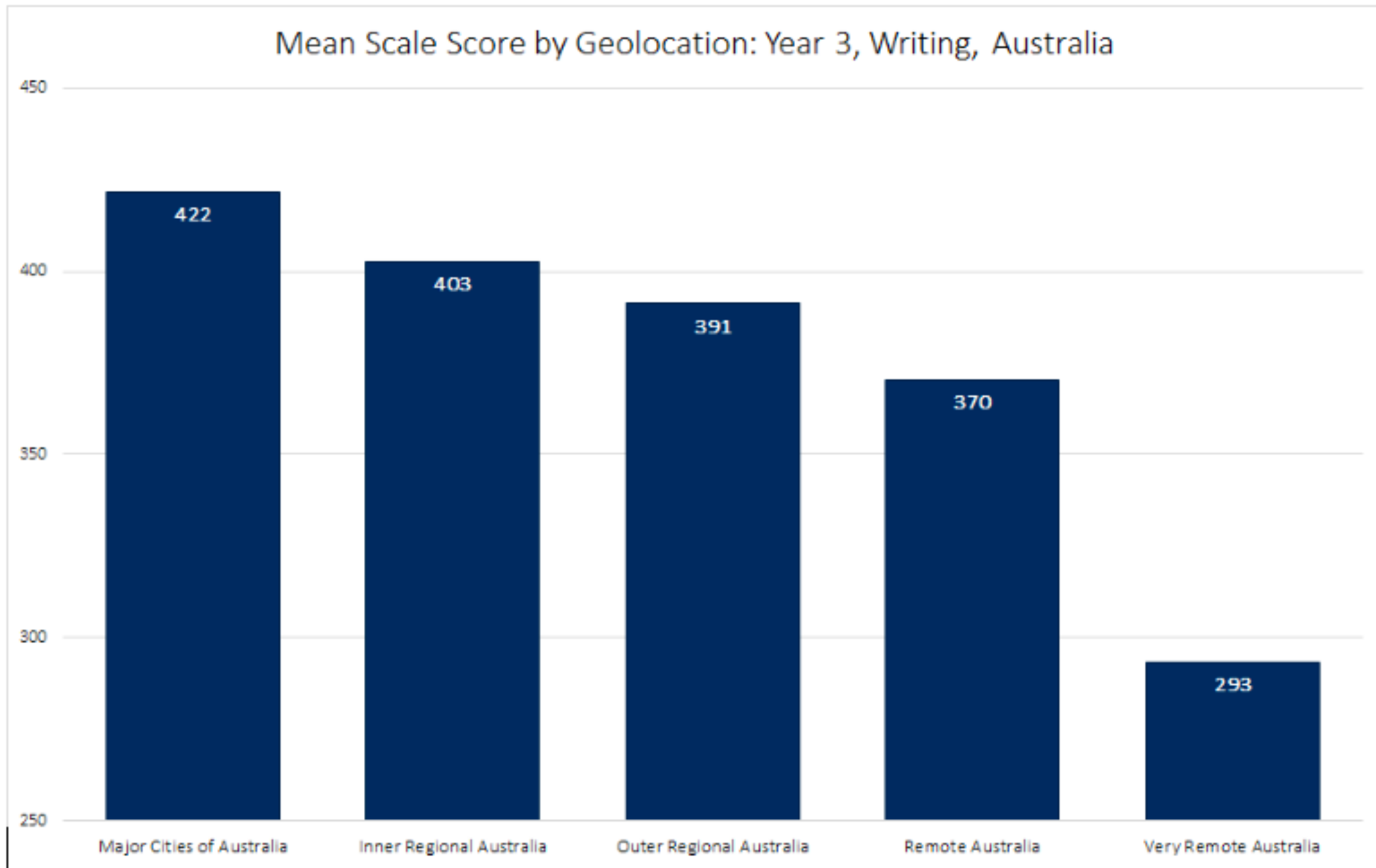


- **Curriculum must be more flexible to ensure we can engage all students**
- **Owned and co-created by the learner (agency)**
- **Engaging and relevant content**
- **Needs to develop all passions, interests and competencies**
- **Not in competition with technology. A focus on human qualities.**

3. Rethinking Data and Assessment



- **Students are more than just a number at the end of their schooling. We can do better.**
- **What gets measured gets done and then becomes a priority**
- **High stakes testing is narrow and does not tell the whole story**
NAPLAN, ATAR, PISA etc
- **It is why students don't follow their passions..Eg languages, maths, sciences**
- **Learner profiles that also measure competencies and skills**

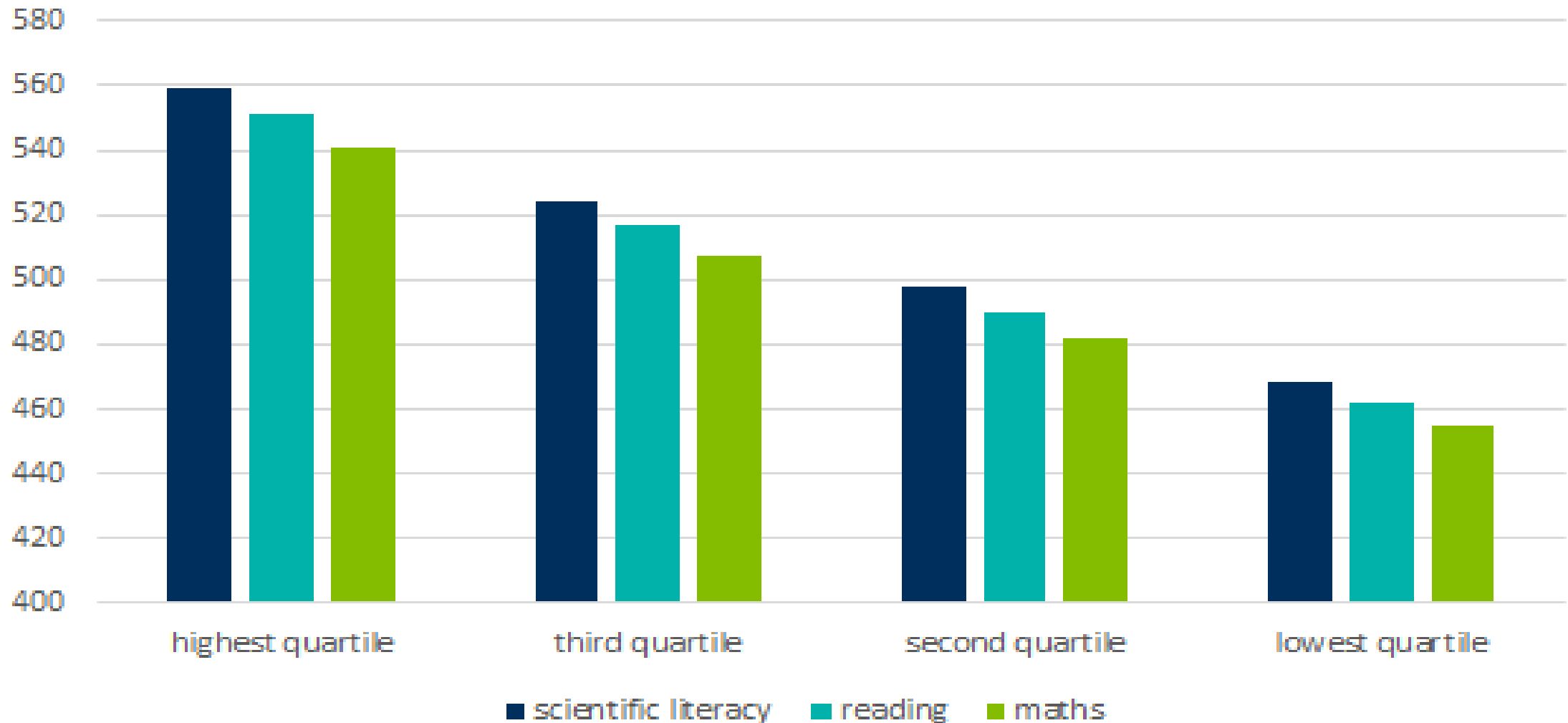


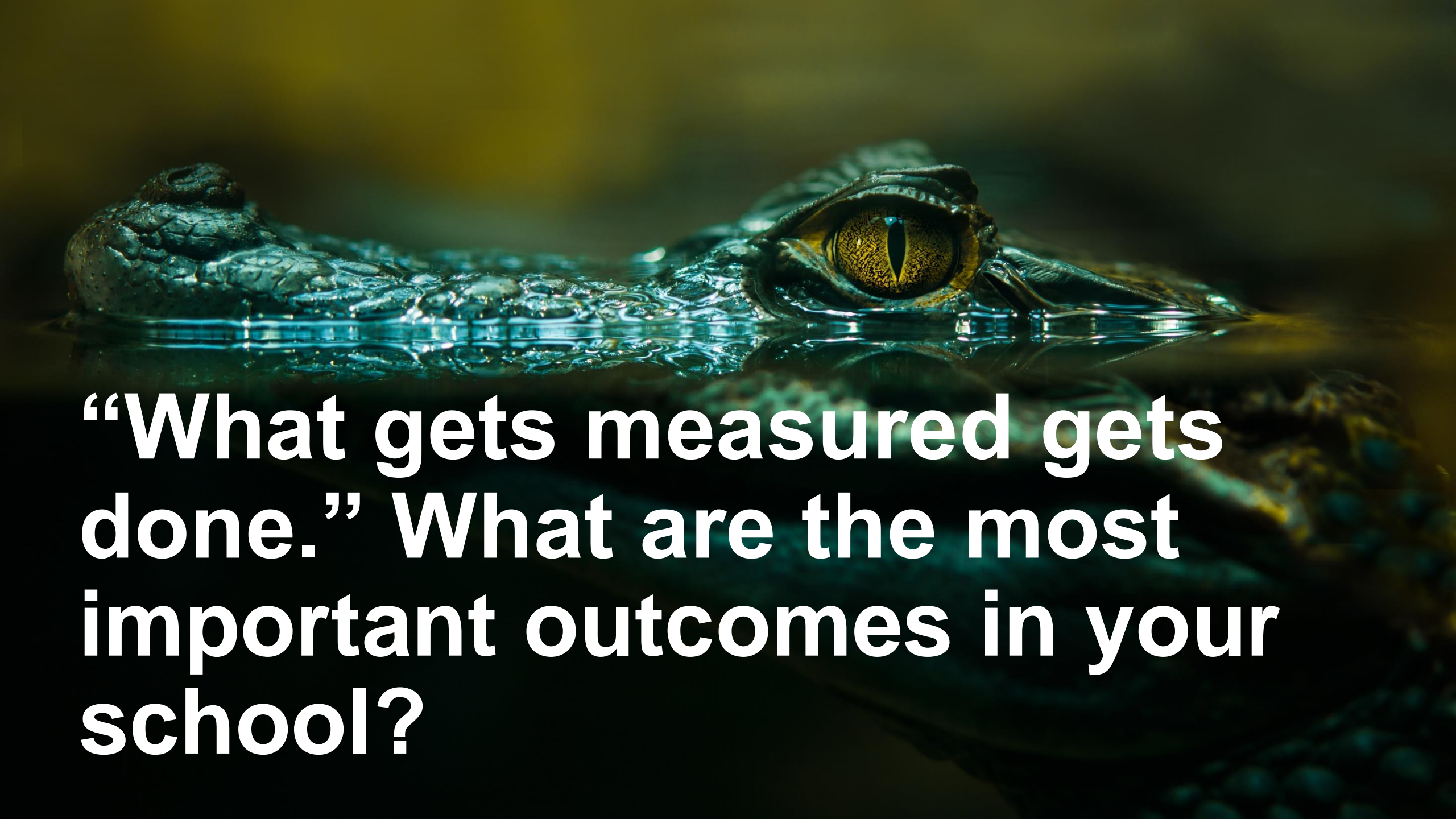
Source: NAPLAN 2017 (Qld)

2015



PISA Average scores by socio-economic quartile





“What gets measured gets done.” What are the most important outcomes in your school?

4. Rethinking Learners



- **Learners need to be architects of their own learning**
- **It was a problem in the pandemic that many students were unable to work independently of teacher instruction and scaffolding**
- **Humans crave agency and self-determination**
- **Students need to be involved in decisions of what to learn, how to learn it and where and when they can learn**
- **Start by allowing some negotiation of parts of the curriculum.**

5. Rethinking Digital Literacy and the World we live in



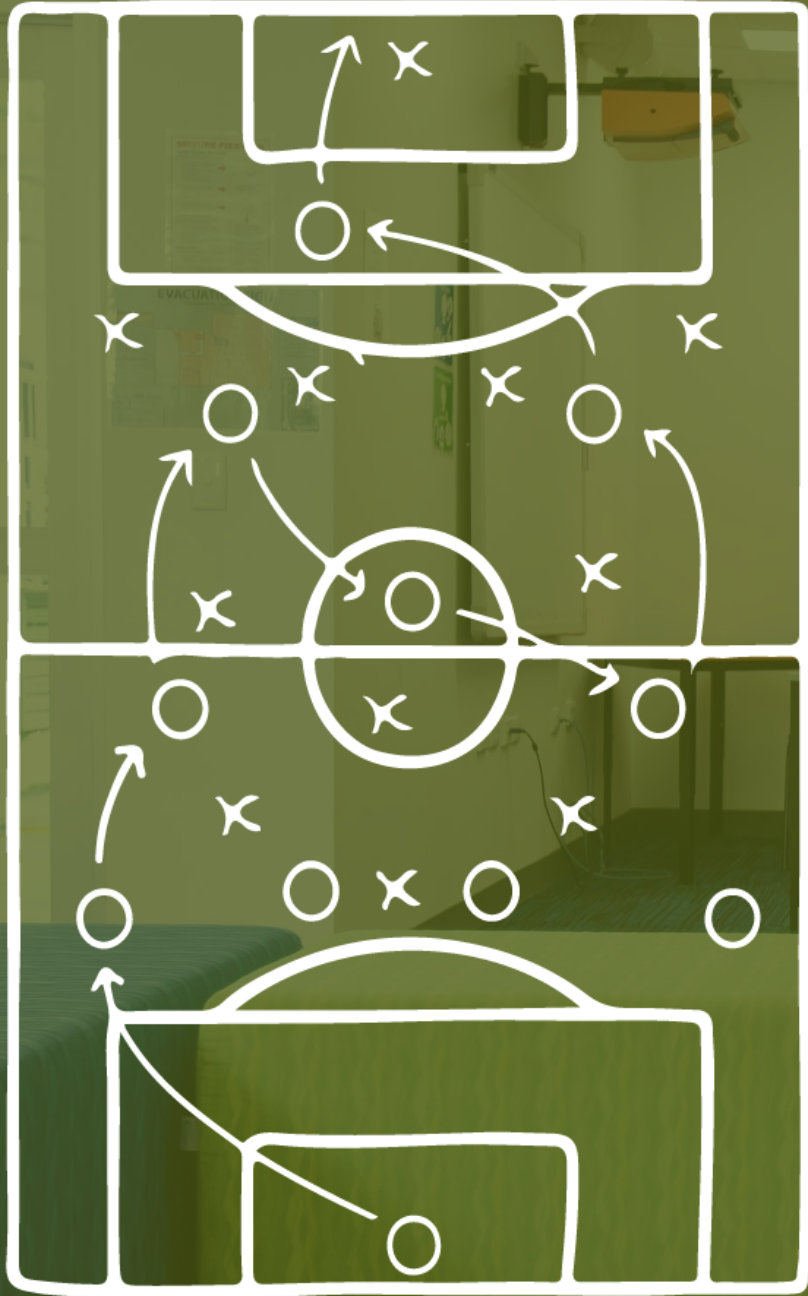
- Digital literacy is more than being able to use a device
- Today's youth spend more time in the digital world than they do in school
- Most young people enter that world on their own or with their friends
- The digital world is
 - Multi-dimensional
 - Psychological
 - Social
 - Emotional
 - Cultural spiritual
 - Economical
 - Technological
 - Behavioral
 - And of course, cognitive
- Parents and schools need a different view of this world and not ignore it.



6. Rethinking Teaching and Teachers

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- Teaching is too hard under the current model of teaching and learning
- Teachers have traditionally been the primary source of knowledge for students as instructors.
- Teachers should be artisans and focus most of their time on the act of teaching and facilitating
- Instead of talking about how hard it is to be a teacher, we should do something about it.
- Teachers need to co-create learning experiences and more options
- We predominantly have a 'one size fits all' mainstream school approach across the nation



What would a school-based 'game plan' look like?

- It identifies what success looks like.
- All staff have participated in the creation and believe in it.
- It deals with what we need to do in every situation....even when we don't know what to do.
- Everyone is accountable for the consistency of practice.
- Non-negotiable standards for all individuals. **Nobody is bigger than the team.**

Capability building through quality performance management

- **Peers working together and building capability through reflection and feedback**
- **Innovating to collaboratively solve problems of practice**
- **Removing duplication to work more efficiently across the team**
- **Leadership development and team building**
- **Improving performance through targeted research professional development**



So what's my point?
**We need to believe
that this is a unique
once-in-a-lifetime
chance to make
radical changes to
student learning that
are driven at the front-
line by those who
know best.**



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Thank you

Faculty of Education

Professor Jim Watterston, Dean

