# Facing the Facts about system capability in public education

SSTUWA
State School Teachers' Union of WA



Our community needs strong public schools. Our schools need a capable public education system. Recent years have seen a drift that needs to be dealt with and our schools cannot wait.

At the time of press, we were still awaiting the Department of Education's agency capability review. Here's what it should say!

**Leadership, culture and governance**

Overarching purpose and vision need to be refreshed. How strategy will be implemented, supported and monitored is currently ambiguous. *Focus* documents need to be clear as to who is responsible for what. Everyone in the system needs to be clear about priorities, the relationship between them and the part they need to play.

Central, statewide and regional services and support have not kept pace with significant growth in student complexity and disadvantage. Organisational structure needs to be fit for purpose: support and services are very centralised and tend to be remote and unresponsive to local needs, especially for regional schools, staff and students.

It is not clear how leaders – central, statewide, regional and school – work together to deliver agreed strategic priorities and objectives. Further, interagency cooperation across human services for children and young people is still largely absent. The department must accept the challenge of driving interagency collaboration to support children and young people.

The desired culture is not clear. Leaders and teachers in the front line do not feel heard and have no opportunity to contribute to the development of the values and culture of the department as a whole. Further, they have no safe way to provide feedback as to behaviours.

Strategic directions documentation does not indicate an evidence base and does not provide transparent measures of progress or success in relation to strategic objectives. Monitoring and evaluation, and their impact on strategic policy and planning, are not evident.

It is difficult to see evidence of investment in improvement. Performance review does not appear to inform strategic policy

and planning. If it does, it does not form part of a strategic narrative.

**What do we need?**

- Priorities for the whole system need to be reduced, focused and communicated.
- Effort and expenditure need to be coherent and strategically aligned at all levels.
- A concerted effort is required to reduce workload in schools, address the teacher shortage and focus on the core business of public school education.
- Progress needs to be monitored, major reforms such as the Independent Public Schools initiative need to be evaluated and strategic decisions need to be evidence-based.
- Department support services need to be more local, accessible and responsive to need and proactively aligned to change management.
- Quality assured and evidence-based teaching resources and professional learning need to be developed and provided by the department itself at no cost to schools.
- Strengthened effort is needed to address growing educational disadvantage and complex needs.
- Delivery of a department-wide approach to optimal placement of students with special needs including disability, mental health and complex behaviours is required.
- Coherent interagency services are needed for individual students with special needs and to address poverty, school readiness, early learning, trauma and complex behaviours.
- More effective planning and resource allocation to address inadequate capital works and maintenance are required.

**When do we need it?**

Let’s face the facts: we need it now.

**Read more**

*Facing the Facts; A Review of Public Education in Western Australia* (Lawrence *et al*, Commissioned by the SSTUWA, 2023)

*Understanding and Reducing the Workload of Teachers and Leaders in Western Australian Public Schools* (Robinson and Hamilton, Commissioned by the Minister for Education, 2023)



By Lindsay Hale
School leader consultant

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
ABN 54 478 094 635 © 2026