Evaluation background

Reform background

In 2012, the New South Wales Department of Education launched the Local Schools, Local Decisions (LSLD) education reform. LSLD aims to give NSW government schools more authority to make local decisions about how best to meet the needs of their students. LSLD focuses on five interrelated reform areas: making decisions, managing resources, staffing schools, working locally and reducing red tape. A cornerstone element of LSLD is the introduction of a new needs-based approach to school funding through the Resource Allocation Model (RAM).

Evaluation

The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) is conducting an evaluation of LSLD. The evaluation began in mid-2016 and will conclude in mid-2019. The evaluation includes a process evaluation that investigates the implementation of LSLD, and an outcome evaluation focussing on the impact of the reform on school and student outcomes.

Main findings

This LSLD interim evaluation report presents interim findings on three key evaluation questions:

1. How have schools spent their RAM equity loadings?

In 2016, schools spent their RAM equity loadings on four main spending categories: employing key staff, enhancing learning support, planning and developing programs, and building staff capacity.

2. What has been the impact of LSLD on school management and local decision-making practices?

In four of the five LSLD reform areas, principals perceive the impact of LSLD to have been positive. In the fifth reform area, reducing red tape, more than two-thirds of principals said that LSLD has not had a positive impact on simplifying administrative processes.

3. What has been the impact of LSLD and RAM funding on school and student outcomes?

The five student engagement measures included in this report (attendance, suspension, social engagement, institutional engagement and aspirations to complete Year 12) showed only very small to small overall changes over time. In terms of differential change over time, we found no relationship between changes over time in these engagement measures and levels of need, with the notable exception that students in higher-need schools typically showed less positive change over time in levels of social engagement than students in lower-need schools. On these findings alone, there is not yet evidence to support the idea that higher-need schools benefit more from the RAM equity loadings than lower-need schools.

Next steps

A final evaluation report will be published by CESE in Quarter 2, 2019. This report will include an analysis of educational outcomes, including in-depth statistical modelling of NAPLAN results from 2012 to 2018, which will help us better understand the longer term effects of the reform.