

FROM LEARNING CRISIS TO BETTER SCHOOLS FOR ALL

ATA Educational Leadership Academy 2021
12th August 2021



ABOUT THIS SESSION

Purpose of this session is to provide you with a big picture of current trends in education and encourage you to have deeper conversations in your communities about the opportunities to educational change for better schools for all.

Part 1: Is there a learning crisis?

Part 2: Equity revisited

Part 3: Let's not let good a crisis go to waste

Part 1: Is there a learning crisis?

Pre-pandemic education



260 million children, adolescents and youth are not at school and only three quarters of 15-year-olds in middle income countries attend school, and just half of them achieve the basic level of proficiency required. – Global Education Monitoring Report 2020



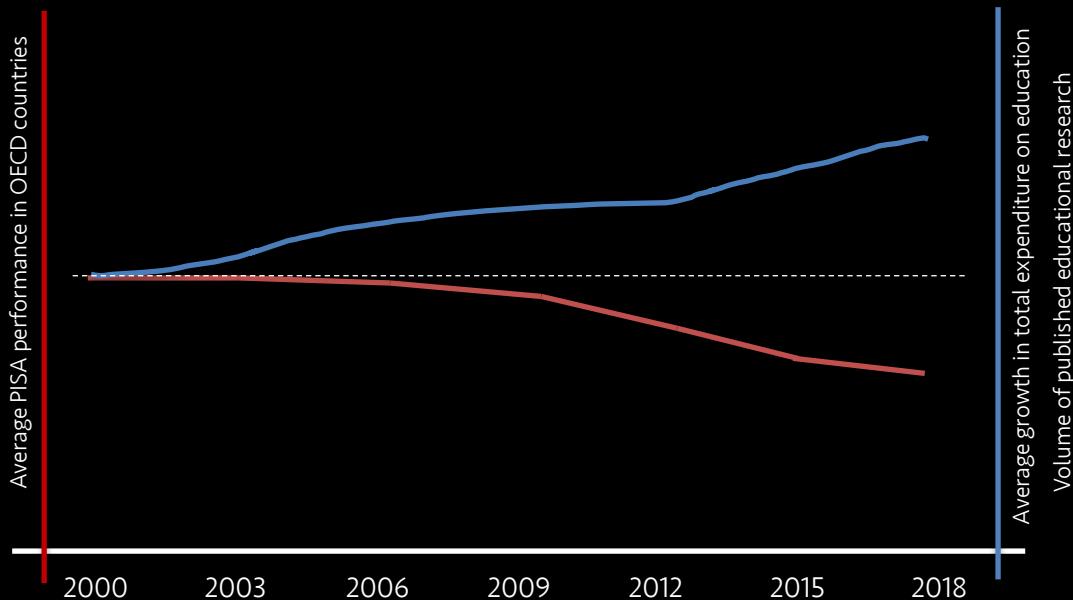
The performance differences across the OECD countries between the most socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged students is equivalent to over 3 years of schooling. – PISA 2018



There is a global learning crisis that amplifies educational inequalities that severely hobbles the disadvantaged youth who most need the boost that a good education can offer. – World Bank Human Development Report 2018

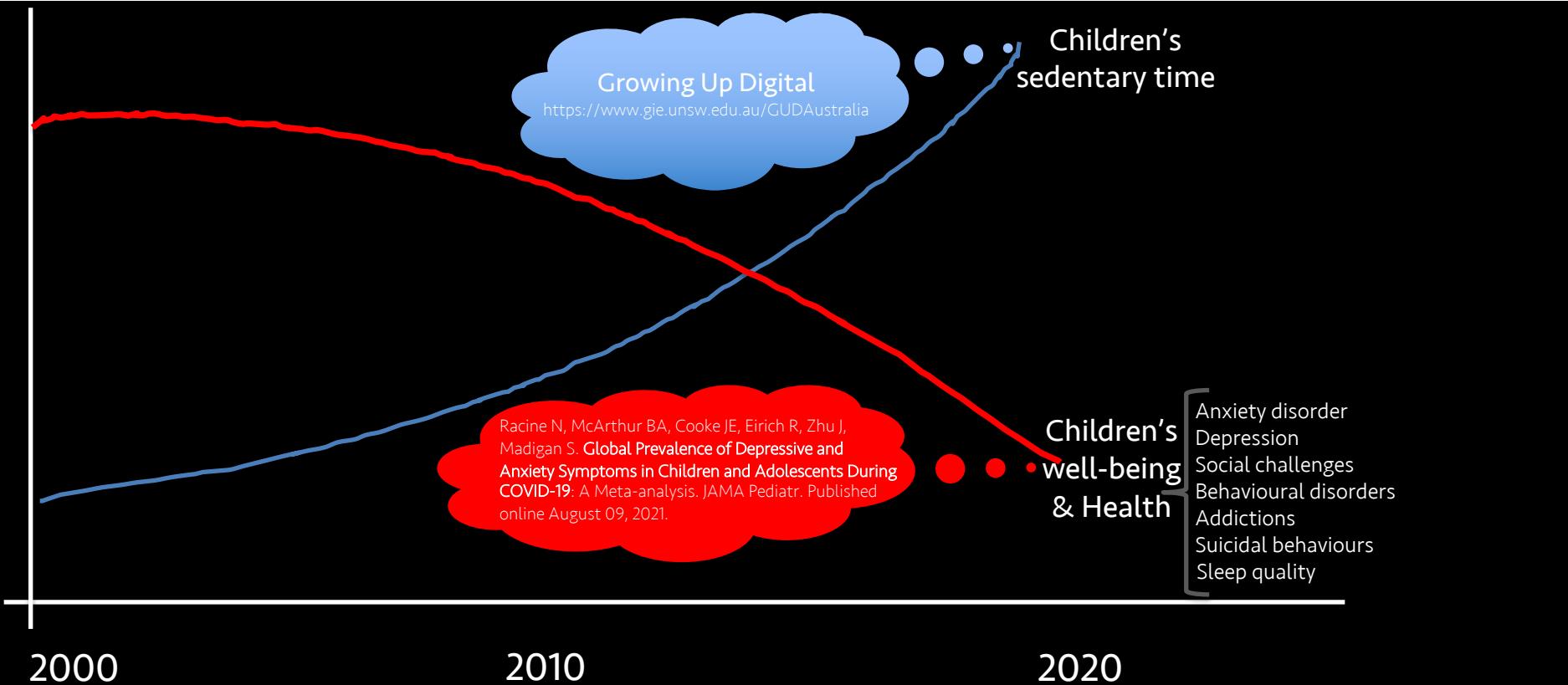


Challenge 1: Student learning vs. education spending and published research

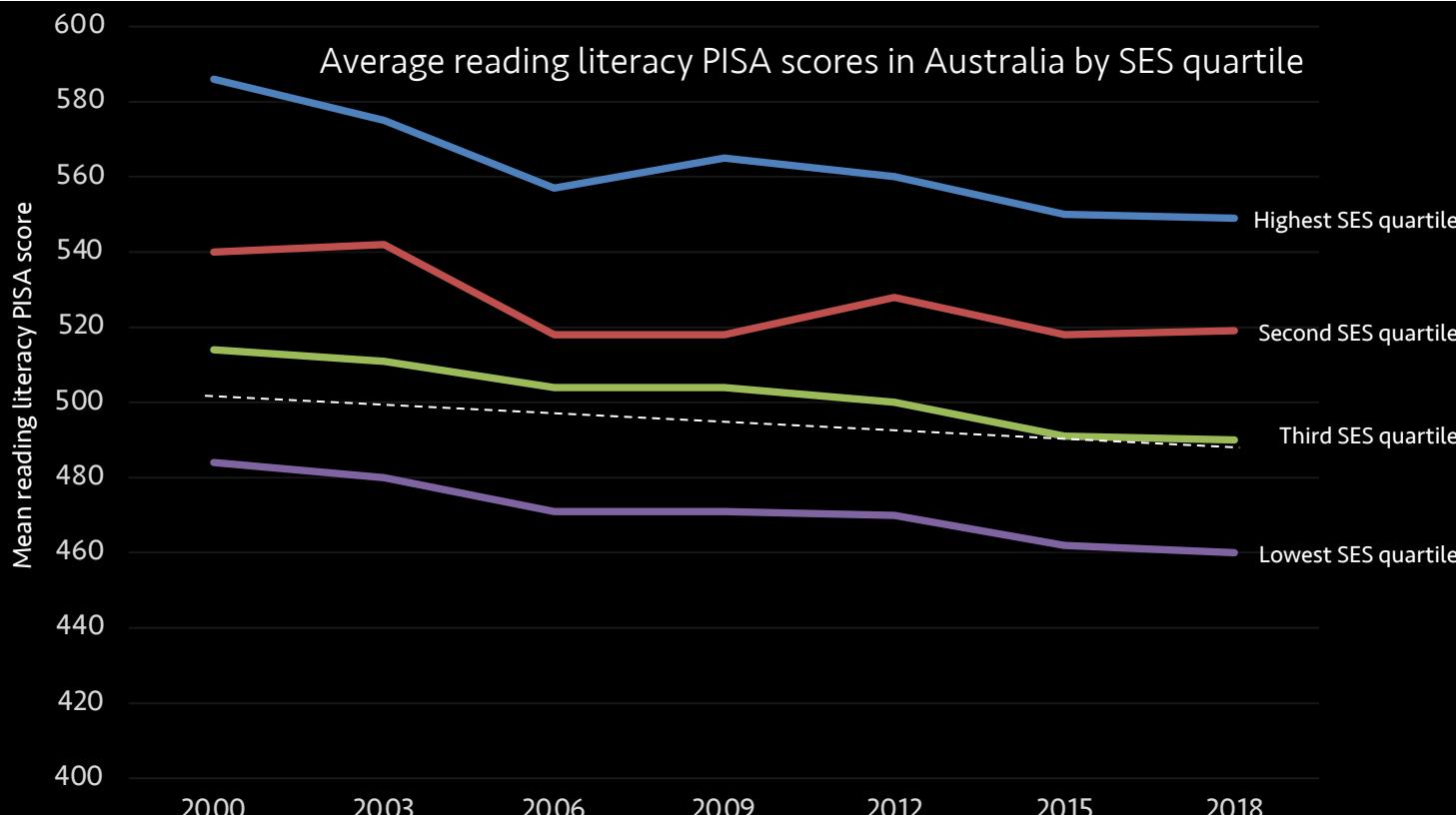


Source: OECD database (2020)

Challenge 2: Student wellbeing vs. sedentary time

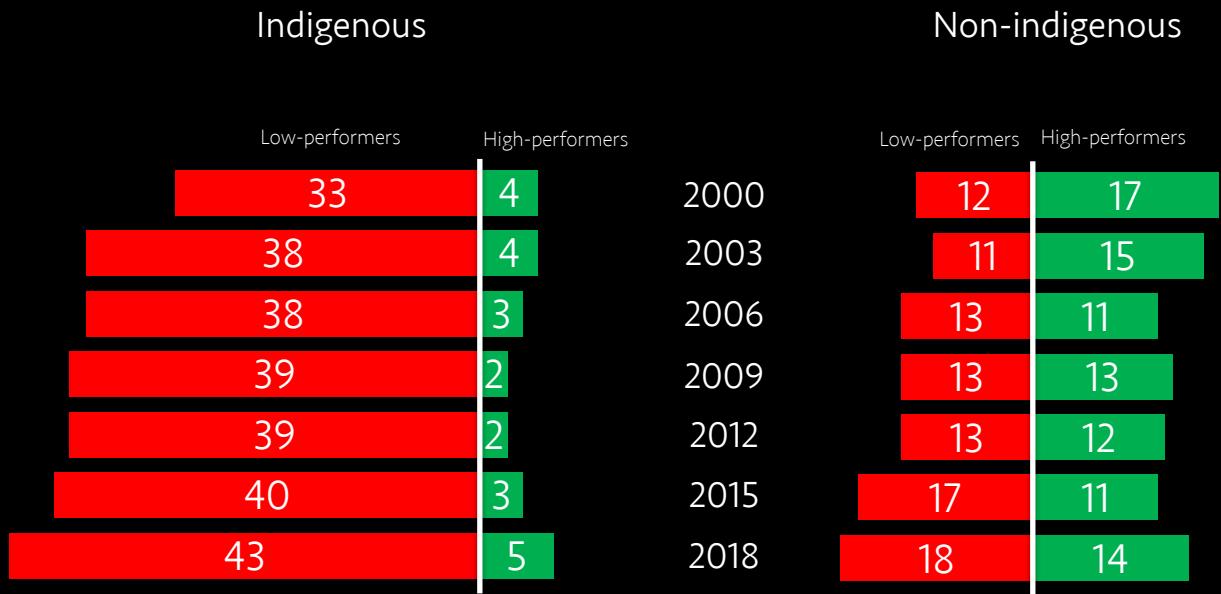


Challenge 3: Growing inequalities



Source: OECD, 2019

Proportions of low and high performers in Australia on the reading literacy proficiency scale from PISA 2000 to 2018, by Indigenous background



BREAK 1:

Learning crisis is real but the primary cause isn't the pandemic

There is a lot of uncertainty in the world right now and Albertan education scene is not well organized either. Curriculum reform seems to be going wrong way, the teaching profession is under attack by the government, and the schools are stressed by the global pandemic. But there are also new opportunities in this catastrophe. What opportunities do you see?

Part 2: Equity revisited

The impact of GERM

1. Competition and choice



"Trying to create more competition among schools, as many school systems are doing, will not lift student performance." – Grattan Institute, 2013

2. Standardization



"There is very little evidence to prove that establishing national academic standards for K-12 schools will improve the quality of American public education." – The Education and Public Interest Center, 2020

3. Academic excellence



"Non-academic skills are more powerful than academic skills in life outcomes."
– David Berliner, 2020

4. Test-based accountability



"Across most OECD countries test-based accountability does not relate to academic achievement." – OECD, 2021

5. De-professionalization

"High performing systems invest in a profession of teaching. Where systems invest in teacher's knowledge and skill, teachers are acknowledged as expert educators who are trusted to make judgments about practice and how to improve it." – Empowered Educators, 2017

Antidotes to GERM

1. Competition → Collaboration
2. Standardization → Creativity/flexibility
3. Academic excellence → Whole-child approach
4. Test-based accountability → Trust-based responsibility
5. De-professionalization → Professionalism

Antidotes to GERM

Sahlberg, P. & Cobbold, T. (2021). Leadership for Equity and Adequacy in Education.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13632434.2021.1926963>

"EQUITY in education means that children from different groups in society because of their gender, class, race, ethnicity and domicile achieve similar education outcomes to ensure non-discrimination."

Excellence → Equity and adequacy

"ADEQUACY in education means that all children receive an education that enables them to fully participate in adult society in a way of their choosing."

The highest performing education systems are those that combine equity with quality. – OECD 2012

BREAK 2:

Equity in education is more important than before

Global education reform movement (GERM) manifests itself in multiple ways in practice and has affected teaching and learning in schools in various ways. Stronger focus on equity in both policies and school leadership are critically important in resisting the GERM. What can we do?

Mission Possible: Fix Inequalities

Australia has a world class education system – but not for everyone. National data and international comparative reviews show that educational inequality is perhaps the most significant threshold that separates us from the pack of leading education nations in the world today. We deserve better as a nation, but moreover, we need to educate all our children so that they are given the tools to thrive and are capable of coping with the challenges that they may face in their lives. Some say that effecting meaningful change in an education system is too complicated and slow. We disagree and urge that as parents, caregivers, education stakeholders, policymakers, teachers and leaders, that we all can do better than we do now. But it takes all of us together to work for that better future and to implement small, but meaningful changes in our ingrained systems. Here are some examples what we all can do.

Mission for policymakers

Make equity a priority in education policy

Equity doesn't happen by chance. Effective and targeted policies can drive better practices. Policies should ensure that all schools have sufficient resources and enough trained personnel to make teaching and learning happen. Policies can also make clear what more equitable education would require schools to do. We know that quality education is easier to have with stronger equity. Consider these: High quality early childhood education for all, wellbeing as an essential outcome of schooling, and special needs education as an inclusive service to all children.

Mission for schools

Make wellbeing a cornerstone of a great school

Children learn better when they are healthy and happy. In recent times, the wellbeing of young Australians has been in steady decline. Similarly, teachers and principals are increasingly stressed, tried and burned-out. Health and wellbeing are particular concerns among underprivileged children. Therefore, care for children's health and mental wellbeing should be part of the work of every school. Sufficient time for recess, physical activity, music, arts and play can positively affect students' and teachers' wellbeing in school and make it a better place for all.

Mission for parents and caregivers

Host a school improvement BBQ

All parents and caregivers want to send their child to the best school. In Australia, unlike many other countries, much time and effort is spent selecting these best schools. What is best for one child may not be for others. Parents and caregivers play an essential role in supporting the school and can make significant contributions to the school community. Supporting your child's school could be as easy as organising a fun gathering with friends to talk about how ways of improving the school to better serve different children, not just your own child/children. Challenge each other to do one concrete thing for the school community.

Mission for businesses

Ask for excellence and equity

Employers know it: Well educated employees are the heart of successful business. This often leads to expectations for schools to raise levels of excellence at any cost. But inequality can be very expensive for companies and taxpayers. Advocate for high quality education in your local community. Don't stop there, insist that education system must deliver these high results in equitable ways. Establish new partnerships with high performing schools in both quality and equity of learning outcomes.

Mission for teacher educators

Give all new teachers a course: "Equity in Education 101"

Teachers play a key role in schools to make all students learn beyond expectations. Initial teacher education can provide new teachers with a broader mindset and approach to student learning in school. Design a course for all students in initial teacher education that provides new teachers with the basic knowledge, values and skills to work in a school and education system that promotes greater equity.

Mission for children

Look after one another

Because we all are different, so are the children in our schools. Some students find school a comfortable place to be and learn; others don't. We can do much better in every school to help each and everyone to think that school is their favourite place. Find someone who looks lonely and doesn't have many friends in school. Go and talk to a fellow student you don't know yet. Create a culture in your school that ensures helping everyone to succeed is the norm.

Mission for journalists

Tell the success stories

Media plays an important role in improving education systems. Too often, however, bad news stories are reported because this content seems to garner more attention. Australia has world class education writers who not just report the news of others but often investigate their own information for their stories. Write a story about a school or a community that has done extraordinary things in helping all children succeed in school, collect real stories from children and parents and encourage inspiring school leaders and teachers to communicate what is possible in our schools.

Mission for artists

Help every school to become an art school

Australian schools have a long tradition of teaching children about the rich culture of arts, music and drama. Still, success in school is determined by grades or test scores in a select few academic subjects. Arts subjects offer most children opportunities to actively engage in learning in school and that is a condition for greater equity in education. Work with students to teach them the work of an artist. Create a project with a school to use traditional storytelling and music that includes all children. Make every school in your community an art school.

Mission for politicians

Listen to the experts

When the going gets tough, we often turn to expert advice. When politicians in Australia were coping with the global health pandemic in 2020, they systematically relied on the experience of health specialists and the top national and international scientists. Now, when you continue to develop Australian education systems to provide world class teaching and learning for all our children, make your decisions after listening to the advice of your top experts and practitioners. Communicate to schools and school leaders an overall direction and trust them to lead the way. Equitable education can't be created by force.

Part 3: Let's not let a good crisis go to waste!

New GERM variants

1. Learning loss

Learning loss is the assumed slipping test scores and the ability to project that data into the future. Test scores do not predict the future of an individual's success very well, and non-cognitive skills may play a bigger role than cognitive skills for future life.

Much more serious losses include those in kids' social-emotional well-being, attitudes toward learning, social relationships, and physical and mental development that can have longer-lasting affects in life than possible loss of academic learning.

New GERM variants

2. Side effects

In the world of epidemics the basic principle is to rely on best available science and expert knowledge to *maximise the effectiveness* of treatments while *minimising their harmful side effects*.

Evidence-based education policies and practices use research to link selected treatments and expected outcomes. But they almost always fail to identify side effects to schools, teachers or children.

Consequential accountability → Teaching to the test and corruption

Between-school competition → Segregation and growing inequity

Standardized testing → Narrowing curriculum and disengagement

New GERM variants

3. Play deprivation

In Australia, 80% of parents believe that children are under pressure to grow up too quickly, and 85% think their kids today spend less time playing than they did when they were their kids' age.

And yet, many, if not most, parents reject the idea of children having more unstructured time during their school days for free play, especially after the disrupted schooling.

From learning crisis to better schools for all: How to get started?

1. Let's avoid side effects

We should stop claiming that there is an extensive evidence base behind suggested educational reforms (treatments) if we don't understand what their unintended consequences (side effects) to teaching and learning will be.

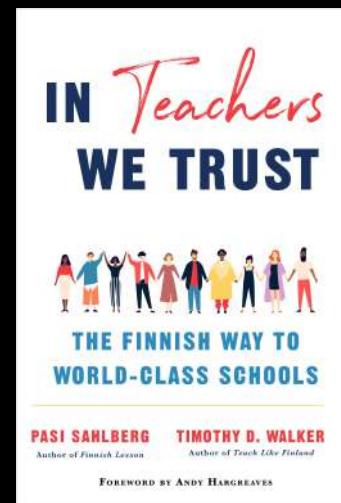
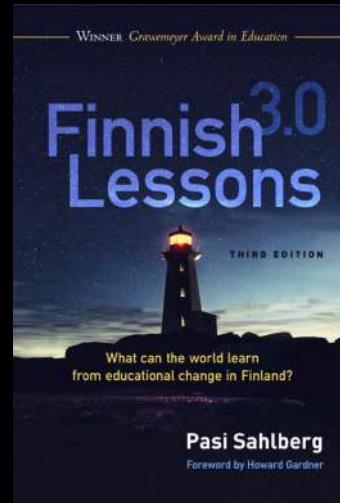
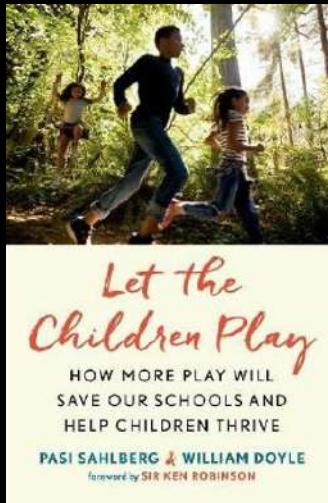
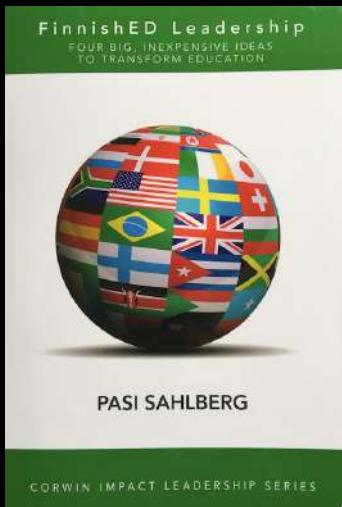
2. Let's accept only evidence-based policies and reforms

It is unfair by the authorities to expect schools to base their pedagogical decisions on solid evidence unless the policies and reforms behind these expectations are based on best available science and practical professional wisdom.

3. Let's adopt new logic to lead public education

We must protect schools from toxic consequences of the GERM. That means adopting education policies that protect and enhance public good for all, and that are implemented using best available collective expert advise.

THANK YOU!



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