



ROOFTOP SOCIAL

Evaluation of the EAL/D Education Leadership Strategy

Final Report

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Prepared for NSW Department of Education

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Executive summary

The EAL/D Education Leadership Strategy

The [EAL/D education leadership strategy](#) aims to build the capacity of NSW Public Schools to achieve the best possible outcomes for students who are learning English as an additional language or dialect.

As part of this strategy, 28 EAL/D Education Leaders were deployed into schools in 2021. The role of these leaders has been to support their local community of schools to review their current EAL/D practices and then to plan, implement and evaluate strategies that are effective in enhancing EAL/D student outcomes.

This evaluation

This is a mixed-method evaluation, drawing on:

- historical activity reporting by Leaders
- before-and-after assessment of schools against the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework
- feedback from school-based stakeholders, Base school principals and DELs
- case studies co-authored by leaders and schools
- feedback from leaders and iterative consultation with the program team.

The primary purpose of the 2023 evaluation was to inform decision-making about what happens to the initiative from 2024 onwards. During 2023 the positions were extended by another 12 months, to the end of the 2024 academic year. This decision was informed by interim findings of the evaluation; findings that are presented in full in this report.

Scale and reach

As of Term 1 2023, 57% of schools had engaged with leaders in some way. This includes 17% (one in six schools) who had worked with a leader to document an action plan for EAL/D education.

This is an impressive reach, considering not only the limited resourcing (<30 FTE positions) but also that the implementation period has been affected by COVID-19 and teacher shortages.

There are distinct geographic patterns in the reach and depth of engagement across schools, both within Sydney and between urban, regional and rural areas. These patterns reflect a range of factors, including levels of resourcing, differences in the underlying demand and different strategies employed by the leaders.

Perceived value

The evaluation reveals strong positive stakeholder sentiment about:

- the **quality** of support provided by Leaders (96% *excellent* or *good*)
- the **value** of the support provided (97% *very* or *moderately* valuable)
- how **well supported** they have felt by the leader (87%-92% *very* or *moderately* well supported, depending on the aspect of EAL/D education leadership in question)
- the **effectiveness** of the Leader's work:
 - with teachers, to build their capacity in EAL/D education (93% *excellent* or *good*)
 - with school leaders, in support of school improvement (90% *excellent* or *good*)

Base School Principals tend to be a bit more critical than others, and a handful of DELs and Base School Principals have not been impressed. Although these are exceptions, their experiences are important to hear.

Areas of focus for practice development could include working effectively with school leaders and strategies for supporting schools with goal setting and evaluation for EAL/D education practice.

Impact on EAL/D practices and learners

There are **good indications that the program has had a positive impact** on EAL/D practice and student outcomes. That said, drawing this inference is not without its limitations and there are exceptions to the rule.

Stakeholders reflected positively on the impact they have seen, in terms of:

- uplift in **understanding, motivation and capacity** (90%-94% *much stronger or a little stronger*, depending on the topic or practice area)
- **improvements in EAL/D practices** in their school or network (92%)
 - less in base schools than elsewhere – this usually stemmed from certain base schools already having strong practices prior to the arrival of the leader, and/or the leader’s focus mostly being in other schools in the network
 - less in parent and community engagement than in other aspects of the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework – noting that schools choose their own focus areas.

In the before-and-after assessments against the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework, two-thirds of the sampled schools (17 of 26) demonstrated **growth into a higher band**. This includes five that grew by +2 bands and two by a remarkable +3 bands, from meeting ‘minimum requirement’ to ‘excelling’ in two years.

When asked to explain the ‘most significant impact’ of the strategy in their own words, the key themes related to:

- growth in capacity of school staff
- pedagogical change, throughout the teaching and learning cycle
- system improvements at the school level
- cultural change – within school staff and also in how the school relates to the community
- collaboration – within and between schools.

Future demand

A clear majority of stakeholders (95%) supported the idea of extending the EAL/D Education Leadership strategy (82% *strongly support*, 12% *support*).

The Department’s assessment of ongoing need also needs to be informed by modelling of demographics, particularly overseas migration.

The model

The strategy is seen as having strong alignment with school obligations (74%-75% *very well aligned*, 15-18% *moderately well aligned*).

Alignment with school planning is there, but could potentially be strengthened and made more explicit through a re-working of the common support planning template.

Enablers of effective practice included:

- striking the right priorities for which schools to work with, when, and how
- positioning of the role to have influence, e.g. through the Deputy Principal role grading and having DELs and Base School Principals champion the role locally
- having the leaders based in schools, so they are close to the action

- having a full toolkit of resources that can be used to support schools, meeting them ‘where they are at’ and bringing evidence-informed practice to the fore throughout.

DEs and Base School Principals consider their local management requirements of the scheme to be reasonable, for the most part.

A refreshed communication strategy for the scheme would be worth developing, particularly for newly appointed or relieving DEs and principals who have not worked with an EAL/D education leader to date.

Working relationships between EAL/D education leaders and the coordinating team in Multicultural Education are strong overall.

The accountability framework for leaders is somewhat complex, as their PDP is the responsibility of their Base School Principal but the coordinating team in Multicultural Education sets the agenda around their workflow and practice. Timely and relevant feedback is more readily available for some leaders than others.

The process by which leaders report on their activity and impact is in need of review.

Recommendations

The implications from this report have, for the most part, already been actioned. This is a result of:

- the iterative nature of the interim evaluation reporting (written and verbal)
- the coordination team’s ongoing review and improvement cycles each term
- the ‘ear to the ground’ that the coordination team has in its working relationships with leaders.

Accordingly, the recommendations in Section 7 are accompanied by brief notes about some of the steps that the department has already taken. In brief, these relate to:

- moving towards permanence and a broader scale of operations, to the extent that this is supported by population projections and other forecasting of demand
 - including potentially rotating the positions through different base schools in the future
- updating key strategy documents to reflect contemporary expectations and practices, e.g.
 - the role statement for EAL/D education leaders
 - the model of support that leaders offer
 - the template and scaffold for support planning
 - common communication materials for the strategy that leaders can use with local stakeholders
- fine-tuning some of the processes in place for activity reporting and related arrangements, to ensure they:
 - are efficient for leaders to use day-to-day
 - suit different operating contexts and scales of work
 - give the coordinating team in Multicultural Education an accurate picture, efficiently
 - support healthy accountability locally (with principals, DEs, etc.)
 - support healthy accountability within EAL/D education leadership team.
- consolidating the relevant process-related documentation about strategy operations, for the benefit of new starters and statewide cohesion.

1 Introduction

1.1 The EAL/D education leadership strategy

The [EAL/D education leadership strategy](#) aims to build the capacity of NSW Public Schools to achieve the best possible outcomes for students who are learning English as an additional language or dialect. As part of this strategy, 28 EAL/D Education Leaders were first deployed into schools in 2021. The role of these Leaders has been to support their local community of schools to review their current EAL/D practices and then to plan, implement and evaluate strategies that are effective in enhancing EAL/D student outcomes.

These positions were originally funded for one year, with three-year funding confirmed on the basis of positive stakeholder feedback about the value and impact of the work (see Box 1).

During 2023 the positions were extended by another 12 months, to the end of the 2024 academic year. This decision was informed by interim findings from the 2023 evaluation; findings that are presented in full in this report.

Box 1: The 2021 ‘launch year’ evaluation

The 2021 evaluation reported that leaders had contacted over one-quarter of schools in NSW during the year, developing almost 200 school EAL/D support plans.

Among those who had engaged with the leaders, a clear majority:

- believed the support provided had been valuable for their school
- expressed confidence in the overall quality of support
- said that EAL/D practices in their school had strengthened as a result of their work with the Leader
- supported continuation of the strategy into 2022.

The main recommendations from this evaluation related to:

- a refreshed set of communication materials, to optimise stakeholder engagement in the strategy
- strategic planning at a network and cross-network scale
- further developing a compendium of strategies and resources for EAL/D Education Leadership
- communication and engagement in state office to share successes and lessons from the first year and pursue opportunities to optimise reach, sustainability and long term system-level impact.

1.2 This evaluation

Scope and focus

As part of its commencement activities, the Department took the wise step of developing and implementing a monitoring and evaluation framework for the strategy. This has informed:

- ongoing documentation and reporting by the Leaders
- data collection and reporting by the program managers
- an independent evaluation of the launch year in 2021
- the scope for the 2023 ‘Year 3’ evaluation – i.e. the subject of this report.

The primary purpose of the 2023 evaluation was to inform decision-making about what happens to the initiative from 2024 onwards, recognising that there are numerous options (continuation as is, modification, cessation, expansion, contraction, etc.). The timing for this evaluation was sensitive to the decision-making timeframe about future directions for the strategy, mindful of the fact that leaders would be seeking certainty during 2023 about their work role in 2024 and beyond.

The key questions for this evaluation fell into three main groups, as set out in Table 1 overleaf.

The Evaluation and Effectiveness team in the DoE Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) was briefed on the evaluation and consulted about the method. Otherwise, they recommended that Multicultural Education commission the evaluation to an external third party.

Table 1: Key questions for this evaluation

Scale and reach	Perceived value	Impact on EAL/D practices and learners	Future demand	The model	
				The current model	A future model
How much support has been provided to schools under the strategy from 2021-23, of what nature, with what focus, over what coverage of schools?	What aspects of the strategy have schools valued, to what extent, and why?	In what ways, and to what extent, has the strategy had an impact on a) EAL/D practices in schools? b) EAL/D student outcomes?	Do stakeholders perceive a need for ongoing capacity building in EAL/D education in NSW public schools? What situation would schools be in if the strategy came to an end in 2023?	How suitable has the model been during 2021-23 (strengths, weaknesses)? What factors have enabled or limited its implementation? How have schools made the most of the opportunities available?	What aspects of the current strategy respond well to the ongoing need? How could the model be strengthened to respond better to the anticipated future need?

Methods

The evaluation draws on eight different data sources. Collection and analysis was sequenced (Table 2) so that early findings could inform critical decisions about the future of the strategy, as well as subsequent lines of inquiry in the evaluation. Alignment with the key questions is shown in Table 3.

Table 2: Data sources used in this evaluation, highlighting time of collection/analysis

Data source	2023 Term 1	2023 Term 2	2023 Term 3
a. Historical activity reporting by Leaders			
b. Before-and-after assessment of schools against the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework			
c. Feedback from school-based stakeholders	Survey		
d. Feedback from Base school principals	Survey	Interviews	
e. Feedback from DELs	Survey	Interviews	
f. Case studies co-authored by leaders and schools			
g. Feedback from Leaders			Focus groups
h. Consultation with the program team			Interviews

Table 3: Mapping of data sources (Table 2) to evaluation focus areas (Table 1)

Data source	Evaluation focus area				
	Scale and reach	Perceived value	Impact	Ongoing need	The model
a. Activity reporting	●				
b. EAL/D SEF assessment			●		
c. School-based stakeholders		●	●	●	●
d. Base school principals		●	●	●	●
e. DELs		●		●	●
f. Case studies			●		●
g. Leaders					●
h. Program team					●

Sampling

The survey during Term 1 of 2023 received responses from:

- 14 of the 23 relevant Directors Educational Leadership (DELs) (61%)
- 21 of the 27 Base School Principals (78%)
- 228 other school contacts that Leaders had worked with over the life of the program: 39 principals, 68 other school executives, 91 EAL/D teachers, 17 teachers and 13 other contacts.

This sample is in a good position to comment on the scheme: over 90% reported having had either a great deal of interaction (57%) or a moderate amount of interaction (35%) with the EAL/D education leader in their school or network (Table 4).

Turnover in the scheme was low in its first few years. Most of those responding to the survey (over 70%) had only had contact with *one* EAL/D education leader since the program started; those with exposure to multiple leaders mostly came from areas where there is more than one leader working in their network or local area.

Table 4: During 2021 and/or 2022, how much interaction have you had with the EAL/D education leader/s in your school or network?

	Limited interaction	A moderate amount	A great deal
DELs (n=14)	3	6	5
Base school principals (n=22)	3	5	14
Other school contacts (n=255)	16	92	147

Note: 5 other school contacts commenced the survey but after this question ceased their response as they reported having had no interaction at all with the EAL/D education leader in their school.

The geographic spread of responses is shown in Table 5, and shows statewide coverage, broadly in line with the distribution of the EAL/D education leaders themselves.

Table 5: No. survey responses by stakeholder type and School Performance Directorate

	DELs (n=14)	Base school principals (n=21)	Other school contacts (n=228)
Metropolitan North	2	3	27
Metropolitan South	4	3	35
Metropolitan South and West	3	8	103
Regional North	1	1	14
Regional North and West	1	1	5
Regional South	2	2	14
Rural North	0	1	11
Rural South and West	1	2	13
Not applicable	-	-	6

Participation in follow-up interviews and focus groups

Follow-up interviews were held with all of the DELs (8) and Base School Principals (9) who volunteered to take part.

Five focus groups with staff were held, with 22 leaders represented (out of 30 on board at the time of the evaluation). Each group had its own focus topic, to provide differentiation:

- Working effectively in regional and rural NSW
- Working effectively when demand for EAL/D Education Leadership is low

- Working effectively when demand for EAL/D Education Leadership is very high
- Working effectively in schools with refugee and/or new arrival communities
- Monitoring and evaluation of EAL/D education leadership

Other methodological notes

Before-and-after assessment of schools against the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework was available for only a sample of schools (26 in total) that had participated in the program from its beginning (Term 1 2021) to the data collection point at end 2022.

System-level data that speak into the question of emerging and future need (e.g. trends in the number of EAL/D learners in NSW public schools and their learning outcomes) have been analysed separately by the Multicultural Education team.

This report includes a number of case study excerpts, as illustrations of practice. For internal audiences, full case studies can be found at

<https://schoolsnsw.sharepoint.com/sites/EALDELS/SitePages/2023-EAL-D-Education-Leaders-Case-Studies.aspx>.

Margin arrows in this report



Upward arrows in the margin of this report highlight insights and findings that are particularly forward-focused. These are brought together in the recommendations (Section 8).

2 Scale and reach

Focus questions	How much support has been provided to schools under the Strategy from 2021-23, of what nature, with what focus, over what coverage of schools?
Methodological notes	This section draws on data reported by leaders on a term-by-term basis, spanning the period Term 1 2021 to Term 1 2023 (nine terms). Consolidating these data to provide a whole-of-strategy snapshot required the combining of nine spreadsheets. The program would be better served by a live database tool than this spreadsheet-based approach.



2.1 Key findings

As of Term 1 2023, 57% of schools had engaged with leaders in some way. This includes 17% (one in six schools) who had worked with a leader to document an action plan for EAL/D education.

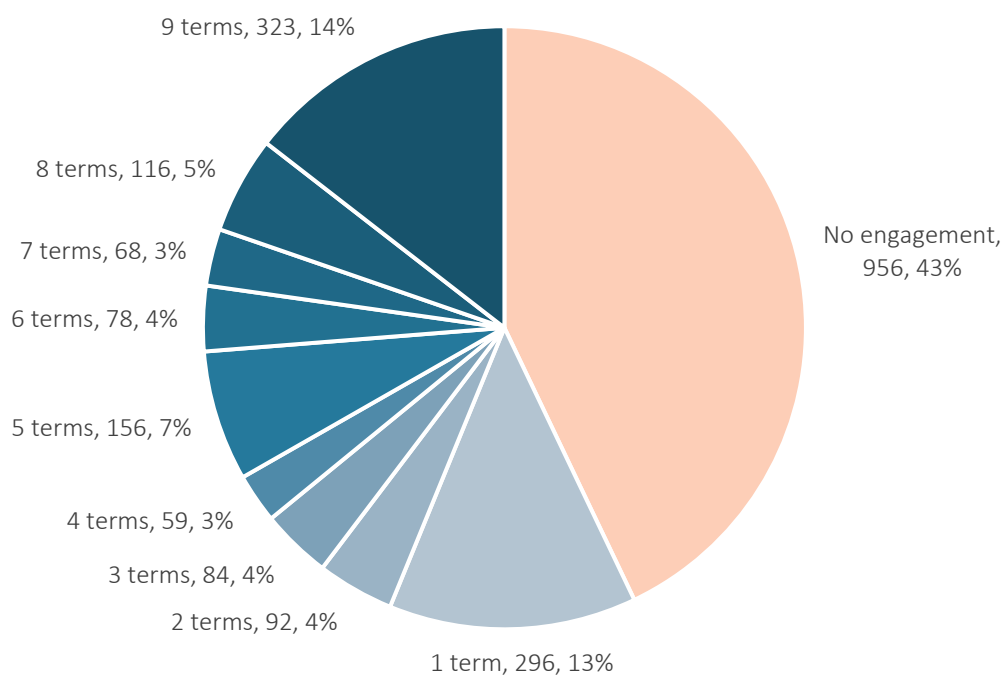
This is an impressive reach, considering not only the limited resourcing (<30 FTE positions) but also that the implementation period has been affected by COVID-19 and teacher shortages.

There are distinct geographic patterns in the reach and depth of engagement across schools, both within Sydney and between urban, regional and rural areas. These patterns reflect a range of factors, including levels of resourcing, differences in the underlying demand and different strategies employed by the leaders.

2.2 Engagement

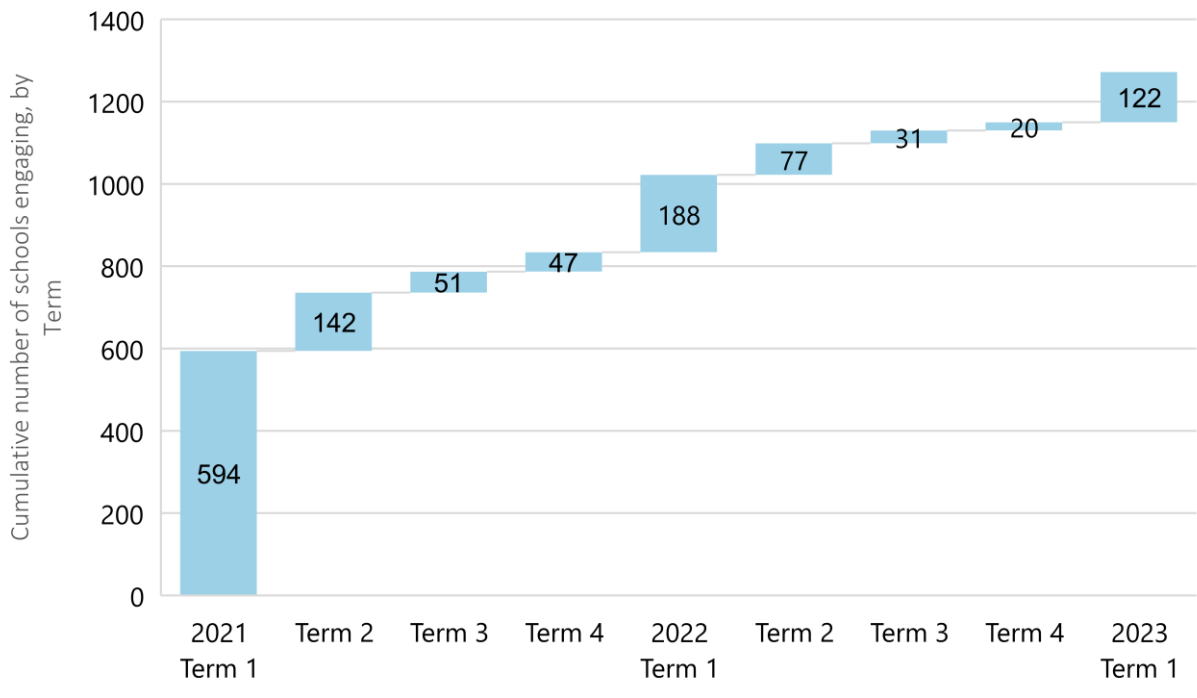
As of Term 1 2023, 57% of schools had engaged with leaders in some way (1,272 of 2,228 schools) at some point over the course of the program, for at least one term (see Figure 1). The notion of school engagement here includes various levels of intensity, including attending an information session, participating in training, receiving or exchanging emails, having meetings (in person or remotely) and so on, as well as deeper and more extended consultations and collaboration (see below).

Figure 1: Overall school engagement with EAL/D education leaders, Term 1 2021 to Term 1 2023 (9 terms).



Almost half (47%) of the participating schools were first engaged at the start of the program, in Term 1 of 2021 (Figure 2). One third of the participating schools engaged more recently, in 2022 or early 2023.

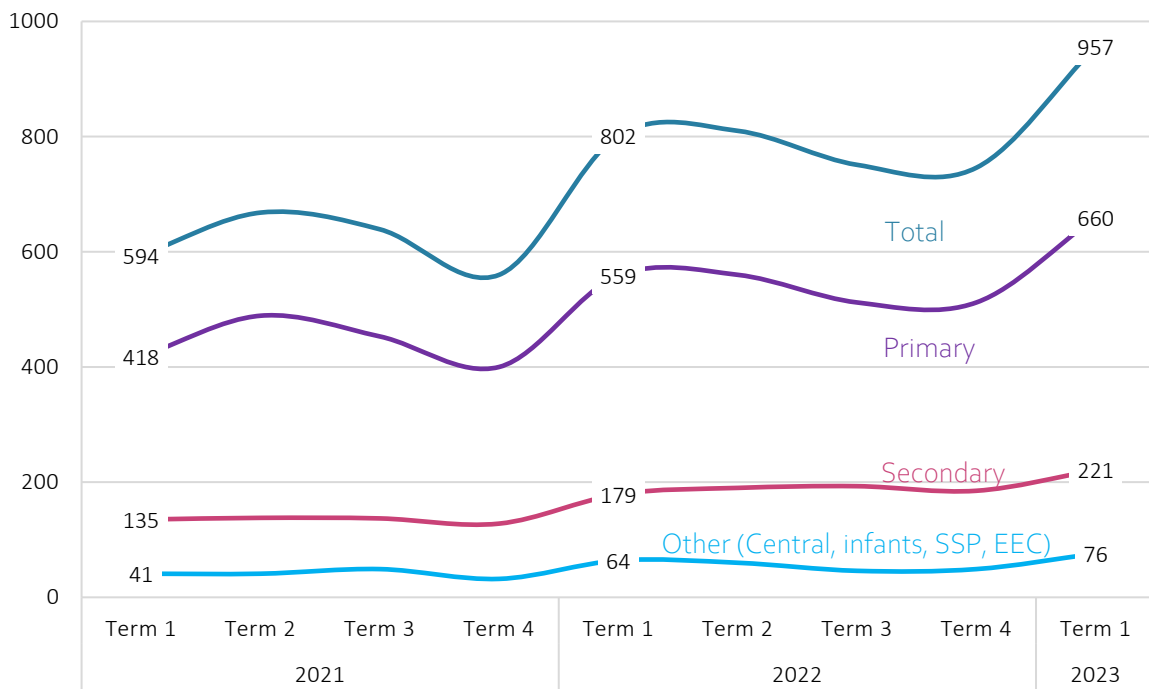
Figure 2: Cumulative school engagement during the life of the program, Term 1 2021 to Term 1 2023.



Activity records also show (Figure 3):

- a sustained higher volume of school engagement in 2022 compared with 2021
- an uptick in school engagement in Term 1 of both 2022 and 2023. This highlights the value of a promotional push at the start of each school year.

Figure 3: Overall school engagement numbers per Term, Term 1 2021 to Term 1 2023.



2.3 Beyond engagement

As school relationships deepen, leaders will often sit down with their key contacts to develop and document a support plan. This plan articulates things like:

- the school’s baseline starting point, in relation to EAL/D education
- which aspects of this the school is prioritising for attention in the coming months
- how the EAL/D education leader will support the school (as well as actions the school will take)
- what ‘success’ would look like, in terms of implementation and outcomes.

According to the term-in-review statistics maintained by leaders, one in six schools had developed a support plan with a leader (17%, i.e. 371 of 2,288 schools across NSW).

Table 6 shows the extent of variation in engagement and support planning by School Performance Directorate, telling an important story about how the strategy ‘looks’ in different parts of the state.

- In some areas, leaders have established contact with the vast majority of schools (e.g. Metropolitan North 99%, Regional South 78%, Metropolitan South 72%). In other parts of the state the awareness and engagement of schools has been more limited.
- The development of support plans shows a different geographic pattern, with particular concentrations in Metropolitan South and West (38%) and Metropolitan South (28%).
- This reveals quite a different ‘strike rate’ from one area to the next.
 - In Metropolitan South and West, 2 out of every 3 schools that have engaged with the strategy have gone on to develop a support plan with a leader.
 - In Sydney’s South, this strike rate halves to around 1 in 3.
 - In Sydney’s north and in the Regional Directorates (Regional North, Regional South, Regional North and West), the strike rate is closer to 1 in 4 at best.

These patterns reflect a range of different factors, including:

- different levels of resourcing in each area
- differences in the underlying demand
- other factors influencing the opportunities available
- different strategies employed by the leaders (see Section 6).

Table 6: Coverage by School Performance Directorate

	Engaged in some way	Developed a support plan	‘Strike rate’ (% of engaged schools that develop a support plan)
Metropolitan North (n=259)	99%	22%	22%
Regional South (n=254)	78%	18%	23%
Metropolitan South (n=279)	72%	28%	39%
Regional North (n=302)	62%	7%	11%
Metropolitan South and West (n=264)	59%	38%	64%
Regional North and West (n=253)	40%	7%	18%
Rural South and West (n=299)	39%	12%	31%
Connected Communities (n=32)	25%	6%	24%
Rural North (n=277)	16%	4%	25%
Unassigned (n=9)	11%	0%	n.a.
Total (n=2,228)	57%	17%	30%

The variation in engagement figures between SPDs also indicates a degree of inconsistency between how certain leaders define ‘engagement’ in their term-by-term reporting. Greater consistency in reporting practices here would add to the value of these statistics.



Table 7 shows variation in these figures by school type. Although exposure to the strategy was higher for secondary schools (68%) than primary schools (55%), the incidence of support plans was much the same (18% for secondary schools, 17% primary).

Table 7: Coverage by school type

	Engaged in some way	Developed a support plan	‘Strike rate’ (% of engaged schools that develop a support plan)
Primary schools (n=1,596)	55%	17%	31%
Secondary schools (n=406)	68%	18%	26%
Central schools (n=68)	32%	9%	28%
Environmental Education Centres (n=23)	43%	4%	9%
Infants schools (n=14)	57%	21%	37%
Schools for Specific Purposes (n=119)	61%	13%	21%
Other (n=2)	0%	0%	
Total (n=2,228)	57%	17%	30%

3 Perceived value

Focus questions	What aspects of the strategy have schools valued, to what extent, and why?
Methodological notes	<p>This section presents stakeholder sentiment about the initiative. It draws on a broad and representative sample, covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 in 5 of the relevant Directors Educational Leadership (DELs) (14 of 23) • 4 in 5 of the Base School Principals (21 of 27) • 228 other school contacts that leaders had worked with over the life of the program – a mix of principals, other school executives, EAL/D teachers, teachers and other contacts.

3.1 Key findings

The evaluation reveals strong positive stakeholder sentiment about:

- the **quality** of support provided by Leaders (96% *excellent* or *good*)
- the **value** of the support provided (97% *very* or *moderately* valuable)
- how **well supported** they have felt by the leader (87%-92% *very* or *moderately* well supported, depending on the aspect of EAL/D education leadership in question)
- the **effectiveness** of the Leader’s work:
 - with teachers, to build their capacity in EAL/D education (93% *excellent* or *good*)
 - with school leaders, in support of school improvement (90% *excellent* or *good*)

Base School Principals tend to be a bit more critical than others, and a handful of DELs and Base School Principals have not been impressed. Although these are exceptions, their experiences are important to hear.

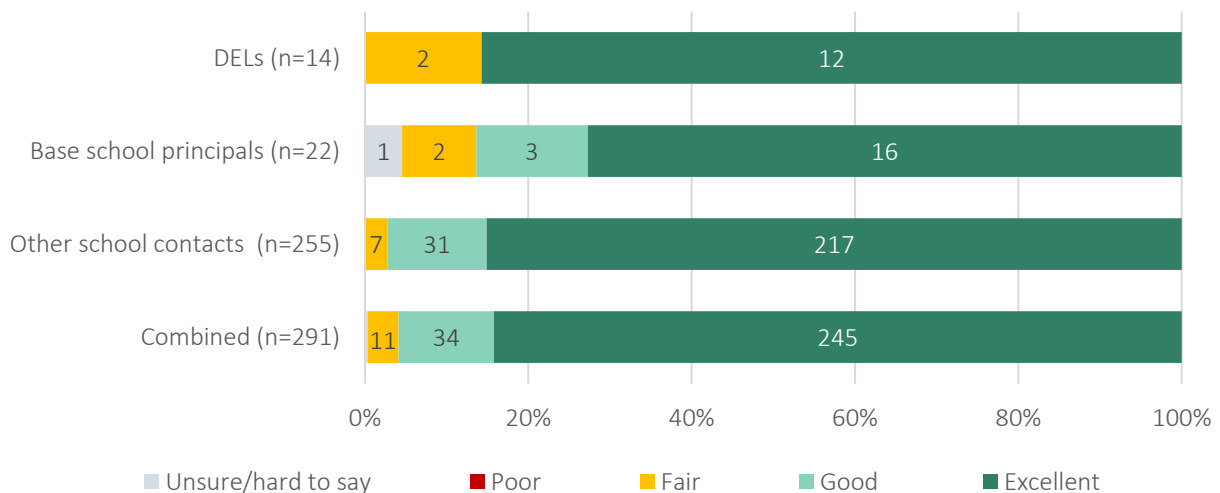
Areas of focus for practice development could include working effectively with school leaders and strategies for supporting schools with goal setting and evaluation for EAL/D education practice.

3.2 Detailed results

Perceived quality of the support provided

The vast majority of stakeholders reported that EAL/D education leaders have provided *excellent* (83%) or *good* (12%) support. Base School Principals were a little more hesitant than others on this measure.

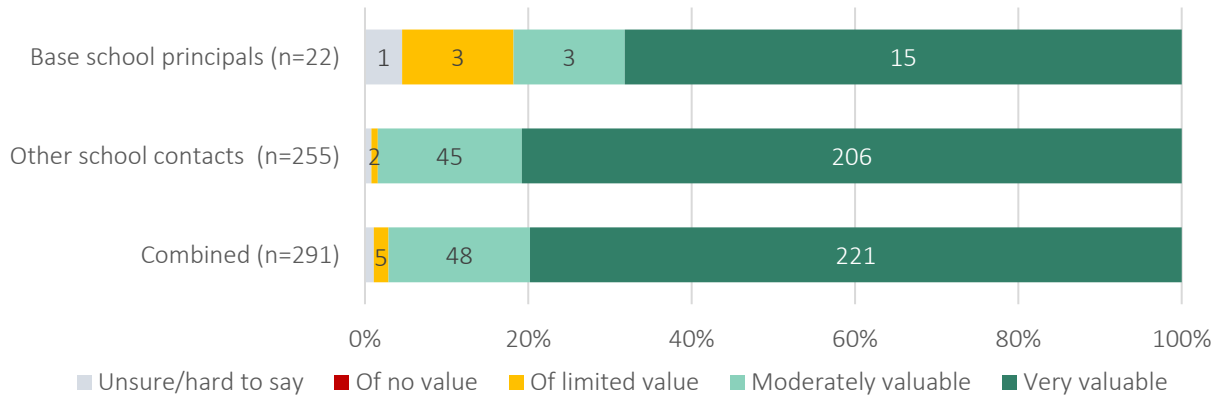
Figure 4: Based on what you have seen and experienced over 2021 and/or 2022, how would you describe the overall quality of support provided by the EAL/D education leader?



Perceived value of the support provided

School-based stakeholders also spoke highly of the value that this support has delivered to their approach to EAL/D education in the school (80% *very valuable*, 17% *moderately*). Again, a couple of Base School Principals were less impressed than their peers.

Figure 5: Thinking about your school’s approach to EAL/D education as a whole, would you say the support provided by the EAL/D Education Leader so far has been...



Note: n=277 school-based respondents only; question not asked of DELs.

How well supported stakeholders feel

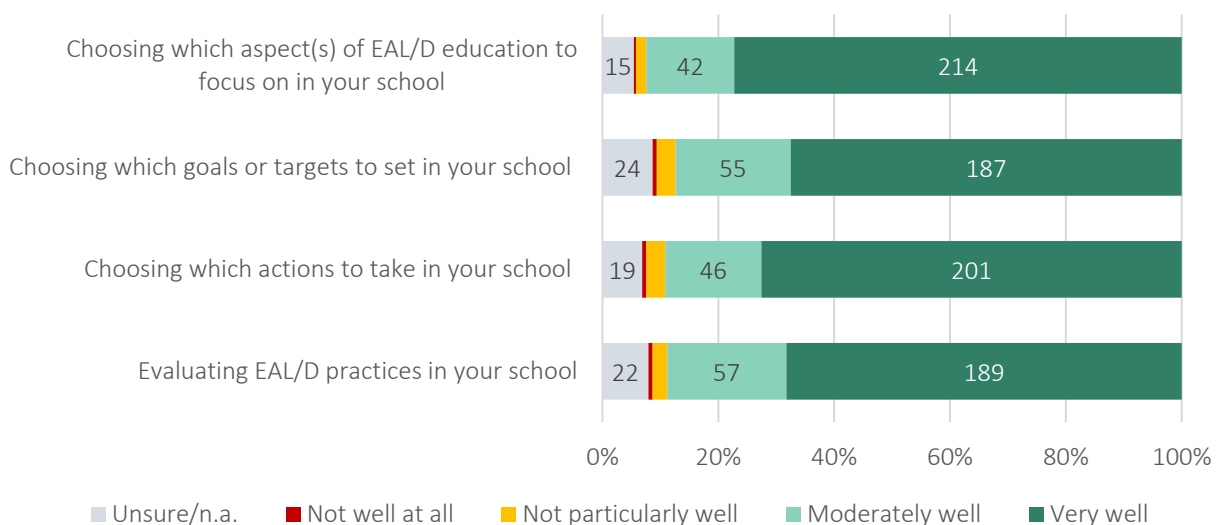
Most stakeholders reported feeling well supported in:

- choosing which aspect(s) of EAL/D education to focus on (77% *very well*, 15% *moderately well*)
- choosing which goals or targets to set (67% *very well*, 20% *moderately well*)
- choosing which actions to take (72% *very well*, 17% *moderately well*)
- evaluating EAL/D practices in their school (68% *very well*, 21% *moderately well*).

The particularly positive feedback about support with the diagnostic process appears to reflect both a greater opportunity to help in this regard (i.e. a smaller ‘unsure/n.a.’ responses) as well as this being a greater area of strength for leaders. Professional learning and practice sharing on goal setting and evaluation could be valuable investments as the program continues to mature.



Figure 6: How well supported has your school felt by the EAL/D Education Leader in...



Note: n=277 school-based respondents only; question not asked of DELs.

Perceived effectiveness of leaders’ work with teachers and school leaders

Over 90% of stakeholders considered EAL/D education leaders’ to have been effective when working with teachers, to build their capacity in EAL/D education (77% *excellent*, 16% *good*) (One illustration of practice here comes from Birrong GHS, whose case study highlights the action research approach they took in collaboration with their EAL/D education leader. This project focused on framing their HSC assessment tasks with a EAL/D lens:

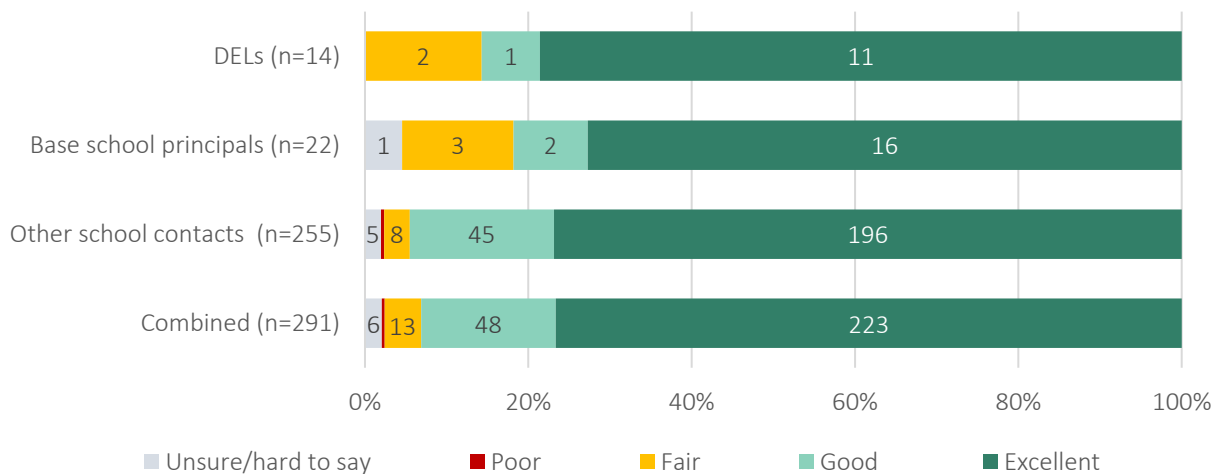
“...All participating teachers responded that they felt extremely confident and somewhat confident about enhancing assessment notifications and tasks for EAL/D learners following the professional learning session compared to only 40% prior to completing the professional learning session...”

Figure 7).

One illustration of practice here comes from Birrong GHS, whose case study highlights the action research approach they took in collaboration with their EAL/D education leader. This project focused on framing their HSC assessment tasks with a EAL/D lens:

“...All participating teachers responded that they felt extremely confident and somewhat confident about enhancing assessment notifications and tasks for EAL/D learners following the professional learning session compared to only 40% prior to completing the professional learning session...”

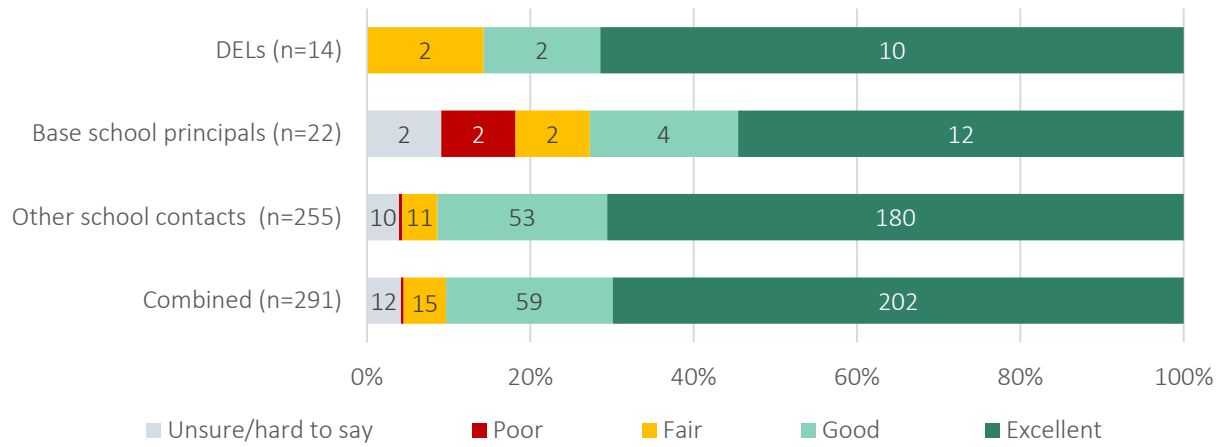
Figure 7: Based on what you have seen and experienced over 2021 and/or 2022, how would you describe the effectiveness of the EAL/D Education Leader’s work **with teachers**, to build their capacity in EAL/D education?



When asked about leaders’ effectiveness working with school leaders, in support of school improvement, feedback was still positive overall (70% *excellent*, 20% *good*) (Figure 8). However, the results were a little subdued compared with those above, and some Base School Principals raised questions about leaders’ capacity in this regard. These findings suggest that working effectively with school executives could be a worthwhile area of focus for ongoing professional development among the group, including peer-to-peer learning led by those who already hold this as a strong suit.



Figure 8: Based on what you have seen and experienced over 2021 and/or 2022, how would you describe the effectiveness of the EAL/D Education Leader’s work **with school leaders**, in support of school improvement?



4 Impact on EAL/D practices and learners

In what ways, and to what extent, has the strategy had an impact on EAL/D practices in schools and EAL/D student outcomes?

Focus questions	In what ways, and to what extent, has the strategy had an impact on EAL/D practices in schools and EAL/D student outcomes?
Methodological notes	<p>This section presents data from a range of sources, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the same stakeholder survey as was referenced in Section 3, as well as follow up consultation with Base School Principals and DELs who made themselves available before-and-after assessment of schools against the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework (26 schools) the case studies jointly prepared by leaders and schools.

4.1 Key findings

There are **good indications that the program has had a positive impact** on EAL/D practice and student outcomes. That said, drawing this inference is not without its limitations and there are exceptions to the rule.

Stakeholders reflected positively on the impact they have seen, in terms of:

- uplift in **understanding, motivation and capacity** (90%-94% *much stronger* or *a little stronger*, depending on the topic or practice area)
- **improvements in EAL/D practices** in their school or network (92%)
 - less in base schools than elsewhere – this usually stemmed from certain base schools already having strong practices prior to the arrival of the leader, and/or the leader’s focus mostly being in other schools in the network
 - less in parent and community engagement than in other aspects of the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework – noting that schools choose their own focus areas.

In the before-and-after assessments against the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework, two-thirds of the sampled schools (17 of 26) demonstrated **growth into a higher band**. This includes five that grew by +2 bands and two by a remarkable +3 bands, from meeting ‘minimum requirement’ to ‘excelling’ in two years.

When asked to explain the ‘most significant impact’ of the strategy in their own words, the key themes related to:

- growth in capacity of school staff
- pedagogical change, throughout the teaching and learning cycle
- system improvements at the school level
- cultural change – within school staff and also in how the school relates to the community
- collaboration – within and between schools.

4.2 Stakeholder perceptions of impact on understanding, motivation and capacity

Nine out of ten school-based stakeholders reported that their understanding, motivation and capacity in relation to EAL/D education leadership had lifted, as a consequence of the leaders’ work with them.

“Teachers are inspired to carry out important EAL/D strategies and pedagogy after [the leader’s] demonstrations. They feel supported and guided and ask more questions about EAL/D.”

“EAL/D education leaders are ambassadors, mediators, collaborators, and encouragers.”

“These people are an asset and resource within all of our schools. The development of programs, resources and initiatives has been invaluable.”

As seen in Figure 9, this includes uplifts in schools’:

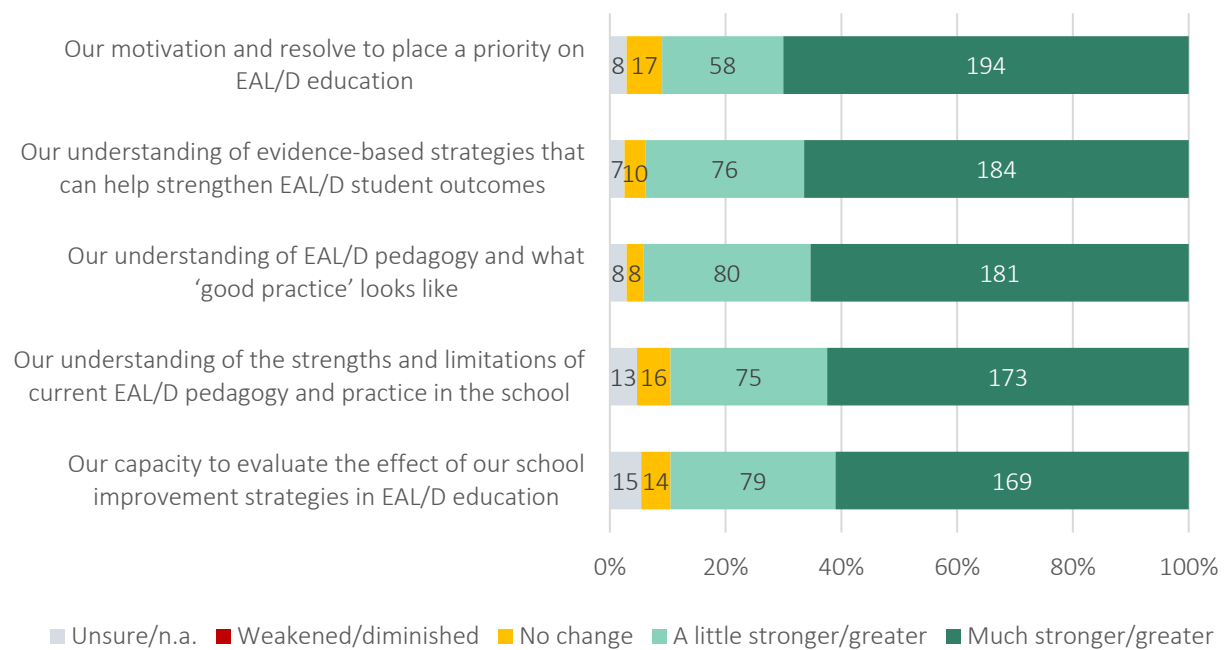
- motivation and resolve to place a priority on EAL/D education (70% *much stronger*, 21% *a little stronger*)
- understanding of evidence-based strategies that can help strengthen EAL/D student outcomes (66% *much stronger*, 29% *a little stronger*)
- understanding of EAL/D pedagogy and what ‘good practice’ looks like (65% *much stronger*, 29% *a little stronger*)
- understanding of the strengths and limitations of current EAL/D pedagogy and practice in the school (62% *much stronger*, 27% *a little stronger*)
- capacity to evaluate the effect of our school improvement strategies in EAL/D education (61% *much stronger*, 29% *a little stronger*).

The slight differential here between areas of capability reinforces the value of investing in leaders’ capacity around evaluative practice in EAL/D education improvement.



Detailed analysis (not shown in the chart) also reveals that Base School Principals were more conservative in their assessment of impact on this question: 73%-82% reported uplift (depending on the topic), compared with over 90% of other school-based contacts.

Figure 9: As a consequence of the EAL/D education leader’s work with your school, have you observed change in...



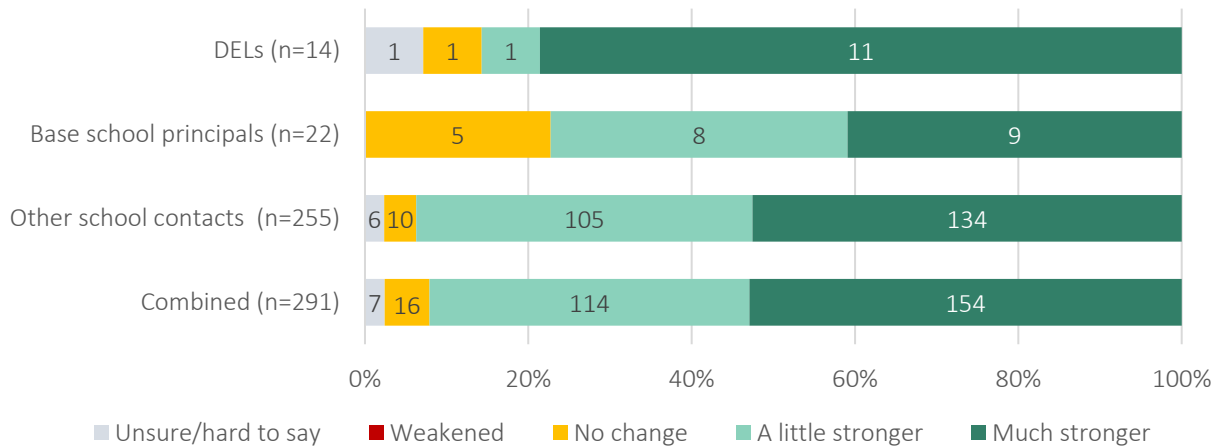
Note: n=277 school-based respondents only; question not asked of DELs.

4.3 Stakeholder perceptions of impact on EAL/D education practices

Over nine in ten (92%) of stakeholders said they had observed positive change in EAL/D practices in their school or network (53% *much stronger*, 39% *a little stronger*) (Figure 10).

- This includes 11 out of the 14 consulted DELs reporting *much stronger* practices in their network; an impressive result.
- However, five of the 22 Base School Principals reported no change. In most cases this stemmed from certain base schools already having strong practices prior to the arrival of the leader, and/or the leader’s focus mostly being in other schools in the network.

Figure 10: As a consequence of the EAL/D Education Leader’s work with your school/network, have you observed any change in the EAL/D practices in your school/network?



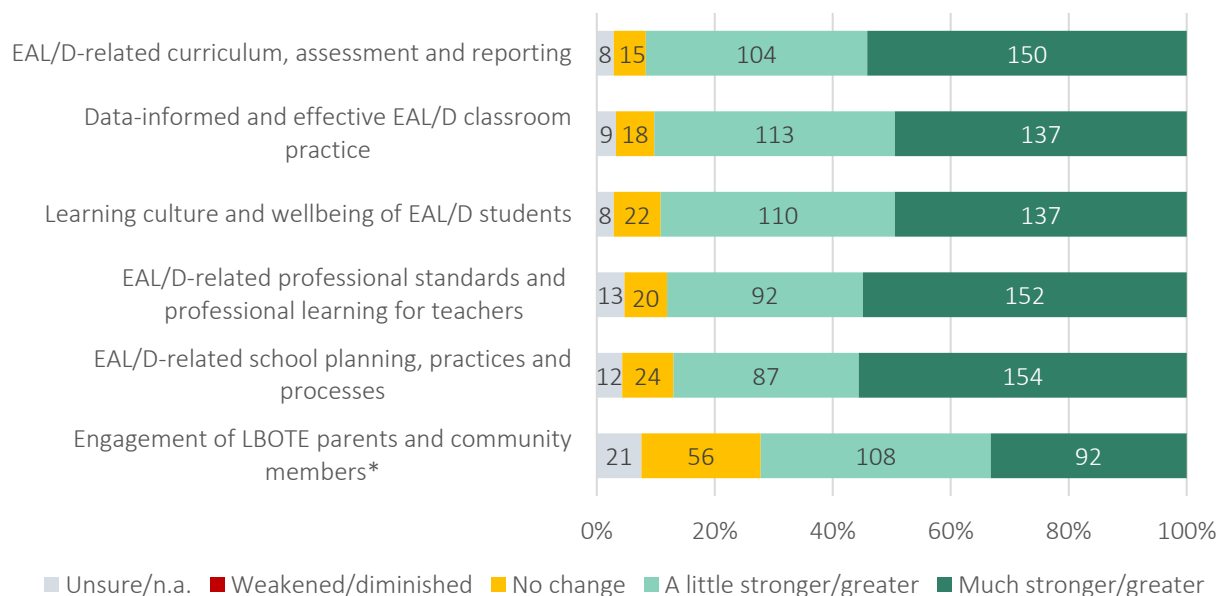
Note: School-based respondents only. * i.e. parents and community members with a language background other than English

When asked about the six categories in the NSW DoE EAL/D School Evaluation Framework (Figure 11), around nine in ten school-based stakeholders reported improvement in five of the domains:

- EAL/D-related curriculum, assessment and reporting (54% *much stronger*, 38% *a little stronger*)
- data-informed and effective EAL/D classroom practice (49% *much stronger*, 41% *a little stronger*)
- learning culture and wellbeing of EAL/D students (49% *much stronger*, 40% *a little stronger*)
- EAL/D-related professional standards and professional learning for teachers (55% *much stronger*, 33% *a little stronger*)
- EAL/D-related school planning, practices and processes (56% *much stronger*, 31% *a little stronger*).

Fewer schools (72%) reported in parent and community engagement (33% *much stronger*, 39% *a little stronger*; Figure 11). This is mostly (if not entirely) explained by school priorities (i.e. this aspect of the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework being a low priority for the participating schools), rather than any issue with the capacity of EAL/D education leaders to provide support in this area.

Figure 11: As a consequence of the leader’s work with your school, have you observed change in...



It is important to note here that stakeholder appreciation for the role is just as high in regional and rural areas as it is in Sydney and other large metropolitan centres. There are a different set of dynamics here: regional and rural student populations tend to have fewer EAL/D learners (total numbers and as a proportion of the school), but that means that regional and rural teachers tend to have less expertise and experience in meeting the needs of EAL/D learners. This can result in urgent ‘spikes’ of need for support from an EAL/D education leader, particularly if a new family or community group settle in the town. An added challenge here is that some of the leaders servicing regional and rural areas work on a fractional load (part time EAL/D education leader and part time teaching load).

4.4 Progress against the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework

The six domains in the EAL/D School Evaluation framework are organised into four bands of maturity, allowing schools to plot their starting point, set priorities and track progress over time. Most of the EAL/D education leaders on board during Term 4 of 2022 (26 of the 30) were able to provide longitudinal data from one school each, selecting a school that they had worked with over a two-year time period since Term 1 of 2021.

These schools had chosen to focus on various domains: more often Teaching (13) and Leading (11) than Learning (4). Nonetheless, the results (seen in Table 8) are encouraging:

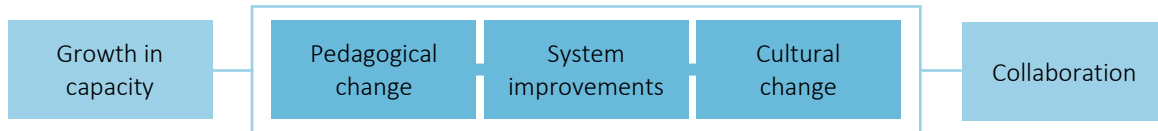
- Two-thirds (17) showed growth into a higher band – including five that grew by +2 bands and two by a remarkable +3 bands (from meeting ‘minimum requirement’ to ‘excelling’ within two years). The stories of some of these schools are illustrated in the case studies jointly prepared by the leaders and schools in late 2023, specifically:
 - Birrong Girls High School (+3 bands)
 - North Kellyville Public School (+2 bands)
 - Wentworthville Public School (+2 bands)
 - Murray Farms Public School (+1 band)
 - Bankstown South Infants School (+1 band)
- One-quarter (7) stayed in the same band – this reportedly includes some schools that showed growth *within* their band.
- The remaining two showed what appears to be ‘backwards progress’ from ‘delivering’ to ‘minimum requirement’. Turnover of key staff in these schools is reportedly a common factor here, due to loss of EAL/D skills and momentum and (in some cases) forfeited gains. Schools also develop more knowledge over time, and some find that themselves better able to make an accurate assessment against the tool at the end point than they were at the start.

Table 8: Before and after assessment against the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework, for 26 participating schools

		2022 Term 4 (After)			
		Minimum Requirement	Delivering	Sustaining & Growing	Excelling
2021 Term 1 (Before)	Minimum Requirement	1	8	4	2
	Delivering	2	5	2	1
	Sustaining & Growing	0	0	1	0
	Excelling	0	0	0	0

4.5 Reported 'most significant impact' of the strategy

Stakeholders were asked to describe in their own words the 'most significant impact' of the strategy, if any, that they had observed in their network (for DELs) or their school (for school-based contacts). We also undertook a thematic analysis of the outcomes described in the case studies. Five main themes emerged – all of which are interlinked.



Growth in capacity

Stakeholders spoke often of EAL/D education leaders being “the local expert” or the “go to person” for support, guidance and expertise – not just within their school but across the network. The most significant impact, in their eyes, was the impact they had seen on the capacity of teachers and leaders, flowing from a range of targeted professional learning strategies.

“The EAL/D Education Leader has knowledge and skills that no-one in our school has. She has been guiding and mentoring me through everything, and has been vital in getting my school and I to the level that we are now.”

“Support with the new syllabus will be appreciated, as well as the support for growing numbers of refugee students across the network.”

Pedagogical change

One common consequence of this enhanced capacity has been in classroom-level teaching practices, with teachers becoming more confident and skilled in:

- gathering, interpreting and using data to understand the learning needs of their EAL/D students
- adjusting their practice in order to meet these learning needs, using well-evidenced and effective teaching and learning strategies
- monitoring student performance and adjusting their programming to suit.

As one illustration of practice, the Wentworthville Public School case study describes how the EAL/D education leader “has supported the school community via direct modelling of lessons, resourcing and whole staff professional learning to embed a high impact and consistent approach to vocabulary development...”. The reported impact of this support has included:

- students becoming much more aware of Tier 2 words, by trying to think of more interesting synonyms to include in their writing
- an expansion of student vocabulary, evident in their writing and during presentations
- students’ enthusiasm to share their vocabulary knowledge with classmates, and willingness to ask for information about new words or words they are unsure of.

This is evidenced not just in self-report feedback from teachers, but also in some instances through classroom observations. The uplift speaks to the spirit of high impact professional learning, with teachers supported not just to learn *about* something new but to apply it in their practice, ‘walking the talk’ until it becomes second nature.

“The support has been provided in a collaborative and friendly manner that promotes deep engagement by leaders and classroom teachers.”

That said, not all of the investment in pedagogical practice change delivers its potential returns, and there is reportedly always more work to do:

- The loss or lack of trained EAL/D teachers continues to be a problem.
- If the focus on supporting EAL/D is not supported by a timetabled allocation, leaders report that EAL/D teachers are often called upon to cover other classes (a particular challenge given current workforce shortages).
- Additionally, experienced and effective EAL/D teachers are a valued commodity and often these staff may gain promotion or choose to move on to other attractive roles (e.g. closer to home). Outside of the EAL/D education leadership strategy, there are few career pathways for EAL/D teachers into executive positions.

System improvements

Another common consequence of this enhanced capacity has been in schools developing effective processes and practices to identify and support E/ALD students.

“Placing an EAL/D lens on existing structures within the school.”

At the most fundamental level, in some cases the work of the leaders has meant that schools are now compliant with the mandatory reporting requirements of the system. This has meant that these schools are now able to report accurately on the English language proficiency level of EAL/D enrolments thus ensuring effective funding to support students.

Cultural change

Stakeholders also spoke of EAL/D education becoming seen in schools as more of a shared responsibility; ‘everyone’s business’ rather than a priority only for certain staff (e.g. EAL/D teachers).

“The regular and ongoing support provided [the leader] has had significant impact in focusing on the needs of EAL/D students and how best we can support their growth as a whole school.”

Another reported aspect of cultural change around EAL/D education relates to community engagement in the school. One innovative example of this was engagement of EAL/D parents and community through the use of QR Codes that link to video translations of important messaging in the school.

“Communicating with low literacy parents and empowering them to make decisions to get better outcomes for their children... families are better supported therefore students are getting better outcomes.”

Collaboration

Collaborative practice weaves in and out of the other four themes, emerging as a leadership strategy for personal effectiveness, an enabler of capacity building, evidence of its effect, and a consequence of the cultural change that flows. Key dimensions of collaboration flowing from the project include:

- EAL/D education leaders engaging collaboratively with teachers, school leaders and system leaders
- development and consolidation of EAL/D teams that are able work cohesively and persuasively to drive practice change in the school
- other enhanced collaboration *within* schools, e.g. with instructional leaders such as Assistant Principals Curriculum and Instruction, particularly on the implementation of the new curriculum (where there is little explicit information about how to ensure that the needs of EAL/D students are being met during the implementation stage)

“[There is a] continuous need for EAL/D pedagogy to be at the forefront of supporting students. [I see a] need for EAL/D support in curriculum implementation. The new curriculum does not

reference EAL/D pedagogy strongly and this initiative would support possible ... implementation of the syllabus."

- finding and nurturing EAL/D advocates in schools by working closely with EAL/D teachers and teams
- enhanced collaboration *between* schools within the network around EAL/D education practices –

"This position has given incredible support to me and the schools in my network. They have become an integral part of my network's operations."

"There is a sense collegial support across the network with a focus on the unique EAL/D demands within the network."

In relation to this last point about collaboration between schools, a number of leaders have found it valuable to develop or support EAL/D education networks between schools. One example of this can be seen in the 2023 Girraween Numeracy Project, which brought together five primary schools and two high schools in one Principal network in a shared focus on enhancing the vocabulary and numeracy skills of Stage 3 and 4 students (see Wentworthville Public School case study for details).

A particularly important strategy in metropolitan areas where the demand for leaders' time is high, these networks:

- allow leaders to get to more teachers than they could otherwise
- allow leaders to drive pedagogical change in a greater number of settings
- provide an opportunity for local EAL/D teachers to model their leadership capacity and grow a community of learners.

In a number of instances, EAL/D education leaders have supported teachers to play an integral role setting up and promoting these EAL/D networks (sometimes known as 'EAL/D Connect' networks), co-presenting and leading professional learning, leading networks and encouraging other teachers to open up classrooms for observations. These in-school champions have often become the key to sustaining improvement, as well as potentially becoming future EAL/D education leaders themselves.

5 Future demand

Focus questions	Do stakeholders perceive a need for ongoing capacity building in EAL/D education in NSW public schools? What situation would schools be in if the strategy came to an end in 2023?
Methodological notes	This section presents draws on stakeholder feedback about ongoing need (the same sample as used in Section 3 and 4). The Department’s assessment of ongoing need also needs to be informed by modelling of demographics, particularly overseas migration.

5.1 Key findings

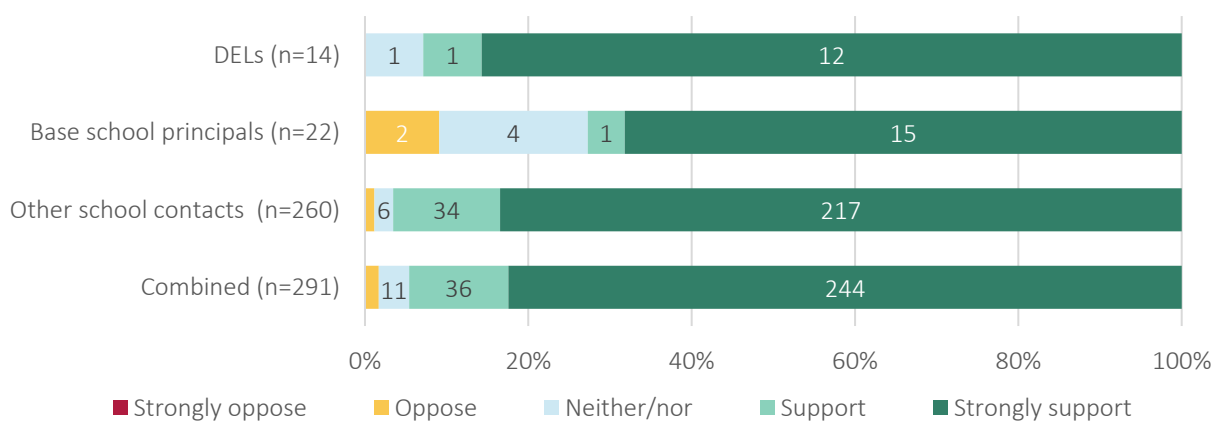
A clear majority of stakeholders (95%) supported the idea of extending the EAL/D Education Leadership strategy (82% *strongly support*, 12% *support*).

5.2 Support for extension

When asked in Term 1 of 2023 whether they were in favour of extending the EAL/D Education Leadership strategy into 2024 and beyond, 95% of stakeholders said they would support this direction (82% *strongly support*, 12% *support*). The main arguments offered for extending the strategy relate to:

- the observed benefits that have flowed from school- and network-level capacity building and collaboration to date (see Section 4)
- the importance of the role in driving quality practice in the school or network
- the need for the skills and knowledge that leaders bring
- a feeling that the leaders’ work has “*only just begun*” and that the momentum created would be lost if the strategy drew to a close
- staff turnover in schools resulting in an ongoing need to keep investing, as schools constantly lose skills and expertise
- a sense of growing need among schools and networks where EAL/D enrolments are increasing.

Figure 12: Would you support or oppose the extension of the EAL/D Education Leader strategy into 2024 and beyond?



The arguments offered for not extending the strategy (by those few that held this view) related to:

- their school already performing at a high level in this area
- their school having now developed teacher capacity, with the changes being sustainable
- the appeal of returning effective teachers to the classroom (in a climate of workforce shortage)
- freeing up resources for other priorities.

5.3 The consequences of not extending

Stakeholders were also asked to predict what impact (if any) it would have on their school or network if the initiative drew to a close at the end of 2023.

Consistent with the findings outlined above, the dominant theme was one of potential loss.

“Our schools would lose an incredible resource, impacting some of our most vulnerable students.”

“We would lose a very valuable resource. [Leader] has been exceptional in her role and worked extremely well with the executive at our school to strengthen the EAL/D strategy in our school and improve the learning outcomes of all students through a focus on EALD evidence-based practices.”

“It would negatively impact plans to improve outcomes for EAL/D students and support the EAL/D families because we need support to help develop strategies for our whole school approach to EAL/D. The lockdown period thwarted progress and now [that] we have rising numbers of refugee students again we need this extra support.”

“My network of schools will continue to have a high rate of EAL/D learners. It will also continue to have a high turnover of staff within the schools due to natural attrition, maternity leave and promotion. [The EAL/D Education Leader] provides constant assessment of each of my schools and assesses where they are on their journey and then provides the differentiated support they require.”

5.4 Expansion beyond current scope

The current EAL/D education leadership strategy is a targeted one, focusing on areas of greatest numeric concentration of EAL/D learners (as of 2020).

One of the limitations of this evaluation is that we have only consulted within the current network of stakeholders, i.e. schools where leaders have *already* engaged and DELs of networks that *already* have a leader at work in their schools.

Equity of access to this resource was raised as a common issue by stakeholders with knowledge of the statewide landscape, with questions about:

- whether, given the value delivered so far, there is any reason why the Department would not want the advice and support of EAL/D education leaders to be available statewide
- if this were to become a reality, how it could be resourced sustainably.



6 The model

Focus questions	<p>How suitable has the model been during 2021-23 (strengths, weaknesses)? What factors have enabled or limited its implementation? How have schools made the most of the opportunities available?</p> <p>What aspects of the current strategy respond well to the ongoing need? How could the model be strengthened to respond better to the anticipated future need?</p>
Methodological notes	<p>This section presents data from a range of sources, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the same stakeholder survey as was referenced in Section 3, as well as follow up consultation with Base School Principals and DELs who made themselves available • consultation with leaders and the program team • the case studies jointly prepared by leaders and schools.

6.1 Key findings

The strategy is seen as having strong alignment with school obligations (74%-75% *very well aligned*, 15-18% *moderately well aligned*).

Alignment with school planning is there, but could potentially be strengthened and made more explicit through a re-working of the common support planning template.

Enablers of effective practice included

- striking the right priorities for which schools to work with, when, and how
- positioning of the role to have influence, e.g. through the Deputy Principal role grading and having DELs and Base School Principals champion the role locally
- having the leaders based in schools, so they are close to the action
- having a full toolkit of resources that can be used to support schools, meeting them ‘where they are at’ and bringing evidence-informed practice to the fore throughout.

DELs and Base School Principals consider their local management requirements of the scheme to be reasonable, for the most part.

A refreshed communication strategy for the scheme would be worth developing, particularly for newly appointed or relieving DELs and principals who have not worked with an EAL/D education leader to date.

Working relationships between EAL/D education leaders and the coordinating team in Multicultural Education are strong overall.

The accountability framework for leaders is somewhat complex, as their PDP is the responsibility of their Base School Principal but the coordinating team in Multicultural Education sets the agenda around their workflow and practice. Timely and relevant feedback is more readily available for some leaders than others.

The process by which leaders report on their activity and impact is in need of review, ensuring that it:

- is efficient for leaders to use day-to-day
- suits different operating contexts and scales of work
- gives the coordinating team in Multicultural Education an accurate picture, efficiently
- supports healthy accountability locally (with principals, DELs, etc.)
- supports healthy accountability within EAL/D education leadership team.

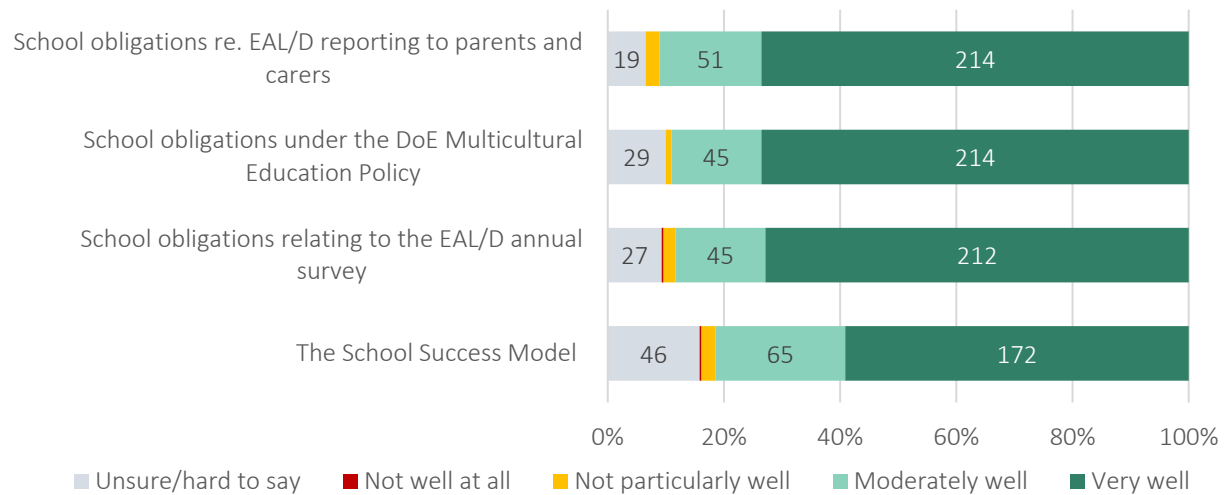
6.2 Alignment with statewide policies and structures

Alignment with school obligations

Around nine in ten stakeholders reported that, in their experience, the EAL/D education leaders strategy has aligned well with school obligations:

- relating to EAL/D reporting to parents and carers (74% *very well aligned*, 18% *moderately well*)
- under the DoE Multicultural Education Policy (74% *very well aligned*, 15% *moderately well*)
- relating to the EAL/D annual survey (73% *very well aligned*, 15% *moderately well*).

Figure 13: In your experience, how well aligned has the EAL/D Education Leaders strategy been with...



Note: n=291 consolidated responses from DELs, Base School Principals and other school-based contacts.

Alignment with the school strategic planning

A majority of stakeholders (four in five) also reported that the EAL/D education leaders strategy has aligned well with the School Success Model (59% *very well aligned*, 22% *fairly well aligned*) (Figure 13, noting that the SSM was still in place at the time of the survey). For example, the case study of Murray Farms Public School highlights how the school developed an EAL/D education growth strategy and integrated this into its Strategic Improvement Plan. This strategy was developed in consultation with the EAL/D education leader, and its location in the SIP has meant that it is closely monitored and evaluated. The resulting continuous improvement process has enabled iterative changes to be made to the strategy, e.g. delivering a workshop for Assistant Principals and EAL/D teachers following staff survey results that showed an interest in unpacking EAL/D enhancements in teaching programs.

Behind the scenes, alignment of the program with school strategic planning is a live topic of discussion for the leaders themselves. Leaders are quick to note the importance of aligning school investment in EAL/D education with the objectives of the school strategic plan. Without this alignment, leaders have observed that it is more challenging to create the visibility, urgency and accountability needed for a sustained and collaborative effort over the long term.

This has important implications for strategy as a leader.

- One ideal situation is where the leader is already working with the school as they are gearing up to develop their strategic plan; this allows EAL/D education to be appropriately positioned within the school’s four-year priorities.
- If a school’s strategic plan has already been written and EAL/D education has not been featured explicitly, leaders have still found ways to identify and highlight the points of alignment. One

example here is by identifying the nature and extent of the contribution that EAL/D student growth will make to overall school targets.

- Naturally, this work requires leaders to have a strong skillset in collaborating with school executive teams and a strong understanding of school strategic planning processes. Both of these are relevant priorities for leader recruitment (in the role description and selection criteria) and Performance and Development Plans (PDPs).



It also has important implications for the tactics and tools that leaders use in their work with schools:

- As leaders have worked with their school-based colleagues, many have found distinct advantages in aligning their language, documentation and working rhythms with those of school strategic planning. This should be encouraged, for the reasons noted above.
- Some leaders have developed their own templates for documenting the school’s objectives and strategies, along with the support they are providing as leaders. This is because they have found that the common template for the program does not deliver or express the kind of alignment that their school colleagues need to see, or set the right tone for the working relationship. Several schools reportedly became defensive when they saw this tool, indicating that they felt they were being audited and that the document was part of an accountability process. So rather than providing a way of supporting schools and strategically planning their intervention it became a barrier to engagement:

“...they were not really sure what the purpose is and we felt like we are doubling up our work.”

“The tools that the EALD educational leaders are supposed to be using to inform SIPs and to do implementation and progress monitoring... They're just not up to the same level of other tools that are being used in the department.”

- As the common planning template is an important reporting tool across the program, some leaders have found themselves documenting their work twice – once in a way that is school-facing, and then again in a way that is program-facing. This is inefficient, and an important aspect of program management to streamline such that the one support planning process works for both audiences. This is picked up in Section 6.5 (under the heading of *Accountability and feedback*).



6.3 Enablers and effective practices

This evaluation has identified several enabling factors, processes and practices that enhance leaders’ capacity to have a positive impact on EAL/D education practices and outcomes in schools.

Patience and prioritisation

Many leaders have found advantage in working with the willing, at least in the first instance. This is not just a demand management strategy, when working in a context of high demand. It is also a strategy for earning the confidence of certain schools that may initially be hesitant to engage, as it allows leaders to:

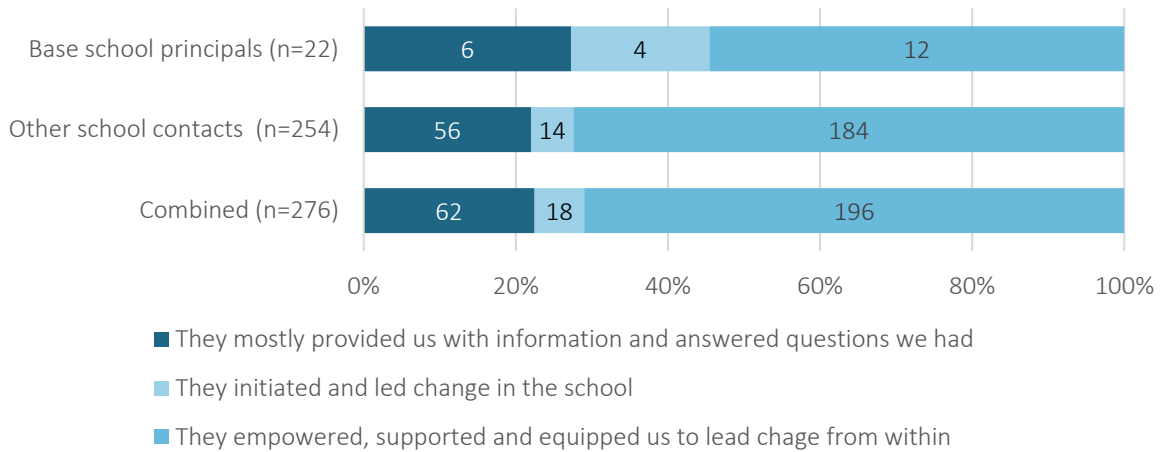
- demonstrate their deep knowledge
- prove themselves as credible, informed and responsive
- let the results speak for themselves as a way of promoting the scheme.

In the survey feedback we received for this evaluation (Figure 14):

- most school-based respondents (over three-quarters) described EAL/D education leaders as playing an *empowering and supporting role in their school, equipping them to lead change from within*. This is consistent with the core philosophy and spirit of the program, as a capacity building initiative.
- A handful reported a different kind of leadership role – one in which the leader was *responsible for initiating and leading change* in their school. This experience was more common in base schools.

- The remainder (around one in four) said their working relationship was more one of *providing information and answering questions*, rather than being deeply involved in the school’s EAL/D journey. For some leaders, this is a common starting place for their relationships with schools, allowing them to build credibility and connections which may grow into a deeper co-working relationship over time as need and opportunity present themselves.

Figure 14: Which of the following statements BEST describes your experience of working with the EAL/D Education Leader?



Once invited in to work with a school, leaders spoke of the need to work tactfully and strategically.

“Be hungry and humble. And remember to work with where they are at.”

Effective leaders were quick to stress that they are only there at the grace of the schools, and ensure that they build trust and grow credibility each step of the way.

Some leaders have adopted a tiered approach to supporting schools in their network or catchment areas, in which:

- their ‘tier three’ schools are independently implementing strategically planned and sustainable interventions that are reflected in the school’s SIP, and the leader’s role is more one of a critical friend
- their ‘tier 2’ schools working to develop pedagogical practices so that the school can support EAL/D learners in meeting literacy and numeracy targets such as the HSC minimum standards.
- their ‘tier one’ schools have fundamental and urgent needs:

“If you look at the EALD School evaluation framework, every single one of the schools we are big in working with are at minimum.”

Having a champion and positioning the role to have influence

The status of the role, as a Deputy Principal, has been helpful in:

- attracting qualified candidates to the position
- giving leaders access to schools and their planning and decision-making processes
- providing opportunities for teachers with deep EAL/D education expertise to continue specialising in this area as their career progresses.

For the credibility of the scheme, it is important that:

- DELs and Base School Principals understand the context of the Deputy Principal remuneration of the position, particularly given the differences in role and responsibility compared with Deputy Principal positions (e.g. the leaders do not have any direct reports)

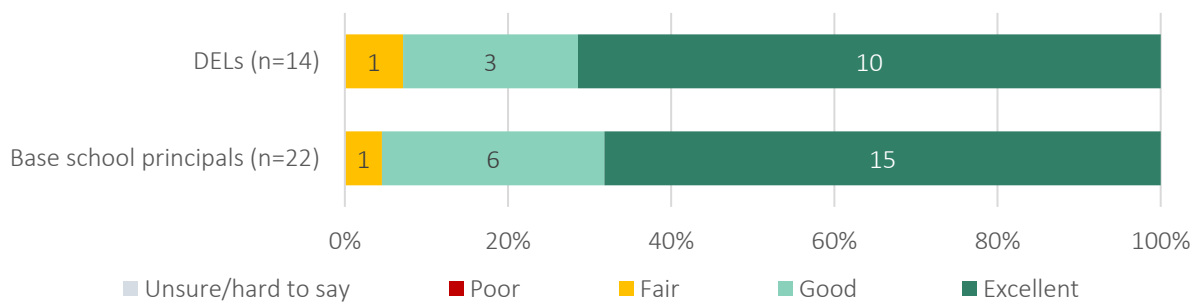
- leaders do operate effectively at a strategic level, ‘earning the rank’ day in and day out.

Since the start of the strategy back in 2021, effective working relationships with DELs and Base School Principals has been identified by leaders as an important enabler of building relationships with schools in the local area. DELs are invited to play an advisory role in the local implementation of the strategy, steering leaders’ focus in line with network priorities. In some instances these relationships and strategic planning at the network level have become highly developed; as an example see the case study of Cowpasture Network in Sydney’s South West. Similarly, Base School Principals also have the opportunity to play a facilitation and steering role in local implementation. Base School Principals also have line management responsibility for the EAL/D education leader based in their school.

Leaders spoke of needing to nurture their relationships with DELs and Base School Principals, and those that have not had a champion have found it far more difficult to get into schools and garner their support. The case study of the Cowpasture network notes the pivotal role of “leadership and advocacy... [with] executive members act[ing] as the EAL/D ‘flag bearers’ for their teams within their school.”. The case study goes on to describe how this “strategic approach ensured that EAL/D programs remained valued and intact, even during periods of high teacher turnover”.

More than nine in ten DELs and Base School Principals said they had *excellent* (two-thirds) or *good* (one-quarter) relationships with the EAL/D education leader/s in their network or school (Figure 15).

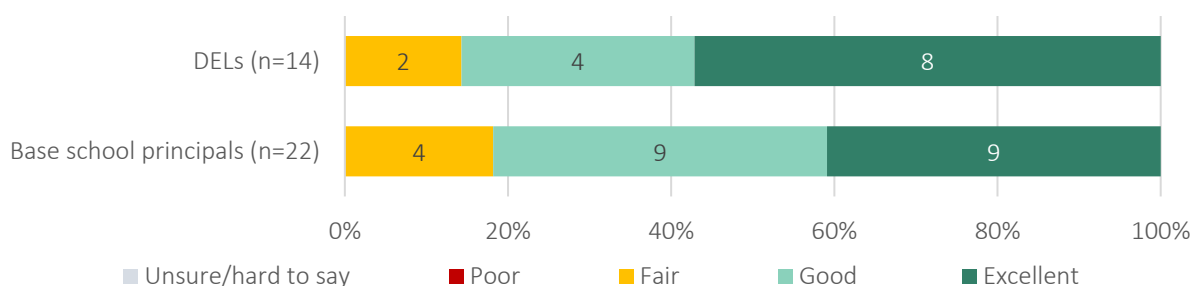
Figure 15: How would you rate your working relationship with the EAL/D education leader?



The reported quality of communication with leaders about their progress and any support they need was highly regarded by DELs (over half said this was *excellent*, with close to one-third *good*) (Figure 16). Some leaders have developed a network plan that they used to monitor their work and update their DEL on their work; this was seen to be a helpful approach, particularly for continuity and onboarding when a new or relieving DEL took over a network.

Base School Principals were also positive about communication with leaders, although not to the same extent (two in five *excellent*, two in five *good*) (Figure 16). For some leaders this may be an appropriate area of focus moving forward, noting that this is a two-way street and some leaders report having experienced more of an ‘open door’ for these conversations than others.

Figure 16: How would you rate the communication with the EAL/D education leader about their progress and any support they need from you?




Having the leaders based in schools

This has lent credibility to the role, helped leaders to retain their currency and enable high impact professional learning in classrooms, e.g. modelling quality pedagogical practice and team teaching.

That said, workforce shortages (during the COVID-19 pandemic and more recently) have placed pressure on some leaders to pick up teaching loads or administrative duties in their base schools; this risk needs careful management.

One suggestion to consider is the rotation of the position away from its current base school.

“I think our EAL/D leader has created capacity in our staff to continue the positive work. If the role was continued I think it would be valuable to be moved to different schools to be host schools... to allow deeper and stronger school connections between the EAL/D and a number of schools.”

Rotation would be best considered on a case-by-case basis, so as not to destabilise working relationships and contexts that are currently effective. 

Why, who, what, how


Some leaders described their way of working with schools as one that moved through the following stages of the conversation:

- *Why* – Ensuring the school understands its obligations to EAL/D learners, and also helping key advocates in the school community articulate the moral purpose and the case for change (with an equity lens)
- *Who* – Supporting the school to effectively identify their EAL/D students and reflect this in their reporting
- *What* – Bringing schools up to speed on what effective practice looks like in EAL/D education, and helping them set priority areas for action
- *How* – Hands-on and practical support that helps teachers build skills and confidence in applied EAL/D pedagogy.


A full toolkit

One good way to do this is for the leaders to have a strong understanding of the key tools to help schools understand where their current practice is at and how they can develop it. These include:

- the [EAL/D learning progression](#)
- the [EAL/D school evaluation framework](#)
- the [EAL/D Effective School Practices](#) research report and its accompanying reflection resource.

The virtual statewide staffroom for EAL/D education is seen as an excellent idea that has the potential to be a valuable resource. Some leaders suggested that navigation improvements in this resource could encourage more teachers to use it. Although this is outside the control of the EAL/D education leadership strategy, advocacy for improvement of this resource would be worth considering. 

Leaders need to innovate at times, in the ways they are working with schools, and tend to be generous in their willingness to share their self-generated resources and practice notes with each other. Work is underway to capture the opportunity for structured pooling and sharing of such resources. However, there are certain challenges for the coordinating team in terms of how to decide what is (and is not) ‘endorsed’, and striking the right balance between consistency and customisation.

A clearer pathway for developmental collaborative projects would help ensure the products are considered and available for wider use. 

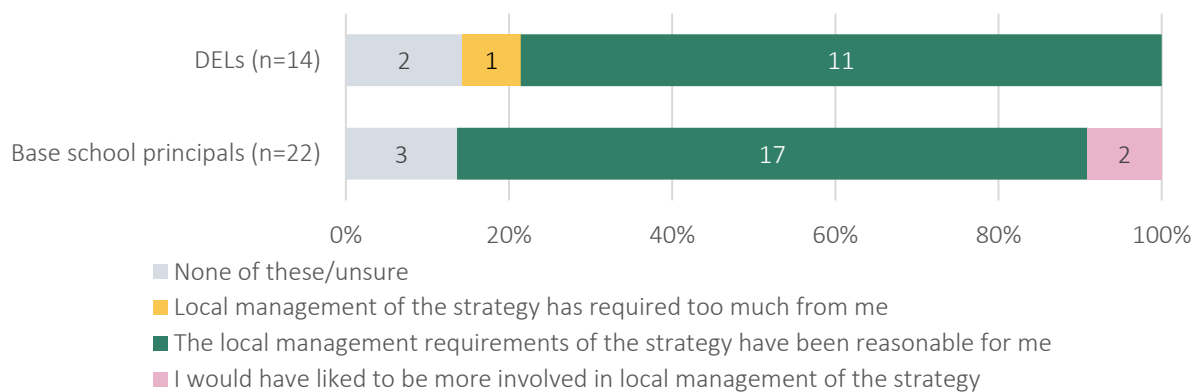
“Some of the professional learning and some of the resources that were being developed by this team and others in the broader team, they haven't been made available. We don't know where they are.”

6.4 Strategy management and promotion in schools

Local management requirements for DELs and Base School Principals

DELs and Base School Principals have generally found the local management requirements of the scheme to be reasonable for them (Figure 17), with only a handful indicating that local management has required *too much* of them (one DEL) or that they would like to have been *more involved* in local management (two Base School Principals).

Figure 17: Which of the following statements BEST describes your experience of strategy management at the local level?

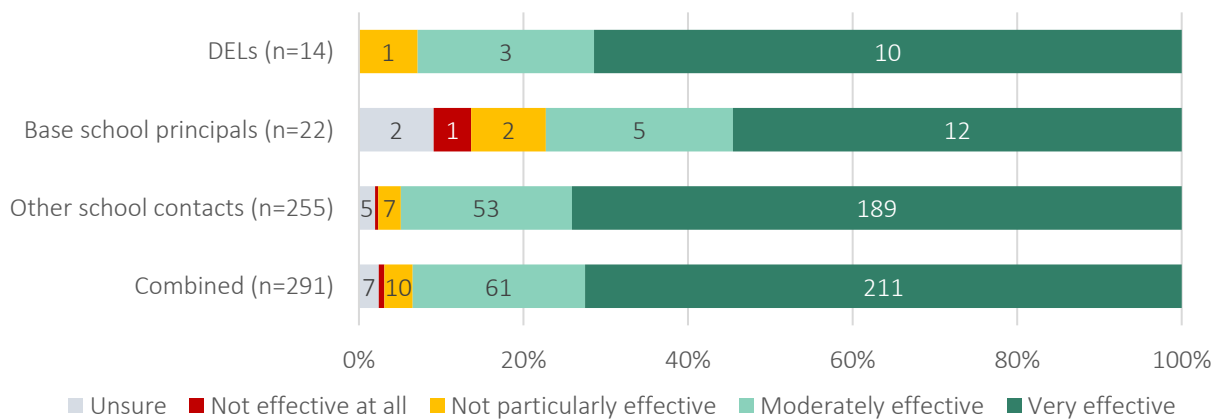


Communication and promotion of strategy


Over 90% of DELs and a similar portion of other school-based contacts reported effective local communication about what the EAL/D education leader strategy is and the support that it can provide (around 7 in 10 said it has been *very effective*, 2 in 10 *moderately effective*) (Figure 18).

Base School Principals painted a more mixed picture on this front: still positive, but not to the same extent. Three quarters said they had found the general communication about the strategy to be *very effective* (over half) or *moderately effective* (around a quarter) (Figure 18).

Figure 18: How effective has the communication been for schools in your network or local area, about what the EAL/D education leadership strategy is and the support that it can provide?



Nonetheless, most leaders reported that there remains some confusion about their role, and a number of those interviewed felt that the program could benefit from a re-launch. Information for principals and DELs is a priority, particularly for the benefit of newly appointed or relieving DELs and principals who have not worked with an EAL/D education leader to date.

The extension in 2024 provides an opportunity for some refreshed communication about the strategy. A common slide pack about the scheme would be helpful for leaders, noting that the story will be easier to tell now than it was back in 2021 when everything was new, particularly with the statistics about reach and value to date, as well as the case studies and showcase material as a resource. 

6.5 Broader strategy management, collaboration and coordination


Team connection and collaboration

The strategy was formed and launched under COVID-19 pandemic restrictions that prevented gathering in person. As noted in the 2021 evaluation, the establishment of whole-team cohesion and camaraderie under these conditions was a significant achievement. Regular online meetings are still held with the team as a whole, as well as periodic face-to-face gatherings. These are appreciated by the leaders, seen as both necessary and purposeful.

Additionally, leaders are all part of a geographic team that meets according to its own cadence. These smaller teams are reported to be an important source of support and encouragement in what can otherwise be a lonely role at times. The members act as critical friends, developing a sense of shared accountability, are a support with planning and delivering professional learning, as well as a sounding board and a source of wisdom or knowledge.


A member of the coordinating team from Multicultural Education is also part of these regional gatherings. Several leaders in rural and remote locations commented on the strength of this partnership and the role it plays in providing feedback, and supporting and coordinating their work.

Role statement

The role description for leaders was developed in 2020, prior to the launch of the program. It would be worth revisiting this document now that more is known about the nature of the work and the requirements, to ensure that it expresses expectations accurately and clearly. This would assist: 

- in helping drive clarity and consistency of role scope across the broader team of leaders
- as a communication tool with Base School Principals and DELs
- in appropriately focusing the Performance and Development Planning (PDP) process.

Accountability and feedback

The accountability framework for leaders is somewhat complex, as their PDP is the responsibility of their Base School Principal but the coordinating team in Multicultural Education sets the agenda around their workflow and practice. This is an inherent tension in the design in the program, and a consequence of the roles being school-based (which, as noted above, is an asset). 

Timely and relevant feedback is more readily available for some leaders than others:

- Some leaders are content with the feedback loops in place, both from practice sharing with their peers and ongoing reflection from their school-based colleagues in schools where they are working – particularly principals and DELs.
- Those based in the rural and regional areas particularly appreciate the constructive and purposeful feedback they receive from Multicultural Education on their work.

- Some leaders have an appetite for more personalised feedback from the coordinating team in Multicultural Education. This, they explain, would want to focus on substance and strategy of their work, and not simply scale:

“We hear: ‘Wow, you’re doing great, you’ve got heaps of school plans’. But we don’t often get genuine feedback on our impact.”

As noted earlier, the document known as the ‘school support planning template’ is one that needs some attention. The pain points with the current process include:



- clarity of purpose and audience – whether the template is designed primarily for use with schools or for reporting to Multicultural Education
- alignment with the term-by-term data collection of school contact activity
- alignment with school SIP structure (see Section 6.2)
- alignment with the school support cycle articulated in some of the early program documentation
- missing certain aspects of the work that EAL/D education leaders undertake, particularly when that work is across groups of schools rather than within one school
- general useability.

The process by which leaders report on their activity and impact is also in need of review, to ensure that it:

- is efficient for leaders to use day-to-day
- suits different operating contexts and scales of work
- gives the coordinating team in Multicultural Education an accurate picture, efficiently
- supports healthy accountability locally (with principals, DELs, etc.)
- supports healthy accountability within EAL/D education leadership team.



Other evaluation and monitoring priorities for the scheme include avoiding over-emphasising evidence of activity (e.g. events), with limited information on the impact of this work. Whilst some leaders have found the showcase / case studies to be time consuming (taking away from their work with schools), it is also seen as one of the best ways in which the leaders can shine a light on the deeper impact of their work that might otherwise be just ‘one school’ in the spreadsheet.

“It was when we went deep with a few, that’s when some principals really started saying, yeah, okay, I can see. I’d like that for my staff too.”

7 Discussion and recommendations

The implications from this report have, for the most part, already been actioned. This is a result of:

- the iterative nature of the interim evaluation reporting (written and verbal)
- the coordination team’s ongoing review and improvement cycles each term
- the ‘ear to the ground’ that the coordination team has in its working relationships with leaders.

For example:

- The interim reporting (submitted during Term 2 of 2023) was instrumental in enabling Multicultural Education to mount the argument that resulted in funding extension.
- The coordinating team consulted actively with leaders during Term 4 to inform recent process improvements in relation to support planning and reporting.

Accordingly, the recommendations here are accompanied by brief notes about some of the steps that the department has already taken.¹

Permanence and scale

When asked how the strategy could be improved, most stakeholders prioritised issues of permanence and scale rather than proposing substantive changes to operations. Extension of the scheme to the end of 2024 is consistent with this desire, and supported by the evidence of good quality support and positive impact to date.

Although we are not privy to the demographic modelling or forecasting of future student population, we encourage the department to consider two questions:

- Is the current demand for advice and support in EAL/D education likely to be short lived? If not, is there any sound argument *against* making the current roles permanent?
- Does the Department want the advice and support of EAL/D education leaders to be available statewide? If yes, how much growth is required, and how can this scale be resourced sustainably?

Base schools

Our findings support the department’s strategy of locating the leaders in base schools (Section 6.3). Should the positions extend beyond 2024, we encourage the department to consider rotating the positions from current base schools to others in their networks. This should be considered on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with the relevant DELs, so as not to destabilise working relationships and contexts that are currently effective. Two relevant considerations here:

- It may be preferable to have leaders in base schools that need additional expertise in this area, rather than those that are already strong performers.
- In base schools, a principal’s enthusiastic support for the model is a ‘must have’, both for the role and the leader in it.

Documentation of support planning

The evaluation has found that the templates for support planning need to be reviewed, to ensure that the planning documents support effective collaborative process with schools and other stakeholders, as well as gathering consistent program-level data on activity and reach (see section 6.2 and 6.5).

¹ The evaluation heard that when leaders embark on developmental collaborative projects (with each other and with colleagues in Multicultural Education), these need to have a clear pathway such that these efforts deliver in a timely manner (Section 6.3). The collaborative processes and responsive timeframes seen below indicate that this message has already been heard and taken on board.

In consultation with the leaders, the coordination team in Multicultural Education has now established a two-part approach to this documentation. This includes a *common front page*, setting out:

- the scale that the plan relates to (single school, network of schools or otherwise)
- classification of the support plan as ‘active’, ‘inactive’ or ‘completed’
- the goals of the plan, and agreed actions towards them
- for school-level plans
 - endorsed by principal (for visibility and engagement)
 - a drop-down box to show which strategic direction in the SIP the goals relate to.

Beyond that, EAL/D education leaders are free to use whatever planning scaffold works for them and their stakeholders, as long as it shows evidence of evaluation, reflection, and sound strategic planning.

An updated role statement

The evaluation heard that there would be merit in revisiting the role statement, as the scope and expectations of the role have become clearer over time (Section 6.5). The project lead in Multicultural Education has since sought and received feedback from the leaders and others on this matter, and updated the role statement accordingly.

Strategy-wide consistency

There are many ways in which the role of the EAL/D education leader requires innovation and customisation to local context. That said, the evaluation has also identified:

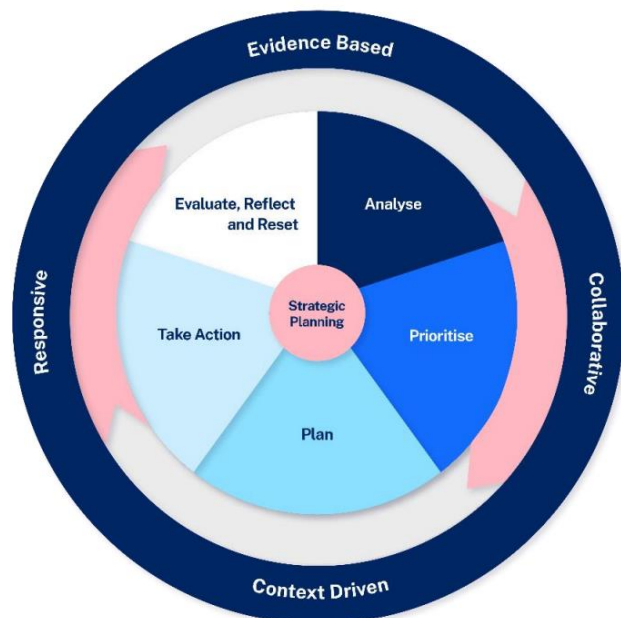
- consistent themes about effective practices and their enablers (Section 6.3 and 3.4)
- a need to ensure consistent understanding of scheme parameters and shared processes across the EAL/D education workforce – both for new starters as well as those familiar with the role.

Through a co-creation process, the coordination team and leaders have since worked together to re-articulate the *model of support* that EAL/D education leaders use in their work (Figure 19). This framework is one that can be used flexibly, for deep dives, spot fires or anything in between. Potential coaching questions and practical resources have also been collated under each phase of support, for leaders to use as a resource in their work.

The coordination team in Multicultural Education has also recently created an *operational handbook* for the leaders. This document includes:

- a statement of purpose for the strategy, along with the department’s EAL/D strategic directions
- the updated role statement and model of support (see above)
- explanatory notes on the new documentation process for support planning (see above)
- links to all the relevant resources and documents
- other notes on strategy implementation, representing the department and accountability.

Figure 19: EAL/D education leader model of support (2024)



Activity reporting

The evaluation has found a need to review the process by which leaders report on their activity and impact (section 6.5). Priorities here are for a system that:

- is efficient for leaders to use day-to-day
- suits different operating contexts and scales of work
- gives the coordinating team in Multicultural Education an accurate picture, with consistent definitions and counting rules for ‘engagement’ (see Section 2.3) and an efficient process for gathering a ‘year at a glance’ picture (see methodological note at the start of Section 2)
- supports healthy accountability locally (with principals, DELs, etc.) and across the EAL/D education leadership team.

In consultation with the leaders, the coordination team in Multicultural Education has since:

- arranged for all leaders to share their calendars with the program coordinator
- modified its data spreadsheet for activity reporting, with data fields mapping exactly to the cover page of the support plan template (see above) and one spreadsheet for the whole year, broken into terms (rather than a different spreadsheet for each term).

Although these changes to the spreadsheet are an improvement, reporting would ultimately be better served by a live database tool than a spreadsheet-based approach (Sections 2 and 6.5). Support from the department on this front has been sought, but thus far not been forthcoming.

Other reporting and accountability

Assessment of school-level progress using the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework has made a valuable contribution to this report, in terms of understanding and illustrating the impact of the strategy on EAL/D practices and learners (see Section 4.4). We recommend that this practice is continued, and potentially expanded to provide a greater sample size for analysis.

The accountability framework for leaders is somewhat complex, with their PDP being a responsibility of their base school principal but the coordinating team in Multicultural Education setting the agenda around workflow and practice (Section 6.5). In response to this, the coordinating team in Multicultural Education is currently in the process of developing PDP guidelines for the leaders.

Communication about the strategy

Extension of the strategy in 2024 provides an opportunity for some refreshed central communication, including a common slide pack that leaders can use with their local stakeholders (Section 6.4). At the time of writing, a communications plan is currently in development, including guidance for principals and DELs about how they can position and support leaders to optimise their impact.

Ongoing professional development for the leaders

The EAL/D education leadership team already has a healthy culture of self-directed professional development, including peer-to-peer learning led by those who have strengths in areas where their colleagues are seeking to grow. Potential focus areas here include practical tactics for:

- supporting schools with EAL/D education-related goal setting (see Section 3.2)
- supporting schools with evaluation of progress towards their EAL/D goals (see Section 3.2 and 4.2)
- working effectively with school executives and school strategic planning (see Section 3.2 and 6.2)
- clear communication with base school principals about progress (Section 6.3).

The coordination team has also made some ‘how to’ videos to support frequently asked questions that they receive from leaders (e.g. navigating the spreadsheet, using outlook calendars effectively).