

School Leadership Institute Highlights | S1 2024





Acknowledgement of Country

We recognise the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we learn, work and live, paying respect to Elders past and present as teachers of knowledge, songlines and stories. We strive to ensure every NSW Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander learner achieves their potential through education.



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Overview

The NSW School Leadership Institute (SLI) provides leadership development programs and support for current and future school leaders. We offer a range of leadership induction and development programs, on-demand learning, online resources and other opportunities for leaders.

Our vision is to enhance the capabilities of all educational leaders in NSW public schools, so they have the greatest impact on teacher and student learning. Our mission is to provide world-class, evidence-informed, future-focused leadership development programs and resources to support school leaders at every stage of their career.

This Highlight Report for Semester 1 2024 captures the impact the SLI has had on NSW public education and the range and reach of our leadership programs, resources and opportunities for leaders across the state.

The SLI's professional learning (PL) options have continued to grow this semester. A greater number of people have engaged with most of the established programs and resources, while new opportunities have been added to the suite of offerings.

A total of 369 people engaged with the Principal Leadership Learning Program during Semester 1 – this surpassed the number of participants across all 4 terms in 2023. Members of the SLI team spent a significant amount of time travelling to the state's north and south delivering the new Regional, Rural and Remote Middle Leaders Program. As part of the department's Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy, the program provides middle leaders in public schools across NSW with the opportunity to participate in face-to-face and online evidence-informed learning and to network with colleagues. The SLI also offered leadership learning sessions for directors, educational leadership (DELs) during Semester 1 2024.

The quality of our work has again been demonstrated in the evaluation data for each of our offerings, with consistently high numbers of leaders reporting the SLI's work met their learning expectations and needs. Overall, our programs receive high or very high satisfaction ratings. We use feedback from participants to continuously refine and improve our work, ensuring we continue to offer world-class programs.

SLI Development Continuum



360° Leadership Survey

There were 905 registrations for the SLI's 360° Leadership Survey in Semester 1 2024. This represented leaders from 436 schools and 106 principal networks.

The survey is a valuable tool to help leaders focus on areas of development and build on their strengths, using feedback from their peers and supervisors. Leaders who participate in the survey receive a detailed report based on the survey responses, which aids in developing a personalised plan.

A total of 5059 evaluators, including 646 school leaders as subjects, 824 supervisors, and 3589 peers, have actively engaged by completing a 360° evaluation during Semester 1. More than 83% of school leaders (639) have received their report.

This data continues to indicate there is scope for the 360° Leadership Survey to support more schools across the NSW public education system.

Notably, 109 school leaders have completed the 360° Leadership Survey for a second time, with at least 12 months having passed since their initial survey. Their report provides data for comparison and highlights areas of growth and areas that have decreased in rating.

Evaluation data shows:

- 87% of school leaders completed the survey with the intention of developing their leadership capacity and capabilities
- 73% undertook the survey to establish the current status of their leadership behaviours
- 62% intend to use the survey to support their Performance Development Plan (PDP) process
- 42% engaged with the survey as they aspire to formal leadership opportunities.

The high level of engagement and the positive intentions behind the survey participation underscore its importance in the ongoing efforts to enhance educational leadership.



“The 360° survey was valuable in linking my current strengths and areas of development to leadership behaviours and allowed me to consider what strengths I could leverage.”

360° Leadership Survey participant

Teacher Leaders

School Leadership Identification Framework

The School Leadership Identification Framework (SLIF) is being delivered with a more formal and streamlined structure of learning in 2024 than in previous years. This new structure includes accredited PL and the offer of a certificate of completion for participants who engage in all 6 stages of the PL.

The positive impact this new approach had on initial engagement is evident from the 399 participants who completed Stage 1 of the PL during Semester 1. According to pre-survey data, participants were a mix of classroom teachers (41%), middle leaders (31%), and other positions, including principals (16%). This reinforces the need for both universal and differentiated learning to cater to diverse needs of the audience.

Learning satisfaction for the live PL sessions remains strong in areas of relevance (90%), usefulness of activities (92%), and intention to apply the learning (95%). However, participants found the role of the PL in supporting them to find a suitable mentor to be less effective at 79%.

Data gathered from other participant feedback also highlights barriers to identifying mentors in some school settings. We are reviewing the program structure to enable the selection of a mentor to occur earlier in the SLIF Development Cycle.

The newly introduced Professional Learning Networks were rated as useful by 94% of participants. However, only 73% agreed that they had a network of peers to engage with to support their leadership development, indicating further work could be done to support networks to flourish.

Among the classroom teachers in the program, 65% strongly agreed and 23% somewhat agreed with the statement “I aspire to formal middle leadership”, confirming the program’s standing as a pathway for career progression. Nearly all these participants identified the development of leadership skills as the predominant reason for participating in the program. These findings underscore the program’s rationale for developing both the quality and quantity of leadership aspirants.



“SLIF sessions encourage reflective practice by prompting me to critically analyse my leadership practices, identify areas for improvement, and develop action plans to address them.”

SLIF participant

Middle Leaders

Middle Leader Induction Conference

The Semester 1 Middle Leader Induction (MLI) Conference for newly appointed and long-term relieving assistant principals and head teachers was held on 24-25 June, 2024. The conference aimed to enhance knowledge of middle leadership roles, practices, and self-awareness. Attendance was high, with 243 participants on the first day and 239 on the second. The high levels of attendance can be attributed to the removal of the prerequisite e-learning course for participation in the online conference.

Participants held diverse middle leader positions, including both first-time and long-term relieving assistant principals and head teachers. SLI team members and 38 presenters from 8 internal business units led seminars across the 2 days of the conference. There was a high response rate to our surveys, capturing 200 responses on day 1 and 209 on day 2, providing us with a strong basis to understand the perception of impact of the induction program.

Pre and post-conference surveys indicated substantial growth in participants' understanding of key concepts, with significant ratings for the usefulness of each seminar and their influence on future practices. Key sessions such as Leading with Moral Purpose, the Role of Middle Leaders, and Leading an Inclusive School received overwhelmingly positive feedback, with 99% of participants agreeing the sessions were beneficial.

Satisfaction levels were also high, averaging 8.32 on day 1 and 8.45 on day 2 using a 10-point scale. Participants suggested improvements such as more networking opportunities and additional practical content. Pre and post-conference surveys revealed profound impacts on understanding the middle leader role, middle leader practices, and self-awareness, with notable increases shifting to into the desired deep understanding area.

Concluding feedback highlighted the conference's effectiveness in providing support, resources, and confidence to participants, with many expressing that the conference was instrumental in clarifying their roles and enhancing their capabilities as middle leaders.



“All the resources and tools will be useful and now I have a better understanding of doing my role effectively.”

MLI participant

Middle Leadership Development Program

Cohort 2 of the Middle Leadership Development Program (MLDP) participated in their first conference in Semester 1, 2024. An evaluation was conducted about the participant experience, with a 9-item electronic survey sent to the 220 middle leaders at the end of the conference (12 participants were absent). A total of 205 responses were received, representing a 93% response rate, which provides confidence in the accuracy of the results.

The average satisfaction rating for the conference was 9.2 out of 10. More than 90% of participants rated the program highly for 'overall satisfaction' (8-10 on a 10-point scale), with no participants rating the conference experience in the low category. This affirms that the content delivery variables are largely where they need to be. Participants were overwhelmingly positive (greater than 95%) about the conference promoting new thinking, being well organised and engaging, and being supported by their facilitator and teams.

Qualitative responses to the question of what the participants valued most about the conference identified 'connections between middle leaders' as the most frequent response. This mainly referred to networking and collegial discussions with a wide variety of colleagues.

The second most frequent response was about their 'team'. Participants spoke about the collegial discussions they had with their team members and how this enabled them to build a collegial team with high levels of collaboration. Participants also valued their facilitators and the knowledge, guidance, and support they provided, which added to the feeling of collegiality in the team.

'Content' was the third most frequent response, where participants described opportunities to reflect on their current practices and to improve their leadership practices through the practical strategies recommended in the presentations. Overall, participants viewed the conference as highly relevant to their role, feeling supported by informed presenters and mentors.

From the qualitative responses, one ongoing focus for further delivery planning is the importance of providing opportunities for middle leaders to connect via networks and collegial discussions.



“The chance to hear from academics directly-so rare for someone from a regional area! The chance to network and to meet new people in similar roles. I feel valued as a professional like never before! Thank you!”

MLDP participant

Senior Leaders

Deputy Principal Induction Conference

The 2024 Deputy Principal Induction Conference (DPIC) saw 128 deputy principals in attendance, comprising 74 newly appointed and 53 long-term relieving deputy principals. This cohort represented 58% of eligible participants, highlighting the conference's broad reach and engagement. Data shows DPIC participants came from a diverse range of School Performance Directorates.

Survey responses overwhelmingly indicated the conference experience was greatly enhanced by the facilitation provided by 23 deputy principals and one principal facilitator. This support structure played a crucial role in the participants' learning journey, fostering a collaborative and supportive environment.

Pre and post-DPIC survey data revealed a significant shift in participants' learning, with many moving from a 'little' or 'some' understanding to a 'deep' understanding, knowledge, and ability across all conference outcomes. This demonstrates that the conference successfully met the learning needs of those who attended.

Pre-recorded content was accessed by 86% of participants prior to the conference, with 76% indicating that it supported their learning. This preparation contributed to the overall effectiveness of the conference by enabling more time for discussion. Additionally, 98% of participants strongly agreed or agreed that the conference was well-organised and effectively delivered.

Comparative data from pre and post-evaluation surveys showed a notable increase in understanding of the deputy principal role, accessing system support, leadership practices, and developing staff and students as a result of attending the conference. The Net Promoter Score for the 2024 Conference was 60.87, placing it in the category of Excellent.

Additionally, 100% of facilitators agreed or strongly agreed that facilitator training was significant in supporting the learning of their colleagues, enabling them to have a clear understanding of their role and feel well-equipped to enact it.



“A big two days but such engaging content that I feel excited to plan improvements in myself so that I can work to improve my impact across and beyond my school community.”

DPIC participant

Senior Leadership – Aspiring Principals Leadership Program

During Semester 1 2024, leadership seminar evaluations for Cohort 9 of the Senior Leaders – Aspiring Principals Leadership Program (SL-APLP) consistently reported strong agreement the presenters are engaging and that the learning assisted them in examining the research and practice around the leadership seminar focus.

Validations of the Cohort 9 leadership inquiry submissions demonstrated self-reflection as a leader of inquiry for school improvement as well as an understanding of how leadership practices can positively impact student, teacher, and leader learning outcomes. This resulted in the following:

- 33 participants submitted their work for validation, of which 63% were successfully validated and graduated from the SL-APLP
- 12 participants will resubmit
- 3 participants opted to receive a Certificate of Participation.

Cohort 10 has 59 enrolled participants, with 70% from a primary context and 30% from a secondary context. Almost half of the participants are deputy principals, 42% are assistant principals or head teachers, with the remainder being principals or education support staff. The program is accessed by leaders from regional and rural areas; however, the majority come from metropolitan areas. Less than 5% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, with a similar number of participants coming from other marginalised communities.

In the program pre-survey, when asked what they most hoped to achieve through participation in the program, most participants saw the program as an opportunity to collaborate and learn alongside like-minded school leaders (71%) and to prepare for principalship (65%). Just over half had identified the development of their leadership skills as a reason.

Another finding of this survey was that 22% of participants are already applying for principal positions with another 40% intending to apply in the next 1-2 years. This illustrates that the majority but, importantly, not all participants are at an imminent point of readiness for principalship.

The critical role of the structure of the Professional Learning Teams supported by principal facilitation is affirmed by participant experience. Over 90% of participants indicate their understanding of these structures in their leadership development, and that they provide safe and supportive learning environments.



“It is really valuable hearing from different colleagues throughout the system. My facilitator is extremely knowledgeable and supportive. She goes out of her way to include everyone. She challenges our thinking with purposeful questioning. She really gets us thinking and reflecting.”

SL-APLP Cohort 10 participant

Principals

Principal Induction Conference

The Principal Induction Conference (PIC) was held early in Semester 1 2024 with 99 newly appointed or long-term relieving principals attending. These participants were supported by 20 experienced principals as facilitators. Most participants (77%) had been in the role for less than 12 months - the target demographic. All School Performance Directorates (SPDs) were represented at the PIC, indicating the aims of equity of accessibility, regardless of geography, are adequately being addressed.

A major aim of the conference was the provision of opportunities to connect and collaborate with other principal colleagues from across the state. Feedback from 98% of participants reflected that there were many opportunities to collaborate, and the conference provided a forum to network with other principals, providing compelling evidence that this aim had been met.

Conference inductees were placed in small groups led by facilitators who were experienced principals of similar school size and type. Almost all respondents (96%) agreed or strongly agreed their induction was enhanced by the support of the principal facilitator, and 100% of participants would recommend the conference to other principals. This indicates the delivery variables, including the content, met the needs of newly appointed principals.

This year, the conference included an expo represented by 7 different business units across the Department of Education to support the learning of new principals. The expo was a success, with 91% of participants visiting the stalls. An expo will continue to be provided at future PICs.

Pre and post-conference data from the PIC provided insight into the inductees' understanding of key leadership and management practices to drive school improvement and knowledge of the principal role and responsibilities. The significant shift from sound to deep understanding across these areas indicates that learning is both challenging and new.



To enhance future conferences, the expo will be expanded to include more business units across the department, which will provide vital information for new principals to support them in leading and managing their school. Additionally, in response to feedback, the finance section will be moved from the morning of Day 3 to Day 2 to support participants' cognitive load.

“The content that was presented aligned with the Principal Role Statement and key accountabilities. It provided great understanding, relevant and thought provoking. All presenters were engaging, experienced and knew their content and subject matter.”

PIC participant

Growing Great Leaders

There are currently 2 cohorts engaged in the Growing Great Leaders (GGL) program. Group 7 commenced the program in September 2023 and will complete the program in early Term 3, 2024. Data reveals 96% of participants from Group 7 have been in principalship for 1-2 years, indicating the target audience is being reached. Thirty-six principals as participants and 9 experienced principal facilitators commenced GGL Group 8 in May 2024.

The GGL program begins with a three-day face-to-face conference that includes delivery of Module 1. Participant feedback from this initial point of engagement reflects that each session and the conference overall was highly valuable, with an average of 94.6% of participants from Group 7 and an average of 97.2% from Group 8 indicating the learning was very or extremely relevant to their leadership practice. While evaluation data of the conference shows it is highly rated, overall program evaluation will be completed at the conclusion of the program in conjunction with academic partners.

Post conference data from participants also indicates the learning needs of principal participants are being met. 100% of respondents found the content extremely useful for their leadership development. Qualitative data correlates and reflects the relevance of the learning to their leadership development within their specific contexts. This affirms both the content of the program and the construction of the Professional Learning Groups in supporting contextual application of the learning.

As a key component of the GGL program, experienced principal facilitators support both participant learning and the program aims of system leadership. 88% of principals who completed the program as part of Group 6 returned as a principal facilitator in the GGL program to develop their skills to support colleagues. The facilitator role in the GGL program addresses system leadership while also providing opportunities for principals to connect relevant theory with practice in their leadership context.



“The conference was well paced and allowed time for reflection. The learning had meaning to my position and has given me quite a bit to think about.”

GGL Group 7 participant

Principal Leadership Learning

A total of 369 participants engaged in the live PL offerings delivered by the Principal Leadership Learning (PLL) Program during Semester 1 2024. This surpassed the number of unique participants in the PLL program for the whole of 2023. The Insights Series Shorts examining the Key Driver System Leadership with Steve Munby was the most highly attended session.

On average, each offering attracts the same number of participants, highlighting that the 3 formats (60-minute to multi-session) of professional learning (Keynotes, Immersions, and Shorts) are meeting the varied individual needs of participants.

As part of the SLI's commitment to providing equitable access, experience, and outcomes of PL for school leaders, all live Insights Series sessions have been made available as on-demand learning opportunities. This semester, the PLL team has provided 12.5 hours of on-demand content, of which 11 hours are accredited at Proficient. This supports school leaders in accessing PL at a time and location suitable to their needs.

The Insights Series Shorts aims to connect participants as a community of lead learners, providing them with relevant and meaningful learning opportunities that combine theory with leaders' contexts. Across the 5 sessions offered in Semester 1, 97% of participants indicated the series effectively met their main reasons for participating, which were opportunities for professional learning and engaging in learning to enhance their practice. This analysis mirrors the participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of the 2 keynote sessions offered in Semester 1.

The 8-part Immersion Edition with Dr Paige Williams provided opportunities to explore skills and tools that principals can use to lead themselves and their teams to thrive through uncertainty. All surveyed participants agreed that the Immersion series provided them with opportunities to engage in collegial discussions that supported their reflective practice.

Thematic analysis of participant feedback throughout the series indicates that the multi-session format of Immersion editions provides time for leaders to implement frameworks and tools taught in masterclasses. Provision of explicit "teach it forward" strategies were valued by participants as opportunities to apply learning and acted as points of reflection on leadership with colleagues throughout the series.

To date, the PLL Resource has had 2,650 unique users, of which 588 are new in 2024. This represents a 28.4% increase in unique users this semester.



“Very valuable, I enjoyed connecting with colleagues gaining insight into what is happening across other school settings and learning from their experiences. I also appreciated the honesty, sense of trust and collegiality evident in every session.”

Immersion Edition 1 participant

Other achievements

Regional, Rural and Remote Middle Leaders Program

The SLI team visited the Grafton, South Coast, Lismore, Richmond, Tweed Coast, Woolumbin and Lennox Coast Networks during Semester 1 2024, delivering the new Regional, Rural and Remote Middle Leaders Program to 144 middle leaders and 61 principals and deputy principals who support them.

As part of the department's Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy, the program provides middle leaders across the state with the opportunity to participate in face-to-face and online evidence-informed learning and to network with colleagues.

Data collected after the SLI team had delivered the first 3 days of the program to each network found 96% of respondents were satisfied with the professional learning and 95% would recommend the learning to others. Almost all (94%) of respondents agreed the delivery of the program created the conditions for impactful collaboration.

“My colleagues and I want tools to better improve practice as a leader. I personally want to just keep learning as much as I can to be an adaptive leader. This will help me become that.”

RRR MLP participant



Leading by Learning

The Leading by Learning program is focused on ways of communicating with people to maximise positive outcomes for learners. Presented by Professor Emeritus Viviane Robinson and Dr Jacqui Patuawa, the workshop examines how leaders build trust while doing the challenging work of school improvement.

The one-day workshop piloted in Semester 1 2024 was attended by 21 directors, educational leadership.

The evaluation survey received 11 responses, with 100% of respondents agreeing the presenters were very effective or extremely effective in creating a safe learning environment and explaining the key ideas with clarity.

Participants found the workshop supportive in developing their capacity, with an average efficacy rating of 4.48 out of 5. Additionally, 91% of respondents indicated that the workshop was very effective or extremely effective in building their capacity to lead in a learning-focused way. All respondents indicated they would have improved confidence in being learning-focused while working with principals because of the workshop. An area identified for improvement was more examples that specifically related to the work of DELs.

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