ROOFTOP SOCIAL

Evaluation of the EAL/D Education Leaders initiative

Final report

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Prepared for NSW Department of Education

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The EAL/D Education Leadership Strategy aims to build the capacity of NSW Public Schools to achieve the best possible outcomes for all students who are learning English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) , including those who are recently arrived in Australia and those from refugee backgrounds.

Commencing in Term 1 of 2021, 28 EAL/D Education Leaders have been placed in 27 base schools across NSW. These base schools are located in areas of high need for EAL/D education, in 23 principal networks across the state.

This evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to learn about the implementation and early outcomes of the strategy during its launch year and to inform decisions about its development in 2022 and beyond.

The evaluation draws on

- administrative records collected by the coordinating team in Multicultural Education
- feedback from stakeholders: a majority sample of the base school principals and Directors Educational Leadership (DELs) who had been involved in the strategy, as well as over 300 other school-based personnel with whom the Leaders have worked
- feedback and deliberation from the EAL/D Education Leaders themselves.

Scale and reach

During 2021, EAL/D Education Leaders:

- contacted over 600 schools by phone, email and in person
- developed almost 200 school EAL/D support plans
- delivered or facilitated over 300 professional learning courses to over 700 participants
- guided action research in over 20 schools
- presented information at numerous staff meetings, principal network meetings, EAL/D Connect meetings and the EAL/D Statewide Staff meetings
- provided a range of other support to schools, responding to local need.

Value, quality and impact

A clear majority of stakeholders:

- believe the support provided by EAL/D Education Leaders in 2021 has been valuable for their school (71%-79% 'very valuable')
- support continuation of the strategy into 2022 (71%-77% 'strongly support' this)
- expressed confidence in the overall quality of support provided by Leaders (79%-81% 'very confident')
- reported that EAL/D practices in their school had strengthened as a consequence of the Leader's work with them (77%-84%). This was particularly prominent in relation to
  – EAL/D-related professional standards and professional learning for teachers
  – EAL/D-related school planning, practices and processes
  – schools' motivation and resolve to place a priority on EAL/D education
  – schools' understanding of evidence-based strategies that can help strengthen EAL/D student outcomes.

The success of the strategy in its first year is partly because it has been '*walking the talk of EAL/D pedagogy*' in its design and implementation: a mix of high challenge, high expectation and high support for the Leaders; clear scaffolding; gradual release of responsibility; and distributed leadership to name but a few.

Examples of Leader characteristics and attributes that impressed stakeholders included their credibility and specialist knowledge, being driven by excellence, working seamlessly with others across the school and network, and being adaptable and flexible.

Reservations about the strategy were rare, and mostly stemmed from stakeholders having not seen the full value *yet*, either because they had only recently engaged or the Leader was still developing relationships and negotiating access to certain schools. Some Leaders were placed in base schools that already had strong EAL/D practices and mostly worked in *other* schools; their capacity to directly impact the work of the base school was therefore more limited.

Stakeholders readily acknowledged the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the work of the Leaders, particularly when schools shifted to learning from home in Term 3. However, most reported that the Leaders engaged well with schools to adjust their work so that it continued to have impact.

Stakeholder and school engagement

Most DELs and base school principals reported strong communication and working relationships with their EAL/D Education Leader. However, operational models for these working relationships vary quite widely. Leaders who have been actively supported by their DEL speak of finding it much easier to establish credibility with principals and respond to the strategic priorities of the network.

DELs and base school principals have appreciated the communication they received from the coordination team in Multicultural Education, and most felt that promotion of the strategy had been effective (57%-65% 'very effective', 12%-29% 'moderately effective'). That said, several spoke of feeling like they had to '*work things out for themselves*', and would have preferred more notice and a deeper briefing about the new role in the early days of the strategy.

Certainly, by the time our surveys were in field (Term 3), most stakeholders said they had '*got it*', reporting a clear understanding of the purpose of the strategy, the nature of the support available, how schools can access it, and which schools would be most likely to benefit.

Thus far, there appears to have been a stronger appetite for the strategy in primary schools than secondary schools. This is not explained by the primary/secondary origin of the Leader.

Leaders have developed a range of tactics for engaging effectively with schools. These include:

- strong diagnostic process for needs assessment and prioritisation
- responding to school-identified need and empowering schools to lead innovation internally
- assisting schools to meet system obligations
- integrating their work with school strategic planning
- taking an applied approach to professional learning and action research
- raising the profile of EAL/D education and EAL/D teams in schools.

Management, governance and reporting

Most DELs and base school principals said they were comfortable with the local management requirements of the strategy, reporting that the load was reasonable for them and appropriate for the nature of the work. Although we did not ask specifically about this, a number of DELs commented that they were in support of the design of the role as a school-based position, located in a base school, favouring this over a non-school based role located in a regional office.

EAL/D Education Leaders reported healthy working relationships with the coordination team in Multicultural Education and have greatly appreciated the support provided. Leaders have particularly valued the responsiveness to shared professional learning priorities, which have evolved over time as the demands of the role have developed.

EAL/D Education Leaders also reported strong working relationships with each other, both within their operational directorates and as well as across the state-wide team. The establishment of this strong team culture is a significant achievement given the constraints imposed by COVID-19, with relationships built mostly through virtual communication rather than in-person.

EAL/D Education Leaders shared mixed views on the 'term in review' reporting and the template for planning and reporting on support to schools.

Recommendations

The department is to be congratulated on the successful conceptualisation and launch of this important initiative. The main recommendations from this evaluation relate to:

- a refreshed set of communication materials, to optimise stakeholder engagement in the strategy
- strategic planning at a network and cross-network scale, such that the impact of the strategy is felt *across* schools, not just *within* them
- further developing a compendium of strategies and resources for EAL/D Education Leadership, consolidating effective practices for school engagement and capacity building
- communication and engagement in state office to share the successes and lessons from the first year and pursue strategic alignment that optimises the reach, sustainability and system-level impact of the strategy in the long term.

Glossary of terms

ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
APST	Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
CESE	Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation
DEL	Director Educational Leadership
DoE	Department of Education
DP	Deputy Principal
EAL/D	English as an Additional Language or Dialect
ESL	English as a Second Language
HSC	Higher School Certificate
NSW	New South Wales
OD	Operational Directorate
PL	Professional Learning
SIP	Strategic Improvement Plan
SLSO	School Learning Support Officer
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

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1   Introduction

1.1   The EAL/D Education Leadership Strategy

Overview

The EAL/D Education Leadership Strategy aims to build the capacity of NSW Public Schools to achieve the best possible outcomes for all students who are learning English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D), including those who are recently arrived in Australia and those from refugee backgrounds.

The strategy focuses on providing high quality, evidence-based professional support and advice for school leaders and teachers, developing their capacity to address the English language, literacy and learning needs of EAL/D students in their schools.

The EAL/D Education Leaders are a key part of this strategy. Commencing in Term 1 of 2021, 28 EAL/D Education Leaders have been placed in 27 base schools across NSW. These base schools are located in areas of high need for EAL/D education, in 23 principal networks across the state.

The role of the EAL/D Education Leader

EAL/D Education Leaders are experienced, TESOL-qualified, EAL/D specialists. In brief, their role is to support their local community of schools to review their current EAL/D education practices and then to plan, implement and evaluate EAL/D strategies that are effective in enhancing student outcomes.

Leaders have sought to operate using the school support cycle set out in Figure 1, noting that the mix of support will vary from school to school and all work is to be collaborative. Participating schools should retain 'ownership' of their problem identification, response and outcomes.

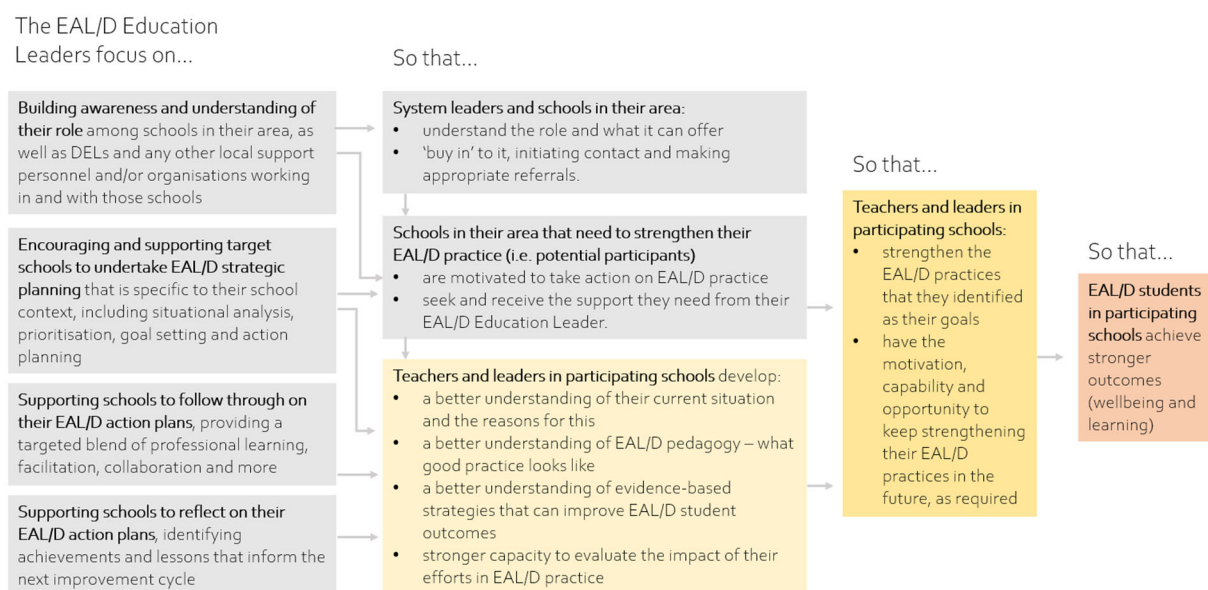#### Figure 1: The EAL/D Education Leader school support cycle
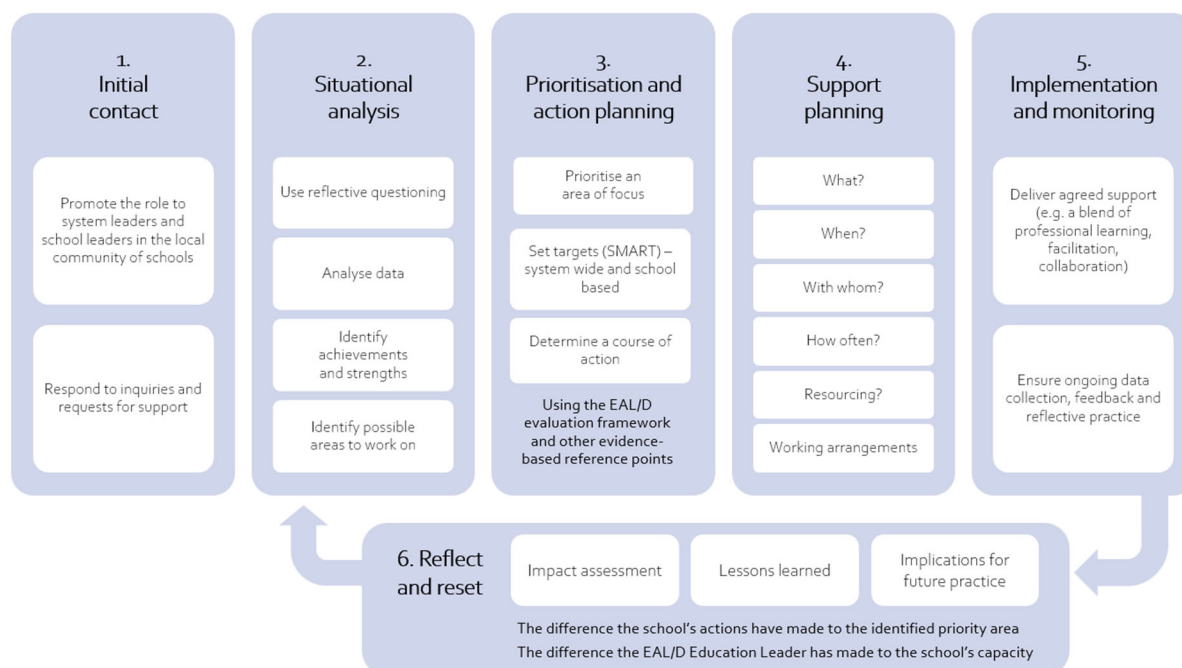
Program logic

The overall logic of the Strategy initiative is set out in Figure 2 over the page. This logic highlights the outcomes that relate to:

- local-level engagement and 'buy in' among systems leaders and school leaders (a priority in 2021)

- the intended short- and long-term benefits for EAL/D practice in participating schools
- the intended positive consequences of this for EAL/D student outcomes.

Figure 2: Overall program logic for the EAL/D Education Leadership Strategy initiative

The EAL/D Education Leaders focus on…

So that…

Building awareness and understanding of their role among schools in their area, as well as DELs and any other local support personnel and/or organisations working in and with those schools

Encouraging and supporting target schools to undertake EAL/D strategic planning that is specific to their school context, including situational analysis, prioritisation, goal setting and action planning

Supporting schools to follow through on their EAL/D action plans, providing a targeted blend of professional learning, facilitation, collaboration and more

Supporting schools to reflect on their EAL/D action plans, identifying achievements and lessons that inform the next improvement cycle

System leaders and schools in their area:
- understand the role and what it can offer
- 'buy in' to it, initiating contact and making appropriate referrals.

Schools in their area that need to strengthen their EAL/D practice (i.e. potential participants)
- are motivated to take action on EAL/D practice
- seek and receive the support they need from their EAL/D Education Leader.

Teachers and leaders in participating schools develop:
- a better understanding of their current situation and the reasons for this
- a better understanding of EAL/D pedagogy – what good practice looks like
- a better understanding of evidence-based strategies that can improve EAL/D student outcomes
- stronger capacity to evaluate the impact of their efforts in EAL/D practice

So that…

Teachers and leaders in participating schools:
- strengthen the EAL/D practices that they identified as their goals
- have the motivation, capability and opportunity to keep strengthening their EAL/D practices in the future, as required

So that…

EAL/D students in participating schools achieve stronger outcomes (wellbeing and learning)

1.2 This evaluation

Purpose and focus

The purpose of this evaluation was to learn about the implementation and early outcomes of the strategy during its launch year and to inform decisions about its development in 2022. At the time of the early data collection (Term 3, 2021), the decision about whether to extend the strategy into 2022 had not yet been made. This decision was announced in early Term 4, 2021, allowing subsequent consultation and analysis to focus more on the question of 'how do we optimise the value of the ongoing effort?', rather than the question of 'do we continue?'.

Table 1 sets out the scope of the evaluation in more detail. Further background can be found in the monitoring and evaluation framework for the strategy, which was developed at the time when the Leader positions were being recruited in late 2020. This framework has guided internal data collection and monitoring efforts for the strategy, as well as this evaluation.

Table 1: Evaluation scope

Implementation	Early outcomes
- Stakeholder awareness, interactions and general perceptions - Participation and reach across NSW - The experiences of participating schools, including how this strategy aligns with other system and school priorities - EAL/D Education Leaders' experiences in the strategy and their reflections on its design and implementation	- Impact on participating schools' motivation, knowledge, skills, understanding and capacity - Contribution to participating schools achieving their goals re. EAL/D practices and student outcomes

Data sources

The evaluation draws on administrative records collected and provided by the EAL/D Education Leaders (consolidated by the coordinating team in Multicultural Education), as well as independently collected feedback from the team and stakeholders (Table 2). These stakeholders included a majority sample of the

base school principals (63%) and Directors Educational Leadership (DELs; 58%) who have been involved in the strategy to date, as well as over 300 other school-based personnel with whom the Leaders had worked in the first half of 2021.

Table 2: Primary data collection

Group	Term 3	Term 4
EAL/D Education Leaders (n=27)	26 returned a complete **survey** (2-6 August) All 27 took part in a 1.5hr **focus group** (9 groups, 3 Leaders per group) (30 August – 9 September) All 27 reviewed and returned their story of 'most significant impact'	All participated in a **sensemaking workshop** (5 workshops of 5-6 Leaders each, working through one feedback theme and one set of stories). **Report back** at the EAL/D Education Leadership Showcase on 1 December
Base School Principals (n=27)	17 returned a complete **survey** (27 August – 8 September)	**Follow up interviews** were undertaken with all 13 who said they were happy to be re-contacted
Directors, Educational Leadership (DELs) (n=24)	14 returned a complete **survey** (26 August – 6 Sep)	**Follow up interviews** were undertaken with all 11 who said they were happy to be re-contacted
Other school-based personnel in participating schools	322 returned a **survey**, out of 575 approached (26 August – 6 Sep). 289 of these survey responses were complete; 33 were partial.	**Follow up interviews** were undertaken with 9 of those who said they were happy to be re-contacted, focusing on those who held outlier views or demonstrated particular insight in their open-ended responses
Coordinating team in Multicultural Education (n=4)	A 1hr **group discussion** was held on 15 September, discussing the key survey feedback relating to program management and administration	An additional **group discussion** was held following the Showcase on 1 December, to discuss implications for 2021

Data collection tools and agendas for the above are attached as Appendices to this report (C, D, E and F).

System-level student assessment data may be used as an evaluation data source in subsequent phases of the strategy.

Additional notes on the 'other school-based personnel' sample

The sample frame for school-based contacts was supplied by the EAL/D Education Leaders, who were asked to invite comment from people they had worked with during their tenure in the role (see invitation email in the Appendices). All Leaders contacted at least a selection of stakeholders, ranging from a minimum of 7 to a maximum of 47, averaging at 21 each (Table 3). These stakeholders came from a total of 202 schools (just under 10% of total schools in NSW).

Table 3: Number of school-based stakeholders contacted by Leaders

Number of stakeholders contacted	Fewer than 15	15-19	20-24	25-29	30 or more
Number of EAL/D Education Leaders	5	7	6	6	3

Table 4 overleaf shows a breakdown of 'other school-based personnel' by role type and operational directorate. This shows that the sample frame is dominated by:
- non-principal school executives (39%) and EAL/D teachers (34%)
- respondents from Metropolitan South and West (42%) and Metropolitan South (19%).

Table 4 also shows that the overall response rate of 56% is not reflected exactly across all role types and operational directorates.

Due to a small amount of survey non-completion among those who started, the sample size for 'other school-based stakeholders' is a little lower for questions that appeared later in the survey than those that appeared earlier. Of the 322 who commenced the survey, 289 completed it. This also explains the 'not stated' figures in Table 4.[1]

Table 4: Composition of the 'Other school-based personnel' sample

Sample subgroup		Approached (the 'sample frame')	Responded	Response rate
	Other school executives, includes Head Teaches (HT), Deputy Principals (DP), Assistant Principals (AP), Instructional Leaders (IL)	223, 16 of whom are also EAL/D teachers	95	43%
		197, excluding the 20 noted above	113	57%
	Role type not stated		33	
Operational directorate	Metropolitan South	111	39	35%
	Regional North	33	23	70%
	Regional South	51	40	78%
	Rural South and West	32	16	50%
Total		574	322	56%

* The 'other' sample also included a handful of contacts who were not school-based (e.g. in district office) and two non-DoE addresses: one at a university and another in the NSW public health system.

Not surprisingly, most of these other school-based personnel reported having had substantial engagement with the Leader (56% a great deal of interaction; 35% a moderate amount) (Table 5).

Table 5: How much interaction have you have had with the EAL/D Education Leader working with your school?

	No interaction	Limited interaction	A moderate amount of interaction	A great deal of interaction
Other school-based personnel (n=322)	-	9%	35%	56%

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[1] We omitted two respondents who said they had had no interaction with the Leader, plus another five who dropped out after the first question (asking how much interaction they had had with the Leader).

2   Scale and reach of the strategy in 2021

As noted in Section 1, 28 EAL/D Education Leaders were placed in 27 base schools across NSW in 2021. This includes a small number of part-time positions in rural and regional NSW, with the total staffing coming to 25 Full Time Equivalent positions.

Together, these leaders **contacted over 650 schools** during the first year of the strategy, through a combination of phone calls, emails and in-person visits. School visits mostly occurred from Term 2 onwards, including close to 400 schools visited during Term 2 alone. Leaders also presented information at numerous staff meetings, principal network meetings, EAL/D Connect meetings and EAL/D Statewide Staffroom meetings during the year.

Around one in three of these contacted schools accepted the offer of focused support. In total, Leaders developed **close to 200 EAL/D support plans**:

- Well over half of these plans focused on the Teaching elements of the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework, i.e. *data informed and effective classroom practice* and *professional standards and learning.*
- Most others focused on the Leading elements of this framework, particularly *school planning, practices and processes*.
- Over half of the schools that had EAL/D support plans assessed themselves as being at the 'minimum requirement' level in the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework.

Professional learning was a key component of the support offered in 2021. Leaders delivered or facilitated **over 300 professional learning courses to over 700 participants**:

- The *Using the EAL/D Learning Progression* course was particularly popular in Terms 1 and 2.
- Refugee education courses picked up momentum during the year, particularly as they transitioned to online platforms (e.g. *S.T.A.R.S. in Schools: Supporting students from refugee backgrounds*).
- School-based action research projects were initiated in over 20 schools, steadily building during the year.

Other support provided by EAL/D Leaders during 2021 included individual teacher support, enhancing teacher programs, guidance with student transitions, collaborative practice and co-teaching, guidance with redesign of EAL/D program structures, assistance with wellbeing programs and support with school-based administrative systems.

The COVID-19 Delta strain had a significant impact on school operations during the year, particularly in Terms 3 and 4. This required Leaders to adapt quickly and developed alternative ways of supporting teachers and schools during this period, including through:

- virtual check-in meetings for teachers of EAL/D students
- development and sharing of resources
- use of virtual platforms for professional learning delivery
- answering requests for support through Yammer and relevant Statewide Staff Rooms.

Note: The data in this section come from the 'term in review' accountability and monitoring processes that was established for the strategy, as well as completed school planning templates. For discussion of these tools, see Appendix B.

3   Value, quality and impact

3.1   Overall perceived value of the support

A clear majority of school-based respondents:

- believe the support provided by EAL/D Education Leaders in 2021 has been valuable for their school – most (71%-79%) say it has been 'very valuable' (Figure 3)
- support continuation of the strategy into 2022 (71%-77% 'strongly support' this) (Figure 4).

Figure 3: 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...
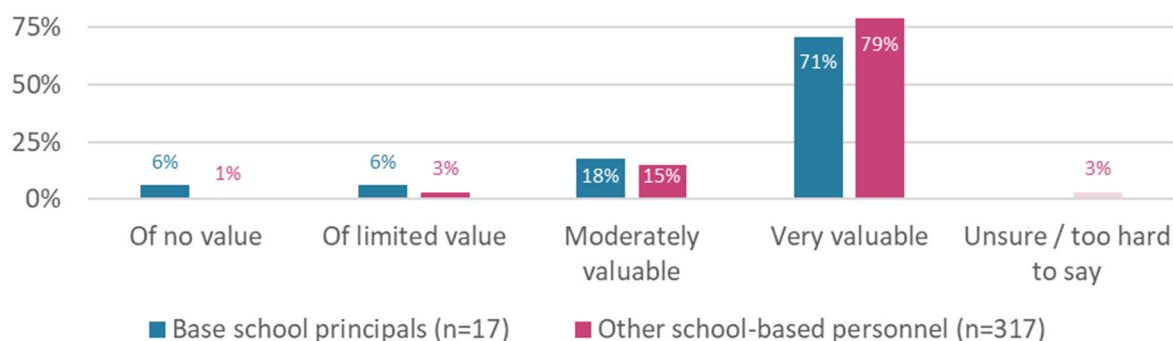
Figure 4: Would you support or oppose the continuation of the EAL/D Education Leader strategy into 2022?
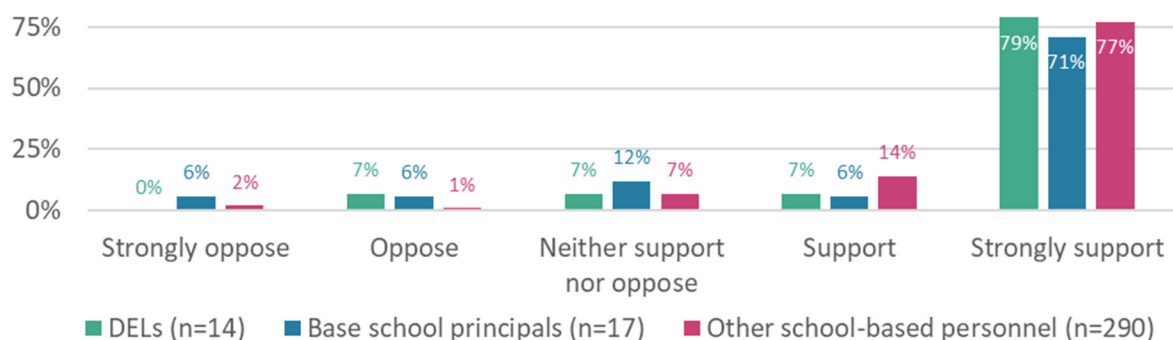
A large contributor to the success of the strategy in its first year has been the personal impact of the EAL/D Leaders, who were often described as *'fitting well into the school context'* and having *'worked well with staff to meet our local need'*.

Reservations about the strategy were uncommon. Where they existed, this tended to stem from:

- not having seen the full value *yet*, because the stakeholder had only recently engaged or the Leader was still developing relationships and negotiating access to certain schools (a number noted the need for ongoing investment to see deeper impact)
- hesitations about the 'fit' between the skillset of an individual Leader and the particular needs of the local schools (an outlier response)
- feeling the loss of expert practitioners who were no longer in their prior roles, having taken on the EAL/D Education Leader position.

Respondents readily acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted on the work of the Leaders, particularly when schools shifted to learning from home in Term 3. However, most reported that the Leaders had engaged well with school leaders to adjust their work so that it continued to have impact.

> **Story 1: Reaching in and reaching out**
>
> I have worked strongly in my base school with a regional refugee settlement focus. There has been a significant increase in refugee enrolments in my base school and I have worked closely with the EAL/D team and am on an intensive professional leaning journey with all staff.
>
> Formerly the EAL/D practice in the school revolved around withdrawal and was a key focus of the EAL/D teacher. With the growing number of students it was clear that we needed to support staff in developing their capacity to cater for students and co-teach with the EAL/D teachers. I have engaged a TESOL academic from the local university to support the network, share knowledge and co-lead with me to build the capacity of EAL/D and classroom teachers.
>
> Due to the complexities of the needs of staff in this area we have adopted a tailored approach to professional learning for planning, reporting and programming and have been purposeful in ensuring that SLSOs have also been engaged.
>
> Integral to the work in supporting the growing number of EAL/D students was the development of a range of communication processes that linked the family and community to the school. This has been especially important considering the challenges that the COVID lockdown has had on a community that has struggled to engage with the rapidly changing circumstances due to the COVID outbreak.

3.2   Confidence in the quality of support

In the main, stakeholders expressed strong confidence in the overall quality of support provided by Leaders (Figure 5) and in Leaders' capacity to work effectively with school leaders and teachers alike (Figure 6).

Examples of Leader characteristics and attributes that impressed stakeholders included:

- their credibility and specialist knowledge
- being driven by excellence
- working seamlessly with others across the school and network context
- being adaptable and flexible.

A number of stakeholders spoke of being impressed by the way in which certain Leaders had transitioned from a classroom position into the EAL/D Education Leader role, which is effectively operating at the level of Lead Teacher in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

Figure 5: How confident are you in the overall quality of support provided by the EAL/D Education Leader?
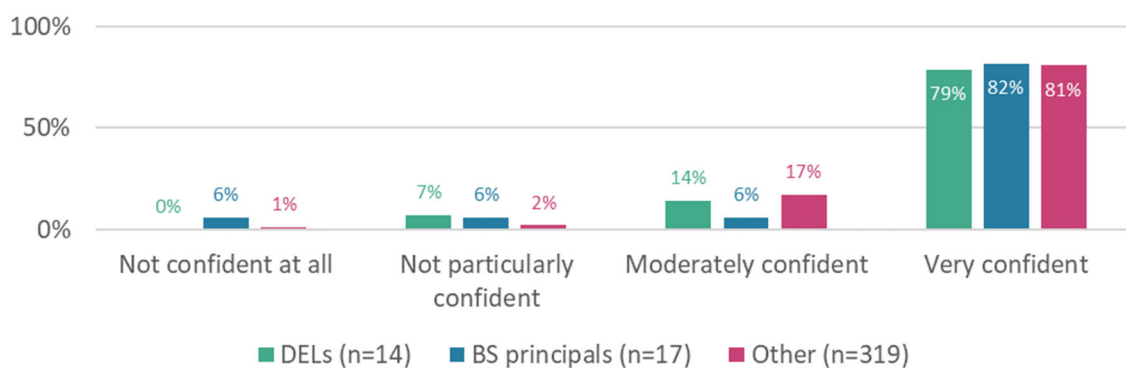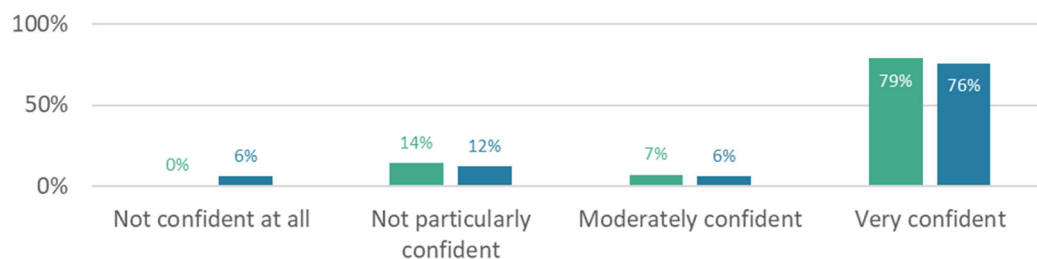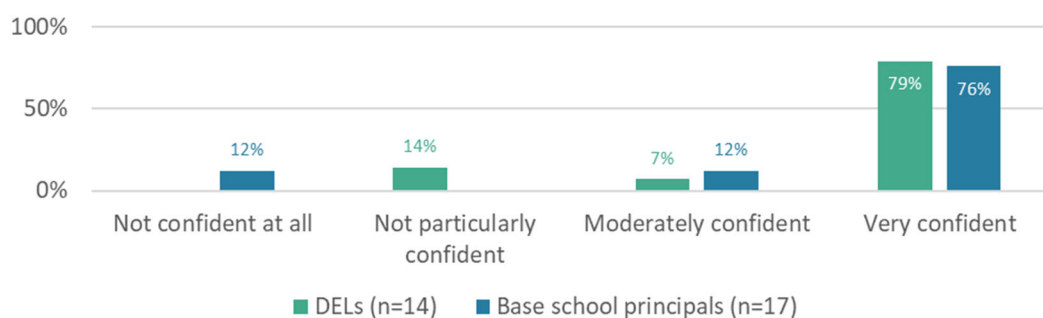
Figure 6: How confident are you in the capacity of the EAL/D Education Leader to work effectively with...

...school leaders, in support of school improvement?

... teachers, to build their capacity in EAL/D education?

DELs (n=14) Base school principals (n=17)

Story 2: Everyone's voice is valued

I was able to work strategically with a school to embed EAL/D pedagogy and practices into school-based change. Working closely with members of the executive team, I was able to provide specialised knowledge and perspective to a school-identified problem of practice.

As a team we used the CESE research on EAL/D Effective School Practices to drive an EAL/D action research project using the spirals of inquiry methodology.

Reflective, targeted and sustainable impact has been the goal of the project. The action research project has been well integrated into whole school planning and processes, including the delivery of professional learning and individualised support for teachers on EAL/D pedagogy and strategies.

Valuing student voice, as well as that of staff members, ensured that the action research project has been authentic. Teachers, students and the executive team have been enthusiastic about working collaboratively with me to develop models of best practice which can be replicated across the school.

There has been a strong focus on data-informed practice and identified impact on student learning driving the project including scaffolding designed to support EAL/D students during remote learning.

## 3.3 Perceived impact on EAL/D practices

Four in five school-based stakeholders reported that the EAL/D practices in their school had strengthened as a consequence of the Leader's work with them (Figure 7).

Responses from base school principals tend to be a little more subdued (24% 'much stronger') than those of other school-based personnel (43% 'much stronger'). This is largely a function of where the EAL/D Leader has been placed, and where their work focused. Some Leaders were placed in base schools that

already had strong EAL/D practices, and mostly worked in *other* schools. As such, their capacity to directly impact the work of the base school was more limited.

Most commonly, stakeholders described the role as '*just what we needed'* or even '*like a gift'*, as it provided the school with a local EAL/D specialist who understood their context.

Figure 7: As a consequence of the EAL/D Education Leader's work with your school, have you observed any change in the EAL/D practices in your school?
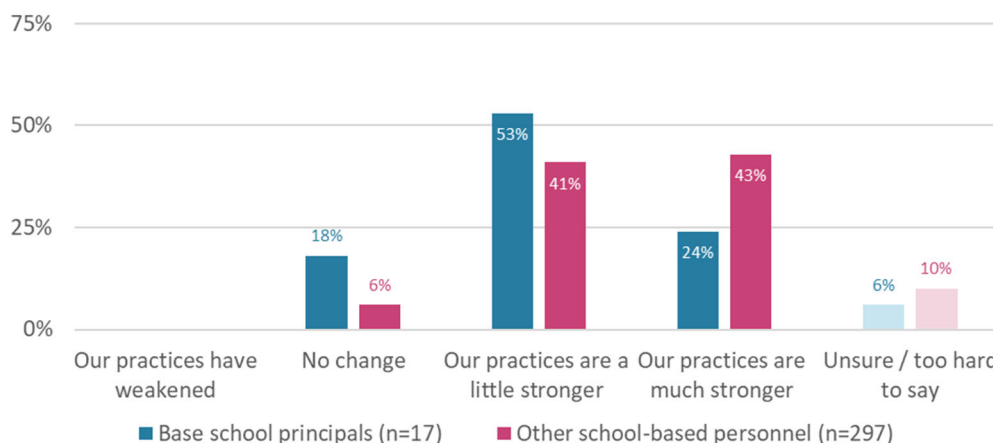
School-based stakeholders were also asked to indicate *which aspects* of their school's practices had been impacted, and to what extent. Figure 8 shows a slightly greater impact on teacher capability and whole-school systems than other aspects of the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework. This is consistent with how EAL/D Education Leaders spoke about 'getting in' to schools – a process that often began with school-identified needs in record keeping systems and capability, then progressing to pedagogy and other aspects of EAL/D education practice (see Story 3 below).

Figure 8: Reported changes in motivation and capability as a consequence of the EAL/D Education Leader's work with your school (other school-based stakeholders, n=303)
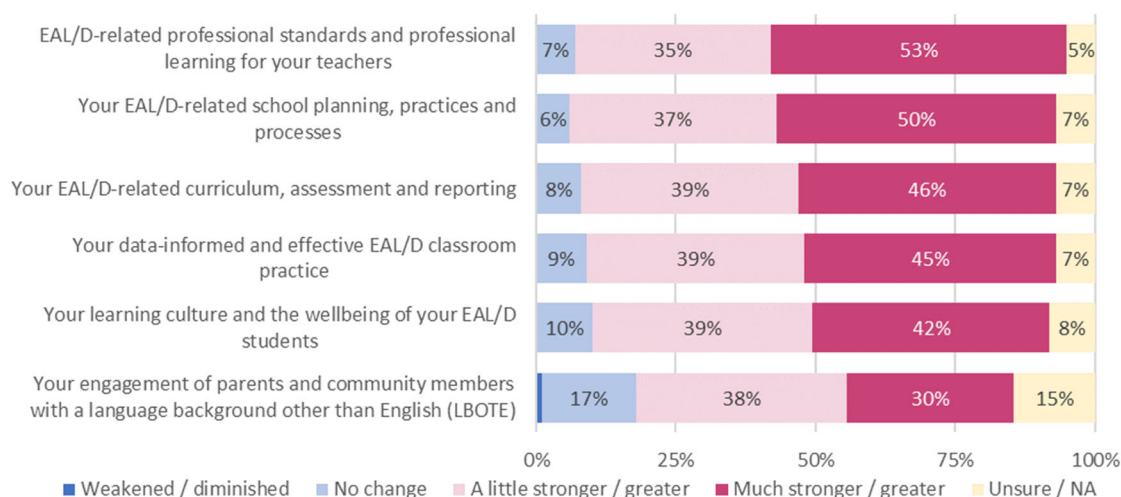
Figure 8 also shows somewhat lower impact on parent and community engagement. This was less often identified by schools as a priority they wanted to focus on in 2021. Nonetheless, Story 1 (earlier) illustrates a good example of work that did focus on this area. Other examples can be seen in Appendix A, including stories such as 'Opening the school gate for parents' and 'Pivoting to meet the challenges of 2021', with the latter focusing particularly on the school's response to events in Afghanistan during the year.

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Story 3: From little things, big things grow

The biggest impact would be the shift in classroom teacher knowledge, and we're starting to see this make its way into programming.

With one of my schools I was able to get in through the EAL/D teacher and the principal, and set up a meeting to talk about the goals of the school using the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework.

We looked at the school's Strategic Improvement Plan as well as the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework to tie our work with our EAL/D students to the school planning cycle. The school wanted all teachers to be using EAL/D-based pedagogy, but they knew that this was a long term goal. The rest of the executive came on board and we collaboratively backward mapped from this goal, asking: 'What did we need to do to get there?'.

The starting point was some whole-school professional learning around understanding who EAL/D students were. This allowed the school to identify these students and their unique learning needs – particularly their language learning needs. Teachers were then keen to learn more about how to effectively support them.

Sometimes that can look like a small impact, but in our area it's actually a massive achievement, especially at the whole school level.

The next question from the school was: 'Now we have this shared knowledge, how are we going to use it? Where are we going to go next? How can we sustain it?' So we worked together to design and trial some programming flowcharts to guide the next process so that it's a sustainable cycle of improvement.

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Figure 9 digs further into different aspects of capability, showing a slightly greater impact on motivation and understanding of evidence-based strategies than on other aspects (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Reported changes in EAL/D practices, as set out in the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework (other school-based stakeholders, n=297)
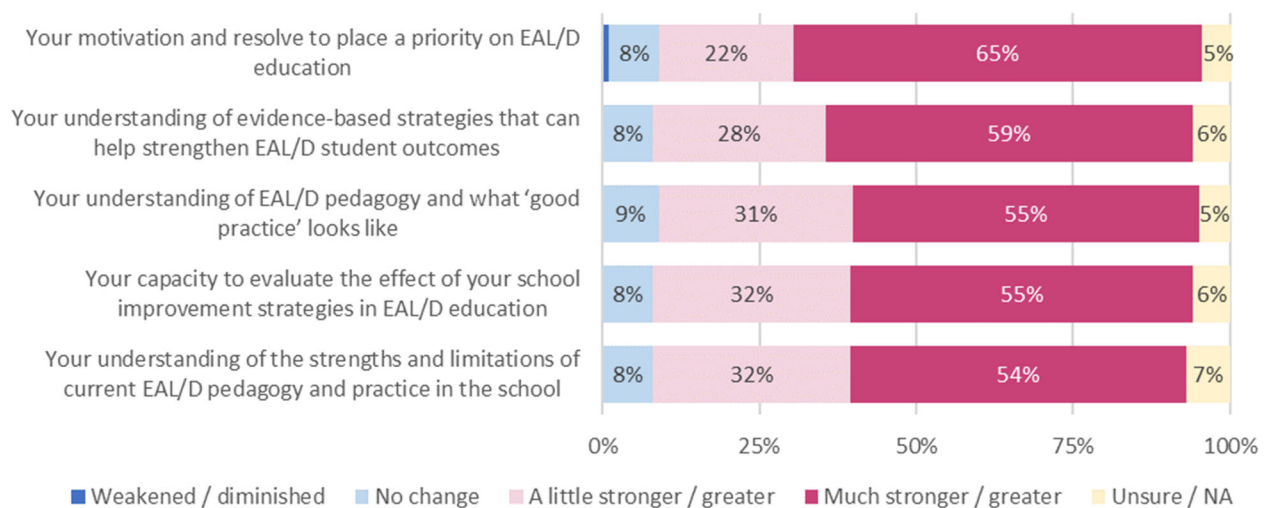
4 Stakeholder and school engagement

4.1 Leaders' engagement with DELs and base school principals

Almost all Leaders said they had at least some interaction with the principal of their base school and the Director Educational Leadership (DEL) in their network. As might be expected, greater levels of interaction were reported with base school principals (73% 'moderate' or 'a great deal') than DELs (42%) (Figure 10).

Figure 10: In your role as EAL/D Education Leader (n=26), how much interaction have you have had with…
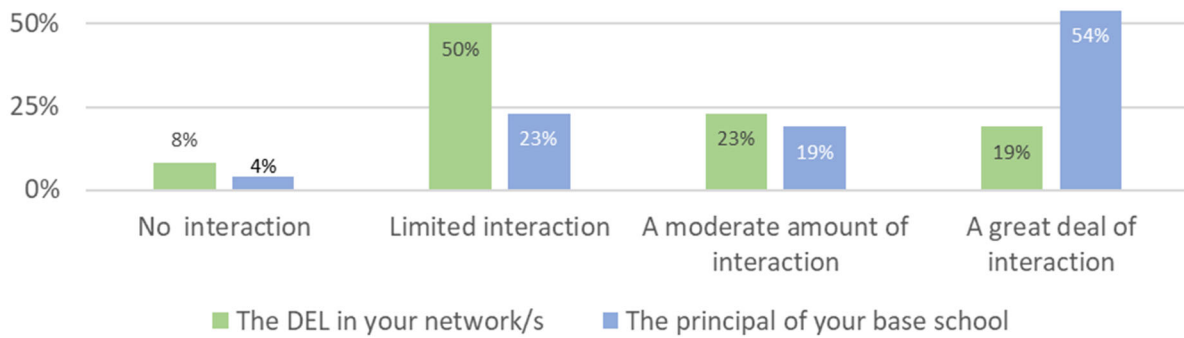
Among the DELs and base school principals who responded to the survey, most reported strong communication (Figure 11) and working relationships (Figure 12) with their EAL/D Education Leader.

Figure 11: Please rate the communication with the EAL/D Education Leader about their progress and any support they need from you
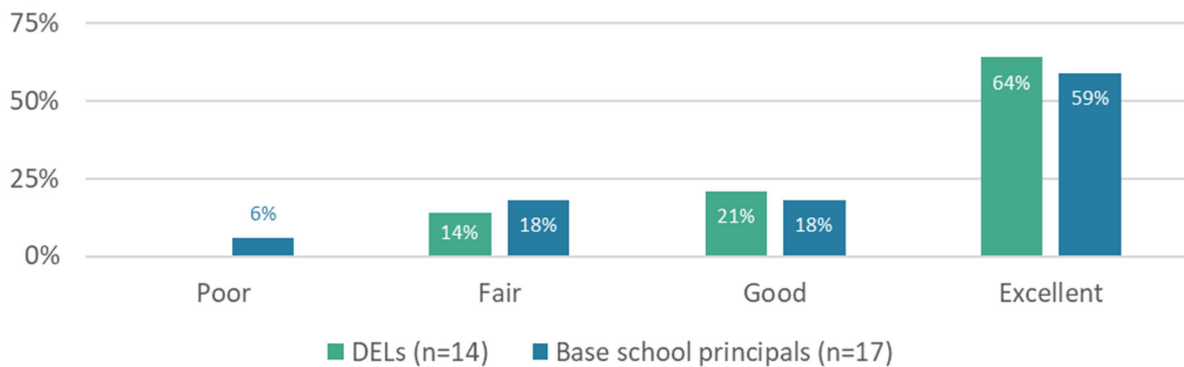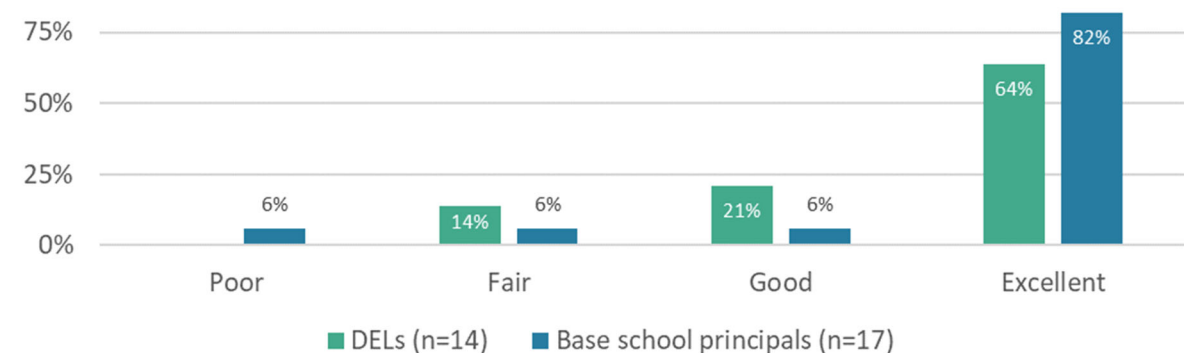

Figure 12: Please rate your working relationship with the EAL/D Education Leader

Where it is offered, the active support of DELs is a valuable asset for Leaders, making it easier and quicker to establish credibility and respond to the strategic priorities of the network. A number of DELs described having strong relationships with the EAL/D Education Leader in their network, meeting regularly with them and guiding their efforts to focus on schools of greatest need. DELs in rural centres emphasised the significance of the role and felt that they would be impacting on many more schools if they had a full-time allocation.

Story 4: Set up for success

I was able to springboard my support for schools at a principal network meeting in Term 1. At the meeting, I outlined the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework and how it can be used to complement school planning, and I gave principals time to examine this document. I also discussed the policy that requires schools to report on the overall EAL/D learning progression phase of all students identified as EAL/D, including a comment on how EAL/D English Language learning has been supported... I also shared ways I could support leaders and teachers to plan and implement whole school approaches that support EAL/D students.

...After this meeting I received a number of invitations to come into schools and work with the executive team. I used a very structured approach that linked the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework to the demands of the school Strategic Improvement Plan. For many of the schools this means that EAL/D targets have now become part of their Strategic Improvement Plan.

The flow on has been significant. At two schools, all staff are now trained in using the EALD learning progression, with the EAL/D team supporting the professional learning. At another school I built the capacity of the EAL/D team to become local experts in the EAL/D progression – they will now build the capacity of other teachers in using the progressions.

...I've created timelines with other schools to build the capacity of their whole staff to use the EAL/D progressions. As schools are building staff capacity or have timelines in place, they are much more confident that they will meet reporting requirements.


4.2   Promotion of the strategy

On balance, most DELs and the base school principals felt that the strategy had been promoted well – over half said the promotion had been 'very effective', while most others felt it had been 'moderately effective' (Figure 13). At least some of the responsibility for promoting the initiative at the local level has been moderated by DELs and base school principals themselves, through introductions, invitations and the like.

Figure 13: How effective has the promotion of the EAL/D Education Leader strategy been to other schools in your network and local area?
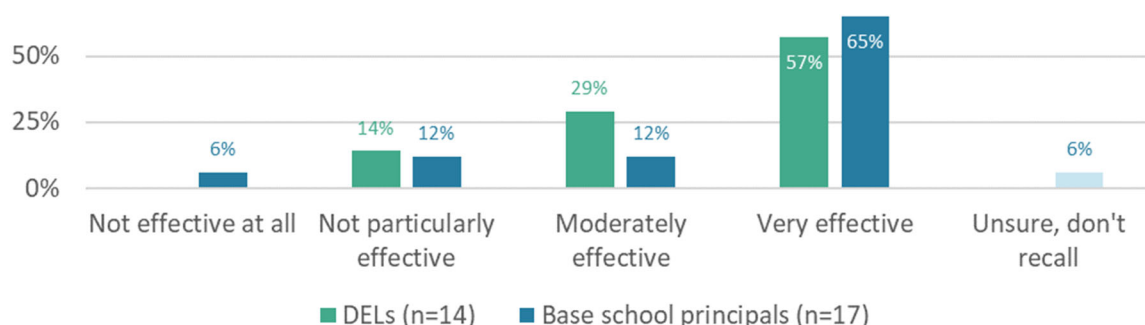
EAL/D Education Leaders tended to speak positively about the promotional resources developed for them to use with schools (Figure 14). However, one in three said these were only 'moderately valuable', and one found they were of limited application in their context.

Figure 14: In your role as EAL/D Education Leader (n=26), how valuable have you found the generic promotional resources for the initiative that were made available for you to use with schools?
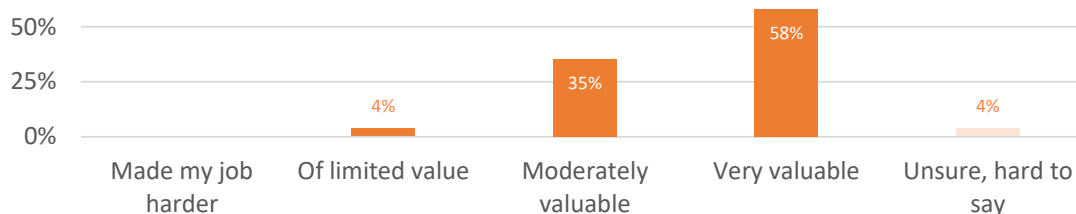
There was a general perception among DELs and base school principals that – in the early days of the scheme – they had limited understanding of the role, how it fitted into the school, and how to best support or promote the Leader. Several spoke of feeling like they had to '*work things out for themselves'*. Some DELs and base school principals said they would have preferred more notice and a deeper briefing about the new role in the early days of the strategy. Several felt that it would have been useful to have a clear induction and outline of the program early on so that they had a strong '*elevator pitch'*, and '*a coherent story to tell'* when presenting to the network or talking to colleagues about the new role.

By the time our surveys were in field (Term 3), however, most stakeholders said they had '*got it'*. A large majority reported having a clear understanding of the purpose of the strategy, the support available, how schools can access it, and which schools would benefit (including their own) and why (Figure 15).

Figure 15: How clearly do you feel you understand...
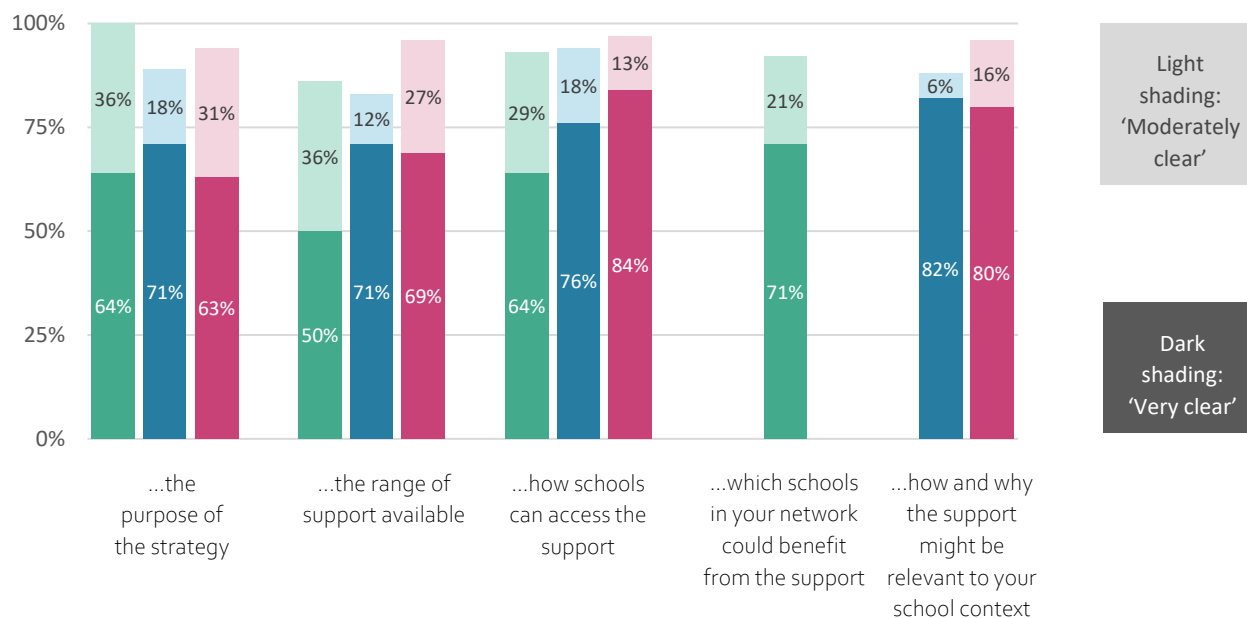
Some stakeholders felt there may be an opportunity to re-launch the strategy in 2022, with clearer expectations around the program so that they can more effectively support the EAL/D Education Leader. Further findings relating to this topic can be found at Appendix B3.

4.3   Receptiveness of schools to the strategy

Thus far, there appears to have been a stronger appetite for the EAL/D Education Leadership Strategy in primary schools than secondary schools (Figure 16). This is not explained away by the primary/secondary origin of the Leader themselves.

Figure 16: How have school leaders in your network/local area reacted or responded to the EAL/D Education Leader initiative? (Leaders; n=26)
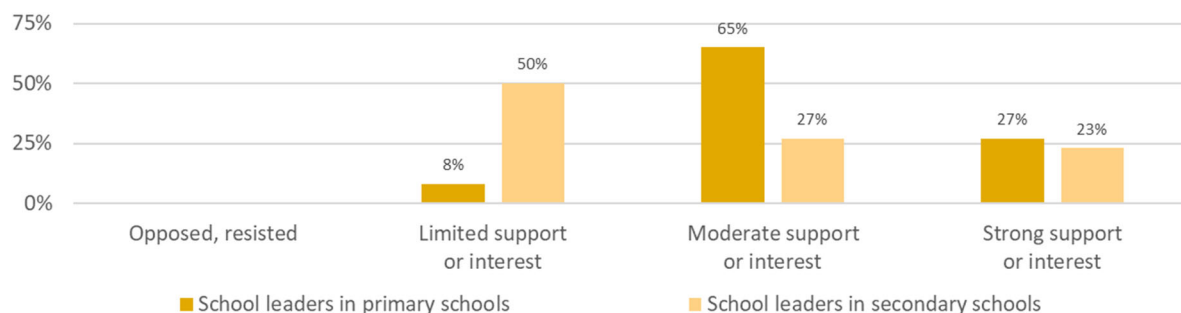
Although some Leaders have found it more difficult to gain traction with secondary schools, Story 5 is one of several examples of effective practice in secondary settings. Another comes from a Leader who reported a positive response to a targeted whole-of-network approach: the creation of a Stage 6 EAL/D Network for sharing practice and resources, growing their skills and knowledge and EAL/D strategies in their Stage 6 classes. The full text of that second story can be found in Appendix A, Story Set 3, entitled 'Buy in from the bottom up'.

Story 5: Opening the door through strategic partnerships

In working with a large secondary school, I reached out to senior executive from one of their partner primary schools and designed a whole-school professional learning session on data-informed teaching and assessment to support EAL/D learners. My role in providing this professional learning, and the endorsement from the co-presenter about my capacity to support quality change in this area, provided me with a heightened level of credibility [in the secondary school].

This opened the door to the [secondary] school, and I was then able to work with their EAL/D team and the head teacher of English to analyse their student data using the EAL/D Tracking Tool. I also supported the EAL/D team in using the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework and EAL/D Advice for Schools to evaluate and identify ways to improve the whole-school EAL/D support program.

The plan we developed has been endorsed by the senior executive of the school, and starting from Term 4 will lead to an increase in EAL/D co-teaching support across Key Learning Areas and an increase in teacher capacity to support EAL/D students.

My work with this school has increased the profile of the EAL/D team, which is now seen as a strong and important resource. Teachers are starting to show more interest in EAL/D shared programming and co-teaching. Many more teachers can now identify effective EAL/D strategies and are aware of the school-based experts who can help them in meeting the needs of their EAL/D students.

4.4   Tactics for engaging effectively with schools

Strong diagnostic process for needs assessment and prioritisation

One of the initial and most significant strategies that EAL/D Leaders employed to engage the school was to use the *EAL/D School Evaluation Framework* to establish a deeper understanding within the school leadership about where the school sat against this framework. Other resource documents that have proved useful in this phase included CESE's *EAL/D effective school practices* and ACARA's *EAL/D Learning Progression*.
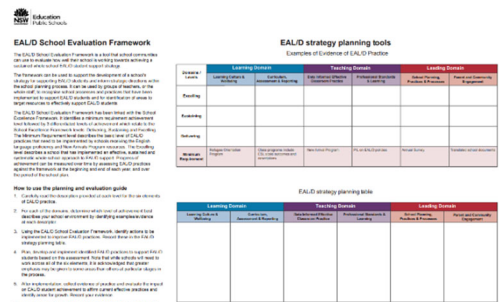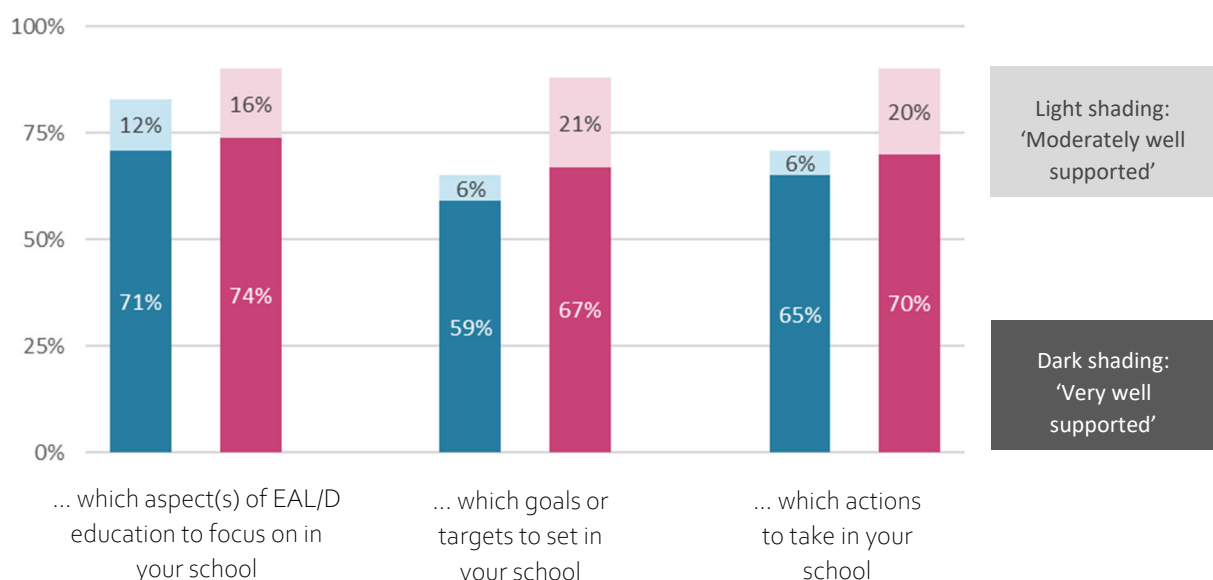
Responding to school-identified need and empowering schools to lead innovation internally

Leaders consistently spoke of earning credibility by responding to the needs that the school self-identified: not coming in with an agenda of their own, but first listening and then – in a manner that is both strengths-based and evidence-based – helping the school identify and prioritise its own agenda for strengthening EAL/D practices. This is an important approach, as offers of support can sometimes make schools feel defensive if they are misinterpreted as veiled criticism from an 'outsider' to their context.
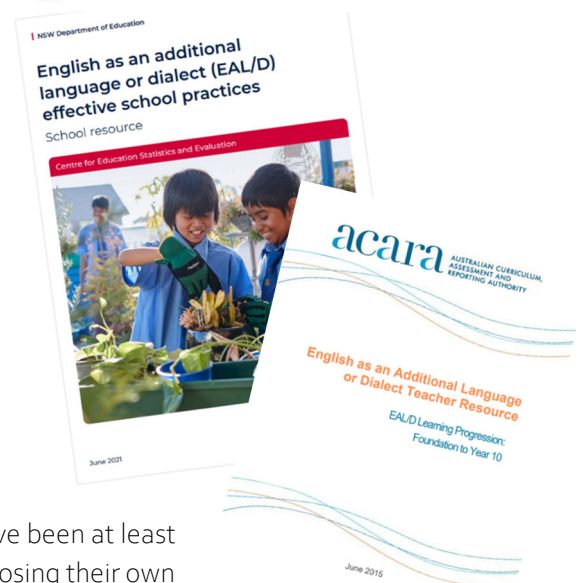
This is reflected in the survey results below (Figure 17), which show a majority of school-based stakeholders feeling they have been at least 'moderately well supported', if not 'very well supported' in choosing their own directions: choosing which aspects of EAL/D education to focus on, which goals or targets to set and which actions to take. Those who did not feel well supported here tended to report that this was because this matter had simply not arisen in their work with the EAL/D Education Leader.

Figure 17: How well supported have you felt by the EAL/D Education Leader in choosing…

Light shading: 'Moderately well supported'

Dark shading: 'Very well supported'

	… which aspect(s) of EAL/D education to focus on in your school	… which goals or targets to set in your school	… which actions to take in your school
Very well supported (first bar)	71%	59%	65%
Moderately well supported (first bar)	12%	6%	6%
Very well supported (second bar)	74%	67%	70%
Moderately well supported (second bar)	16%	21%	20%

> **Story 6: Empowered to lead**
>
> After meeting principals at a network meeting, I quickly developed a connection with one of the principals who was new to her school. Initially I worked with the school in using the EAL/D learning progression and the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework.
>
> It was apparent that the profile of the EAL/D teacher in the school was limited. Through supporting the school in evaluating itself against the framework and encouraging their use of the learning progressions, the EAL/D teacher's profile has grown.
>
> Initially I worked with the stage teams to support EAL/D planning. However, I emphasised that it should be the EAL/D teacher within the school that should be engaged with this planning.
>
> Consequently EAL/D education is now embraced as part of the school's cycle of professional learning and they have taken up the opportunity to do an action research approach to evaluate the impact of their work in this area. The EAL/D teacher is now empowered to lead the learning across the stages and it is hoped that the school will transition from a heavy reliance on withdrawal and interventions to co-design and co-teaching.

For schools that already had strong processes and an experienced EAL/D team, Leaders have been able to provide strategic support and an opportunity to reflect on current practice with a growth focus. For others, the Leaders have become an advocate and source of inspiration for the EAL/D team, raising the profile of EAL/D students and EAL/D pedagogy. In many rural settings the Leader is the only TESOL-trained person in a broad geographical area and has worked with the schools at their point of need, establishing structures in the schools which support them in meeting system obligations.

Another strategy for building trust and credibility that that Leaders often spoke of was to provide accurate information and respond to requests for clarification in a timely way. Once they have shown themselves competent and collegiate in these more 'transactional' matters, Leaders can position themselves in a more 'transformational' role – a trusted advisor who is capable of empowering, equipping and supporting others to lead change in their school (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Which of the following statements BEST describes your experience of working with the EAL/D Education Leader?
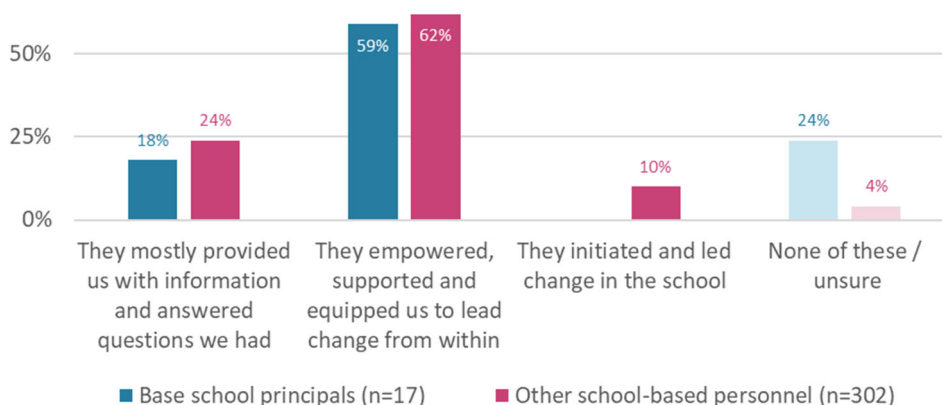

Assisting schools to meet system obligations

As noted earlier, one of the early needs that schools often identified in 2021 was around limitations with their processes for identifying EAL/D students and associated reporting to the system and to parents. Alignment of the EAL/D Education Leadership Strategy with school obligations was stronger in the minds of schools that had received support than it was among DELs and base school principals (Figure 19).

However, during interviews, some other school-based staff noted that much of this work would be done in the background, and that their principal may not have been aware of the importance of the Leaders' support in this area.

Figure 19: How well aligned has the EAL/D Education Leaders strategy been with school obligations…
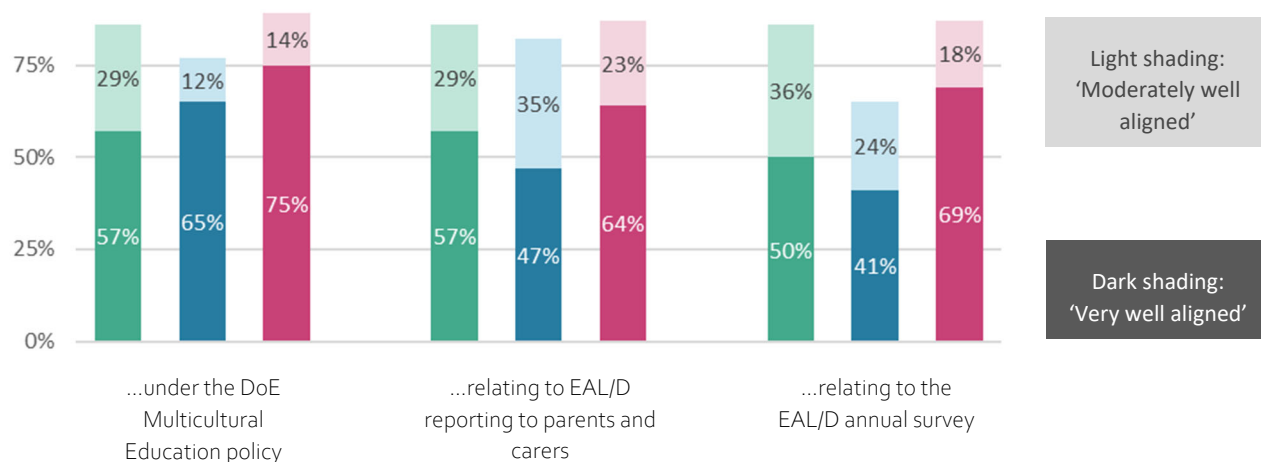

Nonetheless, several DELs were able to identify the direct impact of the work on schools in this area, e.g. through an increase that schools received in their School Budget Allocation Report (SBAR) as they were now identifying and reporting on their EAL/D students accurately. For rural and regional schools this was identified by many respondents as being the most impactful aspect of the work of the EAL/D Education Leader. As one regional DEL noted: *'this may have been low hanging fruit, but it has had a significant impact on my schools'*. One school noted that, for the first time, they felt confident that their schools were compliant with systems policies and procedures in this area.

Integration with school strategic planning

Many of the Leaders were able to work with school executives to show how investment in EAL/D education would pay dividends for the school in delivering on its Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP) or its targets. This has proven to be a highly effective strategy for sustained engagement in the implementation of EAL/D improvement projects.

Most base school principals and other school-based stakeholders have recognised the alignment between the EAL/D Education Leadership Strategy and the School Success Model (Figure 20). As one base school principal commented: *'It has moved the principles outlined in [our] SIP into tangible practice… that is focused on improved outcomes for all students.'*

Figure 20: In your experience, how well aligned has the EAL/D Education Leaders strategy been with the School Success Model?
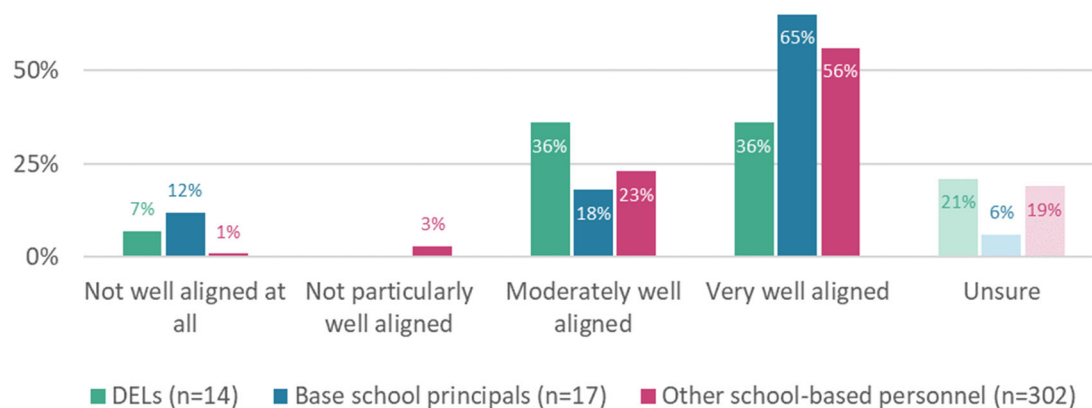
DELs were a little less convinced of the alignment with the School Success Model, and some stakeholders felt that:

- points of connection could have been more clearly articulated as part of the launch materials back in Term 1, to aid schools and Leaders to initially align their work
- timing was a limiting factor here, as a number of schools had already finalised their SIP by the time they developed a relationship with the EAL/D Education Leader.

Leaders reflected that there are opportunities to better align their 'in-house' templates and tools with SIP language and formatting. This possible growth area is discussed further in Appendix B.

An applied approach to professional learning and action research

The Leaders have provided a range of support activities to the schools that engaged with them. As noted in Section 2, a great deal of this work has involved the provision of applied professional learning for teaching staff, as well as working with schools on action research projects which were developed in conjunction with the school senior executive (and sometimes an academic partner). When these action research programs are evaluated there will no doubt be more information about their impact on teaching practices, student performance and community engagement.

Raising the profile of EAL/D Education and EAL/D teams in schools

Both the survey and the interview responses indicated that the EAL/D Education Leaders have ignited EAL/D teams and significantly raised the profile of EAL/D students and pedagogy in many of the participating schools. This was particularly evident in regional and rural schools, where EAL/D-related resource allocation tends to be smaller and the continuity of personnel in the EAL/D team is often problematic. This lack of continuity was identified as a significant issue in many schools, with a majority of EAL/D teachers being inexperienced and few being formally trained in EAL/D pedagogy. In such schools, the presence and support of the EAL/D Education Leader was described as a stabilising influence, providing knowledge, vision and direction. Stories 6 and 7 illustrate this at two different scales: one within a school (6) and another across a broader network (7).

Story 7: Growing each other, with all the 'co' words

My network is often characterised by a large number of EAL/D students with a significant turnover of EAL/D staff. As the number of EAL/D students fluctuates, so do the EAL/D specialist staff employed to support these students. This can make it difficult to establish continuity in planning, programming and practice.

...I have used the model of best practice outlined in the EAL/D Advice to Schools document and EAL/D School Evaluation Framework to plan my support for schools. In working with the EAL/D teams I have encouraged them to identify and share their stories of quality practice. By working in a co-design approach with teaching staff as well as the EAL/D team, I've sought to raise the profile of the EAL/D team and to emphasise the importance of co-teaching and co-design.

I was able to harness some funds though the EAL/D action research project and this has helped to focus the work of the EAL/D team as well as raising their profile and taking on leadership roles within their schools.

The EAL/D team has also actively engaged with the refugee network and EAL/D Connect Network. This has helped them grow in confidence and capacity as they have worked with other EAL/D leaders to grow each other.

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5 Management, governance and reporting

5.1 Local management of the strategy

Most DELs and base school principals said they were comfortable with the local management requirements of the strategy, reporting that the load was reasonable for them and appropriate for the nature of the work (Figure 21).

Figure 21: Which of the following statements BEST describes your experience of strategy management at the local level?
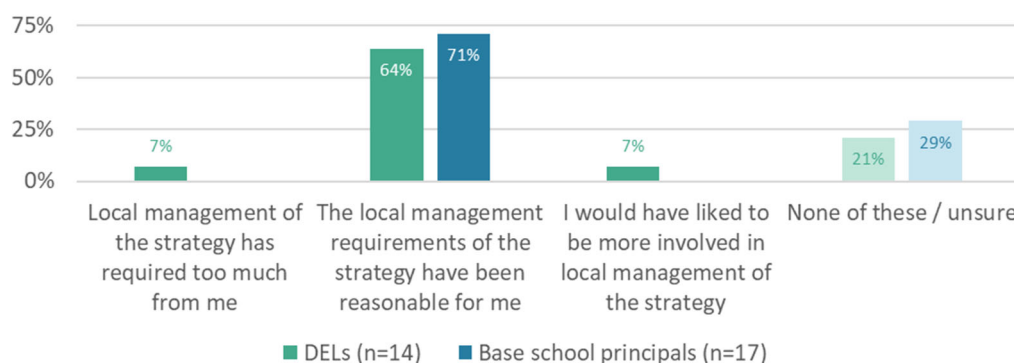
Although we did not ask specifically about this, a number of DELs commented that they were in favour of the design of the role as a school-based position, located in a base school, favouring this over a non-school based role located in a regional office.

5.2 The role of the coordination team in Multicultural Education

EAL/D Education Leaders reported healthy working relationships with the coordination team in Multicultural Education and have greatly appreciated the support provided (Figure 22 and Figure 23).

Figure 22: In your role as EAL/D Education Leader (n=26), how much interaction have you have had with the coordination team in Multicultural Education
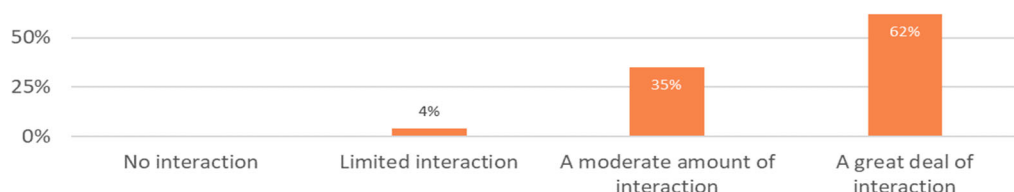

Figure 23: Overall, how well supported have your felt in your role by the coordination team in Multicultural Education? (n=26 EAL/D Education Leaders)

Leaders have particularly appreciated the responsiveness to shared professional learning priorities. These have evolved over time as the demands of the role have developed through the year. Greater differentiation of professional learning may need to be considered in 2022 and beyond in order to support the needs and experiences of more experienced Leaders, as well as those coming from classroom teacher positions. In discussing the challenges of adjusting to the leadership requirements of the role, one Leader commented: *'this is such a huge jump. I haven't done any refugee support leadership roles. I hadn't been in the executive team. It was my first experience in a leadership position'.*

In considering the shared professional learning agenda, priority topics that Leaders have identified include:

- strategic change leadership – there may be some good resources already available at the APST Lead level and using the AITSL principal standard on *leading innovation and change*
- the language, structure and intent of the SIP – this could be delivered by Principals School Leadership (PSLs), as an opportunity to build strategic relationships
- curriculum changes that are slated to occur during the next few years
- technology for collaboration
- the department's approach to High Impact Professional Learning (HIPL)
- effective EAL/D Education Leadership in secondary schools – drawing on the experiences of leaders who have had some success in this.

Some of these topics may also lend themselves to the existing 'ask an expert' list for skill-sharing between EAL/D Education Leaders. Leaders should also continue to be encouraged to take responsibility for their own professional learning, rather than needing others to organise this on their behalf.

5.3 Peer-support structures for EAL/D Education Leaders

Leaders reported healthy and supportive working relationships with each other, both within their operational directorates (ODs) and as well as across the state-wide team (Figure 24 and Figure 25).

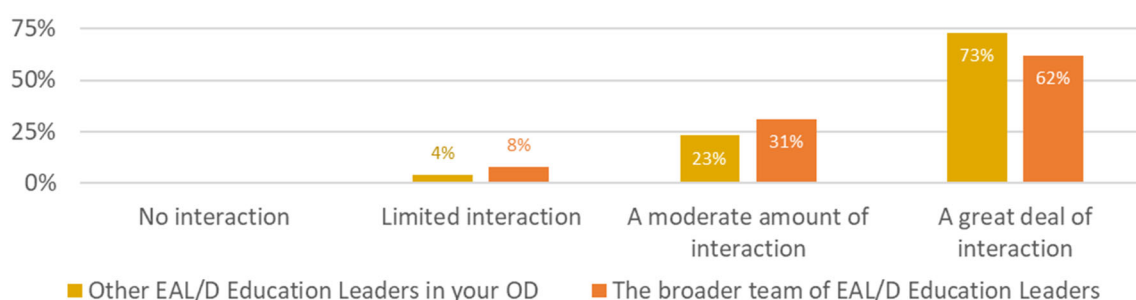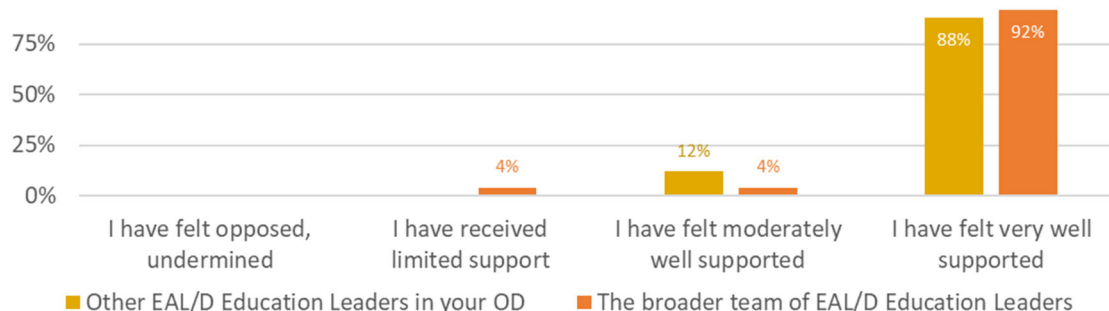Figure 24: In your role as EAL/D Education Leader(n=26), how much interaction have you have had with…

Figure 25: Overall, how well supported have your felt in your role by… (n=26 EAL/D Education Leaders)

Leaders consistently valued the approach to peer engagement, including the buddy system, which provided:

- a 'go-to' person who understood them and their work
- the support of a 'critical friend'
- access to trusted colleagues for debriefing, trouble shooting and planning
- reinforcement of the sense of belonging and being part of ap team that is doing important work.

The establishment of this strong team culture is a significant achievement given the constraints imposed by COVID-19, with relationships built mostly through virtual communication rather than in-person.

5.4   Other resources

Peer-to-peer meetings with other Leaders in their operational directorates were highly valued, as were (Figure 26):

- the weekly whole team meetings – although some called for greater differentiation in response to the different levels of skill and growth among Leaders
- the Leaders' Teams site
- the induction process – although several Leaders still felt 'a little lost' when they arrived at their base school
- the various professional learning resources and courses available for them to use with schools
- the EAL/D School Evaluation Framework.

The State-wide staffroom has also been appreciated by most, albeit somewhat less than other resources.

Figure 26: In your role as EAL/D Education Leader (n=26), how valuable have you found...
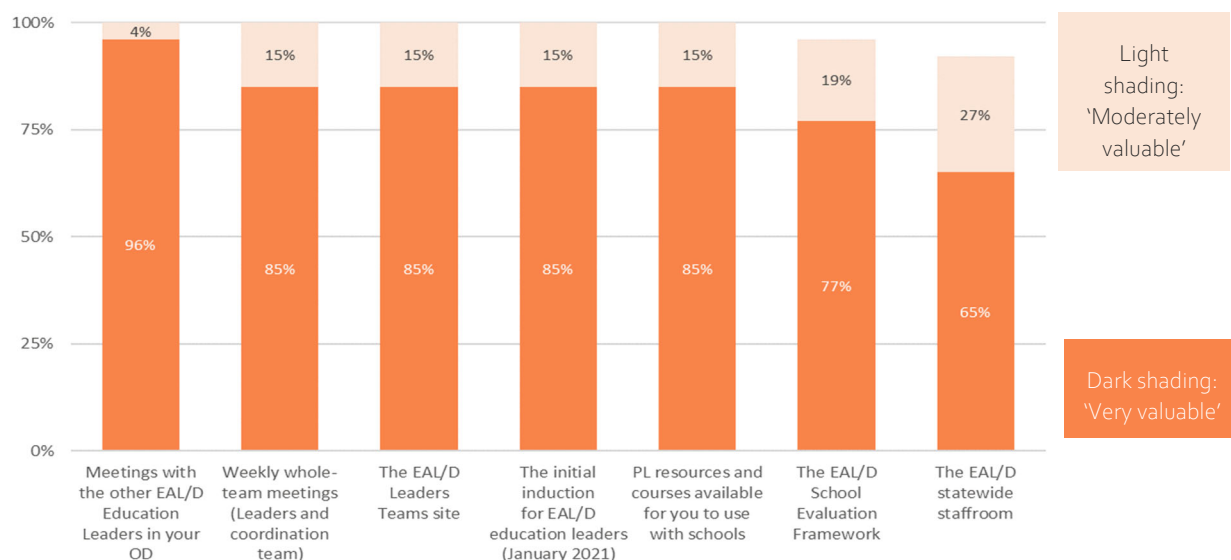
EAL/D Education Leaders shared a range of views on the 'term in review' reporting process and the school planning template and identified several opportunities for strengthening these processes. For detailed feedback, see Appendix B.

6   Recommendations

The department is to be congratulated on the successful conceptualisation and launch of this important initiative. With few exceptions, the strategy has been well executed and warmly received and the Leaders have performed to a high standard, sometimes under challenging conditions.

Although it is still early days, the strategy has already generated a range of significant positive outcomes for the schools that have engaged, and holds promise for further benefits as the strategy is sustained and broadened in 2022 and 2023.

One reflection from the coordination team in Multicultural Education is that the success of the strategy in its first year is partly because it has been '*walking the talk of EAL/D pedagogy*' in its design and implementation: a mix of high challenge, high expectation and high support for the Leaders; clear scaffolding; gradual release of responsibility; and distributed leadership to name but a few.

The following recommendations are focused on strengthening processes, practices, knowledge and systems to deliver on the objectives of the strategy. A few additional recommendations regarding internal reporting and planning processes are also found in Appendix B.

Refresh the communication materials

Leveraging the successes and insights from the first year of the strategy, we recommend revisiting the communication materials for stakeholders to ensure that they provide an up-to-date view of the strategy, its processes, practices and successes. As part of this, we encourage developing a single slide or infographic that DELs, base school principals and Leaders can talk to in meetings when introducing the strategy to those who are unfamiliar with it.

Engage in network-level and cross-network strategic planning

In collaboration with DELs and base school principals, it would be valuable for Leaders to develop a network-level strategy for strengthening EAL/D practice.   This would include an assessment and prioritisation of need, as well as a plan that sets out strategies for working effectively *across* schools in the network, not just *within them*, e.g.

- professional learning for newly appointed EAL/D teachers in the network
- strategic support for EAL/D supervisors in the network
- strategic alignment with newly created positions in the system
- developing an inquiry cycle or action research project among a community of schools in the network that have identified a shared problem of practice
- discussing engagement of secondary schools in the network
- collaboration with other roles that operate at a network scale or more broadly, e.g. Principals School Leadership (PSLs).

For some Leaders, this strategic planning may be better undertaken at a cross-network scale, or even at the level of the operational directorate.

It may also be worthwhile to develop a shared implementation plan for Leaders based in rural and regional locations, including shared responsibilities and work practices, so that the needs of regional and rural schools are effectively provided for within the fiscal constraints of the program.

Develop a compendium of effective strategies and resources for EAL/D education leadership

Leaders have shown significant initiative during 2021 in experimenting and developing effective ways of working with schools. There have already been steps taken to highlight such practices, e.g. through the

findings and stories in this report and through illustrations of practice developed as part of a showcase in Term 4, 2021. There is a timely opportunity to consolidate practice here, collating a 'best of' common set of practices and resources for school engagement and capacity building.

This could be managed through a working group that engages in a process of collecting, refining and sharing techniques. This work would want to have a focus on:

- evidence based techniques that are action-oriented and have a clear line of sight to student outcomes – High Impact Professional Learning (HIPL), action research, sprints, Quality Teaching rounds, etc.
- taking advantage of the economy of scale from being a state-wide strategy
- ensuring consistency of message while still allowing for well differentiated practice with schools and not limiting further innovation and creativity
- the topic of exit strategies, sustainability and handover, given the capacity building focus of the role.

Develop an engagement strategy in state office

The EAL/D Education Leadership Strategy has achieved a great deal in its first year, and there are valuable lessons to share with others in the department. This may include colleagues forming and supporting virtual teams, as well as those seeking to support schools with aspects of pedagogy and change leadership.

While Leaders are forging strategic relationships in their local networks, there is also merit in mirroring this dialogue at a state-wide system level with people who are leading programs and initiatives that relate to or impact on the EAL/D Education Leadership Strategy. This may include:

- the Director of the Principals School Leadership team (PSLs play a particularly key role in school self-assessment against the School Excellence Framework and in supporting the development of SIPs)
- the team coordinating the roll out of new positions, e.g. Assistant Principals Curriculum and Instruction
- the team responsible for supporting SLSOs
- the Directors in school services who oversee Teacher Quality Advisors
- the curriculum reform and implementation team that has carriage of supporting the implementation of new syllabuses.

The goal of developing these relationships would be strategic in its intent, with a view to:

- building others' capacity in EAL/D education
- integrating key messages about EAL/D education into the professional learning and resources that other people develop and use
- securing high quality and timely professional learning opportunities for EAL/D Education Leaders, so they are well informed and able to speak knowledgably about school leadership structures and challenges
- identifying opportunities for local collaboration and referral pathways for support.