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**Summative Evaluation of
The Stronger Smarter Learning Communities Project
March 2013**

Abridged Version

Prepared by the Core Research Team
Faculty of Education
Queensland University of Technology

**SUMMATIVE EVALUATION OF THE
STRONGER SMARTER LEARNING COMMUNITIES PROJECT**

Submitted to
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Table of Contents

| | | |
|--------------------------|---|-----------|
| Overview | | 5 |
| Chapter Summaries | | |
| Chapter 2 | Introduction..... | 6 |
| | Key Findings - Introduction | 7 |
| Chapter 3 | Stronger Smarter Learning Community 2009-2012 Operations and Processes | 8 |
| | Key Findings - SSLC Operations and Processes..... | 9 |
| Chapter 4 | Indigenous Community Perspectives on Indigenous Education..... | 10 |
| | Key Findings - Community Study | 13 |
| Chapter 5 | Teacher Knowledge and Community Engagement..... | 14 |
| | Key Findings - Teacher Knowledge and Community Engagement..... | 15 |
| Chapter 6 | School Cultural and Structural Reform | 16 |
| | Key Findings – School Cultural and Structural Reform | 17 |
| Chapter 7 | Pedagogy | 18 |
| | Key Findings - Pedagogy | 22 |
| Chapter 8 | Indigenous Languages and Dialects | 23 |
| | Key Findings - Language | 24 |
| Chapter 9 | Assessment and Certification..... | 25 |
| | Key Findings – Assessment and Certification | 26 |
| Chapter 10 | Systemic Data on Student Performance..... | 27 |
| | Key Findings – Systemic Data on Student Performance | 28 |
| Chapter 11 | Sustainability | 29 |
| | Key Findings - Sustainability | 29 |
| Chapter 12 | Findings and Implications | 30 |
| | Answers to the Original Research Questions | 30 |
| | Major Findings | 32 |
| | Policy Implications..... | 42 |
| | Recommended Policy Actions | 43 |

Overview

The Stronger Smarter Learning Communities Evaluation Report (Luke et al., 2013) describes the operations and analyses the effects of SSLC on a national network of 57 Hub schools and 70 Affiliate schools. A comparison group of 74 non-SSLC schools was also studied. This report addresses many of the major issues facing Indigenous education by collecting and analysing new data about: the everyday experience of Indigenous staff, parents, community members and students; the professional experience, duration of school placement, and capacity of the administrative and teaching workforce; the impacts of standardised testing on schools and classrooms; and efforts to engage with Indigenous content in curriculum and teaching. It also provides the first large scale picture of what is occurring in classroom pedagogy for Indigenous students.

The research design was qualitative and quantitative, longitudinal and cross-sectional. The combined corpus of large-scale systemic achievement and attendance data, survey response data, interview, focus group and short answer data, and observational field work in case study schools is the largest empirical data base on Indigenous education in Australia to date.

The corpus included school level achievement data on 201 schools and individual student achievement data disaggregated by Indigenous/non-Indigenous status from schools in all states and territories except New South Wales. Survey responses were received from 201 principals and 775 teachers. Interviews and focus group discussions were undertaken with 525 principals, teachers, education advisors, community Elders, parents, Indigenous education workers and staff, and students. Field work observation and interviews were undertaken in 13 selected schools.

The project was funded by the Australian Commonwealth Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) in a contractual agreement with the Faculty of Education, and the Stronger Smarter Institute (SSI), and Queensland University of Technology (QUT), 2009-2012. The Core Research Team was based at the QUT Faculty of Education and also included researchers from University of Newcastle and Harvard Graduate School of Education. It consisted of non-Indigenous and Aboriginal researchers with experience in school reform, program analysis, research methodology, curriculum evaluation and Indigenous education. The team was charged with an independent, arms-length formative and summative evaluation of SSLC that documented its operations and activities, processes and outcomes. The Summative Evaluation report (Luke, et al., 2013) represents the findings, views and analysis of the Research Team. It does not represent the views or analyses of Stronger Smarter Institute staff, DEEWR, ACARA, or State and Territory Government systems that have generously provided data for the study.

This document is an abridged version of the Summative Evaluation of the Stronger Smarter Learning Communities Project report (Luke et al., 2013). It provides a chapter by chapter summary and the key findings from each chapter. The full version of the document can be downloaded from:

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Professor Allan Luke

Chapter 2 Summary Introduction

While the 2013 Summative Evaluation of the Stronger Smarter Learning Communities Project (Luke et al., 2013) report sheds light on the efficacy of SSLC, it also provides a contemporary picture of the educational challenges and issues facing Indigenous communities, Indigenous education workers and teachers, students, and of the educational challenges and issues facing teachers, principals and educators in the current policy environment and educational context. The question being addressed by the research is whether SSLC - and the Stronger Smarter philosophy and orientation to leadership and school reform more generally - has demonstrable positive effects on the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Australian state schools. The research design was qualitative and quantitative, cross-sectional and longitudinal.

The evaluation program had five core research questions:

1. How influential is school leaders' participation in the SSLP in generating and sustaining school reforms and community engagement in the SSLC Hubs, and improved outcomes for Indigenous students?
2. Do SSLC Hubs across the national network have value-adding influence and impacts on their affiliated schools?
3. Do SSLC Hubs and their affiliated schools function as learning communities with sustainable kinds and levels of community engagement?
4. What other systemic, community, cultural and linguistic, school, teacher, and classroom factors impact on school renewal and reform, community engagement and improved Indigenous student outcomes?
5. How scalable and sustainable is the Stronger Smarter approach to school renewal and reform in Indigenous education?

The 2013 Report brings together data from interviews with Indigenous community members, students and school workers; interviews with and observations of school leaders, teachers, students and key school staff; field observation visits to selected SSLC schools over a three year period; survey responses and self-reports by a large sample of SSLC and non-SSLC schools; and multilevel statistical analysis of 2009/2010 systemic data on test score achievement, attendance and other school profile indicators provided by state and territory governments.

The school, teacher and principal population surveyed was not a population representative sample. Yet because of the range of SSLC schools and the inclusion of non-SSLC comparison schools – the sample under study provides a broad, synoptic view of credentials, experience, tenure, and transfer issues.

It is worth noting that the workforce is predominantly non-Indigenous, Australian-born and English-speaking, while the actual percentages of Indigenous principals (5%) and Indigenous teachers (4.8%) remains relatively low.

Contrary to popular beliefs, the overall experience levels and credential levels of teachers and administrators working with Indigenous students are not low. The transfer and mobility issues appear to be concentrated in remote and very remote schools. Less experienced teachers were more likely to work in remote/very remote schools. They were also more likely to have spent less than five years in their current schools, compared to their colleagues in metropolitan and provincial schools. The overall self-reported levels of prior specialised training in Indigenous education of the teaching and administrative workforce are low, with less than a third reporting pre or in-service training.

The findings below were derived from a descriptive analysis of overall cohort demographic and professional profiles. The picture regarding mobility and transfer is more complex. The reported length of principal tenure is over 5 years. This would appear to fall within the range of the conventional expectation of a 3-5 year cycle of reform to generate school-level gains. In terms of teacher tenure and transfer, the evidence indicates that this may be an ongoing problem in remote and very remote schools but does not constitute a problem in provincial and metropolitan schools.

On the basis of limited case evidence described in this report, our view is that the reform cycle for school improvement in Indigenous education may be in the range of 4-6 years, with the few clear cases of school-level improvement requiring this level of continuity of leadership and succession planning.

Key Findings - Introduction

- Key Finding 1:** The transfer/mobility issue does not appear to be a major problem for continuity of school leadership: the average principal tenure in their current position is 5.74 years, but principals averaged 2.36 schools over the past 5 years.
- Key Finding 2:** Remote/very remote schools are more likely to have less experienced staff with higher levels of transfer and turnover: respondents in remote/very remote schools were more likely to report having had 5 or less years of teaching experience compared to their colleagues in metropolitan or provincial schools; respondents in remote/very remote schools were more likely to report having spent 5 years or less in their current school compared to their colleagues in metropolitan or provincial schools.
- Key Finding 3:** The teaching workforce is highly experienced with an average experience level of 14.63 years, but the large standard deviation (11.109) suggests that there is a wide variation in the age of teachers, with a significant proportion of highly experienced teachers and a significant proportion of beginning teachers.
- Key Finding 4:** Overall credential levels of the administrative and teaching workforce are high, with over 80% of teachers and principals having at least a 4 year bachelor's degree, and 9.7% of teachers and 19.6% of principals with masters or doctoral degrees.
- Key Finding 5:** Overall levels of previous coursework on Indigenous education are low, with less than one third of the combined principal and teacher sample reporting any prior specialised pre- or in-service courses.

Chapter 3 Summary **Stronger Smarter Learning Community 2009-2012** **Operations and Processes**

The Stronger Smarter Leadership Program (SSLP) and the Stronger Smarter Learning Communities Project (SSLC) were designed to propagate Stronger Smarter messages. These messages were based on the work of Dr Chris Sarra from his time as principal of Cherbourg School from 1998 to 2005.

The Stronger Smarter philosophy has five “meta-themes”:

1. Acknowledging, developing and embracing a positive sense of Aboriginal identity in schools;
2. Acknowledging and embracing Aboriginal leadership in schools and school communities;
3. ‘High expectations’ leadership to ensure ‘high expectations’ classrooms, with ‘high expectations’ teacher/student relationships;
4. Innovative and dynamic school staffing models, especially for community schools; and
5. Innovative and dynamic school models in complex social and cultural contexts.

SSLP and SSLC were conceptualised as complementary elements of the reform agenda.

The overall Stronger Smarter model, as promulgated by SSLP, is based on two key approaches: first, a critique of deficit thinking and, second, a focus on personal transformation of participants’ beliefs and understandings of Indigenous students, communities, and cultures. SSLP aims for “empowerment” through the “meta-themes” to set the grounds for school level mobilisation and change.

SSLC focussed on the implementation and sharing of school reform models, approaches and stories based on two broad premises. The first comes from the school network literature - Hub and Affiliate schools would constitute active and vibrant ‘communities of practice’ and ‘communities of learners’, exploring, sharing and exchanging model practices. The second broad premise was that within schools, “high expectations leadership” would have osmotic or ‘trickle-down’ effects to teachers’ beliefs, views and, ultimately, their classroom interactions with Indigenous students. In this model, normative directions in what is to be done were to be derived from ‘stories of success’ that would be documented from successful grassroots practices in SSLC schools and transmitted across the network.

The two models were never effectively joined up to form a unified platform for reform. In part this was attributable to management, personnel and philosophic differences within the Stronger Smarter Institute (SSI), and partly attributable to the conceptual and practical limitations of the model. On the latter issue, no criteria or grounds were established for the selection of *stories of success*. Consecutive attempts to collate and deliver these models were not successful.

Finally, the major medium of communication for constituting and shaping the network, the teleconference, proved too limited for the task. SSLC did not branch out into the use of other media (e.g., blogs, newsletters, social networking, video, and website) and its annual conferences focused principally on reinforcing the original Stronger Smarter messages and meta-themes.

Key Findings - SSLC Operations and Processes

- Key Finding 6: SSLC encountered difficulties in staff retention and continuity.
- Key Finding 7: There were content and program transition issues in linking the SSLP leadership training model with SSLC's focus on school reform.
- Key Finding 8: SSLC and SSI were not able to identify, document and circulate models and exemplars of successful practice for use by Hub and Affiliate schools.
- Key Finding 9: SSLC and SSI did not systematically provide advice on specific classroom-level reforms or innovations to schools.

Chapter 4 Summary Indigenous Community Perspectives on Indigenous Education

This section provides an overview of the documentation and analysis of the diverse and complex views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders on the work and goals of Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators in the context of experience in local school sites. The main aims of the Community Study component of the 2013 Summative Evaluation were to document and report on:

- Indigenous community Elders' and parents' views on the Stronger Smarter Learning Communities (SSLC) Hub or non-SSLC schools' engagement with local communities;
- Schools' variable impacts on the community;
- Indigenous students' educational experiences and relationships with the school, its operations and messages;
- Indigenous students' aspirations, outcomes and pathways through and from the schools; and
- Indigenous teachers' and Indigenous Education Workers' experiences and relationships inside the school, and with community engagement initiatives.

The Community Study served two purposes. First, even though there were common themes across the data, it was a deliberate attempt to break up the view that there is a singular Aboriginal and/or Islander 'voice' or 'perspective' on or in school communities. Second, it was meant to create a relational space for dialogue within and around the research, where Indigenous voices and knowledges are not subordinated, hidden or taken for granted.

What emerges from the comparative analysis of Indigenous community views and perspectives and

As with most 'problem' students, educating families is where to begin. For Indigenous students, this goes one step further in needing to educate the community as well. Parents and community need education in understanding what school is about, realising that the experiences they had and the attitudes of the past are [not] what is happening in schools today.

Furthermore, Indigenous communities need to break down their 'crabs in the bucket' mentalities if their children are to succeed

— *non-Indigenous Teacher*

When we first tried to get our parent forum going we had 20 people in at least one meeting. But because parents had no say in our school – they stopped turning up. **But at that [first] meeting, everything we said, everything we suggested, every idea, or just an inkling of an idea was shot down, and the principal told us too that it would be her choice. And it fell apart.**

—*Aboriginal Parent*

non-Indigenous teachers' and leaders' views demonstrates general agreement about the value of education, but a binary divide of perspectives on schooling. Many community members and parents stated that their experience with school consultation and engagement was token and not part of substantive input into policy and decision-making. Indigenous staff described working conditions where their job specifications and levels of input into teaching and school-governance were contingent on the views and opinions of individual school leaders. Students described difficult relations with teachers, where they felt that their actions, their cultural relations and their responsibilities were misconstrued.

The Community Study undermines the myth that Indigenous parents, community members, Indigenous education workers, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students somehow lack the capacity to engage in substantive, informed dialogue about educational issues, school practices

and operations, and teaching and learning. These are articulate and powerful voices.

Taken together, the Indigenous views and experiences reported here corroborate one of the key claims of the Stronger Smarter model: that the school remains a non-Indigenous social institution with predominant views that Indigenous students, communities and families require fixing and repair prior to the improvement of Indigenous outcomes. This was documented in the analysis of teacher comments, with many teachers arguing that communities, families and students lacked requisite skills, knowledges, infrastructure and capacity. On the other hand, Indigenous students, parents, community members and educational staff were univocal in calling for substantive - not token - consultation, engagement, dialogue and mutual understanding with the aim of fundamentally altering cultural relations between non-Indigenous teachers and Indigenous students.

While SSLC and SSLP have set the grounds for increased school awareness of and action with Indigenous cultures and communities, the reported experience of many in Indigenous communities is one of marginalisation from schools that, they report, treat them and their children as deficit. They call for substantive, informed and sustained engagement between schools and communities characterised by mutual respect, with the aim for shared decision-making and collaborative governance at all levels of the educational enterprise. Without exception, their view is that, at present, this is not occurring.

Classroom Narrative

Embedding Indigenous Studies: Mismatched Perspectives

This incident regarding mismatched views of effective Indigenous studies was reported by Lily in 2012.

Yeah ok then so they were both here see, Iris [the support worker] went to the toilet and this other one [the teacher] was telling me how good they were embedding Indigenous perspectives at the school, at Summerfort High School, as I worked at that school... and I said 'that's good', and she says, 'oh Lily... they are really doing it well now! [Then] Iris came back in ...she said 'oh Lily, you should see what I saw the other day'. She said 'one poor ... student came into my room - **she left her class because they were showing an old Indigenous film and they had put it on speed** [played on fast-forward]. These [Aboriginal] women there, with nothing on, walking around and running ... and everyone was sitting there laughing'.

This Aboriginal girl felt so embarrassed, she didn't know what to do. **She shouldn't have felt embarrassed that teacher should have been** ... I looked at this other woman ... and I said ... **see Aboriginal and white people think differently**. Which is true they do – 'cause one was white and one was black, and one thought they were embedding it very well and the black person had it right, you know she was there, she had an idea of what it was - she knew what was really happening.

In this same school, one of the Indigenous Education Workers [IEWs] had taken the initiative after observing an Indigenous studies lesson as she worked one-on-one with an Aboriginal student. She was unimpressed with the way the content was being portrayed and took the initiative to suggest that she deliver a guest class.

...Last year, I did teaching there, in Year 8, and that teacher who was supposed to present that [lesson] did nothing. That's why I went on board ... I spoke about the early days, well I used the DVD of the early years, and we talked about reconciliation, assimilation, stolen generation, all of that and the most important thing was to all the kids in the classroom – is the respect. Respect for yourself, your culture.

In this case, the IEW, Indigenous staff and community were not involved in planning the lesson or teaching.

Case Extract 1 Embedding Indigenous Studies: Mismatched Perspectives

In 1980, Dr.Margaret Valadian argued that Australians have rarely appreciated the extraordinarily proficient nature of traditional Indigenous education systems.

Three decades later, many of the same issues and views that she and her contemporaries raised still stand. Indigenous community members, educators, parents, and students continue to experience marginalisation and exclusion in schools and classrooms. There is a broad concurrence between community views and teachers' comments about Indigenous education. Despite decades of reform *and* intervention, many educators continue to work from a baseline of deficit assumptions about Indigenous cultures and peoples. These views extend not only to Indigenous students, their families and parents, but impact on the everyday experience of Indigenous educators and staff in schools.

Key Findings - Community Study

- Key Finding 10: The Indigenous community experience is that schools continue to work from a deficit perspective on Indigenous students, parents, communities and community members, and school staff.
- Key Finding 11: A significant proportion of teachers surveyed expressed deficit views of Indigenous students, families, communities and cultures.
- Key Finding 12: Many Indigenous education workers and teachers report the experience of marginalisation and disenfranchisement in schools, with reactive job roles and insecure working conditions.
- Key Finding 13: Community members interviewed consider many attempts at school consultation as token and superficial, with little real participation in school decision-making and governance.
- Key Finding 14: Indigenous students and staff interviewed report everyday experiences of labeling and mis-recognition of their actions, learning and social relations.
- Key Finding 15: Community members and parents interviewed acknowledge the importance of test score improvement, but are also concerned with other pathways, aspirations and goals, including cultural knowledge, awareness and relations, community participation, student safety and health.
- Key Finding 16: There is broad community support for the embedding of Indigenous knowledges in the curriculum, but Indigenous students and staff report significant problems with non-Indigenous teacher knowledge and intercultural sensitivity.

Chapter 5 Summary **Teacher Knowledge and Community Engagement**

One of the core premises of the Stronger Smarter approach is that teacher deficit thinking is a major problem in the education of Indigenous students, and that this can be altered through personal transformation and engagement with Indigenous communities and cultures. The Community Study provided an overview of the views and experiences of Indigenous community members, parents, educators and students of deficit discourses at work in schools and their attempts to engage with community. This was corroborated by the analysis of teachers' comments on Indigenous education. This analysis confirmed that a significant proportion of the teaching workforce continued to view Indigenous education by reference to deficits and 'lacks' residing outside of the school, in students, their families, parents, communities, and cultures.

They [teachers] say you're not going to be successful - that you can't do this.

And just because you're Indigenous or something, they expect nothing from you. That's what they basically say. That's what they want you doing; they want you to stay what they think you are.

—Indigenous Secondary School Student, 2012

What emerges is a picture of two distinctive cultural and experiential standpoints on education and schooling – those of Indigenous communities and those of non-Indigenous educators, including educators and school support staff.

Part of the problem may lie in specialised professional training. Teachers reported relatively low levels of previous courses on Indigenous education, and high levels of dissatisfaction with pre-service training in the support of Indigenous learners. But professional training is but one source of teacher knowledge of Indigenous communities and peoples. The level of self-reported knowledge about and everyday engagement and contact with Indigenous communities, peoples and cultures was documented in Chapter 5 of the Summative Evaluation (Luke et al., 2013). While we have no comparative benchmarks, our analysis suggests that overall knowledge and engagement levels are low.

This has implications for pedagogy. Those teachers with higher levels of knowledge about and engagement with Indigenous communities and cultures are more likely to report attempts to teach with and through Indigenous contents, topics and issues in the classroom.

In terms of the impacts of SSLC on teacher knowledge, there appear to be no significant differences between SSLC and non-SSLC schools. Teachers in non-SSLC schools reported gains in knowledge from 2010-2011. However, teachers in SSLC schools reported higher levels of engagement than non-SSLC schools. This is the first indication in the current report that the Stronger Smarter approach is having an impact on the degree to which teachers and leaders focus their attention on issues of Indigenous community and culture.

The findings below provide some grounds for explaining what we referred to as a 'binary divide' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous views of schooling processes and practices. In sum, teachers' levels of actual everyday contact and engagement with Indigenous communities, especially outside of the school, are low. Overall levels of self-reported knowledge about Indigenous issues, histories and cultures are low. Overall levels of teacher satisfaction with their previous training and preparation on Indigenous education are low. Those teachers who report higher levels of engagement and knowledge

are more likely to report that they are attempting to embed Indigenous content in the curriculum, in effect bringing their knowledge and experience of Indigenous community into the classroom.

Key Findings - Teacher Knowledge and Community Engagement

Key Finding 17: Teacher self-reported knowledge of Indigenous cultures, histories and communities is low.

Key Finding 18: Teacher self-reported everyday engagement with Indigenous peoples and communities outside of the school is low.

Key Finding 19: Teachers with higher self-reported levels of knowledge about and engagement with Indigenous communities and cultures are more likely to report that they are teaching Indigenous topics and knowledges in the classroom.

Key Finding 20: Teachers reported that they were not satisfied that their pre-service teacher education adequately prepared them to support Indigenous learners.

Key Finding 21: Teachers in SSLC schools report higher levels of engagement with Indigenous communities and cultures than teachers in non-SSLC schools.

Chapter 6 Summary School Cultural and Structural Reform

What does the model of “high expectations leadership” forwarded by the Stronger Smarter approach yield in terms of changes in school culture and institutional structure? We began by describing a context of reform characterised by a major disjunction between the perspectives, experiences and beliefs of Indigenous communities, on the one hand, and those of teachers and administrators, on the other. Previously, we noted that teachers in SSLC schools reported higher levels of everyday engagement and intercultural contact than those in non-SSLC schools.

In this section, we studied the major premise of SSLP and SSLC: that schools should establish a baseline environment which explicitly named, recognised and displayed elements and messages about and from Indigenous identities, cultures and communities. In our 2011 report, we noted that SSLC schools were taking up this challenge. They reported higher levels of what we termed high expectations promotion and (Indigenous) school climate than their non-SSLC counterparts. By 2012, this pattern had shifted, with non-SSLC school leaders reporting comparable levels of foci on these elements of reform.

We hypothesise that there were threshold effects in SSLC schools, where previously reported high levels of focus could not be exceeded. We also hypothesise that there were “bleed out” effects, where non-SSLC schools were encountering and engaging with the general Stronger Smarter messages around Indigenous identity and high expectations through a range of sources: for example, through press reports, from state and federal policies, and in-service programs.

Principals’ views suggest that SSLC/SSLP makes a difference in a key area of school reform: SSLC school leaders reported significantly higher levels of activity in the areas of Indigenous staffing and school leadership, community engagement and attempts to engage community in school governance. We refer to the latter as ‘attempts’, noting that there were no instances of actual, substantive Indigenous community governance in any of the SSLC and non-SSLC schools studied – in part because of existing legal parameters of school governance.

Here we find evidence of SSLC effects in reshaping school culture and structure. We noted, at the same time, that teachers did not agree, or did not believe that these changes were operational or visible to them. Although we would not expect agreement between principals and teachers, given the acknowledged dynamics and tensions of school reform – it is worth noting that any ‘trickle down’ or osmotic model of school reform would depend on the teachers adopting and appropriating these overall messages.

Finally, a path analysis of the teacher survey data corroborated what we had observed in the field. Having established a visible ‘first wave’ of reform by changing school climate to display Indigenous themes, images and events – many schools then followed distinctive pathways, selecting and prioritising different agendas. These included: a focus on the redistribution of mainstream knowledges, skills and competence through the discourses of high expectations; a focus on Indigenous school leadership and staffing, and governance; and, finally, a focus on community engagement and knowledge. These were a ‘second wave’ of effort and action as schools attempted to move forward, with highly variable results.

Key Findings – School Cultural and Structural Reform

- Key Finding 22: There are no significant differences in SSLC and non-SSLC leaders' reported foci on high expectations and Indigenous school climate.
- Key Finding 23: SSLC school leaders report stronger foci on Indigenous staffing and leadership, and community engagement and governance than non-SSLC school leaders.
- Key Finding 24: Teachers report 3 identifiable paths of reform in their schools: (1) from Indigenous school climate to high expectations promotion and enactment; (2) from Indigenous school climate to Indigenous community governance and Indigenous school leadership; (3) from Indigenous school climate to Indigenous community engagement and knowledge.

Chapter 7 Summary Pedagogy

One of the central challenges confronting SSLC, school leaders and teachers is what is to be done in classrooms. Using school leaders' self-reports on their school's curriculum emphases, and teachers' self-reports of actual classroom time allocations, we attempted to classify pedagogy following conventionally defined paradigms.

The only clear SSLC effect in pedagogy was a stronger teacher reported emphasis on the embedding of Indigenous content, knowledges and topics in the curriculum. However, the overall baseline of time allocated to Indigenous content and knowledges for SSLC and non-SSLC schools was low. Our fieldwork classroom observations corroborated the finding noted previously: that many teachers lacked sufficient content knowledge of Indigenous topics and issues, and there were many instances where they struggled with classroom discussions over contested issues of historical and cultural significance to Indigenous students and communities. In some schools visited, Indigenous Education Workers and community members played key roles in the school's move to embed Indigenous content.

Teachers in both SSLC and non-SSLC schools have established *default pedagogies*, an unmarked norm that dominates how Indigenous students are taught. Specifically, the default consists of an emphasis on basic skills of literacy and numeracy, taught through highly variable versions of direct instruction. These are maintained across grade and year levels, but then appear to transition into vocational education pathways for many Indigenous students.

The likelihood of the school emphasising basic skills, Vocational Education and the embedding of Indigenous content increased at specific thresholds of percentage of Indigenous students. The emphases also increased in schools of lower ICSEA values. In low ICSEA schools, furthermore, the likelihood of more time reported allocated to behaviour management increased.

There was little reported time allocation to progressive pedagogy, to a focus on canonical literary and scientific knowledge, and to critical literacy models in SSLC and non-SSLC schools.

There is evidence that teacher experience counts. It is noteworthy that teacher experience militated against the reported allocation of instructional time to behaviour management and basic skills, with teachers who had more than 10 years experience less likely to focus on student behaviour and no more likely to emphasise basic skills than teachers in higher ICSEA schools.

To instantiate these patterns, we aggregated an overview of school leaders' descriptions of the programs, methods, approaches and in-service programs featured in their schools. This filled in the picture of which programs they were selecting to teach basic skills and where extra-curricular and more general cultural orientations were seen as priorities instead of curriculum. The picture that emerges is one where principals are making eclectic and, in instances, idiosyncratic choices about which programs will enhance their school and student outcomes. Many schools showed few signs of any systematic instructional/curricular leadership.

We have established new empirical grounds for the major premise of the Stronger Smarter approach: that deficit thinking by teachers and principals remains a major challenge and impediment for systems that have ambitions to "close the gap" in conventional educational achievement. In part this is attributable to a reported lack of pre- and in-service training on Indigenous education. But in addition to problems with levels of teacher and principal knowledge, we have also identified low levels of everyday teacher contact with Indigenous cultures, communities and peoples as an ongoing challenge.

SSLC has had an impact in setting the grounds for increased Indigenous engagement and consultation, staffing and leadership. It also has set the grounds for changes in Indigenous school climate and for teachers to engage with Indigenous communities and cultures. These, we have shown, constitute two clear pathways for school reform.

There are various conventional explanations for this pattern. But the key point here is that they appear to institutionalise – or interactionally realise – a deficit/remediation/testing/streaming/tracking model.

The popular mythologies are that Indigenous education is riven by fads and progressivist experimentation. But our findings here show low levels of progressive, child-centred pedagogy, critical literacy, and canonical/classical approaches. More importantly, they suggest that the focus on basic skills, vocational education and behaviour management *increases* as the percentage of Indigenous students rises to key thresholds, and in relation to lower ICSEA levels.

There are two important empirical observations to be made here. First, it is noteworthy that below these key thresholds (11.5 to 15%), schools teach Indigenous students as they would any other cohort. That is, it appears that there is a threshold point at which schools, their leaders and principals appear to recognise or acknowledge that they are teaching a different, distinctive cohort. Unfortunately, their choices are not to move towards any semblance of “high expectations” teaching that many of them aim for.

Second, teacher experience appears to reverse such tendencies: more experienced teachers (>10 years) tend to report less focus on behaviour management and the same level of focus on basic skills as their counterparts teaching in higher ICSEA and lower percentage of Indigenous students schools.

In terms of the actual selection of curriculum materials, instructional approaches and in-service programs – school leaders appear to be struggling to generate coherent school-level programs. While they emphasised basic skills and vocational education, there were no consistent patterns in the selection of curriculum and intervention programs. In instances, school leaders are purchasing consultant services, pre-packaged programs, and materials that have very different emphases and foci. In other instances, schools appear to be bereft of the instructional leadership that is central to improved conventional outcomes.

The ‘trickle down’ effects of Stronger Smarter messages, then, appear to be having a moderate impact only on one area of pedagogy: the teaching of Indigenous knowledge, content and topics. Other than this, SSLC schools appear to be placed in a double-bind situation: On the one hand, they are refocusing school climate on “high expectations”. On the other hand, they are proceeding with what appears to be a system-wide default mode of pedagogy: basic skills and vocational education.

Classroom Narrative

Studying Indigenous Movies

This lesson was not directly observed by researchers but was reported by three Indigenous students in Community Study focus groups. In this case, a non-Indigenous teacher at a metropolitan secondary school was leading a class discussion of the movie, *Samson and Delilah*, which portrays youth and growing up in outback communities and townships. Although the overall population of the school is around 15%, in this particular class, there was only one Aboriginal student in the class. They explain:

Student 1: I reckon the teachers, how they teach the students ... some teachers don't know what they're doing whatsoever, and **they expect you to grasp everything, just like that**, even though they don't know what they're doing themselves. If you ask a question, they'll just be like *[mimics a blank look]*.

Interviewer: So how do teachers handle it when you're outspoken in the classroom?

Student 2: That's what they do. They just stare at you ... I've got an example when I was there in my English class yesterday and we were doing our assignment ...

Student 1: Is your assignment on the film, the Australian film? I'm doing that too. It's actually **Samson and Delilah. That's a really good movie. I love it.** And, like, it's for English and we're doing landscape and how it defines what's happening. Anyways, we're doing that and while watching it, they were so racist. It was so bad and, like, I don't know it was really bad.

Interviewer: So is this from the students making comments? Can you give some examples?

Student 1: The teacher, she laughed actually. There was this one part where Samson – Delilah gave him food, right, and he would follow her. **And then [non-Indigenous student] compared him to a dog. The teacher laughed at that, and I was like, 'WOW'.** They [*Samson and Delilah*] had this way of talking, and they'd all make a mockery out of it. The teacher didn't really have anything to say about it. She was just like, 'Okay students', and that was that.

At the start of the movie ... she, like, gets kidnapped – oh that was so bad – those in the room were going, 'she's so loose now', and all this stuff. It's, like, holy crap. It was pretty sad...

Student 2: That's my point right there ... all of us [Indigenous students] sitting there, and [if] we see that we'd actually get up and walk straight out of the door and we'd still get in trouble for it. They'd be saying 'oh that black chick, that black girl'. I'd say, 'I'm like right here, can you not see me? Why are you saying this shit?'

Student 3: And then you get up and you walk out and 'boom', we get it trouble. When we get offended we can't turn around and [react]. **You just got to follow their rules and just walk straight out or away from it.**

Case Extract 2 Studying Indigenous Movies

Discussion: This narrative, captured in Indigenous students' accounts, highlights their perceptions of place, agency and relationships between themselves and non-Indigenous students and teachers. Initially, students were talking about the specific ways teachers respond when they are having difficulties in a science class. This transitioned into a discussion about their experiences when teachers attempt to teach Indigenous studies content. In both cases, commentary is centred on teachers' pedagogy.

In reporting of the Community Study, we described how students had highlighted the contradictory discourses of the school when it came to behaviour management of Indigenous students: students are expected to be respectful but feel that this is not reciprocated. There was a strong perception amongst Indigenous interviewees that deficit models predominated in schools.

Note that these Indigenous students valued Indigenous studies content, but the students' view was that the content and the teacher's handling of the lesson in Case Extract 2 made them objects of petty harassment and racist derision. One of the collateral effects of this approach to 'embedding' is the way that the lesson content and non-Indigenous teacher and student responses to that content have the effect of defining and positioning the sole Indigenous student in the class as an 'object' of study and commentary.

Key Findings - Pedagogy

- Key Finding 25: SSLC teachers report significantly more instructional time allocated to embedding of Indigenous content, knowledges and topics in the curriculum than teachers in non-SSLC schools.
- Key Finding 26: There are no significant differences in SSLC and non-SSLC teachers' reports of their practices in other areas of pedagogy.
- Key Finding 27: The dominant approaches to pedagogy reported by SSLC and non-SSLC teachers are emphases on basic skills instruction and Vocational Education.
- Key Finding 28: Overall reported time allocated to the embedding of Indigenous content, topics, and knowledges is low.
- Key Finding 29: Reported time allocations for canonical pedagogy, progressive pedagogy and critical literacy pedagogy are low.
- Key Finding 30: Many teachers do not have the requisite background knowledge and cultural experience to teach topics and content on Indigenous knowledge and culture.
- Key Finding 31: When the overall school percentage of Indigenous students reaches key thresholds, it increases the likelihood of an emphasis on basic skills (>15%), Vocational Education (>11.5%) and embedding of Indigenous knowledge (>15.5%).
- Key Finding 32: Teachers in lower ICSEA value schools are more likely to report stronger emphasis on behaviour management (<933.5), basic skills (<922), Vocational Education (<952.5) and embedding of Indigenous knowledge (952.5).
- Key Finding 33: More experienced teachers (>10 years) report less time allocated to behaviour management and basic skills.
- Key Finding 34: SSLC Hub schools' choices of curriculum programs, approaches and in-service programs are eclectic, with no discernible patterns of state, regional or school-type consistency.

Chapter 8 Summary Indigenous Languages and Dialects

Aboriginal languages have been the object of extensive descriptive linguistic and sociolinguistic research for the past century. Over the past three decades, it has been well established that a very significant proportion of Indigenous children are bilingual and/or bidialectal. But while extensive provision and specialised support is available across Australia for migrant ESL students, our data shows that educational recognition and engagement with the language learning development of Indigenous ESL/D speakers appears to be haphazard. With the winding down of bilingual education programs in the Northern Territory, there has been little policy or curriculum emphasis on either transitional bilingual/bidialectal education or on Indigenous language retention and revival.

The push to improve Indigenous performance on English literacy test scores has set the conditions for a *de facto* monolingual education policy. While the Stronger Smarter approach sets “positive Indigenous identity” as a central principle, it does not mention Indigenous languages and their role in the building and sustaining of cultural identity. There were no reported or observed instances of bilingual education in SSLC or non-SSLC schools.

School-based activity in Indigenous language education was reportedly concentrated in a relatively small number of SSLC and non-SSLC schools, which tended to have high percentages of Indigenous students. The reported activity was in two areas: the teaching of Indigenous Language as a formal LOTE curriculum area, and bidialectal programs that used transitional programs for speakers of Aboriginal English, Kimberly Kriol or Torres Strait Creole. These often were undertaken with state government materials, support and resources. However, some principals report that there is no targeted funding support that recognises ESL/D status.

During the period of this evaluation, there was no substantive SSI, SSLP or SSLC engagement with issues of Indigenous language retention, loss and revitalisation and rare mention of the English-as-a-Second Language/Dialect issues facing students and teachers. Overall levels of accurate teacher ‘naming’ of local Indigenous languages was low, and awareness of affiliated language in education issues was low. Overall self-reported levels of pedagogy that focused on Indigenous languages and dialects were low.

But when white people come here they're not even aware of the languages. They're not aware that their languages are so alive here.

Some of the students I work with, they speak five or six dialects before they even speak English. How does that make them dumb? I say to them, ‘that's so smart’. Please teach me, you know.

— *Indigenous Parent,*
Remote School

The evidence suggests that overall teacher and principal knowledge of and engagement with Indigenous language issues are low. There are concentrated pockets of activity in schools with high percentages of Indigenous students, and in jurisdictions that have made available materials and consultant resources (e.g., Western Australia, South Australia). Those schools working with transitional bi-dialectal programs can draw upon extensive curriculum resources. Those schools that are developing Indigenous language revitalisation programs are faced with complex cultural, technical and professional challenges of language selection, linguistic corpus documentation, materials development and teacher selection and training. The Australian National Curriculum inclusion of Indigenous LOTE programs will require expanded expertise and resource development.

Key Findings - Language

- Key Finding 35: Overall, teachers and school leaders reported low emphases on Indigenous languages and dialects in the classroom.
- Key Finding 36: Overall levels of teacher awareness of Indigenous languages is low.
- Key Finding 37: Schools with higher percentage of Indigenous students are more likely to focus on Indigenous languages and dialects in the curriculum.
- Key Finding 38: The focus of current activity is in the teaching of Indigenous languages as part of LOTE and language revitalisation efforts, concentrated in a small number of schools surveyed.
- Key Finding 39: Schools working with LOTE programs are faced with complex local issues of language selection and the availability of linguistic corpus documentation, and with problems in securing qualified local speakers/teachers and curriculum resources.
- Key Finding 40: Teachers' and school leaders' understanding of, and engagement with, English as a Second Language and English as a Second Dialect issues facing Indigenous students is low.

Chapter 9 Summary Assessment and Certification

A model of “high expectations leadership” is based in part on how schools and systems define “high expectations” and how they evaluate whether and when “high expectations” have been translated into substantive changes in student outcomes. We have noted previously that while SSLC and non-SSLC schools had begun to use a vocabulary of “high expectations”, classroom pedagogy was locked into a default mode of basic skills/vocational education. This, we argued, was an institutionalisation of the deficit thinking held by many teachers and principals that SSLC and SSLP were attempting to disrupt and discard.

We find matching evidence in the area of assessment. As in pedagogy, there is evidence of a convergence of activity around NAPLAN, with testing used for a range of purposes. This includes widespread streaming of students into remedial and specialised ability groups and the tracking of students into vocational education and non-academic pathways. It also includes everyday instances of test preparation and narrowing the curriculum to focus on basic skills.

At the same time, there was little evidence of innovation or development of a range of models of assessment including: task-based assessment, authentic assessment, assessment-for-learning, face-to-face developmental diagnostic work. The exception to this was the use of the PLP model, which is gaining traction across many schools. This model entails a negotiated assessment that engages Indigenous students, parents and caregivers in a dialogue with teachers about learning, progress, outcomes and goals. As noted in the Community Study, Indigenous parents, educators called for broader definitions and models for assessing students. This view is also held by many teachers and principals interviewed here.

I think it is the biggest plus, the PLPs. The curriculum is great, but to have those opportunities to develop those positive relationships is amazing. Everyone just walks around beaming after PLPs. And the kids are part of that PLP and have shown Mum or Dad all the things that they have been doing, well it just sets you up for the rest of the year. Where as in the past there were parents that you didn't ever meet.

—*Provincial Hub School
Assistant Principal*

Leaving aside scientific debates over their technical features as test instruments, the problem is not with NAPLAN or testing per se. But our evidence suggests that NAPLAN is becoming the sole indicator of student success, teacher and school efficacy. It raises questions about principal and teacher expertise in interpreting and using standardised test data; and it raises again longstanding questions about the adequacy of existing classroom-based assessment practices.

Our evidence goes beyond a simple description of SSLC effects and efficacy. Indigenous education is increasingly focused on goals and ideals of “high expectations” and “positive Indigenous identity”, it is mandating the “embedding” of Indigenous knowledge, contents and topics and the teaching of Indigenous LOTE in an Australian National Curriculum. But how do these goals translate into practice?

The empirical picture is of a system that has institutionalised a pedagogy of basic skills/vocational education that lacks program coherence in many schools. This system is driven and supported by a comprehensive standardised testing system that, in turn, is used to support pull-out/remediation programs funded by state and federal government, and is used as a major determinant of school and classroom-level streaming and tracking.

This is an empirical description of the educational practices and processes on the ground in schools. It is *not* an ideological or cultural critique. In the following section, we turn to the key question facing not just SSLC schools and Indigenous education more generally: What are the conventional outcomes?

For a system geared towards and aiming towards improved attendance and standardised test score results - it is relevant and fair to judge it by its capacity to deliver these same results.

Key Findings – Assessment and Certification

- Key Finding 41: Principals and teachers have limited expertise and training in the analysis and the use of test score and other performance data.
- Key Finding 42: The emphasis on improvement of NAPLAN test results is a dominant influence on school planning, policy and pedagogy.
- Key Finding 43: There is little evidence of innovation or the building of teacher expertise in classroom assessment (e.g., task-based assessment, high quality assessment, authentic assessment).
- Key Finding 44: Personal Learning Plans are a viable approach to authentic and negotiated assessment and planning, but these require training and systematic implementation.
- Key Finding 45: Streaming and ability grouping are common at all levels of primary and secondary education.

Chapter 10 Summary Systemic Data on Student Performance

The analysis of school level attendance from 2008-2011, school-level NAPLAN gain scores from 2008-2011, and cohort-level NAPLAN gain scores from 2009-2010 show no evidence of positive SSLC effects.

We acknowledge that the general claim in the international school reform literature is that systematic improvement occurs in a 3-5 year cycle of reform, improvement and consolidation. However, in a large sample of SSLC schools that covers all states and territories, a wide range of demographics and locations, diverse school types and levels – it is reasonable to expect that there would be some evidence of improved outcomes by year 3 or 4 of the reform process. There is no statistically significant evidence of improved attendance or test score performance.

But what is more troubling for Australian Indigenous education is the lack of school-level improvement across the entire cohort of SSLC and non-SSLC schools.

Where instances of “closing the gap” were observed, these tended to be in specific age/grade cohorts in specific curriculum/test construct areas. This fits a common overall pattern where within-school variance is greater than between school-variance. In the conventional literature this is taken to represent, variously, cohort and/or program and/or teacher variance. These are analytic questions that we will examine in further detail in our mid-2013 final report.

But if we set these results against our documentation of the reform of school-level culture and structural reform (Chapter 6), the ‘default’ modes of basic skills/vocational education pedagogies (Chapter 7), and dominant test-driven approaches to assessment (Chapter 8) – there are several plausible interpretations and conclusions.

First, the prevailing test/remediate/stream and track/ basic skills/vocational pedagogy system in its current form is not generating improved attendance and/or standardised test score outcomes. This claim is independent from any judgement about the efficacy of SSLC.

Second, the cohort/area specific gains may be generated by the idiosyncratic and unsystematic instructional leadership at the school level documented in the 2013 Summative Evaluation. Principals and instructional leaders’ idiosyncratic market choices of particular curriculum packages may, in part, be responsible for unpredictable performance spikes in NAPLAN results. For example, school A may have concentrated its efforts on a program with a strong emphasis on writing, which yielded improved NAPLAN writing scores, but no change or declines in reading or numeracy. In such a scenario, individual teacher agency, program effectiveness and specific cohort features may come into play. But the resultant gains may not have consistent transfer effects or generalisability to other cohorts or other areas of study.

Third, the clarion call by state and federal governments for schools to “close the gap” without further specification of level or area – *that is, to improve attendance and test score results across the board* – may not be technically possible or at the least extremely difficult within a single cycle of school reform.

Fourth – regarding the pathways of reform described in Chapter 6 of the 2013 Summative Evaluation report (Luke et al., 2013) – it appears that the pathway of translating “high expectations” into conventional achievement gains works (or does not work) separately from school community engagement and community and increased teacher cultural knowledge and engagement.

Key Findings – Systemic Data on Student Performance

Key Finding 46: There are no statistically significant SSLC effects on improved school level attendance.

Key Finding 47: There are no statistically significant SSLC effects on improved school level achievement on NAPLAN tests.

Key Finding 48: In SSLC and non-SSLC schools, there are numerous individual instances of ‘closing the gap’ between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in specific age/grade cohorts in specific curriculum areas – but there is no coherent pattern of school level, school type, jurisdiction or curriculum-area effects.

Chapter 11 Summary Sustainability

The evidence from the network analysis here parallels the organisational and chronological description of SSLC presented in Chapter 3. An initial period of recruitment and enlistment established patterns of Hub-to-Hub communication. This was based on the commitment of SSLC central staff and the initial core of Hub principals. Despite evidence of initial commitment to the network, the density of network communications declined progressively during the implementation of the project.

SSLC did not prove to be scalable or sustainable as a national school network. The “viral” spread of its messages across and between member schools did not occur.

Returning to the evidence, there are a range of plausible explanations for this. Some of these refer to structural elements of the Stronger Smarter approach and the specific implementation of SSLC. Others refer to the complexity and difficulty of reform of entrenched and durable attitudes and structures that appear to be deterring rather than enhancing Indigenous student achievement.

In Chapter 3 we noted that there were SSLC programmatic, design and management issues that may have impeded its growth and consolidation. In Chapter 4, community members identified the longstanding, structural and cultural impediments that any large-scale approach to school reform would face. In Chapter 5, we noted the challenges raised by major gaps in teacher knowledge and engagement. In Chapters 7, 8 and 9 we identified the systemic ‘default’ modes in pedagogy, language education and assessment that, taken together, are sustaining a deficit approach to Indigenous education.

Beyond SSLC, this study raises a host of questions about current and future directions in Indigenous education policy and practice. Is the ‘school network’ a viable approach to reform? Is the ‘school’ the logical or most viable unit of reform? And which combination of different approaches and interventions described here might make a difference in the improvement of Indigenous students’ outcomes – broadly and narrowly defined? What messages and reform priorities might provide a way forward?

Key Findings - Sustainability

- Key Finding 49: SSLC has not reached sustainable levels of Hub-to-Hub communication and continues to rely on communication mediated by SSLC central administration.
- Key Finding 50: SSLC is not scalable and has not shown signs of increased or autonomous Hub-to-Hub communication as it has developed over time.
- Key Finding 51: Longstanding and durable regional clusters are the organisational units with the demonstrated capacity to sustain networked communications.
- Key Finding 52: School leaders do not report staff turnover as a major impediment to sustainable reform.
- Key Finding 53: School leaders report that the difficulty in hiring Indigenous staff and engaging with key community leaders is an impediment to sustainable reform.

Chapter 12 Summary Findings and Implications

Answers to the Original Research Questions

Answers to the five original contracted research questions for this summative evaluation are noted below.

How influential is school leaders' participation in SSLP in generating and sustaining school reforms and community engagement in the SSLC Hubs, and improved outcomes for Indigenous students?

SSLP and SSLC have had an impact on Hub schools. Taken as a combined 'treatment' of Hub and Affiliate school leaders (not teachers), they have succeeded in reorienting the climate and ethos of many Hub schools to reflect the presence of Indigenous cultures, communities and identities. They have had visible impacts in increasing school foci on the employment of Indigenous staff, on increasing Indigenous presence and leadership in the school, on engaging Indigenous communities and on moving towards greater Indigenous governance. This is a significant accomplishment and it constitutes progress on what we have here identified as one key pathway of school reform for Indigenous education: Indigenous school participation and governance.

SSLC membership also has increased Hub and Affiliate teachers' attention to the need for expanded knowledge of and engagement with Indigenous peoples and communities. These have set the grounds in many schools for an increased focus on the teaching of Indigenous contents, topics and issues in the curriculum. This constitutes emergent progress on a second key pathway of school reform: the revision of curriculum to include Indigenous voices, histories, languages and cultural knowledges.

SSLP/SSLC has not, however, generated improved school level outcomes on conventional systemic measures of attendance and achievement. SSLP/SSLC has not succeeded in generating significant gains in Indigenous students' closing the gap on standardised test score outcomes. That is, SSLC schools have been less successful in the third pathway of school reform that we have identified: translating "high expectations promotion" into systematic changes in classroom pedagogy that might "close the gap" on Indigenous student achievement.

Do SSLC Hubs across the National Network have value-adding influence and impacts on their affiliated schools?

The communication between Hub and Affiliate schools was highly variable, with little evidence of systematic impacts of the transmission of Stronger Smarter themes and messages between Hubs and Affiliates. In two cases where we observed that successful Hub/Affiliate relations were achieved, these were attributable in part to longstanding jurisdictional/geographic/professional school cluster relations, many of which pre-dated SSLC. The network analysis, further, documented several instances of robust Hub-to-Hub communication where there were strong regional/sociodemographic links. In each case, Stronger Smarter messages were used to mobilise and motivate a region or group of schools with shared histories, challenges and issues.

Do SSLC Hubs and their affiliated schools function as learning communities with sustainable kinds and levels of community engagement?

As noted above, there is evidence that Hubs generated increased school leaders' and teachers' reported focus on and activity in community engagement. SSLC Affiliate status did not have a comparable effect.

What other systemic, community, cultural and linguistic, school, teacher, and classroom factors impact on school renewal and reform, community engagement and improved Indigenous student outcomes?

School socioeconomic, demographic and location factors, teacher background and training factors influence various elements of school reform, pedagogy and community engagement. These are reported in the key findings below.

Given the overall paucity of evidence of school level improvement, it is more difficult to identify factors which have a causal effect on attendance and test score achievement. Using qualitative descriptions of the four isolated cases of Hub and Affiliate schools with patterns of gain scores, we make the case below for comprehensive approaches to Indigenous educational reform that undertake to mesh all three pathways to school reform that we have identified here. We discuss these further below.

How scalable and sustainable is the Stronger Smarter approach to school renewal and reform in Indigenous education?

It may continue to provide an effective baseline personal growth model for educators who need to engage with Indigenous communities and cultures and to critique deficit thinking in schools. But SSLP does not yield the requisite professional knowledge or expertise required for effective school reform and the improvement of conventionally measured Indigenous student outcomes.

The SSLC model has the potential to support regional/state clusters and its current focus is on the development of professional development materials. But as it was implemented during the period of this evaluation study, SSLC is not scalable or sustainable.

Major Findings

The following section summarises the key findings of this report in sequence as they were presented in this report. Explanatory notes on each Chapter are presented.

- Major Finding 1: That the Stronger Smarter model’s recognition of the prevalence of ‘deficit thinking’ in schools is accurate – but the approach lacks an institutional analysis of how to reform and alter the effects of this phenomenon.
- Major Finding 2: That SSLC was successful at changing school foci on the need for Indigenous hiring, staffing and leadership in the school, on the need for improved community engagement and moves towards Indigenous participation in school decision-making and governance.
- Major Finding 3: That SSLC was successful at increasing teachers’ and leaders’ attention on the importance of knowledge of Indigenous cultures and communities, and on the need to embed these in teaching and learning.
- Major Finding 4: That despite these efforts, the general Indigenous community view and experience is that schools continue to work from deficit assumptions that preclude student enfranchisement, academic improvement and genuine community involvement and governance.
- Major Finding 5: That SSLC was not successful at generating the improvement of conventionally measured attendance and achievement.
- Major Finding 6: That the predominant, default modes of pedagogy for Indigenous students are basic skills instruction leading to vocational education pathways, part of a deficit model of testing/remediation/streaming and tracking.
- Major Finding 7: That there is an overall lack of school level curriculum program coherence in teaching/learning in SSLC and non-SSLC schools, with many principals and schools making eclectic and apparently idiosyncratic decisions about programs, curriculum materials and in-service approaches.
- Major Finding 8: That overall school leader and teacher knowledge of and engagement with Indigenous communities, cultures, languages and histories are a major impediment to community engagement, school reform and improved outcomes.

The Stronger Smarter approach was successful at mobilising many Hub schools and some Affiliate schools to better attend to issues of Indigenous student identities, community cultures and histories, and to begin addressing these by changing elements of school ethos and structure to engage with Indigenous staff and leadership, community, and students. SSLC Hub school teachers were more

likely than their non-SSLC counterparts to attempt to increase their everyday engagement with and knowledge of Indigenous communities and cultures. This is a logical outcome of the Stronger Smarter emphasis, expressed in SSLP, on personal growth and transformation of beliefs around Indigeneity, difference and culture.

This is a substantive achievement in moving schools towards ‘recognitive’ and ‘representative’ social justice (Fraser, 2000). In our description of distinctive pathways of school reform, we described how many schools have begun a journey to better know and engage with Indigenous communities and cultures, to feature and value Indigenous expertise and leadership in the school, and to shift the curriculum to include Indigenous issues, perspectives and knowledges that historically have been silenced in schools. These are important pathways and pose substantive, ongoing challenges for schools.

At the same time, the model was not successful at providing the basis for improved achievement in the acquisition of the ‘mainstream’ academic skills, knowledges and competences assessed through standardised norm reference achievement testing. As argued by Indigenous community members, many teachers and principals interviewed in this study – there is more to education and schooling than NAPLAN. And we here noted the paucity of other benchmarks and measures for gauging school and individual student progress, development and growth.

Further research and development in these areas is needed. But, given the stress on improving test scores, innovation, research and development in teaching and learning, assessment and evaluation has largely ground to a halt.

This said, redistributive social justice requires improved access to curriculum knowledge. Our analysis of conventional school level and Indigenous cohort gains show that this is not occurring to any scale or extent. The Indigenous student gain score analysis – including SSLC and non-SSLC schools in all states except New South Wales – shows that individual cohorts, in specific age/grade levels, in specific curriculum/testing domains are making progress compared to means. But there appear to be few systematic school level, school type, age, subject-area patterns. This makes any causal explanations about ‘what is working’, for whom, where and why difficult.

Our view is this corresponds with two phenomena that we observed. First, the Stronger Smarter approach deliberately has avoided providing any programmatic advice to principals or teachers about what or how to teach. SSLC, in response to the 2011 Evaluation Report, did provide Hub schools with discussion and access to specific models of, for example, direct instruction, phonics and whole-school planning. However, no criteria were provided for the selection of models. The levels of state and regional advice, infrastructure and accountability for principals’ school level curriculum and program choices vary greatly. Nor did the Stronger Smarter “stories of success” model provide specific program or normative directions about what was to be done in classrooms.

Second, the results are described in our description of pedagogy. Here there were few significant differences between SSLC and non-SSLC schools. Simply, the default modes of pedagogy were basic skills/direct instruction leading to Vocational Education pathways. Whatever their intents, this, and the continued emphasis on streaming and tracking, special education remediation models fulfill a deficit model of student lack, remediation and repair – the same model noted and described by both Indigenous community members and teachers interviewed.

At the same time, the rising stakes around NAPLAN and the push to ‘close the gap’ have set a context for the current behaviour of school leaders, teachers and schools. The result, judging by our graphic

overview of programs, approaches, materials and in-service activities, is a collection of programs and approaches that do not appear to fit or follow generalisable pattern. Our view is that principals and school leaders are engaged in market behaviour characterised by an active search for products, consultants and methods that they believe will boost test scores – often in the absence of programmatic advice from their state jurisdictions. At the same time, publishers and consultants work in an unregulated inservice market, where, quite literally, anybody can offer their programs and approaches to schools for a fee.

Hence – there appears to be an alignment between a deficit model of the Indigenous learner, a push for test score improvement, market-driven behaviour by schools seeking to find the ‘right’ program or materials to improve outcomes, seemingly eclectic decisions in materials/consultant/program purchase, and an idiosyncratic, unpredictable pattern of spikes and gains in the performance of specific cohorts, at specific year levels, in specific areas. In sum, there is a lack of “program coherence” (Newman & King, 1996) or “whole school curriculum planning” (Luke, Woods & Weir, 2013) at the school level.

To test this model, we can turn to the isolated cases of SSLC Affiliates who have generated statistically significant gain scores. No Hubs generated comparable gain scores. In what follows, we identify 4 SSLC schools that generated school level Indigenous cohort gain scores at a .5 or .4 level of statistical significance. Note that .5 is the conventional standard; .4 is used by Hattie (2009) as the cut-off point in his meta-analyses of school effects. ACARA lists schools as performing “better than” others at levels of .2 and .3. Our scientific view is that .4 is a technically defensible measure and less likely to include schools who have made marginal gains.

Table 12.1 lists four schools, describing their profile, specific gains, and contextual background of programs and curriculum.

Table 12.1 Isolated Cases of Affiliate Schools with Statistically Significant Gain Scores

| <i>School</i> | <i>Short description</i> | <i>Achievements in closing the gap</i> | <i>What we know</i> |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|
| School One: Affiliate 7/179 | A mid-sized metropolitan state primary school with a fluctuating enrolment of 550 to 650, and an Indigenous cohort of approximately 12-15%. The ICSEA rating is < 890. Approximately 10% of the student cohort speak English as an additional language. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between 2009 and 2010 there was a mean effect of 0.5 across all year levels and all 5 dimensions for the Indigenous student cohort. It is not possible to calculate an effect for Indigenous students in year 3, however in the non-Indigenous year 3 students there was a -ve effect in all of the literacy dimensions but a +ve effect in numeracy (0.16) for this cohort. Across year 5 and 7 there are positive mean effects in all cohorts across all | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New leadership started reform process in 2008 through links to researchers at two local universities. Not explicitly badged as a Stronger Smarter school. Reconnection to local community and to local network of Indigenous educators. Indigenous LOTE. Indigenous studies program throughout the school. Focus on teacher PD, collaborative planning and pedagogy, digitisation of the curriculum . Indigenous after-school homework program. Focus on literacy, numeracy, |

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| | | <p>dimensions (yr 5 non-Indigenous (0.03); yr 5 Indigenous (0.12); yr7 non-Indigenous (0.10); yr7 Indigenous (1.03)).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The greatest effects for Indigenous students are seen in year 7 with gains across all dimensions (numeracy (1.50); reading (0.67); writing (1.01); spelling (1.05); and grammar (0.93). | <p>science and local Indigenous knowledges in the curriculum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific curriculum package or program. |
| <p>School Two: Affiliate 8/179</p> | <p>A small provincial state school that services students in P to year 9 across two campuses. Just over 20% of the student population is Indigenous with many of these students attending the secondary campus as boarders (almost 40% of the students at the secondary campus are Indigenous, many living away from home). The ICSEA rating is just under 900</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between 2009 and 2010 there was a mean effect of 0.5 across all year levels and all 5 dimensions for the Indigenous student cohort. In year 3 there was no Indigenous cohort. There was not sufficient data to calculate mean effects for Indigenous students in year 5 or year 7. In year 9 there were positive mean effects in numeracy (0.73), reading (0.78), spelling (0.5), and grammar (0.57), and a small negative mean effect in writing (-0.03). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school was in transition during this time period with shifts in the student demographic profile of the school. National Partnership School. Focus on middle schooling. Reports to focus PD on building teacher capacity – some work on explicit teaching. Focus on community engagement, but less than 5% of staff are Indigenous. Curriculum focus on literacy, numeracy and science. Member of a local educators’ network with school 6 and school 10. This network paid for a network coach to work across the schools. |
| <p>School Three: Affiliate 12/179</p> | <p>A large metropolitan secondary school with a student enrolment of just over 1200, 6% of these who identify as Indigenous. The ICSEA rating is just over 1000.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between 2009 and 2010 there was a mean effect of 0.4 across all 5 dimensions for the Indigenous student cohort. Both the non-Indigenous and Indigenous student cohorts demonstrated a +ve mean effect (non-Indigenous 0.1 & Indigenous 0.4). There was a –ve effect in numeracy (-0.18), and +ve effects in all other dimensions in the year 9 cohort (reading (0.22); writing (0.85); spelling (0.7) & grammar (0.54). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selective enrolment requirements for 60% of students through excellence in academic results, sport, or the arts (zoned since 2004). Extension academic program in middle school. Destinations data – 30% university 30% VET pathways. |

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| <p>School Four: Affiliate 14/179</p> | <p>A small primary school in a very remote location. Approximately 97% of the 120 students identify as Indigenous. The ICSEA rating is just over 600. The school is approximately 15 minutes drive from a larger centre.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 2009 and 2010 there was a mean effect of 0.4 across all year levels and all 5 dimensions for the Indigenous student cohort. • Gains are primarily attributable to the year 7 cohort (overall mean effect 1.03). At this year level there are positive effects in writing (1.12), spelling (3.77) and grammar (0.5), negligible effects in reading (0.09) and negative effects in numeracy (-0.34). • There are negative effects for all cohorts in numeracy although in year 5 this is negligible (yr 3 -0.32, yr 5 -0.06, and yr 7 -0.34). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Indigenous principal in 2009-2010. • Adopted Stronger Smarter approach to “positive Indigenous identity” and “community engagement” in 2009. • Part of a network of schools in a remote region. • School philosophy is that all students are ESL/D – hence focus on speaking/listening and vocabulary. • Use ESL/D bandscales used to map students. • Kriol and vernacular languages used in junior years, K-1 and then transitioned to Standard English with focus on code switching. • Explicit teaching on how Standard Australian English is used in context. • High expectations school culture. • 2 specialist teachers in literacy and numeracy with higher duties pay. • All teachers receive 40 minutes of curriculum planning time to work with specialists. • Specialists modelling and co-teaching. • Deliberate choice not to purchase specific package or programs. • Support and advice in ESL/D from regional infrastructure and state. |
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All 179 SSLC and non-SSLC schools were listed in rank order by their overall Indigenous cohort gain scores. Following the ACARA standard, students cohorts of >5 were not included in the analysis. These schools were ranked, respectively 7, 8, 12 and 14 in the field. In what follows, we offer brief explanatory overviews of their approaches during the period 2009-2010 that generated gain scores.

School One was under new leadership during the 2009-2010 period. Beginning in 2008, it began collaborative intervention with local universities, supported by funding from the state Teachers' Union and the Australian Research Council. The school has pushed all three pathways of reform simultaneously over a five year period. First, it has a strong focus on Indigenous culture and language. This goes beyond the visibility of NAIDOC activities, public celebration and art to include: 2 full time IEWs who are active in curriculum planning, Aboriginal after-school homework programs, close and regular policy and program consultation with a longstanding Indigenous community organisation, local Indigenous LOTE program, and the inclusion of Indigenous content in the curriculum. Second, it has implemented a digital arts program, which involves students in media analysis and production, with high levels of participation by Indigenous students. Third, it does not rely on a specific literacy or numeracy program or package – but has stressed school level curriculum planning, co-teaching and mentoring with university-based consultants and staff, and the use of general models of teaching like productive pedagogies.

School Two is a P-9 school with a high percentage of Aboriginal students who are full-time boarders. The school was in transition during this period of time, with significant changes in its student profile and institutional structure. It retained a strong middle school philosophy, with a professional development focus on explicit teaching in core KLA subjects of literacy, mathematics and science. The school did not use a specific literacy or numeracy program or package. The gain scores appear to be concentrated in a Year 9 cohort. Possible explanations for these gains are that they are the result of cohort effects, or possibly the efficacy of middle years philosophies.

School Three is a selective metropolitan high school with 6% Indigenous enrolment. It is a state school of excellence in academics, sport and the arts. The gains are concentrated in the Year 9 cohort. As in the case of School Two, these gains may be attributable to specific cohort selection effects.

School Four is a very remote Indigenous school with 97% Indigenous enrolment. Gain scores are concentrated in Year 7 literacy domains. While this also may be attributable to cohort effects, it appears to be related to a series of systematic interventions that began the year prior to the period in question. The Indigenous students are all bilingual/bidialectal speakers of Kriol and local languages. In 2008, an Indigenous principal was appointed. He implemented a focus on transitional bidialectal education, with all students mapped on the ESL bandscales. Two curriculum specialist teachers in literacy and numeracy were hired, taking on curriculum planning, co-teaching and mentoring responsibilities with new and existing staff. All staff planned and implemented a transitional bi-dialectal program that uses Kriol in P-1 and gradually transitions to explicit teaching of code-switching between Kriol and Standard Australian English. The school deliberately choose not to purchase a curriculum product or package and focussed on whole school curriculum planning around a philosophy of high expectations, explicit teaching and bilingual/bidialectal education.

In the above analysis, we have avoided simple causal explanation. As we stated in Chapter 10 – specific instances where Indigenous cohorts have ‘closed the gap’ could be attributable to a range of interacting factors including, but not limited to: cohort effects, teacher effects, and curriculum or program intervention. So we make no causal claims. But we take the cases of SSLC Affiliate Schools

One and Four above to demonstrate the ecological complexity and the possibilities of successful school reform

Our data and our analysis shows that the three pathways of school reform tend to operate semi-autonomously. As we noted in Chapter 10, there is little evidence of ‘cross-over’ or transfer effects between, for example, expanded community engagement, governance and Indigenous leadership, on the one hand, and improved test score development via “high expectations enactment” on the other. To illustrate, while SSLC schools worked from higher levels of teacher community knowledge and engagement, they were not necessarily about to translate this into improved test score achievement. It did, however, apparently translate into a stronger curriculum emphasis on Indigenous topics, knowledge and issues. This is a phenomenon of arguable educational and cultural value for students, teachers, Indigenous cultures and Australian society in-and-for-itself. As the Indigenous community and educational voices here stated in Chapter 4, there is more to education than test score improvement.

At the same time, these schools gains were attributable not to market-driven, commodity/curriculum purchase, or the external imposition of curriculum. In each case, there were simultaneous moves down all three of the pathways of reform we identified here:

- A strong emphasis on understanding, engaging with and acknowledging the cultural and linguistic resources of Indigenous students and communities;
- A strong emphasis on Indigenous staff and leadership within the school and engagement with community; and
- A strong emphasis on building teacher capacity and quality pedagogy across the curriculum through whole-school curriculum planning in key areas.

Indeed, given the diversity of all the schools studied here and given the difficulties they are having in ‘closing the gap’ with an array of packaged programs – it is the case that “one size doesn’t fit all”, as Dr Sarra stated. However, on the basis of the isolated cases where schools have generated patterns of Indigenous gain scores, it would appear that cultural engagement and whole-school, across-the-curriculum planning and teaching quality have the potential to make a difference.

Part of the historical and current problem in the reform of Indigenous schooling has been the policy search for a single intervention, policy lever or program that will ‘solve’ the problem once and for all. The field has suffered from a terminal case of historical amnesia, with successive reforms each claiming that they have the definitive answers. These answers range from: cyclical ‘back to the basics’ movements, direct instruction in phonics/phonemic awareness (dating back to the Van Leer programs in the Cape in the 1980s), culturally-appropriate pedagogy, bilingual education, Indigenous revisions of history in the curriculum, training of more Indigenous teachers and principals, and so forth. These claims historically have generated polarisation and tribalism, with advocates of any specific reform dismissing the claims of others. Yet from an empirical perspective, one of these approaches are ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ in-themselves: they actually yield different effects. They are different pieces of a more complex puzzle of reform that we have described here.

The most recent panacea is the belief that if principals and schools are granted more autonomy and independence – student achievement will improve. Our study clearly shows that, given current levels of capacity, such moves run a serious risk of increasing the achievement gap and have little prospect of generating school-level performance gains in any systematic or coherent pattern.

The Stronger Smarter approach has begun to address several key areas of school reform: community engagement, participation and Indigenous leadership, teacher knowledge and engagement – but it did not address the key areas of pedagogy, assessment and language. Other current reforms advocate specific models of pedagogy, but do not address issues of cultural knowledge and curriculum reform, community engagement and governance.

We propose the use of a comprehensive template for Indigenous school reform that outlines the multiple pathways and considerations that principals and teachers, schools and communities need to address. As an exemplar for such an approach, we here cite the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework, which has guided and consolidated reform in the province of Ontario. The success of these reforms in achieving more equitable results is well documented. The framework is a key plank in a reform agenda that has successfully balanced “informed prescription” with “informed professionalism” (Luke, Woods & Weir, 2012). That is, in Ontario – the Ministry sets out guidelines for school accountability to School Boards, communities and a central bureaucracy. Schools have the autonomy to use the provincial curriculum to build whole school curriculum programs from approved materials and programs. But this is not school/principal autonomy of the order that we have documented in this report. They are required to use this following framework:

K-12 School Effectiveness Framework

A support for school improvement and student success

Assessment for, as and of Learning

- 1.1 Students and teachers share a common understanding of the learning goals and related success criteria.
- 1.2 During learning, students receive ongoing, descriptive feedback based on the success criteria, from the teacher and from peers.
- 1.3 Students are taught, and regularly use self-assessment skills to monitor their progress toward achieving learning goals, and to set their own learning goals within the context of the Ontario curriculum and/or Individual Education Plan (IEP).
- 1.4 Assessment tasks are aligned with the curriculum, collaboratively developed by teachers and the resulting demonstrations of student learning analyzed to ensure consistency with success criteria.
- 1.5 A variety of valid and reliable assessment data is used by students and teachers to continuously monitor learning, to inform instruction and assessment and to determine next steps.
- 1.6 Assessment of learning provides evidence for evaluating the quality of student learning at or near the end of a period of learning.
- 1.7 Ongoing communication is in place to allow students, teachers and parents to effectively monitor student learning.

School and Classroom Leadership

- 2.1 Collaborative instructional leadership builds capacity to strengthen and enhance teaching and learning.
- 2.2 Processes and practices are designed to deepen content knowledge and refine instruction to support student learning and achievement.
- 2.3 Organizational structures are coherent, flexible and respond to the needs of students.
- 2.4 Job-embedded and inquiry-based professional learning builds capacity, informs instructional practice and contributes to a culture of learning.
- 2.5 Staff, students and school community promote and sustain student well-being and positive student behaviour in a safe and healthy learning environment.

Student Voice

- 3.1 The teaching and learning environment is inclusive and reflects individual student strengths, needs and learning preferences.
- 3.2 School programs incorporate students' stated priorities and reflect the diversity, needs and interests of the school population.
- 3.3 Students are partners in conversations about school improvement.
- 3.4 Explicit strategies are in place to enable students to demonstrate strong citizenship skills such as leadership, teamwork and advocacy.

Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

- 4.1 A culture of high expectations supports the belief that all students can learn, progress and achieve.
- 4.2 A clear emphasis on high levels of achievement in literacy and numeracy is evident throughout the school.
- 4.3 Teaching and learning incorporates 21st century content, global perspectives, learning skills, resources and technologies.
- 4.4 Learning is deepened through authentic, relevant and meaningful student inquiry.
- 4.5 Instruction and assessment are differentiated in response to student strengths, needs and prior learning.
- 4.6 Resources for students are relevant, current, accessible and inclusive.
- 4.7 Timely and tiered interventions, supported by a team approach, respond to individual student learning needs.

Programs and Pathways

- 5.1 Programs, pathways, and career planning meet the learning needs and interests of all students.
- 5.2 Authentic learning experiences and experiential learning are built into all subject areas and programs.
- 5.3 Students, parents, and teachers understand the full range of pathways, options, programs and supports that are available.
- 5.4 Students have opportunities to build on in-school and out-of-school experiences and activities to further explore personal interests, strengths and career options.

Home, School and Community Partnerships

- 6.1 The School Council has a meaningful role in supporting learning and achievement for students.
- 6.2 Students, parents and community members are engaged and welcomed as respected, valued partners.
- 6.3 The school and community build partnerships to enhance learning opportunities for students.
- 6.4 Learning opportunities, resources and supports are provided to help parents support student learning and have productive parent-teacher-student conversations.

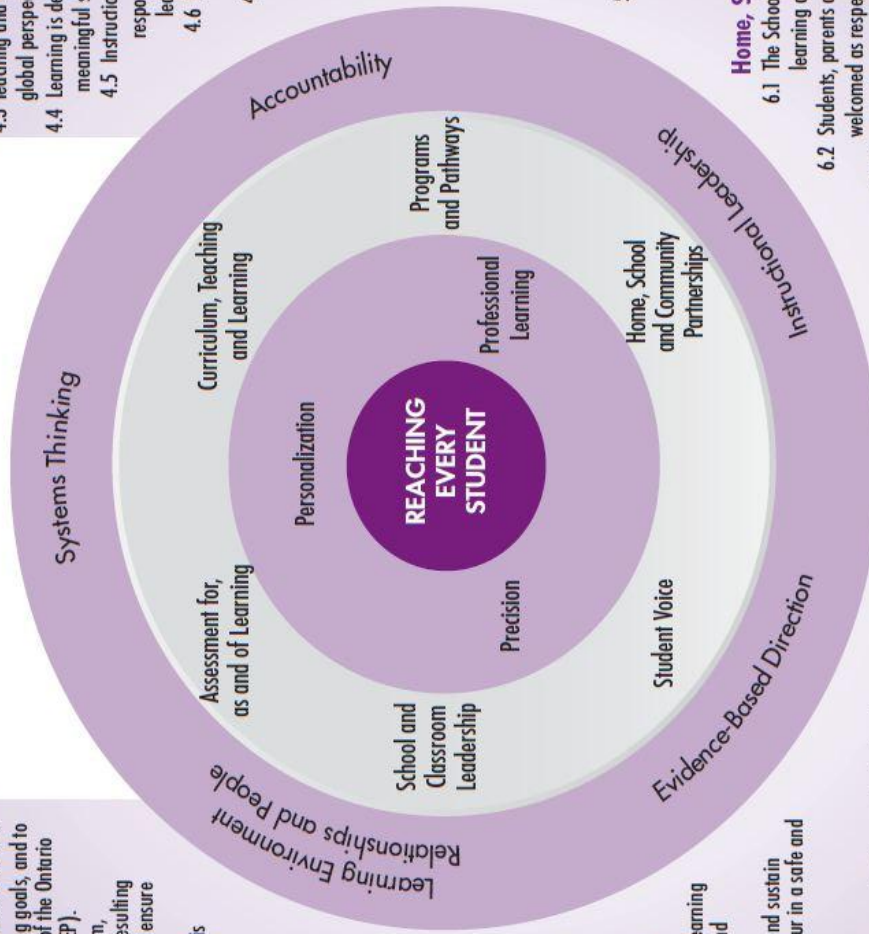


Figure 12.1 Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework

Note that schools are required to plan and focus on all three pathways of reform that we have identified here: it entails coherent whole-school planning around curriculum, teaching and learning, active attempts to engage community in school-level decision making and partnerships, direct engagement with students and communities in articulating and selecting pathways, and innovative approaches to assessment-for-learning, authentic assessment and negotiated assessment. The Ontario model is clear recognition that ‘one size doesn’t fit all’: more equitable outcomes are achieved without the mandate of a single program or instructional approach in any specific area. But Ontario schools and school leaders are accountable for addressing these multiple dimensions of school reform – much as the leaders of the two Affiliate schools showing gain score improvement have done. Finally, the Ontario model is used for mutual accountability all levels of the system: by senior bureaucrats and consultants, principals and teachers, communities and students.

We propose the development of a comparable *P-12 Indigenous Education Reform Template*, based on knowledge of Indigenous education reform and schooling in Australia, including the findings of this report. This would be used as a road map to guide principals down the complex, simultaneous pathways of reform that we have identified here. It would enable local, contextual adaptation and response to the Australian National Curriculum. It would require community engagement, governance and Indigenous leadership. It would create a clear space for Indigenous student voice and leadership. It would focus teachers and schools on engagement with Indigenous peoples, knowledges, cultures and languages. And it would demand coherent school level approaches to teaching and learning.

This is a more complex and difficult journey. As Ontario reforms indicate, this will require: sustained political and community will; new coalitions between Indigenous communities, school leaders and teachers; a strong focus on high levels of teacher and principal professionalism; and clarity and consistency of messages from state and federal systems.

Such an approach would begin from two key insights from this report. First, Indigenous school reform has multiple dimensions and pathways that defy single, ‘magic bullet’ approaches. Second, the current system— built up over several decades and mired in deficit thinking – by definition cannot succeed at closing the gap.

Policy Implications

We conclude by the outlining implications for current policy and future directions of our findings:

- Policy Implication 1: That the current emphasis on NAPLAN without systematic state and regional-level curriculum assistance and advice has the effect of increasing principals' tendencies to pursue 'quick fix' programs in a way that generates less coherent school programs and skewed test results.
- Policy Implication 2: That the push for increased principal autonomy without improved training in instructional/curricular leadership and data analysis risks exaggerating the skewed and idiosyncratic patterns of achievement described here.
- Policy Implication 3: That the Australian Curriculum mandate for the embedding of Indigenous knowledges raises major issues in terms of the requisite depth of teacher knowledge of Indigenous cultures, histories, issues and languages.
- Policy Implication 4: That - given the diversity of schools, communities and cohort demographics - the assumption that there is a single, 'one size fits all' curriculum or pedagogy solution for all Indigenous learners is not the solution to the problem of program incoherence, but risks exacerbating the problems identified here.

Recommended Policy Actions

- Policy Action 1: That the federal and state governments collaborate to develop a P-12 Indigenous Education Reform Template that provides principals and schools, Indigenous communities and parents, regions and state bureaucracies with a comprehensive agenda for school action and accountability.
- Policy Action 2: That state and regions implement research-based, high quality professional development for teachers that focuses on: quality teaching and school level curriculum planning for Indigenous students, and on Indigenous cultural knowledge, awareness and engagement.
- Policy Action 3: That all schools and states put induction and mentoring systems in place for teachers and principals who have limited prior experience with Indigenous communities and students, including those in urban and provincial schools with smaller Indigenous student cohorts.
- Policy Action 4: That state systems and teachers' unions negotiate systems of professional and financial incentives to retain experienced and high quality teachers and principals in rural and remote schools with high percentages of Indigenous students.
- Policy Action 5: That a national clearinghouse and data base of quality curriculum materials, programs, and in-service approaches be developed in cooperation with the states to increase the overall quality and accountability of school level professional development and curriculum decisions.
- Policy Action 6: That a version of the SSLC model be used by states to scaffold and support regional and cluster-based school networks for shared professional development for teachers and principals, curriculum planning, and Indigenous consultative infrastructure.
- Policy Action 7: That teacher education programs and certification requirements nationally be required to include coursework on both: (1) Indigenous cultural knowledges and issues; and (2) principles of quality teaching for Indigenous learners.
- Policy Action 8: That state-level policy mandates work with Indigenous Education consultative bodies to provide principals with flexible but scaffolded approaches to formalising community engagement, consultation and governance.

- Policy Action 9: That states work with their Indigenous Education consultative bodies to begin prototyping and implementing formal Indigenous community governance and collaborative leadership in selected schools, with community members involved in substantive school-decision making.
- Policy Action 10: That states provide policy and training to ensure that Indigenous staff, particularly Indigenous Education Workers, are hired and able to work in accountable, transparent and educationally productive ways.
- Policy Action 11: That the Personal Learning Plans model currently implemented in several states be expanded on a national scale, with appropriate training that focuses on rigorous and culturally-sensitive implementation.
- Policy Action 12: That DEEWR and the states collaboratively support research and development in the area of alternative assessment models in Indigenous education.
- Policy Action 13: That principals be provided with in-service training in key areas of data analysis and use, instructional/curriculum leadership, and Indigenous community relations, staffing and governance.
- Policy Action 14: That the current criteria for hiring and contract duration of principals be reviewed to stress prior experience in Indigenous education, instructional leadership, and an optimal reform cycle of 5-7 years.
- Policy Action 15: That states renew focus on English as a Second Language and Second Dialect issues for teachers and principals working in schools with bi-dialectal and bilingual student cohorts.
- Policy Action 16: That the states implement the Australian Curriculum mandate for the embedding of Indigenous knowledges, issues and content and for the development of Indigenous LOTE subjects with robust materials support and professional development.

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