

Smarter Schools National Partnerships

National Collaboration Project

School Performance Improvement Frameworks



**Final Report
2010**

Acknowledgements

The School Performance Improvement Frameworks (SPIF) Project was a national collaborative project funded by the Australian Government to support the implementation of the Smarter Schools National Partnerships. This collaboration enabled jurisdictions to share experience in developing, implementing, evaluating and improving school performance improvement frameworks and support tools and processes. The project also explored approaches to systemic and professional learning to support the implementation of school performance improvement frameworks.

An Expert Working Group (EWG) was established with representative membership drawn from participating jurisdictions. The EWG performed the decision-making functions at a strategic level, with members also undertaking operational tasks within their individual jurisdictions to fulfil the objectives and deliverables of the project. Their valuable contribution to the outcomes of this project is acknowledged.

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Executive summary

The School Performance Improvement Frameworks (SPIF) Project was a national collaborative project funded by the Australian Government to support the implementation of the Smarter Schools National Partnerships. This collaboration enabled jurisdictions to share experience in developing, implementing, evaluating and improving school performance improvement frameworks and support tools and processes. The project also explored approaches to systemic and professional learning to support the implementation of school performance improvement frameworks.

An Expert Working Group (EWG) was established with representative membership from participating jurisdictions. The project was implemented in three phases: (1) literature review, (2) focus projects (school self review and Principal Perception Survey), and (3) a review of professional learning and systemic support.

Phase one – Literature review

To inform the work of the project, initial research was conducted by the Secretariat, within the Department of Education and Training (QLD). The outcomes were incorporated into a framing paper, which provided an overview of the existing School Performance and Improvements Frameworks landscape.

The literature review examined contemporary research, supported by a credible and robust evidence base, on school improvement and school effectiveness. It focussed on elements, aspects or actions found to effect positive change. The impetus and need for change was highlighted in the review and work already underway as part of the national reform agenda was noted. The paper provided a brief review of selected literature and outlined some key approaches taken nationally and internationally. It was subsequently guided the EWG in determining the most appropriate course of action to be taken in implementing the project.

Phase two - School Self Review and Principal Perception Survey

The EWG identified two areas worthy of closer exploration: school self-review processes and principals' perceptions of school performance improvement frameworks. The South Australian participants led the first focus project, while Queensland and Western Australia led the second. The two projects were implemented between January and August 2010.

The *School Self Review* project facilitated collaboration in the design and implementation of the best approaches to school self-review, within a range of circumstances and contexts. The project shared experiences in developing, implementing, evaluating and improving school performance improvement frameworks, and support tools and processes for school self-review. It investigated systemic and professional learning approaches that facilitate review processes.

A literature research of self-review and case studies of good practice in self-review from two nominated schools in Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia were conducted. Findings of the literature search informed the design and focus of the case studies.

Findings of the literature review and case studies acknowledge the critical role of the school self-review in school reform. The case studies also provide an understanding of effective school self-review practices and processes being used across the states and territories. Enablers of good practice were identified but the impact of these processes could not be quantified, particularly in the context of the concurrent implementation of numerous reform initiatives.

Enablers of effective school self-review were found to include: a focus on leadership capability, use of a range of data, a focus on student wellbeing, and specific approaches and processes supported by dedicated time and resources. Potential areas for future projects that could benefit from collaboration and research were also identified. These included: the use of student data, the application of data from the region to the classroom level, and the development of tools to assess wellbeing.

The *Principal Perception Survey* was conducted to ascertain principals' attitudes, understandings, and perceptions of their school performance improvement frameworks. The survey also sought to provide a better understanding of principals' perceptions of systemic support and professional learning for implementation of school performance and improvement frameworks. The aim of the survey was to gather information to inform approaches to enhancing frameworks to support performance improvement in schools, within a range of circumstances and contexts.

The Northern Territory Department of Education and Training, the Queensland Department of Education and Training and the Western Australian Department of Education were jurisdictional partners in the project. Queensland and Western Australia jointly led the project.

This survey was designed and implemented by officers within the jurisdictions who had specific expertise and experience in the area. This approach was selected to provide an opportunity to collaborate, share experiences, establish ongoing networks and strengthen partnerships for future collaboration in enhancing school performance improvement frameworks.

Survey findings provided new insight into principals' perceptions of school performance improvement frameworks, related systemic support, and associated professional learning. The findings identified aspects of the frameworks for which there is strong support from principals as well as areas that could benefit from further enhancement. In addition, the findings highlighted approaches which assist in overcoming obstacles to effective use of frameworks.

Phase three – Review of professional learning and systemic support

EWG participants were generally located within their jurisdiction's policy, professional development or performance and reporting divisions. This provided an opportunity to gather additional information from a systems perspective on the professional learning and support provided to regions, schools and principals.

In relation to professional learning, all jurisdictions supported school improvement through a range of initiatives or targeted professional development programs. Professional development was seen as integral to most jurisdictions' frameworks. Project participants considered frameworks (in conjunction with other strategies) important performance improvement resources and suggested a number of considerations in implementing frameworks.

Generally, systemic approaches were embodied in an organisation's integrated system/school improvement strategies and reflected in key documents. This provided a coordinated approach (consistency, coherence, shared understanding, collective knowledge and capacity, explicit articulation of expectations and capabilities of schools, leaders, teachers). All participants agreed a focus on capacity-building was essential to school improvement.

While the nature of capacity-building approaches varied across the states and territories, project participants agreed on a number of important elements:

- *Multi-layered* capacity building approach
- Building the *individual and collective* capacity of leaders and the workforce
- *Coaching and mentoring*
- *Team-based* leadership development.

Participants said policies and incentives were needed to attract effective leaders and teachers, particularly in hard-to-staff schools. Capacity-building across all levels of staff was considered important. For example, leadership development (including distributed leadership) was seen as essential and integral to school improvement frameworks. Leaders also had an important role in fostering transparency and accountability. This included 'de-privatisation' (sharing and opening up) of practice at whole school and classroom levels.

Participants highlighted the importance of regional support structures in effecting school improvement. Effective regional support could enhance school improvement and capacity-building through use of data and networks. Intensive intervention and support strategies were considered particularly important for underachieving schools.

Participants agreed that while much had been achieved in recent years, there were still challenges to be addressed:

- Alignment of reform initiatives at school, region, state and national levels
- The professional development implications of high turn-over of principals and teachers (where this occurs) and its impact on the continuity of programs and student learning
- Addressing the strong relationship between socio-economic status, educational disadvantage and geographic location
- Winning the hearts and mind of principals and teachers in implementing the framework
- Understanding how frameworks can influence the practice of classroom teachers and fine-tuning frameworks to strengthen this influence
- Refreshing - rather than re-writing - school improvement documents to embed leadership and sharpen the focus on school targets and performance indicators.

In addressing these challenges, jurisdictions are seeking to create a culture which leads to school improvement and improving student outcomes.

Conclusion

There is increasing pressure on systems and schools to improve and be accountable for educational outcomes. Findings from this project provide learnings from research and practice in the development and use of school performance and improvement frameworks. They highlight the critical role of these frameworks and school self-review in supporting school reform, both internationally and in Australia. The project extends understanding of effective practices and processes used by participating jurisdictions. Enablers of good practice were identified and aspects that could benefit from further enhancement noted. Project outcomes can inform future approaches to enhancing frameworks and strengthening implementation support. Findings stress the importance of flexibility and tailoring approaches to give due consideration to contextual challenges and priorities. An additional outcome of the project was the establishment of a strong network which provides an ongoing mechanism for collaboration in supporting enhanced school performance and improvement.

Introduction

The School Performance Improvement Frameworks (SPIF) Project is a national collaboration initiative funded by the Australian Government to support the implementation of the *National Partnerships*. The project was led by Queensland and engaged Western Australia, the Northern Territory, Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory.

The purpose was to share experiences in developing, implementing, evaluating and improving school performance improvement frameworks and support tools and processes. The project also explored the systemic and professional learning approaches which assist in implementing these frameworks. The project is part of the national reform agenda.

Background

In November 2008, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a suite of reforms to meet the longer-term national imperative to boosting productivity and workforce participation, and improve service delivery to the community. In April 2009, as part of the *National Partnerships* implementation, the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) agreed to work collaboratively on developing and implementing reform strategies in six areas including School Performance Improvement Frameworks.

The purpose of this initiative was to foster collaboration between jurisdictions to support the implementation of the National Partnerships. The Australian Government identified commonalities in jurisdictional National Partnerships implementation plans – including school performance improvement frameworks.

The Australian Government's *Smarter Schools National Partnerships* reform agenda, coupled with recent changes to policy and practice at a national and state level, has increased and renewed the focus on school performance. The National Partnerships emphasise outcomes, targets, and accountability and reporting requirements.

As part of the Smarter Schools National Partnerships, states and territories are working together to improve the literacy and numeracy outcomes of students, address disadvantage in low socio-economic status school communities, and improve teacher quality.

This reform agenda has significant implications for systems and schools, in particular: strategic planning processes, developing and implementing reform strategies, monitoring and reporting outcomes and quality assurance processes. Hence, many states and territories have directed their attention to developing or enhancing their school performance improvement frameworks. An analysis of Australian approaches to school performance improvement frameworks was conducted at the start of the project and is provided in Appendix 1.

Project rationale

The Australian and international focus on improving school and student performance has been subject to increasing momentum in recent times. Globally, there are ongoing efforts by schooling systems to compare, measure, report on and improve school performance.

This increased emphasis in Australia is attributable to a range of factors including greater access to comparable outcomes from national testing and the apparent slowed performance of Australian students on international tests. Australian systems are working to improve performance amid intensifying demands from stakeholders for improved performance, accountability and transparency.

The need for reform is compelling and the benefits of effecting improvement are obvious. It is widely acknowledged there are far-reaching flow-on benefits to accurately identify, consistently apply and effectively and efficiently implement the drivers of school improvement. These drivers may not only improve the performance of schools and students, but are also valuable to the broader community, economy and depth of human capital resources throughout Australia.

The challenges are complex and diverse. Research evidence lacks a consensus on the most effective means for improving student outcomes. Nevertheless, the literature is clear that concerted, coordinated, consistent and coherent approaches can be effective. This underlines the significance of this project in collaborating on approaches to enhancing school performance and improvement frameworks to facilitate - and encourage accountability for - improved student outcomes.

Project desired outcomes

The desired key outcomes for the SPIF project were:

- Systems and schools have shared knowledge of best practice frameworks to support them to innovate, reform and drive improved school performance.
- Systems and schools have a better understanding of the professional learning and systemic support that will assist in implementing school performance and improvement frameworks.
- Identification of systemic requirements to assist schools in achieving improved performance.

Project design

The project was implemented in three phases:

Project phase	Focus	Timeframe
Phase One – <i>Literature Review</i>	Literature Review	July 2009 – November 2009
Phase Two - <i>Implementation of two focus projects</i>	School Self Review	January 2010 – August 2010
	Principal Perception Survey	January 2010 – August 2010
Phase Three - <i>Professional Learning and Systemic Support</i>	Review of Professional Learning and Systemic Support	June 2010 – August 2010

Project governance and collaboration

An Expert Working Group (EWG) was established with representative membership drawn from participating jurisdictions.

The EWG undertook strategic decision-making as well as operational tasks within individual jurisdictions to fulfil the objectives and deliverables of the project.

The EWG participated in monthly teleconferences and two national workshops.

Ongoing contact between participating jurisdictions took place via email. A website was also created for ease of access to key documents.

Phase one - literature review

The following critique of recent Australian and international reform efforts in this area was undertaken to clarify key focus areas for this project and determine the most effective manner in which to progress.

School performance improvement approaches

Over the past decade, approaches to school system improvements have shifted between an emphasis on one or more of the following:

- national or state-wide curriculum
- school performance checked by inspections
- a focus on teaching and testing the basics
- teacher quality
- leadership
- governance
- autonomy
- privatisation e.g. charters and independent public schools.

Competition between schools combined with test-based accountability on predetermined knowledge standards has become a common approach.

Improved access to comparable outcomes from national testing regimes and the slowed performance and inequitable outcomes of students on international tests is also driving competition and calls for consistency and standardisation in schooling globally. National reforms - particularly *the Smarter Schools National Partnerships* and *National Curriculum, National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy* and *MySchool* - are driving a stronger emphasis on outcomes, targets, accountability and transparency in reporting, reflected in reforms across the developed world.

Approaches to large-scale reform

Approaches to school performance improvement can generally be categorised at the school or system level in the following way:

- **Test or standards-based reforms** based on the publication of raw test data or value-added measures of all schools or performance standards for teachers and school leaders.
- **School and system planning, reporting and accountability cycles** e.g. strategic plans, school performance improvement frameworks and agencies such as Ofsted (the UK Office for Standards in Education).
- **Single issue initiatives** e.g. action plans.
- **Comprehensive School Reforms** aimed at whole school change that affects all aspects of schooling (e.g. leadership, curriculum, behaviour, special needs, better use of data, instruction, organisation, professional development and parent engagement) e.g. programs such as Breakthrough, IDEAS, Success for All. Research evidence regarding comprehensive school reforms from the USA indicates some improvement in student achievement which is worthy of further consideration. Comprehensive school reform models generally include: clear direction (or vision), quality leadership and teaching, establishing and maintaining high expectations, governance, professional learning, systems thinking (including data analysis), cultural change, curriculum and a focus on learning.
- **System reforms** include long-term systemic plans. Educational reform at the system level is rarely evaluated. In general, policy borrowing is the usual practice and reforms pass before they are evaluated.

- **Transformational reforms** rarely enacted but often called for, these approaches (sometimes by employer groups concerned about human capital or IT vendors promoting IT solutions) claim incremental or evolutionary changes have not worked for most learners and have created ‘ingrained’ problems of low aspirations and low achievement. Transformational advocates suggest that school improvement alone will not meet the future needs for learning. Advocates such as Leadbeater and Wong (2010) insist we need disruptive innovation and not improvement and that the innovation required can be found at the ‘extremes.’

Approaches to school improvement and accountability

A consistent theme in international literature over the past few decades has been the focus on *accountability*. Empirical evidence as to the success of this focus in improving student outcomes is contested. For example, over-emphasis on high-stakes testing could lead to a decreased focus on promoting other critical skills required in the 21st century including: leading with influence, thinking critically, understanding multiple perspectives, synthesizing new information. However, two distinct approaches to school improvement and accountability were apparent in the literature: a futurist approach and the use of a school improvement model.

Historically, schools and systems have favoured adopting a school *improvement* model in working towards improved school outcomes. Future education thinkers – *futurists* – consider this model is insufficient to support the future demands of learners and learning.

Futurists adopt a range of methodologies to project long-term visions of the future of education and schooling. Some propose scenario-building based on current data to determine a preferred schooling future and work backwards to plan how to get there, e.g. the OECD’s *Schooling for Tomorrow* scenarios and the *Teaching for Uncertain Futures* Open Book scenarios. Others have identified the need to ‘leapfrog’ over the constraints of the current system and redefine the possibilities of the future.

Futurists often raise perceived limitations of current education systems for engaging and preparing 21st century learners to live and work successfully in our technology-rich, interconnected world. There is also often a view that education of and for the future should focus on innovation — *innovative* thinking about using *innovation* to design and deliver a curriculum that develops *innovation* skills and capabilities in learners to prepare them for a new *innovation* economy.

Futurists argue:

- in the future learners will require access to learning anytime and anywhere
- schools are not the only places where children learn - ‘Can a mango tree be a school?’ is a valid question
- constraints of time and space limit the possibilities for learning
- the demand and delivery of education should be independent of location
- innovative thinking is required to consider alternative spaces and places where learning can take place.

They argue the continued pervasion of technology into society not only provides different platforms and tools for learning, but demands a different focus for learning.

From a futurist perspective:

- there is no place for the notion that ‘content is king’
- students will need ingenuity, creativity, collaboration and engagement
- the need for knowing ‘what’, will hold less value than knowing how to find, evaluate and create new knowledge
- teachers will need to adopt innovative pedagogies
- students will need to be empowered to play an active role in their learning.

School improvement approaches need to address the immediate and also the future needs of the students.

Systems have begun to look at the characteristics of schools performing well and demonstrating continuous improvement across a comprehensive suite of outcomes in a variety of cultural, social and economic contexts. A variety of practices and approaches which may be effective in bringing about positive change and improvement have been highlighted:

- Individual student-centric learning
- Cycle of continuous improvement – assessment/measurement to facilitate enhanced learning and teaching and to help identify intervention strategies
- Professional development aligned to curriculum content, pedagogy and assessment, directed towards a practical classroom situation
- Tailored classroom instruction to suit the diverse and distinct needs of that classroom and cohort
- Collaboration and collegiality between school staff in all combinations (i.e. teachers as colleagues, school leaders as colleagues, and line management arrangements)
- School community rapport between staff, teachers, students, families and the broader community.

An overview of approaches to school improvement and accountability suggests that - guided by the broad parameters of their system's school performance improvement frameworks - schools need to design and invent their own solutions tailored to their local contexts.

Trends in existing frameworks

There is a dearth of empirical evidence in the literature regarding the impact on student outcomes of any particular approach to the design and implementation of school performance and improvement frameworks. However, a consistent theme in the international literature over the past few decades has been the focus on *accountability*. This focus appears to have received increased emphasis as a result of the conduct and reporting of standardised tests in specific curriculum areas undertaken by students at selected points of schooling (Lamb et al., 2004). In some ways, output measures have become 'the new currency of an educational market; the new bottom line upon which schools, school systems, and increasingly teachers, will be judged' (Dowling, 2008, p. 9). It is generally recognised that student and school performance as measured by external tests can provide consistent approaches to analysing student outcomes. However, critics argue that in many ways, the increased emphasis on educational accountability has failed to acknowledge the complexities of education (Mulford, Edmunds, Kendall, Kendall and Bishop, 2008).

Empirical evidence as to the success of this focus on accountability, within frameworks or generally on improving student outcomes, is contested. For example, significant reforms to public education in England since 1988 have included an emphasis on national curriculum, local management of schools, greater choice and diversity among schools which was augmented in 1997 with increased funding and improved outcomes, especially in literacy. However, there has been slippage in England's international rankings and the gap between high and low-performing schools and school systems remains of deep concern.

The same concerns can be found in some literature from the United States, where student outcomes have also slipped down the international rankings despite significant education spending (Caldwell & Harris, 2008, pp. 29-30). In particular, over the past decade, a number of studies comparing different educational systems working on different policy levers have been published. Some of these have been remiss in not taking account of concerns about the legitimacy of applying theories, ideas, policies, and practices emanating from one societal culture and transposing them into others with different cultural, political, and economic contexts (Dimmock & Walker, 2000). Cultural differences almost certainly play a role in researching and discussing findings relating to school performance improvement across countries. When making comparisons, it is important to consider that the relative importance of various elements may be perceived differently in different countries.

Recent reforms in Australia appear to herald a transition toward a more holistic approach to school performance and improvement. In addition to national assessments, there is an increased emphasis on qualitative aspects. It is acknowledged these aspects - such as quality leadership and teaching, establishing and maintaining high expectations and increasing challenging curriculum offerings - can be difficult to quantify and measure. To determine the elements that should be included in improvement and accountability frameworks, Australian jurisdictions have begun examining the characteristics of schools which are performing well and demonstrating continuous improvement, within a range of contexts.

For example, Victoria recently completed a research program identifying practices of schools that have sustained improved student outcomes over a 10 year period. These practices were validated against a control group of stable and declining schools. Detailed descriptors of the practices were drafted from observations. Victoria also undertook research on schools achieving higher than expected outcomes in low socio-economic communities.

The research identified 16 practices of selected Victorian schools that have improved student performance. These are listed below in descending order of increasing frequency (DEECD Victoria, 2009)

- Using data
- Coaching, mentoring and sharing expertise
- Raising staff expectations of students
- Establishing and aligning values, vision and goals
- Working in teams
- Aligning professional learning
- Raising students' expectations
- Assigning staff to key priority areas
- Focusing on literacy and numeracy
- Establishing partnerships
- Personalising through individual learning plans
- Engaging students
- Articulating clear staff performance expectations
- Targeting resources to student needs
- Releasing staff for group training, dialogue and planning
- Recognising staff and student achievement.

The research also identified a number of conditions necessary to commence and sustain high performance in selected Victorian schools:

Pre-conditions:

- Strong leadership
- High expectations and high teacher efficacy
- An orderly learning environment
- A clear focus on 'what matters most'

Conditions for sustainability:

- Building teaching and leadership capacity and expertise
- Providing structure and scaffolding for student learning
- Using data systemically to analyse trends and personalise learning
- Strong professional learning teams
- Capitalising on department initiatives, such as the performance and development culture
- Engendering pride in the school.

The validation within selected schools showed consistent improvement in absolute scores and achievement of results exceeding expectations when the location, size and socio-economic status of the school were considered. However, the intensity and links between various practices are of comparable, if not greater, importance than the direction of activity. For this reason, it was found that a focus on individual strategies or treating desirable practices as a 'checklist' are unlikely to be sufficient to effect real and sustainable change. How these characteristics are manifested and the links between them need to be considered (DEECD Victoria, 2009).

Findings from the Victorian research project show some consistency with other literature findings which caution against a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to school improvement. School improvement proponents of the broader framework advocate that schools need to design and invent their own solutions.

More recently, a differential resourcing model has been suggested both as an effective school performance improvement model overall and also to provide schools serving larger numbers of disadvantaged students with the resources to address the more intensive educational needs of their students. This is based on the assumptions that schools with larger numbers of disadvantaged or high-need students must spend more than other schools to meet any given standard of effectiveness.

The literature suggests that even though differential models need to be flexible, they need to be consistent in the way they are implemented. For example, an evaluation of the Western Australian (WA) Government School Accountability Framework completed in 2007 found that each school executes the various framework components differently. The WA framework recommends drafting the plan in consultation with the school community and supports the notion of affording schools some flexibility in the execution of components of the framework. However, the evaluation found differing expectations between various district directors and, in some cases, this difference resulted in the execution of the various components of the framework becoming burdensome for some schools. This suggests that frameworks need some differentiation and flexibility but also a level of consistency in how they are supported. This has implications for the provision of professional learning and systemic support that needs to accompany the implementation of school performance and improvement frameworks.

Need for change

This literature review suggests there is increasing pressure to improve - and be accountable for - educational outcomes within an increasingly complex educational environment. In addition to enhancing outcomes, school performance and improvement frameworks have a critical role in accountability, reporting and transparency. The broader stakeholder community demands and has a right to an appropriate level of information. Schools and systems also need this information to assist in planning, designing interventions and developing responsive programs.

The need for change is compelling and universally agreed to be urgent, although there is no consensus on a clear path to achieving these goals. Given the lack of clear evidence as to the effectiveness of any one approach, the following section presents a brief review of the outcomes of a number of studies of the characteristics of high performing schools. This analysis will help determine the dimensions one would seek in identifying the desirable elements of a framework, or type of framework, likely to contribute to improving student achievement.

High-performing schools

Numerous lists of characteristics of high performing schools have emerged from studies conducted over the past 40 years. However, there is limited empirical evidence to suggest that any one particular set of characteristics is of greatest value. This is mainly due to the fact that few studies have been subjected to independent validation or investigated across a range

of different contexts/countries. Nevertheless, it is useful to review the findings of relevant literature to determine which characteristics of high-performing schools may be worthy of adoption or adaptation in devising an approach to improving school performance and improvement frameworks. The sets of characteristics reviewed here are: (1) *Nine characteristics of high-performing schools* (2) *Highly effective practices for continuous improvement in student learning* and (3) *Effective school improvement factors for effective school improvement*.

(1) Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools

The *Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools* (Bergeson, 2007) is a research-based resource for schools and districts within Washington State, USA, designed to assist with improving student learning.

The research findings published in January 2003 identified nine characteristics most often found in high-performing schools. The characteristics were distilled from a research project undertaken by Washington state school improvement specialists within the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. The research team reviewed more than 20 studies, the majority of which focused on primary schools, with the emphasis on students who achieved at higher levels than their demographic characteristics would predict.

The nine characteristics are:

Clear and shared focus

Everybody knows where they are going and why. The focus is on achieving a shared vision, and all understand their role in achieving the vision. The focus and vision are developed from common beliefs and values, creating a consistent direction for all involved.

High standards and expectations for all students

Teachers and staff believe that all students can learn and meet high standards. While recognising that some students must overcome significant barriers, these obstacles are not seen as insurmountable. Students are offered an ambitious and rigorous course of study.

Effective school leadership

Effective instructional and administrative leadership is required to implement change processes. Effective leaders seek help when needed. They nurture an instructional program and school culture conducive to learning and professional growth. Effective leaders have different styles and roles – teachers and other staff, including those in the district office, often have a leadership role.

High levels of collaboration and communication

There is strong teamwork among teachers across all grades and with other staff. Everybody is involved and connected to each other, including parents and members of the community, to identify problems and work on solutions.

Curriculum, instruction and assessment aligned with standards

The planned and actual curriculum is aligned with the essential academic learning requirements. Research-based teaching strategies and materials are used. Staff understand the role of classroom and state assessments, what the assessments measure, and how student work is evaluated.

Frequent monitoring of learning and teaching

A steady cycle of different assessment identifies students who need help. More support and instructional time is provided, either during the school day or outside the normal school hours. Teaching is adjusted based on frequent monitoring of student progress and needs. Assessment results are used to focus and improve instructional programs.

Focused professional development

A strong emphasis is placed on training staff in areas of most need. Feedback from learning and teaching focuses extensive and ongoing professional development. The support is also aligned with the school or district vision and objectives.

Supportive learning environment

The school has a safe, civil, healthy and intellectually stimulating learning environment. Students feel respected and connected with the staff and are engaged in learning. Instruction is personalised and small learning environments increase student contact with teachers.

High levels of family and community involvement

There is a sense that all have a responsibility to educate students, not just teachers and school staff. Families, businesses, social service agencies, and community colleges/universities all play a vital role in this effort.

(2) Highly effective practices for continuous improvement in student learning

Masters' (2009) report entitled, *A shared challenge: Improving Literacy, Numeracy and Science Learning in Queensland Primary Schools*, proposed a focus on four characteristics of highly effective primary schools.

The Masters' approach emphasises characteristics and teaching practises which are heavily focused on practical implementation in the classroom. The body of research highlighted in the report clearly indicates the most effective way for systems to improve achievement in primary schools is to improve the quality of classroom teaching.

The research which informed the Masters' report also found school leadership profoundly impacted on the quality of classroom teaching. It highlights the importance of strong leadership to promote a culture of successful learning.

Other indicators of successful leadership in high-performing schools include an appreciation of the importance of recruitment and retention of knowledgeable, creative and receptive teachers, appropriate systems and resources to support learning diagnosis tools and strong accountability and performance monitoring systems.

The report details a number of characteristics and practices found to be important in improving learning outcomes (Masters, 2009, p.11). The report also found 'continuous improvement in student performance depends on the implementation of highly effective teaching practices supported and driven by aligned school and system policies and practices'.

(3) Effective school improvement factors for effective school improvement

The Effective School Improvement framework was borne from an international comparative study of best practice case studies in eight European countries (Creemers, Stoll, & Reezigt, 2005). The project, conducted 1998 - 2001, investigated the relationship between effectiveness and improvement - historically two separate and opposing paradigms - which have shown promising signs of potentially successful integration in recent times.

An analysis of program descriptions provided by participant countries and theoretical research conducted by the project team found considerable overlap between the factors identified through each process and substantial, but not entire, consistency between the theoretically-expected effects of factors and the effects demonstrated in case studies.

The framework developed from this work is built around a range of factors which appeared to promote or hinder effective school improvement. The factors are organised into three levels – context, school and classroom/teacher. Diagrammatical representation of the framework (Creemers, Stoll, & Reezigt, 2005, p. 7) highlights that an improving school is firmly embedded in the educational context of a country.

Enhancing or supplementing existing frameworks

A selection of improvement models implemented and evaluated nationally or internationally may guide approaches to enhancing, supplementing or supporting school performance and improvement frameworks. The three models reviewed were: *Breakthrough*, *Nine characteristics of high performing schools*, and the *Effective School Improvement* framework.

Breakthrough

The *Breakthrough* model, (Fullan, Hill, & Crevola, 2006) is designed to transition systems from a state where efforts to improve have shown only modest signs of success to a 'tipping point'.

The model consists of three core elements supported by six core functions (listed below) all of which is facilitated by leadership and coordination.

- School and classroom organisation
- Assessment literacy
- Classroom teaching
- Professional learning communities
- Intervention and assistance
- Home and school/community partnerships

The three core elements, personalisation, precision and professional learning must be interconnected without any one component being overemphasised at the expense of the others (Fullan, Hill, Crevola, 2006).

Personalisation involves tailoring education to each individual learner to engage and maintain the student's interest and address the documented decrease in the student's engagement in learning with each passing grade.

Precision refers to the skill of accurately and precisely using assessment to inform an improvement strategy for each individual learner. It requires teachers to make quality judgements and assumes teachers possess the required knowledge of expected standards for given learners. It also requires that there is a means for extracting this knowledge of the expected standard and translating it into something that can be meaningful to the learner to adopt and use as feedback and a guide for improvement.

Professional learning is the ongoing professional development of teachers in a way that links new concepts and instruction with assessment and demonstrates clear relevance to the practical classroom experience. The conditions for professional development must be conducive with teachers interacting in environments such as professional learning communities.

The six core functions support personalisation, precision and professional learning by readjusting classroom practice. This readjustment involves commencing with measuring students' knowledge and abilities and designing personalised instruction for students based on their results. This is in contrast to the traditional model where instruction is provided, followed by assessment, and teachers respond to individual student needs intuitively.

The construction of an effective education system is seen as an ongoing research and development project, subject to constant refinement. A threshold standard of instruction for all students would assist beginning teachers while more experienced and competent teachers could progress, perhaps as co-researchers and/or co-designers of the instructional system.

Development of the system would require identification of relevant knowledge and skills. The inherent challenges associated with this emphasise the commitment to ongoing refinement.

The *Breakthrough* model advocates the application of critical care paths in education. The adoption of critical care paths in health reform has resulted in a dramatic improvement in outcomes. The inclusion of critical care paths will help identify knowledge and skills and the pathways followed by students as they become literate. It will also help formulate alternate scenarios and provide expert advice and suggested teaching strategies for managing different types of student literacy behaviour.

Developing a critical care path requires a comprehensive definition reflecting all salient features and key stages of the journey through which learners typically pass. The *Breakthrough* model identified the following six stages:

- Pre-emergent
- Early emergent
- Emergent
- Beginning
- Transitional
- Established.

The system adopted or developed to measure and monitor learning should specify the key assessable elements/concepts and should be accompanied by a schedule of pre- and post testing which captures the beginning, end and key stages of the learners' journey throughout the year.

Nine characteristics of high-performing schools

As outlined earlier, the *Nine Characteristics* model was a research project reviewing more than 20 studies to determine how schools sustain progress in educating children and to identify similarities between the schools.

The research project identified nine characteristics in 2002 and found that sustained school commitment to at least five characteristics over a number of years led to lasting success. Inadequate attention to the characteristics or emphasising one characteristic to the exception of the others would yield superficial change at best.

The nine characteristics identified by the research project evolved into a framework for school improvement in Washington (USA) and was subsequently reviewed and confirmed by experts selected by the research team.

The independent review informed the development of the second edition in 2007 incorporating the model and supplementary research findings. The model elaborates on the characteristics and presents contemporary concepts which suggest additional ideas and avenues for improving schools and learning.

The model aims to help schools successfully implement school improvement, moving beyond planning to take action. The model explains the characteristics and concepts while detailing suggested implementation strategies.

Effective school improvement framework

As outlined earlier, the Effective School Improvement Framework project (Creemers, Stoll, & Reezigt, 2005) sought to reconcile the two previously disparate paradigms of school effectiveness research and school improvement efforts.

The framework is structured around factors organised into three categories: context factors, school factors and classroom/teacher factors.

Context factors:

Pressure to improve
Resources/support for improvement
Educational goals

School factors:

Improvement culture
Improvement processes
Improvement outcomes

Classroom/teacher factors:

Teacher motivation and involvement/participation in processes and decisions
Teacher collaboration
Feedback on teacher behaviour
Teacher training/staff development.

Summary of thematic consistencies

The models outlined above provide strong support for holistic approaches to addressing school improvement. Although there are consistencies, each model has distinct features.

The brief outline of characteristics of schools considered successful in attaining high performance above illustrates the variety of practices and approaches which may be effective in bringing about positive change and improvement.

The range of characteristics in each approach demonstrates the number and breadth of factors important to effecting positive change and improvement.

The variance between the approaches supports research findings that cautions against a 'one size fits all' approach and emphasises the need to target the application to the local need ie. the individual student, the individual classroom, and the individual context of the school and community.

Thematic consistencies between the approaches are:

- **Individual student-centric learning**
- **Cycle of continuous improvement** - assessment/measurement to enhance learning and teaching and to help identify intervention strategies
- **Professional development** aligned to curriculum content, pedagogy and assessment and directly applicable to a practical classroom situation
- **Tailored classroom instruction** to suit the diverse and distinct needs of the classroom and cohort
- **Collaboration and collegiality between school staff** in all combinations (ie. teachers as colleagues, school leaders as colleagues, and line management arrangements)
- **School community rapport** between school staff, teachers and students, students themselves, the school community, families and the broader community.

Conclusion

This review points to the need for a flexible, tailored approach to school performance and improvement frameworks. An approach tailored to the needs of individual students while considering the wider context and environment is more likely to effect change than a rigid, prescriptive approach. These findings informed the development and implementation of the further research components of the project.

Phase two - focus projects

The framing paper developed from the findings of the literature review was used at the November 2009 national workshop to help shape two focus projects. The EWG decided that two areas related to school performance improvement frameworks were worthy of closer exploration: school self-review processes and principals' perceptions of school performance improvement frameworks in their jurisdictions. The South Australian participants led the first focus project, while Queensland and Western Australia led the second. The two projects were implemented between January and August 2010.

School self-review

This school self-review project was conducted to facilitate collaboration in the design and implementation of best possible approaches to school self-review, within a range of circumstances and contexts. The project shared experience and learnings in developing, implementing, evaluating and improving school performance improvement frameworks, and support tools and processes relating to school self-review. As part of this it investigated the systemic and professional learning approaches that facilitate review processes.

Design

The School Self Review Project included a literature research of self-review and case studies of best practice of self-review processes from two nominated schools in Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia. Findings of the literature search informed the design and focus of the case studies.

Implementation

The case studies conducted included nine primary schools, two secondary schools, one Aboriginal (primary and secondary) school, one K-10 bilingual French school and one Catholic (secondary) school. Four schools were located in regional areas, eight in the metropolitan area, one in a rural area and one in a remote area.

The reviewers spent one day in each of the schools where they conducted interviews with key stakeholders – leadership team, staff, parents, regional director and, in some cases, students (South Australia). Prior to the school visit, they completed a background search of the respective departmental policy documents and the planning and reporting documents on the individual school website and *myschool* website.

Review of the literature and jurisdictional frameworks

The literature identifies self-review as a critical practice underpinning effective whole school reform with rationales or benefits for systems, staff, parents and students. School review serves a broad range of purposes including political, accountability, professional development, organisational development and teaching and learning improvement (MacBeath, 1999). Various rationales for self-review often co-exist in practice. An examination of existing school improvement frameworks in Australian states and territories found all jurisdictions acknowledged the critical role of school self-review although the terms used varied and included 'self assessment' and 'self evaluation'.

Protocols, standards and tools

- Protocols for self-review cover the many ways school communities worked in the case study schools reflecting a manner that is sensitive and respectful to the school community while holding high expectations for improvement.
- Protocols also exist for the use of data by schools in their self-review process. The document [Principles and protocols for reporting on schooling in Australia](#) guides and informs the use and publication of data generated in the process of measuring the performance of schooling in Australia.

- The establishment of standards associated with student performance and improvement is widespread in education. All jurisdictions have a range of student, teacher, school and school system performance standards in practice, most of which are anchored around standardised testing regimes (e.g: TIMMS, NAPLAN).
- All jurisdictions provide tools and/or templates to assist schools to prepare self-review reports and plans and external organisations have published documents and web-based software to assist school self-reviews.

Use of data

- Although most Australian jurisdictions do not publish standards for self-review process, all jurisdictions use student performance data and/or standards as central to their school self-review processes.
- All jurisdictions require the use of published student performance data to inform self-reviews.

Validation/endorsement

- Most jurisdictions undertake a validation, endorsement or accreditation process after schools complete their self-review. This usually requires that a school provides its findings and plans to an external party, typically a more senior departmental officer (usually at the district or regional level) or a peer external validator (ACT). Some jurisdictions engage an external, independent review authority e.g. New Zealand's Education Review Office or the Non-State School Accreditation Board, Queensland.

Although self-review was seen as important for school improvement, the literature noted it was difficult to measure the specific impact of self-review across schools because usually several reforms or policy initiatives were being simultaneously implemented at any time.

Key findings – case studies

Common themes critical for school improvement emerged from the case studies: leadership capability, effective use of a range of data, a central focus on student wellbeing and self-review approaches and processes that support good practice. Case study schools demonstrated a strong belief that every child was capable of achieving and put systems and conditions in place to support this, especially through instructional leadership. Findings of particular note were:

- All participating jurisdictions had an identified self-review cycle e.g. three, four or five years; however, participants noted the process should be ongoing with a focus on continuous improvement rather than an event.
- All participating jurisdictions had declared standards and principles for effective self-review and improvement although the format and structure varied.
- There appeared to be different expectations and valuing of student opinion and student voice in school improvement between jurisdictions.
- The accountability and compliance requirements of school performance improvement frameworks needed to take account of the diverse school communities and the way in which they engaged with the frameworks.
- The school context and culture appeared to provide a 'unique identifier' or focal point that seemed to drive the review and improvement process. This 'unique identifier' ranged from poor attendance, significant student behaviour issues, building a sense of community and building social capital to moving a school from 'good' to 'best'.
- While many of the schools identified student wellbeing as a priority for improvement, there appeared to be an absence of tools or strategies to measure the improvement or benefits for students.
- All participating jurisdictions have an external review process linked to self-review that varies in regularity, composition of the panel, and purpose. There is variation in the external review/validation approach both between and within jurisdictions.

Discussion of school self review project findings

- There are commonalities between the jurisdictions in their approach to school improvement frameworks. This consistency can inform good practice, national reporting, national research and sharing of tools, processes, principles, language and elements.
- A one-size-fits-all national school performance improvement framework is unlikely to be effective. Accountability and compliance requirements of school performance improvement frameworks need to take account of the diverse school communities and the way in which they engage with those frameworks.
- Self-review is an important aspect of school improvement. All high-performing schools studied had some aspect of self-review. It would be useful to formalise the common principles, elements and standards.
- Self-review should be owned and supported by the whole school community. If the principal leaves, the process should continue and be sustainable.
- Sharing leadership and capacity building of all school leaders will make good practice transparent.
- A good self-review process will identify and collect data and other information in response to clearly identified improvement outcomes, broader than NAPLAN results.
- Effective schools make time and resources available to support consistency in teacher judgement of student outcomes and to develop a shared understanding of effective pedagogy.
- Producing a recommended set of diagnostic and standardised tools is a very worthwhile goal and is subject to another Smarter Schools National collaborative project, regarding literacy and numeracy.
- Schools would be supported by access to and use of student data linked to a portable, personal student identifier to help ensure results are shared.

Further areas for investigation

The project provided a comprehensive view of current and effective practices in jurisdictional approaches to school self-review. Dissemination of the case studies shed new light on the use of the school self-review in the context of school performance and improvement in Australia and areas that could benefit from further investigation emerged. Cross-jurisdictional sharing of good practice in the use of data at the classroom, school, cluster, region and system level, and the development of tools to enable schools to assess social development and student wellbeing are two areas that could be the focus of future collaborative projects of this nature.

Conclusion

Findings of the literature review and case studies acknowledge the critical role of the school self-review in school reform. The findings provide new insight into effective school self-review practices and processes being used across the states and territories. Enablers of good practice were identified but the impact of these processes could not be quantified in the context of the concurrent implementation of numerous reform initiatives. Enablers of effective school self-review included leadership capability, use of a range of data, a focus on student wellbeing, and specific approaches and processes supported by dedicated time and resources. Potential areas for future projects that could benefit from collaboration and research were also identified including: the use of student data, the application of data from the region to the classroom, and developing tools to assess wellbeing.

Principal Perception Survey

This survey was conducted to ascertain principals' attitudes, understandings, and perceptions of their school performance improvement frameworks. The survey also sought to provide a better understanding of principals' perceptions of systemic support and professional learning for implementation of school performance and improvement frameworks. The aim was to gather information which could subsequently be used to inform approaches to enhancing frameworks to support performance improvement in schools, within a range of differing circumstances and contexts.

Partners

The Northern Territory Department of Education and Training, the Queensland Department of Education and Training and the Western Australian Department of Education were jurisdictional partners in the project. Queensland and Western Australia jointly led the project.

This survey was designed and implemented by officers within the jurisdictions who had specific expertise and experience in the area. This approach was selected to provide an opportunity to collaborate, share experiences, establish ongoing networks and strengthen partnerships for future collaboration in enhancing school performance improvement frameworks.

Initial scoping of the project took place at a project workshop in Brisbane in November 2009. This allowed key personnel to meet and begin developing trust and building strong working relationships. The workshop also provided an opportunity to discuss the similarities and differences between the three jurisdictions' frameworks and systems which had implications for the design and implementation of the survey. A second national workshop was held in June 2010 to consider the survey data and the key findings.

Design

The survey was conducted online with questions developed collaboratively by the project partners in consultation with the expert working group. The survey questions focused on principals' perceptions of their frameworks, the support and professional development/learning related to their frameworks, the ways their frameworks contributed to school improvement, obstacles to implementing their frameworks, ways of overcoming these impediments, and strategies that could enhance their frameworks.

Implementation

The Principals' Perception Survey was developed, implemented and analysed from November 2009 to August 2010. The survey, conducted 3-21 May 2010, contained generic questions relating to school performance improvement frameworks with flexibility for some questions to be customised by jurisdictions. It also collected demographic data on the type of school, its geolocation, the experience of the principal and the socio-economic advantage of the school.

Survey sample and response

The survey was delivered to principals in 2152 government schools in: Queensland (1232), Western Australia (769) and the Northern Territory (151). An effective response rate of 1242 (57.7%) was achieved which means that the survey offers a statistically valid sample of principals across three jurisdictions.

Discussion of key findings – survey

A number of clear messages emerged from analysis of the data which provide insight into principals' perceptions and approaches to school performance improvement frameworks.

Impact of school performance improvement frameworks

Sixty-three percent (63%) of principals indicated their school performance improvement framework had a positive impact on school improvement. Frameworks were strongly endorsed as contributing positively to school planning (75%) with staff engagement in school improvement processes (61%).

Obstacles to implementing school performance improvement frameworks

Principals highlighted a number of obstacles to implementing their school performance improvement framework: time for implementation, staff turnover, staff training, staff engagement, availability and adequacy of resources and access to support. Creating the time to undertake the implementation with school staff was identified as the main obstacle by nearly 40% of principals.

Ways of overcoming obstacles

Principals offered a range of strategies for overcoming obstacles to effective implementation of frameworks. These included strategies to:

- simplify school planning, targeting resources to support the framework
- access support, especially adopting cluster and network approaches
- engage staff, including clarifying expectations, professional learning, release time, committees and forums
- staff training including school-initiated approaches, release funding and collaborative approaches
- to address staff turnover, including induction and mentoring
- more effective use of time.

Approaches to school improvement

Principals identified a number of good practices in school improvement. These related to effective use of data, taking whole school approaches to improvement, and shared or distributed leadership.

Correlation of principals' responses to demographic data

Despite correlating demographic data to principal responses, overall, the jurisdiction, school type, school location, Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value and the experience of the principal made little or no difference to the responses.

Implementation support and professional learning/development

More than 80% of principals expressed an overwhelming desire for more support and better professional learning/development to implement their school performance improvement frameworks.

Data and other local support processes

Eighty-six percent (86%) of principals described local support for school improvement as effective or very effective.

Future areas for investigation

A number of areas which could be the focus of possible future collaboration activities emerged.

Professional learning and support

Eighty-six percent (86%) of principals said local support for their framework was effective or highly effective. However, further research is needed to ascertain a better understanding of principals' views of the value and specific nature of current and desired implementation support and professional learning/development.

Pedagogy and frameworks

Although it was not a main focus of the survey, almost 50% of principals reported the framework had contributed positively to classroom pedagogy and practice. Future collaborative projects could explore principals' perceptions about the nature of the impact of the frameworks on classroom pedagogy and practice. Quantification of the impact of the frameworks was out-of-scope of the current project.

Conclusion

This project provided new insight into principals' perceptions of school performance improvement frameworks, related systemic support, and associated professional learning. Findings highlight aspects of the frameworks for which there is strong support from principals, such as the contribution of frameworks to school planning and staff engagement with school improvement processes. They also identify areas that could benefit from further attention, refinement or support, such as additional time for implementation. The findings also highlight specific approaches to overcoming current obstacles to effective use of frameworks.

The project outcomes can inform future approaches to enhancing frameworks and strengthening implementation support. A strong network has been established which provides an ongoing mechanism for continued collaboration in enhancing school performance improvement frameworks and approaches to effective implementation.

Phase three - professional learning/systemic support

EWG participants were generally located within their jurisdiction's policy, professional development or performance and reporting divisions. This provided an opportunity to gather additional information from a systems perspective on the professional learning and support provided to regions, schools and principals. EWG participants responded to the following questions:

- How is your jurisdiction supporting school improvement through professional learning by developing the capabilities of all staff and students (consider tools, processes and related resources and Smarter Schools National Partnership strategies)?
- Describe the systemic support to schools in your jurisdiction to drive improved school performance.
- Do you have any evidence of the effectiveness of your jurisdiction's approach to professional learning or systemic support for school performance improvement?
- What challenges are you facing now and what potential solutions can you suggest?

Key insights from analysis and discussion of the jurisdictions' responses are outlined in the following section.

Professional learning to support frameworks

All jurisdictions referred to supporting school improvement through a range of initiatives or targeted professional development programs. Professional development was seen as integral to most jurisdictions' frameworks.

Project participants considered frameworks (in conjunction with other strategies) important performance improvement resources and suggested the following considerations in implementing frameworks:

- *Alignment* between improvement frameworks and strategies, leadership development and what is needed by teachers in the classroom (including structural system alignment of officers responsible for frameworks and professional learning).
- *Consistency* in messages and in how the frameworks are implemented – clear vision and purpose (improved student outcomes) presented in a simple, clear, credible, easy-to-adopt manner.
- *Flexibility* to support schools in building unique identities to drive school improvement, tailored to the local context and aligned to framework messages and expectations.
- *Resources* - strategies are appropriately resourced.
- *Evidence-based* culture - frameworks informed by an evidence-based research culture.
- *Pre-conditions* established – focus on characteristics of highly effective performance and best practice professional learning (research-based with ongoing provision of professional development).

Generally, systemic approaches were considered to be embodied in an organisation's integrated system/school improvement strategies and reflected in key documents providing a coordinated approach (consistency, coherence, shared understanding, building collective knowledge and capacity, explicit articulation of expectations and capabilities of schools, leaders, teachers). All participants agreed a focus on capacity building was essential to school improvement.

Nature of capacity building approaches

While the nature of capacity building approaches varied across the states and territories, project participants agreed on a number of important elements:

- *Multi-layered* capacity building approach
- Building the *individual and collective* capacity of leaders and the workforce
- *Coaching and mentoring*
- *Team-based* leadership development.

Human resources policies were seen as particularly important. Participants said policies and incentives were needed to attract effective leaders and teachers, particularly in hard-to-staff schools.

Capacity building across all levels of staff was considered important. For example, leadership development (including distributed leadership) was seen as essential and integral to school improvement frameworks. Leaders also had an important role in fostering transparency and accountability. This included 'de-privatisation' (sharing and opening up) of practice at whole school and classroom levels.

Participants highlighted the importance of regional support structures in effecting school improvement. Effective regional support could enhance school improvement and capacity building through use of data and networks. Intensive intervention and support strategies were considered particularly important for under-achieving schools.

Participants agreed that while much had been achieved in recent years, there were still a number of challenges to be addressed:

- Alignment of reform initiatives at school, region, state and national levels
- The professional development implications of high turn-over of principals and teachers (where this occurs) and its impact on the continuity of programs and student learning
- Addressing the strong relationship between socio-economic status, educational disadvantage and geographic location
- Winning the hearts and mind of principals and teachers in implementing the framework
- Understanding how frameworks can influence the practice of classroom teachers and fine-tuning frameworks to strengthen this influence
- Refreshing - rather than re-writing - school improvement documents to embed leadership and sharpen the focus on school targets and performance indicators.

In addressing these challenges, jurisdictions are seeking to create a culture which leads to school improvement and improving student outcomes.

Conclusion

Findings from this project provide a synopsis of learnings from research and practice in developing, enhancing, implementing and supporting school performance and improvement frameworks. The review of the literature noted there is increasing pressure on systems and schools to improve and be accountable for educational outcomes. Desirable elements of a framework or type of framework likely to contribute to performance improvement were highlighted and used to help shape the two focus projects, the *School Self Review* and the *Principal Perception Survey*.

Findings from these projects acknowledged the critical role of school performance and improvement frameworks, including the school self-review, in supporting school reform. They also provided an understanding of effective practices and processes being used across the states and territories. Enablers of good practice were identified and aspects that could benefit from further enhancement noted. Project outcomes can inform future approaches to enhancing frameworks and strengthening implementation support with consideration being given to contextual challenges and priorities.

An additional outcome of the project was the establishment of a strong network which provides an ongoing mechanism for continued collaboration in enhancing school performance improvement frameworks and approaches to effective implementation. Potential areas that could benefit from future collaboration and research include: the use of student data, the application of data from the region to the classroom and the development of tools to assess wellbeing.

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Appendix 1 – Australian approaches as at November 2009

State / Territory	Context	Planning	Monitoring / Assessment	Reporting	Review
ACT (February 2009)	<p>The ACT's 83 public schools are organised into three geographical districts. In the most part, schools are primary (P-6), high school years (7–10) and senior colleges (11-12); variations include P–10 settings and middle school options. Recently, preschools have been amalgamated into primary school management structures.</p> <p>In collaboration with an Educational Performance and Reporting section, three school directors (one per district) are responsible for over-seeing the implementation of school improvement.</p> <p>Each district has a school improvement partner assigned to assist schools with continuous improvement built upon evidence-informed practices.</p> <p>Principles The School Improvement Framework (SIF) identifies the core business of schools as learning and achievement. Each school's strategic plan seeks to optimise learning environments and promote quality teaching and leadership across the school community.</p> <p>Four domains of school improvement help to self-assess and monitor progress towards excellence: learning and teaching; leading and managing; student environment; and community involvement.</p> <p>The SIF supports schools as they: gather evidence to inform planning and set targets; plan and develop strategic and operational initiatives; report on performance and improvement; and validate the achievement of intended outcomes</p> <p>Cycle Over the four year cycle schools annually plan, self-assess and report to their communities. External validation occurs in the final year of the cycle.</p> <p>Key Documentation / Website School Improvement Framework http://activated.decs.act.gov.au/sei/index.htm</p>	<p>The school plan outlines how the school will achieve improved levels of performance by establishing overall strategic priorities. It provides a whole school focus for continual improvement over the life of the school review cycle. The plan is made available on the school's website at the start of each year.</p> <p>The school plan includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a profile of context and purpose • identified priorities • improvement targets (including student performance targets) • major actions (particularly whole school strategies) • a timeframe • expected outcomes. <p>An annual operating plan is developed after reviewing the broader school plan. It identifies priorities and objectives that will be the focus for a specific year and will typically include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • priorities and improvement targets • specific strategies • who is responsible for implementing the strategies • a timeframe for implementation • resources allocated to the strategies • ways to evaluate the implementation. <p>Schools establish a school improvement committee to work with the principal to develop and monitor planning and improvement processes. In devising a planning process the school's improvement committee ensures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • full and open consultation with the school community • strategies for improvement are well researched • data sources are identified and monitoring processes established • the processes for improvement are communicated to key personnel • documentation to support the improvement process is available • future plans are informed by what has been learned. 	<p>Schools are encouraged to implement processes for identifying and gathering evidence that is fair and balanced; leading to analysis that is valid, reliable and trustworthy. This establishes a platform for considered debate and consensus, and increases the level of confidence stakeholders place in subsequent findings.</p> <p>Each school has a major role in collecting and reporting data that will contribute to an understanding of performance at both local and system levels. Decisions need to be based on a range of high quality data and should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • represent qualitative and quantitative sources • be about performance and achievement • inform formative and summative processes • improve accountability and transparency. <p>Schools use data provided by the department, together with data collected at the school to build a comprehensive profile of performance. The data sets include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • standardised achievement results • school performance information • moderation reports from Year 11 and Year 12 courses • school data from system surveys. <p>A self-assessment matrix has been developed to assist schools with continuous improvement and to identify factors inhibiting or accelerating improvement. The self-assessment matrix is based on the domains and elements of the SIF.</p> <p>For each element, a set of observable research-based characteristics has been developed to guide schools towards an evidence-based reflection on their practices within each domain. The characteristics describe key behaviours that would be observed in high performing schools.</p>	<p>ACT schools are responsible for reporting to communities on performance and achievement using formal and informal means. The annual school board report provides the formal mechanism for reporting to the general public through the chief executive.</p> <p>The purpose of the annual school board report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide student performance and school achievement information to the public • record progress in meeting objectives and targets set out in the school plan • provide evidence of improvement in the process of external validation • fulfil reporting obligations required by the ACT and Commonwealth Governments. <p>The school principal must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complete the annual school board report according to a standard format to ensure consistency across the ACT public school system and to facilitate data collection via the report • ensure that processes are in place that allow the school board to monitor and review school performance and to report on it to the chief executive, parents of students at the school and staff • as soon as practicable after the end of each year, approve the annual report by signing off each year's annual school board report, endorsing the process and approving the content as a true and accurate record of the school's achievements • forward the annual school board report to the appropriate school director by the end of February each year for approval and sign-off • submit the signed copy to the chief executive by the third week of March each year • make available to all school stakeholders and the wider school community a copy of the annual school board report on the school's website and provide hard copies to stakeholders upon request. 	<p>External validation is the ACT's evaluation and accountability process supporting continuous improvement and building public confidence in the quality of public schooling being provided in the ACT.</p> <p>The external validation process draws upon evidence of performance and achievement that has been accumulated by the school through its self-assessment processes.</p> <p>An external lead validator is contracted to oversee the validation process across all participating schools. Each year, the lead validator provides the department with a summary report to highlight commendations and recommendations drawn from the school-level external validation reports. This report is published on the department's website.</p> <p>The validation process takes place over three days. The external lead validator, in consultation with the school director, will oversee the selection and operation of external validation panels. External validation is a form of peer review, and as such relies on panel membership that is broadly representative of the ACT public school system.</p> <p>Following the evaluation process the external panel prepares a final external validation report. This report contains a brief analysis of each domain for school improvement, and provides commendations and recommendations for future school planning purposes.</p> <p>The school's external validation report is a public document and is provided to the school board and reported on through the annual school board report.</p>

Overview of approaches to School Accountability, Improvement and Review in Australia as at November 2009

State / Country	Context	Planning	Monitoring / Assessment	Reporting	Review
NSW (2006)	<p>The government system has approximately 2382 schools located throughout the state. There are ten geographically-based regions and ten regional directors. According to the size of the region there are between two and five school development officers (SDO) appointed. The SDOs are involved in school evaluation and improvement of their allocated school education groups.</p> <p>Principles The guiding principles for change and improvement are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner-cCentred • Innovative • Collaborative • Responsive • Equitable • Accountable. <p>Cycle There is an annual cycle for the school plan, self-evaluation and the annual school report.</p> <p>Key documentation/website Leading and Managing the School policy</p> <p>School Development policy</p> <p>Annual School Report templates and support documents are available from the department's website.</p> <p>http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/adminsupport/schoolreport/index.php</p> <p>New Framework for School Development and Accountability.</p>	<p>A school plan is to provide detail of the school's vision, priorities and targets.</p> <p>There is a three year planning horizon with an annual update.</p> <p>Templates are available.</p>	<p>The principal, staff and parent representatives participate in the self-evaluation process which includes considering progress in achieving both state-wide and school priorities.</p> <p>The school also considers its strengths and weaknesses and determines improvement targets and priorities.</p> <p>Recommended priorities and targets are assessed by the staff and the SDO and once finalised are incorporated into the school plan.</p> <p>Schools are supported with the self-evaluation process by district office and school improvement staff.</p> <p>There is a line management relationship with the district director.</p>	<p>Every school produces an annual report. This is the responsibility of the principal and is produced in collaboration with the school's self-evaluation committee.</p> <p>The report is produced within a set framework and a template is available from the department's website. The report includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • achievements • evaluations within the areas of educational and management practice, curriculum, other programs and student performance • targets, progress against previous year's targets and targets for the coming year • enrolment profile, attendance and class sizes • a financial summary of the school operations. <p>The school's annual report is provided to each family in the school.</p> <p>From 2006 greater autonomy is evident with schools having a choice of format and printing arrangements. The mandated elements must be covered. Central printing is available for those using the template or a modified version of it.</p> <p>Trial continues for reporting of like school data.</p>	<p>Aside from the endorsement of the school targets in the annual report by the SDO, there is no systematic review process in place. The review occurs when there is evidence to suggest attention may be required. Generally the evidence that leads to a review comes from the testing programs. Student welfare-based reviews come from data such as a suspensions, attendance, incidents and complaints.</p> <p>There are three degrees of reviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational support team (lowest review level) – to assist schools develop a program within the school • School program review - to assist schools improve a program within the school • School management review – to assist schools improve their management. <p>The school review is always focussed (e.g: student welfare, a department in a secondary school, literacy in a primary school).</p> <p>The size of the review team varies though it is usually three to four members which include the SDO and special personnel. School reviews are conducted over three to five days.</p> <p>School reviews of this nature have been undertaken for several years in NSW, with approximately 80 across the system each year. The review program is gaining momentum although it is dependent on the support and priority given by each regional director.</p>

Overview of approaches to School Accountability, Improvement and Review in Australia as at November 2009

State / Country	Context	Planning	Monitoring / Assessment	Reporting	Review
SA (Jan 2008)	<p>There are more than 900 government preschools, primary and high schools throughout the state. SA has 18 districts under the leadership of district directors. Each district has approximately 60 sites (schools and preschools) and a district team that includes supporting schools with district improvement coordinators, curriculum advisers, early childhood, student wellbeing and behaviour coordinators. Improvement in the system is undertaken with a tri-level approach – i.e. system, district and site.</p> <p>Principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The department's Principles for Improvement and Effectiveness are a component of the <i>DECS Improvement and Accountability framework</i> and includes nine key principles central to achieving and sustaining high performance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on learning Think systemically Shared leadership Attend to culture Listen and respond Make data count Set direction Target resources Continuously improve. <p>Elements of the framework</p> <p>There are five core elements of the framework which, when implemented in an integrated way, improve the effectiveness of programs and practices:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Standards Self review Improvement planning Intervention and support Performance reporting. <p>Each element outlines a focus for improvement and requirements for accountability.</p> <p>Key documentation / website</p> <p>The <i>DECS Improvement and Accountability Framework (DIAf)</i> has a range of web-based resource materials to support sites and districts in planning for improvement. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guide to Self Review Self Review Tools (including rubrics, criteria) <p>See http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/quality</p>	<p>Schools produce both three year site learning plans and annual operational plans.</p> <p>The site learning plan identifies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic priorities (updated annually) Key findings from data that inform strategic targets (updated annually) Learning targets for the following three years Three-year strategic targets. <p>Sites document in their own formats the strategies for delivering targeted outcomes and for monitoring progress annually and over the three years.</p> <p>The template for site learning plans is on the department's website: http://www.leadersdesktop.sa.edu.au/improvement/pages/improvement</p> <p>A template of the annual operational plan is available for schools to use.</p>	<p>Schools are required to monitor their performance through a range of performance indicators, some system-based and some school-based.</p> <p>The following data is collected and analysed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> student achievement staff, student and parent opinion Site-based performance indicators chosen by the school System-based performance indicators used for state and national reporting. <p>Evaluation of this data may lead to adjustments to daily processes, annual plans or the school's triennial plan.</p> <p>Self-review is an essential component of the new framework and occurs annually.</p> <p>A comprehensive self-review tool is available for use in all schools and preschools.</p>	<p>School principals are required to provide regular reports (normally each term) to their governing council regarding progress towards implementing targets and a summary of available data.</p> <p>Appropriate information is provided to the school's governing council and the district director to enable the production of the annual report. The report to the local school communities provides information school plan actions and an evaluation of outcomes achieved.</p> <p>A proforma report is available from the department's website. Its use is not mandatory.</p> <p>District directors have the opportunity to negotiate details of reports with their district through local leadership executive groups.</p>	<p>A key element of the <i>DECS Improvement and Accountability Framework</i> is reviewing performance. This involves analysing school and student performance data to identify trends and performance variance.</p> <p>Progressive levels of intervention and support are conducted at three levels:</p> <p>Level 1: Routine interventions where all members of DECS are responsible for interventions to ensure individuals, groups and programs achieve standards.</p> <p>Level 2: Targeted interventions where actions may be required to support success. These site-level interventions are overseen by district directors and may include undertaking a review process.</p> <p>Level 3: Specialised interventions where specific and corrective actions occur. These may include providing resources, financial review, change of personnel, and are the responsibility of the chief executive.</p> <p>The nature of the intervention and support for each school will reflect its particular needs and circumstances, and build upon its strengths and identified areas for development.</p>

Overview of approaches to School Accountability, Improvement and Review in Australia as at November 2009

State / Country	Context	Planning	Monitoring / Assessment	Reporting	Review
Vic (January 2010)	<p>Approximately 1550 government schools located in nine regions across the state. Each region has a Regional Director and three Assistant Regional Directors – one for School Improvement, one for School Operations and one for Early Childhood.</p> <p>Principles Accountability is a component of the <i>Effective Schools Model</i>.</p> <p>School Accountability and Improvement Framework (SAIF) Each of the elements of the SAIF is integrated and shares a common platform, focusing on three student outcomes (student learning, student engagement and wellbeing and student pathways and transitions) and uses a common set of key questions that address a school's performance, aspirations, and strategies in relation to each of these student outcomes.</p> <p>Cycle Introduced in 2005, the SAIF has a four-year planning and review cycle and an annual cycle of implementation and reporting. The fourth year of the cycle culminates in development of the school strategic plan for the next four year cycle. The school self-evaluation and school review (key elements of the SAIF) provide information to assist the school finalise its school strategic plan.</p> <p>The Network Accountability and Improvement Framework (NAIF) The NAIF was introduced in 2009 to provide regions with greater capacity to support schools and accord greater responsibility to networks. It guides the development of network priorities and aligns school, network, regional and system-wide accountability and improvement processes. A four year planning cycle, annual implementation and reporting cycle are outlined in this document.</p> <p>Key Documents / Website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Accountability and Improvement Framework for Victorian Government Schools 2010</i> • <i>School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2010</i> • <i>Step by Step Guide to Completing the School Self-Evaluation Report 2010</i> • <i>School Review Guidelines 2010</i> • <i>School Strategic Planning Guidelines 2010</i> • <i>Network Accountability and Improvement Framework</i> <p>All documents are at: http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schoolimprovement/default.htm</p>	<p>The planning process includes a four year school strategic plan supported by a series of annual implementation plans based on three domains that correspond to the key planning questions, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student outcomes (What outcomes are we trying to achieve for our students?) • operations and practice (What do we have to do to achieve the outcomes we want?) • resources (How will we manage our resources to achieve these outcomes?). <p>The school strategic plan outlines the school's goals and targets for improved student outcomes (student learning, student pathways and transitions, and student engagement and wellbeing), and summarises the key improvement strategies (the operations and practices) required to bring about these improvements.</p> <p>Schools are also required to develop an indicative planner as part of their school strategic plan. This requires schools to identify the specific actions they will undertake for each year of their strategic plan and outline the expected changes in practices and behaviours (achievement milestones) they would expect to see over this period.</p> <p>Annual implementation plans operationalise the key improvement strategies of the school strategic plan. The implementation plan details the tasks and activities that are to be undertaken in that year, by whom, with what resources and within what timeframe.</p> <p>The school strategic plan for each school must be endorsed by their school council and regional office. Annual implementation plans also require the same endorsement.</p> <p>Templates for the school strategic plan and annual implementation plan are available at: http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schoolimprovement/accountability/strategicplan.htm</p>	<p>Schools collect and monitor their progress across a range of student achievement and school management performance data and provide this to the Department.</p> <p>From the data provided the Department produces a school level report for each school. This contains each school's performance data benchmarked against the state and SFO groups. The School Level report is updated as data becomes available and provides the key source of performance data used across the SAIF.</p> <p>Self-Evaluation All schools must undertake a school self-evaluation as the first step in the year of evaluation, review and planning. The school self-evaluation provides an opportunity for the whole school community to reflect on their student outcomes in light of the goals, targets and key improvement strategies identified in the previous planning cycle. The principal and school council have a shared responsibility in determining the terms of reference for the evaluation and in overseeing its implementation. Data is drawn primarily from the school level report but may also include written reports, survey results and school-based assessments. The audience for the self-evaluation is primarily the broader school community, but is also forwarded to their regional office and central office. For schools undergoing their year of review it will also be used as a primary source of information on the school by the school reviewer. The school self-evaluation template is available at: http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schoolimprovement/accountability/strategicplan.htm</p>	<p>All schools are required to provide an Annual Report to the school community. In 2009 the Annual Report was streamlined to reduce workload for schools and to meet Commonwealth and State legislative requirements, including National Partnership Agreements. The report includes a DEECD generated cover page, a "What our school is doing" statement, a school performance summary and a financial performance and position statement. These reports are uploaded onto the VRQA website. Detailed advice about how to complete the annual report is provided at: http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schoolimprovement/accountability/report.htm</p> <p>School Compliance Checklist The School Compliance Checklist assists schools to identify and report on their level of compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements and Departmental policy expectations. Essentially a risk management tool, the on-line checklist provides links to relevant legislation and examples of best practice to assist schools in ensuring their compliance. Further information about the School Compliance Checklist is available at: http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schoolimprovement/accountability/checklist.htm</p>	<p>Following the school self-evaluation, schools undertake an external review. Schools will undertake either a negotiated, continuous improvement or diagnostic review. Allocation to a review type is decided by the regions as they have better understandings of the school context and any specific needs.</p> <p>Types of review Negotiated review is for schools with student outcomes above expected levels. Continuous improvement review is for schools with satisfactory student outcomes but with opportunities for improvement. Diagnostic review is for schools with student outcomes below expected levels. Extended Diagnostic review was introduced in 2009 and is undertaken by schools requiring immediate assessment and intervention and can occur at any time of the year and outside the school's usual four year cycle. It follows a similar structure to diagnostic review but provides additional fieldwork time (total of four days). Continuous improvement, diagnostic and extended diagnostic reviews are undertaken by accredited school reviewers contracted by the Department. Reviewers provide a presentation of the report to meetings of staff and the school council. Electronic copies are provided to the principal, school council president, regional director and central office. Negotiated reviews are more flexible and are usually focused on an area of development for a school. To assist in this process school are encouraged to utilise a "critical friend" to provide external input and assist in the management of the process. No funding is provided for schools undertaking a negotiated review. The methodology to be used is outlined in the terms of reference and must be approved by the region. In 2010, an Extended Diagnostic Review Follow-up Visit is being trialled to provide support to schools who undertook an extended diagnostic review in the preceding year, in the implementation of their School Strategic Plans.</p>

Overview of approaches to School Accountability, Improvement and Review in Australia as at November 2009

State / Country	Context	Planning	Monitoring / Assessment	Reporting	Review
NT (Sep 2009)	<p>The Northern Territory Department of Education and Training (DET) provides education services in 151 government schools with total enrolments of approximately 32,500 students.</p> <p>There are six geographically-based clusters. Three directors of school performance (DSP) each oversee two clusters.</p> <p>DSPs is to work in partnership with principals to achieve improvement goals and be accountable for results through effective leadership.</p> <p>Principles The Accountability and Performance Improvement Framework (APIF) assists schools to meet local and system goals and targets focusing on performance in six key result areas (teaching and learning, student wellbeing and engagement, student pathways and transitions, community engagement, organisational health and learning and financial health).</p> <p>Cycle The APIF is a four year cycle consisting of planning, monitoring and reporting which is implemented through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School self-reviews • School strategic improvement planning • Annual operational plans • Annual performance reports • Performance reviews. <p>Key documentation/website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DET Accountability and Performance Improvement Framework – Overview • DET Accountability and Performance Improvement Framework – Guide for Schools <p>http://www.det.nt.gov.au/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder perception surveys <p>http://staff.det.nt.gov.au/quickfind/reporting/sps/index.shtml</p>	<p>The APIF requires schools to develop a four year strategic improvement plan which identifies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improvement goals in the six key result areas • locally-set targets, linked to the DET Strategic Plan and national targets, to measure the school's progress in relation towards their improvement goals. <p>Improvement plans are developed, reviewed and amended as needed in consultation with DSPs and the school community.</p> <p>Schools are also required to develop annual operational plans to map the processes needed to achieve the goals and targets identified in their strategic improvement plans.</p> <p>Annual operational plans identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • short-term priorities and targets aligned to the targets set in the Strategic Improvement Plan • broad strategies and specific actions required to implement improvement strategies • staff who are to perform the actions, and their accountabilities • resources and professional development needed to assist implementation • Performance measures used to assess improvements. <p>DSPs and the school council endorse the annual operational plans.</p>	<p>Schools measure performance by comparing their results with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • previous student and school results to find evidence of school improvement over time • locally set school improvement targets to find evidence that improvement strategies are having an impact • like schools, NT and national averages to analyse school performance using these average performance standards agreed NT and Australian Government targets. <p>Schools can access their data and use the reporting and analysis tools provided online at the DET Business Intelligence Centre.</p> <p>Schools are required to analyse their data each year to assess progress in meeting goals and targets before they develop their annual operational plans. Schools also use the data to monitor and assess progress against the annual operational plan at mid-year intervals.</p>	<p>Schools provide annual performance reports to their school communities against the six key result areas, the school's improvement targets and the performance standards based on like schools, NT and national averages. The reports are limited to a maximum of 10 pages and are endorsed by the DSPs and school councils.</p>	<p>Internal Every four years, schools along with their communities and other stakeholders, undertake a self-review led by the principal and leadership team. Self-reviews are a structured and critical reflection based on a range of performance data including the key result areas' evidence measures.</p> <p>The school self-review underpins improvement planning.</p> <p>The tools for the self-review process are currently being revised to enable a more coherent approach across NT schools.</p> <p>The APIF also incorporates performance reviews to build the school's capacity to achieve performance standards through linking individual staff and principal performance to the achievement of the school's goals and targets.</p> <p>External Schools may be chosen to undergo a selective audit if they show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exceptionally high standards of learning compared with like schools • significant improvement growth • they are in need of intervention and support. <p>Selective audits provide important information to the system about conditions for school effectiveness or, in the case of schools in need of intervention and support, diagnostic information to help schools improve.</p> <p>Selective audits are conducted by an independent panel external to the school.</p>

Overview of approaches to School Accountability, Improvement and Review in Australia as at November 2009

State / Country	Context	Planning	Monitoring / Assessment	Reporting	Review
<p>WA (Sep 2009)</p>	<p>The government has almost 800 schools in 14 geographically-based districts. District offices provide a range of support services to the schools in their districts. There are 24 directors schools (metro districts have three or four directors each).</p> <p>Principles</p> <p>The School Improvement and Accountability Framework (2008) is based upon the following commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to improvement • School performance open to scrutiny • Assuring the quality of public schooling • Manageable for schools • Reciprocal accountability • Linked to performance management • Part of a wider compliance context. <p>As well as ensuring that every school's performance is open to scrutiny, accountability mechanisms should help the school improve its performance.</p> <p>Cycle</p> <p>Planning cycles are determined by school context. (Three year strategic planning and annual operational planning are most common). Reporting is required annually.</p> <p>Key documentation/website</p> <p><i>The School Improvement and Accountability Framework (2008)</i></p> <p>www.eddept.wa.edu.au/accountability/</p>	<p>All schools are required to produce a school plan setting out their objectives, priorities, improvement targets, major strategies and evaluation measures.</p> <p>The format of the plan is flexible but is to respond to its community's needs and demonstrate its accountability. It also needs to meet the requirements for annual reporting and provide a framework for improvement.</p> <p>The School Education Act 1999 requires the participation of the school community in planning for the school's future through the School Council. The School Council's main role is its involvement in establishing and reviewing the school's objectives, priorities and general policy direction.</p>	<p>All schools are required to assess their performance in terms of standards of student achievement and the effectiveness of school processes.</p> <p>Schools gather information about student achievement, analysing and judging the adequacy of those levels, given the school's context, identifying strengths and weaknesses and assessing aspects of the school's operations that should be changed to generate improved performance.</p> <p>Appropriate comparisons are made against a standard appropriate for the school, such as state averages, schools with similar student populations, national comparison or its own performance in previous years.</p> <p>School staff also need to assess whether the school is operating as effectively as it could in areas of teaching, learning environment, relationships, leadership and resources.</p>	<p>The annual school report provides the school community with information about the school's performance.</p> <p>School reports are required to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contextualised student performance information • progress on identified priorities • school budget • Australian Government reporting requirements • Highlights of the school year. <p>In addition The new <i>School Improvement and Accountability Framework</i> acknowledges compliance reporting requirements are part of school accountability.</p>	<p>School Reviews are conducted by directors schools and the Expert Review Group (ERG).</p> <p>Directors schools are expected to develop a close professional relationship with their schools through a range of interactions. The most formal of these are principals' performance management and the conduct of a standards review.</p> <p>Directors schools undertake a standards review with each of their schools. The focus of the standards review is the standards of student achievement.</p> <p>Where student achievement is judged to be within or above the range of reasonable expectation, the school is deemed effective.</p> <p>Where student achievement is below the range of reasonable expectation, and the Director schools judges the school incapable of improving student performance without intervention, these schools may be referred to the ERG.</p> <p>The focus for the ERG is to review schools with concerning performance. It conducts a rigorous assessment of school performance interrogating the effectiveness of school self-assessment processes and school operations. An action plan will be developed and endorsed by the director general. The Director schools will be responsible for ensuring the action plan is implemented.</p> <p>The ERG also undertakes a small number of exemplary standards reviews, validation reviews, follow-up reviews and special reviews.</p>

Overview of approaches to School Accountability, Improvement and Review in Australia as at November 2009

State / Country	Context	Planning	Monitoring / Assessment	Reporting	Review
Tas (January 2009)	<p>The Department of Education in Tasmania caters for the education of more than 61,000 students. (February census 2009) providing education services across the state in four senior secondary colleges and 205 schools.</p> <p>As of 1 January 2009, senior secondary education is also provided by the Tasmanian Academy and the Tasmanian Polytechnic. The four colleges and schools are geographically organised into four learning services. Schools are primary: K–6, high school: Years 7–10 and colleges: Years 11–12.</p> <p>Four general managers, one per learning service, are responsible for guiding school improvement as a part of their role. Each learning service has a manager learning and a manager school support. Four regional school improvement boards are made up of business and community leaders and school principals. They work in partnership with learning services to help achieve better outcomes for students.</p> <p>Principles <i>Learner at the Centre</i> is the strategic framework for the four years 2009–2012. This strategy builds upon earlier policy documents such as the <i>Student at the Centre</i> and aligns all key portfolio directions to the government's priority areas of early years, literacy and numeracy and retention. A bottom-up approach enables schools to plan effectively to achieve the government's goals.</p> <p>Principles include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the learner is at the centre of policy and funding decisions the school is responsible for the learning achievement of all of its students each and every student and school is capable of improvement identifying its weaknesses and developing a plan to improve is a core school responsibility. <p>Managers learning and managers school support assist schools to develop plans and allocate resources based on identified needs.</p> <p>Accountabilities Schools are accountable to learning services in the first instance, but ultimately to parents through the school association.</p>	<p>Principals, in collaboration with the secretary and general manager (Strategic Policy and Performance) have developed a <i>School Improvement Framework 2009</i>. This framework sets out responsibilities and outlines an improvement process and lists specific actions and obligations.</p> <p>The improvement strategy recognises every school is at a different stage in improvement. Differentiated support, the use of meaningful school and system data and a 'balanced score card' approach to school leadership are central to the framework.</p> <p>Key performance indicators (KPIs) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community—student satisfaction, parent satisfaction, retention, national 3, 5, 7 and 9 literacy and numeracy results Process—school readiness, early literacy and numeracy, value-added literacy and numeracy, student attendance, socioeconomic and Indigenous equity Resources—financial reporting Our Learning—school effectiveness, teacher satisfaction, professional learning, staff attendance, teacher qualifications. <p>Schools may choose additional KPIs in each area.</p> <p>Specific accountabilities for 2009 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A school improvement plan which is data-based and addresses key performance indicators including strategies for improving school literacy and numeracy outcomes Individual education plans (IEPs), developed in consultation with parents and guardians for students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> funded through the Students with Disabilities Register and profiling not assessed against curriculum standards with English as a second language in state care. A performance feedback and support process ensuring at least one annual face-to-face performance discussion with each staff member. A plan to implement by 2011 the <i>Tasmanian Curriculum</i> and reporting 	<p>The department is committed to a culture of improvement. All schools are required to complete staff, parent and student satisfaction surveys annually. Scores from scales within these surveys are used to determine parent, student and staff satisfaction scores.</p> <p>To assist teachers moderate their assessments of students, detailed statistical moderation reports about assessment against the <i>Tasmanian Curriculum</i> at the school level are provided to principals who are encouraged to use them with their staff. Preliminary reports are provided at the beginning of each year. They are updated at mid-year and end-of-year reporting periods.</p> <p>Assessment information is provided in summary form to learning services managers to support schools moderate their assessments. School improvement boards, in partnership with the Learning Services monitor school improvement.</p> <p>Assessment information from international and national testing also informs school improvement.</p>	<p><i>Tasmania's Education Performance Report</i> (TEPR) reports aggregated data for all Tasmanian schools across a range of measurement items. Included in the report is a regional view of each Learning Service.</p> <p>Each of the measurement items is in turn aligned with government priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early years Literacy and numeracy Student attendance Student retention (apparent Y10 to Y12) Staff attendance Student attendance Staff satisfaction Parent satisfaction Student satisfaction Indigenous equity Socioeconomic equity. <p>Each item is reported in terms of achievement, improvement and overall progress using comparative data and trends determined from previous years' information.</p> <p><i>School Improvement Reports</i> for individual schools are also reported annually so that all Tasmanian schools K–10 are represented on the School Improvement Reporting website.</p> <p>http://schoolimprovement.education.tas.gov.au/2008</p> <p>This website reports school improvement over a range of outcomes strongly aligned with <i>Tasmania's Education Performance Report</i>. It is updated annually to reflect the latest available data.</p> <p>Schools are able to enter their own text in relation to each of the data items. Schools are also able to construct an introduction to their school and provide clarifying information on each item reported.</p>	<p>The <i>Tasmania's Education Performance Report</i> (TEPR) is an annual production overseen by Educational Performance Services.</p> <p>The School Improvement Reporting site and data is updated annually.</p> <p>The information from <i>Tasmania's Education Performance Report</i> is tabled in Parliament and both it and the school improvement reports are publicly available.</p> <p>Tasmania has in place a formal support process for identified schools.</p> <p>There are a number of factors and combinations of factors that contribute to a school being identified for formal support such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> new policy requirements that require a period of adjustment lack of clarity about roles and lines of responsibilities new leadership directions that challenge the status quo challenging or poorly performing students. <p>When formal support occurs, an action plan is developed in consultation with the school leader(s) and details where appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explicit actions that are required timelines for when actions will occur milestones that will be delivered evaluation and monitoring processes. <p>General managers provide the school improvement board with regular updates on progress against the action plan. The type of high-level support offered may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> staff support and professional learning that is focussed and specifically targeted leadership support and professional learning to build leadership density and capacity reassignment of duties for staff members staff performance interventions behaviour support and intervention programs. <p>In the unlikely case the formal support action plan does not result in improvement within the designated timeframe and the school is still trending down against the</p>

Overview of approaches to School Accountability, Improvement and Review in Australia as at November 2009

	<p>Learning services and their general managers are accountable to a regional school improvement board for use of resources to support schools' improvement plans.</p> <p>Educational performance services provide increasingly sophisticated data about schools and student performance for school leadership teams to use in their self-evaluation and planning.</p>	<p>requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School improvement reporting and corporate reporting through the collection of data and information. • Meeting the requirements of the Australian Government for public reporting on school performance and accountabilities resulting from participation in Commonwealth funded pilots and National Partnerships. 			<p>performance measures, intervention will take place. The decision to intervene is the responsibility of a general manager with approval from the secretary.</p>
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Overview of approaches to School Accountability, Improvement and Review in Australia as at November 2009

State / Country	CONTEXT	PLANNING	PLANNING (Continued)	REPORTING AND REVIEWING	REVIEWING (Continued)
Qld (Sep 09)	<p>The Queensland Government system has 929 primary schools, 91 combined primary/secondary schools, 178 secondary schools and 47 special schools.</p> <p>Principles The <i>School Planning, Reporting and Reviewing Framework - Queensland State Schools - 2010</i> guides the processes and documents for school planning, reporting and reviewing. This integrated framework also defines the key priorities and performance indicators, aligned to the Department's Strategic Plan 2009-2013 to be addressed by school through the development of strategies and system defined targets</p> <p>School Improvement Cycles All schools implement processes to support continuous improvement in student outcomes and enhanced accountability through an annual self-assessment, short-term operational planning cycle and usually a four-year review and strategic planning cycle.</p> <p>Through new flexible framework schools will undertake either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a four year school review leading to strategic planning or partnership agreement, or an annual review informing year-on-year short term operational plans. <p>The assignment of a specific improvement cycle is negotiated between the school principals and their supervisor, and should relate to the school's context and performance as well as the capacity to manage increased flexibility and accountability.</p>	<p>Short term – operational planning All schools will undertake short-term operational planning requirements in accordance with the specific improvement cycle. The operational plan focuses on the key improvement strategies for student outcomes.</p> <p>The operational plan should address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the direction and progress in achieving the school's key actions the relevant strategies, performance measures and targets from the school's strategic plan that will drive improved performance in student outcomes effective workforce planning that ensures staff capacity and capability to deliver improved student performance professional development priorities and other priorities arising from consideration of the local context the school budget, developed using the approved budget tools and procedure. <p>The operational plan should be succinct and list those specific strategies being addressed in the current school year. Action plans may be developed and attached to detail the actions and milestones to implement these strategies.</p> <p>Operational plans and the school budgets are developed in consultation with and endorsed by the school's Parents and Citizens' Association/School Council, and depending on the improvement cycle either endorsed by the principal's supervisor or provided to principal's supervisor by the end of February each year.</p>	<p>Long term – strategic planning All schools undertake long-term strategic planning processes and develop either a four-year strategic plan or a four-year performance agreement (except for schools engaged in the annual review cycle, where this is optional in consultation with the principal's supervisor).</p> <p>In this process, the school community (staff, administration and Parents and Citizens' Association/School Council) collaboratively plan how it will improve student achievement, monitor school performance and provide direction for the operational planning.</p> <p>Long-term strategic plans include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the school's statement of purpose and context, describing the school's role within the local community the findings and recommendations from the school self-assessment process on the achievement of improved student outcomes, targets and previous strategic priorities the school's key strategic directions for the next four-year cycle, which relate to the school's context, and student and community needs the priorities and performance measures that align with the department's Strategic Plan key financial resource requirements. <p>For schools involved in National Partnership Agreements, milestones and associated budgets are also required.</p> <p>School strategic plans are developed in consultation with and endorsed by the school's Parents and Citizens' Association/School Council and endorsed by the principal's supervisor during the final year of the improvement cycle.</p> <p>Annual rolling reviews and updates of the school strategic plan should be undertaken during the four-year cycle to maintain its currency. The school strategic plan should be a concise document that succinctly outlines the key directions, priorities and targets for the four-year planning timeframe.</p>	<p>REPORTING School annual report For each school year, all schools publish a school annual report by the end of June of the following year that meets the policy guidelines. Templates are available online to assist all schools in implementing minimum reporting requirements. These documents are updated annually to reflect any changes to reporting obligations. Financial reporting All schools comply with the relevant financial accountability requirements.</p> <p>To meet obligations under the Act principals are to submit to their supervisor by the end of February each year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the annual financial report the budget overview report <p>Written student reports All schools provide parents with a written report on their child's performance at least twice a year.</p> <p>Reporting to parents All schools will offer parent-teacher interviews at least every semester.</p> <p>REVIEWING Review processes Central to these improvement and accountability processes are the monitoring and self-assessment processes that focus on improved student outcomes and the attainment of school performance targets.</p> <p>These processes must be able to respond to the specific school context, emerging issues and local systemic priorities.</p> <p>All schools will undertake either a one-year review or a four-year review as determined by the principal's supervisor.</p> <p>Critical to these school review processes is the verification process and sign-off of student performance outcomes and targets by the principal's supervisor.</p>	<p>The verification process ensures that the outcomes of the self-assessment and the strategic directions set for the next planning cycle are relevant and meaningful for the school.</p> <p>Teaching and Learning audit The Queensland Government is introducing comprehensive curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment audit requirements across all Queensland state schools from 2010.</p> <p>Following the audit, each principal will be provided with a detailed report in relation to their progress against systemic expectations and accountabilities. These audits will assist state schools to monitor their practice to ensure a focus on continuous improvement.</p> <p>International perspectives Schools are also able to develop an international perspective through the achievement of accreditation by the Council of International Schools (CIS). However, such schools are still required to comply with long-term and short-term planning processes and accountability requirements, including financial reporting.</p> <p>A Review by Exception may be undertaken in response to significant and changing circumstances and if there is uncertainty about a school's strategic direction and achievements.</p> <p>A Review of Exemplary Practice may be undertaken where consistent, exceptional student outcomes are identified. The purpose of the review is to document effective practices so that they may be shared.</p> <p>The Assistant Director-General decides whether a Review by Exception/Review of Exemplary Practice is required. A report of recommendations is produced by the panel and provided to the Assistant Director-General. Led by a local steering committee, an action plan with clear timelines is developed and enacted in response to the finding of the report</p>