
Summary Report

In 2008, the Department of Education and Training (DET) commissioned a research team from Griffith University to evaluate the implementation and impact of a literacy education initiative in schools - the Literacy – Key to Learning: Framework for Action 2006 – 2009 (The Literacy Framework).

This Report provides a summary of the main findings of this evaluation, including some suggested actions for consideration when implementing similar initiatives in schools.

What is the Literacy Framework?

Literacy is an important focus for DET because it is integral to effective learning in all curriculum areas and across all phases of learning. The Literacy Framework details the steps needed to achieve excellence in literacy teaching and learning, through a focus on 17 actions that address four key challenges:

- Literacy teaching (Actions - Sec1:6)
- Literacy learning (Actions - Sec1:7)
- Literacy in the curriculum (Actions - Sec1:8)
- Literacy leadership (Actions - Sec1:9)

Associated with the implementation of the Literacy Framework was intensive professional development (PD) for all teachers from Prep to Year 9 and all early years teacher aides. The PD program was delivered to teachers throughout the state during 2008 to 2010. In addition, 15 Regional Literacy Managers were appointed to assist in the delivery of the PD program and to facilitate the implementation of the Literacy Framework.

What was the Purpose of the Evaluation?

DET is committed to rigorous review and evaluation to ensure that its programs and services operate in an efficient and effective manner, and achieve their objectives. An external evaluation has the added benefit of providing an independent or unbiased critique of departmental services by recognised experts.
The purpose of the Literacy Framework evaluation was to provide DET with information on how well the Literacy Framework had been implemented in schools and what impact it had on Queensland state school classrooms, and to inform further implementation of the Literacy Framework and similar initiatives. A focus of the evaluation was the PD program that was delivered to all early years teacher aides and teachers of Prep to Year 9 students.

The research team from Griffith University was led by Professors Greer Johnson and Claire Wyatt-Smith, both of whom have substantive research experience and a publication history that attests to their expertise in the field of education.

How was the Evaluation conducted?

The research team collected data from June 2008 to December 2010 using a variety of methods. These included staff surveys, focus groups, interviews, an analysis of policy documents, and a review of the relevant national and international literature.

A variety of DET staff participated in the evaluation, including staff who attended the PD program, school principals, school curriculum leaders, Regional Literacy Managers and other relevant officers. Completed surveys were obtained from a large number of teachers and principals (9,353 for Survey 1 and 1,188 for Surveys 2 and 3). This added rigour to the evaluation by ensuring that findings were based on a diverse and representative pool of responses.

What did the Evaluation find?

1. In scale and approach, the Literacy Framework was a significant policy and PD initiative that demonstrates the Queensland Government’s commitment to schools, teachers, and students.

2. According to survey responses, the Literacy Framework had some impact in all Queensland State schools. The most frequently reported impacts were on literacy teaching, literacy in the curriculum, literacy learning and student assessments. Other areas of impact included the establishment of teacher partnerships and parent partnerships, addressing student learning needs, and school accountability.

3. Another positive impact was that teachers were more likely to see themselves as literacy leaders following their participation in the PD program.

4. The evaluation found some instances where the Literacy Framework had not had an impact. However, it was often the case that the best-practice messages from the PD program were already in place in these classrooms and schools, thus confirming the good work of these sites. Other cases of low impact were due to the need for more time
for change to be visible, or the need for teachers to have continued support from school leaders and other mentors to incorporate new knowledge into classroom practice.

5. A review of the literature on large scale teacher PD identified several factors that are important for such programs to be successful. These factors include that PD is:
   a. strongly supported by government policy;
   b. based on research and examples of best practice;
   c. content specific;
   d. flexibly delivered so that it is linked to the classroom and school needs;
   e. actively supported by the principal;
   f. relevant, with teachers believing that it will benefit student learning;
   g. interactive so that teachers are involved in decisions regarding its content;
   h. supported over time through either mentorship or peer-facilitated approaches (e.g., learning circles); and
   i. consolidated, with teachers granted time to embed their learning into practice. When implemented effectively, research suggests that teacher PD can lift student outcomes by around 21 percent¹. This literature also suggests that the three factors most important for establishing and maintaining improvements in student learning are teacher knowledge, effective school literacy leadership and time to develop and embed knowledge (teacher time).

6. When evaluated against these factors, the Literacy Framework was found to be most effective in changing teachers’ knowledge and practice as a result of PD participation, with both teacher time and school literacy leadership less often demonstrated across schools.

7. The evaluation also acknowledges that the Literacy Framework is strongly based on research evidence, but suggests that its implementation could have been improved by further consideration of the learnings from other education jurisdictions on the design and delivery of teacher PD programs and the provision of continued mentoring and support to schools.

8. Examining the extent to which there was a direct relationship between the implementation of the Literacy Framework and student learning outcomes was beyond the scope of the evaluation and requires further longitudinal study. The evaluation notes that with any successful education initiative, there is a delay between teachers undertaking PD and improvements in student outcomes of at least three to five years.

9. Other specific findings of the evaluation included the importance of principals acting as champions and leading literacy education in their schools, the significance of clear and precise literacy teaching for improving the literacy skills of students, and the critical role of the partnership between a teacher and teacher aide for boosting the literacy ability of students.

**Where to from Here? – Some Suggested Actions for Consideration**

Based on the findings of the evaluation, the research team has provided DET with some suggestions for improving the ongoing delivery of the Literacy Framework, and for increasing the success of future teacher PD initiatives. The actions for consideration for the Literacy Framework include:

- Providing teachers with time to participate in professional learning circles;
- Establishing a formal mentoring system;
- Using action research projects within schools to support the transfer of teacher learning; and
- Continuing to deliver the Literacy Framework PD to pre-service teachers as part of their induction program, as well as to those teachers who were unable to attend the PD during its 2008 to 2010 rollout.

More broadly, the research team suggest that future teacher PD programs consider the following actions:

- Connecting curriculum, learning and leadership theories to the participant’s school-based and classroom practice;
- Aligning teachers’ PD with school leadership plans for school improvement;
- Implementing whole-school and school cluster PD programs at the same time;
- Allowing for individual school and teacher learning needs in the delivery of PD;
- Establishing a database of Australian state- and federally-funded research and evaluation studies in the field of education;

In addition, the researchers suggest that all future large-scale reform initiatives begin with the school principal. DET will consider these suggestions in their implementation of future teaching and learning reforms. Further information regarding the DET’s agenda for improvement in Queensland State schools is outlined in the document United in our pursuit of excellence. Copies of the full report of the Literacy Framework evaluation are available on request at research.stratpol@deta.qld.gov.au.