


# School Leadership Institute Highlights

Semester 2 2025



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# Acknowledgement of Country

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



# Overview

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

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

The SLI's work supports Our Plan for NSW Public Education in the focus areas of:

- Strengthening trust and respect for the teaching profession
- Delivering outstanding leadership, teaching and learning
- Advancing equitable outcomes, opportunities and experiences.

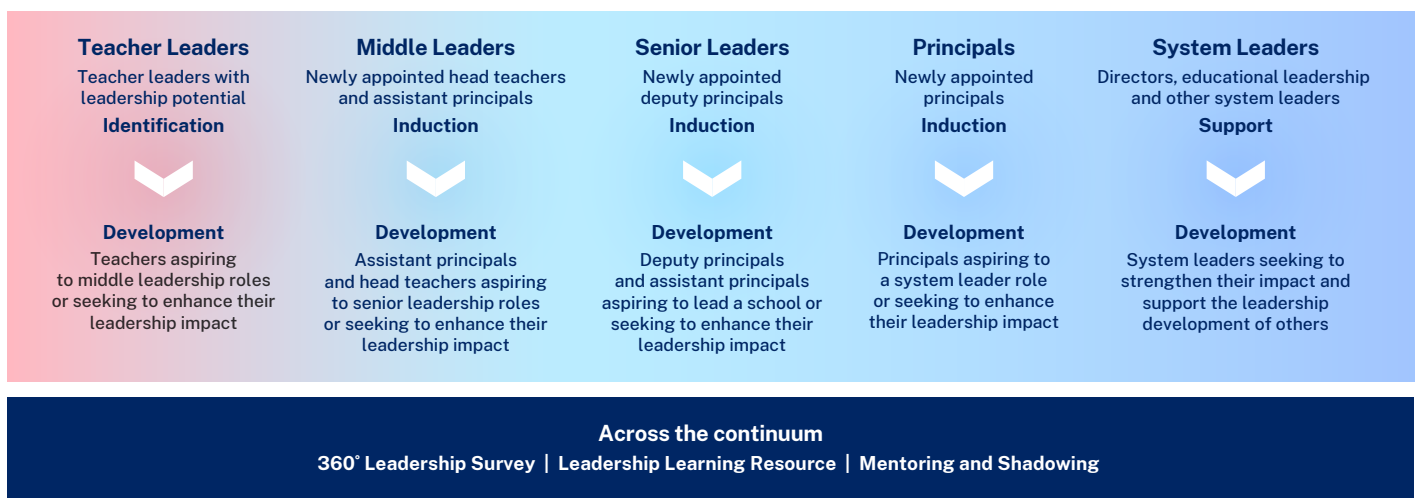
This Highlights report for Semester 2 2025 captures the impact the SLI has had on NSW public education and the range and reach of our leadership programs, resources and opportunities for leaders across the state.

Participant feedback indicates that SLI professional learning remains high quality and effective, supporting leaders to build knowledge and capability across key areas of practice. In 2025, the SLI also strengthened its evaluation approach by incorporating additional qualitative methods to capture richer insights into program impact, including how learning is being applied in practice.

Feedback from the pilot of the new Shadowing for Success program indicates that this learning offering is effective in developing leadership capabilities for current and future roles, while also strengthening professional support networks. Following the success of the pilot, the program will be rolled out across the state in 2026.

The SLI's leadership induction programs continue to provide timely support for newly appointed leaders, with consistently high participant ratings reflecting increased job readiness, strengthened professional support, and a clearer understanding of leadership role requirements.

## SLI Development Continuum



# Teacher leaders



“I am truly grateful to your program, as it gave me the platform and confidence, I needed to believe in myself and take this next step in my career.”

TLDP participant

## Teacher Leader Development Program

Semester 2 marked the completion of Cohort 2 of the Teacher Leader Development Program (TLDP). More than 300 teacher leaders completed the program across all of 2025.

Evaluation activities examined the extent to which the program is achieving its intended outcomes, including increasing leadership opportunities, confidence and aspiration. Survey results show strong improvement for participants for key program metrics including:

- 90% increased sense of identifying as a leader
- 91% increased confidence in exercising leadership
- 82% increased aspiration to take on formal leadership roles
- 74% increased opportunities to lead within their school.

The program requires participants to select one leadership behaviour and complete a development cycle focused on that behaviour. Almost all of participants reported this process was effective, including 61% who rated it very effective and 10% extremely effective. Open-ended responses suggest participants most commonly experienced improvements in their communication skills. This is reflective of the fact that communication is the most frequently targeted leadership behaviour in the program.

Program elements that support practical, school-based leadership development were rated highly. Observations (94%), shadowing (96%) and mentoring relationship (91%) were rated as moderately to highly effective, reinforcing the value of the program's practice-based approach. Independent interviews further affirmed the importance of these supports, with participants consistently highlighting the role of regular, constructive feedback and coaching in enabling growth.

A continuing challenge for some participants is timely and appropriate goal setting, with 42% reporting some degree of difficulty. In response, the delivery team has strengthened goal-setting guidance, including updated models, clearer examples and optional support sessions.

# Middle leaders



‘I appreciated the practical focus and examples that I could immediately apply in my faculty. I also found it to be quite empowering as a conference. One of the best PLs I have attended.’

MLIC participant

## Middle Leader Induction Conference

The Semester 2 Middle Leader Induction Conference (MLIC) engaged 270 middle leaders from diverse roles and regions, including 59% in substantive and 41% in relieving roles.

Participant feedback was highly positive and reinforced the value of MLIC as a targeted professional learning opportunity for middle leaders. The introduction of Professional Learning Groups (PLGs) supported peer connection and collegial learning.

Key findings from post-session feedback include:

- High usefulness ratings for core leadership content, including Leading Performance and Improvement (91%) and Prioritising Performance Management (90%).
- Participants valued practical tools, interactive elements and accessible resources, with requests for longer sessions and more real-life examples.
- The SharePoint conference site improved resource access and overall participant experience.

- The conference strengthened confidence and capability across priority areas, including moral purpose (88%), Aboriginal education (83%), and curriculum implementation (72%), alongside inclusive leadership (66%).
- Role-specific learning supported leadership identity development, with 72% rating these sessions highly.

Future refinement will focus on improving access and deepening engagement. Planned actions include increased timing flexibility, clearer communication pathways (including incorporating MLIC registration information in HR offer letters), strengthened digital guidance (including Zoom support), and expanded opportunities for applied learning through longer breakouts, scenarios and differentiated resources for varied contexts.

# Middle Leader Development Program

Cohort 3 of the Middle Leadership Development Program (MLDP) continued through Semester 2, with participants completing the second half of the program.

Evaluation data from the Term 4 conference indicated strong overall satisfaction, with an average rating of 8.2 out of 10. More than 70% of participants rated their experience highly.

Participants reported very positive experiences of the conference design and relevance. Over 95% provided positive responses that the conference promoted new thinking, was well organised and that the learning was relevant. Presentation engagement was also positive (87%), though lower than Term 3 (96%), indicating an area for attention in future conference planning.

Qualitative feedback reinforced the value of collaboration as a driver of learning. When asked what they valued most, participants most frequently identified their team experience, noting the benefit of working with middle leaders from other schools and sharing insights. The second most common theme was

presentation and content, including opportunities to share Practice Based Projects (PBPs) and learn from knowledgeable and engaging presenters. A smaller set of responses referenced gaining new ideas and skills that could be applied in school contexts. Similarly, the most frequent response about relevance to the middle leader role focused on conference content, often described as drawing together learning from across the program.

Facilitator feedback aligned closely with participant perspectives. Facilitators most frequently valued teams, highlighting the connections and collaboration established across schools, followed by the impact and growth observed through participants' PBPs.

For the first time, facilitators were integrated across all terms of the program (rather than Terms 1–3 only). This approach will continue in the next iteration to strengthen continuity of support and sustain participant learning across the full development journey.



“The conference reaffirmed the importance of relational trust and reflective dialogue in driving meaningful change. It reignited my sense of purpose, optimism, and motivation as a middle leader.”

MLDP participant



# Regional Rural and Remote Middle Leadership Program

The Regional Rural and Remote Middle Leadership Program (RRRMLP) continued to support current and aspiring school leaders through tailored face-to-face professional learning in Semester 2, 2025. More than 230 leaders participated, representing a broad mix of school contexts including central, secondary and small rural schools.

Participant feedback was highly positive with 92% of participants reporting the program met or exceeded their expectations. The presentation team was consistently rated highly for effective facilitation and for connecting theory with the practical leadership challenges experienced in regional, rural and remote settings. Participant voice remained central to program refinement, ensuring learning continues to be responsive and relevant across diverse contexts.

Evaluation findings indicate the program strengthened practical leadership capability across modules, including leadership mindsets, emotional intelligence and feedback skills, with 99% reporting that the program enhanced their confidence in their leadership practice and their ability to lead more effectively. Participants described growth in strategic

self-reflection, collaborative decision-making and community engagement, alongside increased confidence to influence their school environment and contribute to broader system priorities. Participants also reported adopting a more reflective and curious leadership approach, supported by a clearer understanding of leadership expectations and the role of emotional intelligence in leading others.

The integration of intersessional activities and expanded local networking opportunities further supported sustained development beyond the face-to-face sessions, strengthening professional connections across regions with 97% reporting that it supported ongoing professional learning networks. Reported changes in practice included more consistent feedback, improved team structures, and increased confidence in navigating complex leadership challenges.

Overall, the RRRMLP continued to build leadership capacity and strengthen collaborative school cultures, aligning with School Excellence Framework priorities and Our Plan for NSW Public Education focus on strengthening leadership at all career stages.



“I’ve always had buy-in at my school, but now it’s at a depth I didn’t get before. I can work with people much better than I could in the past.”

RRRMLP participant

# Senior leaders

## Deputy Principal Induction Conference

The Deputy Principal Induction Conference (DPIC) was delivered as a 2-day, face-to-face conference in Semester 2 at the department's Parramatta office. The conference is designed for newly appointed substantive, long-term relieving and school-funded/above centrally identified deputy principals, supporting participants to deepen role understanding, strengthen leadership practices, build professional networks and increase awareness of system supports.

The Semester 2 conference was attended by 87 participants, supported by 19 experienced deputy principals as facilitators. Of participants, 42% were in substantive deputy principal roles, and 58% were in long-term relieving positions. Representation included 42.6% from regional and remote areas, 57.5% from secondary settings, and 33.3% primary. There was an increase in participants from central and community school settings from 4% in Semester 1 to 9% in Semester 2. All School Performance Directorates were represented, with the majority of participants from Metropolitan North.

Participant feedback was highly positive. Key findings include:

- 89% reported enhanced understanding of key accountabilities and deputy principal leadership practices.
- 93% reported increased confidence in accessing system supports and strengthened self-efficacy.

Professional Learning Groups (PLGs) were consistently identified as a high-impact component, with 95% indicating they plan to leverage PLG relationships for ongoing collaboration.

The DPIC Hub was valued for providing accessible, self-paced learning resources before, during and after the conference.

The Business Unit Expo included 14 stalls, with 91.5% indicating the Expo provided relevant information or resources applicable to their role.

'The conference was well-organised and provided relevant, practical information... The conference will definitely support my confidence and readiness for the role.'

DPIC participant



# Senior Leadership – Aspiring Principals Leadership Program

Cohort 12 of the Senior Leadership – Aspiring Principals Leadership Program (SL-APLP) concluded in Semester 2 2025. The cohort was supported by 11 experienced principals participating as Principal Facilitators.

Of the 54 participants enrolled, 47 (87%) submitted a Leadership Report and Digital Story for validation. Of those submitted, 33 participants (75%) successfully achieved a Certificate of Graduation, and 7 (13%) requested an extension. Registration data reflects participation by senior leaders from metropolitan, regional and rural areas, and from both primary and secondary contexts.

End-of-program feedback indicates very strong satisfaction, with participants describing the program as high quality, research-informed, and professionally transformative. Participants consistently reported that the learning was engaging, well organised and deeply relevant to current and aspiring school leaders. Many noted shifts in their leadership practice, increased confidence and broadened thinking about their capabilities.

Survey findings reflect strong impact on leadership practice and self-efficacy. Almost all (96%) of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the program enhanced leadership practices that impact student learning, including leading collaborative inquiry to improve teaching and learning. All respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were confident to identify strengths and development needs, achieve goals, and lead team members to reach shared goals. Participants also unanimously agreed the program strengthened the personal and interpersonal qualities required to lead with influence.

The program appears to have strengthened aspiration and readiness for principalship. Pre-program responses indicated 26% were already applying for principal roles, increasing to 52% after program completion. Interest in applying within the next one to two years reduced from 48% to 25%, suggesting movement from intention to active application.

During Semester 2, 43 Principal Facilitator applications were reviewed by a panel of directors and experienced Principal Facilitators, with 39 (91%) successful. Revised attraction strategies, including DEL identification and endorsement and updated promotional resources, increased the pool of suitable candidates.



“The program opened my mind up to my own capabilities. It gave me a framework for my leadership style and provided a way for me to be intentional, inclusive and reflective with respect to how I lead and work with others.”

SL-APLP participant

# Principals

## Principal Induction Conference

“It has provided me with the time and space to reflect on my role as Principal, understand the key accountabilities, and be inspired to work through the urgent and live in the strategic.”

PIC participant



Delivered face-to-face over 3 days at the department's Parramatta office, the Principal Induction Conference (PIC) gives newly appointed and long-term relieving principals the opportunity to enhance their knowledge of the principal role, strengthen their understanding of leadership practices, develop professional connections, and enhance awareness of system supports.

The Semester 2 conference was attended by 43 participants, 70% in substantive roles and 98% being in their first 2 years of principalship. Participants were given the opportunity to evaluate how the conference enhanced their knowledge of the principal role, strengthened their understanding of leadership practices and enhance awareness of system supports.

Responses showed:

- 97%, either agreed or strongly agreed that they had increased knowledge of the key accountabilities of the principal role
- 97% either agreed or strongly agreed they had gained a better understanding of principal leadership practices.

Professional Learning Groups (PLGs) continue to be a valuable component of the PIC, with 90% of participants indicating they fostered a supportive environment and effectively contextualised content for their school.

# Growing Great Leaders

Growing Great Leaders (GGL) gives principals a unique opportunity to connect evidence-informed theory with practical tools. Grounded in Viviane Robinson's student-centred leadership model, and delivered in partnership with the University of Auckland, GGL comprises 7 modules across 8 days of learning through a blend of face to face and online delivery.

Cohort 11 of GGL began in Semester 2 2025, with 31 participants attending a 3-day conference. Feedback from the conference indicated positive engagement with concepts related to student-centred leadership, relationship building, practical application of learning, and the importance of moral purpose in action. Participants expressed appreciation for the actionable strategies, opportunities for reflection and inspiration provided by the presenters.

An average of 98% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the learning was highly relevant to leadership practice, provoked new thinking for principals, provided actionable ideas to strengthen leadership, and enhanced understanding of effective leadership in their specific context.

The conference also served as a powerful source of inspiration and motivation for participants. A recurring theme was a renewed commitment to action, with many expressing eagerness to implement new strategies and share their knowledge with their school staff.



“I am looking forward to going back to my school and implementing some modifications, sharing my knowledge, and building strong collaborative teams throughout my school as a result of the conference.”

GGL Participant

# Insights Series

The Insights Series program engaged 962 school leaders, with 62% of participants being principals. There has been a focused effort to continue to grow the number of principal participants as well as increasing the reach of the program to include deputy principals and directors, educational leadership (DELs).

The program team has achieved a 71% increase in overall registrations for the live program. In 2025 there was a 20% increase in attendance from 2024. The program team remains focused on communication and correspondence strategies to raise awareness of the program and support leaders who register for the program to attend live events and/or engage with the on-demand resources.

Data indicates that attendance at live events is evenly distributed among all school types and Public School directorates, enabling leaders to explore key leadership topics, connect and collaborate with colleagues from across the state, and apply the SLI's Core Leadership Principles and Key Drivers of leadership effectiveness, to enhance their leadership practice.

On-demand access to evidence-informed resources via the Principal Leadership Hub further empowers principals and their teams with agency in their leadership development. The number of school leaders engaging in on-demand learning in the Insights Series is steadily increasing and 23 new offerings have been added to the on-demand learning library in 2025.

Evaluation indicates participants found the learning highly effective in meeting their needs, with 98% of respondents stating the sessions met their expectations. Satisfaction is high, with 95% of participants noting strong connections to evidence-informed theory.

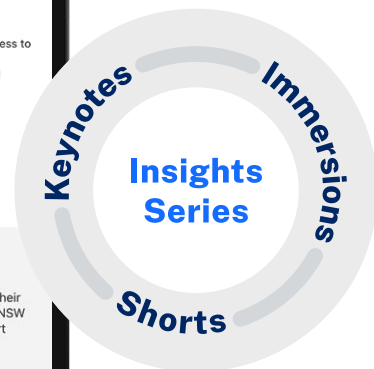
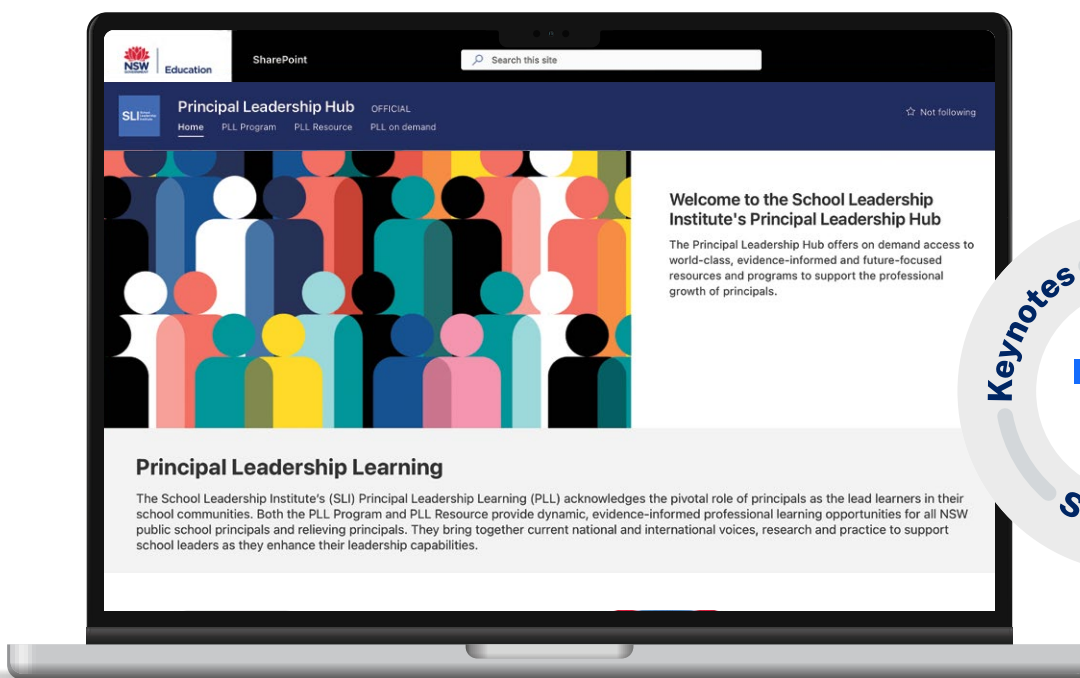
“I have already begun to apply my learning including the protocols and the use of probing questions when addressing big ideas within our School Excellence Plan.”

Immersion participant

Across the Insights Series program in 2025, participants demonstrated a strong and consistent commitment to applying their learning in concrete, practice-oriented ways. Most responses show clear intent to integrate new frameworks, tools, and ways of thinking into leadership conversations, executive team processes, professional learning design, and school planning.

Principals identified next steps such as implementing protocols, introducing models to teams, reframing feedback, adjusting decision-making approaches, or embedding reflective practice. This indicated the learning translated into immediate actionable strategies.

A significant behavioural pattern across sessions is the intention to cascade learning, with leaders frequently planning to take ideas back to executive teams, middle leaders, or whole staff groups. This suggests both personal uptake and a wider commitment to organisational change.



# System leaders

## Leading by Learning

Professor Emeritus Viviane Robinson and Dr Jacqui Patuawa facilitated the Leading by Learning professional learning workshops for directors, educational leadership (DELs) across Semesters 1 and 2. The workshops were designed to strengthen participants' capability to lead in a learning-focused manner.

A total of 43 of the 52 participants completed the evaluation survey. Of these, 66% were substantive DELs, with the remaining respondents in relieving or aspiring system leadership roles.

Participant feedback was highly positive.

Key findings include:

- 98% of respondents reported improved confidence in being learning-focused when working with principals
- 95% rated the workshop as very effective or extremely effective in enhancing their capacity to lead in a learning-focused way
- 96% indicated the workshop was very effective or extremely effective in building their ability to evaluate the effectiveness of their leadership conversations.

The quality of facilitation was also strongly endorsed, with 95% of participants agreeing the presenters were very effective or extremely effective in creating a safe and engaging learning environment and in clearly explaining key concepts.

The presenters' overall effectiveness in explaining ideas and providing feedback received an average rating of 4.42 out of 5.

Overall, the Leading by Learning workshop demonstrates the impact of targeted professional learning for DELs, equipping them with practical strategies to lead with greater influence and enhance the support they provide to principals in driving school improvement.



“High quality professional learning that was informative, practical, collaborative and engaging. The pacing made the breakout time very deliberate and purposeful.”

Workshop participant

# 360° Leadership Survey

In 2025, the SLI continued to offer leaders access to the 360° Leadership Survey. The survey supports leaders to identify development priorities and build on their strengths using feedback from nominated peers and supervisors.

This year, 924 leaders from 447 schools participated (including 83 education support leaders), generating 7,096 evaluations which found:

- more than half of participants had been in their current leadership role for 5 years or less
- 240 school leaders (more than 25%) returned to complete the survey again
- 94% received a detailed report to inform personalised development planning.

While overall participation was lower than the previous year, engagement remained strong, reflecting leaders' motivations to build leadership capability (84%) and establish a baseline of current leadership behaviours (68%).

Feedback shows leaders continue to have a strong positive view of the survey's value and impact.

- 92 % of reported they would be likely to participate again.
- 95% found it beneficial in understanding how their leadership behaviours are perceived by others.
- 91% said the survey supported their ongoing leadership development through planning and goal setting.
- 88% identified it as a valuable resource for developing their PDPs.
- 89% of school leaders recognised the survey as a practical framework for understanding the key behaviours for leading in NSW public schools.



“The 360° survey has provided me with a pathway for future professional learning and development.”

360° Leadership Survey participant

# Lead and Aspire Mentoring Program

The Lead and Aspire Mentoring Program (LAMP) continued to grow in Semester 2, with increased engagement from teachers and leaders in schools and a broad and diverse range of directorates across the department, highlighting the strong value placed in effective mentoring practices. In total, LAMP and modified versions of the Skill and Art of Mentoring, supported more than 350 leaders, teachers and educational support staff in Semester 2.

Cohort 2 evaluation (finalised in Semester 2) indicates participants particularly valued the learning and reflection sessions, which provided structured opportunities to reflect on mentoring practice and identify practical improvements. Participant feedback suggests the learning is translating into changed practice within schools, with participants reporting they are applying mentoring skills to support their work as leaders and teachers.

In addition:

- 95% of respondents agreed the learning improved their understanding of the foundations of mentoring.
- 96% agreed it improved their understanding of the essential skills for mentoring.

Qualitative feedback reinforced the impact of the program on participants' day-to-day leadership. Participants described using a more coaching-oriented approach in their interactions like listening more deeply, asking strategic questions, and reducing the tendency to "solve" problems for others.

Schools also reported flow-on impacts, including the establishment of mentoring programs for aspiring leaders and training current executive staff as mentors to strengthen mentoring quality and consistency.

“Mentoring is not just something I do. It is becoming part of who I am as a leader. I am finding it is the glue that holds growth together, the bridge between reflection and action, and the practice that will ensure my leadership is both purposeful and human”

LAMP Participant



# Shadowing for Success

The Shadowing for Success (SfS) program was piloted in Semester 2, 2025. The pilot adopted a place-based approach, with the Program Lead working closely with DELs and principals within a regional area to deliver the program at Maclean High School for a cross-section of staff, including principals, head teachers and classroom teachers.

Demand for the pilot was strong. The program was oversubscribed, with over 70 applications received and 44 participants matched as hosts or observers. This level of interest highlights an appetite for professional learning that provides practical, experiential development opportunities.

A collaboration with the Centre for Educational Statistics and Evaluation to evaluate the pilot has found the program to be working well, highly valued, and mutually beneficial for both hosts and observers. Participants rated the conference and its content as effective in strengthening their understanding of key aspects of shadowing; overall, 64% found the conference extremely useful and a further 29% found it

moderately useful.

Qualitative data collected following the shadowing experiences indicates that the program design is achieving its intended impact across a range of areas. The shadowing experience was viewed as offering reciprocal benefit, deepening insights into leadership roles and affirming or strengthening leadership aspirations. Participants also noted that the program enhanced cross-school networking opportunities for both participants and their colleagues who were not directly involved in the program. Hosts reported that the experience provided valuable opportunities to reflect on, and validate, their own capabilities.

Logistical and program design elements including timing of delivery, expanding and diversifying the pool of hosts, and providing greater support for reflection activities were identified as areas for potential refinement.

Overall, SfS demonstrates strong potential to build a leadership pipeline by increasing access to structured, experiential learning.



“The mentoring has expanded my leadership mindset, deepened my understanding of whole-school systems, and strengthened my confidence in leading with clarity and purpose.”

SfS participant



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