ImpaxSIA

SPECIALISTS IN SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY IMPACT STUDIES

Flexible Literacy
for remote primary schools

Interim Evaluation of Flexible Literacy for Remote Primary Schools:
changes in students, classrooms, teachers and schools since the implementation of Explicit Direct Instruction and Direct Instruction into 39 remote and very remote Australian schools.

Prepared by Dr Annie Holden, ImpaxSIA Consulting, May 2016

Abbreviations

AT   Assistant Teacher
ATA   Aboriginal Teacher Assistant
DI   Direct Instruction
EDI   Explicit Direct Instruction
ESL   English as a Second Language
FLRSP   Flexible Literacy for Remote Schools Program
GGSA   Good to Great Schools Australia
ICSEA   Index of Community Socio Educational Advantage
PAT   Progressive Achievement Tests
TA   Teacher's Assistant

Cover images: Students in class at Christ the King Catholic School (Lombadina) and St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School (Carnarvon), Western Australia.

Executive Summary

In 2016 Good to Great Schools Australia (GGSA) commissioned Dr Annie Holden of ImpaxSIA Consulting to undertake an interim evaluation of the impacts to date of the implementation of the Flexible Literacy for Remote Primary Schools Program (FLRPS). The Centre for Program Evaluation at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne has been commissioned to prepare a comprehensive and quantitative evaluation. The University has is conducting a quantitative evaluation with baseline and preliminary results expected to be available mid 2017. The ImpaxSIA evaluation is qualitatively focused and is intended to assist GGSA to continue to improve its approach to remote and Indigenous education reform.

Funded by the Australian Government and delivered by GGSA, this Program is implementing Explicit Direct Instruction (EDI) or Direct Instruction (DI) in thirty nine remote and very remote community schools in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

Over a two week period in early May 2016, the evaluator visited four remote and very remote schools in Western Australia and the Northern Territory: Angurugu School (Angurugu), Warruwi School (Warruwi), Christ the King Catholic School (Lombadina) and St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School (Carnarvon). Nearly fifty in-depth interviews with Principals, Implementation Managers, teachers and parents, as well as some GGSA employees, were undertaken in order to build a comprehensive understanding of the range and magnitude of intended and unintended impacts and experiences to date. In addition four case studies were prepared aimed at highlighting the nature of key areas of impact.

The results of the interim evaluation are that these schools each tell stories of success with the implementation of EDI or DI. They are each evidencing a wide range of improvements in student and teacher capability as well as classroom and school practices since embedding EDI or DI, with strong support from Principals and the teaching team.

In some cases, the schools are reporting benefits that go beyond their expectations, including more students performing at grade level, improved student behaviour, improved school atmosphere, better learning outcomes for children evidencing trauma and improved school attendance.

The interviews conducted in these schools also provided valuable feedback and insights into the implementation challenges that have been encountered which can inform GGSA's continuous improvement.

An on-line survey was also developed on the basis of the in-depth interviews and was sent to all Principals and teachers across the thirty nine participating schools. The purpose of the survey was to determine the extent to which the views of those interviewed and the changes they had witnessed were representative of the views of all Principals and teachers across all schools. Anonymity in reporting and confidentiality was assured. The total number of respondents from the survey was 185, seventy six respondents from EDI schools and 109 respondents from DI schools (representing an approx. fifty percent response rate). A significant number of respondents had been involved in the program less than six months due to high turnover in remote schools. Those involved since the start of the program could provide more informed observations on outcomes.

The majority of survey respondents believe that the overall learning environment in their schools has improved (sixty four percent EDI and fifty six percent DI). In relation to observed changes in students, the most significant changes observed were:

- Students have a clearer understanding of what is expected of them as learners (eighty three percent EDI, sixty six percent DI).

- Students are building better educational habits and routines (seventy five percent EDI, sixty one percent DI)

- Students are more confident learners (sixty five percent EDI, fifty six percent DI).[1]

- Students are showing improved English oral language skills (forty eight percent EDI, seventy seven percent DI).

Around one third of the respondents of EDI schools and around half of DI schools thought that students were learning faster than prior to EDI/DI. This issue of the pace of learning under EDI/DI needs further exploration since many of those interviewed reported that under EDI/DI students learn faster and yet the survey results do not bear this out.

Expectations of students' capacity has increased, particularly learning expectations for Indigenous students, with more than sixty eight percent of EDI Principals and seventy percent of DI Principals surveyed agreeing with the statement, "Since the implementation of EDI or DI, our school has higher expectations and is less likely to accept that Indigenous children will not or cannot learn."

The on-line survey results demonstrate that the changes described and views reported in the four case studies in the report below are largely evident across all thirty-nine EDI and DI schools.

In sum the evidence of fifty in-depth interviews at four schools, and 185 confidential survey responses from Principals and teachers across all schools is that overall EDI or DI has produced multiple positive impacts at the student, teacher and school levels. The survey found that across the schools, all DI Principals and seventy two percent of EDI Principals believe that DI or EDI respectively are fundamental to whole school reform. Experienced teachers also highly rated the Program with sixty percent of teachers with more than ten years teaching experience believing that EDI or DI should be extended to other schools.

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1 Results calculated with those who 'cannot comment as I have not had enough experience of EDI/DI' removed from the sample.

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Overview

About the Program evaluation

The Good to Great Schools Australia (GGSA) contract with the Australian Government requires that an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the Flexible Literacy for Remote Primary Schools Program (FLRPS) must be undertaken. Accordingly, GGSA has contracted the Centre for Program Evaluation at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, to undertake a quantitative analysis of outcomes data to evaluate learning outcomes. The Centre has established a baseline and at the time of writing, preliminary results are being collated.

To support the University of Melbourne's evaluative research, GGSA commissioned a further qualitative evaluation from ImpaxSIA Consulting with the aim of informing the ongoing implementation of the Program and to provide additional evidence on the wider intended and unintended impacts of the Program, as well as to gauge the levels of acceptance amongst stakeholders. (See **Attachment Three** for Terms of Reference.)

GGSA commissioned Dr Annie Holden of ImpaxSIA Consulting to undertake this evaluative work. Dr Holden advised in the preparation of the Evaluation Framework for the Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy (CYAAA), in which DI had been trialed since 2011. In 2013 she received an Award for Excellence from the Australasian Evaluation Society for her work with CYAAA.

The objective of the evaluative work commissioned of Dr Holden is to draw out early signs of outcomes and impacts in relation to the two program objectives identified below, and to identify if there are any outstanding implementation issues or any unintended impacts in relation to the effect of the Program to date.

Dr Holden's study consisted of visiting and interviewing four schools in Angurugu, Warruwi, Carnarvon and Lombadina and writing a case study on each. She also designed, piloted and implemented a survey distributed to all teaching teams in all participating schools. The survey instrument was based on the findings of the case study interviews and was intended to determine the extent to which the views expressed and observations made were typical of all schools. The survey instrument was piloted at Warruwi School.

About the Program

The Australian Government's Flexible Literacy for Remote Primary Schools Program supports the improvement of literacy results for children in remote primary schools with the introduction of two alphabetic teaching approaches: Explicit Direct Instruction (EDI) and Direct Instruction (DI).

The Program is being implemented by GGSA using either EDI or DI in thirty-nine remote and very remote State, Catholic and Independent schools in Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia between 2014 to 2017. A list of participating schools and jurisdictions is at **Attachment Two**.

The objectives of the Program are to:

- increase teacher pedagogical skills in teaching literacy through the use of alphabetic teaching approaches, in particular, EDI or DI

- improve literacy results for students in participating schools.

The Program is funded to operate from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2017. It began in August 2014 with project

establishment, evaluation set up and consultations with school systems and schools. School implementations commenced in January 2015 with five days of training delivered to 250 teachers, teaching assistants and school leaders.

Participating schools receive ongoing training for existing and new teaching staff and school leadership, individual in-school coaching from visiting experts, expert data assessment and teacher improvement strategies, classroom materials and implementation resources.

The Program seeks to improve the exceedingly poor outcomes of remote (particularly Indigenous) education by using effective instruction methods that have a scientifically validated evidence base.

About Good to Great Schools Australia

GGSA is a not-for-profit organisation that supports schools and school systems to transition from Poor to Fair, Fair to Good and Good to Great based on the McKinsey and Company framework for school reform. GGSA views effective instruction as the cornerstone for school improvement and attends to three key elements: Great Teachers, Effective Instruction, Every Child.

The implementation model used by GGSA has been successfully trialed in three schools in Cape York since 2011. Results from the CYAAA demonstrate that students learning with EDI and DI improve faster on NAPLAN than the rest of the nation. NAPLAN results demonstrated that Year Three Mean Scale Scores are closing the gap in every test area; that more students achieve in the upper two bands and score great results nationally; and that every student benefits. One hundred percent of CYAAA's Coen Primary Schools' Year Five students are now at or above National Minimum Standard in Numeracy and Reading.

Based on an analysis of 2009 -13 NAPLAN results, Professor John Hattie concluded that: "The program in Cape York shows greater growth than Australian averages. While there appear to be important school differences, the overall program appears to be making greater-than-average difference."[2]

About EDI and DI

DI is a program that uses an explicit instruction pedagogy, a curriculum and scripted lessons. EDI and DI programs are used in many countries, have been extensively evaluated and identified as highly effective.[3] EDI is an explicit instruction pedagogical practice. GGSA developed a full EDI literacy Prep to Grade six curriculum to ensure the appropriate literacy outcomes were achieved and mapped to the Australian Curriculum for English.

DI programs including Spelling Mastery and Reading Mastery are used in many Australian schools. For example, McGraw Hill Education has forty-seven DI Ambassador Schools across Australia and New Zealand including; Presbyterian Ladies' College Sydney, Trinity Grammar and Haileybury.[4]

EDI and DI are integrations of curriculum and pedagogy. In both methods teachers are constantly checking for understanding and lessons are broken down into small, carefully sequenced units. There is ongoing revision so that students retain knowledge and students must master the skill being taught, before learning the next one. EDI teaches students in age-based year levels where students learn at the same pace. In DI

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2 Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy, Queensland State School Reporting, 2014 School Annual Report, Department of Education and Training.

3 National Institute for Direction Instruction, Project Follow Through, http://www.nifdi.org/what-is-di/.

4 McGraw Hill Education, MHE Ambassador Schools, http://www.mheducation.com.au/schools-ambassadors.

students are grouped by learning level rather than by age.

DI was developed by Dr Siegfried 'Zig' Engelmann in the 1960s. It combines well-crafted explicit instruction pedagogy, with comprehensive curriculum and student assessment, and scripted instruction on how to deliver it. The program covers literacy and numeracy from Foundations to Year Six and aligns to the Australian Curriculum.

EDI was developed by John Hollingsworth and Dr Silvia Ybarra in the early 2000s. It is based on educational theory, brain research, DI and classroom observations. EDI combines a set of instructional practices to produce well-crafted and well-delivered lessons, designed to help students learn more the first time they are taught. EDI includes continuous 'Checking for Understanding' to measure student mastery of the concept taught.

Both programs have Positive Behaviour Intervention and Supports embedded into their implementation. Teachers receive training in how to establish classroom rules and routines, develop lessons to teach the rules and routines and develop strategies to acknowledge and reward students for demonstrating appropriate behaviour. Teachers also develop a continuum of responses to correct inappropriate behaviours. In other words, students know what is expected of them; they are acknowledged and rewarded for positive behaviour; and they know what will happen if they do not follow classroom rules and routines. A positive and supportive learning environment then leads to greater student engagement and improved student learning outcomes.

By combining explicit instruction with a comprehensive curriculum and student assessment both EDI and DI stretches the most able students, while guarding against lower-performing students falling behind. The evidence is that DI is suited to all schools but particularly so where the majority of students are significantly below their age appropriate year level and have the highest needs. DI also suits schools where teachers have the least teaching experience and tenure.

EDI is suited to schools where there is a mix of students and various levels, where the majority of students are not significantly below where they should be and where there is a mix of teacher experience and tenure.

DI and EDI methodologies have been extensively and rigorously evaluated for some years overseas and there is an extensive evidence base on the success of these methods compared with other programs in similar schools. This evaluative activity focused on the impacts to date of implementation through the Good to Great Schools Program and impacts on pedagogical skills, as well as views of stakeholders on implementation and impacts to date.

This evaluative activity is one component of an overall ongoing monitoring and evaluation strategy. It meets the objectives of this stage of the evaluation – to provide rich qualitative data on the nature of early impacts and provide insights to inform further improvements in the approach. It will provide a baseline against which future measurement can be made of the views and Principal and teacher observations measured in the survey.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluator conducted visits to four remote and very remote schools in Western Australia and Northern Territory. Nearly fifty in-depth interviews were undertaken with the schools' leadership teams, teachers, Indigenous assistant teachers, parents and community members. In addition, two GGSA Implementation Managers were interviewed (though not included in the survey, as discussed below).

All those interviewed were asked open-ended questions about their experiences, their views and their observations of change since the introduction of DI and EDI. While those interviewed were invited to explore questions relating directly to issues of relevance to them (eg teachers were asked had they seen any changes in the classroom, while parents were asked had they seen any changes in their children's behaviour or mood at home and with family since DI), interviewees were also encouraged to discuss any issue or aspect of the Program that was of interest or concern to them. Conversations were unstructured and exploratory. The in-depth interviews were conducted to provide rich qualitative data that explores the issues with open-ended questions, allowing the interviewee to lead the direction of the conversation and volunteer information, identifying what they see as the key issues and matters of importance and telling the stories that they think are important to tell.

A list of those interviewed is included in **Attachment One**.

As the interviews progressed, a number of themes began to emerge. The survey instrument was designed to test how widely the views expressed and observations made by the interviewees were held across all schools by other teachers and Principals. The survey instrument also included questions to test the lived experience of those involved in implementing DI and EDI and the level of support as well as the challenges they felt they had experienced. The questions were also informed by the specific questions identified in the terms of reference relating to teacher pedagogical skills.

The case study research set out to uncover rich qualitative data and to complement the quantitative research on academic outcomes and attendance being independently undertaken by University of Melbourne. Nevertheless, some of those interviewed wanted to share their stories of success and provided some data to illustrate their points. It is noted that these data have been collected directly from individual schools and have not been validated and therefore not approved by the Northern Territory Department of Education for external use. These data are illustrative only and not intended as a detailed and thorough examination of the data on academic performance and attendance. Naturally, those interviewed commented on their perceptions about these outcomes and these perceptions and the illustrative material provided by those interviewed are presented here as part of the stories of change that witnesses describe.[5]

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[5] All data used in this report was either collected for the sole purpose of the evaluation as primary data, or was accessed from the public record. No records held by other organisations were accessed. Student and staff and school information used in this report is compliant with the Northern Territory *Information Act*. Since the primary survey data collected for this evaluation was provided by informants on the basis that it was confidential, anonymous and for the purposes of the evaluation only, the information collected remains under the custodianship of the evaluator and will not be shared or used for any other purposes other than to report the findings of the evaluation. Talent releases are signed by all teachers and students and permission for use of images is obtained at time of enrolment on an 'opt out' basis. All four case studies were provided for comment and fact checking to the relevant School Principals in draft form (including with

Case studies

The schools visited had the following features:

1. Angurugu School on Groote Eylandt in the Northern Territory in 2013, prior to the introduction of DI, rated as an especially low performing school based on 2012/13 NAPLAN results in literacy and numeracy. As such, it is considered an example of the breadth of applicability of DI.

2. Warruwi School on South Goulburn Island in the Northern Territory is a small remote school. It offers an insight into the challenges of teaching DI with very small class numbers.

3. Christ the King Catholic School, Lombadina, on the Dampier Peninsular in the Kimberley of Western Australia, had initially adopted EDI and struggled with it and then switched to DI. As such, it is considered an example of appropriate program selection for a school with similar contexts.

4. St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School, in Carnarvon in Western Australia, is a mainstream school implementing EDI and is considered an example of a school with stable leadership and teaching faculty and diverse student cohort.

All participating schools survey

A survey instrument was prepared using evidence from the case studies and interviews to collect responses that would quantify the extent to which the wider population of teachers and principals also share the experiences and views of those who were interviewed in-depth. This provides quantitative data from the survey that can then be triangulated with the qualitative data from the case study interviews to paint a fuller picture.

The survey instrument was piloted with a number of teachers and the Principal at Warruwi School. The survey was then administered in the week of 12 May 2016 via Survey Monkey. Respondents were required to respond within one week. A copy of the survey instrument is located on the GGSA website.

The survey was sent to all Principals and teachers in all thirty-nine participating schools, to gather their experiences on the issues and outcomes identified in those in-depth interviews and to quantify those responses.

Anonymity in reporting was offered and confidentiality assured. The words EDI and DI were interchanged to accommodate the different schools, but no other changes were made to the survey. Respondents were offered the option to reply online or to provide their answers by phone interview.

The total number of respondents across the two surveys was 185, seventy-six respondents from EDI Schools and 109 respondents from DI schools. This provided a response rate of approximately fifty percent of staff cross the thirty-nine schools where the Program is being delivered, ensuring validity. All respondents were school employees. Of these thirty-two were Principals, 116 were teachers, nineteen were assistant teachers and eighteen were Instruction Coaches (teachers at the school). This reflects high levels of engagement among schools.

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images) and comments were invited and permissions sought. Some changes were made to three of the case studies following clarifications and fact checks.

Evaluation findings

The schools' experiences of the implementation of the Program that emerge from the nearly fifty in-depth interviews at the four schools are stories of success with EDI and DI at the student, classroom, teacher and school levels. In some cases these outcomes are beyond expectations. The survey results suggest that these positive stories appear to also be experienced across other participating schools.

The survey found that across the schools, all DI Principals and seventy two percent of EDI Principals believe that DI or EDI respectively are fundamental to whole school reform. Experienced teachers also highly rated the Program with sixty percent of teachers with more than ten years teaching experience seeing EDI or DI as central to whole school reform and should be extended to other schools.

Schools are evidencing a range of improvements in student and teacher capability and classroom and school practices since they embedded EDI or DI.

The majority of survey respondents believe that the overall learning environment in their schools has improved (sixty four percent EDI and fifty six percent DI). In relation to observed changes in students, the most significant changes observed were:

- Students have a clearer understanding of what is expected of them as learners (eighty-three percent EDI, sixty-six percent DI).

- Students are building better educational habits and routines (seventy-five percent EDI, sixty-one percent DI)

- Students are more confident learners (sixty-five percent EDI, fifty six percent DI).[6]

- Students are showing improved English oral language skills (forty-eight percent EDI, seventy-seven percent DI)

The survey results were that only around one third of the respondents of EDI schools and around half of DI schools thought that students were learning faster than prior to EDI/DI. This issue of the pace of learning under EDI/DI needs further exploration since many of those interviewed reported that under EDI/DI students learn faster and yet the survey results do not bear this out.

Expectations of students' capacity have increased, particularly learning expectations for Indigenous students, with more than sixty-eight percent of EDI Principals and seventy percent of DI Principals surveyed agreeing with the statement, "since the implementation of EDI or DI, our school has higher expectations and is less likely to accept that Indigenous children will not or cannot learn." DI also helps create a routine and classroom organisation that is consistent across all classrooms where the program is being delivered.

In relation to learnings from the case studies: Angurugu School on Groote Eylandt in the Northern Territory, demonstrates how strong leadership combined with DI, can create a schoolwide learning environment. The school has seen a dramatic turnaround in school behaviours, participation, learning and school culture in the past two years. It has gone from being a school where in 2013 the teachers were reportedly calling for its closure[7], to a school where in 2016 the teaching team is enthusiastic and feeling rewarded. GGSA won wide

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6 Results calculated with those who 'cannot comment as I have not had enough experience of EDI/DI' removed from the sample.

[7] 7 NT News, 3 May, 2013, http://www.territorystories.nt.gov.au/bitstream/10070/245225/2/ntn03may13002x.pdf.

praise for the quality, timeliness and value of the support it provides to schools, particularly the training and in-school coaching provided on a regular basis. Adequate and timely training and support are seen as fundamental to success. The view is that the support is well adapted where the complexities of school staffing and context require tailored support.

At Warruwi School on South Goulburn Island in the Northern Territory "expectations are now much higher, behaviour has improved, attendance has improved and teachers are really seeing the benefits of the method" (Acting Principal Keira Stewart). However, being such a small school, there have been challenges for Warruwi in implementing DI. For example, compromises have had to be made in placing the children at the appropriate academic levels. Because these levels were so varied amongst the student cohort, it was not possible to put all children at the correct level, thus a minority have had to be placed at 'Best Fit', which is not ideal but unavoidable. Similarly, there are often three groups working with only one teacher which means that one group at any time will need to be doing independent work. This has meant that the school has had to build the independent working skills of the children to meet this challenge. Again this is not ideal, but in such a small school, inevitable.

St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School, Carnarvon, had already taken the decision to use some explicit instruction pedagogy practices in their school prior to commencing the GGSA Program EDI implementation. "We don't have behavioural problems here, yet we were not getting the learning outcomes we should have been. Our research pointed to EDI as a good option." The school was further supported in the implementation of EDI when signing on with GGSA. Following over a year of the Program implementation, the school Progressive Achievement Test (PAT) results (provided on page 24), show accelerated learning outcomes evidenced in almost all classes. "We are all excited and can't wait for NAPLAN".

Christ the King Catholic School at Lombadina in Western Australia initially implemented EDI with limited results in their first year so switched to DI in Term Four of 2015. This program is proving much more successful for the school and they are achieving better results. In 2016, in the first four months of their DI implementation, from 2 February to 2 May, attendance increased significantly by between twenty and thirty percent for all classes.

These data underpin the anecdotal evidence from Angurugu and Warruwi schools that regularity of attendance for many students has improved since the introduction of DI. Teachers believe the students enjoy the routine, the mastery, the predictability and the order of the teaching method, and feel able to engage with the material. They also enjoy the weekly feedback on their performance and being able to see how they are progressing week to week. The students reportedly respond well to being placed in a group at their own learning level. All these factors contribute to improved attendance and improved behaviour.

Christ the King Catholic School highlighted in their interviews that the routine, predictability and order of DI is having positive benefits in managing the trauma that is unfortunately experienced by many students. The structure and routine of DI have also been observed to support students with particular special needs, including a student diagnosed with autism who is now able to join grouped lessons rather than requiring exclusive one-to-one tuition through an assigned teacher assistant.

At all schools, with no previous exposure to EDI or DI there was some trepidation amongst some teachers and Principals at the start of the Program. Around thirty percent of survey respondents were skeptical of DI and/or EDI and seven percent admit to being initially opposed prior to its introduction.

In EDI schools, of those teachers and principals who were initially opposed, forty percent are now supportive

and sixty percent are skeptical. None are still opposed.

Of those who were initially supportive, five percent are now opposed and twenty-five percent are skeptical.

In DI schools, of those six individuals initially opposed, three are now supportive, one is still opposed and two remain skeptical.

Of those who were initially supportive, seventy-six percent remain supportive, seven percent are opposed and sixteen percent are skeptical.

Overall, around seven percent of those in DI and EDI schools combined are still opposed. Further analysis of the data shows that the majority of those who are opposed to EDI or DI (eight out of thirteen) have been teaching at their schools for less than 12 months. This means that they were not in a position to observe the school and students prior to the introduction of DI or EDI and therefore are not able to compare what they are observing now with what the school was like prior to the introduction of the new teaching method. However, this opposition and skepticism could still be valuably investigated further. Based on the feedback received in interviews, it is likely that it relates to the higher demands placed on teachers, the reduced time available for unstructured learning, or possibly the greater challenges in allocating teacher resources in small schools under the EDI/DI systems.

It is interesting to note that further analysis of the data show that respondents with more than ten years teaching experience were more positive about EDI and DI than were those with less teaching experience. This suggests that new teachers may be ascribing the demands of teaching that they are experiencing to the DI/EDI teaching method rather than simply this being the demands of teaching per se, whereas more experienced teachers are in a better position to more accurately assess the benefits or otherwise of EDI/DI in comparison with other teaching methods. The challenges of teaching for new teachers are also compounded by the additional burden of relocating to live and work in some of the most remote communities in the country so this also may dampen their enthusiasm. For this reason, the views of teachers with more than ten years experience is considered more valid in evaluating the significance of teacher support for the method.

Eighteen months into the Program delivery more than seventy percent of teachers with ten or more years experience are supportive and sixty five percent of them want to continue to teach EDI or DI when they move schools. The explanation for the lack of support amongst the thirty percent who are not supportive and the thirty five percent who do not want to continue to teach the method when they move schools likely relates principally to demands on teachers and demands on students as well as some concerns about curriculum and grouping of students.

Comments provided by teachers with three or more years teaching experience, who have been teaching EDI/DI for more than twelve months and who remain skeptical or opposed included criticisms of the curriculum; inconsistent or confusing information about procedures, (although others in this cohort praised support and training for teachers as 'extremely thorough and consistent'); students spending too much time on literacy; students with regular high attendance progressing quickly while students returning from absences being unable to re-enter the same instructional groups as they started in (EDI school); in small schools high school students have had to be grouped with much younger students; the challenges for small schools in meeting the staffing challenge; and the need to modify curriculum.

There is a general consensus that EDI and DI does expect more of teachers and can be more demanding, with eleven percent of DI and eighteen percent of EDI teachers going so far as to say that the method is overly

demanding. Significantly twenty five percent of respondents said that EDI provides them with only limited work satisfaction. Of these, sixty percent of EDI teachers and forty eight percent of DI teachers have been teaching the method for less than six months.

That lack of work satisfaction is experienced by one quarter of respondents is of concern, however, that this was predominately amongst teachers with less teaching experience indicates the short amount of time teaching and the significant learning curve required to teach the programs. In interviews teachers stated that this becomes less of an issue after an initial training period.

Around half of the teachers surveyed (fifty one percent of teachers at EDI schools and forty seven percent at DI schools) feel that since being involved with EDI and/or DI, their instructional skills have improved. Thirty two percent of EDI teachers and forty six percent of DI teachers say they feel part of a team. More than half of DI teachers and more than a quarter EDI teachers responded that under the new teaching method they have more opportunity to engage in professional conversations and receive feedback about student performance and their practice. One third (thirty two percent EDI and thirty eight percent DI) said they are more confident as teachers.

The most significant benefit of EDI/DI for teacher capability is that the sixty-two percent of DI teachers and fifty-eight percent of EDI teachers say they have a common language that they share with their colleagues in discussions about learning.

Many remote and very remote schools have a high percentage of inexperienced teachers and a high percentage of teacher and school leader turnover. Principals felt that having a schoolwide instructional pedagogy in EDI or DI combined with teacher training and coaching, helps to manage the challenges associated with staff transience.

Respondents valued the resources provided to teachers and schools. Both teachers and the leadership teams described how the provision of scripts and resources freed them from curriculum development to focus on their teaching methods.

Some schools raised criticisms in relation to delays in the provision of resources and of differences in the use of words in resources that are written for American reader audiences. Others felt there needed to be more resources and that the program needed to be extended into secondary school years where literacy levels are as low as primary levels.

Where it has been implemented in clusters of proximate schools, the challenges of managing student transience are also reportedly reduced. Class size in remote schools can significantly alter from week to week because student families move around or because of community issues and events. With DI, students moving between schools reportedly fit in easily, knowing what to expect and what is expected of them. Because of weekly DI testing, teachers can slot new students into the group at their appropriate learning level.

> *"Kids will rock into a class and say, "Miss, I'm at K39" and can immediately start learning. If a child is not sure where they are at, we can phone the other school to look up the data, or quickly administer a two minute placement test."* Ben Slocombe, Principal, Angurugu School Groote Eylandt.

In interviews there were some concerns raised about EDI and DI being overly demanding on students and about whether sufficient time is being allocated to other curriculum areas due to the priority that is placed on

literacy. The time allocation for the Program is generally considered to be justified by schools and GGSA based on the fact that students' learning needs are high in order to allow for catch up with the general national school population. Given that the vast majority of remote Indigenous students are far below grade level and the imperative to provide basic literacy skills as a priority for academic development, the need to prioritise this learning outcome above all others is viewed by those who support DI/EDI as justified and necessary.

Case Study: Angurugu School, Groote Eylandt[8]

Angurugu School is located on Groote Eylandt, 650 km east of Darwin. It has an estimated 240 students, of whom 100 percent are Indigenous and highly transient. The attendance rate averages thirty four percent but dips to twenty percent and can peak at forty percent.[9]

Prior to the arrival of a new leadership team, and the introduction of DI in 2015, Angurugu was one of the most poorly performing schools in the Northern Territory. Students have an ICSEA (Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage) of 547 compared with an Australian average of 1000.

Table 1: Angurugu School ICSEA Ranking

Student background 2014

Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA)

School ICSEA value			547
Average ICSEA value			1000
Data source			Parent information

Distribution of students [2]

	Bottom quarter	Middle quarters		Top quarter
School Distribution	98%	1%	0%	0%
Australian Distribution	25%	25%	25%	25%

http://www.myschool.edu.au/SchoolProfile/Index/91313/AnguruguSchool/50055/2014

During 2013, two years prior to the introduction of DI, teachers at the school were reported in the NT News as asking that the school be closed down after a number of reported serious violent incidences against teachers and destruction of school property.[10]

At the beginning of 2014, teachers reported that there was a strong sense that the student body was 'wild'. Those interviewed for this case study described the students as noisy, physically aggressive, verbally aggressive and that it was common for students to rove around the classrooms.

As Kerry Romanis, Instructional Coach, describes it:

> *"There was a sense that students were here under their own steam to do what they chose to do when they chose to do it. It was confronting. And I'm not easily confronted."*

> *"The kids were running up and down the hallways banging on the walls to the point where I was scared so I went to the library and waited for things to calm down. Despite the teachers calling them in to class, the kids were always in the hallway. The kids had no structure running up and down in the yard, not wanting to come to school but playing outside with their friends."*
> Rose Overstreet, Implementation Manager.

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8 Angurugu School is located in the community of Angurugu on Groote Eylandt, 50km off the Arnhem Land coast in the Gulf of Carpentaria. The population is approximately 1150, however can fluctuate depending on the season and ceremonial activity. The traditional owners of Groote Eylandt are the Warnindilyakwa people, but are referred to by their language name Anindilyakwa. Angurugu School offers education from early years to senior years.

10 NT News, 3 May, 2013, http://www.territorystories.nt.gov.au/bitstream/10070/245225/2/ntn03may13002x.pdf.

Since 2014, under the leadership of a new Principal, Ben Slocombe, Stephanie Blitner, Principal in Training, and Paul Riches, Assistant Principal, Angurugu School has witnessed a remarkable turnaround. The arrival of a new leadership team, coinciding with the introduction of DI, has transformed the school:

> *"We've gone from an environment that was confronting and unpleasant to a situation where the vibe is now more like a normal school across Australia where there are instances not outside the realm of the most highly functioning schools around Australia."* Kerry Romanis, Instructional Coach.

When DI was first introduced, there was resistance and this resulted in a significant turnover of teaching staff. However, a core group of teachers who were at the school prior to DI being introduced have remained and become converts. As teacher Josh Poidevin recalls:

> *"My philosophy of teaching then was that it should be student-driven. So I've been teaching for sixteen years and I've always used theme-based learning and always tweaked my curriculum – as opposed to DI which takes that completely away from the teacher. You follow the script. You do as you're told.*
>
> *So that was my resistance to DI – I thought the kids won't be interested in this at all. But as soon as I started DI I found they learn amazingly using this technique. It's very different to the way I would normally teach but it works! I didn't think the kids would do it.*
>
> *But this idea that they will enjoy the mastery with the ten percent increase each lesson; they really feel like they can achieve. So now I am a full DI convert. In this context, where education is such a hard sell, it's working really well.*
>
> *The kids get lots and lots of praise and I've seen more increase in the kids' English ability in the last half year or so than I've seen in any other literacy program. And I've used five different English programs since the six years I've been in the Northern Territory."*

Principal Ben Slocombe agrees:

> *"The teachers we have now can see we are making a difference. We are having a definite positive impact; it makes a difference to the kids who come every day, and not just the kids but the families and the community. We had staff before who were "You can't change that. You can't fix that", but they can see now you can. For example, people would say "you won't be able to get kids to sit in their seats for two hours and do DI" but we can now and they do."*

DI uses visual and auditory signalling to draw students' attention, direct them to the task and guide their behaviours. For example, Angurugu School uses the term 'listening bodies', to indicate that students need to be sitting still and paying attention to the teacher's instruction. DI also uses a system of rewards and emphasises constant positive reinforcement for acutely targeted performance achievements and learning behaviours. These teaching methods take some time for a teacher to master but quickly become normalised. Once these teaching methods are normalised, use of these methods spreads beyond the classroom in the school more broadly as they become almost automatic, are easy to use and are highly effective in managing behaviour.

The leadership team made the decision in 2014 to focus first on behaviour as they knew that it would be difficult to teach students until student behaviour was normalised. They also set out to consciously re-brand

the school as a place of learning. In 2014 a School Wide Positive Behaviours Support (SWPBS) Program was developed, based on the Angurugu Way and introduced. The SWPBS Program consisted of four key values – "we are learners; we are respectful; we are safe and we are proud". The SWPBS was introduced prior to DI and was then embedded in the DI method.[11]

Whereas students were previously making a lot of noise at the school, for example, dragging metal cups along the walls to make a loud noise, students now have been taught to make 'respectful' noise and are deliberately positively rewarded when they do so.

> *"Since DI, we've had quite a few parents say their children come home and mimic the teaching of DI at home – we see that the kids are understanding what a 'learner' looks like in a class. Now kids can articulate what a learner's body looks like – what a respectful behaviour looks like, what does transitioning look like, and how to do it."* Ben Slocombe, Principal.

The leadership team made a decision to focus on a core group of regular attenders and empower them with DI. The theory was that if these students' experience was rewarding, then these students would then act as conduits for other students to also begin to attend school more regularly. This tactic appears to be working:

> *"At the beginning of last year it was not unusual to go into a classroom and for there to be only two students, now in each class we have a core of students of 8 to 12 turning up every day. Compared to what we were experiencing before, it is very exciting."* Kerry Romanis, Instructional Coach.

There is some anecdotal evidence also from parents that this is the trend. Lucanne Murrungun says that DI is 'good for learning' and that her twelve year old daughter, Kayalla, enjoys DI and now goes to school five days a week.

> *"Now in the mornings Kayalla gets up and has a shower and breakfast and then she comes and wakes me up and says "Mum take me to school". She wants to go to school because of DI. Because DI helps her to know when she needs to listen. Before, I would sit in class with her but that was OK when it was just two or three days. Now I have asked the school kitchen if I can have a job there because now she wants to come five days and I don't want to go to class for five days."* Lucanne Murrungun, Mother

There is considerable movement of families and students between the communities of Angurugu and Umbakumba on Groote Eylandt, Milyakburra on nearby Bickerton Island and Numbulwar on the mainland. Besides making the collection of enrolment and attendance data difficult, these movements also mean that students regularly transition between schools and as a result are at risk of falling behind.

One real and relevant benefit of DI is that, because the other schools are also DI schools, students are able to instantaneously participate and start to succeed in class. The signalling, the DI teaching style, and the consistent measurement methods mean that students and teachers both know exactly where they are at. The structure of the rooms all look the same; they all have the same reward system; and so transitioning students can easily fit in.

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11 There is evidence that DI (and EDI) are quality behaviour management tools because high quality instruction engages students and therefore leads to a reduction in problem behaviour.

Ben Slocombe showed the evaluator a video of a child enrolled at Angurugu School he had just filmed on his mobile phone, who had 'dropped in' at another nearby DI school, and was confidently reading and participating in the class, explaining:

> *"Kids will rock into a class and say, "Miss, I'm at K39" and can immediately start learning. If a child is not sure where they are at, we can phone the other school to look up the data, or quickly administer a two minute placement test."* Ben Slocombe, Principal.

This benefit of DI was also identified at two other case study schools with similar high levels of student transience. It is common in remote areas for students to move between schools and this can have a significant impact a student's ability to keep up with their cohort. This impact can be mitigated where the school transitioned from, and the school transitioned to, are both implementing DI.

One of the biggest challenges facing remote and very remote schools is teacher turnover. As Paul Riches, Assistant Principal, describes it, the DI method and the support the school has received in its implementation "almost negates the quality of the teachers that we get."

> *"We can't control the teachers we get because we don't get enough applicants, but the accountability process of DI ensures we get to attain a certain quality – that's a huge benefit. The reality is we have huge turnover. We get all different quality teachers – so DI really helps us.* Paul Riches, Assistant Principal.

The benefit of the scripting too is that teachers do not have to focus on curriculum design and developing classroom materials, but can instead direct their energies and attention to the quality of instruction:

> *"The learning from this is that fidelity to the model is important and modifying it is a mistake as it diverts attention. New teachers come in and they are still trying to get themselves sorted out – shipping their belongings up, getting their phones sorted – that can take weeks. The kids don't speak English as their first language and so the teachers need the structure and pre-prepared lesson plans – it is produced for you and you deliver it. That's massive. People then recognise that it does not matter what subject you are teaching, we don't want you to spend time doing lesson plans; we want you to focus on your skill at delivering."* Paul Riches, Assistant Principal.

When in 2014 Stephanie Blitner, Principal in Training arrived at the school, she says she noticed straight away that every classroom within this one school was doing a different literacy program and that the majority of students were at the kindergarten level of instruction:

> *"Now we have a group B2 which is now comparable to a second grade level. This means they have jumped two grades bringing them close to grade level. The group of readers who started with DI is now ahead of our Grade Sevens in reading."* Stephanie Blitner, Principal in Training.

The view of teachers at Angurugu School is that DI lends itself to the ESL context. With DI there is more opportunity for Wanindilyakwan Assistant Teachers[12] to engage in the delivery of the program.

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12 Each teaching group has an Assistant Teacher (AT) recruited from the local community to assist in translation and teaching. The ATs are provided with weekly one-on-one coaching sessions, as well as in-service professional development weeks in Darwin. Their own progress has been significant. Some ATs are now teaching some DI lessons.

"While not all our successes are from DI, students are speaking English a lot more. English learning is more concentrated and goes for longer periods of time." Paul Riches, Assistant Principal.

The response from some members of the Wanindilyakwan community to the new teaching method was initially one of suspicion and some individuals were offended by the direct speaking nature of DI. Parents and interested members of the community were invited into the classrooms to observe the new teaching method. Silvia Lahara reported that many in her community did not want to try it at first "but now they like it and we think the community future will be better for it."

Over the past twelve months Rose Overstreet, GGSA Implementation Manager has seen major changes:

"Implementing rules and routines with the instructional program has been very effective. Another change is that attendance has improved, although not yet to where it could be…I truly believe it is the positivity that teachers are pulling out for the students that is really effective here. And the third change is teacher effectiveness. On-task behaviour is such that teachers can now actually teach. Last year it was literally impossible. Teachers were only managing to get through one lesson per week because they were still implementing the behaviour management strategies but now they are doing at least one lesson per day. This is because the teachers have the strategies in place and are able to get the kids focused and the routines established. The kids are mastering the routines." Rose Overstreet, GGSA Implementation Manager.

When asked about the relationship between school reform and DI in achieving this turnaround, Ben Slocombe, Principal describes it this way:

"DI is the nucleus. It creates a learning culture in the classroom and everything else goes with it. The feedback, instructional teaching, orderly learning environment…. DI has made other initiatives simpler. It's given a structure for the school to follow – the link has been instantaneous. It formed the structure that created consistency across classrooms – not just across classrooms but across the Archipelago – where the kids rotate all the time." Ben Slocombe, Principal.

Case Study: Warruwi School, South Goulburn Island[13]

Warruwi School is located on South Goulburn Island, 350 km north east of Darwin, and is classed as a Category Three remote school. It has 108 students, of whom all but two are Indigenous. The student population is very transient. Warruwi School has an attendance rate averaging sixty percent.

In 2015, in the first week before the commencement of the school term, all schools involved in the FLRPS trial came together to undertake training in DI.

> *"We wanted a whole-of-school approach to teaching reading, and a way of managing high staff turnover, and decided to trial DI as a possible fit for the school."* Acting Principal, Keira Stewart.

Principal Daryll Kinnane[14] reports that Warruwi teachers were able to see that they were part of something bigger than just being a small remote school and that there was an alternative way to teach literacy that held promise. The team felt energized and enthusiastic about DI, commencing implementation of the Program on the second day they returned from the training. "When we came back, the support we received from GGSA was wonderful", reports Kinnane. The staff collaboratively used DI Handbooks, DI You-tube training clips and peer observation to improve delivery. The school was regularly visited by an Implementation Manager and Teacher Coach.

The Term three, 2013 and 2014, the DI trial showed growth in decoding and comprehension skills for students participating in Decoding A and Decoding B, Comprehension A Programs. Data collected from PM Benchmarking and On Demand assessments supported this. In some instances students improved two-three years in reading age.[15] On the basis of these results, the decision was taken to implement DI.

Principal Daryll Kinnane took care to recruit teachers who would support the implementation of DI. Thus there was a very positive attitude to DI amongst most of the teaching team.

Ebony Arthur was appointed as the DI instruction coach in May 2015. When she took on the role, she worked with teachers to restructure the teaching groups and reorganise the rooms:

> *"I was able to see that … tension was caused because the group sizes were too large and there were too many students working in the one space. I assisted the teachers to make structural changes and regroup which helped the classes to run more smoothly."*

Ebony worked with teachers to implement DI guidelines in relation to where students are placed within groups, the size of groups, the number of people instructing in one place and the arrangement of the overall classroom organisation. These are all critical elements in the effective implementation of DI. As Ebony describes it:

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13 The mostly Indigenous community of Warruwi has a population of approximately 500 people, but this number grows during the wet season and drops during the dry, when people travel to visit family and country. A mission settlement was established on the island by Reverend James Watson soon after his arrival on 22 June 1916. The traditional language of the island is Mawng, with people speaking other languages including Kunbarlang, Kunwinjku, Djambarrpuyngu, Galpu and English. English is typically people's second or third language. http://westarnhem.nt.gov.au/our-communities/warruwi/.

14 Daryll was on leave at the time of the field visit but was interviewed after the first draft of the report was provided for comment.

15 Excerpt Attachment B, corro Research Advisory Committee, DoE 2 November 2016.

"To teach DI you have to be ready for a lot of change." Ebony Arthur, Instruction Coach.

Ebony's role allowed her to conduct coaching conversations with teachers and provide detailed feedback on their pedagogy, so that they were able to implement DI with greater fidelity. She was able to reassure them on their practice, which gave them the confidence to persist when they were feeling challenged.

The "On-Line Warruwi Learning Community" site was established in 2013 and is in full use in 2015-16. The Principal, Deputy Principal and Ebony make short videos of teachers teaching and upload these to the site to provide feedback. Teachers also upload videos for feedback and discussion on the site.

> *"We watch our videos and we see how we can improve. That is great. You miss a lot when you are teaching so the video helps you be more aware, not only of what you're doing but also of what's happening when your back is turned. Those videos also get uploaded to our closed Facebook page and all the teachers watch each other and offer each other feedback and suggestions. We also have twice weekly DI practice sessions, which is really helpful."* Amanda Pehi, Teacher.

School Wide Positive Behaviours (SWPB) was introduced in 2013 as a whole school program and is integrated into DI. SWPB practice sessions were initiated in Week 2 of Term 1, 2015 and continued from that period. Routines and expectations were introduced and firmed in the initial months of implementation. Weekly Coaching and teacher conversations were in place from commencement of implementation.

According to Kinnane,

> *"Linking DI to the Positive School Wide Behaviours Program was a major benefit because it challenged everyone's expectations and practice and that was a strength."*

Keira Stewart, the Assistant Principal was tasked to support the embedding of SWPB from 2015 onwards. Part of Ebony's role is also to ensure that the Behaviour management components of DI are fully embedded:

> *"Because Ebony was here, she could roam to check that we were doing all we could correctly: giving points and tokens to students and feedback to us if we weren't. She would make suggestions for where we could have given more points here or handed out a token there."* Amanda Pehi, Teacher.

Ebony also took on the role of coordinating the school's DI data collection. This involved liaising with the GGSA Implementation Manager to provide analysis and feedback to ensure that teachers are better able to get a more immediate and clearer picture of what is happening within their classes.

In July 2015 GGSA assigned Kylie Colman to the school as a Teacher Coach and subsequently promoted her in January 2016 to DI Implementation Manager. Kylie had previously been using DI to teach Aboriginal students in Cairns for five years "so I had been in the same situation and knew what they needed to know: teaching with fidelity, teaching to mastery."

Kylie was able to provide additional support to the school, conducting observations with Ebony as Instructional Coach, guiding paired practice, helping with data interpretation and teaching staff how to interpret their data. Kylie also provided assistance with strategic planning support, scheduling and student grouping. Kylie's knowledge of the different DI component programs – for example, corrective programs, as well as the reading mastery programs, also meant that she was able to give technical advice on content and

suitable programs in the context of teaching students.

> *"We've had a really positive experience with GGSA. Every time Kylie comes out I feel inspired and they teach us really practical skills that we can start implementing straight away."* Ebony Arthur.

With these additional supports and adjustments, Warruwi teachers are able to see students continuing to improve. Bernice Gavenlock, the School Administration Officer, has been at the school for two years but lived in the community for five years. Bernice reported that she had noticed that students are much more confident since DI and will say and spell their names to her, whereas before they could not do this.

Teacher Nina Zepnick believes that DI changes teaching in remote schools such as Warruwi:

> *"A teacher can't get away with colouring in sheets and putting on a video any more. Because of the very specific feedback in praising the students' academic success, we are able to reinforce exactly what we are looking for. The accountability is very high [due to the weekly mastery testing]. And I'm not collecting the information for no reason. Every time I write that I am having difficulty with a child, I can be sure that it will be followed up and I will be supported."* Nina Zepnick, Teacher.

Being such a small school, there are challenges for Warruwi in implementing DI. For example, compromises have had to be made in placing the children at the appropriate academic levels. Because these levels were so varied amongst the student cohort, it was not possible to put all children at the correct level, thus a minority have had to be placed at 'Best Fit', which is not ideal but unavoidable.

Similarly, there are often three groups working with only one teacher which means that one group at any time will need to be doing independent work. This has meant that the school has had to build the independent working skills of the children to meet this challenge. Again this is not ideal, but in such a small school, inevitable.

Acting Principal Keira Stewart believes that "Expectations are now much higher, behaviour has improved, attendance has improved and teachers are really seeing the benefits of the method." While Keira sees that there has been great progress in implementing DI, she believes there is still more opportunity to further embed the approach:

> *"Our goal for the future is to train up people to become peer coaches. That will be down the track. But the idea to build the capacity of the school to be self-sustaining. I think it would take over five years but that is where we are aiming."* Keira Stewart, Acting Principal.

Case Study: St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School, Carnarvon

St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School is located in Carnarvon, 900 km north of Perth and is classed as a remote school. It has 320 students from Kindergarten to Year Ten. Neither the students nor the teachers are especially transient and the school has an average attendance rate of eighty five percent.

St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School is based in Carnarvon, a town of 6,000 people. The school has a diverse student population that reflects the social and demographic profile of the town. Many students are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including approximately twenty percent of students being from Vietnamese families and twelve percent of students being Indigenous.

The school began its EDI journey in 2014, when Principal, Steve O'Halloran, and the teaching team were feeling frustrated with the poor learning outcomes at the school:

> *"Our NAPLAN results were not great and what we were doing was not translating into good results. We felt that NAPLAN results were not reflecting how well we should be doing. We didn't have behavioural problems so there was just no reason for such poor results."* Steve O'Halloran, Principal.

Steve researched alternate learning programs and read the research of educationalist, John Hattie. Based on this investigation he decided to adopt EDI. Trudy Cox, Instructional Coach recalls:

> *"We got all enthused. Steve purchased the EDI books. I was already in place as Instructional Coach. We taught ourselves through watching YouTube and reading the books. I then worked with teachers to improve their classroom practice. My role became very focused. It was really hard work and some of the teachers were exhausted but we still kept going because we could see that this was really working. Then we heard about the Program and applied. We were rapt when we were accepted because for the Kindergarten to Year Six teachers this would mean we would now get the support and training."* Trudy Cox, Instructional Coach.

The school signed up to the GGSA EDI implementation with the school's primary school teachers all attending the pre-training in Perth. The school was provided the GGSA EDI curriculum and are supported by an EDI Teacher Coach who visits the school regularly throughout the term to provide one on one coaching with teachers and implementation support.

The school undertook Progressive Achievement Test (PAT) testing which allows benchmarking of their progress against other Australian schools. The testing results indicate that these school students are accelerating in their learning in comparison to other Australian students. Hattie's research postulates an affect size of 0.4 is expected and so anything above this is above average for educational learning and demonstrates genuine relative accelerated learning.

Growth Summary - Early Childhood Education assessments

Table 1: Growth summary St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School showing Performance Indicators in Primary School (PIPS) in Reading and Math and growth in English Math and Spelling

Year in 2015	Reading Level	PIPS Reading	PIPS Math
Pre-Prep		2.24	1.40
1	1.65		

Progressive Achievement Test (PAT) results

Year in 2015	English Growth 2014	English Growth 2015	Math Growth 2014	Math Growth 2015
2		1.83		0.88
3	0.58	1.09	0.94	0.45
4	0.96	0.65	0.37	0.84
5	0.56	0.48	0.46	0.19
6	0.25	0.46	0.17	0.38
7	0.17	0.51	0.50	0.59
8	-0.47	0.43	-0.27	0.85
9	-0.04	0.50	-0.68	0.41
10	0.35	0.04	0.38	0.25

KEY	Less than expected Growth -0	Expected Growth (up to 0.4)	Greater than expected Growth (+0.4)

Table 2 shows, that after only 12 months of EDI[16], the school is demonstrating real success from the beginning of the introduction of EDI in 2014.

- All students in younger grades have shown accelerated growth in all subjects. The affect size significantly above 0.4 for all subjects, all groups: 2.24, 1.65 and 1.4.

- In English growth, the affect sizes were only greater than 0.4 in three of the eight classes tested in 2014, but in 2015, the affect sizes were greater than 0.4 for eight of the nine classes tested. The affect sizes for 2015 of 1.83, 1.09, 0.65, 0.48, 0.46, 0.51, 0.53 and 0.50 are significant improvements in English learning outcomes.

- Comparison of results for 2014 with 2015 show acceleration for all 2015 English classes and most Maths Classes, demonstrating that outcomes are improving as EDI becomes more embedded in the school.

- For those students who were tested for Spelling, in 2014 the two classes tested only achieved 0.08 and 0.37 but in 2015, the students achieved 0.74, 0.68 and 0.91.

The teachers and leadership team believe that EDI is working:

"We are really looking forward to NAPLAN next week as we believe there is going to be a big jump. We can see it in the students and those of us with children here can see it in our own children." Trudy Cox, Instructional Coach.

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16 These tests were conducted at end 2015, twelve months after the implementation of EDI commenced.

Generally teachers believe that students overwhelmingly welcome the new teaching approach, despite it being more focused work for them.

> *"School is now a place for learning. It's work. EDI make kids accountable, they see now that school is a place to work and learn and they love it because even though it is hard, they are doing well."* Trudy Cox, Instructional Coach.

The evaluator conducted a focus group with teachers after school, to collect shared experiences of the program. The following were identified as observed differences in students since the introduction of EDI:

- students are more excited, more confident and want to know more

- all students are more likely to volunteer to read aloud

- students are more aware of what they are learning

- students are more confident and want to know how they are going

- students' English language, oral and written, has improved

- students' understanding of how to use English is structured, the sounds, their order

- students have become good learners

- students' behaviour has improved in the classroom and in the playground

- students think they are intelligent because they are using big words

- students are more focused on their own learning journeys

- students are more likely to congratulate one another

- students' reading levels are higher.

One of the benefits of EDI that teachers remarked on is the transparency:

> *"Students love to know how they are doing and parents are able to see exactly how their children are succeeding. I know exactly where my kids are at and the parents enjoy it too because they can see where their kids are at."* Carey Hodgson, Teacher.

A number of teachers expressed concern that some high achieving students were not as engaged. The school is currently discussing strategies for providing additional learning opportunities for high achieving students in their EDI classes. One strategy now in place is that high achieving students are keeping a reading book close at hand so that when they complete lesson content before other students they can engage in independent learning tasks.

One teacher felt that because of the discipline and structure of EDI that her students might be less likely to independently problem-solve or less likely to use initiative to respond when an out-of-the ordinary situation arose.

Some teachers feel that the length of the teaching day under EDI is too long for Kindergarten and young students who should be allowed more free unstructured play time. However, they believe that in relation to learning outcomes, these are exceptional under EDI.

Students hold their whiteboards up for the teacher to scan for correct answers at St Mary Star of the Sea.

St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic School now has a new problem. It has more applications for enrolment than it can handle:

> "*Our reputation has improved. It's not only because of EDI but that is a big part of it. Now we have long waiting lists for students, longer than we have ever had.*" Sam Da Luz, Deputy Principal.

As one Star of the Sea employee [name withheld] explains:

> "*We don't want to leave Carnarvon now because our boys are doing so well here under EDI that we don't want to risk taking them to another school.*"

Teachers also expressed views on the rigour of the program and how it was more demanding than other teaching methods:

> "*When we first started teaching using EDI, it was so demanding, we would come to the teachers' room at break, just exhausted. But once it became second nature it was easier…You have to be switched on, all the time, and so do the kids have to be. It's intense. You have to be fully engaged and the students have to be fully engaged.*" Carey Hodgson, Teacher.

As at other case study schools, teachers at St Mary Star of the Sea explained how they find themselves using EDI's checking for understanding and some behavioural management methods used in the EDI classes in other settings inside and outside the classroom. Consistency across the school means that all students are familiar with signalling and expectations and these are easily understood.

The school would like to see the program expanded to meet the needs of secondary school students. For the classes Seven to Ten, the School is designing its own EDI lessons, materials and resources, "with varying success":

> "*We have no training for teachers for Classes Seven to Ten and we are trying to teach ourselves. The secondary teachers are learning from what they see the teachers in the Primary School doing. We were getting such success with the Year Six and they got to Year Seven and we felt we couldn't just stop! It's much slower in the Seven to Ten classes, because they don't have the resources or the support.*" Narelle Holtham, Instructional Coach.

Case Study: Christ the King Catholic School, Djarindjin, Lombadina

Christ the King Catholic School is a Catholic School located at Lombadina on Dampier Peninsular, 180 km north of Broome. It has approximately sixty students, many of whom are highly transient. The school caters for the residents of two Aboriginal communities, Djarindjin and Lombadina with a combined population of approximately 200 people, as well as several outstations in the surrounding districts.

Principal Steve Carroll and Literacy Key Leader Liz Carroll have been working at Lombadina School for the past seven years. In 2014 while they were on leave, the Acting Principal joined up to participate in the EDI project. When they returned in Term Four, they investigated EDI:

> *"Up until that point we felt we had been successfully teaching many students to read but although our students could decode, we were always concerned about their level of comprehension."* Liz Carroll, Literacy Key Leader.

After attending the first EDI professional development training and then teaching the program for several weeks, the Carroll's and the staff began to realise that EDI would not be right for their school. They attempted to implement it as best they could, but it was not meeting the complex learning needs of the students and they needed to make too many modifications to the program. The staff were invited to investigate DI which teachers did by visiting One Arm Point School, that was implementing DI. Steve and Liz then visited the CYAAA to see a DI implementation. They then consulted with staff who agreed DI was the right option for the students at Christ the King Catholic School.

Overall, the school believes the switch to DI has been the right choice. Significant and consistent improved attendance, improved reading comprehension and improved behaviour management have been the key changes witnessed over the six months since the introduction of DI.

> *"The support has been great.   We had four coaches on-site for four days and everyone in the school was trained."* Liz Carroll, Literacy Key Leader.

The grouping of students according to ability levels works well for the school and students are experiencing success. Principal Steve Carroll believes that this is leading to improved classroom and playground behaviour of most students who attend regularly. DI also works well for supporting low achievers:

> *"I have a girl in my class who I thought was always going to be challenged as a learner, as she found it difficult to retain words when she was learning to read prior to DI. But now she is learning and learning well. Now, she is right up there. To see how happy she is; she is experiencing success and keeping up with the group. This is amazing."* Liz Carroll, Literacy Key Leader.

Principal Steve Carroll also believes that the gradual increase in new knowledge of only ten percent at a time, and only after mastery is demonstrated, is a key element of why DI is working for the school:

> *"I have another boy in my class who struggles with standard Australian English …he's in Year Four and has experienced communication challenges since he started school – he has come a long way in a very short time and is now one of the most engaged students in the class!"* Liz Carroll, Literacy Key Leader.

Teachers who struggled with the idea of DI to begin with, in particular with the idea that their class teaching would be strictly scripted, have now "been turned around because they saw the difference in our students. If there's success happening with students, that changes their mind too." All teachers, including Aboriginal Teacher Assistants (ATAs) have been trained in DI and are participating in teaching. The confidence of ATAs at this school, and anecdotally at other nearby schools such as Sacred Heart School, Beagle Bay, has increased as a result of teaching DI:

> *"For us ATAs it feels good. It could be a bit unsteady at first but then we got used to it. Of all the DI techniques, I really like that everything is set out for us, scripted for us. And we get support from [the Instruction Coach] and we support each other. If another ATA is struggling, we show her or practice with her. The Coach goes around and checks how we're going. And when the Implementation Manager comes she observes too and gives feedback. I get constant feedback and support."* Mena Manado, ATA.

The table below shows, that at Christ the King Catholic School, attendance from 2 February to 2 May 2015 increased by between twenty and thirty percent for all classes compared to 2014.

Figure 1: Change in attendance patterns at Djarandin Lombadina following introduction of DI.
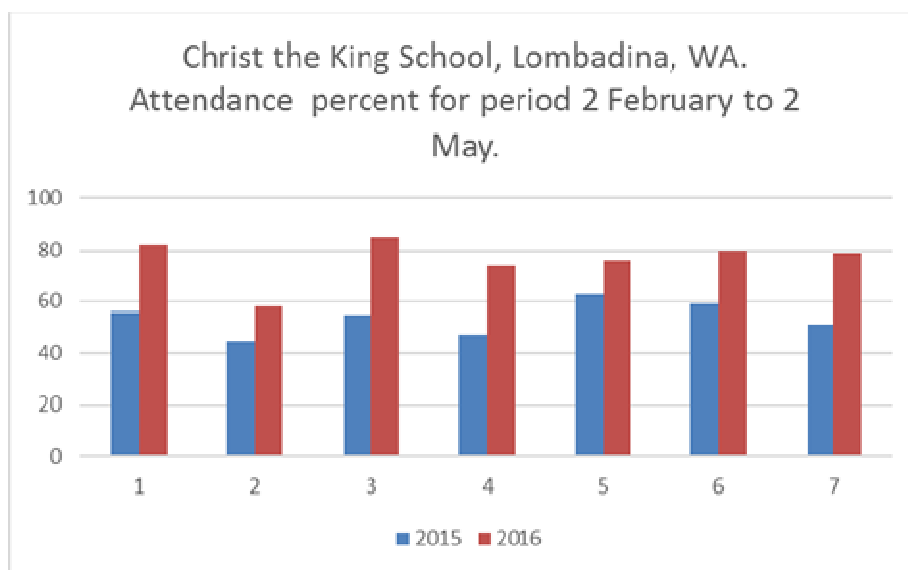
Teachers believe the students enjoy the routine, the sense of mastery, the predictability and the order of the teaching method, and feel able to engage with the material. They also enjoy the weekly feedback on their performance and to be able to see how they are progressing week to week. The students reportedly respond well to being placed in a group at their own learning level. Principal Steve Carroll maintains "they attend because they are experiencing success." All these factors contribute to improved attendance, but also improved behaviour.

One benefit for the school is that there is 'a place for every child' with DI, including those with learning difficulties and language delays.

"With DI, every child in our school can experience success." Liz Carroll, Literacy Key Leader.

For students with special needs, DI is being observed as an appropriate teaching approach that supports their learning. A student at the school with a diagnosis of autism is now able to join the group classes. While his ATA remains with him during these lessons, she does not always have to be sitting next to him. His teachers have noticed that his language skills have significantly improved since DI was implemented.

Staff at Lombadina have recently completed a significant amount of professional learning on supporting children who have experienced significant trauma. Staff highlighted that the routine, predictability and order of DI is having positive benefits for those of their students whose lives may have been significantly impacted by trauma. This observation was also made by the Principal and Assistant Principal at nearby Sacred Heart School, Beagle Bay.

> *"It's the structure [of DI]. The children know what is coming next. They love the predictability and routine. They know what's happening every day. They know how to answer. All these things are very important for children who are experiencing trauma."* Liz Carroll, Literacy Key Leader.

An example is provided of a male student who displayed behaviours related to trauma and was struggling and disruptive in class. Principal Steve Carroll suggested that he move down one group level:

> *"Before, he was disruptive, lying on the floor, making noises and impeding other students learning. He came into our room and now it is easy for him. He's gone from being a child who wouldn't stay in his seat to being engaged ninety five percent of the time. He's doing what is asked of him. The structure is there. He knows what is expected. That's been a win for us and a win for him. Before he was too challenged and he would just give up."* Liz Carroll, Literacy Key Leader.

Attachment one: List of those interviewed

Angurugu School

Ben Slocombe, Principal
Paul Riches, Assistant Principal
Stephanie Blitner, Principal in Training
John Newton, Teacher
Stuart Porteous, Teacher
Josh Poidevin, Teacher
Gloria Yantarrnga, Assistant Teacher
Silvia Lahara, Assistant Teacher
Rachel Barnett, Relief Teacher
Kerry Romanis, Impact Coach, Instructional Coach
Amanda Lalara, Parent
Lucanne Murrungun, Parent
Maria Bowenda, Parent
Priscilla Mamarika, Parent

Warruwi School

Keira, Stewart, Acting Principal
Amanda Pehi, Teacher
Nina Zepnick, Teacher
Jenny Manmurulu, Assistant Teacher
Ebony Arthur, Instruction Coach
Bernice Gavenlock, Administration Officer
Rosemary Urabadi, Parent
Sophia Lee, Parent Guardian

Christ the King Catholic School

Steve Carroll, Principal
Grace Bin, Teacher
Liz Carroll, Literacy Key Leader
Mena Menado, Aboriginal Teacher Assistant
Michelle Rex, Aboriginal Teacher Assistant

St Mary's Star of the Sea Catholic School

Andrew Gammon, Acting Principal
Sam Da Luz, Deputy Principal
Alison Durmanich, Teacher
Carey Hodgson, Teacher
Emily Roche, Teacher
Liz Ferla, Teacher
Nicole Nuttall, Teacher
Jo Buzzard, Relief Teacher
Helena Bassett, Kindergarten Education Assistant
Jacquie Black, Education Assistant
Karen Acott, Education Assistant
Simone Petera, Education Assistant
Narelle Holtham, Instructional Coach
Trudy Cox, Instructional Coach

GGSA

Rose Overstreet, GGSA Implementation Manager
Kylie Colman, GGSA Implementation Manager

Attachment two: Jurisdictions and school systems

Northern Territory

Government
Alekarenge School, Ali Curung (DI)
Alyarrmandumanja Umbakumba School, Umbakumba (DI)
Angurugu School, Angurugu (DI)
Borroloola School, Borroloola (DI)
Gapuwiyak School, Gapuwiyak (DI)
Gillen Primary School, Alice Springs (DI)
Mamaruni School, Minjilang (DI)
Milikapiti School, Milikapiti (DI)
Milyakburra School, Milyakburra (DI)
Minyerri School, Minyerri (DI)
Nganambala School, Emu Point (DI)
Nganmarriyanga School, Palumpa (DI)
Ntaria School, Ntaria (DI)
Numbulwar School, Numbulwar (DI)
Papunya School, Papunya (DI)
Peppimenarti School, Peppimenarti (DI)
Pularumpi School, Pularumpi (DI)
Warruwi School, Warruwi (DI)
Wugularr School, Beswick (DI)

Independent
Tiwi College, Pickataramoor (DI)
Yipirinya School, Alice Springs (DI)

Queensland

Government
Western Cape College, Mapoon

Catholic Education
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School, Thursday Island and Hammond Island

Western Australia

Government
Jigalong Remote Community School, Jigalong (DI)
Meekatharra District High School, Meekatharra (EDI)
Mount Magnet District High School, Mount Magnet (EDI)
Nullagine Primary School, Nullagine (DI)
One Arm Point Remote Community School, One Arm Point (DI)

Independent
Kulkarriya Community School, Nookanbah (EDI)
Rawa Community School, Kunawarritji and Punmu campuses (DI)
Yakanarra Community School, Fitzroy Crossing (DI)

Catholic Education
Christ the King Catholic School, Lombadina (DI)
Holy Rosary School, Derby (EDI)
John Pujajangka-Piyirn Catholic School, Mulan (EDI)
Kururrungku Catholic Education Centre, Billiluna (EDI)
Sacred Heart School, Beagle Bay (EDI)
St Mary Star Of The Sea Catholic School, Carnarvon (EDI)
Warlawurru Catholic School, Halls Creek (DI)

Attachment three: Terms of reference

Background to the Evaluation

Good to Great Schools Australia (GGSA) is required, as part of its contract with the Australian Government, to undertake an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the Flexible Literacy for Remote Primary Schools Program (FLRPS Program). The Centre for Program Evaluation at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, is contracted to undertake a quantitative analysis of outcomes data to evaluate learning outcomes. The Centre has established a baseline and preliminary results are being collated.

To support the University of Melbourne's evaluative research, GGSA commissioned an accompanying evaluative activity with the aim of informing the ongoing implementation of the Program and to provide additional evidence on the wider intended and unintended impacts of the Program, as well as to gauge the levels of acceptance amongst stakeholders.

The objectives of the FLRPS Program are to improve

- teacher pedagogical skills in teaching literacy through the use of alphabetic teaching approaches, in particular, EDI or DI, and

- literacy results for students in participating schools.

Evaluation Objectives

Evaluate early signs of outcomes and impacts of the FLRPS in relation to the achievement of the Program objectives, in particular the social impacts, including unintended impacts and secondary impacts.

Determine general perspectives, attitudes and levels of acceptance of the Program by school leaders, teachers and families.

Evaluation Methodology

- Consult with teachers, Principals, and families to determine their views on the social impacts and effectiveness of the Program to date.

- Visit four schools in Angurugu, Warruwi, Carnarvon and Lombadina and prepare a detailed case study on each.

- Design, pilot and administer a survey based on the findings of the case study interviews, for distribution to all teaching teams in all participating schools.

- Analyse the results of the survey and triangulate with evidence from the case studies and interviews to draw early conclusions about the impacts of the Program.

Deliverables

- Four case studies.

- A survey instrument, piloted and validated.

Collated and analysed survey results.