Australian Education Research Organisation

Discussion Paper

Insights into implementation in schools in 2026

What AERO is learning alongside schools and systems about implementing evidence-based teaching practices

August 2026

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) is Australia's national education evidence body, working to achieve excellence and equity in educational outcomes for all children and young people.

Acknowledgement

AERO's work is made possible by the joint funding it receives from Commonwealth, state and territory governments.

AERO would like to acknowledge the contributions of every school staff member we have worked with in the Learning Partner project, and, particularly, each school implementation team. We would also like to acknowledge the regional system team members who have supported these schools.

Acknowledgement of Country

AERO acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands, waterways, skies, islands and sea Country across Australia. We pay our deepest respects to First Nations cultures and Elders past and present. We endeavour to continually value and learn from First Nations knowledges and educational practices.

How to cite

Australian Education Research Organisation. (2026). *Insights into implementation in schools in 2026: What AERO is learning alongside schools and systems about implementing evidence-based teaching practices.* https://www.edresearch.edu.au/research/discussion-papers/insights-implementation-schools-2026

Publication details

ISBN: 978-1-923066-73-1 (online)
Images: AERO

Contents

Figures

Tables

Since 2023, the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) has been working closely with Australian schools and systems to learn about promising approaches for implementing evidence-based teaching practices in different school contexts. This discussion paper is the third in a series that shares insights from our work with schools in the Learning Partner project.

Background

Effective implementation bridges the gap between education research and everyday practice, for the benefit of students across Australia. As part of the Australian education community, AERO works to encourage the adoption and effective implementation of evidence-based teaching practices in Australian schools.

Since 2024, AERO's implementation team has published annual insights into implementation. Our first Insights into Implementation discussion paper set out what we mean by a *deliberate and structured approach* to implementation (see Box 1), and detailed our insights based on our work with schools in the Learning Partner project in 2023. Our second discussion paper captured what AERO learned in 2024 through collaboration with schools and regional system teams (i.e., teams of education officers employed by systems).[1] This third discussion paper builds on our first 2 papers by detailing insights from our Learning Partner work in 2025.

Box 1: A deliberate and structured approach to implementation

AERO has developed a deliberate and structured approach to the implementation of evidence-based teaching practices in schools (Figure 1). When being *deliberate*, leaders intentionally commit to and plan for the implementation process. When taking a *structured* approach, leaders systematically use reliable implementation components to inform the implementation process.

A deliberate and structured approach to implementation is grounded in school context (the 'where'), focuses on an evidence-based teaching practice (the 'what') and relies on 4 implementation components (the 'how'). These 4 implementation components are:

- working in stages (Explore, Prepare, Deliver and Sustain)
- addressing enablers and barriers
- selecting implementation strategies
- monitoring implementation outcomes.

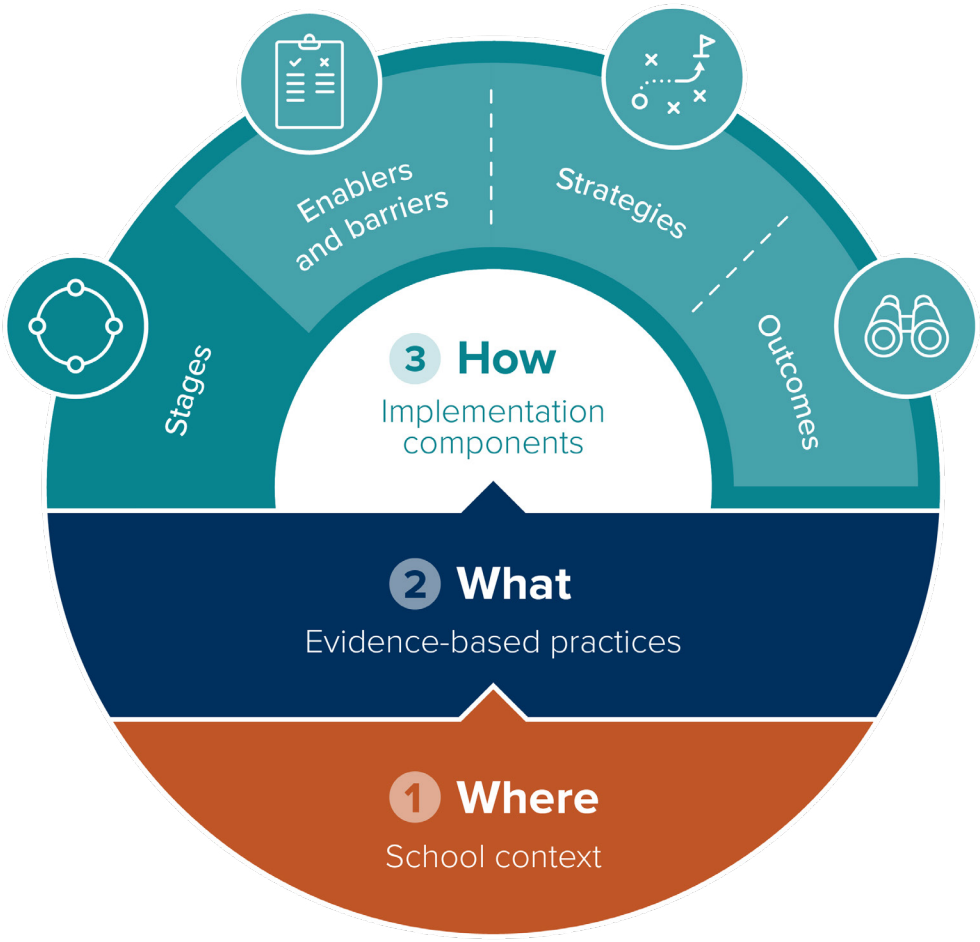
This approach has been developed based on key concepts from implementation literature, and has been tested and refined through the Learning Partner project.

For a detailed account of how this deliberate and structured approach was developed, see our discussion paper, Evidence-Informed Implementation in Schools.

For resources designed for school implementation teams, see our collection of practical resources for implementation in schools.

1 These education officers provide strategic and pedagogical support for networks of school leaders, and work in regional system roles rather than central system roles.

Figure 1: A deliberate and structured approach to implementing evidence-based teaching practices in schools



The Learning Partner project

Working alongside schools and regional system teams

In the Learning Partner project, AERO works with school leaders and regional system teams to better understand the implementation of evidence-based teaching practices in different school contexts. This collaboration enables AERO to learn alongside those who directly support teachers in strengthening their use of teaching practices. Through this work, key ideas from implementation research can be operationalised (or 'brought to life') in ways that are useful and usable for Australian schools.

Schools join the collaboration for 2 years. During that time, school implementation teams are supported by an AERO Implementation Consultant and/or a regional system team to develop their capability in and use of a deliberate and structured approach. In turn, school implementation teams work to support teachers in their schools to embed evidence-based teaching practices.

To date, 53 schools across 3 cohorts have participated in the Learning Partner project (see Appendix A). These schools are located in both urban and regional environments and are from government and Catholic sectors. All schools have focused on implementing explicit instruction.[2] This discussion paper focuses on insights from working with 33 of the schools in the third cohort (see Appendix A).

Iterations of the project so far

Each year of the Learning Partner project has refined and extended our work with schools and regional system teams.

The first iteration of the project in 2023 focused on how school leaders could use key concepts from implementation research on a day-to-day basis to help guide the implementation process and support improvement in teaching practice.

In 2024, we partnered with schools across a wider range of socio-economic backgrounds. We also included a greater focus on implementation leadership through school implementation teams (formed from school leaders, teachers and others in the school community). We provided guidance for these teams to develop their understanding of *both* explicit instruction and implementation processes.

In 2025, we partnered with an even wider range of school communities and focused more on forms of *implementation support* to schools. For example, we:

- partnered with schools with more diverse student populations,[3] secondary schools, a P–12 school and regional schools
- primarily supported schools in network- or cluster-sized groups of 10 to 25 schools
- intentionally provided these schools with 'light touch support' – a less direct but more scalable and efficient form of support than in previous years (see Box 2)
- collaborated with regional system teams (formed for the purpose of the project) to explore and further develop their role in supporting successful implementation in schools.[4]

2 To implement the pedagogical approach of explicit instruction (or explicit teaching), Learning Partner schools have focused on a number of the evidence-based teaching practices that align with how students learn best in AERO's model of learning and teaching. These practices have commonly included rules and routines, chunk content, explain learning objectives and teach explicitly.

3 Based on My School data, in 2025, we partnered with schools with a greater range of socio-economic backgrounds (from the fourth to 96th percentile in the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage [ICSEA]) and greater proportions of students with a language background other than English (up to 58%) and Indigenous students (up to 36%). By comparison, in 2024, we partnered with schools from the 13th to 85th percentile in ICSEA and with smaller proportions of students with a language background other than English (up to 25%) and Indigenous students (up to 28%).

4 Work with regional system teams took the form of up to 4 workshops for the year (one per term), up to 6 online or face-to-face meetings to discuss ways of supporting schools within their networks, shadowing of AERO Implementation Consultants on school visits and participation in the workshops for school implementation teams. This collaboration aimed to draw on regional system team members' knowledge of local school contexts and enhance their knowledge of explicit instruction, a deliberate and structured approach and forms of implementation support to schools. Ultimately, this was designed to enable more tailored implementation support to schools and ensure regional system teams could best support school implementation teams to apply a deliberate and structured approach in their schools.

Box 2: Light-touch support to schools in 2025

AERO provided light-touch support to 33 of the schools involved in the Learning Partner project in 2025. As in 2024, this support to schools intended to build the capability of school implementation teams to successfully lead the implementation of evidence-based teaching practices using the key components of a deliberate and structured approach. However, in line with our greater focus on providing *scalable* implementation support to schools, we provided different types of support at a smaller dosage.

Unlike the support provided to schools in previous iterations of the project, light-touch support:

- mainly used *group-based* implementation support (e.g., workshops with school implementation teams on a deliberate and structured approach and explicit instruction)
- spent more time working with school implementation teams rather than any other groups or individuals in schools
- usually directed modelling, observation and coaching support towards school implementation teams and coaching teams rather than towards teachers (so school implementation and/or coaching teams could, in turn, provide modelling and coaching to teachers in their schools)
- included more forms of hybrid (virtual and in-person) support rather than predominantly relying on in-person support.

Through this light-touch support, overall implementation support was intentionally reduced from 5.5 days per term, per school in 2024 to around 2 days per term, per school in 2025. This meant that, for example, one AERO Consultant could support up to 19 schools in their first year of the project compared to 3 schools in their first year in 2024.

In 2026, we are continuing to strengthen how we support schools in using a deliberate and structured approach. We are continuing to work with the third cohort of Learning Partner schools and their regional system teams to learn about scalable and effective implementation support (see What's next in 2026 and beyond).

Sharing learning about promising approaches to implementation

A key objective of the Learning Partner project is to learn how those leading and supporting implementation efforts in schools can successfully apply key ideas from implementation research, and then share our most widely relevant and actionable learning with the broader education community.

This discussion paper draws on 2 sources to present school leaders and regional system teams with insights relevant across different contexts:

1. the AERO school implementation team's ongoing monitoring and observations of the project since it began. This has involved gathering project data (e.g., school implementation plans, enablers and barriers data and time spent using specific implementation strategies) and recording ongoing learning and reflections (e.g., via AERO team reflection logs). Unless otherwise indicated, our 2025 insights are based on these project observations.
2. findings from a formative evaluation of the Learning Partner project carried out in 2025 (examining the first year of our work with the third cohort of the Learning Partner schools). Details of this evaluation are included in Appendix B.

Drawing on these sources, this discussion paper provides our interpretation of what we're hearing about implementation of evidence-based teaching practices on the ground in schools. It presents our learning at a point in time, and is designed to provide contextualised advice to various audiences in the wider education community.

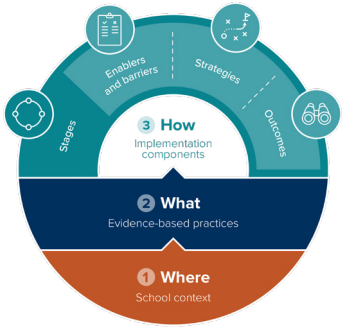
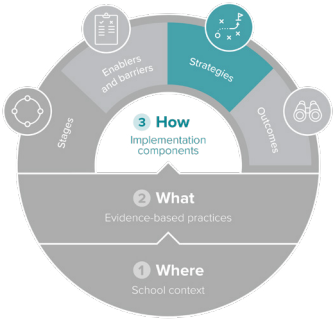
While sections of this discussion paper are informed by the 2025 formative evaluation, this discussion paper is neither a summary of the evaluation of the Learning Partner project nor a presentation of research findings.

Insights into implementation (so far)

Through our ongoing project observations and the 2025 formative evaluation, we have continued to learn a great deal about implementing evidence-based teaching practices in Australian contexts.

Table 1 summarises our key insights and how they relate to a deliberate and structured approach. The first insight draws largely on the formative evaluation and relates to the overall usefulness of the approach. Other insights draw more heavily on project observations and relate to specific aspects of evidence-informed implementation and implementation support.

Table 1: Insights into implementation based on our Learning Partner work in 2025

Insight	Connection with a deliberate and structured approach	Summary
1. A deliberate and structured approach to implementation continues to show promise, even with light-touch support.		• A third year of the Learning Partner project provides further evidence supporting the use of a deliberate and structured approach. • These promising indications were achievable even with light-touch support to Learning Partner schools.
2. While implementation should be tailored to individual contexts, similar contexts share some common considerations.		• Secondary schools may benefit from spending more time in the early stages of implementation to ensure leadership and professional learning structures are in place to support implementation across teaching teams. • Similarities in the implementation experiences of schools with high staff turnover, as well as in the experiences of smaller schools, can help to inform decision-making in those schools. • Schools with different contexts can still learn from each other's experiences.
3. Professional learning looks different when implementation is the goal.		• Carrying out professional learning cycles within a broader implementation effort often involves a shift in leaders' thinking about how they can best structure and support staff development. • Professional learning cycles are easier to run when specific structures and tools (related to leadership, resourcing and the practice itself) are in place. • Schools can run professional learning cycles with minimal external support, though upskilling of 'practice experts' in a school is often important for this.
4. Regional system teams are valued partners in implementation and, when supported, can be well placed to assist school leaders.		• Evidence-informed implementation can complement the improvement support that regional system teams provide to schools. • Guidance on evidence-informed implementation and implementation support can assist regional system teams with this work.

Insight 1: A deliberate and structured approach to implementation continues to show promise, even with light-touch support

Similar to the first 2 years,[5] a third year of the Learning Partner project has provided promising indications that taking a deliberate and structured approach to implementation can increase teacher knowledge of an evidence-based practice and support teachers in changing their teaching practice (see Table 2). The 2025 formative evaluation also identified promising indications in terms of the knowledge and skills needed to lead and support implementation. A key difference in 2025 was that these promising indications were achievable when schools were using a deliberate and structured approach with only light-touch support (rather than with the more intensive support provided in previous iterations of the Learning Partner project).

A further promising aspect is that evaluation participants typically rated the acceptability, feasibility and appropriateness of a deliberate and structured approach and of light-touch support very highly.[6]

Table 2: Promising indications of using a deliberate and structured approach identified in the 2025 formative evaluation[7]

Findings	Source
Practice knowledge and practice change among primary school teachers[8]	
• Analysis of survey responses indicated that teacher knowledge of explicit instruction increased (*n* = 83). • Teachers typically reported changing their teaching to align with explicit instruction (*n* = 73). • Nearly three-quarters (*n* = 52) of teachers reported planning to sustain and extend their use of explicit instruction during 2026. • One-quarter (*n* = 18) of teachers reported planning to sustain (but not extend) their use of explicit instruction during 2026.	Teacher surveys

5 Promising indications from Learning Partner work in 2023 and 2024 are described in our first and second Insights into Implementation discussion papers, respectively.

6 Acceptability, feasibility and appropriateness are implementation outcomes. These outcomes indicate if participants in the Learning Partner project were willing to engage with a deliberate and structured approach (acceptability), believed it was realistic to use this approach with their available resources (feasibility) and considered it fitting their context and needs (appropriateness). These outcomes were measured in the formative evaluation using validated tools from Weiner et al. (2017).

7 In lieu of other published instruments, the formative evaluation needed to create bespoke measurement tools to measure both explicit instruction and implementation knowledge. These tools hadn't been tested for reliability and validity prior to use, and had lower than acceptable Cronbach Alpha scores. For this reason, any formal statistical significance testing would need to be interpreted with caution.

8 Secondary schools were still in the earlier Explore or Prepare stages of implementation when evaluation data was collected (i.e., professional learning cycles hadn't yet started), so secondary school teacher data wasn't collected.

Findings	Source
Knowledge and skills for leading and supporting implementation	
Analysis of survey responses indicated that knowledge of both a deliberate and structured approach and of explicit instruction increased among school implementation team members (*n* = 76).	School implementation team surveys
Analysis of survey responses indicated that knowledge of both a deliberate and structured approach and of explicit instruction increased among regional system team members (*n* = 8).	Regional system team surveys
Perceptions and application of a deliberate and structured approach	
School implementation team members typically rated a deliberate and structured approach very highly in terms of its: • Acceptability: *Mean = 18.0 out of 20 (n = 71)* • Feasibility: *Mean = 17.8 out of 20 (n = 69)* • Appropriateness: *Mean = 17.7 out of 20 (n = 71).*	School implementation team surveys
Regional system team members (*n* = 8) typically rated a deliberate and structured approach very highly in terms of its: • Acceptability: *Mean = 18.9 out of 20* • Feasibility: *Mean = 18.5 out of 20* • Appropriateness: *Mean = 18.5 out of 20.*	Regional system team surveys
One-quarter (*n* = 17) of school implementation team members reported already applying a deliberate and structured approach to other initiatives within their schools (beyond the Learning Partner project).	School implementation team surveys
Regional system team members reported applying a deliberate and structured approach to support schools in their region (beyond the Learning Partner project).	Regional system team interviews
Perceptions of light-touch support	
School implementation team members typically rated light-touch support very highly in terms of its: • Acceptability: *Mean = 18.7 out of 20 (n = 66)* • Feasibility: *Mean = 18.6 out of 20 (n = 64)* • Appropriateness: *Mean = 18.7 out of 20 (n = 64).*	School implementation team surveys

Three years of promising indications from formative evaluations of the project – including now with a light-touch level of support – provide the impetus to continue using and refining this approach for the benefit of more schools.

Insight 2: While implementation should be tailored to individual contexts, similar contexts share some common considerations

It's well-established that implementation is not one-size-fits-all, but a flexible process that needs to adapt to local contexts and needs (Koh & Askell-Williams, 2021, Nilsen & Bernhardsson, 2019). Insufficient consideration of school context is a common reason implementation efforts falter (Moore et al., 2024).

For this reason, schools are encouraged to apply the core components of a deliberate and structured approach in ways that meet the needs of their setting. In the 2025 formative evaluation, regional system teams noted the value of this flexibility, with one regional system team member explaining:

> [An] important part of the project was schools weren't dictated to [about] which strategies they were going to use. That was contextualised to schools … [based on] where they were at and where they needed to go.

Tailoring to context must be done carefully, however. In 2025, we learnt more about which adaptations are most effective in different contexts, and how these can inform implementation in similar settings.[9] These overarching patterns and adaptations are outlined in the following sections.

Secondary schools

Our insights highlight how secondary schools can present a notably different implementation context to primary schools. In particular, secondary schools in the Learning Partner project often needed to spend more time (e.g., one or 2 more school terms) in the early Explore and Prepare stages of implementation to ensure necessary structures were in place before teaching teams engaged in professional learning cycles. Secondary schools commonly used this time to upskill their school implementation teams in a deliberate and structured approach and consider how to provide modelling and coaching to larger groups of staff and/or staff across different learning areas.

We also learnt more about the need to plan around differences in organisational structures between primary and secondary schools when implementing new practices. For example:

- Secondary school teachers typically specialise in learning areas, so it's particularly beneficial to clarify what a given evidence-based practice will look like in different learning areas. To increase buy-in, modelling and coaching may need to be carried out by staff with experience in the relevant learning area.
- Arranging school calendars and timetables to allow for implementation activities presents both opportunities (e.g., if staff are off class at the same time for a coaching conversation) and challenges (e.g., to avoid senior school assessment periods) in secondary schools.
- Bringing together teams from across a secondary school who do not typically work together can require additional coordination and attention to ways of working.
- Given the size and breadth of priorities within secondary schools, greater efforts may be needed to ensure alignment between priorities of school implementation teams and school leadership (e.g., so school leaders who are not on the implementation team are still aware of and support the work).

9 While some contextual factors are dynamic (e.g., school priorities shift over time), others are more stable (e.g., school size). This insight focuses on relatively stable contextual features.

Schools with high staff turnover

In schools with high staff turnover and/or staff shortages, our insights indicate that:

- Consideration of who will form the school implementation team is particularly important, as some stability of members over time will help to ensure continuity of the implementation effort.
- Preparing 'lasting' resources to support the practice (e.g., instructional playbooks describing the practice) is an important implementation strategy. It can assist with onboarding new leaders and teachers and provide a reference point on what has been agreed.
- Implementation efforts may need to return to the Prepare and Deliver stages of implementation regularly to ensure new staff – and staff in new roles – are supported to reach and remain within the final Sustain stage.

Smaller schools

In schools with relatively small numbers of teaching staff (i.e., fewer than 7 full time equivalent teaching staff), our insights highlight that:

- implementation teams will naturally also be smaller (e.g., one or 2 people rather than the suggested 3 to 8 people)
- implementation team roles can be more flexible, with responsibilities shared across team member(s)
- depending on existing levels of practice expertise in the school, modelling may involve more video examples and coaching may take place via video with external experts
- where smaller schools are located in areas where access to casual relief teachers is limited, the timing of professional learning cycles may need to align with availability of these teachers.

Learning from each other

Despite the importance of considering individual and similar contexts when tailoring implementation, we are learning that schools find it useful to learn from each other's experiences of using a deliberate and structured approach. Even if those schools have quite different contexts, the objective is still the same – for evidence-informed implementation to become the norm in schools and for evidence-based teaching to become everyday practice in classrooms.

Exploring the experiences of schools with different contexts can also support regional system teams to build a deeper understanding of how a deliberate and structured approach can be tailored to different settings. As one regional system team participant in the 2025 formative evaluation noted:

> To have our purist secondary schools, to have a P–12 school, and then to have our primary schools … as a contributor to a much larger picture, I think having that broad cross-section of schools has been really helpful.

Insight 3: Professional learning looks different when implementation is the goal

Professional learning sessions are a mainstay of most education systems. Yet, isolated professional learning sessions (e.g., one-off staff knowledge-building sessions) are unlikely to lead to sustained changes in teaching practice across teaching teams or at a whole-school level (Lord et al., 2017).

Rather than relying on one-off professional learning sessions, a deliberate and structured approach uses professional learning *cycles* as a core implementation strategy. These cycles consist of connected activities (knowledge-building sessions, planning support, modelling and coaching) that directly support teachers in using an evidence-based teaching practice in their classrooms.[10] These activities are sequenced over time and include ways to observe and evaluate change in practice.

The 2025 Learning Partner work extended our understanding of professional learning cycles in 3 ways.

A shift in thinking

First, carrying out professional learning cycles within a broader implementation effort often involved a shift in school leaders' thinking about how best to structure and support teacher practice development. Among other things, this shift involved:

- using an implementation plan to guide thinking about *when* professional learning cycles should take place in an implementation effort, alongside consideration of how professional learning fits within a school calendar
- checking enablers and barriers before beginning professional learning cycles, helping to move beyond any assumptions as to what these enablers and barriers might be[11]
- allocating *specific*, *pre-planned roles* to members of the school implementation team and/or coaching team to lead each activity in a cycle, reducing reliance on the same one or 2 people for most professional learning
- using implementation outcomes (e.g., fidelity) to monitor the *progress* of each professional learning cycle and inform future professional learning priorities, rather than using a predetermined professional learning schedule and working through this week by week. This ensures each element of a practice is embedded before staff move to a new focus for professional learning.

10 In September 2026, AERO will publish a series of practical resources for school implementation teams detailing these activities in professional learning cycles.

11 For example, if a key enabler emerged that staff already saw the practice as based on strong evidence, knowledge-building sessions could move through foundational content more quickly.

Supporting structures and tools

Second, we are learning how professional learning cycles are a more useful implementation strategy when schools have specific structures and tools in place.

Most importantly, our Learning Partner work has continually highlighted the importance of ensuring all activities in a professional learning cycle are *properly resourced* (e.g., through time release for coaches to observe lessons). This requires principals to prioritise these activities within their school budgets. Of all the core implementation strategies,[12] professional learning cycles are likely to be the most resource intensive, but they are also essential to an implementation effort and the main activity of the Deliver stage of implementation. Where schools have constrained resourcing, key decisions can help ensure the implementation effort remains feasible (e.g., starting with a smaller group of teaching staff or drawing on practice expertise within their system or nearby schools).

From larger Learning Partner schools, we are learning how forming a *coaching team* alongside the implementation team can help to support consistent practice at scale. Coaching teams enabled planning support, modelling and coaching to be provided to more classroom teachers. Successful use of coaching teams appeared to rely on training members of these teams in both the practice and how to coach, and ensuring all coaches had a shared understanding of their school's implementation goal.

In terms of tools used in Learning Partner schools, *modelling and coaching checklists* played an important role in strengthening fidelity by setting out exactly what elements of a practice a professional learning cycle would focus on, and ensuring staff had a shared understanding of these elements. These short, written proformas supported teachers and coaches to focus on specific techniques during modelling, observations and coaching conversations, and guided reflective discussions on what was going well and what could be improved.

12 Core implementation strategies in a deliberate and structured approach include forming an implementation team, drafting an implementation plan, communicating commitment to the change, delivering professional learning cycles and resourcing implementation efforts.

Building internal practice expertise

Third, our 2025 work highlighted that professional learning cycles can be run with minimal external support when schools take a deliberate and structured approach to implementation and develop internal practice expertise. Building expertise among staff leading implementation is important, as many Australian schools don't have significant resources to continually invest in training courses or externally provided modelling and coaching for all staff. Building internal expertise also strengthens capability for future implementation efforts.

Data from the formative evaluation indicated that many Learning Partner primary schools[13] were able to draw on internal expertise to support professional learning cycles. For example, 91% of primary school teachers (*n* = 87) participating in the formative evaluation reported they had watched a modelled lesson during 2025, and 85% these teachers indicated the modelling was delivered by a member of their school community. Similarly, 70% (*n* = 67) of primary school teachers reported they had participated in coaching sessions, and 93% of these teachers participated in coaching with a member of their school community. Even when relying on internal capacity and expertise, participants viewed the overall deliberate and structured implementation approach as being feasible and appropriate in their context.[14]

Building internal capability in running professional learning cycles often required schools to first develop a small group of staff as practice experts. Where Learning Partner schools did not already have staff with strong expertise in the practice or established coaching cultures and structures, this work typically required a longer Prepare stage of implementation to ensure staff were equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills.

13 Professional learning cycles had not yet started in Learning Partner secondary schools when evaluation data was collected (see footnote 8).

14 While the feasibility and appropriateness of professional learning cycles themselves was not asked about in the 2025 formative evaluation, professional learning cycles form a core strategy within a deliberate and structured approach to implementation.

Insight 4: Regional system teams are valued partners in implementation and, when supported, can be well placed to assist school leaders

School implementation teams benefit from support for leading implementation in their schools (AERO, 2025). In 2025, we learnt more about how education systems and sectors can provide this support at scale through regional system personnel, such as Directors of Educational Leadership (DELs) in New South Wales and Senior Education Advisors within Brisbane Catholic Education. These roles commonly provide strategic and pedagogical support to 10 to 25 schools – a scale that helped inform the size of the school networks we worked with in the Learning Partner project.

Supporting school leaders

Regional system teams who are skilled in evidence-informed implementation can be well placed to support school leaders with their implementation efforts, adding value to current system work. In particular, insights from our Learning Partner project suggest regional system teams can:

- help to ensure alignment in systems and processes related to implementation at the school and system levels
- support principals to prioritise implementation efforts and align these efforts with broader school goals
- support school implementation teams with initial capacity-building (e.g., developing their understanding of a deliberate and structured approach)
- support school implementation teams to monitor the health of an implementation effort and maintain accountability for its progress
- connect school leaders to relevant practice expertise available within their system (e.g., to literacy or numeracy leads with expertise in explicit instruction)
- connect school leaders within their networks to share implementation leadership advice and see what consistent explicit instruction practice looks like in neighbouring schools that have successfully embedded it.

For example, in the 2025 formative evaluation, one regional system team member noted how they connect schools within their network to learn from one another's implementation efforts:[15]

> [The schools] all learn from one another's practice. We really promote [a deliberate and structured approach]. I have a weekly meeting with the network and I always talk about … things people are doing [to implement explicit instruction]. So, part of it is celebrating the work [schools across the network are] doing.

15 About half of the schools in this network had participated in the Learning Partner project.

Supporting regional system teams

While Learning Partner work highlighted specific ways regional system teams can support schools with implementation, it also highlighted the importance of supporting regional system teams to successfully carry out this work. Insights from the project suggest that regional system teams may be better placed to support school leaders when they first have opportunities to build their own knowledge and skills in implementation support within a structured and deliberate implementation approach. More specifically, regional system staff may benefit from guidance in:

- providing differentiated implementation support matched to school needs (e.g., by regularly reviewing each school's implementation progress and making decisions about how to best allocate implementation support)
- forming a team to provide system support and avoid relying on a single person (e.g., to buffer from personnel changes over time and to recognise that regional system staff also have multiple competing priorities).

Recognising that regional system teams also require support highlights the potential importance of a 'cascade of support' – from AERO, to regional system teams, and then to school implementation teams – which we continue to explore alongside schools and systems in 2026.[16]

What's next in 2026 and beyond

Sustained improvement in teaching practice depends on effective implementation of evidence-based practices, and there's still more to learn with schools and systems about how implementation can be best carried out and supported at scale. To this end, our work in 2026 and 2027 will focus on refining how implementation is supported in practice, and sharing new resources and learning with the wider education community.

Refining and extending the Learning Partner project

Informed by progress to date, in 2026, we are continuing our work with the third cohort of Learning Partner schools and their regional system teams. A key focus in this work remains exploring the level of support that most school leaders require (from AERO and from regional system teams) to lead and sustain implementation in their schools. Specifically, we're working to:

- find out if light-touch support continues to be helpful to schools in diverse contexts during the later (Deliver and Sustain) stages of implementation
- understand to what extent regional system teams can provide implementation support to schools within and beyond the project
- adjust and enhance the types of support regional system teams might value from AERO

16 Regional system leaders can play a powerful role in tailoring system initiatives to school context while maintaining alignment with system priorities. How systems can support the adoption of evidence-based teaching practices in schools, and the role of regional system leaders in this, is discussed in detail in AERO's guidance report, Leveraging Evidence for System Support (Lind et al., 2026).

- investigate the various functions required in a regional system team to support schools with implementation. For example, regional system team members may contribute to different implementation support functions, with some focusing on monitoring, accountability and leadership support, and others assisting with day-to-day problem-solving.

To further strengthen the implementation guidance and support available to the Australian education community, in 2027 we plan to expand our focus on scalable models of support. In particular, we will:

- investigate forms of implementation support that are even less intensive than our 'light-touch support', so that AERO could potentially provide this support to more schools across Australia
- continue working alongside regional system teams to consider appropriate and feasible ways for them to support their schools with implementation at scale, including in regional and remote areas.

In the longer term, we would like to explore ways that AERO can provide support, advice and guidance to all regional system staff who are supporting schools with evidence-informed implementation.

Sharing new resources and learning

In September 2026, we will publish a third suite of practical resources for school implementation teams, informed by the insights in this discussion paper, as well as implementation literature. These insights will focus on how:

- a deliberate and structured approach can be tailored to context
- professional learning cycles can be structured and carried out to strengthen implementation
- implementation outcomes can track progress and help inform decision-making.

These resources are intended to provide all Australian schools with guidance in using a deliberate and structured approach to successfully implement evidence-based teaching practices in their schools.

As we have done since 2023, AERO will also continue to share in various formats what we learn about effective implementation to support all schools and systems committed to sustained improvement.

Appendix A: Schools working with AERO in the Learning Partner project

Table A1 details the 3 cohorts of schools that have participated in the Learning Partner project to date.

Table A1: Schools working with AERO in the Learning Partner project

Year	Total participating schools	Schools in their first year of the project	Schools in their second year of the project	Location	Implementation focus
2023	9 primary schools	9 schools (Cohort 1)	N/A	New South Wales (government), Queensland (Catholic) and Victoria (government)	Explicit instruction in either mathematics or writing across Years 3 to 6
2024	14 primary schools	6 schools (Cohort 2)	8 schools (Cohort 1)	New South Wales (government), Queensland (Catholic), South Australia (Catholic) and Victoria (government)	Explicit instruction in either mathematics or writing, at the whole-school level
2025	44 primary, secondary and P–12 schools	38 schools (Cohort 3)	6 schools (Cohort 2)		Primary schools: Explicit instruction in mathematics, vocabulary, reading or writing, usually at the whole-school level Secondary schools: Explicit instruction, usually at the whole-school level
2026	37 primary, secondary and P–12 schools (including 33 who received light-touch support)	N/A	37 schools (Cohort 3)	New South Wales (government), Queensland (Catholic) and Victoria (government)	

Appendix B: The 2025 formative evaluation

Since implementation in schools is naturally complex, and evidence-informed implementation is a relatively new focus in education (Moore et al., 2024), ongoing refinement is a key part of the Learning Partner project. To support this iterative work, each year of the project has involved a formative evaluation (focusing on real-time learning while the project is running, rather than on outcomes collected at the end of the project).

The 2025 formative evaluation was carried out by a dedicated evaluation project team at AERO. The evaluation collected data from school implementation team members and classroom teachers from the 33 schools receiving light-touch implementation support from both AERO Implementation Consultants and regional system teams,[17] as well as 11 regional system team members across 2 systems.

Data collection included both quantitative and qualitative data. Data was collected using:

- 2 online surveys of teachers, school implementation team members and regional system team members
- structured interview sampling with school implementation team members (n = 7) and regional system team members (n = 5).

Implementation plans were submitted by 31 schools and subsequently analysed using a bespoke rubric to provide a quality rating of each plan. Data collection took place at 2 points during the school year (as schools commenced the Learning Partner project, and again in term 4, 2025).

The evaluation included a range of indications, including:

- knowledge of implementation
- knowledge of explicit instruction
- exposure to modelling and coaching
- the acceptability, feasibility and appropriateness of both a deliberate and structured approach and explicit instruction.

Evaluation participants also provided feedback about:

- their experience with deliberate and structured implementation
- their experience of implementation support from AERO and their regional system team
- aspects they found most useful and aspects that could be improved
- what (if any) benefits they experienced or observed.

17 The evaluation also reported on the experiences of 3 schools receiving more direct forms of implementation support, and on experiences of 6 schools from the second cohort of the Learning Partner project. As these samples were small (and potentially identifiable) and we have not previously reported on insights regarding provision of implementation support through regional system teams, this discussion paper includes evaluation findings regarding the larger sample of 33 schools.

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230726.SS.AA.V1