

Growing Ideas Through Evidence

LLEAP found that relationships and activities of schools, not-for-profits and philanthropy generally seek to:

Overcome barriers to student learning

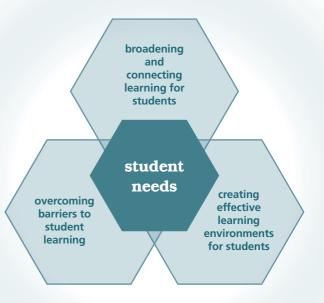
Access to education is a basic human right. It is a gateway to social and personal development, learning and achievement, understanding and future economic opportunities. Single or multiple factors may prevent access to education for students. These include socio-economic background; physical and/or mental health; learning differences; attitudes to school or students; expectations and aspirations; and geographic isolation. Any or all of these may impact on the access to, engagement in and continuity of education for students.

Create effective learning environments for students

Learning environments characterised, not only by 'bricks and mortar', but by positive interpersonal relationships and deep learning by teachers and students, can promote learning and achievement, social connections and wellbeing. Students who enjoy supportive relationships with peers, mentors, teachers, family and other significant others are better able to find assistance when needed, and to learn from and with those around them.

Broaden and connect learning for students

Education prepares students for the future, developing their confidence and capacity to flourish in the world. Education framed in this way recognises that rich learning abounds beyond the school gates and can contribute to the development of students within school.⁴ In this way schools and their communities can help students develop a 'social literacy' for living.⁵



⁴ Lucas, B., Claxton, G. and Spencer, E. (2013). Expansive Education:

Teaching learners for the real world. ACER Press and Open University Press

⁵ CBI (2012). First Steps – A new approach for our schools. www.cbi.org.uk

In 2013, the LLEAP Survey findings showed that relationships and activities across education and philanthropy are hampered when the foundations for relationships to flourish have not been laid. This can be seen in the top three issues preventing schools and not-for-profits engaging with philanthropy, which the survey identified:

- Culture: Don't have a culture of seeking this type of support;
- **How:** Don't know how to collaborate with organisations that can access this support;
- **How:** Don't know how to devote resources to these relationships.

More broadly, our work has shown that for many schools, developing school-community relationships - whether this is with business, philanthropy, not-for-profits, families or other groups - is an area they can find challenging. The reasons for this are numerous and different.

For some, it may simply be a case of never having done this before and so their awareness, confidence and capabilities need to be developed. Each LLEAP Survey has found, for example, that 9 out of 10 schools have never or rarely connected with philanthropy. For others, it may be that they are yet to see and understand the two-way benefits of such relationships.

Over the course of LLEAP, two evaluation issues related to improving the engagement of philanthropy in education emerged:

How have you come to view that a particular outcome area is what you need to focus on?

The national LLEAP survey findings have assisted in illuminating what matters most to schools, not-for-profits and philanthropics and in seeing patterns of commonality and difference across and between the groups.

Even if you know what you're trying to change and for whom, how do you know whether improvements are being made?

Failing to identify and articulate whether improvements are happening can be the undoing of a project or program even before it gets off the ground. It can also hamper bringing on board new supporters, or communicating the impact of the work to others.

The cases in the previous LLEAP *Guides* have gone some way in helping respond to these issues (See page 97). We build on this in the current *Guide*.

'Until doing this [LLEAP] survey I was unaware that these organisations were available to apply to or contact – so very limited information sources.'
(2013 School respondent)



Why evaluate?

Evaluation is important if you want to:

- Find out how well you are addressing an identified need
- Decide whether 'x' intervention is making a difference
- Assess whether or not the outcomes have justified the effort
- Know if there are better ways of doing things
- Know if there are any unintended consequences
- Help attract funding by providing evidence of effectiveness or efficiency or both
- Help attract more or different partners

To evaluate means?

At the most informal level we evaluate every day in all kinds of ways. This involves identifying an issue, gathering information (even if only from your memory) and then making decisions based on that information. Doing this helps to improve understanding of an issue and as a result, what actions to take. In an every day sense, we might evaluate, 'What should I wear today?' 'How did I play today in the match?' 'Which route to work should I take?'

At a formal level, evaluation means the systematic gathering and assessment of information that helps provide useful feedback about 'something' (e.g. a need, a process, an approach, a program or a project). As with the every day examples above, evaluating involves being clear about what the issue is you are trying to address (and how you came to this view) and what you are trying to discover about it.

In education, we might ask, for example, 'How effective were the learning processes used in class today?' 'To what extent and for whom did 'x' program work?' 'Are in-kind and financial resources being used efficiently and effectively?' Discovering answers to these questions involves making decisions about what information you need to gather and how you might gather it.

Types of evaluation?

The relationship between an evaluation and its impact is not straightforward. We live in a complex world. It is impossible to know all the factors that may be at work say, in a school in the families of the students at the school, in the community and so on. Knowledge will only ever be partial. Sometimes experiments can be used to help deal with this complexity. Experiments, however, are difficult to set up

evaluating involves being clear about what the issue is you are trying to you are trying to discover about it

address...and what

because they can have deep ethical issues and almost always complicated practical problems to deal with. Why should only some schools, for example, be given access to an anti-bullying program while others are excluded because the experimental design requires such an arrangement? What cost for those students not accessing this program? There are compromises to be made, and these are often governed by the amount of resources available (including time), the burden the evaluation imposes on schools or the community, the type of program being examined and so on. At some point evaluators must decide what can best be done,

What an evaluation can help with is clarifying the purposes of a program and how it is supposed to act. This cleaning up can be very helpful, even if the outcomes of the program prove elusive when it comes to measuring them.

and what that might imply for the quality of the information gathered, and the decisions that will flow from the use of this information. An evaluation, typically, is a juggling act; it is more an art than a science.

Terminology used in association with evaluation that you sometimes might hear:

Impact

The effect – good or bad – on a significant issue [e.g. overcoming poverty; meeting the housing needs of the unemployed; ensuring all children can read etc]. This can tend to be long-term in focus because the issue is so significant, multifaceted etc.

Outcomes

What has changed? For Whom? [i.e. the improvement: improved literacy, numeracy; improved student capabilities; improved wellbeing etc]. Collectively, outcomes are the building blocks towards impact. These, along with outputs, can provide interim indicators of progress towards a larger impact.

Outputs

What has resulted from the partnership? e.g. Who has been reached? - we reached all our year 'x' students; we ran 15 mentoring sessions / workshops for staff etc. Or what have you produced? - we produced a video for sharing within our school community and within our partner's organisation

Inputs

What resources did you put into the activity or relationship? e.g. a dedicated skilled volunteering coordinator.

Reporting on the inputs can help a funder and others see where resources have been directed. But where you want to focus your reporting is on the outputs and especially the outcomes. Together, these can provide indicators of progress towards making an impact on a big issue.



Noticing what and how?

A big part of evaluating is 'noticing'. Think of the great (big and small) discoveries that have been made in other fields (see break out box). If people had not expanded their thinking and practice around 'noticing', then would we, for example, be doing things the way we do today?

The adages, 'what gets measured, gets done' and 'what gets measured, gets noticed' is being challenged in education. Improving outcomes for students means we need to rethink what we notice, how we notice and whose noticing counts.

In this Guide, we have taken the key improvement outcome areas from the LLEAP 2013 Survey (e.g. Student engagement) and developed an 'Evidence and Approaches Stimulus Tool' (EAST). This table shows examples of evidence and how approaches can provide information of both kinds (e.g. number of attendees at focus group/comments made at focus group). The key to 'noticing' is going into the design of improvement practices with your 'eyes' (and 'ears') open. In this sense, evaluation and improvement can sit hand-in-hand. For example, as illustrated in the Big Picture Education

Australia case study (page 38), they include in their learning approaches a number of public exhibitions during which students make presentations. These are not only integral to the design of Big Picture, they also allow them to gather evidence around identifying, for example, student pro-social capabilities.

On 21 April 1820, during a lecture, Hans Christian Ørsted noticed a compass needle deflected from magnetic north when an electric current from a battery was switched on and off, confirming a direct relationship between electricity and magnetism. Relevant today in everything from medical scanners to car engines.

Growing ideas through evidence









Evidence and Approaches Stimulus Tool (EAST)

Evaluation information can be summative (e.g. real retention rates) and it can also be formative (e.g. feedback from a student and mentor session). It can be quantitative (e.g. the number of students who get a job or go onto further learning post school) and qualitative (e.g. unsolicited comments from parents about their child's enjoyment of a project). What this means is that noticing improvement can come from many different sources and perspectives. As such, approaches used in your 'innovations' can be a source of improvement AND evidence.

What can EAST help with?

- Inspire and expand thinking and creativity ('We hadn't thought of that as a source of evidence.' 'What could we be noticing?')
- Promote discussion in relation to specific outcomes ('What do we notice if student engagement is improving?' 'What do the students say we should be noticing?')
- Invite 'noticing' at different levels micro (individual, within 'classroom'), meso (organisational) and macro (whole of community)
- Keep the focus on outcomes ('Why might noticing 'x' help us come to a view about student engagement?)

What can't EAST help with?

- The examples stop short of specifying what would be considered 'good enough' improvement (e.g. full student attendance) or 'how much', 'how' and 'how often' the information might be gathered (e.g. from all parents, students and teachers at the school; via an attitude survey administered online annually; via pre and post assessments). These types of decisions, important as they are, will be context and capacity dependent.
- Not all of the examples listed will be appropriate or relevant for your purposes. They are presented as 'stimulus' information.
- Neither are the examples 'locked' to specific outcomes, the information gathered may be relevant to a number of outcomes.

To assist link EAST to illustrative cases of practice, the evidence or program approaches within the tool are at times accompanied with a page reference to a specific case.

Improving

What might help you notice whether improvements are being made? Through... Evidence such as,

Student engagement

- Visible signs of student enthusiasm (e.g. unsolicited positive comments from students, parents or industry partners). (See Case 4: page 38)
- Students' body language changes in sessions from just sitting in a chair to leaning forward; walking to walking confidently. (See Case 9: page 62)
- The students' emotive reactions to the school (i.e. happy, smiling youth!).
- Students referring the program to peers with similar challenges. (See Case 3: page 34)
- Questions directed at teachers and fellow students in discussion indicate a desire to learn.
- Students personally connecting with the 'topic', 'teaching and learning methods'.
- Students making connections between their learning and their community (local, national or global).
- Collaborating with peers.
- Students supporting each other with skills and knowledge (i.e. helping each other).
- Students demonstrating greater confidence in addressing course requirements.
- Self-management skills (e.g. is able to prioritise activities and manage their time in order to meet deadlines, is able to follow instructions etc.). (See Case 7: page 54)
- Discussions continuing out of the classroom.
- Completion of set tasks.
- Students requesting continuation and extension of tasks including literacy and numeracy activities. (See Case 3: page 34)
- Students continuing to work on their community projects out of school hours. (See Case 9: page 62)
- School and community leadership roles.
- Voluntary participation in different aspects of school life (e.g. council, fundraising, special events).
- Student use of the library, sporting, science or other such facilities (school and public).
- Students continuing at school or reengaging with local educational options (e.g. previous school; TAFE, training).
- Number of children starting school who have attended pre-school. (See Case 12: page 72)
- Number of absences recorded for children registered at pre-school to assist identifying barriers to attendance. (See Case 12: page 72)
- Increased library membership for children aged 0 to 6. (See Case 12: page 72)
- Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data. (See Case 12: page 72)



Case 13: page 77)

21101. 2 vidence and approaches stimulas tool	
Improving	What might help you notice whether improvements are being made? Through Approaches such as,
Student engagement	• Expanding the idea of 'classrooms' to include a diversity of sites (e.g. poultry houses). (See Case 1: page 24)
	 A focus on Functional literacy and numeracy, permitting extended learning options and improved self-competency. (See Case 3: page 34)
	 Students complete Learning Plans each term and exhibit what they have learnt four times a year. (See Case 4: page 38)
	• Students, who previously would not read due to trust issues or feelings of embarrassment, will read to dogs. The dogs are the 'volunteers'. (See Case 3: page 34)
	Engagement as a student coach or mentor.
	• Students undertake short-term micro-social skills, referred to as focus plans in the Hands on Learning context (e.g. show us you can look people in the eye when you speak to them, show us you don't always have to have the last word etc.). (See Case 7: page 54)
	 A staff observation form for each child details engagement with activities; interaction with other children; ability to listen, cooperate and follow instructions; communication with others; level of independence; levels of aggression. (See Case 12: page 72)
	• Students creating their own books through the process of book making. (See

Improving

What might help you notice whether improvements are being made? Through... Evidence such as,

Student capabilities

e.g. Personal and social competence:

- In the Early Years, e.g. Students are taking turns; taking direction; making decisions. (See Case 12: page 72)
- In Primary/Secondary, e.g. Students give public presentations. (See Case 9: page 62)
- Students showing a willingness 'to have a go' and compare their performance with students within and beyond the school. (See Case 2: page 29)
- Students taking on roles within a team (e.g. role of team leader for a particular job within a project, being an encourager of others, teaching someone a new skill etc). (See Case 7: page 54)
- Setting and achieving goals. (See Case 9: page 62)

e.g. Innovation and enterprise:

 Students researching and turning ideas into enterprises (e.g. lavender farming). (See Case 1: page 24)

e.g. Leadership:

- Monitoring the number and type of individual student development (e.g. students taking on a visible leadership role, whereas in the past they did not. Students hosting students from other schools.) (See Case 2: page 29)
- Students are called upon by external groups to give a formal presentation. (See Case 11: page 68)

e.g. Intercultural understanding:

 Students submitting a major project demonstrating benchmarks in this ACARA capability.

Through... Approaches such as,

Student capabilities

- Annual school hosted curriculum events where peer to peer sharing is the norm. (See Case 1: page 24)
- Students participate in two-terms of cultural understanding prior to going on trip to China. This not only improved the experience for students, but also provided parents, teachers and the students with a baseline from which they could see and hear improvements in their communication. (See Case 2: page 29)
- Older students mentoring young students. (See Case 1: page 24)
- Membership of student council.
- Teacher reflections on progression.
- Formal ceremonies to meet with all scholarship recipients. (See Case 11: page 68)
- Students undergo coaching in 'networking' and then get an opportunity to practice these skills at a business event. (See Case 11: page 68)



Improving

What might help you notice whether improvements are being made? Through... Evidence such as,

Social and emotional wellbeing

- Incidences of bullying (cyber, physical).
- Students and teachers are valuing the opportunity to develop close and productive relationships. Parents are valuing this too. (See Case 4: page 38)
- Peer relationships.
- Relationships with teachers and other adults. (See Case 7: page 54)
- Students talk in class with volunteers about their future aspirations and expectations. (See Case 8: page)
- Parents are reporting that their child is feeling safe, motivated and is learning. (See Case 4: page 38)
- Proportion of households where school-age children and adolescents where their neighbourhood is perceived as safe or very safe.
- Intentional self-harm hospitalisation rate.
- The rate of children who were the subject of care and protection orders.
- The rate of children who were the subject of child protection.
- A significant relationship with an adult(s) / mentor other than a direct family member.
- Positive associations with reading and sharing stories evidenced by encouraging feedback from loved ones and reading more books. (See Case 13: page 77)

Through... Approaches such as,

Social and emotional wellbeing

- Students articulate their growth in confidence and public speaking skills from regularly exhibiting their work to peers, teachers and family. (See Case 4: page 38)
- Peer teaching and learning scheme.
- Student wellbeing survey.
- One to one coaching/tutoring.
- Participation in community volunteering.
- Participation in whole day/week curriculum projects.
- Tailored work experience.
- Are connected to a positive adult role model through regular volunteer support at the school. (See Case 8: page 59)
- A simple student feedback form using emoticons to assess how they feel about being in the program. (See Case 12: page 72)
- A health and wellbeing survey is administered at the beginning and end of the program. (See Case 12: page 72)



Improving What might help you notice whether improvements are being made? Through... Evidence such as, Gain and growth scores in NAPLAN looking for a reduction in 'red flags' on relevant dimensions. (See Case 6: page 49) Achievement in various a school's tests of literacy and numeracy. The proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum

- standards in literacy and numeracy.

 Being recognised through an award. (e.g. National award to a school or NfP)
- Students going on to do further learning, traineeships or employment.
- Students saying they feel better prepared for post-school life. (See Case 4: page 38)
- Visits to the school from other schools, politicians, academics to learn about what they doing to be getting such good improvements.

Through... Approaches such as,

Academic outcomes

- Schools in the program provide an annual written report that includes feedback on 'where are students now'. (See Case 4: page 38)
- School has developed its own tool to understand student achievement in numeracy relative to national minimum standards and/or state averages.

Through... Evidence such as,

Student attendance

- Attendance records by year.
- Unexplained absence frequency.
- · Lateness or half-day/partial day attendance.
- Injury hospitalisation rate.
- Suspension rate.
- Student attitude toward academic subjects.

Through... Approaches such as,

Student attendance

- Student surveys seeking to understand barriers to attendance.
- Student focus groups to explore support ideas.
- Parent surveys or via Facebook seeking to understand barriers to attendance.
- Student achievement data is used to help clarify and understand 'where a student is at' and whether shifts in student achievement correlate to their attendance, behavior, engagement. (See Case 7: page 54)



Improving What might help you notice whether improvements are being made? Through... Evidence such as, **Student** Improved concentration. behaviour • Attendance and participation – 'show up and have a go'. (See Case 3: page Greater interaction between teacher(s) and students. • Students are working supportively in their project teams with other children who are not in their friendship circle. (See Case 9: page 62) • Students actively participate in creating a safe space to learn for all students. • An absence of behaviours previously seen as standard (e.g. aggression towards staff and students). • Inter-personal skills (e.g. able to listen and communicate clearly with others, is able to resolve differences without resorting to violence or confrontation etc). (See Case 7: page 54) Suspension rate. Time out rate. Time on task. Through... Approaches such as, Student • Attention building strategies in classrooms. behaviour • Innovative approaches to rewards. Parent workshops. Community or student mentoring scheme. Through... Evidence such as, **Student** • Real retention measure. (See Case 7: page 54) retention • Education and training completion rates (at a various milestone points and Profile and number of students who have transitioned from K to 1; from primary to secondary school; from secondary school to further learning or employment. Through... Approaches such as, Student 'Successful' student alumni initiative with students.

continued

retention

• Employer mentoring scheme.

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Improving

What might help you notice whether improvements are being made? Through... Evidence such as,

Quality teaching & Teacher quality

- The profile of teacher professional learning (Are teachers also learners? What type of learning are they doing? How is it used?)
- Teachers are anticipating situations before they become an issue (e.g. identifying when students lose interest or are struggling to understand).
- Student learning tasks challenge (e.g. emphasise application, analysis, judgement and synthesis, as these go beyond the mere memorisation of facts or copying information) (i.e. the focus is on the quality of the opportunities for learning).
- Use of appropriate learning technologies in the classroom.
- Diversity of projects (major, minor, long-term, short-term, community focused etc) and completion rates of these. (See Case 7: page 54)
- Teachers are integrating new skills (e.g. book making) into their Literacy, Numeracy and Art with students. Positive associations with reading and sharing stories evidenced by encouraging feedback from loved ones and reading more books. (See Case 13: page 77)
- How teachers talk about students (what is their "running commentary on students' struggles, achievements and behavior?")⁶.
- How teachers interact with each other.
- Recognition within the profession and wider educational communities. (See Case 2: page 29)
- Teachers publishing. (See Case 2: page 29)

Through... Approaches such as,

Quality teaching & Teacher quality

- Using culturally relevant social media tools (e.g. Rooty Hill High School students access the fastest social media platform in China Weibo and have online contact with students in three sister schools.). Teachers deliver the listening and speaking requirements of Mandarin using social media. (See Case 2: page 29)
- Teachers undertake a five day foundation course and a two day workshop on how to implement an internship program and various project-based learning workshops. (See Case 4: page 38)
- Establishing regular feedback loops. (See Case 5: page 46)
- School has developed its own tool to understand teacher confidence and a capability in the use and application of learning technologies across the curriculum). (See Case 6: page 49)
- Level of teacher peer observation.
- Engagement in professional enquiry.
- Engagement in a community of practice / professional learning community.
- Collection of pre-/post- baseline, and daily logbook data across a variety of measures. (See Case 7: page 54)

⁶ Claxton, G. & Lucas, B. (2013). What kind of teaching for what kind of learning? SSAT (The Schools Network) Ltd, London, p. 11



Improving

What might help you notice whether improvements are being made? Through... Evidence such as,

Family engagement

- Parents discovering things about their children they did not know they could do or had an interest in. (See Case 9: page 62)
- Positive relationships between parents, teachers/principal (e.g. how parents are talked about, viewed in school documents).
- How parents talk about school and learning. (See Case 4: page 38)
- Parents 'tear-up' as they see and hear their children caring and doing something about a community issue. (See Case 9: page 62)
- Positive connections with school / with home.
- Parents' confidence to access services and programs (social cohesion).
- Parent engagement in decision making.
- Parental educational aspirations to learn / do further study.
- · Volunteering rates (i.e. types and quality).
- Unsolicited phone calls to enquiring about enrolling their child at the school.
- Language barriers are overcome.
- Number and frequency of parents reading to their children as recorded in a community wide reading program. (See Case 12: page 72)

Through... Approaches such as,

Family engagement

- Daily email updates and photos to parents from the teacher while their children are on a Chinese immersion exchange. (See Case 2: page 29)
- School has developed its own tool to understand family engagement by mapping how well connected the student is with the school, his or her family and his or her community. This then enables an action plan to be developed. (See Case 6: page 49)
- Parent engagement (use Joyce Epstein's 6 Level taxonomy, with an expansive education 'twist'). (See LLEAP Guide 2013)
- Student-led projects give families a way to have a community-focused conversation at home. (See Case 9: page 62)



Improving

What might help you notice whether improvements are being made? Through... Evidence such as,

Community engagement

- Mentors attending events and making positive comments about their relationships with students. (See Case 4: page 38)
- New networks.
- Students linked to groups or individuals in the community. (See Case 9: page 62)
- Volunteering (in school and in community).
- Volunteer retention rates. (See Case 8: page 59)
- Student commitment to giving.
- Student knowledge about their community. (See Case 9: page 62)
- New or different or additional resources.
- Use of community facilities / school facilities.
- Number of new memberships to organisations (e.g. bushwalking, yoga, aquatic centre etc). (See Case 12: page 72)
- Interactions across different settings and perspectives (these prepare students for personal and civic participation in a diverse and interdependent world).
- Visibility of a program, project or organisation (e.g. in local news; radio; shop windows).
- Attendance at school-community 'events' / celebrations.
- Number of approaches to partner.
- New or revised partnerships.
- Retention of partnerships. (See Case 11: page 68)
- Previously identified rural skills shortages are being addressed.
- Reduced vandalism rates in the local community.
- Proactive identification and nomination of community projects (e.g. gardens, boardwalks etc). (See Case 7: page 54)

Through... Approaches such as,

Community engagement

- Vocational training is delivered on the school's premises to students from the school and neigbouring schools undertaking a school-based apprenticeship. (See Case 1: page 24)
- Community outreach program events organised by the school, such as Harmony Day, information nights and assemblies. (See Case 2: page 29)
- Students undertake internships in the community in an area of interest to him or her. (See Case 4: page 38)
- Community projects. (See Case 7: page 54)

Going deeper

If you are interested in going deeper and seeing how these types of evidence and approaches play out in customised ways, then explore the 13 case studies provided in the next section.

In the context of different approaches and programs, these bring to life why the various groups focus on what they do and what they notice to ascertain whether improvement is being achieved.

If you want to go deeper into how to measure then we recommend:

Muir, K. & Bennett, S. (2014). The Compass: Your Guide to Social Impact Measurement. Sydney, Australia: The Centre for Social Impact. http://www.csi.edu.au

If you want to better understand how to evaluate the 'what' of an activity and 'how' the relationship itself is travelling, then we recommend:

Evaluate to Grow: A Guide to getting the most out of your school-business relationship through evaluation. (2012). Written by a team from the Australian Council for Educational Research with assistance from Schools Connect Australia for the federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. http://schoolsconnect.org.au (See News & Resources: Partnering Resources)

If you are curious about what the evidence suggests are innovations that improve student outcomes, then we recommend looking at the 2013 LLEAP case on the work of the UK's Education Endowment Foundation:

http://www.acer.edu.au/files/EducationEndownment.pdf and their Toolkit http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk