

STORY HUBS PILOT

FINAL
EVALUATION



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Prepared by Clear Horizon Consulting
for 100 Story Building

For enquiries please contact
JESSICA TRAN
Email: jess@100storybuilding.org.au
100storybuilding.org.au

The Story Hubs pilot created ‘Hubs’ in schools with the goal of improving student literacy outcomes and creativity, building teacher capacity to support student learning and creation, and a learning community within each school. Story Hubs (SH) was piloted in five schools and one educational institution between 2019–2022. Each Story Hub contains a co-designed creative space, a course program of teacher professional learning (PL), and a peer-to-peer (P2P) learning community. Each Hub was also encouraged to nominate a partner school to expand the program reach.

This report presents the evaluation of the Story Hubs pilot. The evaluation purpose was to understand and codify the Story Hubs model, capture learnings from the pilot period, and provide accountability to funders regarding outcomes achieved. The evaluation included 19 interviews and 23 consultations with teachers, 24 interviews with students, two interviews with 100 Story Building (100SB) staff, and a review of documents including student work samples.

What were the outcomes in the pilot hubs?

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Story Hubs contributed to student learning and wellbeing. Learning and wellbeing are the two ultimate outcomes of Victoria’s Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO), which is an evidence-based continuous improvement framework for all Victorian government schools. The evaluation found that **student engagement and agency increased** when teachers applied the Story Hubs principles in their classes. These changes occurred consistently over time and for normally disengaged students, and during a COVID-affected period where student engagement has been low. FISO identifies engagement and agency as key elements that support learning and wellbeing.

Story Hubs contributed to improved student writing. The evaluation found that **students improved their idea generation, writing length, and their attitudes towards writing**, all which contribute to writing outcomes according to research. While some teachers said writing had improved and others said it was unchanged, this evaluation found that particular writing improvements may not be recognised by teachers due to a focus on functional literacy above creativity and critical thinking. The consistency of this outcome was mixed and obscured by context and the challenge of measuring creativity and critical thinking.

Student writing and learning outcomes varied across schools in line with the level of teacher uptake of Story Hubs principles. Story Hubs was one component of a broader focus on writing in these schools, so any measurable changes in writing would be due in part to this broader focus, rather than Story Hubs entirely. The magnitude of the change in writing outcomes could not be measured due to restrictions for research in schools and the presence of major external factors such as online learning.

TEACHER OUTCOMES

Story Hubs contributed to **improved teacher capacity to support student creation and learning**. This improved capacity was shown by the student outcomes detailed above, which reinforced research that shows teacher capacity has the greatest potential to positively impact student learning. Story Hubs contributed to improved capacity primarily through teacher PL – especially in demonstrating the Story Hubs teaching principles through structured sessions – and the co-designed creative space.

Teacher capacity to support student creation and learning has improved in three ways: the learning and application of specific tools and methods to support student engagement, agency, and idea generation; the deeper adoption of new attitudes and principles to teaching for the same outcomes; and by integrating these principles into their curriculum. The evaluation found that teachers are tailoring what was learned in PL to suit their classes and inquiries, rather than just copying the activities.



Story Hubs contributed to **improved teacher confidence, enjoyment, and sense of support**. These outcomes stood out in a time when teacher wellbeing, morale and efficiency has declined, and teachers feel dispensable and underappreciated despite working incredibly hard. Teacher confidence and enjoyment rose once they successfully applied the teaching principles taught in PL, and their sense of support was directly due to fit-for-purpose PL during online learning.

Teaching outcomes varied across schools according to their engagement with and uptake of PL. Teacher uptake was high across the Geelong hub, low in two hubs, and low but increasing in one hub. Outcomes were consistent for teachers across the Geelong hub, who have continued to apply the teaching principles in their classes over multiple terms.

What was delivered in the pilot period?

School capacity to engage with external programs such as Story Hubs was hindered significantly from March 2020 – November 2021 by COVID restrictions and the associated challenges, particularly in Melbourne. Story Hubs was designed as a three-year, place-based program.

Of the four Hubs, one has been substantially delivered, one has partial and ongoing delivery, and two have had partial delivery. The co-design process was delivered as planned for all four Hubs. The Geelong Hub was substantially delivered during the pilot period: these schools received a full year of teacher professional learning (PL) delivered to the entire cohort of teachers, with active ongoing engagement and established partner schools. The other three Hubs faced limitations as to the extent and reach of PL delivered, ongoing engagement, and partner schools.

What was learned about the process for implementing each Story Hubs element?

Professional learning: Schools that received funding to cover Casual Relief Teacher (CRT) costs had the greatest PL uptake. Free PL alone did not ensure teacher uptake, as schools were influenced by

time scarcity, CRT availability and costs. The most appropriate PL process is to start with structured training ('Sparking Creativity'), then shift towards more responsive coaching in the second year. PL dates should be planned around the whole-school calendar and be locked into teachers' schedule far in advance.

Creative space co-design: The co-design process generally worked well and was positively received by teachers and students due to the high student involvement and agency. The most appropriate co-design process was shorter and facilitated by 100SB rather than teachers. Artists had significant discretion in the final creation despite the significant student agency before that point in the process.

Peer-to-Peer (P2P) learning: Opportunities and teacher appetite for P2P learning were limited due to time scarcity, which was compounded by COVID. P2P learning emerged through the coaching PL, with 100SB acting as the conduit between schools and teachers. This model allowed 100SB to facilitate a cross-pollinate ideas between different coaching sessions and did not require additional time or resources from teachers.

What are the requirements from schools and 100SB?

The key requirements from schools are a commitment of teacher time to PL, active ongoing support from senior leaders, and staff champions to oversee implementation.

The key requirements from 100SB are to navigate the time scarcity in schools, and to learn the unique realities of each school in order to tailor their services.

What was learned about scaling Story Hubs across schools and partner schools?

Reach within schools was determined by the number of teachers who participated in the initial PL sessions, and this reach did not increase over time. The level of senior leadership involvement in driving implementation and the influence of staff champions dictated teacher participation in PL and in turn Story Hubs' reach.

The evaluation found that while school partnerships are supported by both education literature and policy, schools generally lacked the capacity and resources to establish partnerships with other schools. Collaboration between partners was beneficial when it did occur. Story Hubs piloted two different 'partnership models', but lessons from these models are obscured by other factors including COVID.



STORY HUBS

IMPACTS ON TEACHING

Constantly saying...
 "... use of STORY TELLING to unite learning elements and design learning arcs!"
 YES!
 YES!
 YES!

"You're not trying to steer them in a direction..."

100 Story Building

"One thing for me was to feel like I could be a CREATIVE PERSON for the kids..."

"...If you don't have that skill set you just try to steer to what you're comfortable with."

If the coaching hadn't happened it would have been quite a disjointed term!

STORY HUBS seem to complement INQUIRY models!

CURRICULUM

Missing component for teachers

The BIGGEST thing we need to do is adapt the ideas in our classrooms

We came up with these mysterious EGGS...

OUR WHOLE TERM became about these eggs we did...

- An Information Report
- Diary Writing
- A Life cycle
- A Story

OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

Snapshot data from STORY HUBS Evaluation April 2022 illustrated by BB.

"Definitely the BIGGEST THING was increased engagement"

ESPECIALLY FOR DISENGAGED STUDENTS

"Students wrote more... quality was higher."

"I found it hard to quantify... a lot of the curriculum is based around grammar, spelling, things like that."

"I had one student... he was highly engaged with the power to make the rules."

"Because they're writing more you can work on... Capital letters, full stops, even paragraphs because they're at that point in their length."

"Students are demonstrating the work of CREATIVE PRACTICE."

"Hubs offers different access points."

"In normal class we write before drawing... What helps me is when I DRAW FIRST, then come up with ideas to write... That's what we've been doing in Story Hubs."

CREATIVE WRITING GROUPS

"Outcomes for those kids have been phenomenal... they've been able to focus on things they might not have in the classroom because [the classroom is] more structured."

"There are broader aspects to writing than what's contained in the CURRICULUM."

To what extent is Story Hubs appropriate for schools?

The evaluation found that Story Hubs was appropriate for schools where teachers had time and capacity to engage with the program. The demonstrated outcomes from Story Hubs elements – student engagement and agency, improved teacher capacity, active partnerships between schools – are key components of Victorian educational policy and supported by research. However, implementing Story Hubs was inappropriate (and not done) in schools where teachers lacked the time and capacity to engage, a challenge compounded by the onset of COVID and online learning.



FIGURE 1

A sign in the Meadows Hub written by a co-design group student. This sign instructs others on the rules of the interdimensional control room.

Recommendations

The four overall recommendations are:

Continue the program.

Plan how to address the full resource requirements for teacher PL.

Ask schools for an upfront commitment of teacher time and resources for PL.

Develop and use selection criteria for potential new Hubs.

Recommendations related to each element are:

Professional learning: Keep the process of starting with structured PL and then shifting to more responsive coaching. Equip teachers to recognise changes in writing creativity and critical thinking, and keep tailoring PL content to the upcoming needs and gaps of teachers.

Co-design: Keep the co-design process and find ways to embed student agency into the physical design process, COVID allowing.

Partner schools: Revisit how to implement partnerships between schools for Hubs with teacher time and capacity to engage.



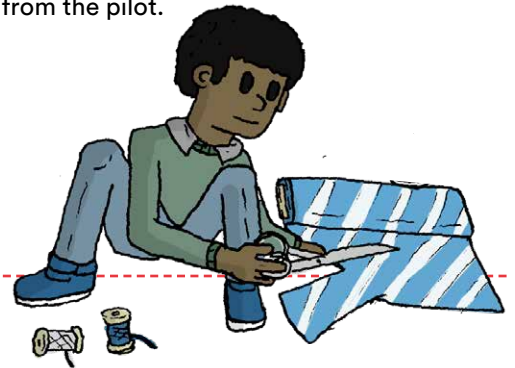
FIGURE 2

Student ideas on display in the Sunshine Hub.

This report presents the evaluation of the Story Hubs pilot program. The evaluation aimed to understand and codify the Story Hubs model and to capture learnings from the pilot period (2019–2022). The evaluation also aimed to provide accountability to funders and schools by presenting evidence of outcomes from the pilot.

This report is structured as follows:

- Executive summary
- Introduction and evaluation approach
- Findings
- Recommendations



2.1

About Story Hubs

ABOUT STORY HUBS

Story Hubs is an extension of 100 Story Building, a creative writing organisation that supports students from primary and high schools based in Melbourne, Victoria. Story Hubs is a decentralised model of 100 Story Building in which ‘Hubs’ are created in schools, rather than students travelling to the 100 Story Building space in Footscray, an inner-west suburb of Melbourne.

Story Hubs was piloted with five schools and one other educational institution between 2019–2022.

The desired end-of-pilot outcomes from Story Hubs were to:

- Improve student literacy outcomes and critical and creative thinking skills.
- Improve educator capability to support students in creation and learning.
- Foster an active learning community within and between Hubs and integrate creativity and collaboration more widely across schools.

These outcomes are shown in the Story Hubs program logic (*see Appendix*).

COMPONENTS OF A STORY HUB

Story Hubs aimed to achieve its desired outcomes by developing Hubs in schools. There were four evidence-informed components to each Hub (*see Figure 3*):

Co-designed creative space: Transformation of a physical room, co-designed by students and educators that embeds student voice, values, agency and imagination into their physical environment. The space enables a shift in mindsets towards one that is about creativity and must give students and educators a sense of ownership over the space. It is a resource that can be used to support different teaching and learning styles.

Creative professional learning: A collaborative arts-integrated approach to teaching and learning, focusing on engagement. This has developed over time in 100 Story Building, and is informed by research and evidence linking arts-rich education to improved student outcomes.

FIGURE 3 FOUR COMPONENTS OF A STORY HUB



Peer to Peer (P2P) learning community: Educators and staff partnering in each Hub must collaborate and share what they do. This shared learning space identifies impactful approaches and strategies and is focused on student outcomes. The learning community is both within the school/organisation team and between partner schools/organisations.

Opening up the classroom (out of scope due to COVID):

By working in collaboration with 100 Story Building and community partners, schools build their capacity to partner with community members in effective two-way learning experiences.

The evaluation sought to answer the following questions:

1. What was delivered in the pilot period?
2. What were the outcomes in the pilot Hubs?
3. What was learned about the process for implementing each element of Story Hubs in schools? What works, what does not work, and why?
4. What is required from schools and 100 Story Building?
5. What was learned about scaling Story Hubs across schools and partner schools?
6. What was learned about Story Hubs teaching principles? (addressed outside of this report)
7. To what extent is Story Hubs appropriate for schools?

DATA COLLECTED

Evaluation findings draw on 19 teacher interviews and 24 student interviews. In addition, the evaluation team collated evidence from 23 teacher consultations conducted by Story Hubs (that is, the data was collected by Story Hubs through consultations and program delivery, it was not collected by Clear Horizon). Table 1 shows the data collected from each source, including a breakdown of data collected from each school. The majority of data was collected at Whittington and St Leonards. All data collection was approved by the Victorian Department of Education and Training’s branch which manages all research conducted in schools and early childhood centres (RISEC).

LIMITATIONS

The following limitations are associated with evaluation findings:

- Disruption caused by COVID: The pilot occurred in a time of tumultuous change for schools, with COVID, online learning, and low student engagement, all of which obscured the outcomes from Story Hubs. This evaluation used contribution analysis approaches to distinguish the outcomes from Story Hubs from changes due to other factors such as COVID.
- Interview evidence is not representative of all schools: the majority of data was collected in two schools (St Leonards and Whittington). These two schools were involved in the second intake of Hubs (2021 onwards) and therefore their experience may be different to that of the first intake of schools. The evaluation has incorporated evidence from the other schools where possible and clarifies which schools outcomes occurred in.
- Recall for the co-design process: Interviews asked students to recall their experiences in Story Hubs, which may be 1-2 years after their engagement, so their recall may not be entirely accurate. To address this the evaluation interviews focused on the past 2-3 months and drew upon documentation to substantiate what occurred earlier in the pilot.



Evaluation approach

EVALUATION PURPOSE

The purpose of the evaluation was to understand and codify the Story Hubs model and to capture learnings from the pilot period. The evaluation also aimed to provide accountability to funders and schools by presenting evidence of outcomes from the pilot. The evaluation purpose and approach changed significantly from what was originally planned in 2019 due to COVID. The original purpose of the evaluation was to provide robust evidence of program impact on students. Delivering on this purpose became unfeasible as schools and Story Hubs were disrupted by COVID, research was prohibited by the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) in schools for long periods, and data from most quantitative measures were obscured by COVID and online learning. The evaluation purpose was adjusted in 2022 to focus on what was useful and feasible in the new context.

**TABLE 1
EVALUATION DATA SOURCES**

| DATA SOURCE | DATA COLLECTED | BREAKDOWN BY SCHOOL |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Documents | 92 documents | N/A |
| Teachers/educators | 19 interviews 23 consultations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whittington: 5 interviews, 10 consultations • St Leonards: 4 interviews, 9 consultations • Copperfield: 2 interviews, 2 consultations • Sunshine: 1 interview, 2 consultations • Meadows: 1 interview • Banksia Gardens: 6 interviews |
| Students | 24 interviews | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whittington: 7 interviews • St Leonards: 8 interviews • Copperfield: 3 interviews • Banksia gardens: 6 interviews |
| 100 Story Building Staff | 2 interviews | N/A |

3.1

Outcomes for students

Story Hubs contributed to student learning and wellbeing. Learning and wellbeing are the two ultimate outcomes of Victoria's Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO), which is an evidence-based continuous improvement framework for all Victorian government schools. The evaluation found that student engagement and agency increased when teachers applied the Story Hubs principles in their classes. These changes occurred consistently over time and for normally disengaged students, and during a COVID-affected period where student engagement has been low. FISO identifies engagement and agency as key elements that support learning and wellbeing.

Story Hubs contributed to improved student writing. The evaluation found that students improved their idea generation, writing length, and their attitudes towards writing, all which contribute to writing outcomes according to research. While some teachers said writing had improved and others said it was unchanged, this evaluation found that particular writing improvements may not be recognised by teachers due to a focus on functional literacy above creativity and critical thinking. The consistency of this outcome was mixed and obscured by context and this challenge measuring creativity and critical thinking.

Student writing and learning outcomes varied across schools in line with the level of teacher uptake of Story Hubs principles. Story Hubs was one component of a broader focus on writing in these schools, so any measurable changes in writing would be due in part to this broader focus, rather than Story Hubs entirely. The magnitude of the change in writing outcomes could not be measured due to restrictions for research in schools and the presence of major external factors such as online learning.

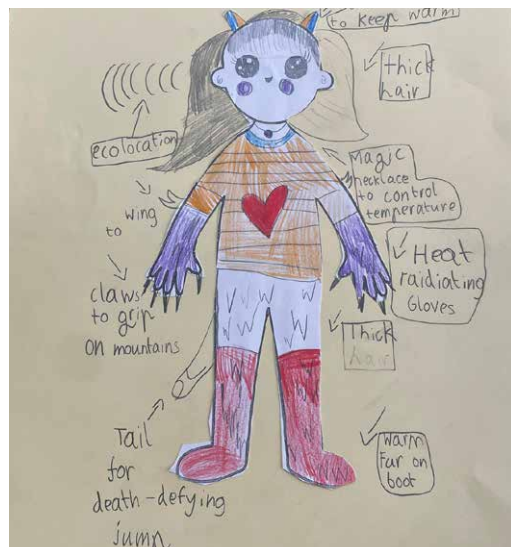
STUDENT LEARNING AND WELLBEING

Student learning and wellbeing increased due to increased student engagement, voice and agency. These outcomes often occurred for underperforming students.

Student engagement was higher in Story Hubs classes. This is a significant outcome in an educational research, policy, and online learning context. Soutter et al (2014) linked engagement to both positive learning and wellbeing outcomes, and engagement is one of the five core elements that contribute towards learning and wellbeing (as per Victoria's FISO 2.0¹, which guides schools to focus their improvement efforts on high-impact practices). This outcome was also especially relevant in COVID-affected education system, where some students struggled with online learning, including those with poor home-learning environments and those already at risk of disengagement². Nine students and 25 teachers (14 interviewed, 11 consulted) said that engagement was higher in Story Hubs classes.

It's more fun, it's more creative and we get to use our imagination instead of just using our brain and trying to figure out things. (SL05)

Student voice and agency increased in classes taught using Story Hubs principles, including the creative space co-design process. This outcome is also recognised as significant in education policy and literature; the FISO 2.0 identifies student voice and agency as one dimension of engagement, which contributes towards

**FIGURE 4**

Student work example. Students created their own 'superhuman' suit that brought together the different animal adaptations they had learned in their inquiry unit. Allowing students to create their own superhuman contributes to student agency and voice.

learning and wellbeing. Student voice and agency have a positive impact on self-worth, engagement, purpose and academic motivation (Quaglia, 2016), which contribute to improved student learning outcomes (Hattie, 2019)³. Sixteen teachers (8 interviewed, 8 consulted) said that **students demonstrated agency and ownership over their ideas** when they applied Story Hub teaching principles.

I think the kids are more invested in their work. They're a lot more excited about their writing. They're creating their own characters, they're creating their own worlds. They're the experts in their own story. It gives them more of a sense of being the author of their own work and having to go through the writing process. You've created the world so what is going to happen...They are a lot more invested in their work in that sense. (SL01)

Two Whittington students illustrated how one Story Hub teaching principle contributed to their agency and ownership over their ideas. These **students said the classes gave them permission to be creative.**

[Our teacher] told us we have to use our imaginations...it felt pretty cool. [Our teacher] said 'just go for it'. We didn't have to listen to any instructions...except to take your time. (W06)

Three teachers (3 interviewed) said that **the co-design process supported student agency**, through both their involvement and ownership of the space, and the sense of achievement and recognition from the launch of the space. This unveiling also supported teacher buy-in for the program.

We did have a launch day where the Principals came to see the end product of the room. And that was a really great and really important celebration as well... Great to create buy-in from staff members, we started unpacking the curriculum. (C04)

Ten teachers (6 interviewed, 4 consulted) said that outcomes occurred for underperforming students. **Students who were normally disengaged or disinterested in writing were more engaged** and able to generate ideas. This is relevant in an COVID-affected learning environment, after the Victorian education system recognised that already disengaged students struggled with remote learning⁴. The PL in one hub was tailored to reach low-achieving literacy students.

Disengaged students are definitely taken along with it. For example, I had a student who was normally disengaged, but he was highly engaged with the power to make the rules. These kids do come along for the ride, but the challenge is the momentum and writing (SL11)

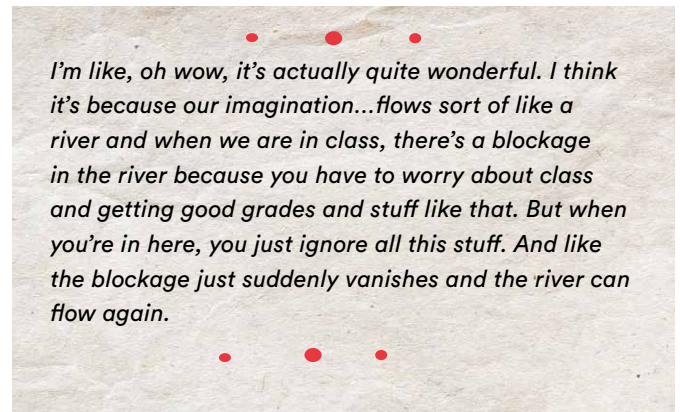


FIGURE 5
Student on how the creative space helps her in class. This quote illustrates how the creative space enables ideation and gives students a licence to be creative.

CONTRIBUTION TO WRITING OUTCOMES

Students generated more ideas, wrote more, and had improved engagement with their writing.

Students generated more ideas in classes taught with Story Hubs principles. Various research (Greene, 1991; Jewitt, 2008; Wright, 2010)^{5,6} suggests that creativity and idea generation is an integral part of the writing process. Teachers and students highlighted how key elements of the teaching principles and methods – including more time to ideate upfront, story building exercises, fusing ideas, and the creative space – all contributed towards student idea generation. Five students and 24 teachers (12 interviewed, 12 consulted) said that students generated more ideas in Story Hubs classes.

[Our ideas came up] in the classroom. We looked at the pipes and we started thinking about what kind of monsters would live there...we drew them and then after that we wrote letters to them. (W04)

Two students (W05, SL03) articulated how the process was different to regular classes as they had **more space to generate ideas at the beginning of the writing process.** This reinforces the notion that the teaching principles were a contributing factor to improved idea generation, and aligns with research that the supports allocating time to the pre-writing phase⁷. One Whittington student explained the benefits of drawing first at the beginning of their writing process, and how it helped them learn.

In normal class we usually write ideas before drawing it, but that really doesn't help me. What helps me is when I draw my idea first, then I come up with ideas to write. That's what we have been doing in Story Hubs and that has helped me a lot. (W05)

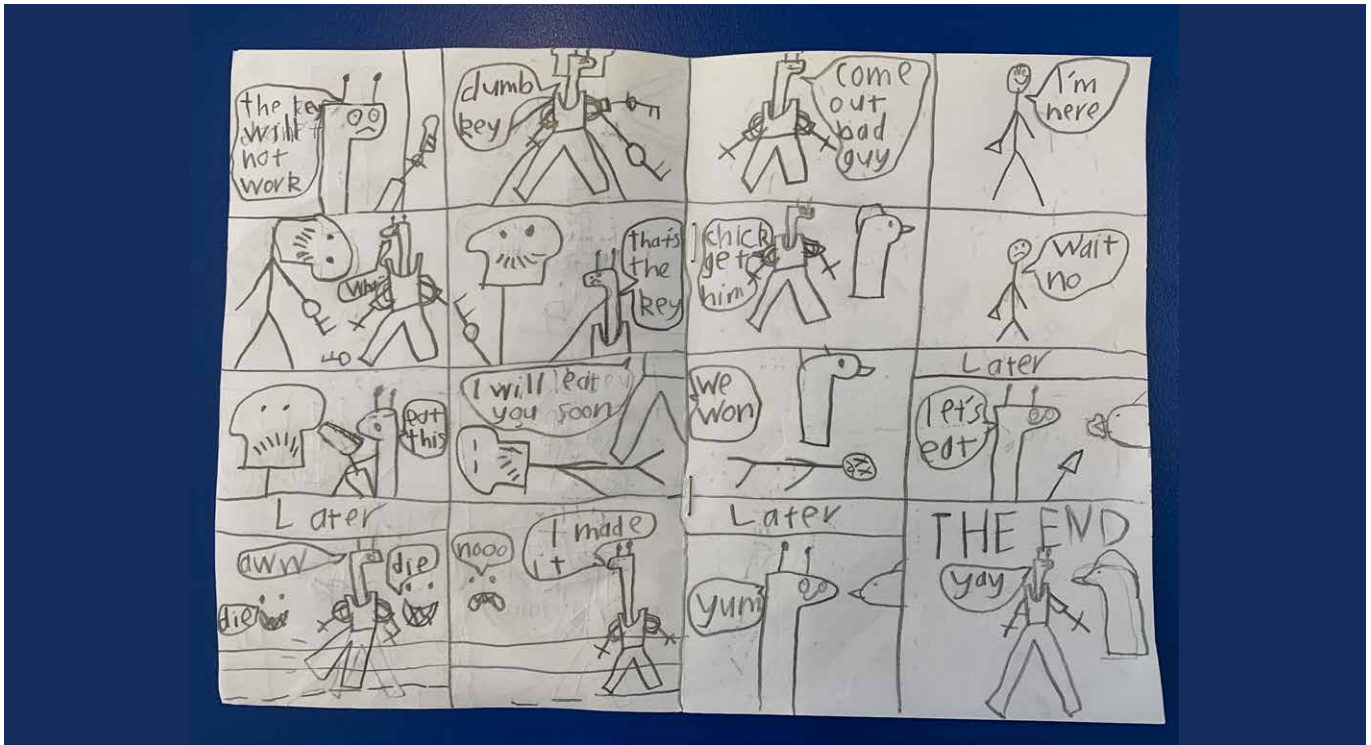


FIGURE 6

Student work example from class taught with SH teaching principles. This student used the additional time upfront to draw and storyboard their story. Their teacher said this was a long story from a student who is normally a reluctant writer.

Writing length and engagement with writing increased. The evaluation found that both attributes contribute towards writing outcomes. Eleven teachers (4 interviewed, 7 consulted) said that the length of writing had increased. Twelve teachers (5 interviewed, 7 consulted) said that student engagement with writing had improved.

I'm thinking, to some of the students that I had that prior to starting Story Hubs, writing was a dirty word to them. Whereas now, with the exercises at the beginning of the week and linking into inquiry, I think they're more engaged in their writing. (W04)

The evaluation found that writing improved due to the contribution of increased idea generation, writing length, and engagement with the writing process. This is in line with the Story Hubs program logic (see Appendix). Six teachers (3 interviewed, 3 consulted) said longer writing and engaged students allowed them to work on writing outcomes, because longer stories allowed teachers to identify areas for improvement and provide feedback, and more engaged students were open to receiving and responding to this feedback.

[The teaching principles] are indirectly helping writing outcomes. Directly, it probably doesn't really do much, but when they're writing, well you can work with that and when they're engaged they're

more likely to receive feedback well...Because they're writing more and because they're happier to write, you can work on things like capital letters, full stops, even beginning to add in things like paragraphs because they're up to that point in their length. (W05)

MEASURING IMPROVEMENTS IN WRITING

The evaluation found that teachers may not be equipped to recognise creativity in writing. Teacher perspectives were mixed on whether student writing had improved: ten teachers said that student writing improved, five said that there was no improvement, and 12 teachers said there was not enough evidence to make a judgement.

Teachers used different criteria to justify their position on whether writing outcomes had improved. Teachers who said writing had improved largely pointed to the quality and length of stories, and those who said writing remained unchanged pointed to the curriculum goals. This aligns with research that suggests school literacy programs are conceived around the functional notion of literacy⁸, which leads to criteria focused on the functional aspects of writing.

The students wrote more than before...the quality of stories was much higher than what I would usually get with a narrative, and engagement was very high. Narratives can be difficult for my students. (DINT18)

When it comes to a curriculum lens, we were not achieving any curriculum goals. Their creativity was definitely sparked, they were super engaged, but at the end of our 3-4 sessions, writing outcomes essentially were not, there was no evidence of achievement. (W02)

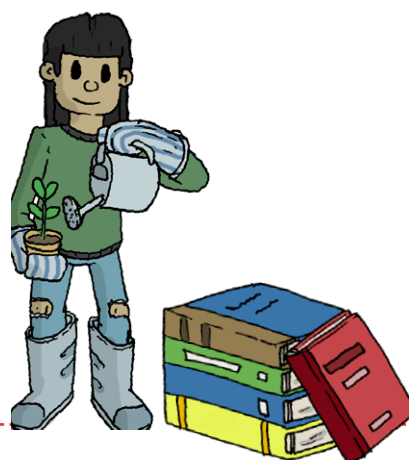
The assessment criteria may not entirely capture the types of writing improvements that Story Hubs contributed to. While critical and creative thinking is embedded in curriculum through a cross-curriculum capability, teachers often don't mark against it. One teacher said that writing outcomes did not improve because most curriculum goals are focused on grammar and other writing elements. While student idea generation and storylines had improved, there were no changes in those elements which account for most of the marks.

I found it hard to quantify in terms of marking and assessments because it doesn't have a huge part in the curriculum...That aspect of idea generation and story lines and having those parts of the story they created – yes [it translated to marking]. Then all the spelling, full stops, capitals, it didn't transfer across...a lot of the [marked] curriculum is based around grammar, spelling, things like that. (SL08)

OTHER CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Five teachers said that student writing outcomes had improved due to a school focus on writing, of which Story Hubs was one component. Teachers explained that the school had a focus on writing, and any improvements in writing were a result of many activities and classes.

As a school we have done lots of work with our writing process, working with the learning specialists to get a really strong system. I am finding it hard to differentiate between what was the [Story Hubs] and the school. Because of the linking up with Story Hubs, then the school-wide focus on writing, I think our writing has improved because of it...I think outcomes have improved but it is part of a bigger thing, they have complemented each other. (W02)



3.2

Outcomes for teachers

Story Hubs contributed to improved teacher capacity to support student creation and learning. This improved capacity was shown by the student outcomes detailed above, which reinforced research that says teacher capacity has the greatest potential to positively impact student learning. Story Hubs contributed to improved capacity primarily through teacher PL – especially in demonstrating the SH teaching principles through structured sessions – and the co-designed creative space.

Teacher capacity to support student creation and learning has improved in three ways: the learning and application of specific tools and methods to support student engagement, agency, and idea generation; the deeper adoption of new attitudes and principles to teaching for the same outcomes; and by integrating these principles into their curriculum. The evaluation found that teachers are tailoring what was learned in PL to suit their classes and inquiries, rather than just copying the activities.

Story Hubs contributed to improved teacher confidence, enjoyment, and sense of support. This outcome stands out in a time when teacher wellbeing, morale and efficiency has declined, and teachers feel dispensable and underappreciated despite working incredibly hard. Teacher confidence and enjoyment rose once they successfully applied the teaching principles taught in PL, and their sense of support was directly due to fit-for-purpose PL during online learning.

Teaching outcomes varied across schools according to their engagement with and uptake of PL. Teacher uptake was high across the two Geelong hubs, low in two hubs, and low but increasing in one hub. Outcomes were consistent for teachers across the two Geelong schools, who have continued to apply the teaching principles in their classes over multiple terms.

TEACHER CAPACITY

Teacher capacity to support student creation and learning has improved. This outcome is recognised as significant in educational research, as teachers have the greatest potential to positively impact student learning (Hanushek et al., 2005; Hattie, 2003). A student with a high-impact teacher can achieve in half a year what a student with a poor teacher can achieve in a full year (Leigh, 2010). Twenty-four teachers (14 interviewed, 10 consulted) said that they had improved capability to support student creation and learning. Teachers explained that before Story Hubs they struggled to facilitate a creative process, generally their process was to tell students “be creative”.

Rather than saying ‘use your imagination’ or ‘come up with an interesting narrative’ to the students, we are planting seeds for them, to help them come up with those ideas as they’re writing (W04)

Teacher capacity to support student creation and learning has improved in three ways: the learning and application of specific tools and methods to support student engagement, agency, and idea generation; the deeper adoption of new attitudes and principles to teaching for the same outcomes; and by integrating these principles into their curriculum.

Use of specific tools and methods

Teachers who received PL adopted specific tools and methods including fusing different ideas, using generative story building exercises, the creative space, real-world stimuli, and randomisation.

Nineteen teachers (ten interviewed, five consulted) said they learned and taught the practice of fusing different ideas to create an original one. This method gives students permission to engage in the fantastical by fusing things together and gives them agency and ownership over the original idea. These teachers explained the significance of this practice learned through the PL sessions.

I loved the idea that with the 100 Story Building there is no wrong answer. You say that to young learners all the time, but it has not quite gotten through like it did for me last year in 3-4 with when you are merging two things together. Like that Andy Griffiths’ model too that if you merge two ideas together and make it your own, it is now unique and it is yours, and then it then gives you the freedom to run with it. (W02)

Ten teachers (5 interviewed, 5 consulted) used generative story-building exercises in their classes. Story building exercises scaffold a creative process for students, allow them multiple entry points to explore and express

ideas, and gives them agency and ownership over the story. These story-building exercises were drawn from Story Hubs professional learning (Perilous Quest and Story Arcs), which guide students through developing a character, then a backpack, and then envisaging a challenge and how to overcome it.

Six teachers (5 interviewed, 1 consulted) used tactile objects as arts-based approaches to exploring ideas and topics. Tactile objects enable a diversity of arts-based entry points to exploring a stimulus, as it allows students to touch, hold, or smell an item, and observe how it moves – all potential jumping-off points for student ideas that encourage a self-led, deeper immersion in the topic. This provided a greater experience than would be achieved through just looking at a picture. Students in different classes created their own eggs and jellyfish, held items that emerged from the pipes, and used other objects.

[In curriculum planning we decided] the students could actually make jellyfish that they could then use to write a description about. I guess another way that you might have done it was perhaps looking at different images of jellyfish and looking at the book and comparing images, so I guess it’s a bit more hands on and a bit more fun in doing it this way as opposed to just looking at pictures and books and that sort of thing. (W04)

Ten teachers interviewed said the creative spaces were used as the foundation for lessons and units. The creative spaces enable an environment conducive to ideation, the fantastical, and student agency, and the spaces themselves were designed by students as part of Story



FIGURE 7
Student works example from class taught with Story Hubs teaching principles. This work shows how one student has fused together two animals to create her own ‘Bunnyphant’.

Hubs. Four interviewees gave examples of how teachers were using the creative space to spark ideas in students, such as by hiding things in the space or asking students to listen to the space.

Last week clothing came out of the pipes, because we are looking at it for our enquiry, and so there was police officers outfits, there was funky goggles, a footy boot, things like that. Because we are doing 'Who's Clothes could these belong to in our community', they then wrote informative text types on who that belonged to, what they do, and what they wear, and what they need. This week again with that theme of the pipe, something else came out of the pipe. (W02)

Four teachers (4 consulted) said they used randomisation to support original idea generation. Using randomisation (randomly selecting aspects of stories) supports idea generation because it doesn't require students to come up with a perfect idea; instead it focuses their energy on how different things work together. This tool also supported engagement and learning as the randomisation usually leads to unusual and humorous combinations that positively affect the classroom environment by encouraging playfulness.

[We used] randomisation for heroes and villains, they had so much fun, they couldn't stop smiling. (DINT10)

Changed teaching attitudes and principles

The PL went beyond a toolkit of methods and sought to convey a set of Story Hubs teaching principles that are used by 100SB. Teachers report adopting some of these teaching principles, including by allowing more time upfront for ideation and discovery, allowing students to direct their own learning, being more accepting of student ideas, and managing the uncertainty that comes with accepting all ideas.

Ten teachers (7 interviewed, three consulted) said they



are allowing more time for ideation before writing. This was interpreted as a changed attitude because it required teachers to prioritise time for play and ideation, which reflects new principles that support student self-led learning and agency and a different role of the teacher in the creative process. Allowing more time for a creative process is uncommon in an outcomes-driven school environment. Four teachers said that in the past they would not give time for students to generate and share ideas and would have taken more control over the creative process.

We have not always used just the kids' ideas. We would walk into a room and say, convince me of your favourite food. Where the [Story Hubs] model would be, okay well what is your least favourite food, and your best favourite food, and if you merged them together, what would you keep and what would you throw out...It has given us some great thinking behind how to develop ideas. (W02)

Seventeen teachers (8 interviewed, 9 consulted) were more accepting and supportive of student ideas. This approach encourages students to express their ideas and gives them agency and ownership over their own ideas. This approach also highlights a different role of the teacher – as facilitator of the ideation process, rather than controller of the ideas. Teachers reported using this approach generally and by specific techniques such as the “Yes, and” method.

Nothing is out of bounds. You sit there and say great idea and what next? When you give the kids those prompts, it really does ignite their imagination. Because you're constantly sitting there saying yes, yes, yes and as a teacher you're not trying to steer them in a direction. (SL01)

Nine teachers (6 interviewed, 3 consulted) learned to manage the uncertainty that comes with navigating all student ideas. That is, teachers have increased skill to perform their changed role as facilitator of the creative process rather than controller of the idea. This also reflects teacher willingness to lead by example and take creative risks themselves. In the past these teachers were unwilling to accept all student ideas because the endpoint was unpredictable, which the teacher saw as a risk. Teachers learned to be comfortable with this uncertainty.

The workshops and professional learning helped me accept all answers - kids will try and throw all sorts of things at you, just because it's what they are thinking...and I learned to embrace that a lot. Kids were coming up with weird and wonderful ideas, and I was able to say 'that's gross - I love it!' I'm able to open myself up to that. (SL11)

Five teachers interviewed said they were teaching more creatively themselves. This indicates that teachers are leading by example and taking creative risks themselves, rather than encouraging students to take creative risks but remaining risk-averse. These teachers were developing new ways to generate student ideas.

[I am thinking of new ways to] just spark a bit of creativity. Not just from what I am doing, but what I have seen other teacher do as well. Like hiding things in the sandpit, showing a picture on the board, anything to generate those ideas. Thinking out of the norm. Even just a squiggle on a page, putting it down on a piece of paper, and the kids just forming a picture out of a squiggle, just those little ideas. (W01)

Integrating teaching principles into the curriculum

Teachers have tailored and integrated the teaching principles into their curriculum in different ways including by building a cross-age, cross-curriculum day of learning around their Story Hub and the creatures who inhabit it, running a lunchtime writing club for students with a wide range of writing abilities, and embedding an imaginative and engaging narrative purpose for a term-long writing unit linked to inquiry. The variety of applications is a further example of teachers being creative. These practices continued consistently in the 12 months following the initial PL.

Teachers allocated time for ideation at the beginning of their units and drawing upon the teaching principles to stimulate student ideas. Eight teachers (6 interviewed, 2 consulted) have integrated ideation exercises at the beginning of a weekly or fortnightly writing unit. This shows that teachers are changing their role in the writing unit to facilitating ideas rather than controlling them from the beginning. These teachers would commence a writing unit with Story Hubs methods to generate ideas and engagement, which then led towards a structured writing process later in the unit.

We work on a one-week cycle. On a Monday we try and create or add to that spark...I think that spark complemented by a weekly writing structure has got to the [writing] outcomes. Knowing that on a Friday you have got everything you need to write successfully, and you have got a block in order to do that, and everything is a stepping point for that. (W02)

Teachers used factual learning to inform fictional writing, that is, using learned knowledge to inform a fantastical adaptation exercise. Twelve teachers (4 interviewed, 8



consulted) had classes deliver information texts by fusing existing information at the end of their inquiry units. Teachers would deliver classes on different inquiry units (such as life cycles, animals, sports, or professions) and then ask students to create their own animal, sport or person by fusing what they had learned. This approach gives students an opportunity to have agency and ownership over ideas in application, in what is otherwise a 'one-way' process of teachers giving information to students.

Our inquiry looks at different adaptations of animals that live in different environments. From that, one of the activities that we've done is we got the students to create a superhuman that's had adaptations that can live in particular environments...Students came up with different adaptations that related to all the animals that we'd researched and looked at. (W04)

Teachers based whole units around an imagined and fictional point of engagement, such as using a strange and unfamiliar object stimuli. This allowed teachers to facilitate multiple writing pieces – learning reports, letters, and stories – that placed student imagination and concept at the centre, and hence encouraged student agency and ownership. Four teachers (3 interviewed, 1 consulted) have based whole units around a tactile item that was conducive to storytelling and writing.

[From coaching] we ended up coming up with this idea of these mysterious eggs and what's inside them. Our whole term became about these eggs. We did an information report about them, we took them home and did diary writing, we've done the lifecycle of the creature in the egg and we will do a story about them. If the coaching hadn't happened, it would have been quite a disjointed term. (W05)

Teachers from one school built a cross-age, cross-curriculum day of learning around their Story Hub creative space and the creatures who inhabit it. Students detailed the 'whole school surprise' based on the Story Hubs provocation and group activities for students across the school for a day.

There was this day, the last time we did a big Story Hub, there was all this mess everywhere. The library had a smashed computer and it was one of our computers. It had slime falling out of a pipe. It had Gerry the skeleton, he had popcorn and green stuff dripping from the light. There was monster footsteps in chalk. And seaweed. And footsteps were coming into the library. (SL05)

Three teachers drew upon the whole-school sessions and the fiction created on that day in their regular classes.

There's so much we can use from that day moving forward. It's been a big day we've done and now there's a hundred other things we can build off from that. A whole bunch of activities that we can base around that day as well. (SL08)

Two schools held weekly creative writing sessions in the creative space. Four interviewees explained that teachers were booking weekly sessions where students could practice creative writing within the space. This shows a weekly commitment to giving students the agency to write their own ideas and stories. The extent to which teachers used Story Hubs teaching principles and methods is unknown.

For grades three to sixes, they would come down and they would have – they would pencil in a creative writing session. There are four grades across the three to sixes. And they would all booking at least an hour a week, where that would be a time where the kids could down and do any form of creative writing using that space. (S01)

Teachers were using imaginary worlds and ideas for the basis of different writing forms, such as persuasive texts, informational texts, and letters. Allowing students to write about an imaginary world or idea improved their agency and engagement in what would otherwise have been dry and less engaging writing. Three teachers (2 interviewed, 1 consulted) used persuasive texts based on imaginary prompts and three other teachers (1 interviewed, 2 consulted) had students write letters based on their imaginary worlds.

[We used a Story Hubs] prompt for a persuasive text - the school just got a huge water bill, how do we pay for it?...The grade 5-6s wrote texts on why the school should sell the foundation kids' playground (DINT12)

[The kids] had to go find a doorway that was the doorway to their world, took a photo and then the kids had to draw on it then went through a similar process to Perilous Quest [SH workshop]: rules, warning sign, letter to a friend, invitation, letter to council about the issue. (DINT03)

Teacher confidence, enjoyment, and sense of support

Teacher confidence improved after changing their teaching attitudes and principles. The common reasons cited were the ability to embrace uncertainty, feeling better equipped to support student storytelling, and having a clear plan for their curriculum. Five teachers interviewed who were involved in PL said they felt more confident teaching after applying the teaching principles or methods.

One thing for me was to gain that confidence in the classroom, to feel I could be a creative person for the kids, to make sure that I could accept what they could give me and do something with it. (SL11)

Teachers enjoyed teaching more when they used the SH teaching principles. This outcome stands out in a time when teacher wellbeing, morale and efficiency has declined⁹. Five teachers (4 interviewed, 1 consulted) said they enjoyed teaching more when using these principles.

After the class [where I used Story Hubs methods] I just felt really quite pumped. I found that was beneficial...I can only speak for myself, but I am sure other teachers probably felt the same way as well. (W01)

Story Hubs contributed to teachers' sense of support during online learning. Story Hubs provided tailored training to Banksia Gardens staff to help them transition to online learning. Two teachers (2 interviewed) said that they felt supported by Story Hubs during the lockdown because the external support met their specific needs:

[The most significant change from Story Hubs was] the feeling of support. Feeling that someone is doing something so in line with our current needs, that is being responsive to the crisis, and responsive to the environment. (BGF03)



WHAT WAS DELIVERED IN THE PILOT?

School capacity to engage with external programs such as Story Hubs was hindered significantly from March 2020 – November 2021 by COVID restrictions and the associated challenges.

Of the four Hubs, one was substantially delivered, one has partial and ongoing delivery, and two have had partial delivery. The co-design process was delivered as planned for all four Hubs. The Geelong hub was substantially delivered during the pilot period: these schools received a full year of teacher professional learning (PL) delivered to the entire cohort of teachers, with active ongoing engagement and established partner schools. The other three Hubs faced limitations as to the extent and reach of PL delivered, ongoing engagement, and partner schools.

THE CHANGING CONTEXT DUE TO COVID

The emergence of COVID has posed fundamental challenges to the Victorian education system. Victorian schools oscillated between remote learning and face-to-face learning for the period from March 2020 to December 2021.

School capacity to engage with external programs decreased significantly due to this COVID challenge. Schools across the state – including in the pilot Hubs – were required to upskill to online learning, manage the repeated transitions between online and face-to-face learning, and provide additional support to students falling behind. The school principal from one Story Hub detailed this challenge.

In 2020 it was full survival mode for schools and myself and teachers...[Story Hubs] was just in the too hard basket. We had no [capacity] to engage. (M01)

Prohibitions around face-to-face engagement also prevented schools from accepting external support. Schools were unable to invite externals – such as 100 Story Building staff – to visit for long periods during face-to-face learning due to lockdowns and movement restrictions.

WHAT WAS DELIVERED IN EACH SCHOOL?

Of the four Hubs, one was substantially delivered, one has partial and ongoing delivery, and two had partial delivery. Story Hubs was initially planned as a three-year program. Table 2 shows that the Geelong hub was substantially delivered; these schools received a complete course of teacher PL delivered to the entire cohort of teachers, with active ongoing engagement and established partner schools. The other three Hubs received lower ratings due to limitations in the extent and reach of PL delivered, ongoing engagement, and partner schools.

TABLE 2
RATING OF DELIVERY IN EACH HUB

| RATING AND HUBS | JUSTIFICATION |
|--|---|
| Substantially delivered | |
| The Geelong Hub: Whittington and St Leonards Primary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The co-design process and build were delivered mostly as planned, albeit disrupted and shortened due to lockdowns. A one-year teacher PL program was delivered to the entire cohort of teachers. Teachers are continuing to engage with Story Hubs through the creative space and two years of planned PL. Both schools have identified partner schools (each other) and collaborated through PL and co-design. |
| Partial and ongoing delivery | |
| Meadows Primary (and partner Banksia Gardens Community Services) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The co-design process and build were delivered as planned. Year 1 teacher PL was delivered to the grade 3–6 teaching team, years 2 – 3 of pilot (2020 – 21) were disrupted by COVID and limited. Active ongoing engagement in the Story Hubs program and interest in both teacher PL and using the creative space. Teacher PL in years 2-3 included staff from partner organisation (Banksia Gardens) |
| Partial delivery | |
| Sunshine Primary and Copperfield College | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The co-design process and build were delivered as planned. Teacher PL has either had partial reach (such as being delivered to a single cohort rather than to the entire school) or less sessions were delivered than intended. Teacher engagement in PL was significantly disrupted by COVID. Partial ongoing engagement with Story Hubs through teacher PL and use of the creative space. Partner schools not established. |

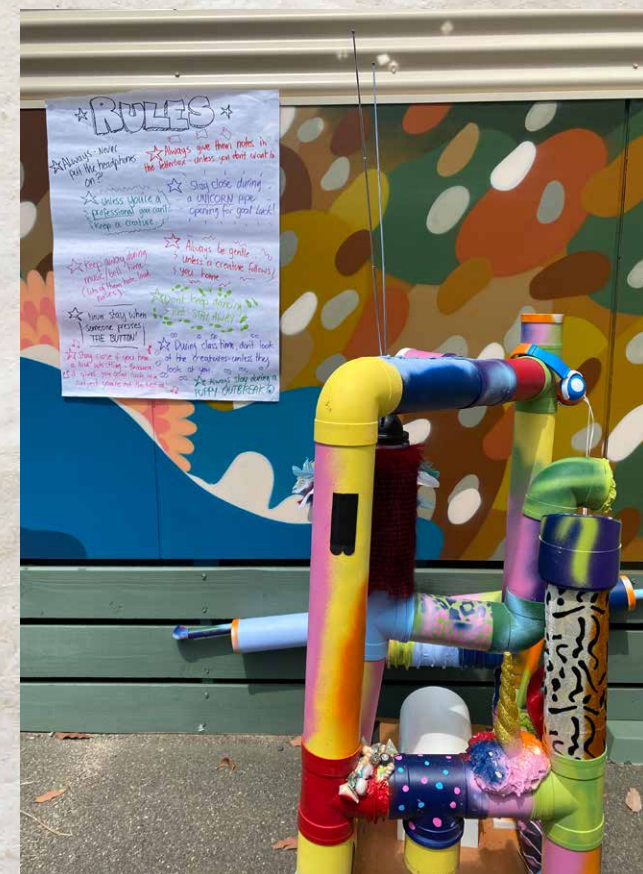
Table 3 details the activities delivered in each Hub. This table considers only the key influencing activities (activities that directly build the capacity of schools, such as the co-design process and teacher PL) and omits the significant background work in communicating with schools, organising sessions, and establishing partnerships, amongst others. Following is a brief discussion of delivery in each Hub.

Whittington Primary and St Leonards Primary

The Geelong Hub was delivered simultaneously from 2021 onwards as a partnership between the schools, following the first round intake of Hubs and the onset of COVID restrictions. The output from co-design was a set of pipes that were present in classrooms across the schools. The teacher PL started with a structured program (called ‘Sparking Creativity’) followed by ongoing curriculum coaching. The structured PL was delivered to the entire teaching cohort, and the curriculum coaching was delivered on an as-needs basis. Schools received direct funding to cover CRT costs from a grant they applied for. The two schools had a writing improvement focus, and were already working together on the principal network level to improve student voice and agency.

TABLE 3
ACTIVITIES DELIVERED

| HUB | ACTIVITIES | PARTICIPANTS |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Substantially delivered | | |
| Geelong Hub | Co-design process, build, and launch, across five sessions Teacher PL: Six sessions, including five sessions in 2021 (Sparking Creativity), and one coaching session in 2022. | Eight students and two teachers All teachers received teacher PL |
| Partial and ongoing delivery | | |
| Meadows Hub | Co-design process, build, and launch Teacher PL: Eight sessions, including three before COVID (pre-Mar 2020), four across 2020-21, and one in 2022. Support to Partner Hub: eight teacher PL sessions to Banksia Gardens in 2020. | Students received two co-design sessions All teachers received teacher PL and support with co-design for students Up to 10 teachers in Banksia Gardens received PL in 2020 |
| Partial delivery | | |
| Sunshine Hub | Co-design process, build, and launch Teacher PL: Eight sessions, including six before COVID (pre-Mar 2020), two in 2020, and two in 2021. | Students received direct co-design sessions All teachers received teacher PL |
| Copperfield Hub | Co-design process, build, and launch Teacher PL: Eight sessions, including three in 2020 and five in 2021. | Students received direct co-design sessions Year 7 – 8 Literacy teachers received PL |



Copperfield College

The Copperfield Hub was distinct due to the school’s large size, two campuses, and being a high school. The Hub was delivered from 2019 onwards and the creative classroom was successfully launched in late 2019. The Hub was coordinated by the literacy leader for year 7-8 teachers. Teacher PL fell substantially in 2020 after COVID commenced and resumed in 2021, but was disrupted by further lockdowns. Coordination and teacher PL has been limited since the key staff member left the school in early 2022 and was not replaced.

FIGURE 8
Portal pipes connect the two schools to an underworld of creatures in the Geelong Hub.

Meadows Primary

The Meadows Hub was delivered from 2019 onwards, with the objective of being accessible by the broader school community to help address the low English literacy of many parents and families, rather than simply being offered to students. Meadows Primary was also participating in a regional writing program concurrently with Story Hubs.

The co-design process was delivered in 2019 and the creative classroom was officially opened in early 2020. Teacher PL was focused on responding to teaching needs rather than delivered a structured, prepared program. School engagement with Story Hubs and teacher PL declined considerably during 2020-21 but has risen again in 2022. Story Hubs is currently active through a lunchtime writing club.

Meadows Primary had an existing relationship with Banksia Gardens Community Services which was nominated as the partner organisation. Teacher PL was delivered to the partner organisation in 2020 as their staff adjusted to online learning.

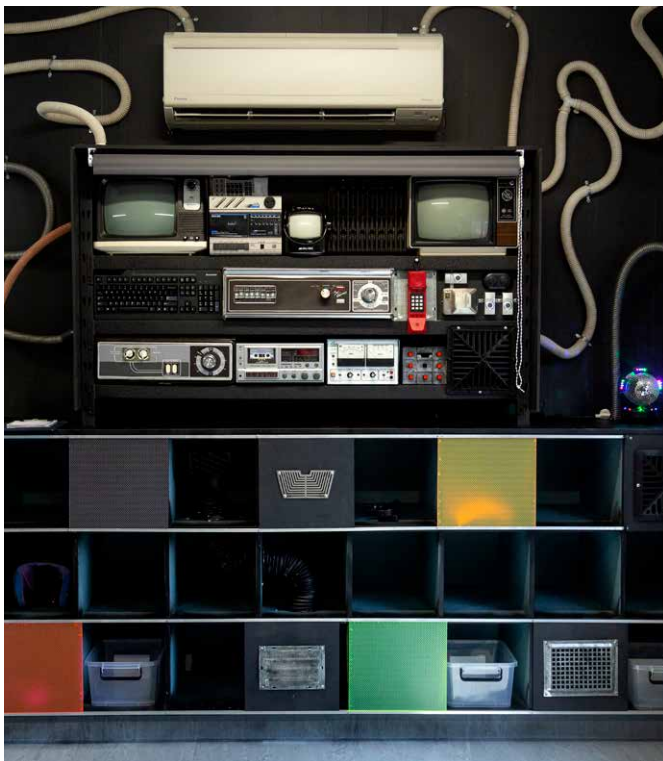


FIGURE 9
Interdimensional control room in the Meadows Hub.



FIGURE 10
An otherworld tree that is the last of its kind waits to be fed stories by students in the Copperfield Hub.

Sunshine Primary

The Sunshine Hub was delivered from 2019 onwards. The Hub was coordinated by a senior teacher within the school rather than the school principal as it was in the Geelong and Meadows hubs. The co-design process was delivered in 2019 and the creative classroom officially opened in late 2019. Teacher PL focused on responding to teaching needs rather than delivering a structured, prepared program. School engagement with Story Hubs PL has been limited to a specific teaching team, or one-off whole-school sessions since COVID commenced and the senior teacher left the school, but every class uses their Story Hub for an hour of writing each week.



FIGURE 11
A portal door in the Sunshine Hub.

IMPLEMENTATION FINDINGS

This section identifies the key process lessons from implementing three Story Hubs elements – professional learning (PL), co-design of the creative space, and peer-to-peer (P2P) learning. Partner schools are addressed in a later section.



5.1

Professional learning

Free PL did not ensure teacher uptake, as schools were influenced by time scarcity, CRT availability and costs. Schools that received funding to cover CRT costs had the greatest PL uptake.

The most appropriate PL process is to start with structured training ('Sparking Creativity'), then shift towards more responsive coaching in the second year.

PL dates should be planned around the whole-school calendar and be locked into teachers' schedule far in advance.

SCHOOL RESOURCES: COSTS, TIME, AND CRTS

Story Hubs provided free PL for all Hubs, but take-up of this professional learning was mixed. The evaluation found that three other resources required from schools – teacher time, the costs of CRT, and the availability of CRTs – all strongly influenced teacher uptake of PL. Other factors associated with all SH elements are discussed in Section 5.

Time scarcity was the major factor that influenced uptake of PL. A key learning for the pilot program was that free PL was insufficient to drive uptake by teachers if they lacked time, a challenge that was compounded by COVID and the shift to online learning.

We expected that these under-resourced schools would jump at the possibility of free PL. What became more apparent is that while they would relish that PL time, the schools and leaderships and teachers' ability to carve out that time from everything else was severely limited. (1SB01)

CRT costs hindered teacher uptake of PL in schools. While the Story Hubs PL was free, schools were still required to pay for CRTs to cover classes while teachers were attending sessions. Two interviewees said the CRT costs hindered uptake in schools.

[The CRT costs] contributed to the ability of the whole school to get behind the program. I know in one of our schools, the teaching professional learning very quickly was focused on just one

team, 3-4 teachers rather than the whole school because they said they just couldn't afford to have professional learning across the school. They couldn't afford the casual relief teaching, money or the time. (1SB02)

The number and availability of CRTs also influences uptake of PL. Some teacher PL sessions were delivered on a single day to the entire teaching cohort. Data party attendees highlighted the challenge for these schools to find CRTs to cover all their classes at once, which was compounded by COVID and the associated workforce challenges.

PL CONTENT AND SEQUENCING

Story Hubs provided two types of teacher PL – responsive coaching and a structured course. The evaluation found that starting with structured PL and then shifting to the responsive coaching in the second year worked best.

What has worked is we built trust with [teachers] in doing [structured PL first]...it does, I think, mean that teachers can trust us to carry them further along in this journey, changing what happens in their classroom and to actually be open to trying ideas or experimenting with things [through coaching]. (1SB02)

Starting with structured coaching worked well because it built teacher buy-in, trust, and understanding of the Story Hubs methods. Four interviewees including two teachers said that 100SB staff demonstrating the Story Hubs methods helped teachers see the benefits for students and how they were applied.

For the teachers to see that style of connection, storytelling and what Story Hub do [through structured PL upfront], it was really important to build that credibility, and that was really great. (C04)

One teacher said that teachers who had not seen 100SB methods demonstrated were more reluctant to engage in ongoing PL.

Maybe because [teachers] hadn't been involved in 100SB before and I had seen benefits of working with them – [the PL] was not a priority for them or they didn't understand what benefits would be and staff don't really want extra work (C02)

Shifting to coaching after structured PL worked well because teachers trusted 100SB staff and were more willing to use them as a coach. Two interviewees said teachers trusted 100SB staff because they had seen the Story Hubs methods demonstrated and then applied the methods themselves.

Coaching worked well because it supported teachers to incorporate SH methods into their curriculum and the sessions were flexible to meet the needs of individual teachers being coached. Three teachers (who received structured PL before coaching) said they valued ongoing coaching because it helped their curriculum planning.

[The coaching] actually worked really well...They gave us lots of ideas of, I guess interesting and fun sort of writing activities that we could do, so it was great having them sit down with us and saying this was our inquiry unit and have them bounce different ideas off us. (W04)

Drawbacks from coaching were the limited scope for planned/designed training and the ad-hoc nature of coaching. 100SB staff suggested that the current model of coaching – which consists largely of 'bouncing ideas back and forth' – failed to fully leverage 100SB knowledge. Furthermore, the coaching model relied on ad-hoc requests from teachers rather than being pre-planned or guaranteed.

I think there is probably still room for some more formalised sessions in the professional learning in this second year which can stretch teachers into new areas of thinking. One hour bouncing ideas back and forth isn't the same as us being able to sit down and plan and design. (1SB02)

Incorporating reflection points into the PL course worked well because it further supported teacher buy-in and adoption of SH teaching principles. Two teachers and one 100SB interviewee said that reflection points supported buy-in and nudged teachers to apply the teaching principles.

Reflection points has been really useful, having that point to ask teachers, "What have you implemented since the last time, what is working for you, what is not working for you?"... Whenever [teachers] can see it iterated and being implemented in their setting, they buy into it more. (1SB01)

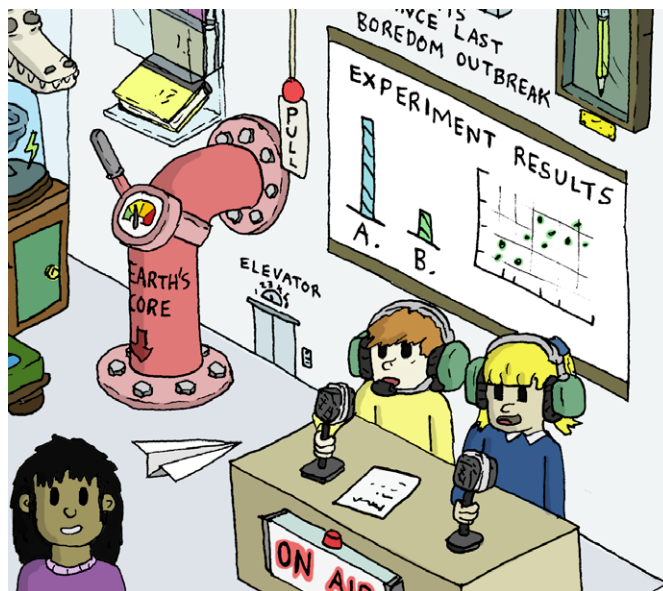
Tailoring PL content to the school's existing curriculum and unit plans was well received by teachers because they could immediately see the relevance for their classes. Two teachers championed the process of informing 100SB of the upcoming teaching needs and gaps before PL, so they could tailor their content.

Last year, I had a lot of time to talk and spend some time with [100SB staff] to really put a teacher classroom, teacher perspective onto the professional learning they were giving us. I think that was a really big benefit. (S01)

PL PLANNING AND ORGANISATION

Professional learning dates should be planned around the whole-school calendar to ensure teachers are able to attend. Interviewees and data party attendees agreed that having access to the whole school calendar when planning was important for ensuring that PL went ahead. Partnering with school staff with the decision-making power to commit to PL dates was also important – this is discussed further in Section 5

There is specificity to the school... [Planning] becomes quite hard if the decision makers aren't there being like, yes, we can give that time, yes, we can do that, yes, I have the whole school calendar here and it doesn't affect anything else. (1SB02)



5.2

Co-design process

The co-design process generally worked well and was positively received by teachers and students due to the high student involvement and agency.

The most appropriate co-design process was shorter and facilitated by 100SB rather than teachers.

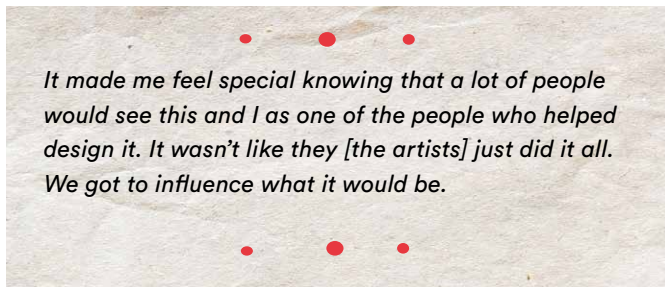


FIGURE 10

Quote from student involved in the co-design process. This quote illustrates how student agency and ownership come from designing the creative space.

Artists had significant discretion in the final design despite the significant student agency before that point in the process.

The co-design process worked well and received positive feedback from all schools. Four teachers said that student involvement and agency was a positive element of the co-design process. The 2019 Learning Report found that students made key decisions on the proposed design, and created artefacts for the space. Schools in the first intake had families and community members who were keen and excited to support the build of the space and participate in working bees.

That process was outstanding. It was engaging. It was collaborative. It's allowed for voice and agency with kids and staff, high levels of energy, really clear direction, just a really smart way about going about it...[The organisation] was all brilliant. (M01)

A shortened co-design process facilitated by 100SB staff was most appropriate because this process responded to time scarcity of schools, required less of teachers, and allowed staff to ensure student voice was maximised in the final design. This process was adapted and tested in the Geelong Hubs in response to feedback and reflections from the first intake.

When we got to Geelong, we ultimately decided that it should just be a direct facilitation, us to students, to shorten how long it took to co-design and also, to just ensure that the final hub was actually designed by students, and did not leave a lot [of discretion] to the designer. (1SB02)



Student agency slightly decreased at the end of the co-design process, due largely to COVID and time scarcity. Artists (who built the space) were unable to collaborate with students during the co-design as planned – the program originally planned to invite artists to two co-design sessions - due to COVID. Furthermore, three students said they wanted to participate in physically building the creative space but had limited involvement in the final build. These three students were from the initial intake of schools, meaning COVID was not a factor.

My group of friends and I thought we would be able to participate more in like the building of the room. We just like made these treehouses. And that disappointed me a bit too. We brainstormed about what the room would look like, what colours, but we didn't actually get to do most of it. We just painted some branches and made tree houses and that's all we got to do. (C03)

5.3

Peer-to-Peer (P2P) learning

Opportunities and teacher appetite for P2P learning were limited due to time scarcity, which was compounded by COVID. P2P learning emerged through the coaching PL, with 100SB acting as the conduit between schools and teachers. This model allowed 100SB to facilitate a cross-pollinate ideas between different coaching sessions and did not require additional time or resources from teachers.

Teacher appetite and opportunities for P2P learning was limited due to time scarcity. 100SB attempted to facilitate P2P learning by offering PL sessions to multiple schools at once, however teacher uptake of these sessions was limited.

I think this is one of the things that's been most impacted by COVID. There haven't been opportunities to connect. We did try and do professional learning sessions online that did enable teachers from different schools to attend and share that learning and to hear as they were doing the activities, how other teachers were responding to it. But we generally didn't have a good spread of uptake from the different schools to really foster that network. (1SB02)

The P2P learning model that eventuated was 100SB staff acting as a conduit between schools. The coaching process allows 100SB staff to bring in both their own suggestions and their experiences with other schools to cross-pollinate ideas.

What it's currently looking like is peer-to-peer learning through us of what the possibilities are. (1SB01)

The key requirements from schools are a commitment of teacher time to PL, support from senior leaders, and staff champions to oversee implementation.

The key requirements from 100SB are to navigate the time scarcity in schools, and to learn the unique realities of each school in order to tailor their services.

6.1

Requirements from schools

Committing teacher time and resources to PL is the first requirement of schools in relation to the successful implementation of Story Hubs. The evaluation found that a time commitment is required to ensure time-scarce teachers have space to attend PL, and resources are required to ensure CRTs are funded and available to cover for these teachers. Four teachers and two 100SB staff said that time-scarcity is a major barrier to school uptake of programs.

There is no time to do this work in schools. It's such an obvious and immovable barrier...The system is very good at being like, you can't because there is no time. We've allocated all the time and there is nothing left. (1SB02)

Support from school leadership is the second requirement of schools. Two teachers and two 100SB staff highlighted the need for school leadership to be committed to Story Hubs and prioritise implementation in a time-scarce environment.

[Implementing Story Hubs] really requires leadership to be committed into it. The Principal was really committed to bringing this through, so that was a big support for me. But you need leadership on board. (S01)

A whole-school focus on writing is preferable from schools participating in Story Hubs. This writing focus is linked to the previous point, because if schools have prioritised writing, then it follows that school leadership will be more supportive. Delivery has been best in schools where improving writing was a key component of school strategies.

Staff champions who oversee SH implementation are a requirement from schools. The role of staff champions was to organise and inform all elements of Story Hubs, particularly the teacher PL and codesign process. This role fell to passionate individuals in each Hub as schools lack a formal partnership management capacity.

You do need to build key relationships with schools...there is not a function in the school that we have worked with that is about fostering, maintaining and supporting external partner relationships. (1SB02)

Multiple staff champions are required to reduce dependency for Story Hubs implementation resting with one individual. Delivery in two schools was hindered when the staff champion left or changed position within the school. Staff also cautioned against putting too much pressure on one individual.

You need a dedicated person, at least one, maybe two, because the 3/4 teacher and I were originally tagged to it, but then our roles changed. (S01)

6.2

Requirements from 100SB

Navigating time scarcity in schools is a requirement of 100SB. Time scarcity was a major barrier to uptake of teacher PL as explained above. 100SB needs to recognise and navigate this time scarcity in implementing Story Hubs wherever possible. Two teachers said that 100SB staff acknowledged and respected this time scarcity, which was appreciated by staff.

I know Story Hubs understands the fact that, teachers are very time poor, like everybody is. But teachers are really time poor...And [Story Hubs] were really great with that. (S01)

100SB is required to learn the unique realities of each school, in order to tailor their services to each Hub. All schools are complex and different, and one interviewee highlighted the importance of understanding these differences and complexities.

100SB need to understand concurrent programs and the whole school calendar in order to organise professional learning. One school participated in a separate writing program alongside Story Hubs, which limited their time available for Story Hubs PL and required them to align the different programs. The significance of the whole school calendar for planning PL was discussed in Section 4.1.

There was a bit of confusion. We loved the Story Hub stuff, and we also loved the [separate writing program] type of stuff. How do we make them sync together? (M01)

100SB need to understand the upcoming gaps and needs of teachers to tailor the PL content. The value of tailoring the PL content was discussed in Section 4.1.

100SB is required to understand the existing networks between schools to implement partner schools. This understanding would allow 100SB to leverage any existing networks rather than re-create the wheel. Data party attendees also cited the need to understand the appetite and usefulness for interschool collaboration.

Story Hubs was a bit of us trying to find out exactly where [the existing interschool networks] for our particular schools were and could we support what already existed for them with Story Hubs rather than coming in and being like, “Well, we will have to create a new network.” (1SB02)



7

REACH AND PARTNERSHIP FINDINGS

Reach within schools was determined by the number of teachers who participated in the initial PL sessions, and this reach did not increase over time. The level of senior leadership involvement in driving implementation and the influence of staff champions dictated teacher participation in PL and in turn Story Hubs' reach.

The evaluation found that while school partnerships are supported by both education literature and policy, schools generally lacked the capacity and resources to establish partnerships with other schools. Collaboration between partners was beneficial when it did occur. Story Hubs piloted two different 'partnership models', but lessons from these models are obscured by other factors including COVID.

7.1

Scaling across schools

The evaluation found that reach did not scale (increase) over time, albeit this was likely affected by COVID. Rather, the maximum reach was equivalent to the number of teachers that participated in the early round of PL. Story Hubs scaled across the entire schools in the Geelong Hub, where all teachers participated in all structured PL. In schools where Story Hubs started with a subset of teachers (such as teachers from a particular year level) there was no snowball effect across the other teachers.

[We hoped to] start with small projects and show what is achievable there, then lifting outcomes and engagement and working your way from there [to engage with teachers in other year levels] (C02)

The level of direct support from senior leadership and influence of staff champions dictated teacher participation in PL and in turn Story Hubs reach. Story Hubs delivered PL to a subset of teachers when senior leadership gave high-level permission and support for the program but were not directly involved in driving implementation and maintaining Story Hubs as a priority in a time-scarce environments.

7.2

Partner schools

The evaluation found that while school partnerships are supported by both education literature and policy, schools lacked the capacity and resources to establish partnerships.

Partnerships within and between schools are supported by both Victorian educational policy and literature. FIFO 2.0 incorporates ‘Strong relationships and active partnerships between schools and families/carers, communities, and organisations to strengthen students’ participation and engagement in school’ as a key dimension that contributes to student learning and engagement. A report documenting the benefits of sister school relationships in Victoria found that such programs can have positive effects on student global awareness, attitudes and responses. These benefits are of greatest significance during the third year, once relationships had been well established and embedded within the school (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013).

The evaluation found that schools generally lacked the capacity and resources to establish partnerships with other schools. This was present in 2019 and compounded by COVID from 2020 onwards. Only one of the participating schools had an active partnership with another organisation. Furthermore, teachers and 100SB identified many practical barriers to partnering with other schools, including time scarcity and the logistics of travelling to different schools and timetabling classes.

There was no groundwork that’s already laid in schools for that kind of partnership with another school. They don’t share resources like that, if any... these connections and partnerships don’t exist... I don’t know how common it is to have programs which gather two schools together (1SB02)

Collaboration between Story Hubs partners was beneficial when it did occur. Collaboration between the Geelong schools occurred during the creative space co-design process, combined teacher PL, and a shared learning session at the end of 2021. Four interviewees (2 interviewed, 2 consulted) said the collaboration with other schools was beneficial for their own learning about the experiences of teachers in other schools and provided a positive experience for students.

My first interaction with [the partner school] was through the Story Hubs...Teaching is a pretty busy job and when you can sit down with another staff and show learning success, it is a pretty nice moment to reflect on that process. It was good to do that, to get their ideas, share our ideas. Because then you can almost use theirs or solidify what you are doing, then it is right. (W02)

Story Hubs piloted two different ‘partnership models’, but lessons from these models are limited due to other factors, including COVID.

Equal partners model: In this model both schools receive funding, teacher PL, and collaborated in the co-design process to make a creative installation in each school with a shared narrative background.

Centre-satellite model: In this model both schools receive teacher PL, but only one school receives funding to build the creative space. The intent of this model was that students from the satellite school would visit the space in the ‘centre’ school, but this did not eventuate.



APPROPRIATENESS FOR SCHOOLS

The evaluation found that Story Hubs was appropriate for schools where teachers had time and capacity to engage with the program. The demonstrated outcomes from Story Hubs elements – student engagement and agency, improved teacher capacity, active partnerships between schools – are key components of Victorian educational policy and supported by research. However, implementing Story Hubs was inappropriate (and not done) in schools where teachers lacked the time and capacity to engage, a challenge compounded by the onset of COVID and online learning.

The Story Hubs elements align with Victoria’s FISO 2.0 and are supported by research. The demonstrated outcomes from these elements – student engagement and agency, active partnerships between schools, improved teacher capacity – are key elements and dimensions of the FIFO 2.0 and supported by research as

detailed in previous sections.

Story Hubs was appropriate for teachers with time and capacity to engage with the program. All teachers interviewed said that Story Hubs was relevant for them – but the data collection bias should be acknowledged here; all teachers interviewed were actively engaged in Story Hubs.

The evaluation found that implementing Story Hubs was not appropriate in schools where teachers lacked the time and capacity to engage with the program. This was particularly the case during 2020, when teacher capacity was consumed by the transition to online learning. 100SB respected schools’ need for space during this time and did not push PL or other activities on teachers’ already full workload. Low engagement from three schools since 2020 suggests that they lacked the capacity to engage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation provided four overall recommendations and then five recommendations related to specific Story Hubs elements. The four overall recommendations are:

Recommendation 1: Continue the program

The pilot demonstrated that the Story Hubs model works, achieves outcomes for teachers and students, and is appropriate for schools – all in a COVID-affected period. 100SB are able to leverage the learnings from this pilot to improve future Hubs, as has already occurred in the Geelong Hubs.

Recommendation 2: Plan how to address the full resource requirements for teacher PL

The program design and funding could better incorporate all the school costs associated with teacher PL – PL costs, teacher time, and the costs and availabilities of CRTs. In most Hubs the PL costs were subsidised but teachers were required to find and fund CRTs, which limited uptake of PL.

Recommendation 3: Ask schools for an upfront commitment of teacher time and resources for PL

An upfront commitment of time and resources led to greater PL uptake, rather than trying to squeeze in sessions in a time-scarce environment. A clear commitment of teacher numbers also clarifies the likely scale of the pilot within schools.

Recommendation 4: Develop and use selection criteria for potential new Hubs

Using selection criteria will ensure new Hubs are appropriately placed to implement a Story Hub, which in turn will maximise the outcomes from this investment. The selection criteria should focus on requirements to successfully implement a Story Hub within the school, and could incorporate school leadership support, staff champions, and concurrent programs.

The following recommendations are related to specific Story Hubs elements.

Teacher Professional Learning:

- Keep the process of starting with structured training ('Sparking Creativity') and then shifting towards more responsive coaching in the second year. The best teacher and student outcomes were achieved from this PL process.
- Keep tailoring PL content to the upcoming needs and gaps of teachers. Maintain a clear process where 100SB can learn about these immediate needs and tailor upcoming PL to meet these needs. Teachers consistently highlighted this as an important element of all PL.
- Equip teachers to recognise changes in writing creativity and critical thinking. This could be delivered both through teacher PL and helping teachers navigate the established curriculum goals and writing assessment rubrics.

Co-design:

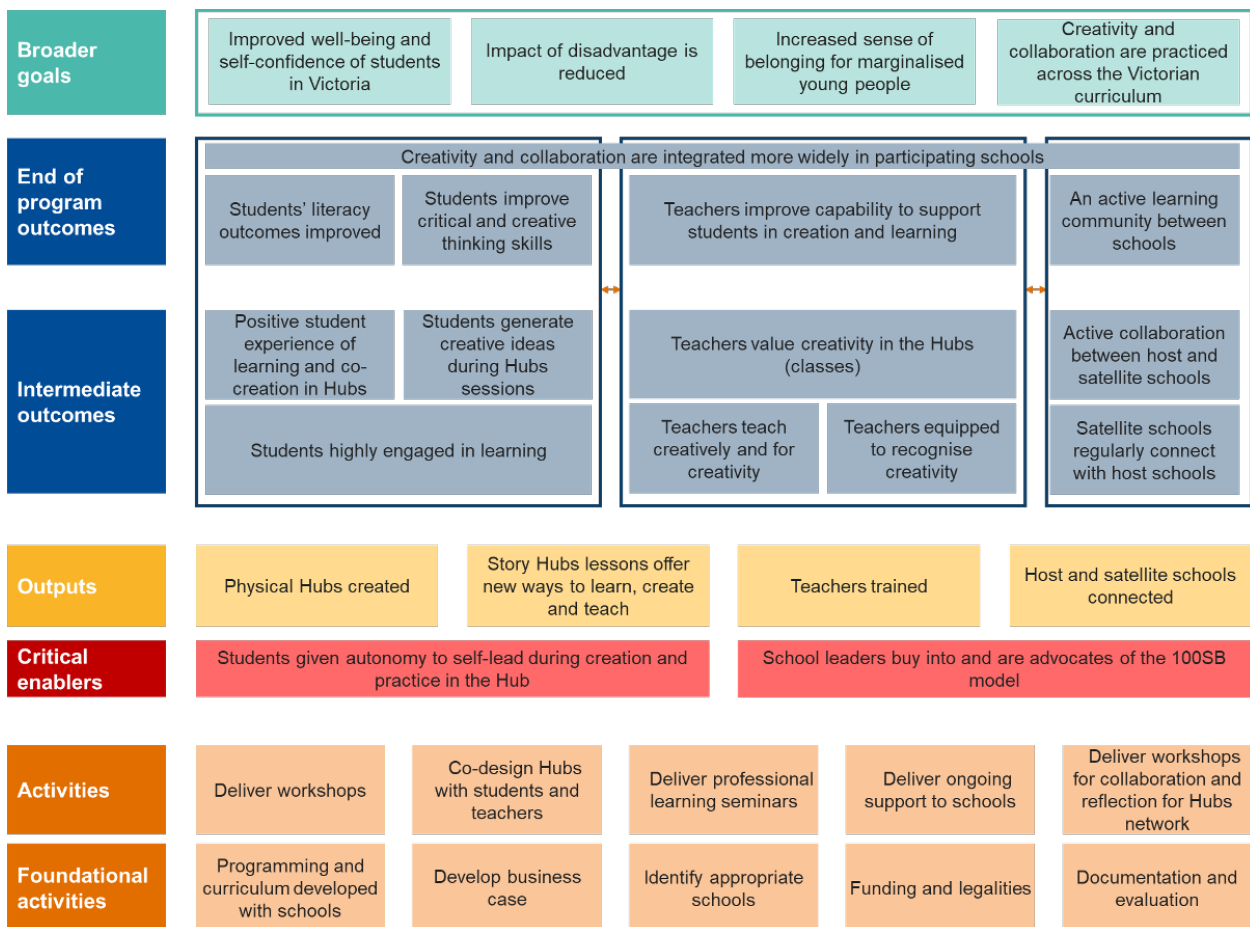
- Keep the co-design process. The co-design process was well received by all schools, teachers, and students. The shorter co-design process facilitated by 100SB staff was most appropriate for schools.

Partner schools:

- Revisit how to implement partnerships between schools for Hubs with teacher time and capacity to engage. This may include setting clear expectations of resources required upfront and actively facilitating the partnership.

APPENDIX

STORY HUBS THEORY OF CHANGE AND REFERENCES



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Story Hubs Pilot 2019-2021 was a significant undertaking that would not be possible without the generous support of organisations and individuals. The pilot program was supported by:

Aesop Foundation

Anthony Costa Foundation

The Ian Potter Foundation

The Lionel & Yvonne Spencer Trust

Perpetual

The Ross Trust

The Hart Line Fund

The Stan Willis Trust through the Australian
Communities Foundation's ACF Reserve Fund

and our valued community of individual supporters.



Prepared by Clear Horizon
for 100 Story Building

For enquiries please contact
JESSICA TRAN
Email: jess@100storybuilding.org.au
100storybuilding.org.au

