PREPARED FOR

100 Story Building

STORY HUBS 2020

LEARNING REPORT

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1 KEY TAKEAWAYS

This Learning Report presents the evaluation of the Story Hubs pilot program in 2020. The purpose of this evaluation was to document the outcomes, key achievements, and lessons for improvement from Story Hubs actions.

Story Hubs is a three year pilot program run by 100 Story Building in which 'Hubs' are created in schools and educational institutions in disadvantaged socio-economic areas. The pilot aims to improve student literacy outcomes and critical and creative thinking skills, improve educator capability to support students to create and learn, and embed the philosophy and practice of Story Hubs.

Each Hub incorporates a creative physical space co-designed by staff and students, a creative professional learning program for educators, a peer-to-peer learning community, and an open classroom to foster collaboration with community partners. The pilot draws upon arts-based teaching approaches supported by evidence and tested through experience in 100 Story Building programs.

Story Hubs partnered with three schools for this pilot: Meadows Primary School, Sunshine Primary School, and Copperfield College. There has also been ongoing engagement with Banksia Gardens Community Service Centre, which has a close relationship with Meadows Primary. The report focuses upon outcomes from Banksia Gardens, as the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) prohibited any research activity in schools during 2020.

In 2019 Story Hubs conceptualised, co-designed, and built a Story Hub in each school. This process included professional learning sessions for educators, co-design with students, and consultation with other stakeholders.

The changing context due to COVID

Education in Victoria and around the world was significantly impacted by the lockdowns associated with COVID restrictions. Schools transitioned to remote learning across all year levels in March 2020, which was largely kept in place until October 2020 or later. These restrictions and the associated transition to online learning significantly impacted Victorian schools, thus considerably restricting Story Hubs capacity to operate in 2020.

While there were challenges to implementation, the relevance of 100 Story Building and Story Hubs has increased because its aims of improving student engagement and addressing the equity gap have become more essential than ever in response to the inherent limitations of remote learning.

What was delivered?

Story Hubs successfully maintained partnerships with all Hubs despite the challenges faced by schools during the year. Two professional learning sessions were delivered before COVID restrictions were implemented in March 2020. Story Hubs met twice with each Hub after March 2020 to identify their needs and in response delivered eight tailored online professional learning sessions.

What were the outcomes?

Story Hubs professional learning sessions **improved the capacity of educators** in Banksia Gardens to support student learning and creation. This was achieved through improved educator confidence and capacity to engage with students online, changing their approach to teaching, and providing specific exercises to support student engagement and idea generation.

The expectations from student outcomes for 2020 were limited given the challenges associated with COVID-19 and online learning. However, there was some instances of students from Banksia Gardens exhibiting similar or higher levels of **engagement and idea generation** when educators changed their teaching practice.

The extent to which teaching practice changed and student outcomes were achieved in the three schools due to Story Hubs is unclear. Further insight into the extent of these changes should be available in the 2021 Learning Report, provided research in schools is permitted.

What was learned?

Four of the lessons learned from Story Hubs in 2020 were:

- **Story Hubs is more than a creative space**: The experience this year has validated the significance of Story Hubs teaching principles and activities as standalone components of the Hub.

- **Buy-in from influential senior staff in each Hub is important to ensure educator engagement**: Influential staff in senior positions are critical to ensuring educator engagement and attendance of professional learning sessions in each Hub.

- **The partnership model is important to ensure Story Hubs' relevance to educators**: Story Hubs adaptation and responsiveness to the needs of the individual Hubs (partners) allowed it to remain relevant to the needs of educators and contributed to the outcomes that were achieved in 2020.

- **A minimum professional learning dosage is required to achieve outcomes**: Schools struggled to commit to a minimum dosage (time) of professional learning in 2020 due to the transition to remote learning, which limited the outcomes for Story Hubs.

Recommendations

The evaluation presents the following recommendations moving forward:

- Continue the pilot
- Increase the reach and dosage of professional learning for educators (COVID permitting)
- Aim to change teaching practice both within and outside the creative space

2 INTRODUCTION

This Learning Report presents the evaluation of the Story Hubs pilot program in 2020. The report was developed to assess the effectiveness and impact of Story Hubs and identify key lessons for improvement. The evaluation was delivered by Clear Horizon in line with the evaluation plan developed in collaboration with 100 Story Building.

This report is structured as follows:

- Key takeaways
- Introduction and evaluation approach
- About Story Hubs
- The changing context due to COVID
- What was delivered by Story Hubs in 2020?
- Findings from the evaluation
- Learnings
- Conclusion and recommendations

There are also six stories of significant change interspersed throughout the report.

Evaluation approach

The purpose of this evaluation is to document the outcomes and key achievements from Story Hubs actions in 2020, develop learnings about Story Hubs that can be used moving forward, and provide a baseline for the final evaluation in 2021/22.

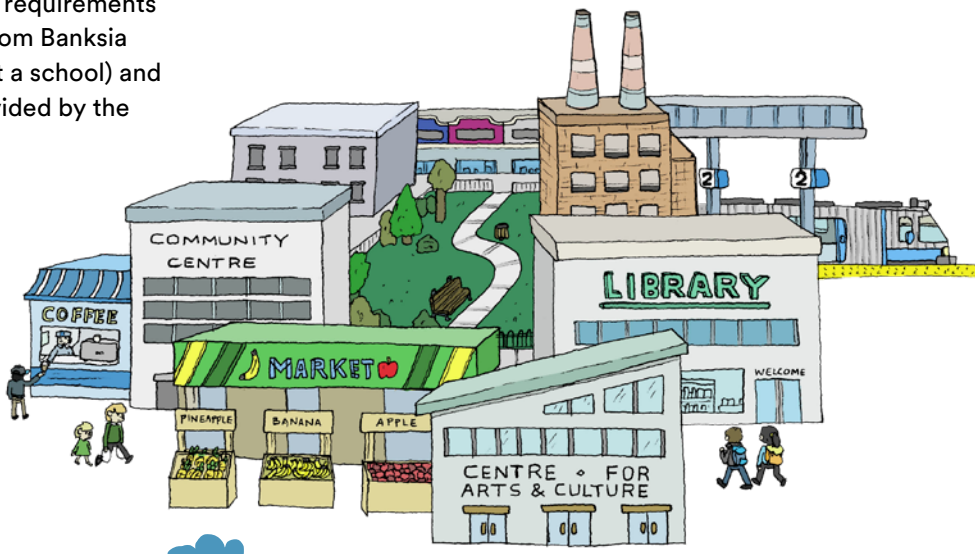
The evaluation sought to answer the following questions:

- How did Story Hubs engage the three Hubs in 2020?
- What were the outcomes for educators and schools from Story Hubs?
- What were the outcomes for students from Story Hubs?
- What did we learn through the piloting process?

This evaluation drew upon the evaluation framework that was approved for delivery in participating schools by the DET in early 2020. However, this evaluation was unable to collect data from the three schools due to the restrictions prescribed by DET. To comply with these requirements this evaluation only collected new data from Banksia Gardens Community Centre (which is not a school) and made use of existing documentation provided by the schools before the DET's directive.

Interviews were conducted to capture information against the four questions above. A total of 14 interviews took place with Banksia Gardens educators (5), Banksia Gardens students (6), and Story Hubs staff (3). A parent was present for all student interviews in line with the ethics requirements for interviewing children under 18. Data was also collected at a Reflections Workshop in December 2020 where stakeholders discussed the data collected and collaboratively developed learnings and insights.

While every effort was made to reduce bias for this evaluation, the following limitations are associated with this report: Interviews could only be conducted in Banksia Gardens and may not be representative of other schools; students were required to recall their classes over a four-month period, and; the myriad of changes brought upon by online learning made the contribution of Story Hubs to student outcomes unclear.



3 ABOUT STORY HUBS

Story Hubs is delivered by 100 Story Building, a creative writing and arts-based learning organisation that aims to amplify the voices of children and young people aged 6-18. Students from across Melbourne visit 100 Story Building's creative space in Footscray for excursions and after-school programs, and a number of programs, such as Early Harvest, are delivered in partnership with schools. The mission of 100 Story Building is to:

> *"Provide opportunities for the most marginalised children and young people in our community to build the literacy skills, confidence and sense of belonging that are fundamental to future success" (100 Story Building mission statement).*

Story Hubs uses a decentralised model of 100 Story Building, in which 'Hubs' are created in schools, rather than students travelling to the 100 Story Building space. Story Hubs is a pilot program operating between 2019 – 2021 in schools and educational institutions in disadvantaged socio-economic areas.

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

- improve **student** literacy outcomes and critical and creative thinking skills
- improve **educator** capability to support students to create and learn
- foster an active learning community within **Hubs** and integrate the philosophy and practice of 100 Story Building more widely

Story Hubs responds to the need to target students in disadvantaged areas and close the equity gap in the education system. Extensive research demonstrates a strong link between social advantage and educational achievement. Students in the bottom quartile of socio-economic advantage can be up to 3 years behind their most advantaged peers[1], are less likely to complete secondary school or move on to further education. As adults, they are more likely to be unemployed, or in low-paid jobs[2].

Story Hubs' arts-based approach is supported by local and international studies which show that arts-rich learning opportunities help students to achieve better grades, reduces their likelihood of leaving school early, enhances their confidence in learning, and increases their likelihood of becoming involved in their community[3/4]. Story Hubs draws from the experience and expertise in arts-based approaches developed through years of 100 Story Building programs.

1 Thomson, S, De Bortoli, L & Underwood, C (2016), PISA 2015: A first look at Australia's results, Australian Council for Educational Research, Melbourne, p60

2 Lamb, S, Jackson, J, Walstab, A & Huo, S (2015), Educational opportunity in Australia 2015: Who succeeds and who misses out, Centre for International Research on Education Systems, Victoria

3 Ewing, R (2010), The Arts and Australian Education: Realising potential, Australian Council for Educational Research, Melbourne, p13

4 Dunn J, Bundy P, Jones A, Stinson M, Hassall L, Penton J, Lazaroo N and Le L 2019, Creating Critical Connections through the Arts: The Y Connect Report. Examining the impact of arts-based pedagogies and artist/teacher partnerships on learning and teaching in one Australian secondary school, Griffith Institute for Educational Research. Smithrim K and Upitis R 2005, 'Learning through the Arts: Lessons of Engagement', Canadian Journal of Education / Revue canadienne de l'éducation, Vol. 28, No. 1/2, pp. 109–127.

What makes a Story Hub?

Story Hubs aims to achieve its desired outcomes by developing Hubs in schools. There are four components to each Hub:

- **Co-designed creative space**: Transformation of a physical room, co-designed by students and educators. The space seeks to enable a shift towards a creative mindset and gives 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**: An arts-based approach to teaching and learning, focusing on engagement. This has developed over time in 100 Story Building and is informed by evidence linking arts-rich education to improved student outcomes.
- **Peer to Peer (P2P) learning community**: Educators and staff partnering in each Hub should 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**: 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.

These components are shown in Figure 1.

The story so far

Story Hubs partnered with three schools for this pilot: Meadows Primary School, Sunshine Primary School, and Copperfield College. All three schools have below-average Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) scores. In 2020 Banksia Gardens Community Service Centre joined as a Hub partner to Meadows Primary, helped by an already close relationship to the school.

In 2019 Story Hubs conceptualised, co-designed, and built a Story Hub in each school. This process included professional learning sessions for educators, co-design with students, and consultation with other stakeholders.

Three creative spaces were launched in December 2019 and February 2020: *a gateway to a dragon's den* at Copperfield College, *a place of light and dark magic* at Sunshine Primary and *a traffic control room for inter-dimensional exploration* at Meadows Primary. For a full summary of activities and achievements in 2019 see the 2019 Learnings Report.

FIGURE 1 FOUR COMPONENTS OF A STORY HUB

4 THE CHANGING CONTEXT DUE TO COVID

Education in Victoria and around the world was significantly impacted by the lockdowns associated with COVID restrictions. Schools transitioned to remote learning across all year levels in March 2020, which was largely kept in place until October 2020 or later.

These COVID restrictions and the associated transition to online learning had a significant impact on Victorian schools[5]: Principals and educators transitioned by redeveloping the curriculum, making hard copies available online, building their capacity to deliver classes remotely, and facilitating student adoption of online systems. During the year educators were time poor and unable to participate in professional learning sessions as planned, and schools were unable to go on excursions or host incursions.

Implications for Story Hubs activities in 2020

The changing school context significantly restricted the ability for Story Hubs to operate during 2020. These restrictions impacted all four components of a Story Hub:

- Classes were unable to access the **co-designed creative spaces** that were launched in the months prior to the pandemic.
- Educators had less time and space to engage with all planned **professional learning** sessions, including with Story Hubs.
- Educators and staff had less time and opportunity to **collaborate and share lessons** learned, both within schools and between schools and partner schools.
- Community members and 100 Story Building staff were prohibited from visiting an **open classroom** to collaborate with educators and students.

Implications for Story Hubs moving forwards

While there were significant challenges to implementing the Story Hubs program in 2020, there is some evidence to suggest the relevance of 100 Story Building and the Story Hubs program has increased because of the pandemic.

The program's focus on improving student engagement and addressing the equity gap are issues which have become more pronounced due to remote learning. Regarding student engagement, a survey of teachers in Australia and New Zealand found that teachers had difficultly engaging students who need one-on-one attention, and that 80% of teachers believed students would need extra instructional support when they got back to school[6]. 100 Story Building's expertise in student engagement, as well as their demonstrated ability to train teachers in delivering engaging classes (as detailed in Section 5, below) suggests they are well equipped to deliver valuable support to schools in a variety of circumstances, be it in a face-to-face or remote teaching context.

100 Story Building and Story Hubs' focus on closing the equity gap has also increased in relevance, as this gap is likely to widen due to COVID. Research commissioned by the Australian Government to examine the potential impact of remote learning found that the equity gap in education will increase[7] and nearly half (46%) of Australian children and young people, especially in the early years and vulnerable groups, are at risk adverse effects on their educational outcomes, social, and emotional wellbeing by being physically disconnected from school[8]. 100 Story Building staff have identified the increasing relevance of the program given this trend.

[5] Sacks, D., Bayles, K., Taggart, A., Noble, S., (2020), Government Matters, https://www.pwc.com.au/government/government-matters/covid-19-education-how-australian-schools-are-responding.html

[6] Flack, C. B., Walker, L., Bickerstaff, A., Earle, H., & Margetts, C. (2020). Educator perspectives on the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning in Australia and New Zealand. Melbourne, Australia: Pivot Professional Learning.

[7] Clinton, J. (2020). Supporting Vulnerable Children in the Face of a Pandemic: A paper prepared for the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment. Centre for Program Evaluation, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne

[8] Brown, N., Te Riele, K., Shelley, B. & Woodroffe, J. (2020). Learning at home during COVID-19: Effects on vulnerable young Australians. Independent Rapid Response Report. Hobart: University of Tasmania, Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment.

Story Hubs successfully maintained partnerships with all Hubs despite the challenges faced by schools during the year. Story Hubs delivered two face-to-face professional learning sessions to educators in March before the transition to online learning. Story Hubs met twice with each Hub after March to identify their needs and in response delivered eight tailored online professional learning sessions.

Maintaining the partnership

Story Hubs **successfully maintained** partnerships with all Hubs despite the challenges faced by schools during the year. Two 100 Story Building staff highlighted the continued partnerships with each hub as a significant achievement for the pilot program, given that school priorities changed drastically during 2020 and partnerships with external organisations could have been de-prioritised.

During the year, Story Hubs **respected the needs of each Hub** to have time and space, particularly from March – June as schools were adjusting to the transition to remote learning. Story Hubs met twice with each Hub later in the year to find out their needs and how the professional learning sessions could be tailored to support educators in each school.

Professional learning sessions

Story Hubs delivered **one face-to-face and one online professional learning session** to educators before the transition to online learning. These sessions focused on educators as creative facilitators and were attended by 21 staff from Meadows Primary, Sunshine Primary and Banksia Gardens. The same professional learning content had already been delivered to 11 staff from Copperfield College in December 2019.

Story Hubs developed and **delivered eight online professional learning sessions** based upon the needs of the Hubs. The sessions were developed in response to the needs identified during meetings with each Hub and Story Hubs predictions of what would be relevant to educators based on the context. Sessions were delivered from June – November 2020, each session was 30 minutes long and recorded so other educators could watch afterwards. Table 1 shows that the average attendance was around 10 educators per session. A description of the content for each session, including the face-to-face sessions, is in the Appendix.

While the online professional learnings sessions were provided to educators from all Hubs, **attendance was mixed** between schools, likely due to the limited availability of educators. Most educators who attended the professional learning were from Banksia Gardens and Meadows Primary. There was minimal attendance from Sunshine (1-4 educators attended up to two sessions), but this still represented the only non-DET professional learning that Sunshine educators attended for that term. There was no attendance from Copperfield College. The reasons for this lack of attendance are unclear given that the evaluation was unable to contact staff from these schools.

TABLE 1
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SESSIONS DELIVERED IN 2020

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SESSION NAME	ATTENDANCE (recording views)
Pre-lockdown sessions	
#1 Educators as Creative Facilitators	16
#2 Educators as Creative Facilitators (online)	5
Total for pre-lockdown sessions (2 sessions)	**21**
Online sessions during lockdown	
#1 Performing Online	15 (10)
#2 Happy Meals	18 (10)
#3 Performance for Non-Performers: Educator Energisers	7 (3)
#4 Simple warm-ups and Wind-downs: Happy Meal Poetry	5 (4)
#5 Show, don't tell! Point, don't yell: Descriptive Writing	22 (5)
#6 Supporting the Raised Hand 1	3 (8)
#7 Post Lockdown Writing	3 (3)
#8 Supporting the Raised Hand 2	10 (0)
Total for online sessions (8 sessions)	**83 (43)**

6 FINDINGS FROM THE EVALUATION

This section looks at the outcomes of the professional learning for educators and students. All the data in this section are from interviews with staff and students from Banksia Gardens, in compliance with Victorian DET guidelines prohibiting data collection in schools. This section starts by considering the outcomes for educators and students at Banksia Gardens, and then discusses the likelihood of these outcomes occurring in the other Hubs, considering the difference in contexts across the sites.

6.1 What were the outcomes for educators at Banksia Gardens?

Story Hubs training sessions improved the capacity of educators to support student learning and creation. This was chiefly through improved educator confidence and capacity to engage with students online, changing their approach to teaching, and providing specific exercises to use that support student engagement and idea generation.

Improved educator capacity to support student learning

Evidence suggested that professional learning sessions enhanced educators' **confidence and capacity to engage with students online**. All four Banksia educators who attended the 'Performing Online' training said it improved their confidence and capacity to deliver online sessions. In particular, the training helped educators become comfortable in front of a camera and understand how to interact with students online in a meaningful way.

> *Participating in the professional learning has helped me to improve my skills. I can engage with the students better, and I feel confident to perform online. (BGF_01)*

Before the session, educators were confident and experienced delivering face-to-face classes, but had struggled to translate this to online learning. This was the first training dedicated to online delivery that Banksia educators received, and three educators indicated they started at a low level and found these sessions especially valuable.

> *As a facilitator I feel comfortable working in a room with kids, being myself and being silly, relating on their level. With the onset of COVID and online I felt myself becoming rigid and camera-shy; [Story Hubs] were a good model for how to interact with people online in a meaningful & fun way. (BGF_05)*

Story Hubs also gave educators **a sense of support** during the year. The partnership with each Hub ensured that the training provided met the specific needs of educators and so provided support in the areas that were most needed, including student engagement and delivering online classes. Two Banksia educators (BG_03, BG_05) 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. (BGF_03)*

I am a staff member of Banksia Gardens. I attended some of the Story Hubs professional learning sessions from June to November 2020, including the sessions on performing online and warm-up activities.

Our classes shifted online because of COVID. At the start of this transition, I was not confident teaching online; I did not know how to control the classes, and initially felt scared. There were lots of little things such as lighting and how to use my voice which I did not know were so important.

That is why for me the most significant change from the Story Hubs professional learning was becoming more confident in my capacity to perform online. The training taught me how to set up the camera and lighting, how to engage kids in warm-up activities, and other skills needed to perform online. Now I am pretty confident taking online classes.

This was the most significant change for me personally. It is especially significant because I'm quite a shy person, so this has helped me open up and improve my confidence.

Changed approach to teaching

The Story Hubs arts-based approach to teaching and learning aims to support the key student outcomes of engagement and idea generation. Four Banksia educators have adapted their teaching approach in line with these outcomes. These educators placed a greater emphasis upon fun and enjoyment in their classes to improve student engagement and built a sense of creative safety to foster student idea generation.

Educators aimed to improve student engagement by placing **greater emphasis on fun and enjoyment in their classes**. While student engagement has always been a key focus for teaching, four educators reported making classes more fun and enjoyable as a deliberate method to improve student engagement.

I am a staff member of Banksia Gardens. I attended some of the Story Hubs professional learning sessions from June to November 2020, including the sessions on performing online and warm up activities.

For me, the most significant change from the Story Hubs professional learning was learning to put more emphasis on fun and creativity. Story Hubs helped me to see that it is possible to facilitate learning in a beautiful way that makes people feel included, in which participants are in the driving seat; there is a bunch of stuff which underpins this approach, such as helping to create a safe space. There is a recipe, and if you follow that recipe you get good results while also being fun and creative.

In the past there were times when I wouldn't have looked to see if there was a way I could make something more fun and engaging. My natural tendency is to try to do that a bit, but there have been times when I have just presented the plain content. Now I think about how to make activities fun or memorable so that students will engage in what would usually be thought of as 'the boring stuff'. This also has a flow-on effect to other staff in Banksia; people see that it is okay to have fun and be creative, and they see that stuff still gets done, and the results are often excellent.

This was the most significant change for me because fun and creativity keep people feeling energised and connected and improves quality of life. If you must work – especially in a year like this one, where it's been a lot of hours and work – why not make it fun? If you are not looking forward to fun stuff and engaging in fun stuff, far out, what an awful life!

> *For me, the most significant change is putting a higher priority on fun and creativity. The other stuff comes after it; the creativity and fun results in people feeling energised and connected [and engaged] (BGF_02)*

Connected to student engagement was the idea of **creative safety** and how to build it in the classroom. Three educators spoke about the importance of creative safety and how they had placed a greater emphasis on making students feel comfortable when sharing ideas:

> *I think about 'how might I present this idea', how can I put a premium on making people safe and voicing their opinions, helping people voice their opinions and feel safe, even if incorrect, to help them engage on it and not get stuck. (BGF_02)*

One educator said their **teaching approach was already aligned** with the Story Hubs teaching principles. This educator was already placing a strong emphasis upon student engagement and ensuring students felt comfortable expressing ideas in classes. While the Story Hubs training did not change their teaching style, the educator felt that the novel resources provided helped them sustain their approach:

> *The warm-up games help students to engage in the session and feel more confident. I use warm up exercises nearly every week... we change the activities. We had warm-up activities before, but now we draw upon these [Story Hubs activities] (BGF_01)*

Use of specific exercises

Educators have also contributed to improved student engagement and idea generation by taking specific exercises from the Professional Learning sessions and applying them in their classes. Each of these exercises are designed to improve student engagement and creative safety.

Three of the five Banksia educators reported **using specific exercises every week** in their classes. Two educators (BGF_01, BGF_05) use the 'Yes, and...' exercise weekly, another (BGF_03) uses the 'Monsters Generator', and one (BGF_01) also uses the warm-up exercises each week. The "Yes, and..." exercise aims to directly encourage student involvement and idea generation when storytelling, and the 'Monsters Generator' aims to encourage students to contribute ideas.

> *In the storytelling we use the 'yes, and'. We use that weekly in the creative arts and meditation program. We adapt it with a picture of a weird object... we go around the group. (BGF_05)*

While three of the five Banksia educators use exercises every week, one educator **used the poetry activities in class as a one-off exercise**. The poetry activity aims to encourage idea generation through word association.

> *I got some idea on how to get the [students] thinking of something they could write about. One thing was associate three words with feelings, or three words for seasons. It made me realise I could do it with my students. The way it was broken down for us allowed me to simplify it for myself. (BGF_04)*

6.2

What were the outcomes for students at Banksia Gardens?

Students exhibited similar or higher levels of engagement and idea generation when educators adapted their teaching practice. Some educators attributed this to the Story Hubs training, and others were unable to attribute these changes to Story Hubs due to the myriad of other factors at play. These students outcomes exceed the expectations for the pilot in 2020 given the challenges associated with COVID-19 and online learning.

Students in Banksia Gardens classes had high levels of engagement and felt very comfortable sharing ideas – more so than during regular school. However, it is unclear how Story Hubs has contributed to this alongside other factors such as prior teaching practices and smaller class sizes. This contribution story will be explored further in the 2021 Learning Report provided data can be collected from schools.

Outcomes from changed teaching practices

The improved educator capacity and changed approach to teaching resulted in **improved student engagement** in some cases. Educators attributed this to a combination of the changed teaching approach and use of activities taught by the Story Hubs training. Two Banksia Gardens facilitators (BGF_01, BGF_05) said that student engagement improved when they had adapted their teaching approach.

> *The students enjoyed the warm-up activities. When we use the activities, they are more confident and participate in the activities more. They put their hands up and unmute themselves quicker, they participate more than before. (BGF_01)*

For other educators, Story Hubs' contribution to improved student engagement was unclear. While student engagement was high in Banksia Gardens, and educators did change their approach somewhat, these changes represented the growing maturity and capacity of educators and it was unclear what level of influence Story Hubs had on these outcomes. Two facilitators did not attribute changes to student engagement to Story Hubs training.

> *I am not sure how Story Hubs impacted student engagement. Most of our work is trying to engage our students. I would not be able to identify the Story Hubs influence in this, but it adds to everything else. It is part of a training, maturing ideas and styles, and because of that and other things we are able to be quite successful in terms of engagement (BGF_03)*

I am a staff member of Banksia Gardens. I attended some of the Story Hubs professional learning sessions from June to November 2020, including the sessions on poetry.

For me, the most significant change from the Story Hubs professional learning was the way it led me to simplify my lessons and make them more fun. Before the session, while I always tried to make things interesting in my classes, I did not necessarily try to make things fun. I did not think classes like this would work, and I would never have tried to teach a class on poetry.

The professional learning made me think about simplifying things and making it fun. Teaching and learning does not have to be in a box. It is just about bringing a bit of fun into the curriculum. That's been very valuable and my students are enjoying it. I am thinking about continuing this with my classes; I just need to remember to reflect on how I can present in a really fun way so that the students enjoy what we're doing and won't be afraid of it. For example, when teaching 'how to write a formal letter', I thought that it would be boring if I went straight into it. So, I thought I could make it fun by thinking of one's idol and write a letter to them instead. That was a nice steppingstone during the lessons.

This was the most significant change for me because it resulted in successful classes and led me to overcome my initial resistance to making things more fun. I didn't think they were able to do it, and at the start the students were resistant and afraid, but after seeing the presentation I decided to do it, and it worked and the students loved the exercises and were laughing!

Use of the Story Hubs teaching principles and activities **improved student idea generation** in some cases. Generating creative ideas is a significant factor of creativity and an outcome that Story Hubs aims for its students. One BG facilitator (BGF_01) had observed students generated more ideas when they used the Story Hubs approach and exercises, particularly the "yes, and.." exercise. This facilitator explained that the students were more engaged in classes and felt confident to suggest new ideas:

> *With the storytelling the students are more creative. They enjoy the storytelling, they have more ideas, and they are more creative than the first sessions. For example, in the first sessions the students did not come up with many ideas, but with a combination of warm up exercises and the 'yes, and...' method they are coming up with more ideas. (BGF_01)*

I am a staff member of Banksia Gardens. I attended the 'Educators as Creative Facilitators' training in March right before classes moved online, and some of the Story Hubs online professional learning sessions from June to November 2020, including the sessions on performing online and warm-up activities.

For me, the most significant change from the Story Hubs professional learning was my approach to working with kids in online classes: being authentic and silly and playful and relaxed, that has rubbed off! Before March I was taking face-to-face classes, and as a facilitator I feel comfortable working in a room with kids, being myself and being silly, relating on their level. With the onset of COVID and online learning I felt myself becoming rigid and camera-shy; Story Hubs were a good model for how to interact with students online in a meaningful and fun way. The silliness and fun have really rubbed off on me; I have tried to mimic that sense of playfulness

This was the most significant change for me because it has demonstrably helped kids remain engaged during the lockdown. Kids are hard to engage online; there is stuff going on and the TV might be on in the next room, brothers and sisters might be doing stuff in the background. Being more relatable and sillier has helped me keep their attention. In some cases, I have fostered better relationships online than in the classroom. I feel the professional learning has partly impacted that.

Student engagement and creative safety in Banksia Gardens classes

Students were **comfortable sharing ideas** in Banksia Gardens classes, but the contribution of Story Hubs to this is unclear. Students were comfortable in both those classes delivered by educators who attended Story Hubs professional learning and those who did not. Five out of six Banksia Gardens students said they felt comfortable sharing ideas with their educator and class at Banksia Gardens. The one student who did not feel comfortable said they would only share if they were very proud of their idea.

> *Yes, I do, I share [my ideas] with everyone. The teachers would pop by, there would be video calls. It's a small group with a lot of things and ideas going around. It is just fun. (BGS_03)*

Students were **more comfortable sharing ideas in Banksia Gardens classes** compared to their regular school. Two parents had directly observed the Banksia classes and could comment on their child's behaviour in classes. Both parents said that the classes created a safe environment to express ideas, and that their normally shy children shared more ideas and engaged in classes more than regular school:

> *[My daughter] is a very shy person, I really liked the program because she was able to speak and express herself and her ideas. They pushed her to speak up. I really liked her being able to join and express herself... It is a very small group; they are able to speak up without fear or embarrassment. If the children say something they might think "I will be criticised", but here they think it is okay to speak up, the teacher says they can speak about anything, the is acknowledgement from the teachers and their mates do not laugh at them. (BGS_03)*

When asked to compare Banksia Gardens classes and their regular school classes, all six students said they felt more comfortable sharing ideas in Banksia classes. However, these students all indicated that the **class size** was a major factor here; Banksia classes are much smaller than their school classes, so the educators could spend more time with them:

> *At school it is a class of 25, so when a teacher asks something only specific people contribute. With Banksia when it is a one-on-one thing or a small group you have a chance to open up, but in class you are hidden under the shadows. (BGS_04)*

6.3

Were these outcomes likely to have occurred in the other Hubs?

Story Hubs successfully maintained partnerships with all Hubs despite the challenges faced by schools during the year. However, this evaluation was unable to confidently determine what other outcomes occurred in the other Hubs aside from Banksia Gardens, as it was prohibited from collecting data from the three schools. Evidence of these outcomes will be captured in the 2021 Learning Report, provided data collection in schools is permitted.

Story Hubs may have contributed to improved educator capacity at Meadows Primary and Sunshine Primary, based upon the professional learning attendance data. Attendance from Meadows Primary was relatively consistent, limited for Sunshine Primary and low for Copperfield College.

The extent teaching practice had changed, and student outcomes had been achieved this year due to Story Hubs is unclear. There was no evidence collected to indicate the number of educators in these schools who applied the lessons learned from the professional learning or their 2019 experiences with Story Hubs, which included excursions to 100 Story Building and the process to co-design the creative spaces. Where these were applied, the outcomes for students may be much broader and deeper than at Banksia, as schoolteachers taught large classes for 25 hours a week compared to a small group for 3-5 hours at Banksia Gardens.

I am a member of 100 Story Building. I worked directly with schools during the year and was involved in the professional learning sessions.

Before this year, teachers were less open to the idea that they could incorporate performance and drama into their practice, because it's hard, requires openness to practice, requires time to experiment with to figure out what works and what doesn't and demands that teachers take risks with their practices. These were things that teachers were unable to do in their normal classroom for many reasons. One reason was that student behaviour changes if teachers take risks, so it was a question of how much risk and experimentation was possible without risking student engagement.

For me, the most significant change from Story Hubs this year was the increased openness of schools and teachers to performative and dramatic modes of teaching and learning. Our professional learning sessions focused on performance, which required teachers to reflect on their own practice and how it does and does not support student engagement.

The new environment this year made them open to the idea that the skills and approaches that we introduced (improvisation, performance) were relevant to them as teachers. This year they had to try new things, they could not rely on normal behaviour management methods; these realities caused a shift where teachers felt: "We have talked about this as something we are interested in, now is the opportunity to get into facilitating deeper using these methods."

This was the most significant change for me because it reflects what is happening more broadly for teachers across Australia. In education webinars I have attended with other schools the ideas that came up were related to the role of the teacher. One teacher talked about 'performance-based roles' as part of their teaching practice. It was significant because they saw how it was not just relevant to the online learning space; they saw how it was relevant to student engagement and things they thought necessary.

6.4 Learnings

100 Story Building and the evaluation team gained many lessons from their experiences delivering and evaluating Story Hubs in 2020. This section highlights four significant learnings for the team that are important to reflect on how to sustain and enhance the benefits of Story Hubs.

Learning 1: Story Hubs is more than a creative space

The experience of Story Hubs this year has validated the significance of its teaching principles and activities. Without the opportunity to physically deliver its program in 2020, the focus shifted to the codification and adaptation for online delivery of these teaching principles and approaches. The outcomes for educators and students suggest that these teaching principles can stand alone as an important component of Story Hubs. Staff agreed that the physical space is still important as a powerful, tangible achievement and source of inspiration for schools, and as a tool for facilitators to use in the classroom:

The physical space is a nice entrée, but it is not the magic sauce. The magic sauce is having teachers understand that they can get a bunch of educational outcomes through these teaching approaches… The space is not so much about the physical surroundings but the stories that can be told about the space, like a trapdoor with 99 floors underground. A learning environment that is creative and inducive to creative thought. (Reflections workshop)

Learning 2: Buy-in from influential senior staff in each Hub is important to ensure educator engagement

Influential staff in senior positions are critical to ensuring educator engagement in each Hub. The two Hubs with principals or senior staff directly involved in Story Hubs achieved the highest level of engagement in professional learning sessions in 2020. Both contacts had considerable influence over the professional learning agenda in their school and ensured staff attended sessions. The two Hubs led by teachers in Literacy Leader positions had limited influence over other educators, which contributed to low attendance at professional learning sessions. This is further evidenced by the Creative Leadership in Learning program (see Figure 1), which is a similar program to Story Hubs based in NSW that uses arts-based approaches to improve student engagement and idea generation. In this program the direct involvement of principals in all professional learnings was attributed as a key determinant of program success

FIGURE 1 CASE STUDY: LEARNING FROM A SIMILAR PROGRAM

The Creative Leadership in Learning program run by the Sydney Opera House aims to improve student engagement and creativity of schools in NSW. The Program provides professional learning to teachers and co-delivers a creative project for students.

Some elements of this program can be compared to Story Hubs for learning purposes:

- This program delivered 10 days of teacher professional learning each year, with eight teachers on average per school attending all 10 sessions. Once teachers have attended the 10 days training they were not required to attend the following year.
- School principals were required to participate in all professional learning sessions

Learning 3: The partnership model is important to ensure Story Hubs' relevance to educators

Experiences this year validated the Story Hubs partnership approach, and the resulting flexibility and adaptability which comes from a partnership. Story Hubs adaptation and responsiveness to the needs of the individual Hubs allowed it to remain relevant to the needs of educators and contributed to the outcomes that were achieved in 2020. Both the professional learning content and mode of delivery (30-minute lunchtime professional learning sessions over Zoom) were suitable for educators with limited time and adjusting to remote learning.

Learning 4: A minimum professional learning dosage is required to achieve outcomes

Schools struggled to commit to a minimum dosage (time) of professional learning in 2020 due to the transition to remote learning, which limited the outcomes for Story Hubs. The outcomes achieved were significant considering that educators attended a maximum ten hours of professional learning this year. This dosage of ten hours was far less than the 10 days of professional learning delivered by the Creative Leadership in Learning program (see Figure 1), albeit Story Hubs delivers professional learning over the entire pilot period, compared to the CLIL program which delivers all training in a single year. The amount of professional learning was largely dependent upon what each school could commit to and was significantly impacted by the switch to remote learning during 2020.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation presents the following recommendations for consideration moving forward.

Recommendation 1:
Continue the pilot

Story Hubs has demonstrated it can improve educator capacity and student outcomes even within the restrictions imposed by COVID and validated the use of a partnership approach which responds to the individual needs of each Hub. The pilot will have opportunities to increase its reach and outcomes with the return to face-to-face learning and the need for greater student engagement and extra support for schools in 2021.

Recommendation 2:
Increase the reach and dosage of professional learning for educators

Professional learning sessions influenced educator capacity and student outcomes in 2021, but they were short and had low attendance due to COVID. Story Hubs needs to ensure that more educators attend sessions, and more time is given to these sessions for the pilot to be successful. This relies partially on the context (whether COVID restrictions both forces educators to continue remote learning with students, and forces Story Hubs to deliver professional learning sessions in an online format) and may require liaising with influential staff in each Hub who can ensure educators attend the professional learning sessions.

Recommendation 3:
Aim to change teaching practice both within and outside of the creative space

The experience of Story Hubs this year has validated the significance of its teaching principles and activities and shown that these principles can be successfully applied outside of the creative space. Encouraging educators to apply these principles on a day-to-day basis (rather than waiting for classes run in the creative space) will increase the reach and quality of Story Hubs impact.

I am a member of 100 Story Building. I worked directly with schools during the year and was involved in the professional learning sessions.

For me, the most significant change from Story Hubs this year was the one teacher from Sunshine Primary who started doing more creative writing herself. After the professional learning session, the teacher hung back and told us about the writing she had done personally and wanted to bring it into her classes. She was proud of her work and was more comfortable in navigating creative writing with her students.

This was the most significant change for me because it was something we were already aware of but hadn't been able to explicitly document. Other changes may have occurred in the schools, but this is one we know happened, someone considerably changing their practice and developing their confidence around creative storytelling.

APPENDIX

DESCRIPTION OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SESSIONS

SESSION NAME	DESCRIPTION
Face-to-face sessions	
#1 Educators as Creative Facilitators (full day)	Through the concept 'educators as creative facilitators' we explore ways to foster a classroom environment that enables creative risk-taking, collaboration for engagement and respect for the imaginative space. Approaches/ideas covered include creative safety, questioning for imagination and using the Story Hub as a tool.
#2 Educators as Creative Facilitators (half-day)	Through the concept 'educators as creative facilitators' we explore ways to foster a classroom environment that enables creative risk-taking, collaboration for engagement and respect for the imaginative space. Approaches/ideas covered include creative safety and questioning for imagination.
Online sessions	
#1 Performing Online	Basic tips and techniques for delivering remote teaching online including framing, talking to camera, pacing and using chat for activities.
#2 Happy Meals	Small, medium and large sized story-making activities to help students transition into creative mindsets or get energised for learning. These will be demonstrated as activities plus extension ideas to tailor for different ages and contexts.
#3 Performance for Non-Performers: Educator Energisers	Following on from the idea that 'find what you're enjoying' is key to online teaching, this session is focused on performance and drama-based practices that will help you as an educator develop your stamina and confidence on camera, and engage your student learners. We know it's hard to facilitate without in-person feedback (we miss it too!) so here's some ideas for generating and directing engagement through the camera and design tips to help structure your learning sessions.
#4 Simple warm-ups and Wind-downs: Happy Meal Poetry	Join us for some poetic word play! This session is all about having some fun with words - building short poems, wiggling ears around assonance, exercising brain cells with twisty meanings. You can use these activities to prompt all kinds of writing, not just poems! Suitable for using with upper primary or secondary students.
#5 Show, don't tell! Point, don't yell: Descriptive Writing	Together we will work through challenges with and approaches to students developing 'show, don't tell' skills in their descriptive writing. Best for mid-upper primary, with suitable ideas for lower secondary.
#6 Supporting the Raised Hand 1	This session will focus on how educators can support creative risk-taking and collaboration now we are back in the room. For the educators: how to facilitate the sharing of ideas in a way that validates all student input while allowing you to stay on track with your activity. "If they are brave enough to raise their hand, we should be brave enough to use their idea". Suitable for years 2-7.
#7 Post Lockdown Writing	How to tap into the rich, varied and unusual experiences that all Victorian students have gone through to develop some writing reflections. Without getting 25 stories about 'school on a laptop'. This session will outline an approach revolving around small successes in writing by using a varied list of provocative prompts to find little 'wells' of interest from the past 6 months. We are building a Lockdown Montage, in writing. Suitable for years 3-7.
#8 Supporting the Raised Hand 2	Build on strategies shared in the first session, explore further strategies that borrow from improvisation practice to support creative facilitation and the confident exploration of ideas with students. Aimed at years 3-7.

PILOT PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

PROGRAM PARTNERS

Banksia Gardens Community Services

Copperfield COLLEGE

Meadows Primary School

Sunshine Primary School

EVALUATION PARTNER

Clear Horizon

SUPPORTERS

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